

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Century-old Club
- Cheating over age
- The Jellicut
- Philatelic quiz
- Discovering a writer
- Cricket masala

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## Century-old Club at crossroads

(By A Special Correspondent)

Yet another venerable Madras institution is about to be brought down. The hundred year-old Mylapore Club on Luz Church Road is about to be asked to vacate the premises it has been occupying for a century.

An institution that owes its origins to some of the best known legal luminaries of the last century — the likes of Justices P.R. Sundara Iyer and V. Krishnaswami Iyer and Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer — and other outstanding personalities, it may no longer be part of the Mylapore landscape, if the letter of the law is followed strictly, without consideration to history.

The land on which the Club stands belongs to the Kapaleeswarar Temple and the 99-year lease under which the Club has occupied it, has expired. The temple authorities have given the Club notice to vacate and

the Club's strenuous efforts to buy or lease out at least a part of the premises stand defeated as of now.

While *Madras Musings* steers clear of the legal aspects, it nevertheless feels strongly that the Club, being part of the history of Mylapore, deserves greater recognition. It has some of Chennai's most eminent personalities as its members and office-bearers. The Club is famous for its tennis, bridge and billiards facilities and outstanding players have represented it in various competitions. Its canteen enjoys a fame that extends far beyond Luz and Mylapore. Most important, it has a reputation for its very home-like atmosphere and the many activities that it offers the whole family.

Would it be too much to expect of the temple authorities to ask them to consider parting with a small part of the vast grounds the Club now occupies,

for the Club's continued use, with the proviso that some or all of the sporting facilities be made available free of cost to the children of temple staff and any other deserving children of the temple's choice? Perhaps two of the tennis courts could be retained and these could be thrown open for public (temple) use during certain hours of the day or days of the week. The library can likewise be expanded to be used by the families of temple staff. Several such innovative measures can be thought of, if both parties put their heads together and try to find a happy solution acceptable to all, now that the legal niceties have been ruled on.

All over the Western world, heritage institutions are treated with great respect. Here, too, a few tentative steps are being taken to preserve heritage. With its rich past, the Mylapore Club is worth saving.

## SCARCE RESOURCE

Water has now become a scarce resource. Long treks by village women, empty pails at municipal pumps, water tanks on city streets, press coverage on droughts, all go to prove it. Water harvesting, artificial recharge have become vitally necessary to:

- Arrest groundwater decline and improve its accessibility.
- Beneficiate water quality in aquifers.
- Prevent surface water runoff during monsoons.
- Enhance availability of surface water at a specific place and time.
- Reduce power consumption.
- Conserve urban waste water.

### The role of industry

Industries are major consumers and have responsibility to take on a meaningful role in accelerating this programme by:

- Organising mass awareness campaigns by the constituents in industrial areas through handouts, posters, village level involvement through panchayats.
- Practising rainwater harvesting and recharging in their own factory premises.

- Implementing rainwater harvesting in residential buildings, even before they become mandatory.
- Motivating communities to participate in *shramdan* camps for cleaning ponds, tanks, wells and borewells; and reutilising them for groundwater storage.
- Assisting with financial support for construction of check dams and creation of catchment areas.
- Recycling industrial waste water subject of course to the quality of the matter and verifying safety.
- Recharging industrial effluents after treatment.

### Guidelines for water conservation

The reduction of water use and recharging of surplus water underground are achieved by:

- Redesigning cisterns / tanks / reservoirs in industrial areas. A traditional 3.5 gallon toilet cistern can be replaced by a modern 7 litre one with equal effect and more saving of water.

(Continued on Page 5)

## IFA grants cover several arts

Three recipients of grants from Bangalore-based India Foundation for the Arts, an independent, national grant awarding institution, involved in serving the arts and culture, will present their work on January 26 at the Book Point auditorium, Anna Salai, Chennai. Of these, Dr. Malavika Kavlekar has researched the history and role of photography in the Bengal of 100 years ago, Himanshu Burte has worked on developing a theoretical framework for designing public places for art, and Chennai-based Dr Karaikudi Subramanian's Brhaddhvani has collaborated with Kochi-based dance school Dharani in identifying, documenting and notating *ragas* and *talas* in *Sopanam* music. Brhaddhvani "aims to render this near-extinct form of temple singing more accessible to

musicians, dancers and other performing artistes," according to IFA Executive Director Anmol Vellani.

During the past five years, IFA has supported projects in twelve states in such fields as performance studies and art history, sociology and anthropology, conservation and architecture, cinema and photography, folk performance and material culture, painting and sculpture, and music, dance and theatre.

These include the following six projects from Tamil Nadu funded during 1999-2000.

1. Kalachuvadu Trust, Nagercoil. Principal Investigator: Dr. A.R. Venkatachala-pathy. Rs. 4,71,500 over eighteen months. Comprehensive documentation of the writings of Pudumaippithan, the first modern Tamil writer. The

(By A Staff Reporter)

project will bring together his voluminous writings — short stories, essays and criticism — scattered across the country in public and private collections. The final outcome, in the form of micro-film and digital copies of Pudumaippithan's work, will be of value to scholars and also facilitate future publications of his writings.

2. Tapasya Kala Sampradaya, Chennai. Rs. 5,00,000 over one year.

Video and audio documentation of the oral and performative elements of *sadir*, locating it within the context of the lifestyles, pedagogy, and beliefs of the Isai Vellalar community, whose few surviving members are the only remaining

exponents of the dance. The resulting film and archival footage are expected to be of interest to both dancers and scholars.

3. Brhaddhvani, Chennai. Principal Investigator: Dr. Karaikudi S. Subramanian. Rs. 3,60,000 over one year. Collaborative research, involving a centre of music, research and training in Tamil Nadu and a school of performing arts in Kerala, towards the identification, documentation and notation of *ragas* and *talas* in *Sopanam* music. The project aims to render this near-extinct form of temple singing more accessible to musicians, dancers and other performing artistes. Outcomes will include selective video documentation of *Sopanam* artistes.

4. Anita Cherian, Chennai. Rs. 1,28,500 over fourteen months.

Dissertation research on the development of a 'national' theatre in India, analysing and evaluating post-Independence cultural policy and the role of institutions like Sangeet Natak Akademi and National School of Drama. The study is expected to contribute to a critical assessment of the role of the State in creating and propagating aesthetic hierarchies and the future of the theatre arts in India.

5. Scharada Bail, Chennai. Rs. 4,05,990 over two years. Research towards an illustrated book on itinerant toymakers from various parts of the country. The study will document the lifestyles

(Continued on Page 5)



# The age of cheating, bane of Indian sport

One of the worst ills affecting Indian sport has been the endemic age-cheating that has been going ever since age-group competitions were first introduced some decades ago. (This does not include the practice of Test cricketers and the likes reducing their age by three years at the minimum in order to prolong their careers.) For long years, Tamil Nadu used to be an honourable exception to this tendency among State-level sports bodies to field over-age boys and girls to enhance the State's prospects of winning competitions. Recently, this too has changed and it has not been uncommon for Tamil Nadu Under-12, Under-16 etc. teams to include players who clearly belong to higher age groups. Unfortunately, schools are no exceptions to this highly contagious disease. Even principals are known to collude with students and parents to provide fake age or birth certificates to strengthen their teams which would duly win trophies for the good old alma mater.

This year, there has been a strenuous and honest attempt by the BCCI and a few other governing bodies to end this menace once and for all. Boys and girls in various disciplines like Tennis, Volleyball and Cricket have been subjected to a standard medical examination procedure and summarily eliminated. Several boys have been sternly dealt with in this fashion in the lead-up to the ongoing Under-19 series between India and England.

In Tamil Nadu — and Chennai — cricket too, age tests have been scrupulously followed... or, rather, almost followed. *The Man from Madras Musings* understands that at the Under-14 and Under-16 level, a few boys genuinely belonging to the relevant age group were unfortunately dropped from State squads because of their physical development — but not told why they were being excluded. Had those boys been asked to prove their real age, they would have done it successfully by simply furnishing their parents' marriage certificates! At the same time, a couple of youngsters who have the backing of vested interests unafraid to flex their muscles both literally and figuratively passed the age test without too much trouble.

MMM is all for removing dishonest practices in sport and will support any steps taken to clean sport, but he will be the first one to demand transparency and complete fairness in clearing or disqualifying young sports-persons.

## Dotcom to dotgo?

Comes news from the US of an exodus of employees from the dotcom world to traditional media in a swift reversal of what happened in 1999-2000. In a tragic denouement that has evolved rather sooner than anticipated, websites and portals

are winding up faster than you can shout 'Yahoo' and literally thousands of dotcommers are on the streets looking for jobs — mainly in the traditional print medium of newspapers and magazines. Venture capitalists and other financial experts who knew with utter certainty hardly a year or two ago that the Internet was the medium of the future and decided to put their money where their informed hunches were, are now equally convinced that there is no future "in them that cyberwaves". *The Man from Madras Musings* is dismayed to learn that euphoria has already given way to gloom in India as well. Sure as night follows day, when New York sneezed, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai caught colds and are seemingly heading for pneumonia.

A recent article in *The Economic Times* on the reverse exodus to traditional media in the US could very well apply to what is happening or will soon happen in Chennai. MMM quotes: "Over the last two years, many journalists set a course for the new frontier of the internet, chasing the promise of new business models, management opportunities, and lucrative stock options."

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

"But with the recent softness in online advertising spending and a renewed focus on quaint metrics like revenues and profits, many of these new companies have been struggling, leading scores of employees to return to more stable traditional media companies..."

"The valuations that had been attached to many of the internet media companies have come crashing in recent months as investors put a renewed emphasis on being profitable."

MMM, innocent as he is of the wondrous ways of the new economics, has always believed that "quaint metrics like revenues and profit" are crucial to any business, but in the face of superior knowledge as spouted by the financial gurus of the internet age had assumed that he must be wrong and they right, that there were some secret sources of revenue beyond his knowledge of terrestrial economics. Yet now that the bubble seems to have burst, he sincerely hopes that viable revenue models will soon be identified and help the new medium fulfil its exciting potential.

## King Anand

Viswanathan Anand's splendid achievement in winning the FIDE world chess championship has received all the attention it deserves. The receptions accorded to the world champion at both Delhi and Chennai were fittingly grand, with overjoyed enthusiasts of the board game of Indian origin thronging the

airports. The *Sportstar* annual awards function became an occasion for *The Hindu* and *Sportstar* to announce a grand Sportsperson of the Millennium award that included Rs. 2.00 lakh in prize money. At a colourful ceremony a couple of days later, the Tamil Nadu Government honoured arguably the most outstanding sportsperson the State and, indeed, India has produced. During the function, Anand received the *Sportstar* award; in a nice gesture of 'one-downmanship', the authors of the award refrained from stealing the thunder from the Tamil Nadu Chess Association which had organised the function.

In all the euphoria surrounding this great achievement and the several good performances of young Indian chess players, male and female, in recent years, and amidst the general popularity of chess in India, it is easy to overlook some of the less happy features of the development of the game in the country. Nothing surprising really, but *The Man from Madras Musings* cannot help wondering how much better our boys and girls could perform if chess were to receive a fraction of the attention or

the world, managed in a few short years to demolish the dire Malthusian worldview that was so prevalent, and pertinent, four decades ago....

"...a miracle was born in the mid-60s at Swaminathan's laboratory in New Delhi — and, a few years later, at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines which he later headed. Swaminathan brought into India seeds developed in Mexico by US agriculture guru Norman Borlaug, and, after cross-breeding them with local species, created a wheat plant that yielded much more grain than traditional types. Scientists at IRRRI accomplished the same miracle for rice."

"Imminent tragedy turned to a new era of hope for Asia, paving the way for the Asian economic miracle of the 1980s and 90s."

Among Swaminathan's several awards have been the Ramon Magsaysay Award for community leadership in 1971; the Albert Einstein World Science Award in 1986; the World Food Prize, which is considered almost on a par with the Nobel Prize, in 1987; the Tyler Prize for environmental achievement

and the Honda Award in 1991; and the Sasakawa Award of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) — for his 'outstanding global contribution' to conservation and sustainable development — in 1994.

A tribute by R Padmanabhan published by chennaionline.com, recounts: "He has been inducted into the Royal Society of Britain and the national academies of science in the United States, China, Italy and Sweden, not to mention the erstwhile Soviet Union. More than 30 universities in India and abroad have conferred honorary doctorates on him."

"Swaminathan ploughed the money he received through awards into the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), founded a decade ago. The explicit aim of the Foundation is to harness science and technology for environmentally sustainable and socially equitable applications."

"The Foundation is involved in a range of activities, including ways to hook farmers up to the Internet. It is the only institution in Asia to have received the prestigious Blue Planet Prize for 'solving global environmental problems through scientific research and application.'"

Swaminathan's continuing commitment to research and agriculture is the happiest aspect of this dedicated scientist's contribution to India long after officially retiring from Govern-

ment. Today, shepherding his MSSRF, he is probably busier than ever, his 75 years sitting lightly on his shoulders.

During the course of his 45-year research career, Swaminathan has published several books and more than 250 papers in international scientific journals. A glimpse into his approach to research is offered by an interview published by ISAT gate magazine in March 1997:

"Under our demographic and socio-economic circumstances, we must promote more research... that is related to micro enterprises based on science and technology. When we developed the 'hunger-free area' programme for Dharmapuri... we brought the best in modern technology to identify the problem areas and prioritise our action plan. This is what I call ecotechnology, or ecologically sustainable technology."

"The E stands not only for ecology but (also) for equity (both in social and gender terms) and employment generation in addition to economics. I would like to see a massive movement of science for society based upon these four Es."

Few Indian scientists have succeeded to the extent Swaminathan has in mobilising international opinion to support causes dear to him. In MMM's opinion, he stands tall among scientists and opinion leaders the world over. Time magazine was right in naming him one of the most influential Asians of the century.

## In brief

★ *The Man from Madras Musings* is convinced that this is the season of the Tamil Nadu or Chennai citizen. Take sport for instance. There has been Viswanathan Anand's crowning achievement, with other chess players, like Vijayalakshmi Subbaraman and Sasikiran, turning in outstanding performances. In basketball and volleyball the State has continued to dominate the heights with championship performances. In hockey it recently flattered to deceive, but at least half a dozen players are in national reckoning. In cricket, it's hardly two years since left-handed Sadagopan Ramesh began to make waves as a Test opening batsman. We have also had an impressive Test debut by left-arm spinner Murali Kartik (a Chennai-born lad who plays for Railways in the Ranji Trophy) and some pretty useful performances at the national level by left-arm all-rounder S Sriram, who has however failed at the international level. Hemang Badani, another left hander, has made some memorable contributions to India's improved display in the recent past with at least one match-winning innings. The latest to hit the headlines is yet another left hander, Viduyt Sivaramakrishnan, who spun India Under-19 to a brilliant last over victory in the first Test against England Under-19 at the Wankhede Stadium. MMM is intrigued by why Tamil Nadu produces so many left handers of quality in cricket. Any guesses?

— MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### The music makers

*Madras Musings* has really done service by recalling many of the names of the giants of music and *rasikas* too have mentioned several names worthy of recollection and remembrance. But is there any end to the count of the stars? Has anyone been able to take a census of gods and goddesses worshipped in India? Has the enumeration of ragas or songs reached finality? Even as you choose to think that the list is complete, a stray thought dawns, a suggestion or whisper comes in from a *corasika*, 'What about Uthukadu or Kothavasala?' The enumerator regrets, 'How have I missed him or them!'

The suggestions made in letters to the Editor are at once a tribute to the art, artistes and music-lovers in whose musical bosom, happy experiences lie embedded safe and true eternally.

For the information of music-lovers, nearly 1600 lives of composers, musicians, dancers and musicologists have been elaborated in detail in the *Garland* series in an unaided, non-profit dedication to art and artistes.

**Garland Rajagopalan**  
Carnatic Classics  
7 (Old 3), 24th Cross  
Indira Nagar, Chennai 600 020.

### What is Indian?

While the sentiments and responses in reader Jayaraman's letter 'Aspects of patriotism' (MM, October 1st) are noted, could he or his cousin abroad say what constitutes "traditional Indian dress?" To my mind, it varies as much as the climate and contour of this sub-continent, under-labelled as a country.

**N. Dharmeshwaran**  
21, Kumaran Nagar  
Guduvancherry.

### Best value meals

I agree with MM (November 1st) that these eating places will be easy on pocket, but in my memory the best value for money I got at an eating place was my school mess — Miller Hall — at MCCHS, Harrington Road. I still remember the menu:  
Mondays — Chapathi & mutton kurma — 30 paise

Tuesdays — Poori & minced meat — 30 paise

Wednesdays — Curd rice & mutton cutlet — 30 paise

Thursdays — Mutton biriyani & lemon juice — 35 paise

Fridays — Something veg. Don't remember.

This was in the late fifties and very early sixties. The school was presided over by the best headmaster in the world, Mr. Kuruvilla Jacob. They were great days...

**C.G.Prasad**  
9, C.S. Mudali St.  
Kondithope  
Chennai 600 079

### Mindless reclamation

Chennai is today the victim of two years of failed North-East monsoons. The water table has sunk drastically and the citizens are anticipating a year of acute water shortage with its accompanying spin-offs of disease, electricity cuts and expensive water purchase.

A combined, dedicated effort by the Government, the community and the individuals is paramount if the coming crisis is to be contained and managed effectively not just in the coming year, but in the long run as well.

In this scenario, one is filled with alarm and dismay to learn that a housing layout is being planned in the lake bed in Thirumullaivoyal village, behind All India Radio. This lake is a feeder to Red Hills lake, the city's main water source. Besides, it contributes to preserving the water table of Thirumullaivoyal, HVF and other surrounding villages. As part of Chennai's prime catchment area, it is supposed to have been earmarked on the CMDA Master Plan as a Green Belt.

Whose pocket then is being lined, that those laid down norms are being set aside and the community made the victim of the greed of a few parasites? Not to mention the disastrous consequences that await the gullible buyer who sinks his hard-earned money to, one day during a good monsoon, find himself marooned!

**Mallika Gulvady**  
Greenfields, Satyamurthy Nagar  
Chennai 600 062.

### Save the pedestrian

With vehicles keeping pace with the burgeoning popula-

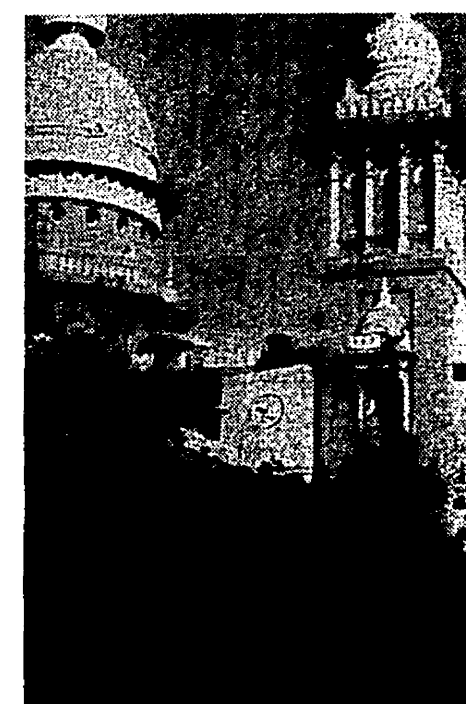
tion, accidents are the order of the day. Even the pedestrian crossings which are meant for the exclusive use of the pedestrians are unsafe these days as these are seldom manned. These crossings are used by vehicle users and pedestrians to fend for themselves, risking their lives and limbs.

To avert mishaps, I suggest the following:

- Speed-breakers should be constructed at all pedestrian crossings so that it becomes imperative for the vehicle to slow down.
- All pedestrian crossings must be manned even during non-peak hours.
- The width of crossings should be reduced so that it is sufficient only for the exclusive use of pedestrians. In this manner, heavy vehicles can be prevented from taking "U" turns using the crossings.

**V.S. Jayaraman**  
31, Motilal Street  
Chennai 600 017.

### Who'll save them?



I enclose a photograph of the High Court of Madras showing some permanent structures built on the top of the old buildings. Similar

### Ban smoking

The hazards of smoking have been highlighted both in the lay press and in medical journals time and again. In ancient times cannabis sativa and indica, marthuna, KIF, dagga and hashish have been in the smokers' menu apart from tobacco. Later having understood their evil effects, the former have been banned. Tobacco continues to harm society in many ways.

Tobacco smoke has nicotine, organic acids and millions of tiny liquid compounds called tar, all harmful.

### Risks of smoking:

1. Higher incidence of respiratory diseases.
2. Ill effects take 20 to 40 years to show.
3. Lung cancer occurs 20% more in smokers.
4. Death rate of smokers is around 68% while the death rate of heavy smokers is 123% (more than 40 per day), cigar 22% and pipe 12%.
5. Mouth, throat and oesophagus cancer has 5-10 fold increase in pipe and cigar smokers.
6. It increases coronary heart diseases by 30%.
7. It increases hypertension, cholesterol, platelet adhesion and carboxy haemoglobin.

8. Filters in cigarettes do not reduce harmful effects appreciably.

Passive smoking is breathing in other people's cigarette smoke. It has two components.

1. Smoke coming out of the burning end of the cigarette.
2. Smoke exhaled by the smoker.

Both these together make 75% of combustion product. Wives and children who are subjects of passive smoking suffer from:

1. *Otitis Media*: Children are affected by infection of the middle ear.
2. *Sudden infant death syndrome*: One quarter of all deaths is due to maternal smoking.
3. *Respiratory infection*: This is the cause of 1.5 to 3 lakhs of lung infection in children below 18 months.
4. *Lung cancer*: 20% to 30% of children exposed to long-term passive smoking suffer from lung cancer.

A non-smoker living with a smoker who smokes 20 cigarettes a day is smoking 10 cigarettes a day. Passive smokers run a 91% risk of

structures have been put up in four or five other places. I presume that the structures have something to do with the ongoing airconditioning process in the Court Hall in the old buildings.

Recently, the PWD did some repair works in the M.H.A.A. reference library hall. Instead of making any attempt to restore the damaged portions to their original shape, ordinary cement plastering was done on the ceiling and on the walls.

Even in the absence of a Heritage Act, the Honourable High Court came forward to save the *DGP building*. Who is going to save the Court buildings?

**B. Manivannan (Advocate)**  
54(24),  
Washer Varathappan Street  
New Washermanpet  
Chennai 600 081.

heart attacks compared to those who are not exposed to smoke. Thus the time has come for non-smokers to DEMAND a clean and healthy atmosphere. They cannot any more be silent spectators to a harmful habit that potentially threatens their own health.

Many progressive countries have enacted ban on smoking in public places. Our Association has made a plea through the lay press for ban on smoking in public places as early as August 1996.

The statutory warning as it appears now is ineffective. Non-smokers should not start smoking even on peer pressure.

The film censor board should strike off any scene glorifying smoking. Smokers should be motivated to stop smoking. The so-called smoker's cough should be considered the forerunner of serious lung diseases.

We are worried about the commitment of the Government in this matter. Its decision should not go the way of the safety helmet episode. Despite serious apprehensions from the medical community which directly tackles the resultant morbidity and mortality and its attendant sufferings, the Government took a populist attitude in the helmet rule.

The general health of the community at large and that of the budding citizens is at risk. The country should take precedence over temporary populist considerations in taking a firm decision to ban smoking in public places. The media has a duty to the society in this matter and should help propagate this message to all.

### E. Rabindranath

Gen. Secretary, Tamil Nadu Medical Practitioners' Association  
815, Poonamalle High Road  
Chennai 600 010.

### Groundwater management

It is heartening to learn that the Tamil Nadu Government has introduced a Bill to enact the Tamil Nadu Groundwater Development and Management Act and to establish a Tamil Nadu Groundwater Authority.

We sincerely hope this Bill becomes law soon. There is rampant illegal tapping of groundwater in Chennai. Especially in Besant Nagar, where there is abundant drinking water (thanks to an underwater spring) a lot of illegal tapping of water is going on. Lorry-loads of water are being drawn for sale. The water level in Besant Nagar is steadily going down. If this continues, sea water will creep in and there will be a catastrophe. Most of us do not get Metrowater and are dependent only on groundwater. Will the authorities act before it is too late?

### V. Chandrashekhar

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

### Better Chennai

The article "Could we just work better together towards a better Chennai" (MM, December 1st), is very thought provoking. I feel that beautification with greenery at various places should be started and maintained by NGOs.

Water supply in city is to be augmented. In Bombay a man living on the 12th floor gets regular water supply in the kitchen, bathroom and toilet with sufficient pressure.

In our city the borewell at some places may supply water but underground water table is low. Unless, therefore, we plant more and more trees particularly in catchment areas, apart from various other places, the chances of inducing rain bearing clouds are bleak. Only when rainfall is good and water is allowed to get underground, the water table will improve. If mass awakening does not come about, multistoreyed buildings in future may go without water.

I am very much pained to read that a foreigner staying in Chennai does not get warmth from Tamilians, who are noted for *virundu ombal*. This is not appealing to me.

(If I could get his address I would be interested to write a letter to him or meet him personally as a friendly Tamilian).

The entire MM issue was a cerebral feast and I very much appreciate that a small journal as yours has not published a single advertisement. I should really thank the sponsors of *Madras Musings* for noble journalism.

### S. Balasubramanian

Retd. Chemist, Ordnance Factories  
Plot No. 21, II Street  
A.T. Nagar Annexe  
Chennai 600 087.

## 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.



# Cinema parkalaama?

Pongal, or Sankranti, the big festival in the South, is just round the corner. New clothes, new jewellery, new household appliances are being bought to celebrate the festive season. Many new movies are also ready for release to cash in on the auspicious day called *Kaaniyam Pongal*, or the picnic day, when the family will be out of their homes.

Going to the movies has always been a big thing in Chennai. School and college students, newly married couples, housewives, travelling reps, office-goers and for that matter practically just everyone spends his or her leisure time going to movies, talking about movies and reading about cine stars. Much has been written about the strong influence of cinema on the Tamil psyche.

Drama was the crowd puller before cinema became popular. Every town and village had drama troupes visiting them with the popular plays. Both dance and drama heavily depended on mythology for their subject matter. *Therukoothu* incorporated both and was an important part of any celebrations, religious or social. The temple festivals included these popular *koothus* to keep the itinerant population entertained.

We have heard of the versatility of the doyen, S.G. Kittappa, whose strong tenor could belt out the classical songs that could be heard in the last row without the benefit of mikes and speakers. The delight of the audience at a particular piece of music resulted in repeated demands for "once more". This was followed by cheering as actors even had to stand up after their staged death to sing their swan songs all over again before repeating their death scene many times over. This leisurely pace of the development of the tale was the result of a more relaxed time-frame in people's lives.

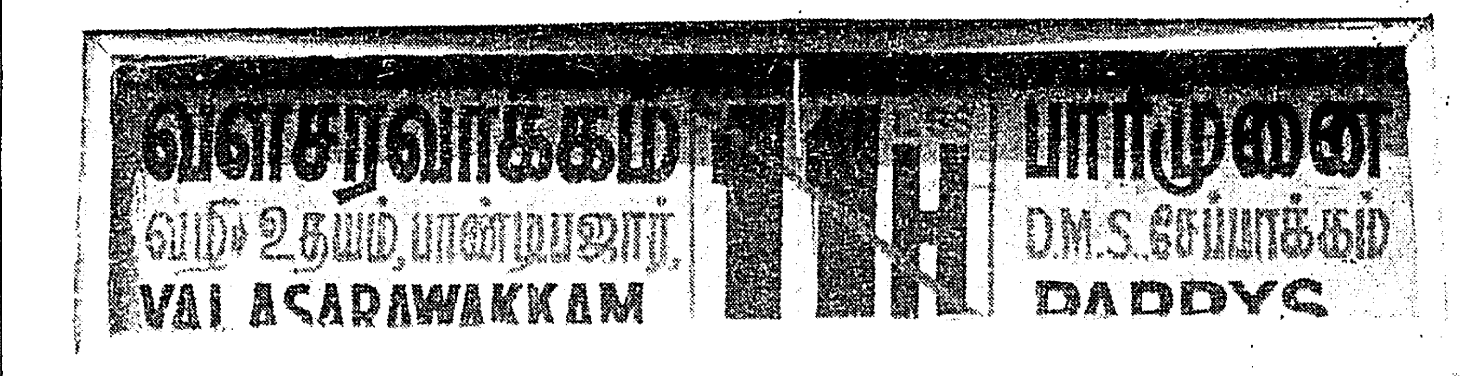
Then came the *Bayascope* with a harmonium artiste playing background music while the film was being run. The 'touring talkies' were thatched huts and temporary tent structures that moved with the travelling *bayascope* team. Bullock carts with printed posters on the sides and beating drums would noisily jangle along rural roads announcing the forthcoming attraction in the village and all its surroundings. The tent would go up and people would flock to see the wondrous moving pictures. The audience seated on the floor paid mini-

mum and many a film became a hit till the 60's due to the repeated patronage of these 4 annas movie goers. The elite of the villages occupied the wooden (later on cane) chairs placed at the rear. Gradually the tent cinema became a permanent fixture in small towns and big villages. Today these have been upgraded with tin roofs, wooden benches and cushioned steel/plastic chairs. The front benches still hold sway with their whistles and cheerful enthusiasm.

Cinema halls in Chennai have changed with the times. Elphinstone theatre at the end of Mount Road was part of the memories of a generation's introduction to Hollywood movies. Greta Garbo and Ronald Colman, Charlie Chaplin, the Laurel and Hardy duo, Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn along with Mickey and Donald ruled the hearts of Madras upto the 60's. The wonderful taste of the icecream soda from the Elphinstone Soda Fountain was inexplicably mixed with Sunday morning cartoons of everyone's childhood. The nearby Casino and Gaiety were close favourites with mainly John Wayne Westerns and Hitchcock *kolai/kuthu* or murder and action movies.

## Sivaji and MGR

Chitra, Wellington, Kama-dhenu, Kapali and Eros are the cinema houses where Sivaji Ganesan and MGR ruled the roost. Going to the movies was an outing that had its own charm. For the afternoon matinee at 2.00 p.m., you had to be in the queue by noon to get tickets during weekends and holidays. Summer holidays with the burning sun did not in any way deter the cine-goer and long lines were formed in front of the ticket booths. Women had a separate line, and because of black marketing, rules came into force that only one or two tickets were issued per head half an hour before screening time. So a family of 6 to 8 people would line up with packed *idli* or *dosai* with 'gunpowder' spreads and *murukku*, *thattais* and assorted savouries to help pass time and keep hunger pangs at bay. Sellers of peanuts, *kuchi* icecream (popsicles) and *goli soda* (coloured drinks with the gas sealed in with marbles) did brisk business as people stood, sat, dangled on the steel pipes meant to hold the ticket buyers in line. Nothing would hold back the surge of audience when a new picture was released.



The Old (below), is the not so visible route board in Tamil displaying the number and the destination of the Pallavan Transport Corporation's bus fleet, causing the commuter to strain his eyes to find out the route.

THE OLD...

The New are the bold, visible destination boards written in English and Tamil, helpful to the commuter, adopted by the Transport Corporation now, the latest being illuminated vinyl boards. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

...& THE NEW



The Hindi film fans would trek to the bylanes of Triplicane to Star and Midland to watch Ashok Kumar, Nutan, Dilip Kumar, Meena Kumari, Raj Kapoor and his bevy of beauties and Silver Jubilee Rajendra Kumar enact their romantic lives, backed by the golden voices of Mukesh, Rafi, Lata and Asha. Many a burqaed lady with a clutch of children would open up tiffins of *biryani* at lunch or dinner time as they

loudly sobbed when the thespians pulled at their heart strings. The hard seats, the bugs and the hot stuffy and stale atmosphere inside the theatres, did not in any way keep away the crowd. Gradually, more modern theatres began to make their appearance. Shanti and Anand were built to accommodate more audience with plush interiors, airconditioning and better

acoustics. It was another matter that quite often the AC was switched off midway through the movie to save on power. The audience in the grip of the denouement would hardly notice the change. If anyone did protest, the standard explanation of the management was "power cut".

Safire - Emerald - Blue Diamond was the first complex in

(Continued on Page 6)

# The Jellicut

It is a long time since I saw a Jellicut, but I am not likely to forget it.

The Jellicut is the southern bull ring. There are no horses and lancers here, no flashing matadors with blooded swords. No one waves red cloth at colour-blind bulls; such cloth as there is may be of any colour and is swathed around the bull's horns. The men are unarmed and unprotected, and their aim is not to kill the bulls, nor even to infuriate them.

All the same this rustic sport does not lack spectacle, or excitement, or risk.

Each bull that enters the ring — a circular stockade — has a piece of cloth, often brightly coloured, wound across and around its horns in a loose bannage, and the game consists in the men snatching the cloth clear of the horn as the bulls are driven down a fenced lane. That is, basically, the Jellicut, and explained this way, it seems a tame pastime. Let me give a fuller account.

Around Madura, and elsewhere in the south, an active, medium-sized breed of cattle, compact and powerful, is to be found in varying degrees of purity. The Jellicut bulls come from this stock, and are specially reared for the ring. The best type of fighting bull is a beautifully balanced beast, not

running to exaggerated dewlap or hump, light and quick-muscled. It is so evenly made, without frills and fancy touches, that its power is not apparent at first sight, except perhaps in a certain arrogance of carriage and gait. A well-trained bull will suffer no stranger to approach close, and is wickedly fast on its feet and with its horns. White, laced with front-grey or a rusty fawn on the head, fore quarters and legs, is a much-fancied colour and is said to indicate fighting blood.

Not all the bulls that enter the Jellicut ring are pure-bred or have the fighting temperament; even steers get in, at times. Some especially dangerous bulls are widely known and respected, and are taken around the countryside for the sport. These are known by the names of their villages, or by the number of years for which they have held their own, unconquered, in Jellicuts. A Jellicut is a major event in rural areas. Men and beasts come to it from all around, sometimes from considerable distances.

The crowd gathers right from the morning for the afternoon's sport. The banded heads of the bulls give them a deceptively complacent and domestic look, as their owners lead them in. A number of bulls are driven into the

circular stockade — at the farther end is a long, narrow, fenced lane, leading out to open fields.

The spectators crowd around the palings thickly, and the men who enter the arena take up strategic posts in the lane, the frequent gaps in the bamboo fencing allowing them a ready, squeezed, acrobatic exit, should the need arise.

The fun begins with the first batch of bulls — any number up to a dozen — entering the stockade. A terrific din is set up, with the aid of drums and tin cans and loud voices. The bulls careen round the ring, the dust rises in a red ground-mist under their hooves and they are off, with waving tails and low heads, down the lane. They are not allowed to enter the lane all together, but one by one, so that the waiting men have a chance.

The men hug the fence, and as a bull goes lumbering past one of them steps in and deftly snatches the cloth from off its horns. A cool head, smooth-moving limbs and perfect timing, rather than bravery or brawn are what make for success in this game, as in all sports of skill. But it is not always that the bull goes tearing blindly past, allowing its crown to be lightly snatched — close holds, and courage too, are often needed.

The Jellicut begins modestly, and the first few batches to enter the stockade hold no really

dangerous bulls: some of them are just over-grown, mild-eyed calves still. The bulls with the worst reputations come later; they are reserved for the time when body and spirit have been sufficiently warmed.

At the last Jellicut I saw, staged in a village a dozen miles or so off Madura (I have forgotten its name), there was a notorious bull, a beast that had not been routed in five years, and with the name of a killer. This bull entered the stockade late in the afternoon, when we were tired of watching the sport and were about to turn home. A wave of excitement spread down the close mass of watchers, and five bulls entered the lane in quick succession, giving the men near the lane mouth no opportunity to single out any of them.

I asked my neighbour (never are neighbours nearer) to point out the killer to me, and he waved an obliging hand at the oncoming bulls. There was the bull, right in front, a big fawn-and-white animal with rolling eyes and a large, massive head held threateningly low. As it trotted past, a man leaned out from the fence, side-stepped the sweep of the horns, and plucked the cloth casually off its horns. Joining in the spontaneous applause, I felt my neighbour poking me in the ribs. 'Not that one,' he said. 'Do you see that grey bull behind all the rest. That's the one? The grey bull was well behind the others,

sauntering down the lane and keeping to the middle, the down-held head swaying from side to side to rhythm of movement. I must say I felt disappointed at the killer's looks and leisurely manner — there were many bigger and more defiant bulls in the Jellicut that day.

A splendid young man, who had distinguished himself earlier, stepped lightly down the lane as the grey bull passed him, and reached out for the cloth. The bull turned in a flash, the young man leaped back from the quick, sideway toss of the horns, and the bull continued its sauntering way down the lane. Only when the man collapsed on the fence, and was helped out of the lane, did we realise that the bull had scored. I had come up to this Jellicut with a doctor from Madura, and we hurried round the stockade to the casualty. The horn had pierced and torn the abdominal wall, and the man was in obvious pain, but I was told that it was not so grave an injury as it looked. We tried, long and ineffectually, to persuade the young man to go with us in the car to Madura, where he could have proper attention: he would have none of our help, and was sure that the aids and medicines available in the village would do.

A week later, meeting a man from a nearby village, we learned that the bull had claimed another victim. —

Courtesy: *Nature's Spokesman*.

M. Krishnan

## IFA GRANTS COVER SEVERAL ARTS

(Continued from Page 1)

and craft of toymakers. It will focus as much on possible measures to alleviate the lot of the toymakers as on their creativity and resilience. The researcher also plans to publish articles, apart from giving lecture demonstrations and workshops on toymaking based on her study.

6. R.V. Ramani, Chennai, Rs. 5,00,000 over eighteen months. Making of a documentary video film on the shadow puppet theatre of South India. The film will inquire into the performative and technical aspects of shadow puppetry while simultaneously striving to serve as a record of the life and times of the puppeteers. It will also seek to identify useful comparisons and areas of common interest between shadow puppetry and cinema.

Well-known musician Sriram Parasuram, who did an interdisciplinary of five significant compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Koothu-pattarai — for theatre development — were earlier grantees to benefit from IFA assistance. While Koothu-pattarai received a grant of Rs. 44.00 lakh

over three years, Sriram Parasuram was granted Rs. 1.05 lakh over one year. The Brhaddhvani project combines the expertise of two organisations involved in different kinds of artistic work. What has brought Brhaddhvani and Dharani together is a common interest in *Sopanam* — a musical form native to Kerala, which predates Carnatic music and survives today in a few temples and as an accompaniment to Kathakali.

Brhaddhvani is a Chennai-based centre for music research and training. Its Director, Dr. Karaikudi Subramanian, is interested in documenting *Sopanam* music not only for its possible archival value, but also because he is keen to notate *Sopanam* using a particular method of musical transcription developed at Brhaddhvani. This notation system is part of a holistic methodology for music education, called Correlated Objective Music Education and Training (COMET), and it enables the transcription of different musical styles in a manner that facilitates teaching and learning. Dharani, a school of performing arts in Kochi, is interested in the possibilities of *Sopanam* for the musical reper-

toire of Mohiniattam. Dharani, led by Ms. Shyamala Surendran, will identify and locate the surviving *Sopanam* musicians and assist Brhaddhvani in the audio and video documentation of their music. The musicians at Dharani will eventually be taught *Sopanam* music through the Brhaddhvani methodology. According to IFA, while this project does not concern itself with larger questions such as change and continuity within a musical tradition, the focus on documentation of the repertoire as it exists today will undoubtedly create interest among musicians and possibly dancers. Further, one hopes that the Brhaddhvani method of notation makes *Sopanam* accessible to many more musicians than it would otherwise have been available to.

IFA organises such presentations at least twice a year in different parts of India to enable grantees to share their work with new audiences. Through the presentations, IFA also hopes to reach out to more potential grantees from Chennai and Tamil Nadu, as yet unfamiliar with IFA's assistance in the field of promotion of arts and culture.

## A SCARCE RESOURCE

(Continued from Page 1)

- Using urban effluents after suitable treatment for social purposes like horticulture.
- Recycling of industrial waste water.
- Conserving monsoon water in check dams, percolation tanks, village ponds, etc., but discarding the dust-laden run-off from the first spell.
- Using existing or defunct wells and tubewells for recharging.

### The cost

The cost of a roof top rainwater harvesting structure for a 200 sq.m. roof or pavement area varies between Rs.800 and Rs.2000 on the assumption that a dug well or borehole is already part of the dwelling unit and can be used for recharging.

The cost of a check dam ranging from a small gully plug to a concrete or masonry structure across a small stream can vary from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 6 lakh. The bigger check dams are community operated and serve upto 8-10 hectares.

In factories, the existing drainage can be utilised to carry roof water for recharging to one or two other locations by remodelling the drainage, using obstructions in the designed flow route for diverting the water to the area of interest.

To mention a few success stories:

*Mehsana, Gujarat:* Artificial recharge was achieved through well injection and spreading channels techniques resulting in increase in water levels.

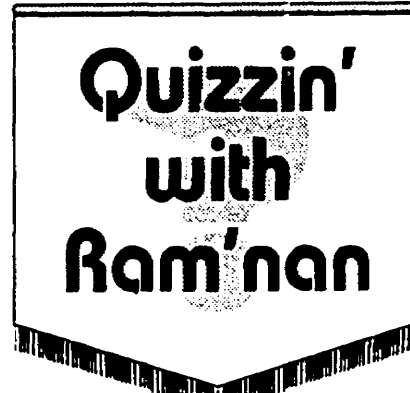
*Amnawati, Maharashtra:* Artificial recharge was executed through three percolation tanks, with water level rising upto 10m.

*Odakkali, Kerala:* Sub-surface dykes constructed in Kerala Agricultural University raised groundwater level from 0.22 to 0.87m.

*Kolar, Karnataka:* Artificial recharge through percolation tanks, watershed development and recharge of well fields resulted in 5-10m rise in groundwater level.

*New Delhi:* Artificial recharge through four check dams in the JNU and IIT campus created storage of 4.60 to 22.18 thousand cu.m and rise of 0.8 to 0.9m in water levels. Roof-top rainwater harvesting through two injection wells in IIT also resulted in 0.51m rise in water level. Similar water harvesting was undertaken on the President's Estate through existing dugwell, shaft and injection well, the results of which are not yet available. — (Courtesy: INTACH Newsletter).





(Questions 1 to 9 are from the period December 16 to 31. Questions 10 to 12 pertain to Chennai. Questions 13 to 20 relate to Tamil Nadu.)

- Who has been designated the new U.S. Secretary of State?
- Who is the Castrol Cricketer of the Year 1999-2000?
- Who has been chosen as the prestigious Time magazine's 'Person of the Year'?
- What distinction did Piet Norval (South Africa) and Don Johnson (U.S.) achieve?
- Which Indian unveiled his statue at Madame Tussaud's wax museum on December 20?
- Which media baron has agreed to pay a shortfall of \$35 million to the UN on behalf of the U.S.?
- Name the legendary Pakistani singer known as the 'melody queen' who passed away on December 23.
- Which battalions were a target of a militant attack on the Red Fort on December 22?
- Which Indian actor's 'alleged' adverse remarks led to violence in Nepal?

\* \* \*

- What is special about the new Chennai telephone directory?
  - Easy one. Which Chennai-born and bred player became the World Chess Champion recently?
  - Where in Chennai would one find Wellesley House, Clive House and the Grand Arsenal?
- \* \* \*
- Who became the first National Women's Squash Champion from the State recently?
  - What distinction has gastroenterologist Dr. Rajkumar achieved?
  - Who have won the State awards for best actor and actress for 1999?
  - Which work has been selected for the Sahitya Akademi award for Tamil?
  - Of which book were T. Prakasam, O.P. Ramaswamy Reddiar and P.S. Kumaraswamy Raja the first three occupants?
  - The oldest cinema hall in South India is in the State. Where?
  - Where is the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University situated?
  - Where were nine *peadams* of three temples damaged leading to communal tension on December 23?

(Answers on Page 7)

## PSBB boys leave stamp on quiz

It was the only team from Chennai to represent the South Zone in the all-India final of the Indepex Asiana 2000 Philatelic Quiz Contest, part of the 14th Asian International Philatelic Exhibition conducted by the Department of Posts recently in Calcutta. The duo of R. Ramkumar and Krishna Raghavan, Class XI students of Padma Seshadri Senior Secondary School (Nungambakkam), did not return exactly triumphant but benefited immensely from the experience. "We never knew that there is so much history attached to each stamp, and that we could learn such a lot from a quiz competition," they said.

"For one, we were the youngest team, among the eight, in the finals, and for another, we had a couple of very tough questions thrown at us during the later rounds. Otherwise, we would definitely have made it to the top three," said Raghavan. "In any case, we had decided to give it our best shot and thoroughly enjoyed every

minute of the contest," added Ramkumar.

La Martinaire, Calcutta, won the contest, followed by St. Francis Degree College for Women (the South Zone winners), Hyderabad, and Don Bosco, Park Circus, Calcutta. The three teams were given tickets for an all-paid four-day trip to Kathmandu, courtesy Cox and Kings. Ramkumar and Raghavan received a CD, a T-shirt with the picture of an Indian stamp emblazoned across, and a wall clock each.

Although the PSBB team returned a trifle disappointed, it had put in a spirited performance in the preliminary contests. In the first contest, the regional round comprising 25 teams from Chennai city, Ramkumar and Raghavan came second. In the circle round, which had 15 regional round winners from Tamil Nadu taking part, the duo won the first place by a wide margin. And in the zonal round, comprising eleven teams from the four southern states, Ramkumar and



Ram Kumar and Krishna Raghavan of Padma Seshadri Senior Secondary School with their trophies after the circle quiz.

Raghavan emerged second in a nailbiting finish. Both boys were presented attractive shields by the Tamil Nadu Postmaster General.

In each of these contests, there were written as well as oral rounds. Although there were questions on sports, entertainment and current affairs, most of the questions, especially in the later rounds, had a philately angle.

"For the regional, circle and zonal contests, we hardly prepared seriously except for reading newspapers and a few general knowledge books," said Raghavan. But before the finals, they did go through the *Stamp*

*Collectors' Dictionary* and the *History of Stamps and Stamp Collection*. For both the boys, who plan to take up engineering as a career, their string of well-earned victories in Indepex Asiana 2000 came as a very pleasant surprise. In spite of the pressure of studies next year — they will appear for the CBSE Plus 2 Exam as well as for IIT entrance exams — Ramkumar and Raghavan are eager to take part in more such contests.

"Who knows, with better luck, we might just find ourselves as one of the victorious teams in the finals!" they exclaimed confidently.

## CINEMA PARKALAAMA?

(Continued from Page 4)

Chennai with three theatres. By the mid-80's many more came into being though the original itself ultimately closed down. Theatres like Wellington and Midland were pulled down to make way for, more lucrative, commercial buildings.

The first drive-in theatre called Prarthana came into being on the Mahabalipuram Road. Whole families would take two or more cars and drive to watch the latest Kamal Hasan or Rajni movie. The picnic atmosphere continued with sandwiches and curd rice carried from home and supplemented with puffs and *samosas* from the restaurant in the complex. An important item carried by the movie goer to the drive-in was mosquito coils and repellants!

The influx of video and VCDs did not affect the movie audience. Theatre going has been part of the Chennai-vaasi's lifestyle. This is true of all of Tamil Nadu. The rural Tamilian still continues to see movies in sheds and tents. The trip to the nearest city for families almost always includes a movie, sometimes two consecutive shows in nearby theatres in one day!

Upmarket multiplexes are making their appearance with shopping malls and food courts

in Chennai. Older theatres are trying to update their infrastructure though the vandalism on seats and premises still continues. The *kadala* (peanut) and *colour* seller has been banished. Shops sell softy ice-cream, branded fizzy drinks, chips and popcorn. New sound systems like Digital or Dolby Surround Systems have been introduced. But the sensitive movie-goer wisely takes a pair of earplugs or cotton wool (even tissue paper does the trick) to filter the loud decibels that Indian movie houses are fond of!

Tickets can be bought online or through telephone. Theatres like Albert send home the tickets. However, brisk blackmarketing in tickets continues at all new cinemas to cater to the last minute audience. Today, the language of the film is not a barrier. Many films, especially Hollywood blockbusters are dubbed into Tamil. So theatres exhibit all types of movies without any special classification in terms of area, audience seating capacity etc. Even the release of recent movies (generally those that bombed at the box office) on TV channels does not keep the audience home.

Commonly heard in and around Chennai — *Cinema parkalaama machi?* (to the movies mate?)

Padmini Natarajan

## Do you know your stamps?

The Indepex Asiana 2000 Philatelic Quiz Contest was one of the well-attended events at the five-day 14th Asian International Philatelic Exhibition, held at Calcutta's Netaji Indoor Stadium. The objective of the exhibition was to foster philately or stamp collection as a hobby among school children. Twenty-six countries from Asia participated. A few commemorative stamps were also released during the occasion.

Commemorative stamps, either personality-based or theme-based, are printed just once to mark a specific occasion. Priced higher than ordinary stamps, commemorative stamps are treasured by stamp dealers and collectors and are rarely affixed to postal mail. They are a good source of revenue for the postal department, and hence, Indepex Asiana's initiative in getting more and more students interested in stamp collection. However, to accelerate the growth of philately in India, which has been very slow, the onus is on the Postal Department to conduct more such exercises at regular intervals rather than just a once-in-a-year contest.

Here are a few of the questions that were asked during the preliminary and final rounds of the Indepex Asiana 2000 Quiz Contest:

- What in philately parlance is a cut square?
- On which country's stamp did Gary Kasparov first appear?

- Who first divided stamps into the pre- and post-adhesive era?
- Which monument in Tamil Nadu was the first to appear on a stamp?
- Which emblem of the Tamil Nadu Government appears on a stamp?
- What are definitive stamps?
- Why does a picture of St. Auburn appear on a stamp with Gary Sobers?
- What is a condominium stamp?
- Who was the first musician to appear on a stamp?
- Which prominent statue in Chennai appears on a stamp?

Answers:

- When two stamps of the same denomination are joined together or separated by a perforation to form a single stamp of a higher denomination, such a stamp is called a cut square.
- Azerbaijan.
- Sir Rowland Hill.
- The Vivekananda Rock Memorial.
- The gopuram of the Srivilliputhur temple.
- They are stamps used for affixing on postal mail, unlike commemorative stamps which are usually preserved.
- St. Auburn is a part of Sobers' name — Sir Garfield Saint Auburn Sobers.
- It is a stamp released jointly by two countries - stamps of Sudan and New Hebrides, for example.
- Bob Dylan.
- The Labour Statue.

## Talking to an icon — and discovering a writer

What questions do you dare ask someone who is an icon in Tamil literary circles? Do you talk about her more-than-150 short stories, novelettes, and 30 novels? Her travelogues and biographies? Her particular sensitivity to issues such as drug addiction and old-age problem? About her novels that have changed long-held perceptions in society?

Do you ask her about the hit movies and TV serials based on her work? Her success as an anchorperson on TV? Her perceptive interviews with the likes of Indira Gandhi and Mother Teresa? Her pioneering work in bringing out audio and videotapes based on her stories?

Or do you talk to her about her many awards and distinctions — won both as a writer, and as acknowledgment of her work as a social activist?

But the world knows all this about Sivasankari, writer, activist and social commentator of eminence.

So, what do you do?... when every question appears impertinent?

Then, slowly....you begin to wonder.

About the human being-Sivasankari.

How does a person evolve into Sivasankari? Are Sivasankari born or made?

Suddenly, there is a sense of anticipation. You set off on your interview, and decide you'll allow sheer instinct to lead the way.

And at the end of that conversation, you thank your stars for having done so, because what you have gained is a fascinating, albeit brief, glimpse into the working of a remarkable mind.

\* \* \*

The little girl, Sivasankari, youngest among her siblings, grew up amidst a large, loving, family. Her father was very much the patriarch and her upbringing ran along strictly conventional lines. "We only went to girls' schools, and later to 'girls only' colleges."

That did not stop her parents from enrolling her in the NCC: "I've marched in Independence Day Parades". Or from teaching their daughter swimming.

## Answers to Quiz

- Gen. Colin Powell; 2. Sachin Tendulkar; 3. The U.S. President-elect, George W. Bush; 4. They won the World Doubles Tennis Championships in Bangalore; 5. Amitabh Bachhan; 6. Ted Turner; 7. Noor Jehan; 8. 7 Rajputana Rifles and Jat Regiment; 9. Hrithik Roshan.
- It is made up of three volumes instead of two;
- Joshna Chinnappa; 14. He is the youngest FRCS examiner in the country; 15. Rajnikant and Simran; 16. T.K. Sivasankaran's *Vimarsanangal*, *Mathippuraigal*, *Pettigal*; 17. The Chief Minister of Madras State; 18. In Chennai, the Gaiety Theatre; 19. Coimbatore; 20. Melapalayam.

Underlying the conventionality was a deep sense of mutual respect. This was an environment where rules were observed, but each individual was given due place and credit, irrespective of sex or age. "The only 'fear' element present in our lives was that of God... and that was based on *maryada*."

Women were respected as strong individuals. The extended family was present, but never intrusive. Each family member learnt the tolerant give-and-take characteristic to a joint family without losing his or her sense of self or privacy. This was also a home where intellect, art and achievement were revered. This was a home that entertained the likes of Kamaraj, C. Subramaniam, Kalki and T.T. Krishnamachari.

Sivasankari is trained in classical music and is an exponent of Bharatha Natyam at concert level. "I wanted to be a dancer. But my parents felt that education was important. I had to acquire a college degree."

She saw the logic behind their arguments, accepted their decree and moved on.

For children growing up in such an atmosphere, the processes of thinking and decision-making take place on a larger canvas, with wider perspectives. "Nothing ever became an issue."

Emotional and psychological security was taken for granted.

Their house, on the present Thirumalai Road, had a huge *maidan*. "I even had a deer as a pet." She recalls T.Nagar as a "green tree-filled" area, where she roamed freely, climbing trees and plucking mangoes. Friday evenings meant visits with the family to the Kapaleeshwar Temple. "You walked on sand inside the temple". Outings meant the lighthouse, the zoo or the museums. She recalls picnics at Elliot's Beach. "It was completely deserted, and petromax lamps were used for light." Madras was always a culturally vibrant city. RR Sabha was the hub of cultural activity in those days. Music Academy concerts used to be held in P.S. High School.



Her memories of her growing years are filled with deep pride in her hometown. "I've travelled the world over, and I'd like to bring all the good things I've seen and place it here to make my city the best in the world." Change is inevitable, although she says the remarkable swiftness with which the city has changed over the past few years leaves her stunned. "Do you know that today Chennai has the most extended nightlife of all?" she smiles. Life in this city is very different today. Even festival seasons have changed.

"When Navarathri came around, we'd have so many houses to go to....so many people to see and visit."

Children today do not appear interested in this lifestyle. "Maybe this means our generation has not proved a good role model for our children," she muses. Modernisation never meant Westernisation.

She feels that the city never grew in a planned manner, "and we do take our landmarks for granted."

A picture begins to form in your mind... of a child growing up in the best of all environments — one with no fear, where a person is encouraged to think, imagine and dream. Sivasankari attributes much of her multifaceted-personality to

her genes. The most significant gift of all came from her mother.

The art of storytelling

"My mother would just reel off stories," she remembers. "She could go from plot to plot continuously...like to-be-continued serial stories. And the stories spontaneously came off the top of her head."

Is this the source of her own talent?

Possibly, "but I was lucky. I was placed in a time where I was able to turn this into published work."

Ironically, Sivasankari never aspired to be a writer. "I was interested in Sanskrit. Actually, I never even read all that much back then."

Fate, obviously, had other plans.

And in 1968, the stage was set. A certain social practice, a ritual practised on childless women (she refers to this as "the *ammikul* incident") sparked off a deep sense of outrage and questioning in her. Doors in her mind opened. She began to wonder why traditional families still allow so many cruel little rituals to exist. Even in the presence of very real affection and care, people are still capable of being so harsh to one another.

"Making a ritual, or a joke, around a fact, is such cruelty," she states.

Angry, disturbed, emotional, she sat down and wrote the whole incident out. At the end of the exercise, she found she had a short story on hand. Quietly, not too confident, she sent it to Kalki, without anyone else's knowledge. That was her date with destiny. She received an acceptance letter, "which I read 200 times over", she laughs.

She never looked back after that. By '69, her output of writing had increased. By '70, with the support of Manian of *Ananda Vikatan*, her first novel was out.

Around this time, her husband's work required moving to a small village near Villupuram.

How did a city-bred girl manage under these circumstances?

Strangely, she says, that proved the most significant time in her life, because that's what "opened my inner eye". So far, she says insightfully, she had viewed life "from the pretty safety of an upper-middle-class window". This move changed her very soul. With heightened perception, she began to see all of Life's myriad hues — the blacks and whites, and the hundred shades between. The agonies, the ecstasies, the highs and lows, the undoubted miracles juxtaposed with grime and senseless brutalities — all the games of Fate. Images began to swirl around her. "I heard the sound of someone wailing along with the sound of someone singing; I saw a flight of green parrots against a twilight sky, while in the foreground stood a village child whose upper lip was sore with crusted mucus..."

In the 13 years that she spent here, her eyes, her heart, her ears, her very being became like a sponge. She absorbed everything that happened around her. She attributes her writing to both her mother's influence in developing an interest in story-telling along with what she describes as her greatest gift...the ability to empathise with all life around her.

People began seeing her as a writer to reckon with. She understood and accepted people's appreciation of her work with humility, and decided that it could only mean that she had to learn more and reach farther. "The human being in Sivasankari had to be enriched". She took the necessary steps to do so. Around '74, she began to seriously learn the craft of writing. She engaged a tutor, and studied the vast treasure of Tamil literature. What had come before was spontaneous outpouring. Now, she began to look within herself.

Ranjitha Ashok

(To be continued next fortnight)



Jan 10-17: 'The Eyes of the Thar' — an exhibition of charcoal and pencil drawings by Satish Gupta. Satish Gupta's book 'The Eyes of the Thar' will be launched on the 10th. This book is published by Mapin.

Jan 18-30: 'Manisha Gera Baswani' — An exhibition of paintings.

Jan 24: Weekend workshops on traditional "Kolam" and palm leaf decoration. Charges Rs. 75. (At Dakshina Chitra.)

Jan 25: Dance performance by Dominique Delorme. (At Alliance Francaise, 6.30 p.m.)

Jan 27-Feb 1: A decade of German Cinema 1990-2000.

This special programme Decade of German Cinema aims to give an overall picture of contemporary German cinema. Along with feature films, the programme includes also documentaries and experimental films from Germany. (At South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce.)

Jan 27: A week of contemporary German Cinema. Part of the German Festival in India. Contact Max Mueller Bhavan for further details. (At South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce.)

Exhibition of South Indian Bronzes. (At CP Arts Centre.)

Learn the creative art of arranging flowers. (At the Dakshina Chitra.)

Mime performance by Frederic Herrera. (At the Alliance Francaise, 6.30 p.m.)

The 1st of the 2-day workshop organised by British Council & Tulika Child Book Publishing House is a programme by V. Naidu, artistic director of the Birmingham-based Brumhalata, an inter-cultural story telling company. The venue is Good Books & Resource Centre and the programme is for teachers, actors working with young people.

Jan 31: A major annual fund-raising event, the Spastics Society of Tamil Nadu presents Usha Uthup and the Sami Sisters in "Nostalgia 2001" at the Kamaraj Memorial Hall. Tickets will be available from 15th January from Landmark (Nungambakkam), Odyssey (Adyar), Events (Thiruvanniyur). Donor cards will be available at the venue from 25th January onwards between 3.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m.)



● Nostalgia

# Cricket Masala

● Excerpts from a regular column "Curdrice Cricket" are reproduced below, courtesy: WWW.Chennaionline.com

## The Don of Pithapuram

One of the great losses Chennai has sustained like every other metropolis in the name of urban development is that of vanishing playgrounds. Where the Nandanam tower block stands now was once a full-fledged cricket ground known as the Pithapuram ground, with a matting wicket of true bounce and lightning fast outfield. Amazingly, it was maintained by an individual — albeit a cricket-mad one — who spent more than a minor fortune on leasing it, caring for it, providing practice facilities morning and evening through the year to as many as 20 players on any given day, and running a first-rate team that participated not only in the TNCA league but also in tournaments outside Madras. 'Don' Rangan — the allusion was to the Australian cricket immortal, not to a dubious character of Italian origin — was in fact godfather to many a young cricket aspirant. It would be no exaggeration to claim that anyone who has been anyone in Madras cricket has at some stage of his career practised at 'Rangan's nets' or played for 'Rangan's team' on 'Rangan's ground', as they were known. Such was the man's charisma.

Match fixing was not entirely unknown those days. It was a practice resorted to by teams conspiring to secure their

places in the league at the expense of a third minnow. Naturally, money played no role in all that skulduggery but no one in need of such adventitious help to stay afloat would ever dare to approach Rangan with a request to throw a match. Rangan, however, had no such scruples when it came to winning a match. If ever a match could be fixed in favour of his team winning it, I am sure he would have fixed it with knobs on, so badly did he want to win every single game that he ever played. Asif Iqbal, the Pakistan captain has been charged with winning the toss in a Test match and informing his surprised Indian counterpart, G.R. Visvanath, to the contrary. Not once but several times did Rangan do exactly the opposite, or so the story goes. Even as the coin came down, he swooped down on it and with a bright smile, told his rival "Bad luck, we bat." He was even credited with possessing a collection of coins whose heads and tails you could not tell apart!

## Wake-up call!

In the second half of his career, 'VV' (Kumar) was quite a grey eminence in cricketing circles, but he still continued to be a champion lateral thinker. There came a stage when he was senior not only to fellow players but also to umpires and administrators. And he sometimes took liberties with them no other player would dare to.

It was the first over after lunch in a crucial TNCA league

match in the seventies. With his very first ball, VV rapped the batsman on the pads and appealed loudly. To his amazement, he found that the umpire had fallen asleep standing, no doubt as a result of his exertions the previous night as a volunteer giving the finishing touches to preparations at Chepauk for the Test match barely a couple of days away.

Desperate for wickets, 'VV' whose appeal had startled the umpire awake, admonished him sternly: "Didn't I tell you not to stuff yourself with curdrice during lunch?" The poor umpire was as embarrassed as he was angry, but chose to ignore the bowler's impertinence.

A couple of balls later, 'VV' hit the batsman on the pads

● by  
**V. Ramnarayan**

again. This time, he rephrased his appeal in a rather novel fashion. *Ithu emayya?* (What about this one, I say?) he asked with utmost casualness in Tamil. The poor batsman had no chance after that, as the umpire's finger shot up like a rocket.

## A sardar among batsmen

Satvinder Singh was a superbly organised right hand batsman, whose several innings of quality in the Ranji Trophy, marked him out as a future Test prospect too, until a road accident damaged his knee permanently. I had the pleasure of playing against and with 'Chinda' as Satvinder was known. One of his innings, which I enjoyed watching from the non-striker's end, remains etched in memory.

Playing for Alwarpet Cricket Club against Jolly Rovers in the 1969-1970 season of the TNCA league, Chinda added a little over 150 runs with nine, ten

and jack after the first seven wickets had gone for approximately 70. Batting at nine, my contribution, as that of the next two batsmen's, was a single digit innings. Many who watched that memorable 147 by Satvinder at Loyola College put that innings on a par with the finest they have seen. I certainly agree with that assessment. In one over from that accurate and nippy fast bowler, B. Kalyanasundaram, during that innings, Chinda hit five consecutive boundaries, in a wide arc from cover to midwicket.

For all his technical perfection, the result of his father's coaching, and his stylish strokeplay, Chinda was a nervous starter, especially before the start of the match! Butterflies in the stomach were made more menacing by the Sardar's tendency to consume large quantities of betel nut on the morning of the match. The result was often a desperate search for the facilities of the ground, facilities that often did not exist. This knock was no exception and Chinda had come back from his pre-innings mission in the nick of time to put on his pads!

## Raja — a free spirit

In an era of swing bowling as opposed to the seam and bounce of contemporary cricket, he had an equally delightful answer to the outswinger or the inswinger. He cover drove imperiously, but he also played a gorgeous ondrive. Nor was he a poor cutter or hooker, either.

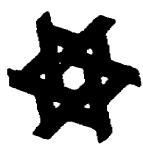
K.R. Rajagopal struck a fine partnership with his teammate and captain Belliappa who was the unwitting cause of Raja's being overlooked by the national selectors. For both were openers and wicket-keepers, and as State captain, Belli was the first choice stumper throughout the best years of

Raja's career, though many felt that Raja was by far the better keeper. When Raja was a strong contender for a place in the Indian team touring Australia in 1967-1968 after a magnificent domestic season as a batsman, another wicket keeper Indrajitsinhji was preferred to him on the pretext that he did not keep for his own State.

Raja is a simple man. For most of his playing days in Madras (he earlier played for Mysore), he worked at Sankarnagar, Tirunelveli, and took the night train to Madras to play league matches on the morrow for Jolly Rovers, the highly successful team sponsored by his employers. He brought as luggage a ridiculously small bag and went straight to the house of another "Raja", P N Sundaresan, *The Hindu's* cricket correspondent and the father of his teammate P S Narayanan. On the morning of the match, Raja made a hearty meal of the curd rice lovingly served by Mrs. Kamala Sundaresan; it kept him going during the day-long exertions that would follow. He would then jump on to the pillow of Narayanan's Lambretta, tousled hair, stubble on his chin, crumpled shirt and trousers and all, with his cricket shoes wrapped in an old copy of *The Hindu*. No fancy kit bag for him and as for his bat, he would most probably pick it up from the team kit on reaching the ground.

Such was Raja's pre-match preparation, but once he put on his pads and settled down to face the first ball of the innings, the change in him was electric. Slight of build and short in stature, he was a picture of poise and concentration as the bowler started his run towards him. Soon all hell broke loose as the crowd went into raptures over his incandescent batsmanship that needed no warming up.

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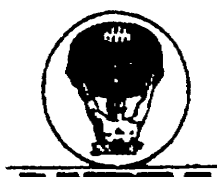
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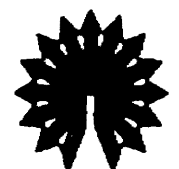
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