

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Vol. X No. 1

FREE ISSUE

April 16-30, 2000

Heritage rules are ready

But when do they get into the rulebook?

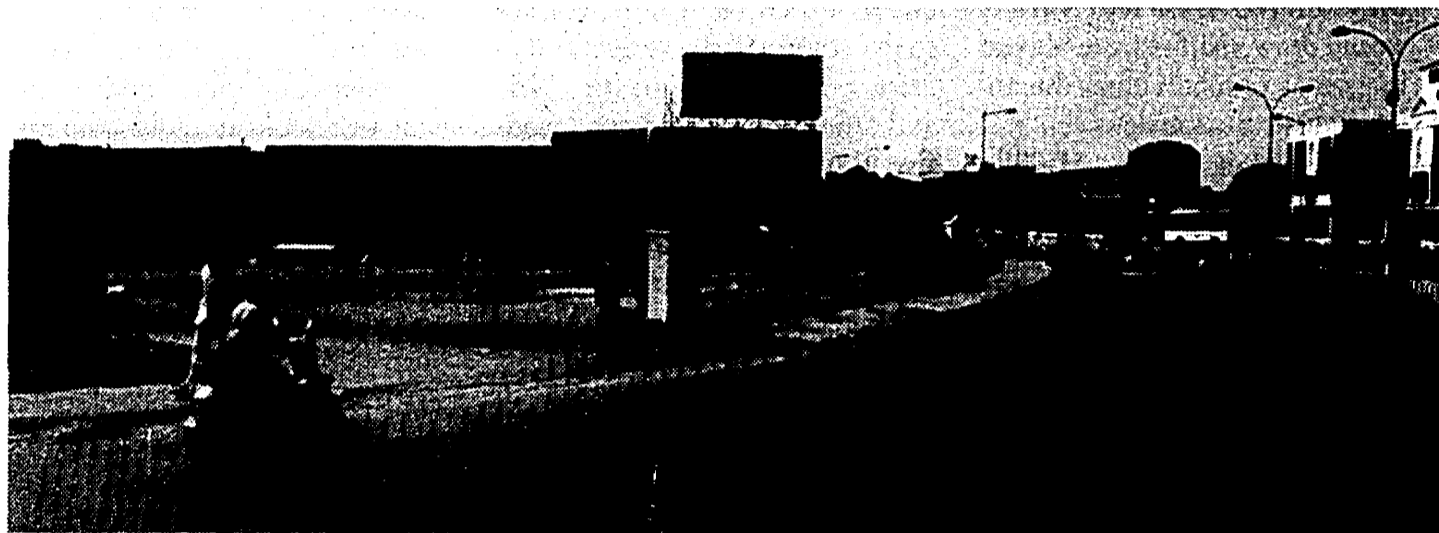
Madras Musings is delighted to learn that the Heritage Regulations drafted by Chief Town Planner Ananda Ranjana Doss, Member, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, Town Planner S Santhanam of the CMDA and their team has been approved by the CMDA's Chennai Heritage Advisory Committee with only minor modifications.

These regulations now have to go through the CMDA's normal procedures before they can be incorporated in the Development Control Rules of Greater Chennai. Madras Musings understands that this is likely to happen before the end of May.

A spokesman of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Tamil Nadu Chapter, which was represented on the Heritage Committee and which submitted the modifications to

the Draft Regulations, told Madras Musings, "We have been urging the Government for two years and more now to introduce Heritage Regulations in the city as a prelude to the Heritage Act for the whole State. That's a long time to be persuading people to act. We only hope that the promise made at the last Advisory Committee meeting, that the finally agreed on regulations would be introduced within a couple of months, will be kept. Once that's done we can go on to using these regulations as a basis for an Act to cover the whole State. Bombay, Hyderabad and Nagpur have already got Heritage Regulations. Kerala and Karnataka are well on their way to Heritage Acts. Why is Tamil Nadu, which has always prided itself on being a pioneer in so many fields, going so slow on this particular issue?" Once the Regulations are in

(Continued on Page 6)

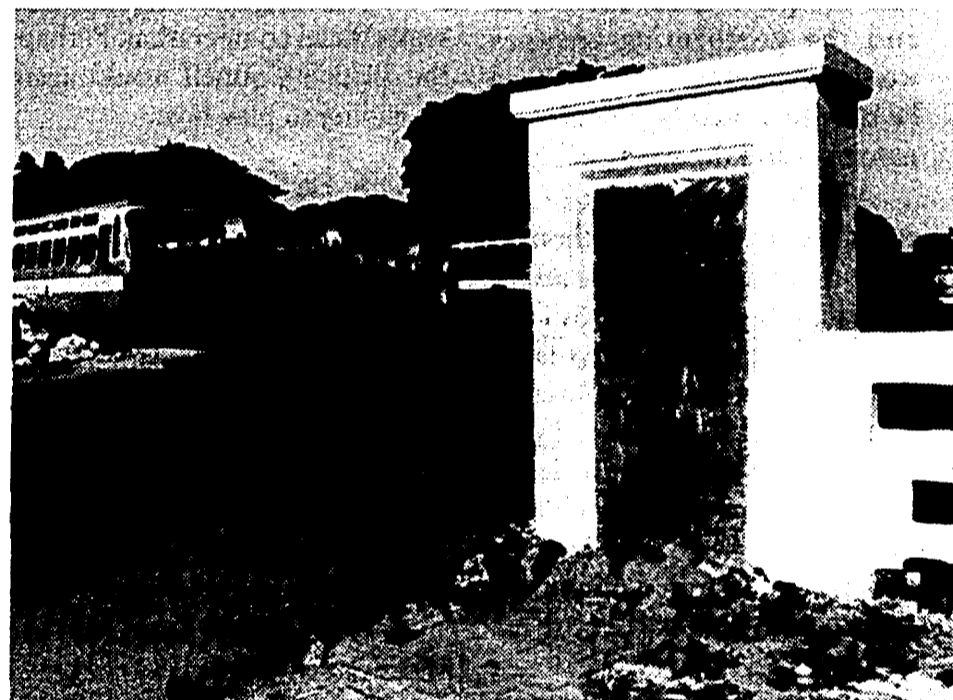


A BIT OF THREATENED HERITAGE

• A little noticed historic plaque is the one seen in RAJIND N CHRISTY'S photographs. Located at the northern end of the Maraimalai Bridge in Saidapet, the clearing of the shanties on the bank of the Adyar for a bus terminal has left it exposed to threat from any bus-driver moving out of the terminus in cavalier fashion. It is urged that the plaque be moved to the much safer southern end of the bridge before harm befalls the memory of one whose munificence was great.

The plaque here commemorates the generosity of that great merchant and leader of the Armenian community in Madras at the time, Coja Petrus Uscan, who built the first bridge across the Adyar at a cost Rs. 1 lakh in 1728 in order to enable the public to reach the Mount of St. Thomas more easily. Two years earlier he had built the steps that lead to the Church atop the Mount. And in his will he left Rs.5000 for each in perpetuity to ensure the maintenance of both. That is a bequest still administered by the Government.

Uscan, who refused to support the French against the British, even though it meant forfeiture of his property in 1747, is one of the legends of Madras now long forgotten but whose commemoration deserves to be preserved wherever it is found in the city.



Still talking of water...

(By A Special Correspondent)

• Restore all water bodies and temple tanks in order to

store rainwater and ground-water recharge.

• Implement rainwater harvesting both at macro and micro levels in the city and suburbs. Particular attention needs to be given to satisfying the water needs of large campuses through rainwater harvesting.

• Produce water from the sea through desalination. Satisfy industrial water demand through treatment and recycling of sewage.

These were recommendations made at a workshop on 'Efficiency in Water Management for Sustainable Living' organised recently by the UNCHS (Habitat) Informa-

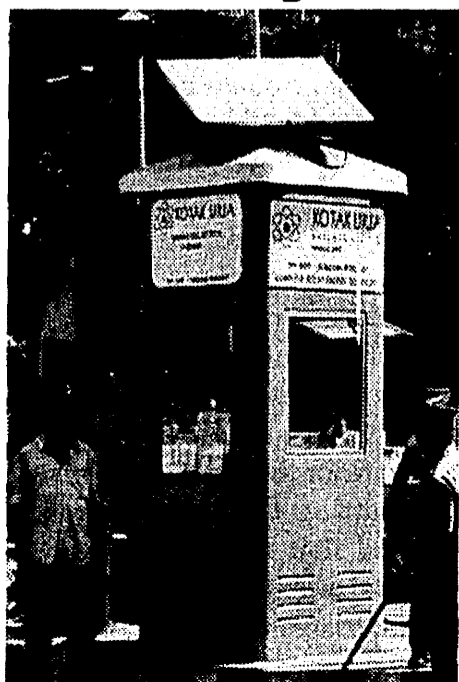
tion Dissemination Office and Citizens' Alliance for Sustainable Living (SUSTAIN) as a part of UN World Water Day-2000 Celebrations.

Introducing the theme, G. Dattatri, UNCHS Consultant, said that Chennai had traditionally been a city where water supply was a chronic problem. In spite of heavy investments, Chennai continues to remain famished for water. This is because our past record of sourcing, distributing and managing water has been highly inefficient. Only efficient management of water can put an end to the city's water problems.

N.R. Krishnan, former Secretary, Ministry of Environment

(Continued on page 7)

Traffic police look to the sun, out of the sun



The first 'solar' box in operation - manned by a police woman - near the Traffic Commissioner's office.

With the sun getting more scorching by the day, the City Traffic Police has come up with a novel shelter for its personnel which, at the same time, will make use of the sun by harnessing its energy. Forty-two solar powered traffic umbrellas are being installed at the main intersections of the city, according to R. Sekar, IPS, Joint Commissioner (Traffic), Chennai.

Each enclosed green-coloured booth will provide comfortable seating facilities for the traffic constable while ensuring fresh air and noise-

and dust-free atmosphere. The booths have glass panels on all sides (for clear vision), fans and a public address system. This system and the lighting will be "fully powered by solar energy," according to Sekar. The solar panels (affixed on top of every booth) above the loudspeakers, will have a back-up capacity upto a maximum of 48 hours' (two days) supply.

Each booth costs something over Rs. 1.5 lakh and all the booths are being erected with the help of financial assistance

(Continued on Page 3)

Nothing official about it all

When the British Council recently organised a day-long seminar on 'Old Cities, New Cultures' what emerged was a consensus on using heritage space for cultural activity to revitalise old cities. A great idea and we could certainly do with a Chennai Festival along the lines of the Glasgow and Edinburgh Festivals that were spoken about by the visitors. Such festivals in public spaces would not only draw wider audiences than those which patronise the *sabhas* during the Season, but if they offered sufficient variety would draw visitors from abroad in greater numbers than the annual Music Season does.

The *Man From Madras Musings* would be delighted to see the grounds of the Museum complex, the area in and around the Town Hall (Victoria Public Hall), parts of the Guindy Park and the Marina used for dance, music, theatre, folk and other entertainment performances in what could well be a three-month long Chennai Festival daily from December to February. That's ambitious thinking, but MMM is sure the performers, the *sabhas* and the performing troupes would co-operate. What would be needed would be the coordinators — and the sponsorship.

And it was in respect of the coordinators that MMM thought the organisers of the seminar went slightly off the tracks. They certainly got together several of the leading non-governmental cultural organisations and personalities, but official participation was minimal. Surely the organisers know that nothing moves in this State without the official stamp, at least at the bureaucratic level, if you plan to use public space. And it was that official presence that was lacking at the seminar.

The only official present was R Kannan, Director of Museums, and he was an enthusiastic participant who appeared to be willing to throw open the Museum's gardens and halls for such a festival. But, being in a transferable position, what happens when he moves on?

More significantly, where was the representative of the Tourism Department? From what MMM could see, there was some representation from the private sector, but the official sector was obviously uninterested to judge by the lack of attendance. How do you begin to dream of an Edinburgh-like Chennai Festival without the Tourism Authority giving the lead?

It also struck MMM as unfortunate that, when you have in mind such transfer of major experience, the audience did not include participation of those who are more significantly key players in the Indian, at least the Chennai, context. From the heritage angle, the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority's Heritage Committee, from the view of public spaces, the Corporation of Chennai, from the cultural point of view, the Departments of Culture and Education

as well as representatives from the Federation of *sabhas*, and representatives of folk and other performing arts needed to be there. None of them were. And without them the dreams spoken of at the seminar just cannot materialise.

MMM has always noted with regret that seminars of this kind are dominated by what might be described as 'five-star participants'. The contribution of each of them is undoubtedly immense and they DO make things happen — but on a scale to attract audiences of their ilk. Taking culture to the young, to the streets and to attract tourists, domestic, NRI and otherwise, of all strata, needs the kind of organisation that is backed by official support. And given the tenor of the presentations, the organisers should have made certain that key members of officialdom were present, at least for the summation.

Perhaps what's now needed to make up for opportunity lost is a formal dialogue between those present at the seminar and officials of key departments to whom the former would make a presentation of the thinking at the seminar and seek official co-operation. Perhaps the British Council would again be willing to play host.

Scots' heritage

Listening to Scotland's speakers at the seminar, *The Man From Madras Musings* wondered what the secret was for reducing the population of a city from over a million people down to 6,00,000. If we had the answer to that, we might get somewhere with Chennai too, thought MMM.

But if a reduced population made a city more manageable, and imaginative blending of architecture and culture enlivened it, what else did Glasgow's planners do to make a gloomy old city come to life again? The answer would appear to be they introduced a new cultural view, not particularly consistent with the traditional view of conservation in old cities.

Side by side with finding new uses for old buildings — a church converted into a concert hall, for instance — there has been encouragement for building even factories imaginatively. Looking anything like factories were the factory buildings shown in the slides. But what interested MMM most was the bold step taken in Glasgow to fill gaps between old protected, conserved or renovated buildings with modern sculpture and new buildings in the most modern idiom. Whether traditionalists will go along with this practice, MMM is not very sure. But there is no doubt that the NEW certainly livened up the OLD spaces.

Another resident of Glasgow, a journalist, however pointed out that an almost Faustian pact had been made by the authorities in Scotland to ensure that Tourism remained Scotland's biggest industry; for a few tourism dollars, a whole culture had been lost, he regretted, while sounding a warning about exploiting culture to promote tourism. The great wilderness that is sold as Scotland's

unforgettable scenery is, he pointed out, entirely manmade. The traditional lifestyle that existed when the scene was different has vanished as a result.

Local inputs regretted, among other things, the intrusion of new culture in Indian cities where even the corner shops were vanishing. Also rued was the lack of civic sense to make our surroundings attractive. Government came in for its share of brickbats and there was none to answer such statements as "Culture has zero value because Government is not committed to it" and "Government does not understand Tourism; just look at those cement statues that have come up in Mahabalipuram!"

Proceedings got sidetracked for a while when a lively debate on hoardings ignited spontaneously. Said one activist, "Let's all sign a petition against hoardings", forgetting that such petitions to save Moore Market and clean the Coom had come to nought. Be that as it may, hoardings suddenly found a champion: "Hoardings are a part of popular culture in

Chennai and as a champion of culture you should be the first to encourage this art". That led to a flutter about the art of cinema hoardings, the old-fashioned commercial hoardings and the modern electronic ones. It was fun ... but we got no further with anything.

Back on the rails, MMM heard a singer and a music critic make a more meaningful plea to make the annual Music Season a greater success. Why doesn't the Federation of *sabhas* function more purposefully by getting together on programming, publicity and the release of videos and cassettes, she wondered. Why don't they encourage greater professionalism in the presentation of programmes, particularly in matters of acoustics etc? And why aren't music and dance appreciation courses being run by the Federation in order to increase audiences? Other suggestions she made were to have interactive sessions after each programme between performer and audience and the establishing of a community centre — yes, a 'music cafe' — for youth interested in classical music.

Whether this would play even some small part in keeping an old city alive through new cultural practices or whether it would be looked at as a form of conservation — which must necessarily contribute to economic development, as mandated by an architect — is debatable. But these were about the only suggestions that provided food for thought, MMM tended to think.

Whatever the reason, it would be nice if His Worship the Mayor took a personal interest in both projects and insisted on

work getting underway on both buildings as well as on the integral development of the surrounds, which would include the New Moore Market, My Lady's Garden, the Ashley Biggs Pavilion and grounds, the two stadia, the space between and, together with the Railways, the neighbouring complex. An integrated restoration plan of this whole area could make this a part of the city to be proud of. Since it's all property with fairly well-defined ownership, it shouldn't be difficult at all to put such a plan through. May MMM hope, Mr Mayor, that before your term comes to an end you'll make this area a landmark memorial to your first stewardship of the First Corporation of the country?

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Unionisation, Government beginning to play a greater role in their affairs and managements feeling their powers threatened have all undoubtedly been responsible for the present state of discontent. MMM, however, finds it hard to accept that mature people responsible for the education of the young, people who should be setting youth an example, can't find it in themselves to discuss, arrive at compromises and settle disputes among themselves, whatever they be, instead of squabbling as in a common labour dispute.

The longer these disputes drag on, the greater the shame for two once-eminent educational institutions. Is this the legacy the present management and staff of Madras Christian College and Kalakshetra want to leave behind? If so, a pox on both your houses, MMM says.

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OUR READERS WRITE



A readers' club?

The general contents of *Madras Musings* and letters from readers suggest mutual clarification or questioning and elucidation on an active basis. Reading MM is not a passive affair.

Just note this: No sooner had I finished writing the above paragraph, than I heard the postman's ring and there was a letter from one Indukanth S Ragade of T. Nagar referring to my letter regarding impracticability of EA being spread on water and clarifying that it was a printing error for cetyl alcohol!

To this end, readers can give their phone number or e-mail address so that they can contact one another and a virtual MM Readers' Club would function.

N. Dharmeshwaran
Plot 21, Kumaran Nagar
Guduvancherry 603 202.

The good and the bad

I visited Chennai in the first week of February after a long time and was happy and surprised to see the city buses to Parry's Corner being routed inside Central Station. But it was sorrowful to notice that the bus route information boards on the bus platform are only in Tamil. With the buses also plying with Tamil boards, those from other states/countries will find travelling in Chennai very difficult.

I don't feel our faith in our language will be affected in any way by providing bus route boards in English. Rather, this will gain us respect from others for our social concern.

S. Ramesh
F3, Alaknanda Apts
Coconut Garden Layout
Naharbhavi, Bangalore 560 072.

Rainwater harvesting

As part of the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC), Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, our trust has published booklets in English and Tamil on Rainwater Harvesting. Those interested may call 4918415 or write to us for a free copy.

Sekhar Raghavan
Mrs. Sitalakshmi Raghavan
Memorial Trust
D15, Bayview Apartments
Kalakshetra Colony
Besant Nagar
Chennai 600 090.

A word of caution

The sudden spate of computer institute advertisements that have been appearing in the press reminded me of a similar spate of advertisements by finance companies a few years back. The finance companies promised high interest with a gold or silver coin thrown in. Hundreds of gullible investors, mostly pensioners, invested their hard-earned savings in these companies. Most of these companies closed down. Some proprietors have been arrested. But the poor investors have not recovered their money.

How many of these mushrooming computer institutes will remain after collecting exorbitant tuition fees?

This letter is to warn ambitious youngsters and their parents not to rush in where angels fear to tread. All that glitters is not gold.

C. Mahadevan
B-12/4, 25th Cross Street
Besant Nagar
Chennai 600 090.

Traffic police look to the sun

(Continued from page 1)

from corporates and institutions. One third of the exterior surface of each booth is being given to a sponsor for its message.

"Wherever there is an automatic signal, efforts are being

made to link the controls of the signals to the booth", says Sekar. The policeman inside would then be able to make necessary modifications to the signal schedules, according to the traffic, he adds.

"We would like to have 500 to 600 such booths in the city,"

Electoral rolls now available to citizens' organisations

The Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu, has agreed to our request to supply Electoral Rolls to voluntary citizens' organisations on payment of a fee. Earlier, electoral rolls were given only to political parties and not to citizens' organisations.

Catalyst Trust had made this request as it feels that citizens' organisations, such as residents' associations, could do a much better job than the government, of cleaning up the electoral rolls by making the necessary additions, deletions and modifications.

Such action would not only promote awareness among citi-

zens but could also help in eliminating bogus voting, the Catalyst Trust is confident.

The Catalyst Trust had conducted a Voters Awareness Campaign during the 1999 General Elections. The success of the campaign was the tremendous enthusiasm shown by more than 1000 organisations which joined the campaign. This enthusiasm has prompted the Trust to launch a permanent Citizens' Awareness Campaign by joining the strength of various organisations throughout the State.

A first step of this Citizens' Awareness Campaign is

sensitising citizens on the need to ensure the correctness of the voters' list in respect of their area. These organisations are prepared to undertake the verification and correction of the voters' list.

The rate of the sale copy of the computerised Electoral Rolls will be Rs.1.20 per page, we are informed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

A.K. Venkat Subramaniam,
IAS (RETD.)
The Catalyst Trust
2/380, First Main Road
AGS Colony, Kottivakkam
Chennai 600 041.

A helping hand

The Association for Non-traditional Employment for Women (ANEW) functioning at AE 104, Anna Nagar, has started three new schemes to help girls and women from poor families.

It is offering a basic training programme in computers for girls who have studied upto Std. 10 and Std. 12 and preferably living in Anna Nagar area.

A stipend will also be offered for deserving girls in addition to free training.

An autorickshaw, specially designed by Bajaj in association with ANEW, for the safe transport of children to schools, will be launched in Anna Nagar soon and will be driven by girls trained by ANEW. The girls driving the vehicles will be paid a monthly salary of Rs. 1,500 to start with.

ANEW is also planning to encourage girls to start a workshop for servicing scooters and autorickshaws in the Anna Nagar area. They will be trained by the manufacturers. ANEW will bear the cost of providing the facilities and equipment. A stipend will also be paid to deserving girls undergoing the training.

Any lady willing to spare time to work with us in running a basic level training programme on computers may contact: Lakshmi Kumar, Ph: 6412662 or Vatsala Ramakrishnan, Ph: 6461909.

ANEW funded by private donations is run by women exclusively to help poor girls to gain vocational skills to enable them to improve their financial and social status.

Association for Non-traditional Employment for Women
ANEW House, AE 103
Anna Nagar, Chennai 600040.

Trams again!

The interest in Madras Electric Tramways (MET) seems to be perennial, especially among senior citizens, considering the number of nostalgic letters published regularly in this column of *Madras Musings*.

This is understandable since the trams met an important need of Madras at a time when buses were tiny and carried only about twenty passengers and no standees. The roof of the buses were so low that it was not possible to stand even if one tried. The conductor was glued to his seat and tickets and fares were exchanged in relays by passengers themselves.

An overstuffed tram car carried about a hundred passengers and the fare was usually half an anna (6 pies or 2 pies) per stage, say between Parry's Corner and Central station. Even with this low fare, some passengers hitched free rides and a passenger would jump off from the slow-moving car when the conductor approached for ticket. In spite of this, MET made a tidy profit since electricity was cheap.

The tramways used two types of carriages, one a long eight-wheeler, the other a short four-wheeler. The short ones could negotiate sharper bends and easily rerailed when a car went off the rails, which often happened. The Royapuram — Egmore route always had the short cars since the track circumambulated the narrow mada streets of Royapuram. It had also to cross a railway level crossing near Clive Battery on North Beach Road. Another short car service was from Ripon Building end of Park Town to Mount Road through labyrinthine Chintadripet byways. This also had to face a railway level crossing near Park station. When the Railways electrified this portion, the level crossing was permanently closed for tram traffic. The main link was di-

verted via the overbridge in front of Central station and Bodyguard Road. However, the smaller tram cars traversed from the Periyar bridge end of Mount Road to Chintadripet and back. Two other shuttle services were from Mylapore to San Thomé and from Central to Elephant Gate end via Walltax Road.

M. Sethuraman
6/16, Mahalakshmi Nagar
Adambakkam, Chennai 600 088.

Do they help?

International conventions are nowadays held quite frequently in Chennai. The organisers behind these conventions are executives occupying senior positions in industry. Could they tell me:

How have these conventions helped the city or its residents?

The organisers collect a lot of funds through sponsorships and registration fees. A lot of winning and dining goes on in five star hotels. Foreign speakers are flown in at enormous expense. The organisers are seen on the stage, rubbing shoulders with these 'eminent speakers'. We learn how to market potato chips, soft drinks, soaps and tooth paste. But how do the poor, the downtrodden, the slum dwellers of Chennai benefit from these conventions?

These conventions take place with unfailing regularity. The interval of a few years only makes the squalor of Chennai more squalid, the poverty more pathetic and the visual impact more painful. Doesn't their conscience prick?

I am forced to come to the conclusion 'Hypocrisy is a necessary blemish for all great men!' More so for corporate executives.

Vijayalakshmi
B-12/4, 25th Cross Street
Besant Nagar
Chennai 600 090.

Information sought

Can any reader tell me when and where the first electric crematorium was installed in Chennai?

P.G. Sundararajan
9/4, 'Varsha', Balu Street
Tiruvanniyur, Chennai 600 041

'Road', not 'bazaar'

Re: OLD and NEW, MM April 1st, the post office in question is the Flower's Road Post Office and NOT the Flower Bazaar Post Office as printed.

Rajind N Christy
Chennai 600 040.

Want to muse with MUSINGS?

If you would like to be put on *Madras Musings'* mailing list, just fill in the form below (use block letters/type) and post it to M/S. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, CHENNAI-600 006.

Name

Address

.....

.....

Note: Overseas postage extra. Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Gulf: Rs. 375/year. US & Europe: Rs 425/year. Cheques payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press.

K. Sridhar

- MMM

A city wasting away

Chennai has decayed considerably, primarily due to over-population and neglect of its conservancy services, particularly in respect of solid waste management.

Solid waste management in Chennai is a daily struggle, fighting against several odds, like a financial crunch, weak infrastructure, underutilisation of manpower, poor maintenance of transport vehicles, unhygienic methods of waste-handling, crude dumping of garbage in landfill sites and the failure to obtain public co-operation. There are too many loose ends to tie up. The civic authority is entrusted with the task of enforcing strong regulations of waste control with weak authority and limited public support.

• T. Nagasundaram
Former Asst. Commissioner
Chennai Municipal Corporation

There is a tremendous need for partnership between the city's managers and the public. At present there is suspicion on both sides. Yet, neither can do the job by themselves.

A policy of 'free for all' — allowing the public to throw all wastes, in all places, and at all times — is practiced. The concept of waste control, casting "duty of care" on its producer, transporter and final disposer, is totally lacking. New schemes are being tried, and several projects like 'Litter Free Zones', 'Bag Conservancy' and 'Night Conservancy' are launched on a trial and error basis, without adequate study, working arrangements or resources.

Under the policy of mechanisation, the Chennai Municipal Corporation purchased a giant mechanical sweeper for Rs. 1.50 cr, six refuse collectors of 15 m³ capacity at a cost of Rs. 5.44 lakh each, 41 small compactors and 5 big compactors at a cost of Rs. 2.50 crore, 160 one-cubic-metre steel portable containers at Rs. 3125 each in '90-'91. All this equipment was operated by the suppliers for just one year only. Thereafter they became non-functional and are still kept unused in an open playground in Kodambakkam.

The proposals of Shiva Prasad & Co. to generate 5MW of electricity from garbage and of EID Parry to convert garbage into compost manure by chemi-

cal treatment, presented in 1996, have not been implemented so far. The sanction accorded by the Government of Tamil Nadu to TIDCO in January 1997 to implement the project for generation of electricity from garbage collected in the Chennai City area has proved futile till date.

Heavy expenditure to the tune of Rs. 10 crore is incurred every year on an average for the purchase of new conservancy vehicles in addition to the deployment of hired vehicles of ENCOFED. Rs. 18 crore was spent for the purchase of trucks in '98-'99. The cost of maintenance of fleet of transport vehicles is exorbitant. The administrative expenditure has doubled in just two years from Rs. 8.68 crore in 1996-97 to almost Rs. 18 crore in 1998-99.

The challenge today is not to spend more but to be more efficient. Making mistakes in administration is unavoidable and unfortunate. It is not a crime. The crime is not to admit to mistakes and to attempt to save face at all costs. This is exactly what is happening in Solid Waste Management at the Chennai Municipal Corporation.

'Vision 2000', 'Singara Chennai', 'Sustainable Chennai Project' are all virtually closed chapters. The latest plan of the Corporation is to partly privatise conservancy operations, implementing a system of mechanised waste collection through containerisation and handling devices in selected zones. The scheme does not address all the issues and problems related to solid waste management. The focus is on one particular function: Removal of garbage from the collection centres. It is not enough if wastes are removed. They should be managed. Among the issues not considered in detail are the efficacy of integrated waste management, the 3 Rs (Recycle, Re-use and Resource), and scientific disposal at landfill sites.

To keep our city environmentally safe, Solid Waste Management is essential, but it must shake off the past and begin a process of cleaning up the mess by adopting inexpensive measures, local options and other ways and means at affordable costs.



A landmark institution in need of help to renew itself

• Our OLD (above) is the garden-house Grasmere in Egmore (opposite the railway station but hidden from public view by walls and trees) into which the oldest Public Records Office in India (even pre-dating the British equivalent in London) moved in October 1909. The office had its beginnings in Governor William Langhorne's record-keeping in Fort St George in 1672, but became a properly constituted Records Office in 1805 during Governor William Bentinck's stewardship. It was headed by a Head Record Keeper called Mootiah and was located at different times in various places in Fort St George till the move to Egmore.

Over Rs. 3.25 lakh was spent in getting P. Loganatha Mudaliar to convert and equip Grasmere for a Record Office worthy of the First Presidency. On April 15, 1911, educationist Henry Dodwell was put in charge, of the institution and its most glorious years began. As the Tamil Nadu Archives and Centre for Historical Research it may be a shadow of what it was in the Dodwell,

Sekhara Menon, Baliga eras, but it is nevertheless one of the better Government institutions not only in the State but in the country. Would that there were money to put into practice more modern methods of record-keeping and preservation of records not to mention recruitment of additional qualified staff! Nevertheless, it is good to see slow progress being made and a hard-pressed staff doing their best to preserve the wealth of records held and help researchers make use of them.

The first steps to modernising the archives are to be seen in our NEW (below). The new library building offering nearly 8000 sq. feet as against the 3000 sq. feet of the old, might not have been built to aesthetically blend with the OLD behind which it is, but of its functional purpose there can be no doubt. Once the Archives receives a bit more funding, the old collection, about 2.5 lakh in number, will be moved into these more reader-friendly, computer-equipped premises. Meanwhile, the research hall has already been refurbished

in Grasmere and about 300 scholars, many of them from abroad, are enrolled here for research, as against a dozen in the 1930s. Today, the refurbishing offers them airconditioned comfort.

In preparation for moving into the new library block, the Archives has already begun to lessen its load — the wisdom of which is a subject for debate. Its collection of law books has been handed over to the Dr. Ambedkar Law University and its medical books, about 10,000 in number, has gone to medical colleges in the city. The Andhra Pradesh Archives has agreed to accept about 6000 Telugu books and a response is awaited from the Karnataka and the Kerala Archives in respect of the books in the languages of those States. The Archives also has a wealth of material in Sanskrit, Urdu, Grantha, Arabic, Persian, Oriya, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Latin. The rare books are being preserved by lamination (introduced in 1997) and about 2000 books have already been laminated, with about 40,000 more awaiting their turn. The lamination work, however, moves slowly for want of raw materials and a sound budgetary provision and the library lives in hope that Government will allocate more funds to save these rare books. Preserving books by the old-fashioned method of pasting chiffon continues. Some rare books are also being xeroxed. Photo filming, with newly received equipment, has just begun and a part of the Public Consultation Record of 1857, has been completed. But here again more money is needed for materials and readers.

The future of old magazines, journals, newspapers and textbooks is also being considered. The Archives has about 300 titles of old Tamil journals and magazines, such as Ambullimama 1947-1968, Amudha Surabhi, 1949-1959, Ananda Vikatan 1926-1973, Anandha Bodhini 1919-1962, Kumudam 1957-1964, Swadesimitran 1945-62, Gundusi 1948-59 and Pesumpadam 1935-61. Many a researcher uses this material. Recently, for instance, a researcher from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, went through Tamil text-books on Geography, History and Tamil, held by the Archives. If these are moved out, where will a researcher go?

Madras Musings, which over the years has made full use of the Archives, hopes the Government will help dissipate the gloom in the halls and corridors of this invaluable institution. (Text and photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



On top: Grasmere into which the Records office moved in 1909. Above: The Tamil Nadu Archives' new 7500 square feet building awaiting occupation. Below: The Elke Senator from Germany, the book archival camera, now speeding up microfilming at the State archives.



Looking back

Idylls of Ennore

Recent reports in Madras Musings about the threat at Ennore Island reminded me of the many times in my youth I went to that once idyllic rural backwater which in both senses it then was.

In July 1946, as a young Welshman barely 21, I left austere post-war Britain for Bombay and from there entrained for Madras. I had been invited to join P. Orr and Sons as a contracted assistant on a three-year contract which was usual in those days. Initially, the company lodged me in Bosotto's Hotel, conveniently near its Mount Road premises. Because of the expense, I soon left the rich fare of Bosotto's for the simple, but still excellent, cuisine of Chesney Hall. At that time Chesney Hall was a well-

known boarding house on quiet Commander-in-Chief Road. In that fine 19th Century building, expatriate bachelors and young married couples put up before climbing, if they ever did, the higher rungs of the British Companies for which they worked, moving into flats or bungalows.

Settled in, sharing expenses with another P. Orr employee, a Scot, Bill Thompson, and we became friendly with a British engineer who had been recently employed by Madras Tramways. Jimmy (I don't remember the rest of his name) had been detailed to keep an eye on a little bungalow in Ennore which a senior official of the Tramways had built adjacent to what was called the Clubhouse. As the owner of the bungalow had just gone on leave to Britain, Jimmy thought it might be nice if the three of us went on a picnic to Ennore and inspected the house.

We travelled there by train, for petrol was still rationed and saved for Company use. We had a compartment to ourselves in an era when India's population was a third of its present level and travel comfortable.

Arriving at Ennore, we walked the short distance from the station to the Clubhouse along a sandy path cutting through grass nibbled close by numerous goats and cows. In the near distance, there was a scattering of houses on the sward. Of these, one, as we learned later, was supposed to have been a hot weather retreat for the second Lord Clive, an escape from the confines of Government Estate and Fort St. George.

When we reached it, we found the Clubhouse, a simple building entered from a courtyard and standing on a bluff above the Ennore backwaters. A shady verandah, the surrounding trees and the water seen through them gave the place a welcome feeling of coolness that hot August day.

We were greeted by the Taylor family who rented the Clubhouse at the time and saw to the amenities at the adjoining cottage, which Jimmy's brief it was to check. It turned out that Taylor had been employed in the Tramways as an engineer, and when he retired to Ennore, had set up a small workshop to service armatures and other small parts for the



Participants in a Madras Boat Club regatta 30 years ago. Those were the days when palmyrah still dominated a green, green Adyar.

Row, row, row your boats, slowly through the sludge!

The Boat Club, one of the oldest rowing clubs in the country, having been founded in 1867, has in recent years been enjoying a growing student membership. Its home course, the Adyar River however, is in a state of disrepair, so to speak. The river suffers from two problems. First, the closing of the river's mouth by the sand built up by the current storm in the Bay of Bengal and, second, the lack of enough water to purge the river during the droughts caused by the failure of the monsoons. Compounding this problem is the Metro rail bridge which cuts across the river, creating sand bars which do not allow natural flow.

The water stagnation has increased the mosquito menace. Sewerage is let into the water in many places between the Adyar Bridge and Saidapet, making it unfit for fish to live in and giving way to environmental degradation.

Michael Stamford, Captain of Boats in 1958, was back at the Madras Boat Club recently during a short holiday in Chennai. And he couldn't help but regret the state of the Adyar River.

Stamford first saw the Adyar River and the Madras Boat Club in 1951. "The clubhouse was primitive and the river appeared to be right out in the middle of the country; no building could be

seen, no traffic noise could be heard and the only human activity was the odd fisherman fishing from his log raft", he recalls.

He remembers that in those days too the river had the same stagnation problem as of today, but, he adds, "The water in the river was pure enough for fish to breed in and there was little pollution because there was little human activity. This was limited to a dhobi ghat under the Mount Road bridge further up river." Recalling the regattas, he says that due to the Adyar River being far out of the city, in those days, attendance at even the All India Regatta was limited to regular supporters, who had their own transport. But such events were recognised by the authorities and the then Governor presented the prizes.

"The Adyar River is now spoil for me", he rued, and explained, "To see buildings on the far bank, polluted water (I would hate to fall into it), no fish jumping to catch the mosquitoes as the sun sets, and to hear traffic humming in the background makes me wish for the old days." On a brighter note, he added, "But the saving grace is that the Madras Boat Club still flourishes."

The Honorary Secretary of the club, V.G. Ravi wrote a letter to the Director of CPR Environmental Education Centre in Au-

gust 1998 explaining the problems faced by the rowers due to the pollution and the fear that the invited participants for the National Junior Championships would register protests on the state of the river! He also made the point that the sport enjoys no grants and depends entirely on membership subscriptions, which are but a drop in even a water-short river.

The present Captain of Boats, Sanjay Raghuram, feels that "while Chennai should be proud to have such a grand waterway running through the city, we have unfortunately let it deteriorate steadily". He adds, "While the sport of rowing is not the most popular it nevertheless has been granted the status of a national sport and is enjoying increasing participation particularly in Chennai. With the Boat Club, the only one in Tamil Nadu, its promoting of the sport can be successful only if quick action is taken to clean the river which is the most important component of the sport."

Will the Rs.300 crore allocated for the cleaning of the Adyar and the Cooum water systems give rowers the opportunity to row once again in a river like the one seen in the 30-year-old photographs accompanying this article?

Vijay Malhotra

with her parents and was happy enough with the rural life and the slow tempo of her days.

The Taylors were very hospitable for they enjoyed company. He liked to drink, she to cook. We were introduced to pungent Middle Eastern dishes apart from curry and rice which were the Sunday lunch staple.

After that first visit we were often at Ennore, sometimes staying overnight with the Taylors; singing for our supper with a gift of the latest 78 records for Mollie to play on her wind-up gramophone. Crosby, Como, Sinatra for romance, Guy Lombardo, Xavier Cougat, Victor Sylvester for dancing.

Occasionally a young girl cousin from Bangalore would be there and then we could really party as darkness fell and the hissing Petromax lamps lit. I remember very little of the interior of the Club. The young are more concerned with themselves than surroundings. It was, I think, sparsely furnished, as were most houses before AC became common. A big living room with bedrooms off it, primitive bathrooms, with thunder boxes (portable lavatories) and jars of water with dippers. DDT had reduced the mosquito menace but we still slept under nets on

(Continued on Page 6)

A study of the professional woman in Chennai finds...

Inter-caste marriage favoured

The status of women in the world began to change significantly from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. In India, attention to women's rights started with the formation of a women's association in 1917. This awareness gave women political rights, but their socio-economic condition continues to be deplorable.

In the last few years, several attempts have been made by scholars and researchers to highlight the problem of women with specific reference to their marriage hardships, their status in the workplace, their role in public life and so on. We have attempted to study these aspects in the lives of professional women (from law, medicine,

Chennai have come from urban areas.

Place	Doc	Eng	Prof	Adv	Total
Urban	200	22.75	21.0	22.0	85.25
Rural	50	2.75	4.0	3.0	14.75

The survey reveals that 68% of the respondents were married, 3% were divorcees. It was found that about 60% of those married had arranged marriages while the rest had love marriages. The percentage of love marriages was higher in the medical profession than in other professions.

The survey reveals that nearly 25% of the women professionals leave their children in the care of their mothers when they are away for work and about 29% of them leave their

(9%) not for behind. Only 4% favoured Law. Amongst the Muslims, teaching and engineering were chosen by 5 per cent each.

Though more than fifty percent of the women professionals favoured inter-caste marriages, only 20% were in favour of inter-religious marriages. In fact, more than 55% of the respondents were against inter-religious marriages.

Most of the respondents were satisfied with the relationship they had with their colleagues, superiors and subordinates. There appears to exist a cordial relationship in their workplaces. But eve-teasing is a common problem, faced by 80% of women professionals.

Another major problem faced by the respondents, as serious as eve-teasing, is the dowry harassment.

by Kingsley Chandrasekaran
Reader in Public Administration,
MCC, Tambaram
& Julia Isaac

teaching and engineering) in and around Chennai. Our study has focussed on:

- Understanding the social background of women professionals;
- Discovering the value — attitudes of professional women to women's education, inter-caste and inter-religious marriage;
- Identifying specific problems faced by them in society, and finding out the degree of satisfaction in their inter-personal relationship with their seniors, colleagues and subordinates.

The sample size of the study was 300, 100 respondents from the medical profession, 100 college teachers, 50 engineers and 50 advocates. The age group of the respondents was from 25 to 55 years.

The study reveals that the medium of instruction for most of the professional women was English (nearly 75%). It was found that persons who have studied in English medium have better chances of getting into professional courses.

Medium	Doc	Eng	Prof	Adv	Total
English	20.75	19.5	19.5	15.5	75.25
Tamil	4.25	5.5	5.5	9.5	24.75

About 85% of the professional women working in

children in the care of their mothers-in-law. About 17% of the women professionals in the nuclear families leave their children in child-care centres and about 9% leave them at a neighbour's place or in the care of servants.

About three-fourths of the respondents support the nuclear family system; only a fourth prefer the joint family system. It was found that 43% of the respondents were from backward communities, 31% were from forward communities, 11% from most backward communities and the rest were from the SC/ST categorisation.

More than 50% of the women professionals favoured inter-caste marriages with doctors and lawyers having an even more favourable view of such marriages.

Inter-caste marriages	Doc	Prof	Eng	Adv	Total
Agree	17.25	9.75	6.0	13.5	46.5
Disagree	3.75	12.25	9.5	6.5	32.0
No sure	4.00	3.00	9.5	5.0	21.5

More than 50% of the women professionals were Hindus, about 32% of them were Christians, and about 17% Muslims. Strikingly, there was a meagre percentage (2%) of doctors and advocates among the Muslims. Law (15%) was the favoured profession among the Hindus followed by medicine (13%), engineering (12%) and teaching (11%). Medicine was the favoured profession amongst the Christians (10%), with engineering and teaching



April 20-30: Exhibition of paintings by several artists. (At Vinyasa Art Gallery.)

April 20: Exhibition and sale of Chikan work (at Vimomisha.)



A painting by Pakkiri... with Western influence kept at bay.

Till April 22nd: Art Exhibition featuring the work of M. Pakkiri. His recent work includes meticulously drawn mixed-media paintings portraying village life and events from mythology. Richly decorated horses and elephants highlight paintings. Pakkiri remains true to the Indian Art form, without diluting it with the Western idiom.

Pakkiri has been in the forefront of many craft development programmes in Tamil Nadu. He is known for his contributions in kalamkari, papier, maché and weaving. (At the Lalit Kala Akademi.)

April 22: Pottery Workshop (10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at DakshinaChitra. Tel: 491 8943).

April 23: To celebrate World Book Day and more specifically its theme, encouraging reading/encouraging writing, the British Council poetry circle presents an evening of verse and song, *Willm Shkspr — A bird's d.* (At the British, Council, 6.30 p.m.)

April 27: Wooden handicrafts and furniture from Saharanpur (at Vimomisha).

April 28: A two-day South Indian heritage experience. (At DakshinaChitra, Rs.1000 inclusive of board and accommodation. Limited to ten guests.)

IDYLLS OF ENNORE

(Continued from page 5)

iron bedsteads. A generator must have been installed, for I recall ceiling fans rather than insect-strewing punkahs.

The days were spent being rowed by a fisherman over the limpid backwater to swim in a clean sea, or walking in the casuarina plantations on the fine sand under the trees, fresh unpolluted air stirring the branches sibilantly. Occasionally we were taken aboard the salt boats, which plied on the canal which opened off the backwaters.

In the few houses nearby lived elderly retired people drawn to Ennore for the cheap living, healthy breezes and peacefulness. Some of them we got to know. The local fishermen were quiet, shy folk glad to sell us some of their catch for Mrs. Taylor to cook, and to hire out their boats. In one of these crafts I left, and lost, my leather bound copy of *The Oxford Book of English Verse*.

We always returned very reluctantly to Madras, though a garden city then, sun scorched from bathing, footsore from dancing and looking forward to our next excursion to lovely Ennore.

Before they emigrated to Britain, then the US in 1949, the Taylors moved to a large early 19th Century house near the viaduct in Ennore. It was there that I and others spent Independence Day 1947, having

celebrated the night before in a large party of British and Indians in the Cocktail Bar of the Connemara Hotel before driving out crammed in a jeep, to Ennore, the back packed with blocks of ice picked up from the since demolished South Indian Royal Ice Factory in Egmore. We were all very merry and one more so than the rest, fell asleep on the ice and was lifted out rigid at our destination, still comatose.

Another memory was of a large picnic party organised by some young British officers based at the Transit Camp then in Commander-in-Chief Road. This was in 1946 and only the Army had plenty of petrol. We drove out to Ennore in a convoy of Jeeps and trucks, young officers and civilians, V.A.Ds and other girls. Ice boxes contained drinks and delicious food, mainly provided by Mr. and Mrs. S. Ramsay Unger, owners of the S.I.R. Ice Factory. We bathed, ate and drank and larked about at the bar until it was time to drive back to the City.

At that memorable Army picnic was a young girl briefly here from England after a long separation from her parents. In 1951 she came to Madras again and that December we were married in St. Mary's, Fort St. George. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay Unger.

After the Taylors left India and soon after, my friends Jimmy and Bill, I rarely went to

Ennore, going farther afield when I had the time by country craft to Covelong from Lattice Bridge. Then a few years ago on one of our annual winter stays in Chennai my wife and I drove out to a now industrialised Ennore and by chance arrived to see the demolition of that handsome pillared house where I saw the birth of independent India. The Ennore Clubhouse was still there and I made a wish that it would be preserved as a memory of the 18th Century resort Ennore once was. Has it been?

John Davies

HERITAGE RULES

(Continued from page 1)

place, the CMDA will notify the protection being given to about 200 buildings in the City that the Heritage Advisory Committee has unanimously agreed on as needing protection and conservation, *Madras Musings* learns. Thereafter further listings of buildings in Chennai and within CMDA limits will be done and a supplementary conservation list drawn up after due discussion by the Committee.

Is light at last being seen at the end of the tunnel? We hope that is indeed the case, said the slightly dubious Editor of *Madras Musings*.

At odds at Kalakshetra

It was on February 29th that Rukmini Devi Arundale was born. And with the year 2000, a leap year, Kalakshetra's mini art festival, held annually in the last week of February, should have been a more celebratory occasion than usual. But, in fact, the festival was not held at all. With the staff and management at loggerheads it was the performers and the audiences that were the losers.

When I went to Kalakshetra to find out why, classes were going on as usual and pretty girls in dance practice costumes, half saree over pyjamas, were strolling about or pedalling sedately on bicycles. There was a painting show being held by the Fine Arts students. Music and dance syllables could be heard amidst the chirping of the birds and the rustle of leaves. There were brand new buildings for classes, replacing the old thatch-roofed huts. But there was nevertheless an uncomfortable stillness in the air. Why?

The Director of Kalakshetra, Rajaram, a musician, was sitting all alone in what was Rukmini Devi's personal library. "I am extremely depressed these days," he said and began singing a song he had just composed, *Neeye thunai Munuga*. And then he got down to answering my questions.

"The staff are agitating for pensions. When Kalakshetra was taken over by Government by an Act of Parliament, salaries were fixed for the dance and music teachers taking into account the salaries of the teachers of the College of Music run by the State Government. But by some quirk, the administrative staff were given Central Government scales. Now the teaching staff want UGC scales. Kalakshetra is not a college but a school, since we accept students after Class 10. We need to upgrade the institution to the status of a degree college. A committee has been appointed to look into this," states Rajaram, expressing the management's point of view.

"We have waited for eight years for the upgradation, study and implementation, but has it even started?" respond the agitated members of the faculty.

"Rukmini Devi turned down suggestions to make Kalakshetra a deemed university. She did not want interference in the academic and artistic affairs of the institution," says Rajaram.

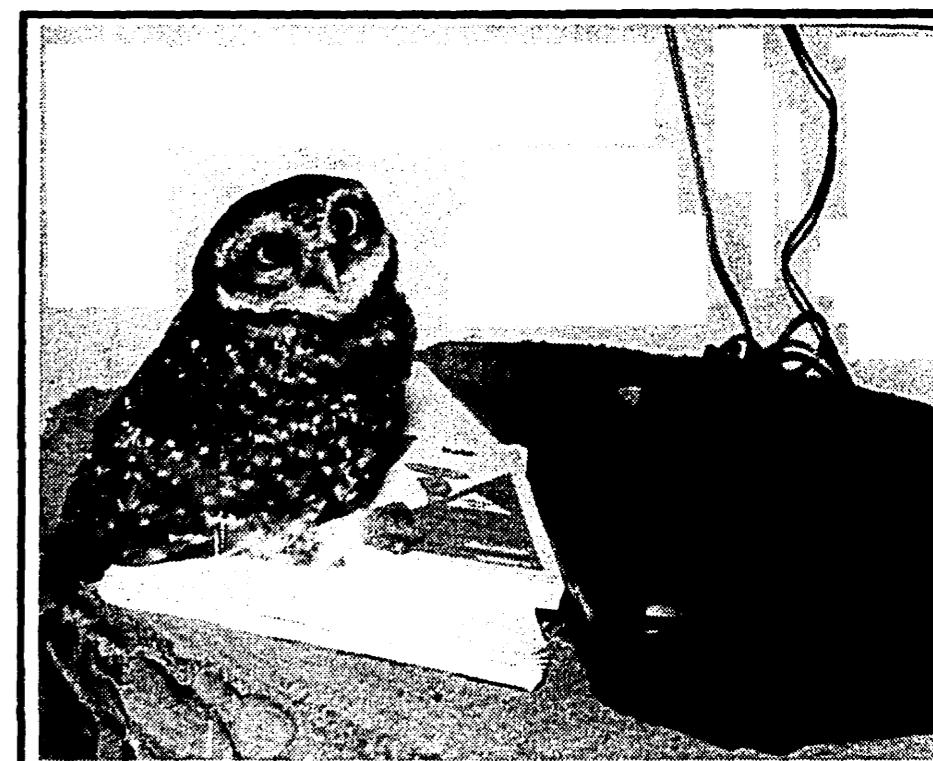


of my classmates took. Once the Government took over and our status as privileged members of the family was reduced to that of being employees, we felt the necessity to ask for our rights."

"We are fighting to keep the identity of the institution," goes on Janardhanan. "We did all kinds of work for Athai because we were a part of the family. Now with government not recognising us, why should we?" he asks. "Take the case of the thatched hut built thirty years ago which became my home", Janardhanan cites a case in point. "Now the government is deducting Rs.3000 from my salary for the accommodation as licence fee!" He shows me the many letters Rukmini Devi had written to him requesting him to stay back in Kalakshetra and consider it his home. "We are told that government has taken over Kalakshetra and not the

EDITOR'S NOTE

● As we go to Press, we hear that a team from the Central Government Ministries concerned is due at Kalakshetra to hold talks with the management and the staff. We hope that the presentation of their cases here will lend lucidity to the deliberations and bring about a more cordial atmosphere in one of the country's leading educational institutions.



The spotted owl at the author's desk

The owl that came a-calling

One morning I was woken by fluttering noises in my sitting room. A Spotted Owl had come calling and was flying around, from windows to bookshelves, from chairs to cupboards.

Owls are nocturnal birds and crows attack them during the day. So I let the bird stay inside the house.

The green vegetation in my house and compound in Nandanam attracts many birds and animals. The latest visitor, the owl, as well as earlier ones were representatives of the denizens of the area before people moved in and the place became 'a colony'. How the landscape has changed since we first came here!

After the rains, hordes of small frogs appear in waves. Rat snakes find refuge from the ophiophobic residents of the neighbourhood under stacked pots in the garden. Hordes of white butterflies fly in search of the tender leaves of the 'Sarakonni' (*Cassia fistula*) to lay their eggs. The Common Mormon butterflies rest in the cool shade of plants in the garden in the afternoons.

When I first came here years ago, I used to wake up in the mornings listening to the song of partridges, denizens of the fast disappearing scrub. The scrub and the partridges have gone. Of late, spotted deer from Guindy Park occasionally graze on grass growing in patches where man and machine have not yet overrun them.

Man has moved in displacing the older residents of the area. We call that urbanisation. With urbanisation have come floods, rats, water stagnation, flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches and bad smells.

The owl would have told me all that, had it the ability to talk.

The bird refused to go away. It may have been because of the lack of a congenial place to stay or maybe it was protesting against the pollution outside. On the third night, I caught it with a bedsheet, took it to the open verandah and shooed it away. I owe the owl an apology for not being very hospitable. Perhaps even for occupying its ancestral property.

O.T. Ravindran

STILL TALKING OF WATER...

(Continued from page 1)

and Forests, inaugurating the workshop, predicted that with the expected increase in demand of water the situation in Tamil Nadu would soon reach a period of stress. He also emphasised that water had to be conserved.

M.G. Devasahayam, Managing Trustee, SUSTAIN, said Chennai citizens received water for a barely minimum level of hygiene at the best of times. During droughts this was worse and only 20-30 LPCD was

available as against the civilised norm of 150 LPCD. This has become a worlwhile phenomenon and no worthwhile efforts seem to have been taken to resolve this vital issue, he pointed out.

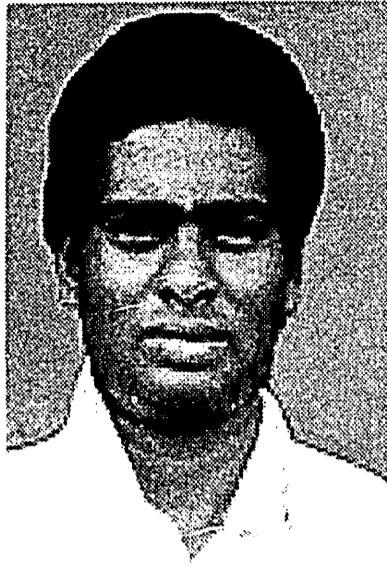
Louis Menezes, Director, Centre for Urban Poverty Alleviation, said more than half the demand for water in the city was being met by private suppliers. Though people paid a very high price for water supplied by private lorries, they were reluctant to pay for an efficient public water supply system.

Striking the right note with the bat

One of the more enjoyable pleasures of being a cricketer turned cricket writer is the opportunity to get to know some of our youngsters and watch their growth into first class, sometimes international, cricketers. The recent selection of Tamil Nadu left-hander Sridharan Sriram to represent India in one-day internationals was one such instance.

Readers will forgive me for striking a personal note, for having interacted with Sriram, however marginally, from the time he was ten years old, I take the liberty of telling this story from that perspective.

The first thing that strikes me about the way Sriram's career has run is the possibility that, but for the intervention of my former captain M L Jaisimha, he might have become a performing Carnatic violinist. His father, S D Sridharan, a concert violinist of repute, taught him to play the instrument and he progressed past the *varnam* level to be able to play a *kriti* or two. It was at this stage that he attended a coaching camp for under-12 boys held in Hyderabad and the coach, Jaisimha, found him to be a promising left arm spinner. Fortunately for him, his grandfather, Srinivasa Desikan, a retired Hindi and Sanskrit teacher who had disapproved of son Sridharan's interest in cricket because, among other things, it might cause injuries to his violin-playing fingers, now decided that Sriram's future lay in cricket.



S. Sriram

During those early days, I watched Sriram's cricket from somewhat close quarters, as my nephew Naveen Nataraj, a young off spinner, was Sriram's schoolmate at Sishya, Adyar, and constant cricket companion. He too had come in for

It was as a left arm spinner that Sriram first made a mark. His was a precocious talent that was expected to go far, but when he began to play in the first division league of the TNCA when still in school, I for one was worried that the early exposure might harm him in the long run. My old-fashioned fears were soon to be dispelled when Sriram acquitted himself creditably in the league as well as in international age-group cricket.

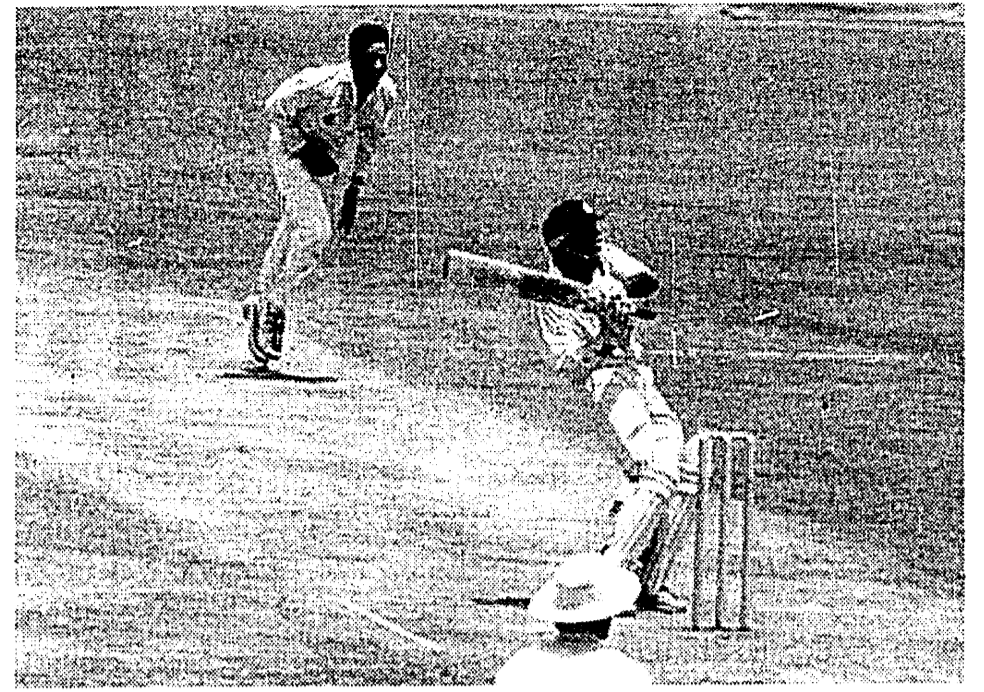
At the under-19 level, Sriram soon established an outstanding record, reaching his peak on the South Africa tour in 1992-1993, claiming 29 wickets. It was on this tour that he gained the confidence that he could make the transition to senior cricket. For one thing,

● by V. Ramnarayan

praise from Jaisimha during that Nutrine camp, and later played inter-state age-group cricket, before studies abroad claimed him. Srinivasa Desikan accompanied Sriram (and Naveen) to every match those days, often carrying the boy's kitbag. There were occasions when I offered the trio lifts in my car. The grandfather helped the budding cricketer in numerous ways, often reading his lessons aloud to him before the tired boy dropped off to sleep after a hard day's cricket. Throughout school and college, Sriram remained a good student, securing full marks in mathematics in his B.Com. examination.

while the seniors were struggling, the junior team was winning everything before it, earning considerable positive press coverage. He also had the opportunity to bowl to the senior Indian team in the nets for over a week, and started believing that the gap could be bridged with determined effort.

For the record, Sriram was the highest wicket-taker on that tour, claimed a hat-trick for India U-19 against England in the Delhi Test, toured England, Malaysia and Hong Kong with the Indian U-19 team in 1993-94, captained India U-19 against Australia in India, toured Australia with the



S. Sriram... violinist turned bowler turned batsman in the running for an India cap.

Indian U-19 team in 1994-95, and toured the West Indies as a member of India 'A' team recently, besides playing for India 'A' in Los Angeles last year.

Sriram has worked hard at his fielding, especially during the wilderness years, when he was languishing as a reserve in the Tamil Nadu State squad, blocked by the continued success of two left arm spinners, Sunil Subramaniam and D Vasu. After a long wait, he gradually began to hold his place in the State team as a batsman who could also bowl. This is the time he developed serious problems with his bowling action and doubled the intensity of his effort towards improving his batting and fielding. Trying to help him correct his bowling action in the nets at his request, I was impressed by his determination.

Frankly, at that stage, I secretly believed Sriram would be better off giving up bowling and concentrating on his batting. Happily, he has proved me wrong, by improving his action beyond recognition, thanks to the constant encouragement he has received from his senior colleagues at MRF like T A Sekar, W V Raman, N Gautham and Senthilnathan.

A batsman in the classic mould, Sriram made a good impression in the Nagpur ODI against South Africa in which he made his international debut. (Unfortunately, his grandfather to whom he owes so much was not alive to watch him that day.) He not only displayed good technique but showed the right attitude by sacrificing his wicket in the run chase. His direct throw resulted in Herschelle Gibbs' dismissal and he made a number of good saves. He bowled a good line, length and trajectory, holding his own even while coming in for some stick.

Sriram has a good temperament, fierce concentration, and excellent technique, attributes that have enabled him to cross the 1,000 run mark this Ranji Trophy season. His 165 against Punjab in the quarterfinal came on top of 177 and 288 in the last two super league matches. With Tamil Nadu into the semifinal round, he has a chance to make a big score in Mumbai and get closer to Vijay Bharadwaj's record tally for a Ranji season. More important, he shows the ability to stake a claim for a place in the Indian top order in Test cricket.

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