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# MADRAS

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## MUSINGS

Vol. I. No. 16

FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

December 1 — 14, 1991

*Is Madras fast becoming...*

# The medical capital?

(By a Special Correspondent)

The recent open-heart surgery performed on a 16-hour-old 'blue baby' by Dr K M Cherian of the Madras Medical Mission's Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases created medical history in India when the infant got a second lease of life. A few days earlier he had operated on the seven-day-old daughter of a Dubai-based Pakistani couple. Both incidents focus on the skills available at the Institute — at present functioning in the Vijaya Hospital — as well as the international reputation it is acquiring.

But this is not the only medical facility in Madras that is giving the city an international name in South, Southeast and West Asia for medicare. There are several other hospitals — and outstanding medical personalities — in Madras that are responsible for many beginning to describe the city as the 'Medical Capital of India'. Today, they come from all parts of India and many parts of the world to these centres of excellence.

Perhaps the first of these institutions to acquire a national reputation was the Perambur Railway Hospital. It was there that Dr K M Cherian, encouraged by Dr T J Cherian, first demonstrated his skills and, ever since, there have been several teams of doctors who've contributed to its reputation for heart

as well as other medicare. Vijaya Hospital and KJ Hospital were among the first of a host of private hospitals that added to the city's reputation by introducing high tech medicare. Vijaya went even further when it established its luxurious Health Centre in sylvan surroundings.

Of this age is the sprawling M V Hospital Diabetes in Royapuram

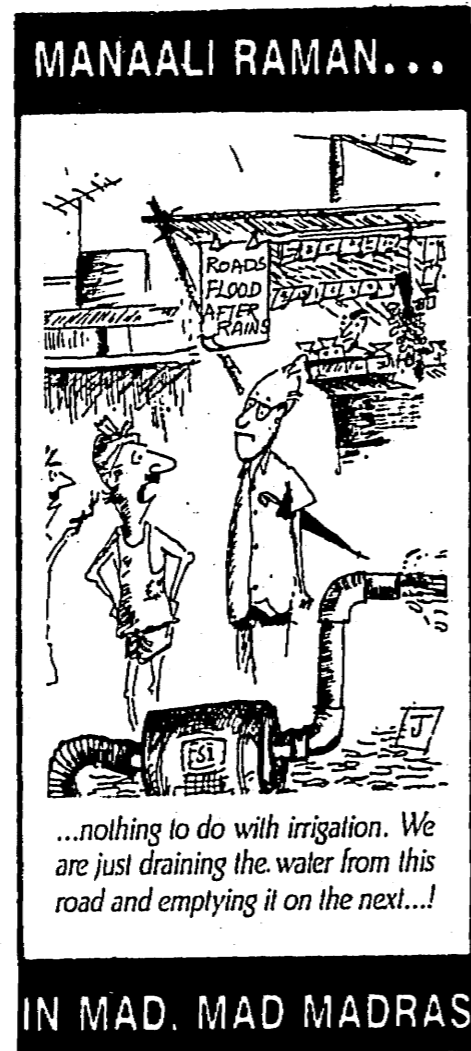
and the Sankara Nethralaya for eyecare, both institutions renowned throughout India and in the neighbouring countries. The Cancer Institute in Adyar is another institution of national repute.

Madras's 'Harley Street', Poonamallee High Road, today has so many private hospitals that several three star hotels have been established on the same road to cater to the numerous visitors to the city for medicare or to those who are staying on while their kin are being treated. But nowhere has this concept of hotel and hospital been more felicitously treated than in Apollo Hospital, whose Hotel Sindoori neighbours the huge medical facility.

While all the earlier mentioned hospitals have been enhancing Madras's medical reputation, it is Apollo which brought the city's medical facilities greatest national attention. The success of Apollo as a business venture, the establishment by the same company of Apollo-type hospitals elsewhere in the country and its reputation for attracting back Indian specialists settled abroad really put Madras on the medical map of India. That was when the rest of the country and beyond began to learn that Madras had much more than Apollo.

Today, the Apollo success story continues. It is planning a major cancer

(Continued on P3)



The oldest printing press in India, The Diocesan Press in Vepery, not only has taken on a new name but, as The C.L.S. Press, also plans to take on a new, more up-to-date image. (Photograph by SUSHFLA NAIR)

# A new lease of life

(By S. Muthiah)

One of the most revered names in Indian printing has just undergone a name change. It is also undergoing a sea change. Both, it is hoped, will bring to the C.L.S. Press the high reputation it enjoyed in the heyday of the Diocesan Press.

The Diocesan Press, now rechristened the C.L.S. Press and in the process of modernisation, is the oldest printing press in India, founded in Vepery, where it still is, in 1761. Its beginnings go back to "a hand-press and some cases of type and other printing equipment" that were part of the loot from Pondicherry that Gen. Eyre Coote brought back to Madras from Pondicherry.

The Rev Fabricius, then in charge of the activities of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in Madras, had belonged to the Tranquebar Mission which was responsible for reestablishing printing in India in 1712. Trained in this tradition, Fabricius asked Governor Pigot for this booty and

promised to use it to print Government's requirements in the first place and use only the spare capacity for the SPCK's work. And so, in 1761, he became manager of a press known as the Company Press as well as the Vepery Press.

When Fabricius expanded this press in 1766, with the help of the Tranquebar Mission Press, he was able to establish two distinct divisions in Vepery. The new division was to develop into the S.P.C.K. Press and the Diocesan Press and now the C.L.S. Press. The older division was returned to the Company in the late 1760s, moved to Fort St George and became the nucleus for Government Press, another Madras first in India.

The Vepery Press became the Diocesan Press when a Diocesan Committee was set up to run it in 1815. This Committee sold the press to the American Board around 1850, but re-acquired it in 1866 and has run it — and the Christian Literature Society — ever since.

Renowned for its several publication firsts and subsequent high quality of printing in the first half of the 20th Century, the Press fell on hard times in the last couple of decades when it could not keep pace with the modernisation going on in the rest of the printing industry in Madras. But even in those lean times it maintained its reputation for the best binding in the city, an area Madras has sadly been deficient in.

Now, after a management consultancy group had examined its workings and recommended an overhaul, the Diocesan Press enjoys a new lease of life, even if it be in a changed name. It is to be hoped there will be no looking back now and that the Vepery Press will regain its high repute before long.

# WATCH THAT BAG, MY GUEST!

(By A Business Traveller)

It happened to me at the Hilton in Munich some years ago. Shortly afterwards it happened to a colleague visiting Spain. It happened again recently to a friend staying at a venerable five-star hotel in Madras. In fact, it happens regularly in such hotels all over the world, and all that can be done is advise patrons of such hotels: "Watch your bag!"

In my case, I had checked in early one morning and was asked to have a coffee in the lobby coffee shop while a room was got ready. As I sat jotting down my notes for the day's meetings, I reached for my briefcase that I had placed by the side of the comfortable leather-bound armchair I was sitting in.

Alas, there was no bag! And I hadn't put that bag down there even five minutes!

In the case of my friend, he was paying his bill at the cashier's counter and his wife was standing a few feet away. When he reached down for his bag to put back his documents after the bill had been settled, alas, there was no bag! His wife later reported that she had seen someone walk past with a briefcase, but didn't for a moment associate it with her husband's.

As for the latest case, half a dozen of us, including the couple from Britain we were calling on, were enjoying a drink in the bar of the hotel. It was an

hour later, as we broke up, that the lady from Yorkshire discovered that her handbag was missing. A hue and cry did not return the bag, but it did produce a curious story.

Sitting at the table behind her was a group of Southeast or Far East Asia types (it later transpired they were very likely Tibetans). They had apparently gone around in a taxi from one five-star hotel in the city to another, before going from this last port of call to Central Station. Not much was learned about who else had lost anything anywhere else, but in this case one in our group was certain he had seen one of the 'Tibetans' fiddling around with something on the floor.

None of this, however, brought the bag back, or its valuables — which were quite substantial — but the visitors were, on subsequent days, quite impressed with all the courtesies and assistance they received from not only the hotel staff but officialdom wherever they went. One bit of advice that they promised to remember was, "Always keep your handbag in your lap and your briefcase between your feet when you are sitting in a public place." I'd received the same advice from the Munich Police, but had forgotten it in a year.

My briefcase has gone back to be being parked beside whatever chair I sit on!

# Some security concerns

The Man from Madras Musings had never thought he'd see the day when political leaders from Tamil Nadu would have to worry about their safety. But we live in changing times, and their security is becoming the prime concern of the authorities from Kashmir to Kanniyakumari. But those security concerns take devious twists and turns every day.

Take for instance a couple of recent instances concerning the safety of Chief Minister Jayalalitha, perhaps the most protected person in the country. On one day, when she attended a wedding in the mofussil, the whole neighbourhood at the venue was combed and everyone resident there issued identity cards. Despite such precautions, the wedding hall was substantially thinned of guests just before she came in and allowed to fill again only after she left.

Yet, on Deepavali day, one of the most exuberant celebrations was at her home in Poes Gardens, Veda Nilayam, it has been reported. Policemen, staff and retinue all joined in a 4-hour bash during which the entire array of firecrackers available appeared to have been lit. The scene was colourful, the noise deafening, and the neighbours treated to a spectacular display of pyrotechnics.

A few days later there was that city tour after the rains, during which close crowd contact was the objective. No wonder that questions are being asked about the strictness of security one day and such relaxation the next, when the lighting of such high security risk items as firecrackers and mass contact are permitted.

Security guards in Delhi, however, have not been as amenable when it comes to the security of Jayanti Natarajan, the MP who was highly critical of the police role in Sriperumbudur. She's now reported to be "sick of the security" she's had to accept, with security men "all over my place both in Delhi and Madras". That security blanket against LITE threat includes, apparently, opening all her mail — to ensure there's "no letter-bomb in the mail" and to discover whether "there is a threat to her life".

With such security, privacy is the biggest casualty, many a politician is discovering.

## Honour with the job

It's become the fashion in Tamil Nadu to honour our Chief Ministers in a way that's unique even in India. A doctorate, which none of them is thereafter shy to use, is apparently a distinction that goes with the job.

Karunanidhi was conferred his in 1971 by Annamalai University. MGR received his Ph.D. from Madras University in 1983. And 1992 is to be the year of *honoris causa* for Jayalalitha, to judge by recent pronouncements from the Madras University Senate.

When that doctorate is awarded, the Chief Minister, will become only the fourth woman to receive the honour in the University's 135-year history. The first was Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai, the regent of Travancore, in 1934, then there was Mother Teresa and, in 1983, M S Subbulakshmi. None of these three ever used the

honour as a prefix and it would be nice if the Chief Minister restored that respected convention whereby all those given honorary degrees neither use the doctoral prefix nor allow others to use it when referring to them.

Meanwhile the trend Karunanidhi set has allowed a whole generation of "doctors" in Tamil Nadu, most of them less erudite than him and owing their

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

**HONORARY DEGREE** to essays written or fees paid to unknown, unlisted American universities. The desire to bask in doctoral glory has made some of the most conventional of people set aside convention and announce on their letterheads that they are "Dr so and so." It's time we got back in line with the rest of the country before everyone in the state becomes a "Doctor."

## Hands off, Men

Strictly speaking this is not a Madras, or even a Tamil Nadu, story. But the Man from Madras Musings has been reading the views of local feminists on the subject in the local press and thought he'd like to share with them these rather delightful excerpts from a 'Hands-Off Office Guide for Men' that appeared in the *Washington Post* after the Thomas-Hill 'sexual harassment' sensation:

**"DIRTY JOKES:** Make sure your listener is some one you know well enough to be fairly sure that she might actually laugh. Keep in mind that it is harassment if the dirty joke is just dirty and not funny.

**TOUCHING:** Contact with a clothed shoulder or below is probably OK, as long as it is really a touch and not a caress. Anything else is not OK.

MMM is not certain how many women in Madras are faced with similar situations, so whether this advice is relevant, but before they all jump up in protest, it should be added that the author was a Megan Rosenfeld — and Megan sounds an awfully feminine sounding name. Perhaps it belongs to a woman with a sense of humour!

## 100 years young

It was reported in the columns of *Madras Musings* a few weeks ago that St George's School and Orphanage on Poonamallee High Road is the oldest school in the country following the Western tradition of education. Very much younger, yet celebrating its centenary, is the Railway Mixed Higher Secondary School in Perambur.

Is this the first school in the country to be established for the children of railwaymen? It was founded just 35 years after the South got its first rail track, Royapuram to Arcot, and that was just three years after the first line was inaugurated in 1853 from Bombay to Thane. Ever since, the school's gone from strength to strength and many a railwayman's child has gone on to a splendid career from here, in India and abroad.

That's a record the school might publicise a bit more.

MMM

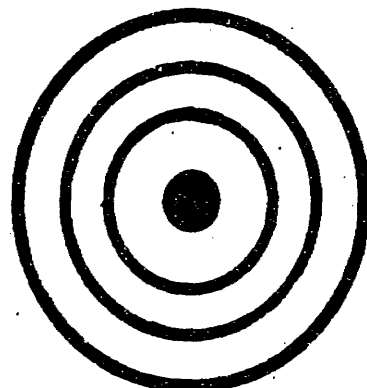
# BEWARE OF MUTUAL FUNDS

All the existing Mutual Funds in India are managed by Government owned Institutions. They have access to large resources and have the advantages of a big buyer, namely, command of a good price, ability to buy in bulk at the time at which such volumes are available and the ability to wait for a good price when the market goes through its periods of depression.

The shares of Mutual funds that are traded in the market, are considered to be safe and eminently acceptable as investments. In fact, these have proved to be more profitable than the Mutual Fund documents which have an assured buy back offer. As of today, a Mutual Fund share, well traded in the market, is a safe and profitable investment option, likely to yield a good gain to the investor.

But let us beware, for, this need not always remain so. A mutual fund share will remain acceptable, only as long as the investments in its portfolio are first rate, high yielding and with good potential for capital growth. As of date, in spite of a lack of information on the composition of the respective portfolios, these institutions are thought of as being well managed. The point is that they need not continue to remain so. Let us look at banks in this country for a comparison. These were carefully nurtured and tended into dependable, trustworthy institutions over the years. But, they have not remained so. Indeed none of them are now perfectly healthy. Some of them are cause for serious concern. The law that provides for non-disclosure of the honest state of their affairs has not helped boost customer confidence. The responsibility for this degradation rest with our Government, who, over the last twenty years have

systematically, for whatever reason, destroyed the basic tenets of lending, namely safety, liquidity and profitability.



BULL'S EYE

The Mutual Funds which are now in their infancy and which, as yet have not built reserves, are presently under threat. The Government, thirsty for resources, is in the process of compelling

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NOVA ELECTRO MAGNETICS LTD (Current Market Price — Rs. 27.25) The company is engaged in the manufacture of video tapes and cassettes in technical collaboration with Electro Magnetics Ltd, Singapore. This 100% EOU located at MEPZ and the video tapes division is operating at 85% capacity within 6 months of commercial production. The first half working results of the company is excellent. We expect the company to declare a maiden dividend for 1992-93 and the share price is likely to double by that time.

Mutual Funds to invest in the Equities of Government Corporations, perhaps, for the only reason that these shares cannot sell in the open market. If that happens, the Institutions—managed Mutual Funds will not continue to enjoy the same confidence as they do at present or provide returns as good as they do now.

We recommend the following three names of shares which can yield substantial gains in the near future.

**NOVA ELECTRO MAGNETICS LTD** (Current Market Price — Rs. 27.25) The company is engaged in the manufacture of video tapes and cassettes in technical collaboration with Electro Magnetics Ltd, Singapore. This 100% EOU located at MEPZ and the video tapes division is operating at 85% capacity within 6 months of commercial production. The first half working results of the company is excellent. We expect the company to declare a maiden dividend for 1992-93 and the share price is likely to double by that time.

**PENTAFOUR PRODUCTS LTD** (Current Market Price — Rs. 36.25) This Madras based company is engaged in the manufacture of refrigeration and air-conditioning products, electronic power line equipments such as UPS, Stabilizers, Voltage Transformers, Water Heaters and Coolers. A maiden dividend of 18% was declared for 1991. The company may come out with a rights issue to part finance its various growth plans.

**PENTASIA CHEMICALS LTD** (Current Market Price — Rs. 38.00) Promoted by Asian Paints and TIDCO, this company is engaged in the manufacture of Pentaberythrol and Sodium Formate. TIDCO is reportedly divesting its 26% stake in this company in favour of Asian Paints. This will enable the company to revive soon from its losses. The share at current price appears to be a good long-term investment.

K. Gopalakrishnan

## OUR READERS WRITE

Let them retire

I read with great interest Devika's article in your Nov. 1 — 14 issue. The problems of competent young Bharata Natyam artists will not be solved by forming any number of associations as long as the seniors continue to hog the major stages.

Till the Sixties the gurus were invariably male and they were interested only in the progress of their students. Now the lady gurus regularly compete with their students and outwit them with their influence and resources.

It is time that all the older dancers voluntarily retired immediately. They will be doing their greatest service to Bharata Natyam by this act of renunciation. Let the audience get a chance to see new faces on the stage.

P Rajagopalan  
Madras-600 004.

No red carpet

Propos Mrs Bertha Lobo's letter, (*Madras Musings*, Nov 15 — 30) I would like to set the record straight by mentioning that the views expressed on restaurant fare in *FOODS and FADS* are my personal ones and not as a food editor for *Madras Musings*. Hence there is no question of my having got "the red carpet treatment to popularise the restaurant". In every instance the management and staff of the restaurant/food joint under scrutiny had no inkling that their fare was going to be reviewed.

V.K. Madras.

For cricketers only

It is unfortunate that we encourage only cricketers even if they achieve small things. When compared to them, other sports persons are not even considered as players at all. We should be proud of having two world champions. The treatment received by the world carrom champions leads to talented persons receding from sports and games. Talented players must receive adequate encouragement. Then only India's name will shine in international sports.

R Shannuganandam  
25 Mosque Street-600 015

Enjoyable Writing

*Madras Musings* is very interesting and induces one to read all the pages. I really enjoy the writing. It is also very informative.

Parthasarathy Kannan  
Madura Coats Limited-625 001.

Goodness — for nothing

Your attractive fortnightly is well edited and got up in a fetching manner, full of interesting items, catering to a variety of tastes and with good pictures too! Incredible that one can have all these good things for nothing!

May Muthiah's *Madras Musings* enjoy an ever-widening clientele!

Wg. Cdr. S Sankara Narayanan  
31 Defence Officers' Colony-600 097.

To avoid risk

PTC buses terminating at Depot points should be allowed inside with their load to facilitate safety and avoid risk/hazard.

Route 5-B takes commuters inside to disembark leisurely, whereas Route 49 commands commuters to get down opp. Krishnaveni Theatre, causing a huge traffic bottleneck.

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

For all sections

The contents of *Madras Musings* are really very interesting, covering all sections of society. I am sure you will maintain its tempo.

S S Ramamurthy  
No. 7, 2nd Cross Street-600 028

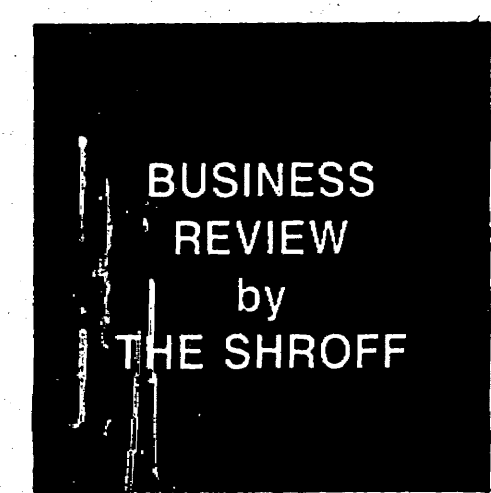
# Decision Time at Binny Mills

## BUSINESS REVIEW by THE SHROFF

This column has been following the various happenings at the Binny Mills for quite some time now. Binny which is in urgent need for a rehabilitation package from the financial institutions to help revive it, has been not receiving it due to the management and the labour not seeing eye to eye.

The bone of contention has been the shifting of the process house to Bhuvanagiri. The management has maintained that this shift is necessary as a process house requires uninterrupted supply of water. But the labour has held that the management (the Ramaswamy Udayar group) wants this move to get rid of the labour. There has been much distrust on both sides and court cases galore with decisions swinging in favour of both sides.

In the latest twist to the saga, the Tamil Nadu Labour Commissioner N Adimoolam has permitted the Binny management to shift the processing house to Bhuvanagiri in South Arcot District. He has also instructed the company to reopen B & C Mills in a phased manner within a month. The mills have been officially closed since April this year. The commissioner has



taken this decision since the State Bank of India and the IDBI (Industrial Development Bank of India) the institutions which have to bank roll the rehabilitation package have found out that the shifting of the process house will alone ensure the viability of the mills. The state government and the central government cannot make firm commitments on regular supply of water, coal and railway wagons to make the process house in Madras a viable proposition.

What have all these delays meant in terms of cost? The IDBI has found out that the cost of the original scheme (for shifting the process house) has gone up to Rs. 84 crores from Rs. 60 crores. Although modernising the factory in

Madras itself (with the process unit) would cost a similar amount, the fact that there is no guaranteed supply of water and coal makes it a dicey proposition.

It appears as though the management is quite pleased with the decision and willing to accept it. However, what the labour's reaction will be, is difficult to predict. The Marxist labour union CITU has taken a tough stand from the beginning on the shifting of the process house.

Will they go to the courts and again stall this recent move? We should know the answer soon.

More on textiles

The textile workers of Coimbatore returned to work a few days ago after a strike which extended several weeks. The Chief Minister intervened and persuaded the South Indian Mills Association (SIMA) to pay the bonus based on the amount paid last year. And she told them to pay it in two instalments. Although the management and the labour have accepted the chief minister's decision neither appear particularly happy.

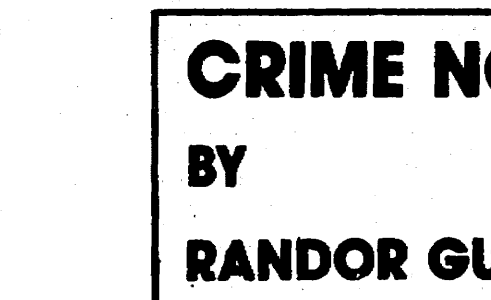
# A MODERN DAY KANNAGI

The *Silappadikaram* (The Tale of the Anklets), that immortal Tamil epic by a prince-turned-ascetic-poet, Ilango-adigal, is about Kannagi, a woman deified by the Tamils as the personification of chastity, nobility and all the womanly virtues. She had fought against the gross miscarriage of justice which had resulted in her husband Kovalan being put to death for a crime he did not commit.

This stirring legend is, at best, a skillful blend of myth, fiction, fact and folklore. But Kannamma, a 20th Century woman, was a very real person who revealed something of Kannagi in the role she played in a real life drama.

Mohanur, near Salem, is a fertile village blessed by the River Kaveri. A farming family, consisting of Thy-

ammal, her daughter Kannamma, her son-in-law Balu, her unmarried son Siva, and a grandchild, lived happily — or so it seemed — in a spacious house not far from the land they owned.



## CRIME NOTEBOOK BY RANDOR GUY

One grey dawn, the son was found dead in a shed by the edge of the family farm.

His head had been severed and splattered all over the shed.

And Balu, the son-in-law who had slept in the shed to keep watch over the crop, was missing! Where was he? Kidnapped?

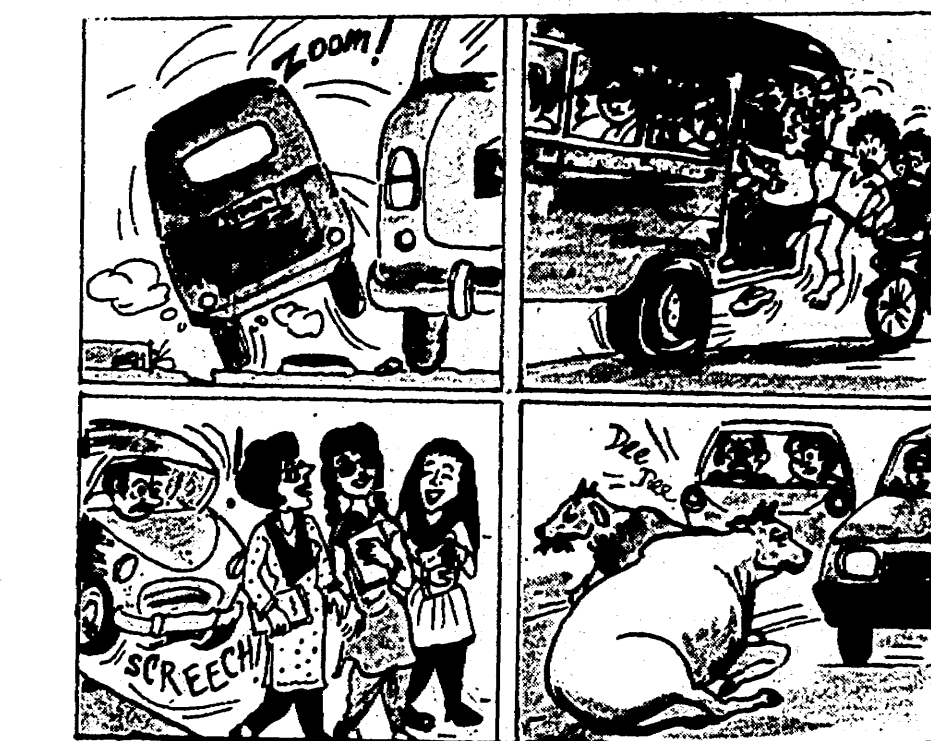
When the police arrived on the scene, N Krishnamurthy, IPS, took

charge of the investigation. He had the river bank searched and, not far from the shed, were found a blood-stained arava and a dhooli floating in the water. 'NK', as the senior Salem district police chief was known, requested that police dogs be sent from Madras. The canine detectives, when they arrived, led the police to the family house!

NK did not need to spend much powder and shot to realise that the missing son-in-law was the likely killer. Several villagers also felt that Balu was the culprit. He had been pestering his wife, they said, to demand a larger share of Thayammal's estate; her son, after all, was a bachelor and did not need a big share. But Kannamma refused to listen to her husband's arguments. And so Balu began to hate his brother-in-law.

NK, a good student of human nature, faced a problem. He realised that the evidence of Kannamma was vital for any case against her husband. But to what extent would she cooperate, he was not sure. He was keen to avoid summoning her as a witness and then find her turning hostile in court.

Kannamma, however, surprised him when she readily agreed to go into the witness box and give evidence against her husband. "My brother, the



# Madras Roadrums

I have the strongest suspicion confirmed at least ten times a day — that either the Madras-on-the-road has the proverbial nine lives of the feline species or that he leads a totally charmed life. How else do you account for the miraculous escape of countless cyclists, pedestrians, scooterists, car, bus and bullock cart drivers, not to mention the hangers-on of the aforementioned, who hug themselves onto Madras roads without the slightest concern for traffic rules, very often without regulation headlights and headgear, and, sometimes, alas even without heads-on-their-shoulders?

Materialising seemingly from nowhere or from cunningly camouflaged corners, leaping Houdini-like into your traffic-lane and imperiously nosing you out, gyrating gleefully across the road when you are going full-tilt, blithely presenting themselves to view

— but naturally from the 'No Entry' side — just when you are negotiating a vicious turn, overtaking a three-tonner on a moped triumphantly loaded with mother, wife, children and shopping.... It is quite amazing that more of us don't wind up as cold statistics in the morgue! Or end up being driven up the wall, both literally and metaphorically....

As a matter of stark fact, I was, well, driven up a road divider the other day when a mighty shove from a rather hefty lady landed me, head-first, into a madly mobile intersection with the enticing prospect of either Eskimo-kissing a jeep, being run over by a truck bearing the ominous (farewell?) message "O.K. Ta-Ta", or clambering up and onto the divider. I did the last with commendable alacrity and, though nothing but my dignity was seriously bruised in the process, I wasn't quite amused. Everyone around me, however, was I might add that the road divider was a cylindrical upended pipe from which I sort of stuck out along with some flower pots....

Why, Oh why, must trucks and buses — uncrowned kings of the Madras asphalt jungle — hog all the road space, leaving lesser beings and vehicles to either scutter humbly or jump into the closest ditch? And why must the intrepid three-wheeler navigate crazy sideways on two wheels, squeeze its three-foot frame into one-foot spaces, fly over potholes, attempt three-hour journeys in three minutes and generally make you sit within it with eyes tightly shut, a state which I suspect its driver also adopts? And why must holy cows form islands of cud-chewing meditation right in the middle of the busiest roads? Why must cyclists never possess headlights, car drivers never dip their lights, or ladies flap their arms instead of signalling properly? And why, to quote Trevor Fishlock, of *India File* fame, must "such pretty girls with such intelligent faces step off the kerb into the thickest traffic without looking left or right"?

My husband, coolest of drivers, regards such questions as purely rhetorical, and advises that, for my own survival, I should get cracking on developing nerves of steel, eyes at the back of my head and a willingness to bash on, regardless. My reformist zeal he regards as quite unnecessary, since my first-shaking stances against erring drivers only send them into paroxysms of mirth. And the other day when I got out of the car to yell at a pretty girl cycling down the wrong side of the road, it turned out to be my own daughter....!

Ah well, I suppose if you can't beat them, you can always join them. Mount Road, here I come, headlight-less, signal-less, wrong side of the lane, et al!

Balu was, in due course, arrested and charged with the murder of his brother-in-law. He was brought to trial at the Sessions Court in Salem. Kannamma was the star witness for the prosecution and caused a sensation testifying against her husband, shocking the rural folk, whose values were different.

Balu was found guilty and sentenced to death. An appeal before the Madras High Court was dismissed; the death sentence confirmed.

This was when the rural housewife showed she was no ordinary woman. As a sister she had given evidence against her husband. Now, as a dutiful wife, she fought for her husband to save his life. She filed a mercy petition to the Governor of Tamil Nadu seeking remission of the death sentence. She called on NK and appealed to him to help her. "I now fight to save the life of my husband, the father of my only son, the man of my life to whom I owe life-long allegiance. He may be a murderer, but he is my husband. For his sake... and for my son's sake... I must fight now!"

NK sympathised with Kannamma whose rare sense of justice had resulted in her husband facing the gallows. When the petition came to him for his remarks, he strongly recommended remission, narrating the full story. The Governor ordered remission and the death sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. Kannamma's fight for her husband's life is a *la Kannagi*, had not been in vain. This modern day Kannagi was a rare woman indeed!

# Blow that bubble!

To all those people who spend their life writing to the Editor asking questions such as "Whither the country?" or "Whither youth?" or complaining that the posts and telegraphs, banks, railways, government hospitals, Tirupati laddus and the pavements of Madras HAVE GONE TO THE DOGS I offer a solution. Read the *Limca Book of Records*, henceforth referred to as the *LBR*.

Take the case of the 'Boy Who Would Not Stop Blowing Bubbles'. We are told that Satish Kumar Verma suddenly started blowing bubbles at the

ground. So it's with great sorrow that it is noted that the record for the largest dosai is held by a restaurant in Ahmedabad.

But for the rest, the citizens of Madras are fairly singing and dancing their way into the *LBR*, led by V.A.K. Ranga Rao and his collection of 78 rpm records. The 'Drive-in' at Woodlands is acclaimed as the first of its kind, a dubious claim, since people were driving into the Cubbon Park restaurant well before that, but we shall let it pass. And Higginbotham's is hailed as the oldest bookshop.



age of seven, "but naturally the habit was not encouraged by his parents", notes the *LBR*. Because, unlike other children, young Satish kept blowing bubbles out of saliva (his own). "He practised on the sly", we are told, though not where; was it in the bathroom, in their neighbour's house, all alone at night? By the age of sixteen, Satish was able to blow his way into the *LBR* with bubbles as large as 15 cm to 28 cm, which is as large as a quarter plate and a dinner plate. How does one measure saliva bubbles? Are the parents thrilled at the idea of having produced such a splendidly salivating son? Will more people try the sport?

The best thing about the *LBR* is that it's short and zippy. The Editor, Vijaya Ghose and her team, have just managed to whet the imagination and keep the saliva flowing, as it were, with the big, the beautiful, the bad and the bizarre.

Indians really do the strangest things. Aside from the banana eaters and the typists, there are others who cut vegetables non-stop, balance coins, a boring child who keeps threading a needle continuously, grown men who breed bees in their beards (after having invited the Queen Bee first), or climb down coconut trees upside down, balance weights from their teeth or perform the 'candle and fire dance', whatever that might be, five thousand times. Tamil Nadu is famous for "Non-stop" feasts. People who have either talked, or sung, or clapped, or played the *gottuvadayam*, all the way into the *LBR*. It makes you wonder whether we hold a record for the largest number of bores?

The country's brightest achievements are in the past. In the fields of mathematics, medicine, astronomy, art and architecture, not to mention religion, India has scored several firsts. As everyone knows we are the proud discoverers of the absolute bottom of all achievements — the zero, as well as the more enigmatic decimal point.

There are many physical and natural records that India can be proud of, but one the sweetest must be that we are the country with the largest variety of mangoes, more than 1000 different kinds, according to the *LBR*, and we also produce the largest quantity of sugarcane in the world. While the record for the highest yield of paddy rice in the country is held by a farmer from Tamil Nadu.

Naturally such statistics sharpen your sense of pride in your home

But why have they left out, "The World's Best Brother", as V.G. Panneer-das is described at the entrance to his Mausoleum at his Golden Beach resort? The Golden Beach itself must create a record of sorts, with its Chola King who can stand for 20 minutes at a stretch without blinking, its honey-moon cottage with a sliding mirror over the ceiling and the first ever statue of a Dancing Nataraj that shows its back (or should that read 'backside?') to the world?

The *Limca Book of Records* actually asks for suggestions, so in a spirit of discovery we suggest the following: the country's largest free trade zone — Burma Bazaar; the world's smelliest canal — the Buckingham Canal; the most unpronounceable name for a racetrack — Irunkattukottai the longest saree shop — Nalli's; the world's most intrepid creature alive, the Madras mosquito — it's been eradicated as many times as Dracula and still it lives; and, finally, the shortest syllable with the most frequent use — Da. As in "What, Da, why you blowing bubbles, Da?"

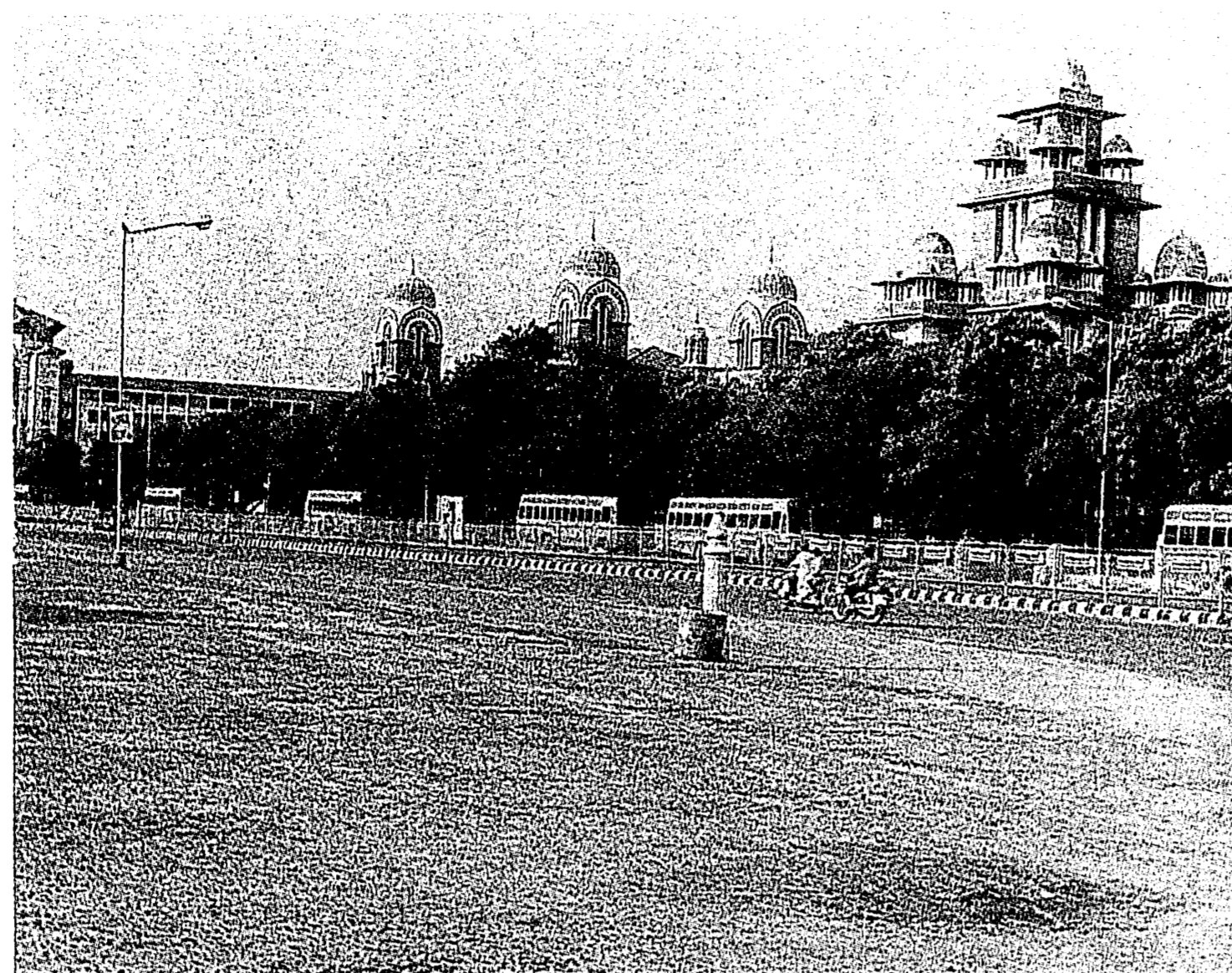
"Da, so I can get into the *Limca Book of Records*."

## THE WRITTEN INSPIRATION

The written word has always been a source of inspiration for filmmakers. Be it the latest potboiler or an award-winning novel, the all-time classic or even, in rare instances, a work of poetry, film-makers have always been making adaptations with varying degrees of success. This fortnight, let us look at some of these 'literary' films that have become recently available in video.

**Paris Trout**, starring Dennis Hopper, Barbara Hershey and Ed Harris, is based on Pete Dexter's award-winning novel. The year is 1949, the scene a small town in the American Deep South. A psychotic money-lender shoots two members of a black family for not repaying their debt. While Hopper revels in the role of the psychotic baddie, the film is a gripping reminder of the racial prejudices prevalent at that time.

The Merchant-Ivory/Habvala team returns with a screen adaptation of Evan S. Connell's **Mr Bridge and Mrs**



When new university buildings were built in the 1930s on the Marina, they were integrated with the classical Indo-Saracenic of Senate House (extreme left, above), described as the finest example of this school of architecture in which Madras played a pioneering role. The style was even followed in the building of University Examination Hall, further south on the Marina, to give the city a rather unique skyline, also now lost with the variety of styles that occupy the western edge of what is now called Kamaraj Salai.

**THE OLD...** On the other hand, when the new Children's Museum was added to the Art Gallery (extreme left, below), Museum and Library complex on Pantheon Road, no attempt at all was made to achieve integration, except perhaps in using salmon sandstone. Water-tanks, windmills and pre-historic monsters (which appear to better suit the unkempt grounds) all add to the jarring effect that lack of aestheticism has created here. (Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR)



## THE WRITTEN INSPIRATION



**Bridge**. The film is a sort of record of the lives of a middle-aged couple from the 1930s to the 40s. Rather than a story, this is a slice of life that records the mundane events and little dramas in the couple's relationship. The outstanding feature of the film is the star performances of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward, who, incidentally, have one of the most enduring marriages in Hollywood history.

**V.I. Warshawski** stars Kathleen Turner as a private eye who talks and acts tough. The film is adapted from the novels of Sarah Peretskey, one of the

leading lights of the new generation of crime fiction writers. I wonder how faithful an adaptation this is, for Turner's performance never goes beyond comic book caricature and, on the whole, the film is mere 'B' grade entertainment.

I came across **The Old Gringo** nestling in a dark corner of the library, untouched by man. Based on the novel by Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, the film stars Gregory Peck and Jane Fonda. **The Old Gringo** is a fantasy on the last days of Ambrose Bierce, the well-known American story writer, essayist and aphorist who disappeared in Mexico during a political upheaval in 1914. Fans of Latin American literature will enjoy the film's elements of magical realism while Gregory Peck brings Bierce back to life, complete with the irony and cynicism that he was famous for.

**Mister Johnson** is set in the West Africa of the 1920's. This is a 'Raj' film

with a difference, as it is a balanced account of the cultural divide between the ruler and the ruled. Central to the story is the tragi-comic figure of Mister Johnson, a native clerk, working for the British, who tries to bring 'civilisation' to his people. William Boyd has written the script from the novel by Joyce Cary. The direction is by Bruce Beresford.

One of the greatest examples of 'literary' film-making is John Ford's 1940 film of John Steinbeck's **The Grapes of Wrath**. The story is of a group of Oklahoma 'dustbowl' farmers who trek to California in search of a better future. Ford's direction, combined with Greg Tolland's photography and fine acting all around (most notably from Henry Fonda), makes **The Grapes of Wrath** a truly poetic experience. No better tribute could be paid to this film than in the words of John Steinbeck who said: 'A lean stringy dark piece of electricity walked out of the screen and he had me! I believed my own story again.'

**MAKE MINE MADRAS**  
Featuring  
**GUNDOO - MALLI**  
by  
**JOMTON**



## Slumming to build beautiful

(By A Special Correspondent)

There was nothing hackneyed about Roderick Hackney's recent talk at the British Council on the buzz word in architecture since the late Sixties, 'Community Architecture'. In fact, he was downright provocative.

Whether he had provoked Prince Charles into taking a great interest in the Inner Cities or whether the Prince of Wales had provoked him into paying more attention to Community Architecture in the urban cores might be debated. But there was no doubt that Rod Hackney provoked many in Madras on the occasion and even raised a few hackles.

A former President of the Royal Institute of British Architects and a former President of the International Union of Architects, Rod Hackney has, ever since he got into Community Architecture in 1968, ruffled the feathers of the Establishment. When you make statements like "If you want to build for those in the slums, you must live in the slums to really understand their needs" and "Anyone who works for me must live five years in the slums — I live in a slum and I've got offices in all the slums I'm restoring", must expect to have the Establishment look rather askance at him. And Hackney got his share of those looks when he suggested that local architects should take a shot at living in the slums of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta.

Hackney's contention is that by living in the slums, with the people you are building for, you begin to understand them, you establish a rapport with them and you get them involved. All those slum renovation projects of his were made model, prize-winning developments through the SWEAT of those who lived in them, was his rather glib answer to a question about where the money came from for such attractive restoration. Yes, he might have got every family to contribute sweat towards the toil necessary for such re-building, but no do-it-yourself scheme can be completely free of the need for money.

Pressed on this later, Hackney said, as though he couldn't believe the questioner, "Come on! Surely getting the banks to lend the money needed to supplement self-help is no problem!" Banks lend money to build a house in a Madras slum? Indian architects to set up house for a few years in the slums of Bombay or Madras? Forsooth! Obviously, Hackney doesn't know Indian banks and Indian

slums, many who listened to him felt.

But whether Hackney learned anything from Bombay's Dharavi on a Madras kuppam or two or passed it on to his audience is not quite as important as the fact that, if our slums are to become brighter-looking villages and transform the Inner City, "people's participation" is the most essential ingredient of the exercise. How that can be obtained in India is the answer not only architects but every planner has to find to achieve success.

For more on Hackney's views, read his autobiography which sounds more like a 'Spaghetti Western': *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. "You'll love it or you'll hate it," the author promised, announcing that copies would shortly be available in Madras.

## Ooh, what a lovely stink!

Tourism, Hackney style

"Tourism is different things to different people," said Dr. Roderick Hackney, the charismatic, controversial architect, who is best known in his role as architectural guru to Prince Charles in his campaign for a more humane approach to architecture. In Madras for a series of lectures organised by the British Council, he was on this occasion speaking on "Conservation and Tourism" to a group of people in the travel, tourism and culture promotion trade.

His audience listened with a look of polite shock as Dr. Hackney blithely

described how his most exciting experience had been a visit to Dharavi, Bombay, the largest slum in Asia. "Many tourists want an experience that is not tainted by the smells, the food

GEETA DOCTOR

and water, the diseases, but you take that away and you take away most of the experience as well. The most civilised place I found in Bombay was Dharavi, a slum, because it worked.

There were prostitutes, drug pushers, slum lords, but they were all living and working together. I'm not saying that chaos is safe. I'm saying that chaos is part of a culture. Chaos means vitality and vitality means culture. Keep the chaos!"

"Keep the chaos!" The words summed up the message that Hackney elaborated through a carefully chosen series of slides showing different communities living in different parts of the world. Some of them showed a picturesque cluster of houses-clinging to a steep Italian hillside. The former cottages of a grape growing community had become a valuable tourist attraction because of the rich texture of local stone, wood and tile woven by the people through centuries of living together. Other pictures showed rural immigrants living in boats, the raw edges of a shanty town, together with an abandoned "Lifeboat House" that had been renovated, a flour mill that had been made into a 3-star hotel and the centre of Covent Garden in London, that, through community action, had been made into a space for people to use and enjoy. In every one of the instances Dr. Hackney emphasised the need for people's participation.

"People's perception of what people really want can be misjudged," he says. "You need to re-educate the authorities in what people want. Please don't destroy your culture for the sake of what some people imagine that tourists want. Please don't sacrifice yourself for the tourist. The cost will be too great. The world needs to see different cultures. The more tourism is encouraged, the more broad-minded people will become. You know why tourists come to India? Because of the people. It's the people who provide the richest kaleidoscope of experiences, and yet there are agencies with money who want to promote tourism but see people as a blight on the tourist scene.

"The worst tourist of all is the West European or American tourist. Unless they are guaranteed a certain standard of accommodation, they won't come. But this attitude is changing. Even the Hilton Hotel 5-star culture is changing. They are trying to bend to suit the local style. Tourism should not be paternalistic. Tackle the resources of the people. Ask people what they want. You can never imagine the pulling power of ordinary people."

## THOUGHTS FOR A RAINY DAY

The Madras is not accustomed to go about trilling, "Rain, rain, go away. Come again another day," nor does he have any good reason for doing so. But one came close enough to entertaining such thoughts this month when the city had as much rainfall in four or five days as it usually does in the entire monsoon. Our imaginative press corps, which indulges in such literary gems as "low-lying areas were flooded and 'office goers were put to much inconvenience" when there is the least shower, had a field day when it really poured over the city and elsewhere. They let themselves rip with photographs and human interest stories which were singularly stereotyped. The customary beefs were made about the poor condition of the storm water drainage, or whatever it is called, and the sad state of the streets.

Perhaps the one new element in the reporting on the rains this time was the tour the Chief Minister made of some of the flood-hit areas, which provided for some unusual pictures of the CM wading through water, and some elaborate sycophancy which seemed to ignore the fact that it is the duty of a popular chief executive to provide physical assistance and boost the morale of the people at large during times of distress. I am not being snide about the CM and I think it is a fine thing that she has begun very effectively in recent weeks the process of making herself available to officials and public alike.

Apart from the great hardships the less-privileged sections of the population particularly have been put to, the condition of the roads, bad at the best of times, now totally appalling after the rains, affects all of us, and there is nothing comparable to the agony of bouncing in an autorickshaw over the



deep ruts that cover our streets like the pock-marks of a bad attack of small-pox (that figure can be used now since small-pox is said to have been eradicated from this country). The question that arises is: when the drainage gets clogged and the roads get pitted every year, why is something not being done about it in good time?

One of the papers reported quite seriously that because the rain was not steady but intermittent, it gave the Corporation officials the necessary breathing spells in which to rush from one place to another to clear the flood waters. While appreciating the good work done by the Corporation officials and employees, I don't think there can be a more woeful commentary on the system and the power structure that remain totally indifferent to civic problems. The drainage system is many decades old and actually covers only less than half the city. This is a statistic that is repeated year after year, but nothing has been done about it.

As far as the roads are concerned, some years ago, when the major arteries took a particularly bad beating, in a rush of civic consciousness the Government acquired the use of a monster road-laying machine which could do a very effective job in a very short time. Allowing for the fact that it had to be hired from somebody, why has its use not been obtained during succeeding years? The answer in one word would seem to be "contractors" who wouldn't allow their prerogative of doing shoddy work for large sums of money being taken away by the machine. So much for political will, a phrase that is much bruited about these days.

I mentioned the reporting of the rain-related incidents which was, for the most part, wooden. It is, of course not very easy to be imaginative in the reporting of an event the contours of which are pretty much the same all over. All the same, photographs from unusual angles, stories in detail following the travails of one single individual or family and similar items would bring home to the comparatively well-off middle-class people the dimensions of the havoc. Picture after picture showing people wading in knee-deep water tend to pall.

As well, we have enough water for a year and more, which is fine, but the city's utter unpreparedness and lack of planning is very obvious from the incredible fact that nearly a year and a half supply of water had to be let into the sea.

SK

# Polynesia in the Park

What does the name 'Polynesia' conjure in the minds of most of us? Islands of spectacular beauty. With abundant sunshine, coral beaches fringed with palms, rolling white surf and cloud-covered volcanic peaks — we know that much from the ads.

Whether or not these islands are less idyllic in reality compared to the time of their discovery by Captain Cook, Polynesian cuisine is certainly becoming more and more popular the world over. So if you wish to get a flavour of the real thing, perhaps you should try the Polynesian food festival at THE RESIDENCY, at PARK SHERATON.

You may begin with one of their cocktails, with colourful names like "Volcano", "Rain-killer" or "Express Polynesia" and then go on to try the exotic salads, ranging from Barbalos mussels drenched with red wine, cold aubergines flavoured with ginger and mint to the inevitable chicken and pineapple concoction. The main dishes include spicy prawns, ginger pomfret, sliced tenderloin in soya sauce and, yes, sweet and sour pork with pineapple, bananas, tomatoes and capsicum.

There is, indeed, no Polynesia without pineapple, — Hawaii being one of the world's largest producers of this tropical fruit. So, don't be surprised if dessert includes diced fruit in

## FOODS & FADS

iced preparations, apart from vanilla and cocoa medley. If you are not averse to the sweet things of life, this is an experience not to be missed.

### Relaxin' in Kodai

If you are willing to settle for something milder than volcanoes and high seas, like, say, wooded hills, trekking trails and a lovely lake, then hurry up and book yourself a flat in Kodai-kanal with the Relax 'N' Resorts group (Raju Estates, 15 Balaji Avenue, T' Nagar). Situated opposite the Presentation Convent and just 1.4 km from the Kodai Lake, you will get a fully furnished two-bedroom apartment (with all the city comforts, like running hot water, daily supply of milk and other provisions, laundry service, transport, entertainment and

even cooked meals) for five full days booking or multiples thereof, for a one-time down payment in two categories.

From April-June end and August and September (peak

season), the booking rate is Rs. 30,000 for every 5-day slot. For all other months, the rate is Rs. 20,000 for every 5-day slot. This "time share booking" ensures you the right to enjoy the apartment of your choice every year at the same time.

### The tinda way

When I was a child, growing up in Delhi, I developed an aversion for a vegetable called TINDA — a circular, light green object, not unlike an unripe tomato. However, its texture is very different, since it possesses a slightly hairy, thick skin, and resembles a miniature bottle gourd with seeds when cut.

During the long northern summer months, when all other vegetables disappeared from the market, the TINDA reigned supreme and appeared very day,

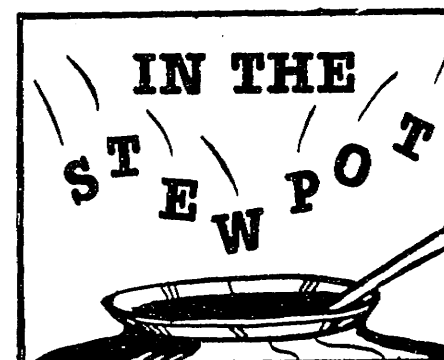
without fail, on the dining table. Being a bland vegetable, it does not adapt itself to sambars and kootus. Years later, I discovered, at a friend's place, how delicious even TINDA can be, when prepared with garam masala. So be sure to buy this vegetable (available at the Panagal Park market) and try out the following recipe for Stuffed Tindas:-

**INGREDIENTS:** 350 gms medium-sized TINDAS, 1 tbs ground cummin seeds, 1 tbs ground amchoor or 2 tsp lemon juice, ¼ tsp chilli powder, ¼ tsp salt, freshly ground black pepper, 1 onion (peeled and cut into half-rings), 6 tbs vegetable oil.

Split the TINDAS in halves and scoop out the insides. Mix the inside with coriander, cummin, amchoor, chilli powder, salt and pepper and fry lightly in a little oil. Stuff the TINDAS with the mixture.

Over a medium-high flame, heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the onions till brown.

Put in the stuffed TINDAS. Cook slowly, uncovered. Gently turn the TINDAS, until all sides are lightly browned (15 minutes or so). Cover the pan, turn the heat to low and cook for another 5 minutes. Serve hot. V.K.



Transfer to a shallow platter. Sprinkle with the fried onions and serve hot.

### EGG VINDALOO

6 eggs, hard boiled, shelled and cut in halves  
3 onions, chopped fine  
1 1" piece ginger grind to a paste  
8 red chillies with a sprinkling  
2 teaspoons cummin of  
seeds (jeera) vinegar  
1 1" piece cinnamon  
4 cloves garlic  
4-5 tablespoons vinegar mix together  
1 tbs jaggery, powdered & set  
1½ teaspoons garam masala aside  
Salt to taste

**Method**  
Heat ghee. Fry the hard boiled eggs till golden. Set aside.  
In the same ghee fry the onions till golden. Add the ground paste. Cook for at least 5 minutes.

Add vinegar-jaggery solution, garam masala and one cup of water. Simmer till the gravy thickens.  
Gently lower the eggs. Simmer till well blended. Serve hot with rice.

### SPICY ALOO

12 medium sized potatoes, pressure cooked, peeled and cut into ¼ inch pieces.  
1 heaped teaspoon garam masala  
1 heaped teaspoon amchur  
1 heaped teaspoon mirchi powder  
2 heaped tbs dhaniya powder  
5 tbs oil  
Salt to taste  
½ cup water

**Method**  
Heat the oil and add all the masalas. Add 1/2 cup water and salt.  
When the masala blends well with the oil, add the chopped potatoes.  
Simmer for 5 minutes till everything blends well.  
Serve hot as a side dish.

Chandra Padmanabhan

# Quizzin' with Navin

(Quizmaster Navin Jayakumar's questions are all from the fortnight of November 1 — 14)

- Extension plans of which public sector organisation in the city came to a halt following stiff resistance from locals resisting the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's Statue from the site?
- The SAARC summit scheduled to begin on November 7 was put off indefinitely amidst controversy. Where was it to have been held?
- Which grand old man of Indian cricket passed away on November 8 in Bangalore?
- Which city eye research foundation isolated the virus which caused the recent 'Madras Eye' epidemic and identified it as Adenovirus Type 4?
- By what name is 'brain fever' affecting parts of S.Arcot District otherwise called?
- Who is the new captain of the Tamil Nadu team for the current Ranji Trophy cricket season?
- About what experience did South African skipper Clive Rice say "We feel so humble"?
- On what basis did the SFI disqualify Bula Chowdhury from the 100 m backstroke after she came first in that event at the 47th National Senior Aquatic Championships at Thrissoor on November 13?
- What alternative fuel is to be tested on Cholan Roadways buses?
- Why was the *Tongnova* in the news recently?
- What highlight of the Skanda Sasthi festival at Thiruchendur was attended by several lakh devotees on November 12?
- In which city was the International Childrens' Film Festival inaugurated with *Abhayam* (Malayalam) as the opening film?
- Which organisation selects the winners of the Bravery Awards (9 boys and 3 girls) for 1991? They will be presented the awards by the PM on the eve of Republic Day celebrations?
- Which media tycoon's body was fished out from the sea after he mysteriously drowned while on a cruise?
- Name the creator of the world famous *Star Trek* TV series who passed away recently.
- What ongoing conflict has been rated as the bloodiest conflict in Europe since 1945?
- What festival was inaugurated by the Labour Minister at Chettiyar Hall, Alwarpet, on November 14?
- Madras has a total road length of about 2000 km. How long is its drainage network, and how much had been cleared of debris during the pre-monsoon 'Operation Clearance'?
- On what charge was the Shri Sena Chief Bal Thackeray charge-sheeted on November 13?
- Which Prince returned home to Phnom Penh from a 13-year exile and received a rapturous welcome?

(Answers on Page 8)

The View from the Wings... ..by V.R. Devika

# A plan to revive Museum Theatre

In my column in *Madras Musings*, Nov. 1-14, I had referred to Government showing some interest in the Museum Theatre again. Now it looks as though government is serious about it. A meeting was recently called by Avvai Natarajan, Secretary, Department of Culture, and Nanda Kishore, the Director of the South Zone Cultural Centre, to discuss the theatre's future.

As often happens, when titans of the dance world congregate, there was plenty of lively discussion, not always to the point. Vazhuvoor Samaraj contributed most to bring the meeting alive. This scion of the great Vazhuvoor tradition of Bharatha Natyam has a deep voice and commands attention. He pointed out that people who have no right to be dance teachers have become popular conductors of programmes and that there should be recognition of the right way of Bharatha Natyam.

But is there really a right way? Don't individual styles have their own flavours? Dr Padma Subramaniam, who has developed her own style (she prefers to call it Bharatha Natyam and says it is actually the revived Margi style of dancing which was once prevalent all over India) suggested that the need was, rather, to document the different movements that each recognised style of Bharatha Natyam is known for. After much interesting conversation and the airing of diverse opinions, the subject of the day, the regular use of Museum Theatre, was finally remembered. And it didn't take long to reach a consensus. The happy tidings are that there will be programmes every day at the theatre and, in any given week, there may be recitals of Bharatha Natyam, Carnatic music, folk dances, theatre, Katha Kalakshepam etc.

It's nice to hear that one of the landmarks of Madras is getting a new lease of life. It is to be hoped that the Chief Minister will now revive several other landmarks in the city too.

### Dynamic catalyst

Back in Madras, after a long spell away from it, is Mina Swaminathan who has a great enthusiasm for traditional forms of theatre and



Mina Swaminathan

narration and is determined to do something about it.

She is a great believer in the potential of drama to focus attention on the burning issues of the day. She has

always seen creative drama as a powerful medium of education and communication. And so, when her much decorated scientist-husband, Dr M. S. Swaminathan, decided to return home and settle in Madras, Mina quickly got involved with a group in Madras working with both theatre and education. Busy as a bee, Mina now holds creative drama workshops for teachers, conducts research on the state of the girl child, and has activated Tamil theatre groups in the city to get together and present a repertoire of plays for children.

In her, the Madras art circle has got a dynamic new catalyst, and as interest-

# POLITICISING THE TAMIL FILM

One of the 1991 Deepavali releases was *Rudra*, featuring charismatic star and incredibly successful film-maker K Bhagyaraj. In this film there is a song and dance number (a visual cliché in Tamil cinema these days) whose lyrics have a strong 'MGR-ish' flavour: sermons in syrupy words extol the virtues of patriotism, need for 'Indianness' and such stuff. MGR had such songs in every film of his, conveying his political philosophy, beliefs and ideals, ambitions and dreams. He took great care and time in finalising every word of the lyrics and such songs were immensely successful in helping to create the MGR phenomenon. Many Tamil film stars and film-makers have attempted to use these sermons in song, but nobody has been anywhere near as successful as MGR.

In *Rudra*, several shots or visuals of politically charismatic personalities are somewhat brazenly used to catch public attention and, what is more important, to sell the movie to the public. Several shots of Rajiv Gandhi inaugurating some scheme or other in Tamil Nadu... MGR in his familiar iconic clothes... the Tamil Nadu Chief

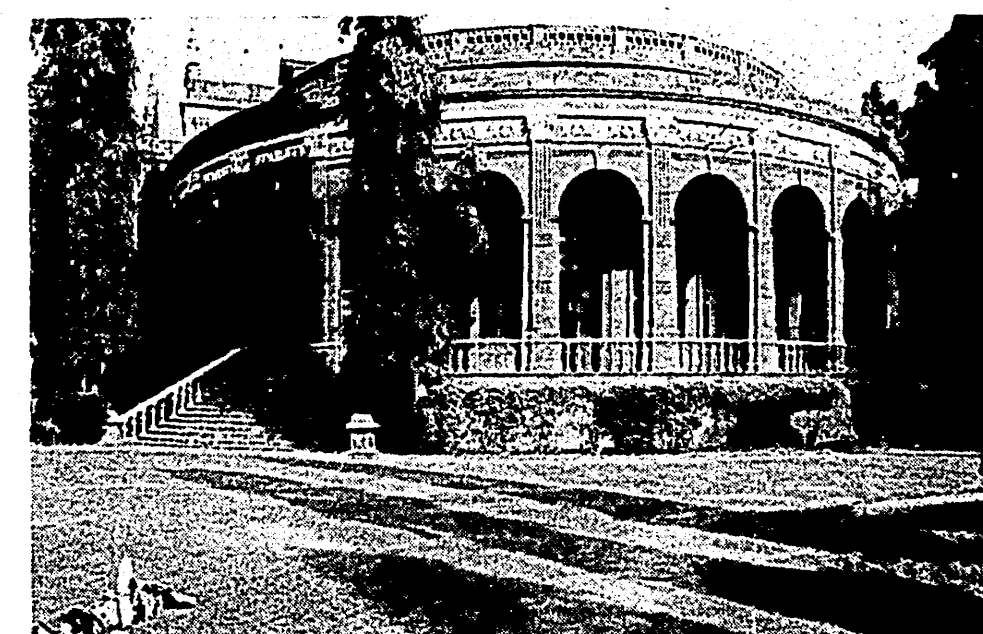
Minister Jayalalitha juxtaposed with shots of the Kaveri river and lyrics extolling her stance on the river-water issue...all these are intercut into the song sequence. What is most amusing in this number built around the hero, Bhagyaraj, is that there are even shots of Prime Minister Narashima Rao, who by no



stretch of imagination is a political icon in the mould of MGR, Jayalalitha or even Rajiv Gandhi. Is this a new way to catch the wandering attention of the Tamil moviegoer?

The exploitation of political imagery in Tamil cinema dates back almost to the beginnings of the talkie era in the 1930s. The British film censor of Indian films was very severe on anything political. In a Hindi film, *Mahatma Vidur*, a mythological about Vidura, the step-brother of King Driharashtra, the actor who played Vidura bore some resemblance to Mahatma Gandhi and, in several sequences, also wore a similar minimum of clothes. Both proved the proverbial red rag to the British bull, who promptly banned the movie as a political film!

However, some smart Tamil film-makers, like that South Indian pioneer K Subramaniam, did succeed in injecting doses of patriotism into their films. In his film *Naveena Sarangadhra* (1936), featuring the legendary M K Thyagaraja Bhagavathar and lovely S D Subbulakshmi, there was a sequence showing the citizens of a mythical kingdom rising in protest and marching towards the palace to demand justice from the unjust king. Even though the story was set centuries earlier, the marching protesters wore white khadi Gandhi caps and raised the slogans of the Thirties against the tyrannical ruler!



The Museum Theatre, likely to enjoy a new lease of life shortly. Photograph by SUSHELLA NAIR

ing times as she had created in Delhi are ahead of it.

### Popularising Harikatha

I was sad missing the Harikatha Kalakshepam performance of Dr Prameela Gurumurthy, organised by the Max Mueller Bhavan early last month. I've been told by those who saw the performance that it was a rare experience in Madras.

Prameela is a Lecturer in the Department of Music, University of Madras, and is a popular Carnatic and Hindustani vocalist. Her Ph.D. thesis was on Harikatha, the dying art of story narration which was so popular in yesteryears. Prameela has been regularly giving lecture demonstrations to re-introduce and popularise Harikatha Kalakshepam and in every one of these she has had some new information to add on this fascinating art.

### Shows aplenty

Achutan Kudalur is showing his water colour paintings at the Sakshi Gallery from November 16 to 29. This temperamental artist has become one of the more popular and saleable ones in Madras. He is one of the few artists from Madras who does not belong to the inner circles of art that operate from Cholamandalal or the Late Kala Akademi.

Not very happy to be reminded of his engineering background or his long stint at the Public Works Department in Chennai, he's a lot happier talking of his art. Having resigned from the PWD, he now devotes his time to painting and has turned out a lot of interesting work which sells well.

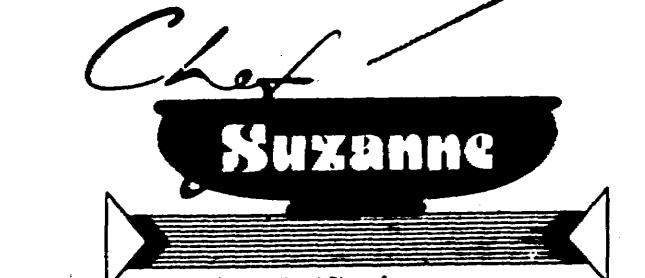
Sakshi has also invited G Ravindra Reddy of Vishakapatnam to show his terracotta and fibreglass sculptures from December 2nd to 14th.

At The Gallery, it is Thota Tharani, a painter in a hurry and a much-decorated art director for the movies. He is another artist who does not belong to any group and finds greatest happiness in operating alone.

His colleagues in the art world have at last begun to consider his association with films respectable, but Thota Tharani has always kept his two worlds apart, even though they complement each other very well.

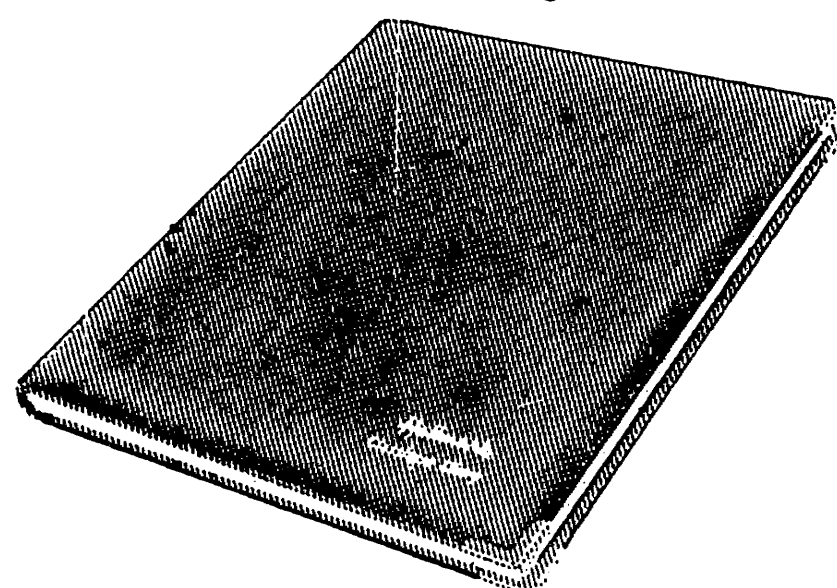
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# A celebration that made history

When the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association recently celebrated its diamond jubilee in magnificent manner — though amidst the tightest-ever security measures the city had witnessed — it made history in more ways than one. It became the country's first sports body to earn the distinction of having the President of India as the chief guest at a Jubilee function. And it was also the first time the President of India, the concerned State's Governor and Chief Minister, and the President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India all shared a platform to felicitate a State controlling body.

Participation of the President of India perhaps explained the several postponements of the Jubilee celebrations. But the long wait for this "son of the (Tamil Nadu) soil" was fully vindicated. The reception President Venkataraman got on his arrival, and the manner in which he recalled the

makers of Tamil Nadu Cricket, from Dr P Subbarayan, the first president of what was then the Madras Cricket Association, to its present incumbent underscored the fact that the TNCA could not have invited a worthier

by  
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celebrity to preside over its Diamond Jubilee celebrations, even if he provided a mild surprise with his reference to the "Dennis Lillee-MRF Pace Foundation." He would have been more on target if he had called it the Ravi Mammen MRF-Pace Foundation.

In keeping with the occasion was the TNCA'S gesture to two State and international cricketers of decades ago, A G Ram Singh and M J Gopalan, and two eminent past officials, C R Pattabhiraman, a former president, and S Sriraman, who was secretary for a

record term of nearly three decades while M A Chidambaram was the president. The TNCA presented them with a Diamond Jubilee memento each, and, in doing so, the controlling body provided a surprise as well.

If Sriraman was an automatic choice, as indeed he was, how could the TNCA have overlooked Chidambaram's claim? Chidambaram was the TNCA president for the longest-ever term, and the controlling body's biggest asset, its stadium, named in his honour, was his brainchild. Perhaps the former president, who was the chairman of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations committee, in which capacity he had presented a report on the celebrations, had made it known that he did not want to share the limelight a second time.

That apart, it was a splendidly conducted celebration, even if there were one too many speakers.

Veteran photographer K.N. CHARI, one of the pioneers of sports, particularly cricket, photography in India was a very visible and busy presence at the grand Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association held recently at the University Centenary Hall. Among the many pictures he took to record the occasion were these (from left to right):

M.J. Gopalan receiving his memento from the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Bhisma Narain Singh;

M.A. Chidambaram, former President of the TNCA and chairman of the Organising Committee, presenting a memento to President R. Venkataraman, as Governor Bhisma Narain Singh and Chief Minister Jayalalitha look on.

And the President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Madhavrao Scindia, presenting a memento to A.G. Ram Singh.

What struck Chari and many others present as a sad omission on the occasion was the failure to present a memento to C.R. Rangachari, the third musketeer of Madras and Tamil Nadu cricket.

## Cricketing leaders in nostalgic mood

The jinxed Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association finally went off with a bang. Not at Chepauk, where the Association has been trying to hold it for many months with a match to fit the occasion, but in the University Centenary Auditorium. And there, their long love for the game was expressed by several who participated in the celebrations.

President R Venkataraman recalled that he had to give up "amateurish cricket when he began to see two balls instead of one and always hit soaring sixers off the wrong ball while the real one spreadeagled my stumps". Chief Minister Jayalalitha also recalled the cricket she had played in her schooldays and the many matches she used to regularly watch. A loud cheer greeted her announcement that she was a life-member of the TNCA.

Speaking of the passion that cricket has become in India and the magical quality of the game, the Chief Minister got in her usual plug for women's participation. This time she turned to history and informed that large gathering that "cricket, in fact, originated as a ladies game and was played by the ladies of the court of England during the time of Queen Elizabeth I". Her emphasis at this point, to explain that that ruler was popularly known as 'Good Queen Bess', had many in the audience trying to read between the lines.

She also suggested that the French Revolution might not have taken place at all "if only the French nobility had played cricket with the peasantry". And that it would be nice if disputes could be settled and peace brought about by matches. That this year's Karnataka-Tamil Nadu match too could settle a dispute or two if the two Chief Ministers decided to grace the occasion, was a thought a few present might have had.

Later, mentioning the good old days of 'Madras Cricket', the President recalled that "even my tightfisted friend CS (C Subramaniam, now Governor of Maharashtra), who held the purse strings of the then Madras Government, relaxed his grip somewhat and gave his unstinted support to Madras Cricket".

In a speech that was both nostalgic as well as humorous, the President had his own explanation for the popularity of the shorter game today. "People today prefer short coats and mini-skirts, cut their hair short, develop shortsight early and have short lives. No wonder, the short, one-day game is so popular!"

— The Corner Flag

## More unbranded classics

The classics are here again. The first of them, the South India 1000 Guineas, is scheduled to be run on December 1. The SI 2000 Guineas is fixed for December 15. The SI Oaks will feature the New Year's Day programme, and, as always, the richest and most prestigious of them all, the SI Derby, will pull the crowds on Pongal Day, January 14. The SI St Leger will, on February 9, ring the curtain down on the 1991-92 Guindy classic scene.

These are the South Indian turf's premier classics, launched years before Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mysore entered the list of Indian classic centres. Unfortunately, the Guindy classicss

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have lost much of their glamour and status. While sponsorship has boosted the prize money and standing of the classics of other centres, particularly Bangalore, Bombay and Hyderabad, the Guindy classics have virtually stagnated ever since the Tamil Nadu Government took over the Madras Race Club, the country's oldest turf centre, and its subsidiary, the Ootacamund R.C., nearly a decade ago.

After taking them over, the government created a department called the Department of Racing, with a Custodian in charge, to run races at both Guindy and Ooty. The DOR has often indicated that it is not the government's policy to seek sponsorship, or accept any voluntary offer of the same. But the picture has changed. A new government, with a sports-minded lady at the helm, has come to power. If, as a sporting institution, the DOR was interested in sponsorship, which could bring the Guindy classics on par with those of the neighbouring centres, it could have sought her four-month-old government's views.

Everything, however, points to the DOR having decided to carry on, the show in the same low key as in the recent past: The erosion of Guindy's status has obviously not made any impression on the DOR. As a result, Guindy, which was not long ago a trendsetter, has now become a

backwater. It has been left behind by both Bangalore and Hyderabad.

Bangalore can boast of a McDowell Derby or a Bagpiper Colts Trial, and Hyderabad of a VST Derby or a VST 2000 Guineas with fabulous prize money for each. But unless and until the DOR wakes up, Madras will have to be content with the stereotyped lineup of the South India Derby, the S.I. 2000 Guineas and the rest, with static prize money to underscore the lack of initiative and imagination of the powers-that-be at Guindy. To make matters worse, they have begun the current season by skipping the usual pre-season Press briefing, which could have thrown some light on their stand on sponsorship in the light of the change of government.

## ANSWERS TO QUIZZIN'

1. Runway of Madras Airport's International Terminal.
2. Colombo.
3. M. Chinnaswamy.
4. Medical Research Foundation — Sankara Nethralaya.
5. Japanese encephalitis.
6. W.V. Raman.
7. His meeting with Mother Theresa.
8. The stroke judge in his report had clearly mentioned that the swimmer had taken the turn with the help of a 'crawl action' in the 100 m backstroke event, which is against FINA rules.
9. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) in a 50:50 combination with diesel.
10. It was the Thai sailing vessel carrying ammunition and weapons for the LTTE that was apprehended by the Navy and handed over to the Q Branch of the Tamil Nadu Police.
11. Soorasamharam.
12. Thiruvananthapuram.
13. Indian Council for Child Welfare.
14. Robert Maxwell.
15. Gene Roddenberry.
16. The civil war in Yugoslavia.
17. National Book Week Festival.
18. 560 km; 300 km.
19. Provoking and abetting the vandalism of the Wankhede Stadium pitch.
20. Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

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