

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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FREE ISSUE

May 1-15, 2000

What awaits hoardings in City?

*Will we follow Delhi
for the better?*

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Madras High Court is currently hearing a batch of cases pertaining to advertisement hoardings in Chennai and the rest of the State.

As is evident to every person in our State, hoardings are found at every street corner, alongside virtually every bridge, road, marketplace, river, school, college, theatre and any other public place. Hoardings have invaded the already shrinking pavement spaces in the city and pushed the pedestrian onto the road, where he or she confronts the speeding traffic.

It may be recalled that, two years ago, the Supreme Court directed that all hoardings in Delhi be removed as they were considered traffic hazards. Overnight, several buildings of architectural splendour and several green and open spaces appeared. For years, these had been hidden by the

metallic walls of advertisement hoardings.

The skyline of Chennai, on the other hand, is today completely dotted with advertisement hoardings. What this has displayed is not just the advertisement, but also the inability of the State to protect public spaces.

Courts and jurists have repeatedly proclaimed that the State is a trustee of public spaces, and that it must protect these spaces from being privatised. Unfortunately, the only regulation thus far has been the attempt to charge advertisement tax on each hoarding — thus making the entire exercise one of revenue-seeking.

What is needed is not regulating of hoardings but a ban on them, particularly in urban areas. — (CAG Reports)

'Goods once sold...' clause illegal

(By A Staff Reporter)

The unilateral condition, "goods once sold will not be taken back/exchanged", found in cash memos/bills issued to the consumers is against the law. This was stated in a letter Union Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution Minister Shantha Kumar recently wrote to all the State Chief Ministers.

Section 14 of the Consumer Protection Act, he pointed out, states that any aggrieved consumer has a right to get relief

against defective goods, deficiency in service, over-price charged... The consumer courts have powers to give directions to the opposite parties to repair/replace the defective goods or return the money etc. to the aggrieved consumers. He went on to state that in the developed countries, like the UK or USA, the position was actually the reverse, with sellers declaring, 'In case you are not fully satisfied

with our products, you can bring the same to us within a month for either replacement or return of your money'.

The Union Minister has urged the Chief Ministers "to take immediate appropriate action... to ensure that the cash memos/bills etc. issued in your State by the traders/shopkeepers do not carry the condition that 'goods once sold will not be taken back/exchanged'."



For a training school established in 1975, we find it hard to believe that this institution has still not been able to find a roof of its own. What more can we say about a practice that is very much part of life in Chennai! (Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

What action on Manali toxic leak?

(By A Special Correspondent)

On March 18, 2000, toxic vapours leaked from drums in Manali in north Chennai where a multinational company had stored Ethylchloroformate (ECF). The company had imported 76 drums of this chemical and stored it in a warehouse in Manali, en route to Hyderabad. The leak took place due to ruptures caused by the build-up of

high pressure in some of the drums.

ECF is used in the pharmaceutical and pesticide industry. It is a highly toxic, corrosive, flammable and colourless liquid. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, this chemical is a fire hazard and when heated to decomposition, it emits toxic fumes containing chlorides. It is a poison by intraperitoneal, ingestion and inhalation routes.

Further investigation has revealed that a leading environmental group in the USA has found the Texas facility of this company, from which the chemical was imported, to be one of the top offenders in the "Chemical releases and waste generation in the 'Off-site Transfer' category".

This industrial accident exposes the risk faced by developing countries like India and displays the incapacity of regula-

tory agencies in the country to deal with disaster mitigation and prevention. Though the implementers of the law, the Tamil Nadu State Pollution Control Board, have issued a notice to the US supplier, there is no news of the penalties imposed on the company, the assessment of damages and the payment of compensation to those affected. — (CAG Reports).

Writing to the Editor?

Madras Musings' Editor's Office and Circulation Office remain at Lokavani Hall Mark Press. Therefore, all letters to the Editor, articles for publication, invitations and correspondence about circulation may continue to be addressed:

C/o Lokavani Hall Mark Press,
62/63 Greaves Road,
Chennai 600 006.

— THE EDITOR.

The sorry state of a grand museum

In an endeavour to breathe new life into what could be a grand museum, one of the finest in the country, monthly lectures are now being held in the Centenary Hall of the Madras Museum. One look at the hall, its facilities and the surrounds, and you are unlikely to want to come again. At least, that's the way *The Man From Madras Musings* felt after a couple of visits. Enthusiasm is one thing, but if the surrounds are uninviting, visitors are unlikely to become regulars. And this is symptomatic of the malaise that's stricken all sections of one of the grandest museums in the country. Not that it is very different from the state of affairs in other museums, except a couple in Bombay and Calcutta where the heritage-conscious public have decided to do something about appearances, at least.

Here in Chennai, what the public sees during any visit to the Museum and National Art Galleries is dismaying. And dismay starts from the precincts, where compound walls are broken, gates are askew, and the gardens are untended both from the point of view of gardening as well as cleanliness. Inside the buildings, pictures are askew, captions are missing, the frames have seen better days, sculptures are haphazardly placed, lighting is minimal, the state of the buildings themselves — particularly their interiors, many of which leak — is abysmal. Above all, no one in the galleries is interested in being helpful, each appearing to have a host of personal problems that need to be discussed with others.

Certainly not much can be done with this plethora of problems if all the Government is going to allocate for the coming year is Rs.40 lakh — much of which is likely to go on public toilets, computers and storage racks. But surely something could be done to make the staff in the galleries a little more responsive to visitors and a little more active about keeping the galleries cleaner, neater and with labels in place. A cleaner, tidier garden with well-tended lawns and flower beds would also help.

MMM sees only two answers to the problem of dilapidatedness and poorly exhibited treasures deprived of a worthy setting. And they are, the Government gets interested in the State's heritage and allocates a considerable sum for restoration of buildings, improvement of interiors and creation of the right ambience for the wealth of the Madras Museum. Or, in the alternative, the Government calls for corporate support and agrees to be a silent monitor of those who call the tune, its role only to ensure that there is no misappropriation of the State's treasures.

Calcutta did something along these lines during the City's 300th birthday ten years ago, but there's been little sustainability

thereafter. The more recent Mumbai experience appears to be working better and it might be worth the while of the Tamil Nadu Ministry concerned and the Department to study the Mumbai example, then try to get the corporates interested in a viable project. MMM must, however, add a caveat. No matter by which alternative the museum and art galleries are restored to their past splendour, their success thereafter can only be assured if the staff, particularly in the galleries, take a greater interest in looking after the treasures and exhibit them with pride.

Landmark judgement

The judgement delivered by a bench of the Madras High Court in the case concerning the language of instruction till the end of Class 5 was a landmark one as it focussed on the rights of the individual. But welcome as an endorsement of the *status quo*, many of the problems affecting education in Tamil Nadu remain.

The Man From Madras Musings feels that too much time is being wasted on this debate on the language of instruction. He'd rather the same amount of time was spent on the second and third languages. If in a State like Tamil Nadu, basic instruction is given in Tamil or English, that's fine, as a child familiar with either as his first language at home will have no problem if his instruction is in the

If that is not done, all the instruction given in the primary language is not going to serve Tamil Nadu or the country to the fullest extent. If that primary language is English, you're likely to be preparing wards for overseas jobs and if it is in Tamil, you'll be preparing him for Tamil Nadu — and even that is a perhaps, given the amount of English used in the State. In both instances, you'll be limiting his opportunities and, more importantly, not offering him the widest possible choice as far as opportunities are concerned. In fact, without a fluency of English and Hindi, you could well be depriving the country of his abilities.

When, wonders MMM, are those concerned with education in this State going to call as loudly for excellence in second and third language education as they do for computer literacy?

The Tamil focus

It is truly amazing the amount of time, money and energy being wasted in Tamil Nadu on Tamil instead of on BETTER EDUCATION. *The Man From Madras Musings* cites the following recent examples:

- The addition of signboards in Tamil in shops and institutions if not already there prominently.
- The addition of Tamil number plates on Government buses — and, no doubt,

and the world, with Government willing to fund them.

— The history of Tamil literature, the works of several Tamil writers, a book on the contributions of Tamils to the world, a Tamil encyclopaedia and a *Tirukkural* encyclopaedia are all to be funded by Government.

MMM welcomes the entire cultural initiative and is not too concerned over Tamil number plates, signs and minutes, provided they are readable both in lettering and language. But the question remains, how much does any of this window dressing do to improve the quality of the State and help prepare young men and women to serve in any part of Tamil Nadu, the country or the world?

It would be wonderful if those concerned with all this spent all their time, energy and money on the teaching of Tamil, English and Hindi properly in schools, improving the standards of education in the State and only then implementing all that has been listed above.

Book pricing

It was a celebration at the British Council of World Book Day and *The Man From Madras Musings* found himself listening to an animated discussion on how those involved should be 'Reaching out to the Book Buyer'. It was a discussion meant

The general consensus was that this was because prices were too high, reducing the numbers bought; this, however, it was agreed, did not mean less reading, if the libraries were doing their job. But even they were finding prices a limiting factor, particularly with grants not being as substantial as in the past. MMM, talking to one in the audience involved in running a club library, heard him wonder, "What do I do with around Rs. 15,000 a month?" With even paperbacks averaging about Rs. 200 each, he went on, "I can't get more than 75 books a month for a membership of about 500 of all ages. And with a few hardbacks — of the latest titles — that number comes down by another 20% or so. So how can we encourage reading, particularly of new books", he wondered, virtually throwing up his hands.

No matter all the explanations for the present pricing of books, no one in the audience appeared really convinced that what was being offered was a fair price. Particularly when that awkward question was asked, "How do publishers in the vernaculars manage to sell books at about 50-65% less than English books of equivalent size?" MMM hasn't got an answer except to wonder whether when Jeffrey Archer is translated, does he get any royalty from the translations or whether local authors get a fair royalty or whether there are any all-India distribution costs. But even while expressing such uncharitable thoughts, MMM has to admit that many a time vernacular publishers do perform miracles with their pricing.

Author's income

If pricing, lack of shelf space and display, and tardy ordering and supply all contribute to dampening the ardour for reading, the ardour of many a writer is dampened by the income he gets from general books. Even a successful writer like Shobha De says, "If I had to live on my royalties, I'd starve". And David Davidar, of Penguin, arguably the most successful publisher in India adds, "No one should get into writing expecting to make a lot of money". Indeed, it was pointedly asked: With royalties averaging from 7½ to 15 per cent and with sales from 1000 to 2000 copies over two or three years, and with no reprints, is it worth the candle? You'd do far better working on textbooks, suggested this author.

Be that it is may, there's that ego trip of seeing your book in print, knowing it is read by more than the few people at home and getting those generally kind reviews and your name in the Press. To many in India that's more than worth it and they keep on writing. And as long as they write, and as long as publishers want to swell their list, there are readers in varying numbers for every book, MMM is convinced. So while debates like this do not provide any answers, they do reflect the verity that the book is still not dead — not by a long shot.

— MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Unsafe gap

The existence of a wide gap between the EMU-M.G. train and the platform of Park Station is very dangerous. Commuters may fall in the gap while alighting from the train.

One such incident occurred recently when a commuter fell down while alighting at Park Station from an EMU train bound for Chennai Beach Station. I was also one of those alighting at Park Station at the time and I and other co-commuters acted quickly and pulled him out before the train moved.

The railway authorities should take remedial measures to close this gap and ensure passenger safety.

S. Sambasivan
95 Station Road
Chromepet
Chennai 600 044.

Landscaper's record

The letter 'greening of hope' by T.K. Srinivas Chari (MM, April 16th) is accompanied by photographs and a caption reading ".... such imaginative use of greenery needs encouragement. Suggestions from people like O.T. Ravindran would be welcome."

The person responsible for this statement should have made the effort to enquire who is responsible for the landscape at Ceebros Corporate office and the Karumuttu Centre. These landscapes are the vision and genius of Sekar James, the leading landscape architect of South India for the past 25 years.

A brief dossier on the accomplishment of Sekar James is being sent for your reference.

M. James
5th Floor, Kasi Arcade
Thyagaraya Road
Chennai 600 017.

Editor's Note: The dossier includes the following information:

Sekar James' first project was the well known 'Fisherman's Cove' in 1974. In 1981, he took in a couple of horticultural associates, but decided, after 12 years to launch out on his own. He now operates under the banner MASTER PLAN.

Sekar James has been regarded as the pre-eminent landscape architect of South India. His working career as a landscape architect spans over two decades, and embraces a truly staggering variety of landscapes and gardens. He has to his credit more than 1000 projects both planned and fully realised by him.

Past projects include Madras Refineries Ltd., Madras Fertilizers, SPIC, T.I. Cycles, Connemera Hotel, Hotel Trident and Park Sheraton.

Projects completed recently include Hyundai Motors India Ltd. (550 Acres) and Thapar Dupont (150 Acres).

Projects on hand in designing/execution stage include St. Gobain Float Glass India (450 Acres), Ford India Limited (200 Acres), Mitsubishi Lancer (120 Acres), and Titan Township (Bangalore, 75 Acres).

A neglected beach

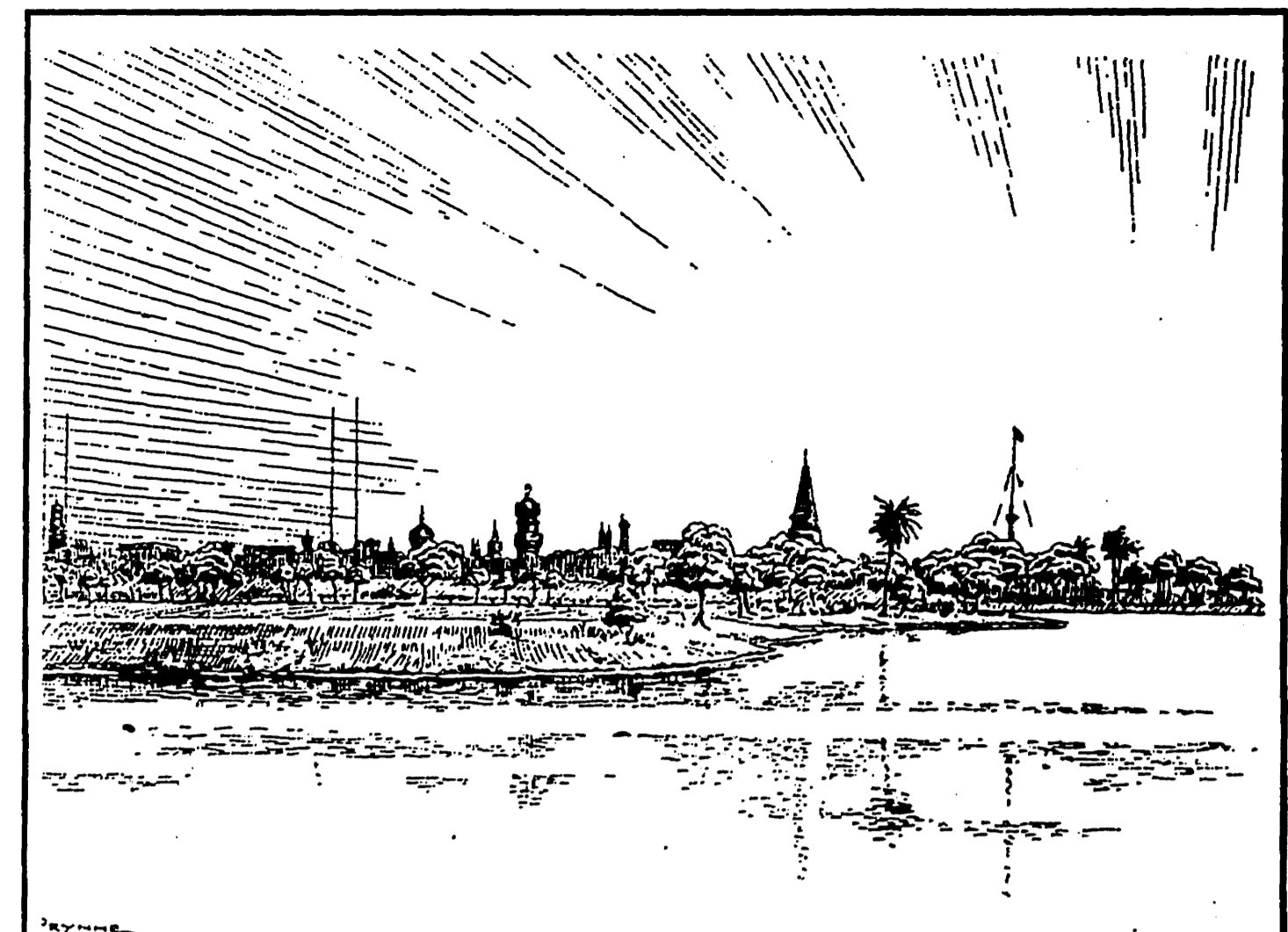
The San Thomé Beach off San Thomé Church is in a neglected condition. Once it was a favourite spot for beach-goers to enjoy a vast stretch of sand free of pollution. There is still a spear-shaped wooden structure to mark the victory of the III Carnatic War. There used to be a gym surrounded by lawns on the sand.

P.A. Ranganathan
16, Vedachala Garden
Mandaveli
Chennai 600 028.

Free contact

The general public often contact various Government departments on the phone to obtain information or to air their grievances. Often, they are unable to speak with the particular official and they end up making two or three calls.

In certain departments like Telephones, Police, Fire Services, we have toll-free numbers like 197, 100, 101 etc. Such toll-free facility can be arranged in more departments, like the Electricity Board, Office of the Provident Fund Commissioner, etc.



Madrigals and ditties

Reference V. Sundaram's letter about *The Cooum in the Raj Days* (MM, April 1) he says that the poem (or song?) 'On The Cooum' quoted by him was written by W.O. Horne. The poem was actually written by V.H. Shipley and appears in the *Madrasi Madrigals*, a book published around 1928. The hand-drawn sketch of the Cooum accompanying Sundaram's article also appears in this book. This is one of the two sketches accompanying the poem in this book. I enclose the other sketch (seen above) which shows the Cooum from a different angle and location. Both these sketches are by H.F. Prynne.

Madrasi Madrigals is an interesting and amusing book of poems on different events, places and buildings in the city, such as 'Adyar river', 'Elliott's Beach', 'Victoria Hall', 'Guindy Races', 'Museum Theatre', 'Georgetown and 'Boat Club'. The book was published by Higginbothams. My father purchased the book in August 1947 for 2 annas at Triplicane beach and I still have

the copy. None of the major city libraries have a copy of this rare book.

S. Suresh
45, IV Street
Padmanabha Nagar
Adyar, Chennai 600 020.

The poem on the Cooum, quoted by V Sundaram (MM, April 1st) inspired this little rhyme, though the theme is one which your readers must be sick of by now.

PEDESTRIAN DREAMS

All I want is a road somewhere,
Just to take me from here to there,
But sans enormous scare;
Oh, wouldn't it be lovely?
Clean flat surface to place my feet,
Free from garbage and rough concrete,
Just safe sidewalk and street;
Oh, wouldn't it be lovely?

Oh so lovely walking absorbingly straight,
No more rubble heaps and slush or poles to negotiate!

'Tee Square'
Chennai 600 020.

This will help the public in contacting the officials concerned. This will help the common man to a very great extent.

Paul Prathap Jayaraj
4, 25th Cross Street
Indira Nagar
Chennai 600 020.

A taxing ordeal

Motor Vehicle Tax collection is increasingly becoming an ordeal for both the motorist and the Government. In spite of Lifetime Tax provisions, in spite of opening several centres for collection of M.V. Tax, the motorist is put to a lot of hardship. A lot of time, money and energy is meaninglessly wasted standing in longer queues every year, what with the influx of thousands of new vehicles.

As an experimental method I suggest the following method for M.V. Tax collection be tried exclusively for privately owned two-wheelers and four-wheelers:

Whenever a two-wheeler motorist fills up petrol, a sum of 25 paise per litre of petrol could be collected towards M.V. Tax. Similarly, for a four-wheeler motorist, irrespective of the fuel he is using (petrol or diesel), a sum of 50 paise could be collected for every litre of fuel. All the money thus collected could go into the Motor Vehicle Tax fund of the Government.

The advantages of this method of collection of M.V. Tax are as follows:

- The motorist who uses a vehicle more frequently, pays more tax.
- A lot of unnecessary paper work is eliminated.
- There is an incentive to save fuel.
- RTO authorities could concentrate on other important problems.

Dr. S. Shanker Dev
Kylas'
6, Giri Road
T. Nagar
Chennai 600 017.

No loud honking as cars go past,
Stopping clear at the traffic lot;
Safe crossing zones at last!
Oh, wouldn't it be lovely?

This kind of writing used to appear in campus rags at one time, and perhaps still does. Are there still versifiers who can pen ditties on contemporary Madrasi themes in the style of well-known lyrics?

Though my own exposure is limited to some of the old musicals which provided fertile ground for imaginative parodying, there must be a whole lot of new sources to be exploited.

Incidentally, the initial target for the above piece was the computer community — one of my pet hates. But may be the generation which apparently chooses to spend much of its life on its gluteus in front of a monitor, will compose some interesting pieces and prove to be more talented than I can imagine!

A heritage campus

Seeing a picture of Queen Mary's College, I wondered whether it was going to be pulled down to build a five star hotel or some multistoried complex. I was relieved that was not going to happen. But it should be treated as a heritage building, so needs to be restored and renovated, not repaired.

Every Queen Marian has nostalgic memories of the years spent there. So would many students of Presidency College for whom it was a hostel.

I don't know if present students still sing the famous refrain, "Queen Marians never die, never die, they only fade away". Whether they won or lost any event, the refrain was sung. It started on a boisterous note and went into crescendo.

Mrs. Anna Varki
9, Central St.
Kilpauk Garden Colony
Chennai 600 010.

A few days after
Ramanujam's death anniversary
we remember

The human side of genius

I refer to C.A. Reddi's reference to Ramanujam's first degree (MM, March 16th). Ramanujam lived in the shadow of poverty and hunger. But he had built up a rich inner life. He sought no recognition or reward, but only a climate in which he could lose himself in his soul-satisfying but soul-absorbing discipline. The impressions and recollections of his professors, wellwishers and friends throw light on Ramanujam, the man and the mathematician. The mathematician is of interest to the specialist. But the man is bound to touch every heart: shy, modest, uncomplaining, free from any trace of vanity and bitterness, and above all genuinely concerned about the poor students – the man Ramanujam was made of such stuff.

The extracts and the letter to the Registrar, Madras University, given below reveal the man and are from Ramanujam, *The Man and the Mathematician* by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan (Asia Publishing House).

Year 1910: Interview with Ramaswami Iyer, Deputy Collector and founder of the Indian Mathematical Society.

Ramanujam: I am interested in Mathematics. This notebook contains some of the theorems and results got by me.

Ramaswami Iyer: Pass it on to me... My goodness! I find it to be a mine of theorems and formulae, what a feast! Where are you working?

Ramanujam: I am unemployed.

Ramaswami Iyer: I hope you have sufficient ancestral property.

Ramanujam: No, sir, my family is poor. My father is a petty clerk in a cloth merchant's shop in Kumbakonam. Sir, he pleased to give me a clerk's post either in your office or in the Taluk Board Office.

Ramaswami Iyer: If you become a clerk in any one of these offices, your mathematical abilities will soon disappear. I do not want to sin that way.

Ramanujam: Who else will help me?

Ramaswami Iyer: You will get some real help. Go and meet Prof. Seshu Ayyar of the Presidency College and give him this letter. Do you know him at all?

Ramanujam: Yes, sir. I was

his student in the Government College, Kumbakonam.

"In the plenitude of my mathematical wisdom, I condescended to permit Ramanujam to walk into my presence. A short uncouth figure, stout, unshaved, not over-clean, with one conspicuous feature – shining eyes – walked in with a frayed notebook under his arm. He was miserably poor. He had run away from Kumbakonam to get leisure in Madras to pursue his studies. He never cared for any distinction. He wanted leisure, in other words, that simple food should be provided for him without exertion on his part and that he should be allowed to dream on."

R. Ramachandra Rao, Collector of Nellore and President of the Indian Mathematical Society.

K.S. Srinivasan, popularly called "Sandow", had known Ramanujam well in Kumbakonam. He called on Ramanujam one evening (February 1912).

Sandow: Ramanujam, they all call you a genius.

Ramanujam: Me a genius! Look at my elbow, it will tell you the story.

Sandow: What is all this, Ramanujam? Why is it so rough and black?

Ramanujam: My elbow has become rough and black in making a genius of me! Night and day I do my calculations on slate. I wipe the slate every few minutes with my elbow.

Sandow: Why not use paper?

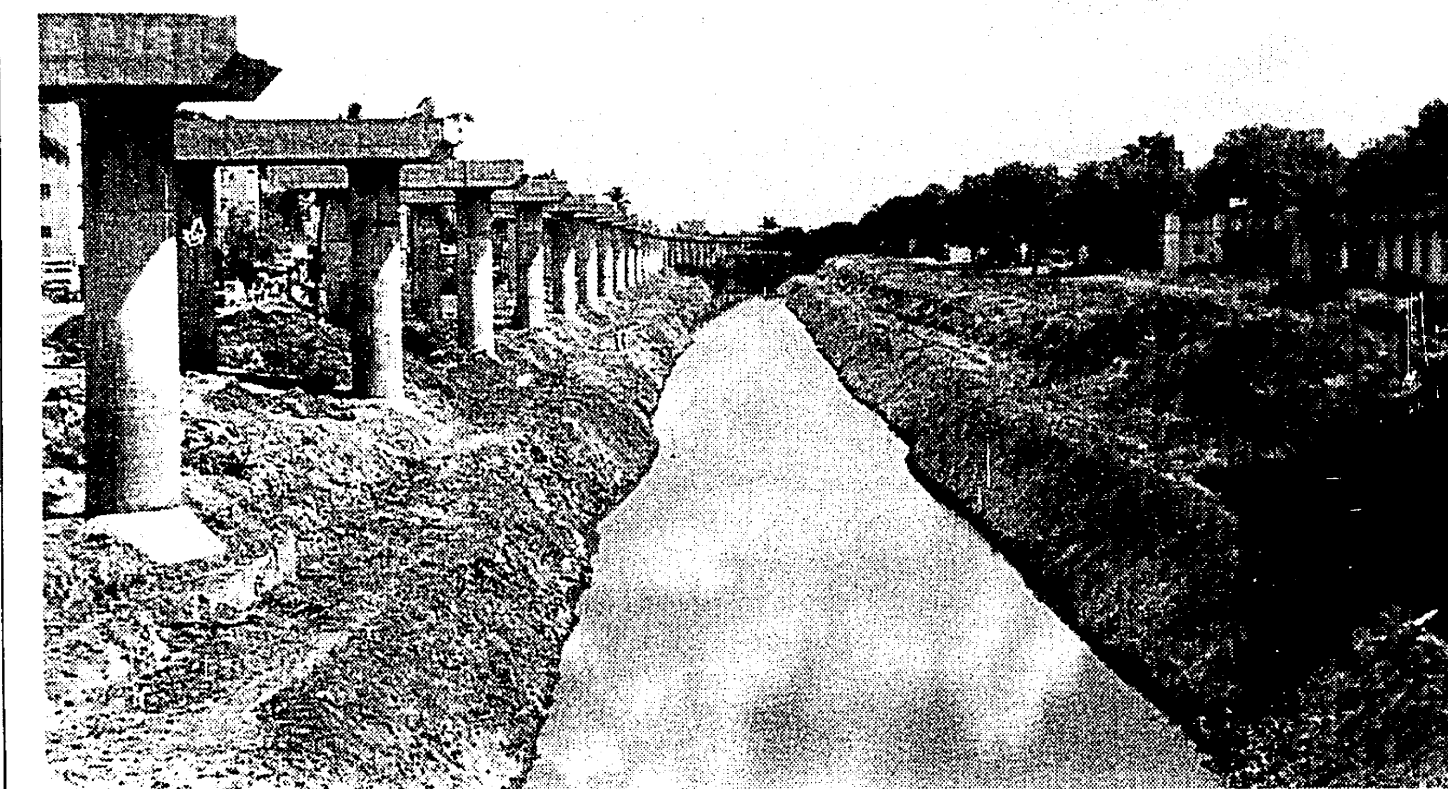
Ramanujam: When food itself is a problem, how can I find money for paper? I may require four reams of paper every month.

Sandow: Tell me honestly, what do you do for your food? Do you work anywhere?

Ramanujam: Our Professor Seshu Iyer introduced me to R. Ramachandra Rao, the Collector of Nellore. That great man has been providing me with money every month.

Sandow: Then why do you worry yourself?

Ramanujam: How long am I to depend on others? The humiliation of it has gone deep into me. Therefore, I did not take the money from last month.

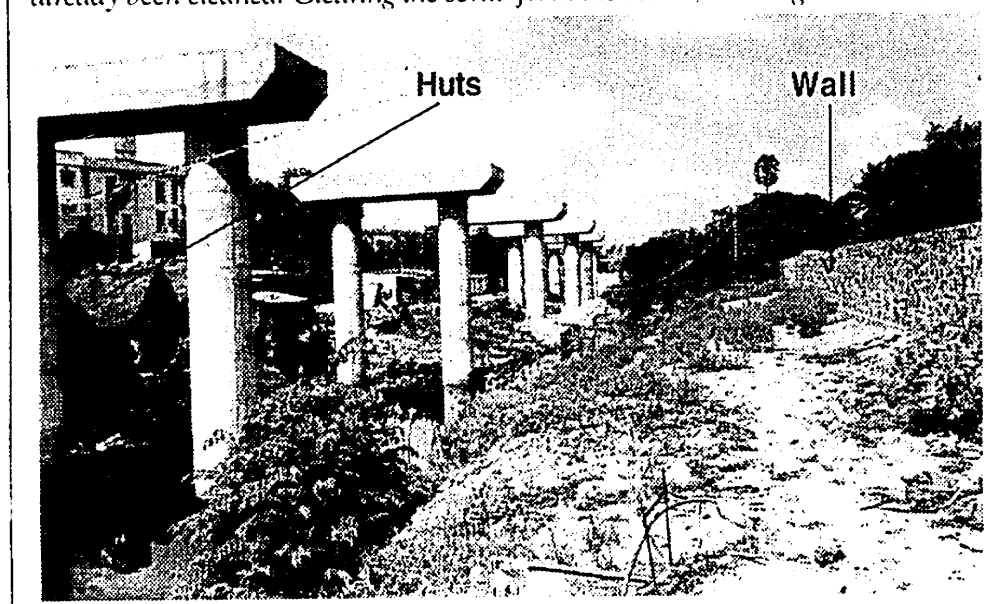


THE OLD...

• The Buckingham Canal is beginning to look splendid again in stretches. Like the one in our NEW, just behind the Cancer Hospital in Gandhinagar, Achar. Our OLD shows what the same stretch looked like before the desilting spree by Government got underway.

Below is another aspect of the NEW seen near the VHS Hospital; this stretch of canal, soon to be desilted, is protected by a wall recently raised to keep out new encroachers. Encroachers out of the past, however, appear to have got licence to stay put, or so it would seem from the huts seen on the left in the picture.

Cleaning of the Canal has been taken up in phases from October 1999. First, the 4 km from the Coonan to R.K. Mutt Road was cleaned. Then the 3 km from R.K. Mutt Road to the Adyar River (Gandhi Nagar) was completed. Now work is on along a 24 km stretch from Gandhinagar to the Muttukadu backwaters. Meanwhile, 17 km from Central Jail to Ennore Creek have already been cleaned. Clearing the silt from the banks, desilting the canal, moving out encroachers and strengthening the embankments are all part of this scheme to make the Buckingham Canal a waterbody again, not the drain it had become. But those on the project say, desilting has to be a constantly repeated process if the Canal is to look like what it appears in our NEW. This has to be supplemented by the prevention of encroachments and garbage and sewage disposal in it. If that is ensured, there is no reason, these officials say, why the Canal within City limits can't be like the stretch beyond Thorapakkam where fish and other aquatic life have begun to thrive.



...&THE NEW

in the *Mathematical Journal*. Ramanujam invariably wore a buttoned-up coat which hid no shirt within. One day, his cap was blown off by a gust of wind when he got into the tram. The Sanskrit Pandit asked him to go out and get himself a cap, as attending class without a head-dress was against discipline. Ramanujam begged to be excused saying that he was too poor to buy another cap, though it cost less than half a rupee.

Sandow: What a rash thing to do! What are you going to do now?

Ramanujam: I joined the Madras Port Trust Office as a clerk on the 9th of this month. Pay Rs.25/- a month.

After a hurried lunch, Ramanujam would go to Singaravelu Mudaliar, (Professor of Maths, Pachiappa's College) who waited for his assistance to solve difficult problems

In 1918, he had an assured annual income of 500 pounds – £250 from Trinity College, Cambridge, and £250 from the Madras University. According to his Gospel of Wealth, any wealth which comes to a person's share beyond his actual needs must only be received as a contribution to a Trust Fund for social good. This Gospel of Wealth prompted him to send the following letter to the

(Continued on Page 7)

When the Lodds were Lords

There have been some letters in *Madras Musings* of late about a forgotten Madras personality who in his time was a dominant figure in the City. Finding out more about his contribution to Madras has not been the easiest of tasks, as many a descendant was reluctant to speak. I was lucky to meet a ninth generation descendant, Lodd Ramgopal, who was more forthcoming about his great great grandfather Lodd Govindas. But while Ramgopal has collected much memorabilia of his great great grandfather, he also talks of changing times and developing the properties of Lodd Govindas.

Born to Lakshmi Bai and Seth Veneedas, the son of Seth Veneedas, was Lodd Govindas I in 1755. Lodd Govindas I, who dealt with pearls and diamonds, came to Madras from Gujarat about 220 years ago. He had three sons, Balakrishnadas, Balamukundas and Girdhardas. In 1821, Lodd Krishnadas was born to Balamukundas, but lost his mother barely 12 days after his birth and his father five years later in an accident. He was thereafter brought up by his mother's parents in Mysore.

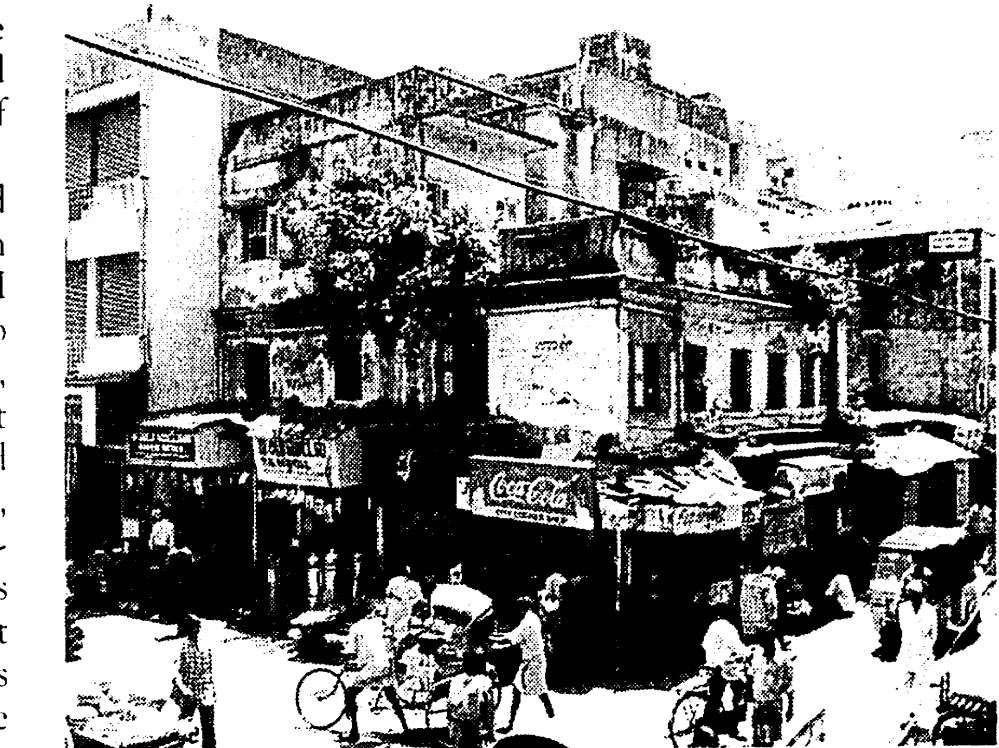
A part of the family had migrated from Gujarat to Seringapatnam. The first of them to settle there was Seth Laldas, who was also known as the 'Nagarseth', or master of the city. The Venkataramanawami Temple in Mysore and Shri Jalakaneteswaraswami temple in Bangalore are Laldas' contributions to Mysore State. But neither the Wadiyars nor Tippu Sultan were exactly helpful to the family and there were some quite considerable losses.

After Laldas' death and the ups and downs his brothers Govardhandas and Narasinghadas went through,

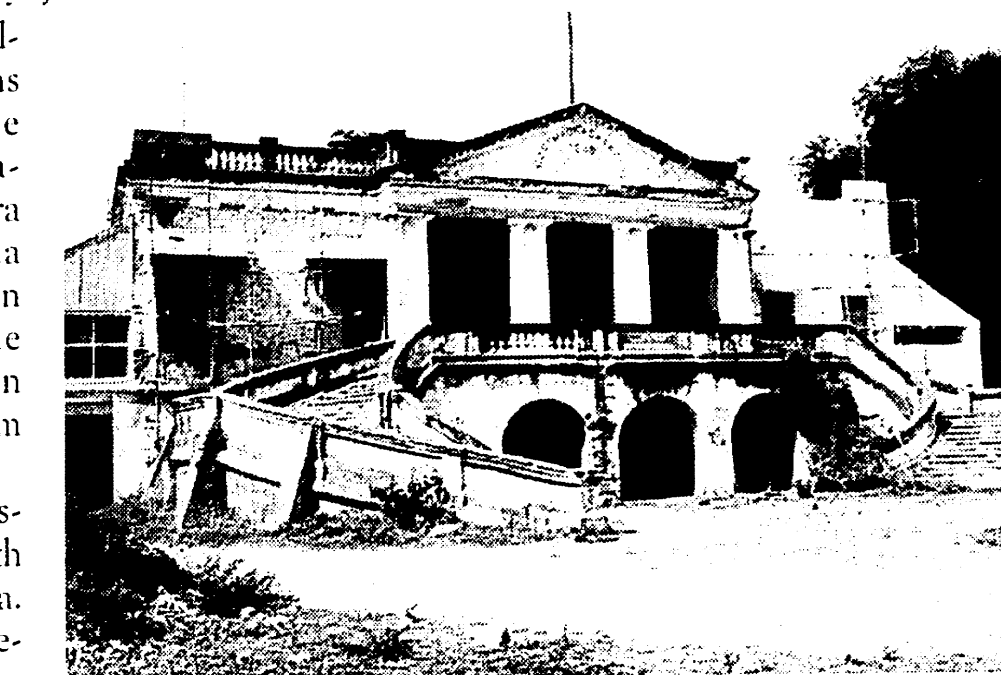
Krishnadas went to work for the wealthy Seth Damodardas. He then came to Madras to work with his paternal uncle Lodd Girdhardas. During this apprenticeship here, he picked up English, which helped him to enlarge the business activities Girdhardas had with a London-based firm, Lewin Joseph & Company, in precious stones. In time Krishnadas became an expert in examining precious stones, and fixing a price in a manner

late wife's sister Bhagirathi Bai and to them was born Govindas II in 1873, the Lodd Govindas of all the correspondence in *Madras Musings*.

Krishnadas became a leading banker. In 1882, he advanced a loan of 25 lakhs to Zamindar of Carvetnagar for which Narayanvaram taluk, consisting of 232 villages, was mortgaged to Krishnadas for a period of 48 years. A special legislation to help the Raja of Carvetnagar and Kalahasti was



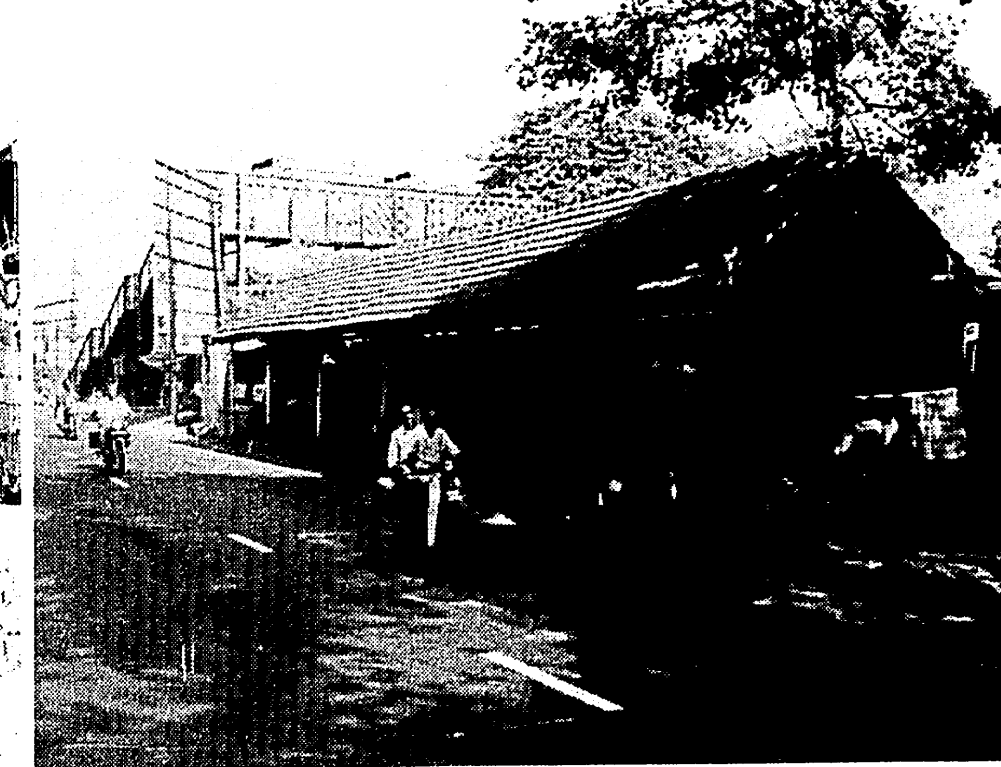
The building (with the Coca Cola sign) in the left hand corner of Mint Street is all that's left of a palatial building that stretched well beyond the highrise seen on the extreme left. This was the Lodd family's first home in Madras.



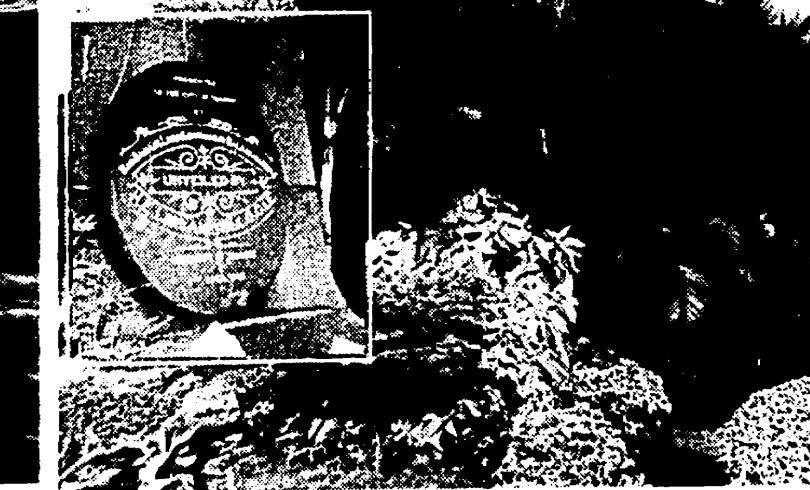
Umda Bagh, sold to Government for the Madrasa-i-Azam on Mount Road, by the Lodd family who had acquired the property from the Nawabs of the Carnatic.



The Anandhana Samajam where a school still functions, founded by Lodd Krishnadas in Mint, George Town. This building was built by him.



The horse-and-jukka shelter opposite Ripon Buildings, perhaps the only one still used in the City, was a gift to Madras by Lodd Govindas.



The statue of King Edward VII, opposite Rajaji Hall, gifted to the City by Lodd Govindas's father, Rao Bahadur Lodd Krishnadas Balamukundas. (All photographs of the present by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



Lodd Govindas in his daily attire, photographed in 1922.



Lodd Govindas in ceremonial attire, photographed in the 1920s.

passed, a long legal battle followed. Eventually, Lodd Govindas received a decree in 1904/5 for Rs. 21,21,000 as principal and Rs. 2,00,000 as interest. The decree was executed only in 1930.

In 1895, Krishnadas helped put up a pavilion for the Indian National Congress conference held in the city. He also hosted the delegates in his *Patter's Gardens* residence. He also entertained guests in his *Umda Bagh* home. Krishnadas later sold *Umda Bagh* to the Government of Madras for Rs. 1.5 lakh though it had been valued at more than Rs. 3 lakh. He extended this consideration because the building was being purchased for a public and philanthropic purpose, namely as home for the Madras-i-Azam school.

Lodd Krishnadas gifted to the city the King Edward VII statue, opposite *Rajaji Hall*. To get the statue he wanted, he went to England and met the Royal Sculptor, George Wade. Lord Ampthill, Governor of Madras, unveiled the statue on April 8, 1903. The *Anandhana Samajam*, an institute in which Annie Besant took keen interest, was started in 1890 to help the blind, dumb and lame. This too was possible through the generosity of Lodd Krishnadas. From 1893, the poor were also fed here. When the numbers increased and a need for a permanent structure was felt, he constructed a building in 1895 for it. Later, a small day school was opened in the building for the blind boys and girls. The Tarapore and Perumal Chetty families today run the school. He also helped build the *Nurses' Quarters* in the Victoria Caste and Gosha Hospital (Kasturbari 'gosha' hospital), and these named the father, Lodd Krishnadas *Nurses' Quarters*.

Footnote: Some of the memorabilia of the glorious age of Lodd Govindas that are now in Lodd Ramgopal's collection are a carved metal luggage carrier from Lodd Govindas's car MC 9612, a silver cap that was worn by him, badges with photographs of Govindas on them, and documents, such as 1860 bonds and receipts. Ramgopal is the son of Lodd Mohankrishnadas.

(To be concluded next fortnight)
Rajind N Christy

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Questions 1 to 12 are from the period April 1 to 15. Questions 10 to 12 pertain to Chennai. Questions 13 to 20 relate to Tamil Nadu.)

- 1. What is the new Cash Reserve Ratio as announced by the RBI?
2. Which author of Indian origin won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for her debut work Interpreter of Maladies?
3. Name the Prime Minister of Japan who went into a coma, leading to a change in the Premiership.
4. Name the first indigenously constructed naval ship commissioned at Visakhapatnam (on April 3rd).
5. Which Indian sportsperson was recently banned by the sport's governing body for taking a banned substance?
6. How long is the prison sentence given to the former Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif?
7. Why was a Rajesh Kalra in the news internationally recently?
8. Name the Indian nun beatified by the Pope on April 9th.
9. Who won the prestigious U.S. Masters golf tourney at Augusta recently?
10. To whom was the Loyola Institute of Business Management's 'Mother Teresa Award for Best Corporate Citizen' given?
11. Which company recently introduced Chennai's first toll-free customer care line?
12. Where in Chennai was the first pedestrian-operated traffic signal, that too a solar powered one, opened recently?
13. In the surplus course of which tank does the Adyar waterway have its origins?
14. Which area in Karur District has got a Central Government grant, under the Integrated Watershed Development Project, to develop 11,606 hectares of wasteland?
15. Where in the State is the Tamil Nadu Government planning to set up a Rs.2 crore mega-market for the farmer's 'Uzhavar Perum Sandhai'?
16. Name the schoolgirl from Madurai who annexed the Asian under-10 chess championships.
17. Where in the State will the country's second largest shipbreaking yard come up?
18. Name the three prominent AIADMK leaders expelled from the party recently.
19. In which film did the matinee idol Kamalahasan make his film debut?
20. Which team won the State women's football championships (at Dindigul) recently?

(Answers on Page 7)

It's up to you - not the doctor!

One of the most dramatic events of the 20th Century was something that most of us are hardly aware of. Within a small timeframe of 60-70 years, life expectancy in virtually every society doubled from around 30 years to 60 years or more; in many advanced societies the figure was closer to 80 years. At no other time in history has such a dramatic change been seen in such a small period of time.

This longevity is not just one of numbers. The added years are in most cases lived free of disease, with the individual being able to contribute significantly to society. The very definition of health has therefore changed from one of avoiding disease to that of being able to get the most of our bodily and emotional functions.

It is easy to succumb to the misconception that the credit for this gift goes to the advances in modern medicine that have occurred during this period of time. The truth lies elsewhere. This doubling of life span takes place predictably when two important social changes occur in any given population:

- 1. A daily nutritional intake that is equivalent to 2500 calories.
2. Freedom from common infections that is brought about by:
a. A protected water supply.
b. Good sanitation and drainage.

Both these requirements are dependent upon development standards and have nothing to do with the medical profession. They are related to per capita incomes and other indices of development, not the availability of doctors and hospitals. This is substantiated by the observation that the increase in longevity occurred earliest in Western societies in the 1920s — a good 20 to 30 years before the much-publicised triumphs of modern medicine, with its antibiotics and other lifesaving drugs.

This longevity, however, comes with a price. An aging population that has survived the attrition of infection and

malnutrition now falls victim to a variety of complex disorders that are related to wear and tear of the human body: diseases such as heart attacks, diabetes, cancer, strokes, arthritis and so on. You do not need to be a doctor to realise that these diseases often generate medicinal bills that are very large and often crippling.

Most of these diseases can be significantly reduced or their effect blunted by simple measures. However, this requires effort by the person concerned and is seldom within the domain of traditional doctors. Herein lies the problem. Disease involves a situation where the responsibility for intervention is placed in the hands of the doctor. The patient has very little to say in the choice of what is considered appropriate.

By training, aptitude and preference, modern doctors are professionals who do their best when the system breaks down. The more acute the breakdown, the better the results. Doctors are disease-care specialists; asking them to keep you healthy is obviously not going to work.

Yet, most of us live our lives without ever pausing to reflect on this bounty, and complain endlessly about how miserable we feel. For this, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Despite the much publicised growth in knowledge and capability of the medical profession, it is increasingly obvious that the responsibility for staying healthy is the individual's. The medical profession cannot help him in the important business of staying healthy.

Staying healthy is not a simple act. It involves a balance between:
- Nutrition;
- Physical condition;
- Economics;
- The environment;
- Social and cultural standards; and
- Freedom from disease.

Since time immemorial, all our traditions, scriptures, and collective wisdom have repeat-

A rewarding experience in ACTION

The concept of DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short Courses) recommended by WHO is now practised the world over as the best possible strategy to cure tuberculosis. In Chennai, the practice of DOTS in the private sector has proven successful because a set of committed individuals called the DOTS providers have undertaken to care for tuberculosis patients in their communities. The DOTS provider's commitment is to watching the patient swallowing the drugs. Here, the responsibility of cure rests on the DOTS provider and not on the patient.

DOTS providers are usually friends of the patient and they have known each other for many years. A next door neighbour, a friend, a colleague, or someone who is interested in the welfare of their friend.

These individuals come from different backgrounds and range from a tailor to a watchman, a doctor and a sweeper. Though their professional and socio-economic backgrounds vary a lot, the purpose for which they have come together is the same, to help in the cure of a patient. They have taken the time to make a difference in the lives of their friends. The responsibility which they have taken, may take just a few minutes of their time, but it is a task which requires consistency and commitment for six months.

The bond which exists between the patient and the DOTS provider is not just friendship. The latter becomes a sort of 'doctor' to the patient during the time of treatment. So the joy and satisfaction which they feel when the patient is cured is a great reward; there is no monetary reward for their work.

Here are some of their experiences that DOTS providers, working with the Advocacy for Control of Tuberculosis programme, wish to share:

- I have 11 patients who come to me to take their medicines. My husband is a doctor and they are all his patients. They come regularly and I always expect a 'cured' result at the end of their treatment. I am able to do this with my husband's encouragement. - Pankajam
Initially I had a fear of doing the job, but as I saw the patient

edly prescribed the same principles. The only thing that changes is the context and the temporal realities. Innumerable strategies are at our disposal. An industry has arisen out of the need for self-improvement and health maintenance. In addition, we are in an age when access to information regarding these principles is abundant, and easy. There is no dearth of

Advertisement for REACH (Responsible, Effective, Accessible, Cost-effective, and Humanitarian) DOTS message. Includes text: 'TB is a bigger killer than AIDS', 'Closer home in India', 'We carry nearly one-third of the global TB burden.', 'TB is curable, but it takes knowledge and will.' and 'The DOTS message'.

- getting cured, I become more confident in my work. - Sampath
I am happy to help my friend (patient). I go and give her the medication in the afternoon after finishing all my work — sending my children to school and the cooking. My family supports me in this responsibility. If I forget, my husband reminds me. Without him, I would not be able to do it. - Muruvammal
I give medicines for my friend. Sometimes I wait till 10 o'clock to observe him swallowing the drugs. I had the feeling that I was the 'doctor' for this patient. Because of my efforts he is getting cured. If given an opportunity, I would like to help more patients. - Pasupathy
The medicines were absolutely free and of the highest quality. It was a great help in cutting down the costs of the treatment. - Eric Baptist
Jovitta Joseph & Sheela Augustine Social Workers, ACT
(Courtesy: REACH Annual, 2000)

resources. The only requirement is our willingness and persistence in sustaining these efforts. If sustained, there's little doubt that individuals and society will benefit in no small way. We will have years added to our lives — and life added to those years. (Courtesy: REACH Annual, 2000).

Dr. Arjun Rajagopalan

Beth Bullard's Diary

The U.S. discovers the Carnatic flute

Atlanta, Georgia, 19 August 1999

Mala has matured, displaying more confidence in performance, more strength of tone. Recognition finds her; titles flow in; she is named Kalai-mamani.

Madras, March 1996

My life-long dream of living in India and learning about its music first-hand has come true! My project: The Flute and Flute Players in South India. My guide: T.S.P. My affiliation: the famous Music Academy. In an inspired moment, TSP arranges that I start flute lessons with a young musician on her way up as a performer: she is Mala, daughter of the Sikkil Sisters, a duo I have already come to admire from cassettes obtained in the U.S. Thus begins a very special personal and professional relationship between myself and Mala — a voyage of discovery and mutual support for us both. I am not alone in recognising Mala's potential as one of the best young exponents of her art; indeed, her concert at the Music Academy, which I attended, is judged the best of the season given by a solo artiste of the younger generation.

Carlisle, Pennsylvania, January 1993

My fellowship ended, I am back in the U.S. The three months in Madras have kindled my desire to gain further understanding of South Indian culture, its people, its arts, and most especially, its flutists and their histories. I set immediately to work making applications for further research in Madras... How I miss these people, their music, and Madras itself!

Madras, September 1995

I'm back... South India is a source of endless fascination and wonder. The more I learn, the more there is to learn... TSP and Mala are once again my revered gurus. To this able duo I succeed in adding a third, thus forming a perfect trinity for instruction: Radha Viswanathan, Mala's mother-in-law, is my guru for vocal lessons!...

I attend many recitals of the reigning greats, like the Sikkil Sisters, N. Ramani and T. Viswanathan. Among the younger flutists, Mala stands out. She combines the best of her aunt and her mother's styles of playing: Kunjuman's clear, classic lines and infallible sense of tempo, with Neela's flair, expressiveness and precision of sruti.

As before, Mala places her role as ensemble player above personal display, and she communicates effectively in equal measure toward her ensemble and toward her audience. And

most venerable traditions in the world.

Carlisle, Pennsylvania, November 1998

As a Western player and university teacher of flute, I belong to the National Flute Association, an organisation of professionals and other enthusiasts for this instrument. The annual NFA convention, I decide, is the venue to introduce South Indian flute playing; to my knowledge, this style has heretofore never been shown to the national membership of this organisation. (North Indian flute playing is known to many, as Hariprasad Chaurasia plays frequently to audiences of non-Indians as well as NRIs in the U.S. But Carnatic flute-playing, like Carnatic music, is not familiar in America.) My proposal is adopted, and Mala is invited to the NFA Convention to be held in Atlanta, Georgia. She is to be the first 'act' for the opening gala concert of flute music from around the world, entitled 'Dawn of the New Millennium'. How appropriate, I think to myself, for the millennia-old art of South Indian classical music, represented by the venu, to open an event celebrating the beginning of another thousand-year span (even if by Western reckoning only)!

Atlanta, Georgia, 19 August 1999

From our base in Carlisle, the three musicians and I now turn into a four-person travelling team bringing Carnatic music to six colleges and universities, five of them in the State of Pennsylvania and one in New York city. At most of these places, hardly anyone —

Dr. Beth Bullard is a Western flutist and musician who came to Madras twice to study South Indian music, its history, and its musicians. For three months in 1992, she took lessons in the flute with Sikkil Mala Chandrasekhar and in music history with T.S. Parthasarathy. Three years later she spent six months here continuing these studies. Dr. Bullard, who teaches at Dickinson College and Gettysburg College, in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., is at present working on the history of the flute. She relates her learning experience and later activities in the form of a diary, extracts from which are published here.



Mala Chandrasekar.

including students (music and non-music) — knows anything about Carnatic music. And when they do, they know only little of it...

The music professors are very appreciative but less effective in their reactions... The second level of commentary comes from students whom we touched with both the intellectual and sonic content of Carnatic music.

Some found this group of musicians to be 'quite relaxing', or 'fascinating' or 'very rhythmic and intense' or even 'thought-provoking, even if extremely complex.'

One was 'really astonished' by the mridanga playing, another noticed the Indians play the songs 'in a circular way' while the practice in Western culture is to 'play from Point A to Point B'.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF GENIUS

(Continued from page 4)

University of Madras. He was too weak to write the letter himself. It was written from a nursing home in Hardy's hand.

To The Registrar University of Madras Sir, I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter and gratefully accept the very generous help which the University offers me.

I feel, however, that after my return to India, the total amount of money to which I shall be entitled will be much more than what I shall require. I should hope that, after my ex-

Yet another wrote: '(What) struck me as unique was how they went from note to note. In our language it's like steps, but in theirs it seems like more of a progression. Our steps now seem rigid where their progression is very graceful.'

'At one point I realised that I was moving along with the music,' commented someone else. 'As I looked around the room many people were doing the same thing.'

Amazement marked another observation: 'I had never seen a flute made out of anything but metal before'.

And there was astonishment too. '... to actually see that all the music is in their heads; and to hear them improvise — it was simply astonishing. It was definitely one of the most interesting musical experiences I have ever enjoyed in my life...'

In six weeks, Mala, her music, musicianship and that of her ensemble made a lasting impression on some 2000 persons in the colleges, universities and towns in America where we appeared, most of whom had never experienced this magnificent music and who otherwise might never have experienced it at all. More often than not, important aspects of Carnatic music were recognised and appreciated. Most celebrated of all on this tour were the musicians — as themselves and as ambassadors of their culture. — (Courtesy: Sruti)

penses in England have been paid, £50 per year will be paid to my parents and that the surplus, after my necessary expenses are met, should be used for some educational purpose, such in particular as the reduction of school fees for poor boys and orphans and provision of books in schools.

I beg to remain, Sir your most obedient servant, (S.Ramanujam) ***

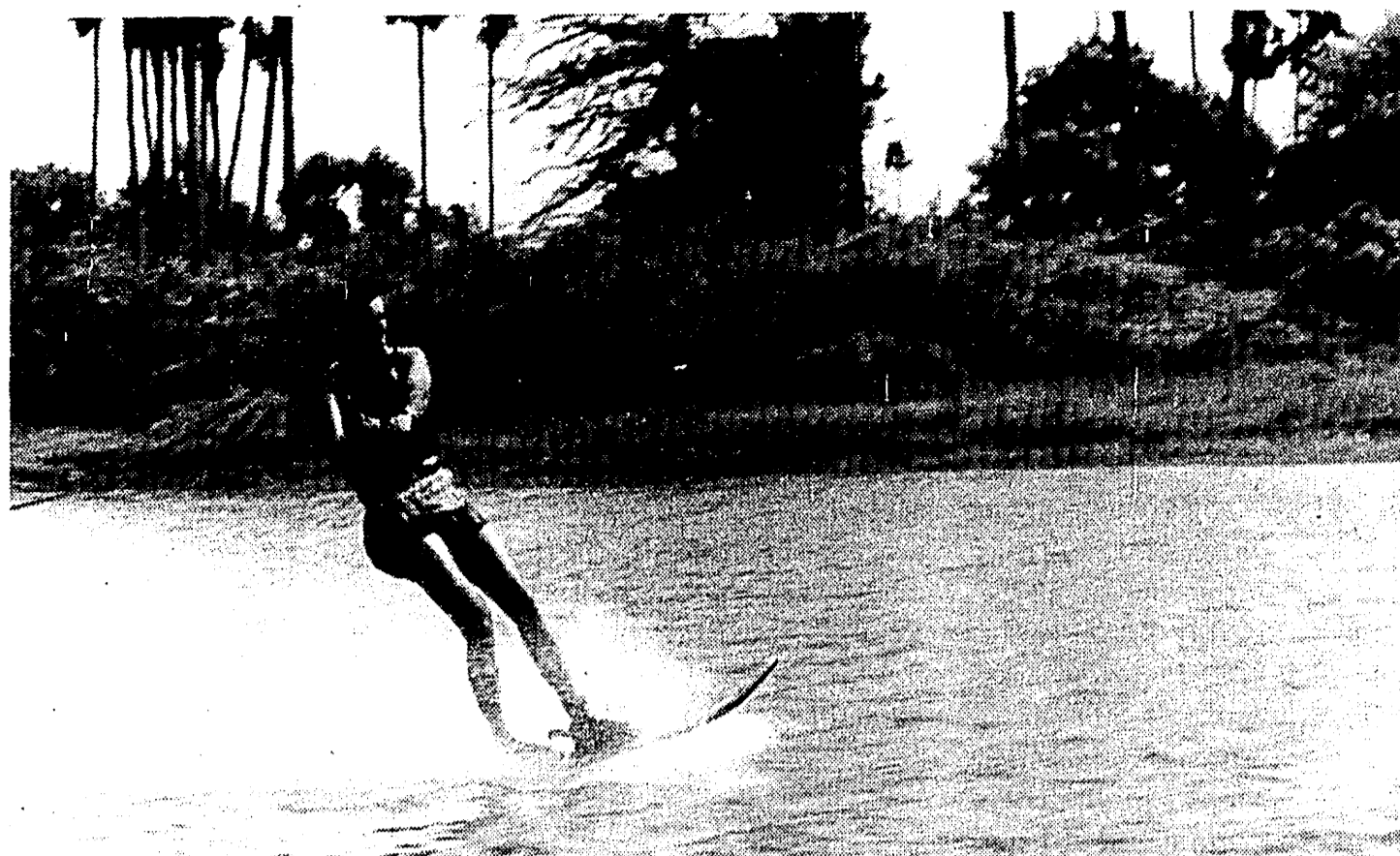
S. Ramanujam passed away on April 26, 1920 at Chetput.

S. Jagadeesan 48A, Tarachand Nagar Varugambakkam Chennai 600 092.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- 1. 8 per cent; 2. Jhumpa Lahiri; 3. Keizo Obuchi; 4. INS Aditya; 5. Badminton star Aparna Popat; 6. Life imprisonment, i.e. 25 years; 7. He was the Delhi businessman-bookie whose arrest led to Hansie Cronje's dismissal and made the match-fixing scandal come to the fore; 8. Mother Mariam Theresia (born: Chiramel Mankidiyan in Kerala) and founder of the Holy Family Apostolate; 9. Fiji's Vijay Singh.
10. Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited; 11. Satyam Online (1600334554); 12. At Seerani Arangam on Kamaraj Salai ***
13. Manimangalam Tank; 14. Kadavur region; 15. Ottanchathirram in Dindigul District; 16. V.K. Sindhu; 17. Valinokkam Port at Ramanathapuram District; 18. Sedapatti R. Muthiah, S. Raghupathy and Karuppusamy Pandian; 19. Kalathur Kannamma; 20. Chennai.

The thrills of speed on water



Arun Vasu water skiing at Tarsha.

Jet skiing, kayaking, parasailing, water skiing, wind surfing... hold your breath, there's more — knee boarding, wake boarding, banana boat rides and extreme tube rides. Offering all this to Chennai's ever-increasing fun-seeking crowd is Tarsha Water Sport (TWS), 15 km after Mamallapuram on the East Coast Road.

For those who might wonder whether travelling 60 km away from the city to experience joy rides on water is worth it, the fact is that TWS, run by Leisure Adventure Private Ltd., has been drawing regular crowds during weekends ever since it opened about a year ago. "The weekend rush at the facility is proof that distance is not an inhibiting factor at all," says Arun Vasu, partner, Leisure Adventure, whose pet project is this only-one-of-its-kind in Chennai.

The increasing number of visitors to TWS is certainly heartening for Vasu, a qualified scuba driver who readily admits that he is much happier driving or windsurfing off the beaches in the Maldives, Andamans, Goa or Covelong (off Fisherman's Cove), than steering his travel company (TT Travels Ltd.) towards profitable ventures.

Vasu's earlier water sport experiment at Muttukkadu met

with little success, due to clearances which were long awaited but which never came. Well, Tarsha, named after his daughter, seems to have changed all that for Vasu.

It was at Muttukkadu that Vasu started learning windsurfing 17 years ago, from a foreign friend. His romance with wind and water led him to scale new heights. He was placed second in an all-India windsurfing competition in 1992, and at the wind-surfing national championship in Goa the next year, he stood fifth.

speedboat and two more jet skis were purchased. A restaurant was opened to cater to visitors. And thus began a commercial venture.

The sheer thrill of speeding up to 80-90 kms an hour on water is an unbeatable experience, it's almost addictive, according to Vasu. An enthusiastic rider can easily graduate from a

● by Sashi Nair

It was Vasu's sheer passion for the sport that made him never give up hope. That, and the birth of this daughter, helped him treat his sour experience at Muttukkadu as just another step to a goal, of setting up a water sport facility in Chennai.

"Actually TWS began on a trial basis, with just one speedboat and a jet ski. I had invited a few friends who awaited beneath a thatched shed" for their turn for a ride, reminisces Vasu. This continued for two or three weekends. Soon, a pucca clubhouse was constructed, complete with shower, toilets and a kitchen. Another

simple joy ride on a jet ski, a watercraft which has seating for two and which can be driven easily on water, to the more skilled and adventurous forms of water sport, like water skiing, wake boarding and knee boarding.

In wake boarding, a skateboard is strapped to your feet while the board is pulled by the speed boat. The more adventurous the rider, the more the flips, jumps somersaults and turns. Knee boarding is very similar, except that the board is strapped beneath the rider's knees. Another skilled water sport offered by TWS is water-skiing, where two separate skis

are strapped to the rider's feet while he holds on to a nylon rope drawn by a speedboat.

Wind surfing is done on a fibreglass board with a sail. A basic course for beginners is offered by TWS. Trained windsurfers are then shifted to another location, away from the backwaters and on to the open sea where the waves help the surfer on his way.

For the thrill of flying 200 ft high in the air, there's parasailing as well. A long nylon rope connects the parasailer to a jeep which charts out the route on the ground, usually near Tiger Caves in Mahabalipuram. A parachute provides the flier added safety.

For those who need company to enjoy speeding on water, there's the banana boat ride, where a banana-shaped rubber inflatable five-seater is pulled by a motorised boat as it speeds across the water. The extreme tube ride is done on a round inflated tube, ideal for a couple. But for those wanting a quiet, long, leisurely paddle by themselves, there's also kayaking or canoeing on offer.

Asked about safety stan-

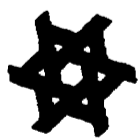
dards, Vasu assures everyone that the facilities offered by TWS are absolutely safe. The average depth of the water is only 4-5 feet. Moreover, life-jackets are compulsory. And if there is still problem, there are lifeguards to help.

So far, more than 200 people between 6 and 70 years of age have been trained at TWS; 60 per cent of them had never swum before. TWS is open to annual membership. For a yearly membership fee of Rs.5000, a discount of 20-25 per cent on all rides can be had. A few dozen water sports enthusiasts have already enrolled.

TWS has a tie-up with The Caravan Company which enables families the option of spending a day by the backwaters in an air-conditioned caravan. A caravan for six can be hired for Rs.2500.

Arun Vasu and Aparna, his wife, have several exciting plans for TWS. An all-India water skiing and wind surfing competition, followed by a jet ski race with riders from abroad, are two of them. Another plan is making provision for beach volleyball and fishing at the centre.

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



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