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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. X No. 24 FREE ISSUE April 1-15, 2001

INSIDE

- Sad restoration
- Services need improvement
- Sethu study needed
- Two pages on the cultural scene
- Cricket & rugby galas

A decade creating awareness

(By the Editor)

This issue of *Madras Musings* — our 240th — marks our completion of ten years of service to Madras that is Chennai and its citizens.

When we started on April 15, 1991 (a Tamil New Year's release), we were not quite sure where we were headed. Our focus then was basically to publish human interest, achievement-oriented and offbeat news stories that would appeal to the reader with roots in Madras, wherever he was, stories we felt that the local Press was not looking adequately at.

Over the first year, however, we found ourselves beginning to look at the City more closely. There was a greater focus on the heritage of the City, on a nostalgic look at its past and on the city's ethos. And why not? Madras was the first city of modern India, and what a lovely place it would be to live in if only people were aware of its heritage and the issues that needed to be addressed to make its people take pride in it once again. At the end of the first year, we recorded our contribution so:

'*With this issue,* Madras Musings *completes a year of service to Madras and its citizens. The good news is that it will continue for a while longer... This gives your Editor this chance to look back and look forward.*

It has been a year of considerable satisfaction to those of us who have put Madras Musings *together every fortnight and we do believe we have made some contribution to a better understanding and appreciation of this City of ours. Equally, from all that we hear — and our mail continues to be quite substantial, apart from what's told us as we move around that city — the contribution we have been making to Madras, the style and presentation of our journal and the non-political, human and sometimes more-light-than-Madras-is-accustomed-to touch, appear to have struck a responsive chord with readers. And several of them are not only enthusiastically loyal to* Madras Musings *but keep writing to us to add their friends to our readership...*

Distributing... nearly 10,000 copies at present, we are reaching a readership many times that number — and most of them are members of the City's leading clubs, its professional associations, its leading educational institutions and its service organisations.

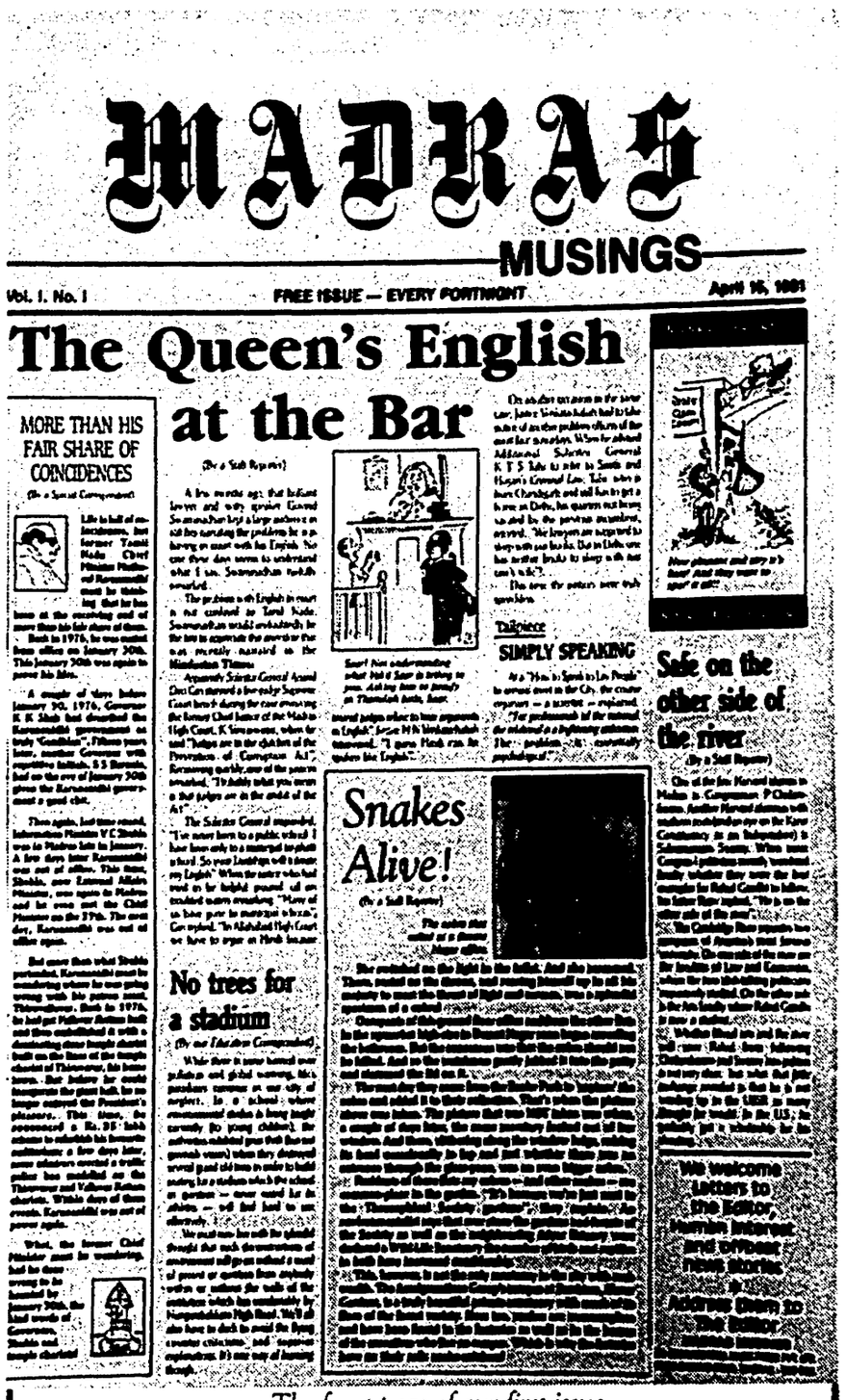
We have, throughout the year, continued to welcome new readership, and no request to be put on our mailing list has been turned down...

There have also been scores of suggestions on how to improve Madras Musings... *The only suggestion your Editor feels a real need to heed is the one that youth does not feature too often in* Madras Musings. *But too often that perception of youth is linked with the pop, disco and glad rags themes. And those, while all certainly having a place in life, are not a priority for an Editor with only eight pages at his disposal. What we would like to feature is real achievements of the youth of Madras. We would welcome such stories in the months ahead.*

And finally whither Madras Musings? *In fact, that's a question that should read: How long more,* Madras Musings?

Madras Musings *was founded as a unique, free issue publication to provide a forum for improvement of the city. We would like to keep it that way. But survival cannot depend indefinitely on such*

(Continued on Page 10)



MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. I. No. 1 FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT April 15, 1991

The Queen's English at the Bar

MORE THAN HIS FAIR SHARE OF COINCIDENCES

No trees for a stadium

SIMPLY SPEAKING

Snakes Alive!

Safe on the other side of the river

We welcome letters to the Editor, human interest and offbeat news stories

The front page of our first issue.

WHEN S.K. LOOKED BACK A YEAR

When Madras Musings *completed its first year, well-known columnist S.K(rishnan) congratulated* Madras Musings, *in these words:*

'Welcome, all ye faithful, it is celebration time, *Madras Musings* is a year old with this issue. A year might be an invisible speck in the infinity of time, but is nothing to be sneezed at in the life of a periodical. And for those of us who have been associated with *MM* from its inception — if inception is the word I want — this is not just a gratifying moment, but a moment that calls for gratitude also.

When *MM* was first conceived, its sponsors had several options open to them, and the decision to make it a free 8-page tabloid was deliberate, though taken nervously and after a lot of soul-searching. A further decision was to make it entirely City-oriented with an occasional excursion into other areas of interest to the Madrasi, wherever he was. That this was a correct decision was obvious from the beginning when our mailing list grew from a couple of thousand into over eight thousand in the course of a few weeks. *MM* was obviously fulfilling what is usually known as a felt need in a city that has no other magazine devoted to it, with the distinguished exception of *Aside*, which is considerably different from *MM* in motivation, style and substance.

A free periodical full of interesting reading matter with contributors drawn from various specialisations? Was it feasible in an environment in which the only free publications are house-organs? Would people not view with suspicion, if not totally despise, anything that was offered free? (As a matter of fact, some readers keep wondering whether we might not one fine morning charge a subscription, while others actually plead with us to levy at least a nominal subscription.) That *MM* would be distributed free was a carefully considered decision of the sponsors, the reasoning being that if it proved to be good enough, it may gain more of a readership than if it were sold for a price. This is exactly what has happened.

Early on, the Editor and his advisers worked out a format for the periodical, and since the formula proved successful, it has hardly been changed in the subsequent months. The main focus has always been the City, its pleasures and its shortcomings, its happenings, the regular and the unusual (one issue had two different "man bites dog" stories), and, generally, what people would want to know about what is happening in their City. To this effect, *MM* tries to take in its scope a wide variety of topics, all of which may not be of interest to all of its readers, but it is something more than a hodge-podge publication devoted to odds and ends. It has its own inner logic.

Two sections which have proved to be particularly popular are the quiz — nobody can deny the temptation to prove to himself that he is as knowledgeable as the next man — and what might be called the nostalgia bit. The true Madrasi has a good deal of interest in his city's past, and the items on old films, and, for that matter, old crimes, as well as the photographs showing the old and the new in buildings, have been very well-received, as have been recapitulations of glorious moments of the past in sport.

As we enter a new year, we make a commitment — and a complaint. The commitment is simply to keep up the quality of *MM*, and to improve it further. The complaint — the subject is rather delicate, but we have been considerably disappointed at the lack of advertising support which would give just that extra fillip to *MM*, and help it to expand. We will leave this thought with everybody who reads *MM* and wishes it well, with a renewed expression of our most sincere thanks to the readers for their interest.'

Welcome restoration, but sorry execution

Maadi Poonga, on Ibrahim Saheb Street at the north end of George Town, built on the last remnants of the ramparts of Chennapatnam, has once again been greened and restored as the terrace garden it was meant to be when it was developed in 1957 (see page 6). Chennai Corporation's recent renovation is certainly a right step towards a better Chennai, *The Man From Madras Musings* agrees. BUT...

One of the city's major heritage monuments and an Archaeological Survey of India protected site, the ASI had over the years allowed various plaques to be embedded in the historic wall. The terrace garden itself was allowed to deteriorate, and has, for years, been an open-air toilet and a dumping ground for waste.

While welcoming the Corporation's effort to restore the garden, *MMM* can't say that he is happy with how the restoration has been carried out. Besides adding to the plaques, the wooden gates of another age have been replaced by ornate metal gates, which are not in keeping with the wall at all. Worst of all has been painting the walls to look like something out of the present instead of retaining yesterday's looks. When the Army takes up restoration work in the Fort, *MMM* hopes that it will restore the giant wooden gates and walls there to the state they were originally in and not follow this garish route.

With *Maadi Poonga* all spruced up, another thought strikes *MMM* and he wonders how long the garden will be maintained in its present state. The Corporation maintains 88 parks (down from 175 in 1973). In 1993, ten parks were taken up for improvement. These included Thiru Vi Ka Park, Shenoy Nagar; Sriramulu Park, Broadway; Gill Nagar Park, Kodambakkam; Sathyamurthy Park, Chetput; Sharma Park, T' Nagar, and the terrace garden. Some of them are already showing signs of neglect. Meanwhile, *MMM* regrets that what was once the city's best kept garden, My Ladye's Garden, truly a neighbour of the Corporation, has not been looked at at all in this dedication to beautifying Chennai. Surely that should have been the first park to be restored — unless there are other, environment-unfriendly plans for these gardens which are verily in a sorry state.

New fountains, wasting precious water, also seem to be very much part of the Corporation's city beautification project. Surely, with the city suffering from an acute water shortage, *MMM* would think water-harvesting a greater priority for the money being spent. Rather than putting up fountains in the city, the Chennai Corporation should be looking at restoring the couple of score temple tanks in the city which would, at least, recharge the groundwater. Why does the Corporation seem to feel that giving new life to these tanks is not its job and that only beautification is?

Wasted road-building

A major bypass road linking Kotturpuram and Adyar is being planned, *The Man From Madras Musings* understands. The 50 ft, 3 km-long road, *MMM* hears, will begin at the southern end of the Kotturpuram Bridge and run along River View Road, Kotturpuram, NSK statue at Kottur and join the Adyar Bridge at Malligaipoo Nagar. The project has been designed in consultation with IIT, Madras, at an estimated cost of Rs.5 crore. The bypass road would be convenient for people travelling from the north Adyar area towards Mylapore, T' Nagar and Teynampet — and that's a thought *MMM* welcomes.

A few years ago, *MMM* had welcomed another bypass road, the one built along the south bank of the Cooum River, a west to east link between the Connemara Hotel bridge with the Gaiety Theatre bridge. It was also stated at the time that it was planned to extend this road westwards to join Greames Road by the Pantheon Road bridge. Neither has that happened, nor has the stretch built proved a welcome one any longer!

There is no point in building new roads of this nature, *MMM* feels, if they are going to wind up in the state the road from the Connemara to the Gaiety is now in, with garbage, building material dumps and wild growth along its sides, numerous shanty garages for repair work which narrow the road, pockmarks on the surface, and FOUR speed-breakers outside and near the MES headquarters guaranteed to break the suspensions of vehicles, not being built to any of the laid down specifications. If crores of rupees are being spent, surely it is well worth ensuring that the facility is well maintained for it to be meaningfully used. If such roads are to be allowed to deteriorate like this one, it would be far better and more cost-effective NOT to build them at all, *MMM* feels.

P.S. There is some road-widening going on at the western end of this stretch, but will that too face the fate of the eastern end before long?

Fighting corruption

The energy, determination and commitment of M.B. Nirmal has constantly amazed *The Man from Madras Musings*. Starting with cleaning up the streets of the city with Exnora, he moved Exnora on to a wider stage and has, now, himself moved on to a still wider stage. Founding and chairing 'Fifth Pillar', he's all set to tackle corruption. And to that end, a 'Fifth Pillar Headquarters Anti-Corruption Committee' has been set up at 20 Giriappa Road, T'Nagar, Chennai 600 017 (Tel: 8283377/8241688; e-mail: exnora@vsnl.com).

In an appeal to the public, Nirmal writes, "Public are requested to file complaints in the form of reports of alarming corrupt practices carried on by the elected representatives and officials of Central, State and Local Governments to Fifth Pillar.

"BEFORE AND NOW STATEMENT: The before statement should be about the financial/economic status of the individual before he assumed his office in government and as of now. The petitioner should spend some time and make a thorough study to find out the assets acquired and wealth amassed in the form of moveables as well as immoveables by the corrupt persons. The information should include disproportionate wealth owned now by the nearest kith and kin of each of the corrupt individuals. If possible the report can be supported by photographs of properties presently owned including those in the name of benamis. (Confidentiality is assured)...

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

"The 5th Pillar will deal with the reports received in the following way:

- Lodge complaints with the Chief Minister, Home Secretary and Director, Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, demanding action from them.
- File independent public interest litigations in the appropriate court.

The public are requested to co-operate."

MMM hopes that Fifth Pillar Headquarters will be flooded with 'Before & Now' – shall we call it BAN? — statements. But IF and WHEN action is taken — *MMM* notes the tortuous process justice is taking in several cases at present — what then? Will that assure the public swifter and more efficient service, will it ensure promises made being implemented faster?

Nirmal says, "India's main enemy is corruption. Unless we fight and remove it, the country has no future." *MMM* tends to disagree. Corruption must certainly be eradicated, but far more important is ensuring better service by everyone offering service, greater efficiency by all service providers, superior quality of products by manufacturers, and dedicated implementation of the laws. Must a cheque issued 100 miles away take weeks to clear, must a relaid road surface break up with the first rains, must traffic create chaos because no one follows the rules and no one makes the effort to make them do so, must technicians never keep their promises of turning up and if and when they do, do such shoddy work? *MMM* can keep on in this vein, but it is really not necessary; the point is that corruption has nothing to do with the sorry state of service that exists in everyday life and NOTHING is being done to improve that. Perhaps Nirmal should start focussing on that, perhaps starting with the banking service that he once was in.

Not just dandy!

The Man from Madras Musings has long been accustomed to quality fare from British Council-sponsored productions, an inseparable part of the cultural scene of the city over the years. It was therefore with great expectations that *MMM* went to see *I am Dandy* recently.

This David Gale ensemble of professional actors promised to take the audience "through a whirl of teasing and haunting moments that often resemble a jumbled, half-remembered dream or nightmare" during the course of an evening of "mixing text with startling physical theatre".

MMM has never been a person of delicate sensibilities, but even he could not help feeling embarrassed and rather puzzled by much of the play. Of course, he might have drawn comfort from the explanation offered by a British Council newsletter in which playwright David Gale said: "There are moments of great elegance, from which erupt tidal waves of hysterical behaviour." This was, however, obviously not a reference to *I am Dandy* which, though it abounded in hysterical behaviour, shunned elegance with typical post-modern fervour for the fetid.

According to what *MMM* understands from David Gale, the vulgarity and physical and verbal excesses of *I am Dandy* were his response to the comfort and strength that people draw from their belief systems, something that *MMM* finds unacceptable. "The idea that certain monolithic and enduring spiritual institutions are based on nothing has never ceased to astound me. The decisiveness and efficiency with which many people lead lives based on a vague belief that there is some overall purpose to their activities leads me to conclude, sourly and enviously, that there must be something in all this nothing. Clearly it would be comforting to believe in some of this bullshit, but really life is too short," Gale expounds. The producers of the play also have a perfect explanation for the "startling physical theatre" on stage which says: "The lid has blown off. People are seeing things and believing things like there's no tomorrow. Angels and aliens, Satan and saviours — all are jostling for attention at a time when panic, food scares and widespread excitability seem to be the order of the day. Terrible things that never happened are vividly remembered and an irrational explanation is vastly preferable to no explanation at all."

MMM is no believer in "bullshit", as Gale puts it, but he finds it difficult to stomach the brand of physical theatre *I am Dandy* represents, seemingly unprovoked displays of crude physicality that, we are led to believe, are artistic expression of the human predicament in these troubled times. It all seems like so much wasted effort, especially when the cast is obviously highly competent, trained and dedicated to its cause. Cause and effect may be passé, but *MMM* can't help wondering whether such productions are the result of the "dropping-the-playwright-baby-on-its-head" syndrome afflicting some careless nanny of the past.

All for Gujarat

A chair commode presented for bidding might have raised a laugh at a recent charity auction at Murray's, but it did raise Rs.25 more than expected and that was Rs.35 towards the Rs.25,525 eventually raised on the occasion for the CRY Gujarat relief fund. The highest bid for the day was for a teakwood cot, which added Rs.1100 to the kitty.

Amongst the other 100 or so items *The Man From Madras Musings* found being put up for bidding were car radiators, bumpers and other parts, old gramophone records, paintings, lawnmowers and safari suits. They all helped — and perhaps good causes need more auctions of the sort that help people clean out their homes.

– MMM

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 .....

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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.

Still a long way to go

— *for improvements in healthcare, education and public distribution*

(By A Special Correspondent)

Are the basic services of primary health, primary education and public distribution functioning satisfactorily in Tamil Nadu? No, according to a survey conducted by the Catalyst Trust and the Public Affairs Centre.

To become more responsive to the needs of citizens, most state governments in India have created policy documents for their various departments. The Tamil Nadu Government made an early start in this direction and many of its departments have brought out policy documents and citizens' charters and are making efforts to adhere to them. The survey also looked at how aware the public were of the policy documents and citizens' charters, the extent of their implementation and whether improvements had taken place as a result of the introduction of these documents.

Since covering all government departments would have been an enormous task, the CT-PAC survey focussed on the three most critical services provided by the State Government — primary healthcare, basic education and the public distribution system. Also, since rural citizens were more dependent on services provided by government, the study had a rural focus of various schemes and the extent to which the results had percolated down to the grassroot level.

Service users in four rural districts of Tamil Nadu, Tiruvallur, Erode, Pudukkottai and Tuticorin, were interviewed in the first phase. The second phase consisted of verification of the availability of services and related aspects. This was carried out by volunteers from the Federation of Consumer Organisations-Tamil Nadu (FEDCOT) and Makkal Sakthi Iyakkam. Gallup India did the analysis for both phases.

These were some of the CT-PAC findings:

Public Distribution System

Only 6% of the respondents were aware of the citizens' charter. Although access to ration shops was not a problem, the average waiting time to get a new card was 83 days compared to 7-14 days specified in the charter. Underweighing of commodities was a major problem (30%), followed by the denial of the whole quota of ration (12%). Only 42% of the shops functioned on the days they were open. Although the names and designations of officials to be contacted in case of any complaint were to be displayed at the shop, only one shop understood what the system was for and none of the shops had displayed the names or designations of the officials to be contacted. Only 32% of villages had constituted vigilance cells and of these only 75% were functional.

Fiftyeight percent of the respondents had not experienced any improvement in services in the past one year. However, 43% found it easier to get items at the PDS outlets. Waiting time was found to be the same by 56% of the respondents, while 50% found no change in the behaviour of ration shop owners.

Basic education

Public awareness of the policy document was low (4%). Seventyfive percent of children went to state-run schools but those attending private schools gave quality of education as the reason for not going to the state-run ones. The drop-out rate was 11.5%, 7% for boys and 16% for girls. Although schooling was to be provided free of cost, 19% of the parents said that money was collected by the school authorities for such purposes as building funds. A large proportion of students found the notebooks supplied to be inadequate, while 29% of parents found the uniforms to be of poor quality.

Although schools had to be inspected regularly, 50% of schools had been inspected a year or more ago. Eightyseven percent of schools had blackboards, but only 24% had toilets (of these, 75% had separate toilets for girls). Only 36% of the schools had a playground, while sports equipment was available only in 33% of the schools. Sixty percent of the schools had drinking water facilities.

School records showed a 30% drop-out rate with more boys dropping out than girls. People interviewed, however, said that only 12% dropped out.

Sixty percent of the respondents said that there were no changes in the overall functioning of the schools, compared to the previous year. 59% felt that the teaching had improved.

Primary Health Care

Awareness of the policy document was high (53%). However, knowledge of specific contents was low. There were more outpatients than in-patients, beds were easily available and medicines were generally given when needed. The average waiting time to consult the doctor was 42 minutes. Use of disposable syringes was low and knowledge of disposal procedures for hospital waste was negligible. The immunisation programme was generally considered successful, except for polio. Only 65% of pregnant women were given iron supplements. Over 60% of abortions were carried out at PHCs. A startling disclosure was that 37% of the respondents paid bribes for services.

Only 39% of PHCs were found to have surgical instruments for minor surgery, while only 16% had an operation theatre. X-ray machines and laboratories were found only in 26% and 39% of the PHCs respectively. Of the 24-hour centres surveyed, only 21% remained open throughout the day.

Fiftyseven percent of the respondents observed no change in the performance of the PHCs in the last one year. Only 42% believed that the treatment by doctors had improved.

One issue that was common to all the three services, but a major problem in the PHCs, was corruption. It was least in public distribution. Lack of strict monitoring and poor grievance redressal were problems in the PHCs.

A comparison of the findings of the survey across the four districts revealed that certain issues were specific to some districts. For example, awareness levels were generally low in Erode. But people in Erode and Tiruvallur were more interested in getting their grievances redressed. While the PDS was best in Pudukkottai, basic education was the worst in Tiruvallur. Public healthcare got the best rating in both Erode and Tiruvallur.

Although the overall satisfaction with the three essential services ranged from 52% to 65%, there seemed much more scope for improvement in the quality of services, the survey felt. The survey revealed that, on the whole, there was a lack of awareness of their rights among the citizens, low satisfaction about the quality of services, lack of adherence to policy documents and a lack of efficiency in proving services. The remedy, the survey concluded, lay in concerted action by the government, NGOs and citizens to increase awareness, improve quality and speed up implementation of policy statements.

The CT-PAC survey was co-ordinated and prepared by Dr. Sita Sekhar, Senior Research Advisor, Public Affairs Centre, with advice and support from A.K. Venkatasubramaniam of the Catalyst Trust.

• 'Our Readers Write' on Page 9

One of the students from the 'Semester at Sea' programme helps in brick-laying in a village.

Raising the bar — of expectation

It was mid-afternoon in the middle of March, and sweltering hot. But, for the residents of Jagjeevan Ram Nagar, a slum in Vysarpadi, it was an enjoyable festive afternoon. They were keenly awaiting the arrival of foreign students of the 'Semester at Sea' programme from the University of Shipboard Education, Chicago. The students would help the residents build a community hall, under a project organised by the Dalit Liberation Education Trust.

A petite and vivacious Roopavahini, 17 years old and 'tenth pass', was excited about teaching youngsters of the area in the soon-to-be-completed community hall. "I already have 25-30 children who are interested in attending evening classes. I'm sure there will be around a 100 soon, and we'll be able to organise a few more volunteers to handle those who need help," she said.

As the coordinator of the Trust sang *'Ennada nadu ithu, pollatha nadu ithu, Kannumun ennamo etho nitham nadakuthada!'*, a sunken-eyed middle-aged Kousalya wailed, "Why doesn't anyone do anything about basic facilities like water and drainage? We don't even have a pump in this locality, we are given exactly two *kudams* for *all* our needs by the Corporation lorries. And we don't have enough public toilets. Life is so difficult." Twelve-year old Ramu pitched in, "I get to bathe only once a week; since my mother goes to church, she gets to bathe twice!"

Soon, the foreign students arrived. A noisy, colourful band welcomes the visitors who are very enthusiastically greeted with smiles and handshakes by the scores of children who had gathered for the function. The students were garlanded with jasmine, their foreheads adorned with red *tikkas*, and they indeed enjoyed the reception.

After the introductory speeches, a few children presented a short cultural programme. The others meanwhile clambered over each other to try and sit close to the visitors. And in the background, a lathi-wielding policeman tried to make some order out of chaos.

For Grace Lester, it was a thrilling moment. "I've had such amazing experiences in all the ports we've visited (Cuba, South Africa, Brazil, Kenya). After this stop, it'll be Malaysia and Japan, and I'll be going back home with so much to think

(Continued on Page 10)

Remembering Rukmini Devi — in pictures

There are several admirers of the multifaceted talents of C. Nachiappan, formerly of Kalakshetra, now the Koviloor Swamy. Learning photography at the Besant Memorial School from Conrad Woldring, from the age of 12 for four years before the Dutch theosophist died (a tragic victim of electrocution), 'Nachi', as he was known to everyone, developed into a fine photographer and an expert in letter pressprinting. A protégé and personal assistant of the late Rukmini Devi at Kalakshetra, he ran the Kalakshetra Press for over 50 years and helped it gain an international reputation for quality printing.

Nachiappan had shot pictures of Rukmini Devi and Kalakshetra extensively. A comprehensive collection of those photographs would serve as a visual history of an important period in the nation's history, one that saw the resurrection of Indian classical dance and restoration of pride and dignity in our art, crafts and heritage, thanks to the crusading efforts of Rukmini Devi Arundale. And now, the Koviloor Swamy has brought out two volumes containing hundreds of photographs of Rukmini Devi and Kalakshetra by Woldring and Nachiappan, mostly the latter. The volumes also contain articles by Rukmini Devi herself and close associates like Betsan Coats, K. Chandrasekharan, Sarada Hoffman, James Cousins and Barbara Sellons.

Conrad Woldring.

C. Nachiappan, as the young Photographer

It is an extraordinary work of documentation of the dance form and the imprint Rukmini Devi left on it, the dance-drama format she conceived, the costumes, sets, lighting and aesthetics she pioneered, her original contributions to choreography, the outstanding professionals and international celebrities she carried along with her in her work.

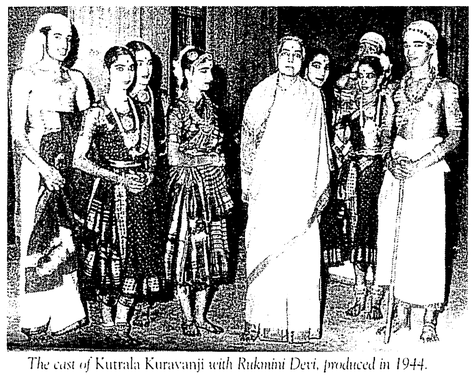
The range and scope of Rukmini Devi's interests and her lifetime achievement were always a revelation to the uninitiated. Her early dance dramas included *Hiawatha, The Light of Asia* and *Karaikkal Ammayar!*

Rukmini Devi

For someone who had believed that Kalakshetra was a stronghold of Sanskrit, it was a pleasant bonus to learn that poems and songs in Tamil, Telugu, Meerabai's songs in Hindi, and even Bengali (as in Rabindranath Tagore's *Syama*) had been part of the repertoire of its dance-drama through the years. A priceless assemblage is that of pictures of the Ramayana productions, which gives the reader an idea of the kind of sets, costumes and usage of stage space Rukmini Devi conceived. They are also pictures of some of the greatest dancers and dance teachers of Kalakshetra.

It is a well known fact that Rukmini Devi gathered around her some of the towering personalities in music and dance and inspired them to create lasting work for posterity, besides teaching their art to young students. All these famous people are to be seen in the pages of the album: Mysore Vasudevachar, Tiger Varadachariar, Veenai Krishnamacharya, Chandu Panicker, M.D. Ramanathan, Papanasam Sivan, Veenai Sambasiva Ayyar, Mylapore Gowri Amma, Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai, Budalur Krishnamurti Sastrigal, Kalidasa Neelakantar, Subramania Sastrigal, Turaiyur Rajagopala Sarma — what a galaxy of stars!

The book is an extraordinary collection of black and white photographs, though it also has a few colour pages. Read Nachiappan speaking of the technique used: "In the days of Conrad Woldring there was no colour photography. He was adept in black and white pictures, which he produced by proper tonal rendition and contrast. This was to be achieved by proper lighting, akin to daylight conditions, *i.e.*, sun as the main light source (like a big solar spotlight) and the skylight as a fill-in for the shadows. This lighting technique was called 'available light' photography." According to the author, Conrad used a simple Rolleiflex camera, but produced such remarkable sharpness in the negatives that big enlargements with the least grain were possible. 'One camera with a tripod and no dark room (as outside photo labs took care of developing and printing) was his philosophy'.



The cast of Kutrala Kuravanji with Rukmini Devi, produced in 1944.

The only disappointment in this wonderful album in two volumes is the less than satisfactory proof-reading and editing, in places. But it is a collector's item, all the same.

V. Ramnarayan

An advertising award function — with a difference

There was none of the razzmatazz usually associated with an advertising awards function. In fact, the very title of the programme had seemed like a printing mistake, the 'Kalki Sadasivam Memorial Award for Creativity and Excellence in Advertising'. At the Awards Function, in which advertisements by HTA and Goldwire in Tamil and English respectively were adjudged the best work in 2000, the audience learnt that Sadasivam had indeed started his career as Advertising Manager at S.S. Vasan's Tamil weekly, *Ananda Vikatan*, where he introduced some novel promotional techniques besides boosting the ad revenue of the magazine. He had even bought advertising space in *The Times*, London, to get British investors to advise their units in India to advertise in *Ananda Vikatan*, according to the brochure distributed at the function.

What set the function apart was that the speeches were mostly in Tamil with a sprinkling of English. There were no 'Power Point' presentations, no video shows, no special effects to entertain the sizeable audience that packed to capacity the Ragasudha Hall. But there were good old speeches extolling the virtues of the man who moulded the career of M S Subbulakshmi, and citations were read out in praise of the prize-winning entries. The audience consisted mostly of senior citizens and others of a strictly Mylapore vintage, and why not? They were the most likely to remember the stirring deeds of the co-founder of *Kalki* magazine. And they enjoyed the entertainment that followed, a Carnatic music concert by Sudha Ragunathan, the last thing you would normally expect in an event associated with advertising.

While listening to eulogies of the late Sadasivam, most of them referring to his generosity, his *guru bhakti* towards Rajaji and the Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram, and the crores of rupees donated by him and his wife to charitable causes, the audience might perhaps have wondered whether awards for advertising excellence were indeed an appropriate way of remembering him, until it was made clear that one of the criteria for the awards was social purpose. Both the award-winning entries qualified on that count — while the Ashok Leyland advertisement stressed the need for pollution control and care for the environment, the MRF ad encouraged motorists to smile and reduce tensions on the road.

Present that evening to receive the award on behalf of HTA, the agency that created the Ashok Leyland advertisement, was Indu Balachandran, a celebrity in the advertising world, especially as a result of her excellent work in television advertising. Her fame seems to sit lightly on this youthful 'star', who surprised the organisers and audience by informing them that her grandfather had been a close friend of Sadasivam, in fact his regular rummy-playing companion in a group that had as its head the patriarch of Carnatic music, Semmangudi Srinivasier.

The Kalki Sadasivam Memorial Trust should in future, perhaps, concentrate on giving awards to Tamil advertisements, leaving English language advertising to the likes of the Advertising Club. Especially as most vernacular advertising is merely English advertising translated into Tamil, there should be more and more incentives for original work in the vernacular.

V.R.

Two pages on the cultural scene

Still practising an ancient tradition

Few know that the Madras Museum has the ONLY bronze collection in the world which includes representations of ALL the schools of the art in South India. Most connoisseurs of art agree that the ancient tradition of bronze casting, dating back to 8,000 years or more, has few parallels anywhere in the world.

G. Masilamani Sthapathi is a very talented representative of the *sthapathi* lineage of bronze casters whose recent exhibition of 'Bronze Icons' in Chennai, drew rave reviews. He had just returned from Mumbai, after participating in a ten-day exhibition at the Prince of Wales Museum, hosted by the Paramparik Kaarigar.

"The invitation to Mumbai came as a pleasant surprise. Actually, it was as a result of my previous exhibition at the CP Arts Centre in Chennai. And the response in Mumbai was perceptibly very positive. Things are slowly looking up for traditional craftsmen like me. There is now a leaning towards Art and all things connected. Earlier, even if someone appreciated art, he wouldn't express it. Nowadays, beauty and creativity are beginning to be appreciated and enjoyed," says Masilamani.

Masilamani Sthapathi

According to Masilamani, stone sculpture is more difficult than bronze casting, because the wax moulds are easier to fashion. You can add or remove the wax, but not stone. So, though the process is long-drawn, involving initial drawings, creation of the wax model, making the clay mould, the week-long drying, melting the wax, the casting of the bronze and the final finishing touches, there is more freedom in creating bronzes.

As *sthapathis*, Masilamani says, they are expected to follow the *Agama shashtras* to the minutest detail, with exact proportions such as *ashtathalam, navathalam,* and *panchathalam*. But with long years of experience (Masilamani has been working with bronzes for the past 13 years), you come to rely more on evoking what is called *netrananandham* or aesthetic pleasure, rather than on specific measurements. "Personal discipline and bhakthi, or single-minded concentration is very important. Otherwise it will show in the finished product," he stresses.

Bronze casting is believed to have reached its pinnacle during the Chola period. Masilamani agrees, "The sculptors of the Chola period were very dedicated. It was as if the sculptor and the sculpture merged into one another, such was their devotion. Naturally, the images they created were more beautiful than even they expected. In fact, *sthapathis* then were considered as priests, or closely associated with priests. In later periods, under the Nayaks or Hoysalas, the accent was more on the constructive aspect. The freedom and flow of lines of the figures were removed when the later styles imposed their own embellishments; the emphasis was more on what should be, than on what was natural. Maybe, we could liken it to the unfettered creative imagination of a toddler as compared to the eager-to-please, more inhibited offerings of an older child!"

A 48" bronze Shiva as Vrishapadevar, by Masilamani Sthapathi.

Though Masilamani studied at the Kumbakonam College of Arts and Crafts, he belonged to the traditional Sthapathi clan, his father Govindaswami Sthapathi created bronzes till he died recently, at the age of 76. Of the 100 or so *sthapathis* in Tamil Nadu, most are located in Swamimalai and Mahabalipuram, and there are about six in Chennai. However, there are many non-traditional *sthapathis*, who choose this line, without a background in the art.

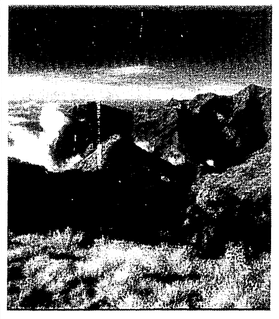
"Unfortunately, there are those who are in this art merely for money; they have no knowledge or emotional involvement with their work. For them, quantity matters, not quality. There is also not much encouragement fromGovernment for individual craftsmen but, only for institutions. But genuine artists should not be calculative or money-minded", Masilamani feels.

Masilamani Sthapathi has experimented with modern art, too. Basically abstract presentations of traditional motifs, they are displayed at the National Museum of Modern Art in New Delhi. An admirer of philosopher J. Krishnamurti, he is fond of reading spiritual books. "As a widower (his wife passed away during childbirth 12 years ago) with a young son, my personal life has been rather difficult. But professionally, things are looking up, people everywhere appreciate my work. I hope to popularise this glorious art form abroad by holding more exhibitions. The first one will be in Canada. And perhaps I might establish a training institute for *sthapathis* sometime in the future", he was optimistic about the future.

Shobha Menon

Images of the Western Ghats

A photo exhibition titled 'The Western Ghats: Portrait and Panorama' by Ian Lockwood was recently held in New Delhi. The exhibition attempted to highlight conservation issues in the Western Ghats through the use of finely produced black and white photographs while communicating the message of ecological or architectural conservation.



Kolkulmalai View, Tamil Nadu. One of the last remaining examples of the grasslands / shola ecosystem left in Palni Hills. Much of this kind of habitat has been converted into monoculture plantations of exotic (non-native) trees.

The Western ghats are now recognised as one of two critical biodiversity hotspost areas in India, the other being the Eastern Himalaya. These mountain ranges are a rich haven for flora and fauna, and play a critical role in regulating and storing monsoon rains that give us precious water.

This region, stretching from Mumbai to Kanyakumari, is today threatened by unregulated development causing the destruction of the natural habitat. This reality led Lockwood to document the remnants of the fragile ecosystem and their unfolding tragedy. "Documentation of the destruction and scenes of natural beauty are the key aspects of my work," he states. His work, he hopes, will help educate the masses and awaken the cause of conserving natural habitat and historic monuments.

Ian Lockwood is an environmental science and photography teacher at the American International School in Dhaka, Bangladesh He works with students to understand the environment, organises field trips to create awareness and appreciation for the natural world and focusses his study on local issues and habitat. Having grown up in the Western Ghats and Bangladesh forests, Lockwood strives to promote conservation of natural resources in both areas.

Lockwood's father "was an avid photographer and camera designer," and the son was exposed to the work of Ansel Adams at a young age. Both father and son shared a desire to present the breathtaking, but unknown South Indian landscape in a similar manner to Adam's monumental work on the American West. The fact that these images were used to awaken Americans to the cause of conservation was of particular value to Ian Lockwood. As a student in college he took several photography classes while pursuing a degree in Development Economics. Mary Ellen Mark's work on social issues, both domestic and global, were inspirational, especially her intimate portraits of people. He was also inspired by Sabastiao Salgado, an economist turned creator of exquisite black and white images depicting Third World problems.

Tangled Shola Tree, Palni Hills, Tamil Nadu.

Lockwood's most effective images have been products of his intimate experiences with the environment. His work on India's Western Ghats and Bangaladesh's forests will be useful in highlighting a larger cause — conservation. — (Courtesy: *SPAN.*)

A point of view

Sethusamudram scheme needs further study

After reading the story, 'Nanguneri the first step' courtesy the *Industrial Economist* (*MM*, March 1st), **M.C. VAIJAYANTHI** writes saying she is surprised that *Madras Musings* which has the tradition of taking up the cause of conservation should support the Sethusamudram project even indirectly.

Vaijayanthi adds, "Not only will the project affect the ecology and environment, the famous Thirupullani/Dhanushkodi temples would also disappear. Security experts too have pointed out the dangers of opening up of this sea route, with the LTTE already active on the high seas in this area". Enclosed was a copy of the letter sent by the Bombay Natural History Society to all its members, a letter which brings out the adverse ecological impact the Sethusamudram project is likely to create.

The BNHS letter states:

'The Gulf of Mannar Marine Reserve is threatened by a shipping canal project that will disturb the delicate marine ecosystem of the area, with its sea grasses, corals, mangroves, turtles and highly endangered dugongs. The communities that depend on the Gulf will also be severely hit by the resultant ecological degradation.

The Rs. 1,200-crore Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project on the coast of Tamil Nadu is under consideration by both State and Central governments. It entails the dredging of a canal to enable faster sea travel between the east and west coasts, to prevent ships having to sail 700 miles around Sri Lanka.

More than 50,000 people in 138 villages and towns spread over five districts rely indirectly on the fishery resources of the waters of the Gulf for their livelihood. Commercial fishing is carried out in about 5,500 sq. km of the reserve. The construction of the project will destroy the unique and fragile marine ecology of the area through constant dredging to maintain a canal depth of about 10 m. Aside from the immediate area of the seabed, the consistent churning of sediment will also smother the coral reefs. The increase in shipping traffic will inevitably result in an increase in oil spills and marine pollution.

The area is already under stress from industries along the Tamil Nadu coast. Ash and effluents from the Tuticorin Thermal Power Station, the Dhrangadhra Chemical Works and the Tuticorin Salt Marine Chemicals already pollute the Gulf.

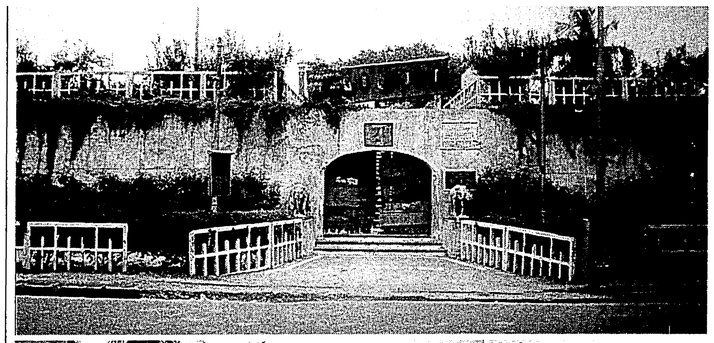
The Gulf of Mannar is one of India's biologically diverse coastal regions. Over 3,600 species of plants and animals exist in this area, in a combination of different ecosystems, including mangroves, sea grasses and coral reefs. It is the first marine biosphere reserve in South and Southeast Asia. Encompassing a group of 21 small islands along the coast, the reserve stretches for 180 km and is approximately 10 km wide. Believed to have the highest concentration of sea grass species along India's coast, with six of the world's twelve sea grass genera and 11 of the world's 50 sea grass species occurring here. These beds are of global significance as they are among the largest remaining feeding grounds for the globally endangered dugong, *Dugong dugong*. Additionally, five species of marine turtles, innumerable fish, molluscs and crustaceans also feed here.

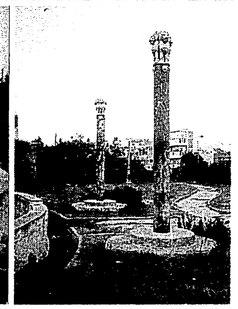
The Gulf of Mannar also harbours 117 species of coral belonging to seven genera. At least 17 different mangrove species occur within the reserve area. Of these, *Pemphis acidula*, is endemic. The IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas along with the UNEP, UNESCO and WWF has identified the reserve as being an area of 'particular concern'. On the basis of its threatened status and richness of biological wealth, the reserve was one of six areas chosen for inclusion in an action programme to save India's protected areas.

Despite this international recognition of its biodiversity potential, the Tamil Nadu Government has chosen to ignore all protests, national and international, and seems determined to go ahead with the project. Unless large-scale public opinion can be mobilised, the dugongs, sea turtles and biodiversity of the Gulf of Mannar will be sacrificed together with the livelihoods of thousands of traditional fisherfolk.'

Reader Vaijayanthi, a member of the BNHS, concludes by requesting that 'a serious study of the Sethusamudram project be made' before it is too late.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Madras Musings* too has several times in the past mentioned the need for such an environmental study before embarking on implementing this century-old suggestion. The last we heard on the subject was that a study was underway. We also were told at the time by an official working on plans for the project that there was little or no environmental danger posed by the project. What we would like to see is a public debate by experts before a final decision is taken on a project which has several economic benefits for one of the poorest parts of the country — once regularly famine-stricken.



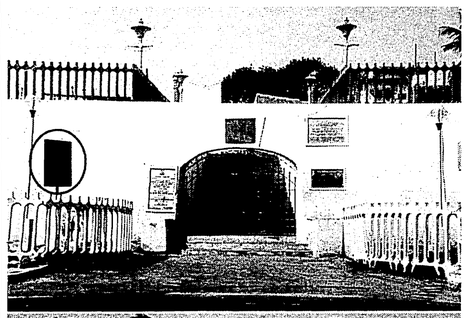


Our OLD (above) this fortnight is of the Maadi Poonga, *a park on Ebrahim Saheb Street, the northern boundary of George Town. This park was developed on the old 'Black Town Wall', which was built to protect what the residents called Chennapatnam — as opposed to Madraspatnam, Fort St. George, where the British lived. The wall has long been protected, under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites And Remains Act, 1958, by the Archeological Survey of India. But of protection there has hardly been any for years, either by the ASI or the Corporation of Madras who developed the park, with ornamental pond and Ashoka pillars in 1957, had it inaugurated by Justice P. Rajagopal, and arranged for the lighting in 1973. All that the park has offered neighbours and visitors in recent years has been the sorry state of neglect it fell into and a view of its use as an open air toilet and refuse dump.*

THE OLD... ...& THE NEW

Plans for the fortification of Black Town, ensuring the defence of the two pettais which constituted Black Town (now George Town), were initiated by Robins and Brohier. John Call's subsequent proposal for a town wall was put into effect only after Hyder Ali's raids of 1767 and 1769, the first led by his son and the second by Hyder himself, emphasised the need for better defences. The building of the wall was not undertaken till late 1769 after tenders had been called for. Paul Benfield, resigning as Call's assistant, was the only person to tender a bid. He offered pagodas 1¾ per cubic yard of brick work and 8½ fanams per cubic yard of earthwork. The tender was accepted with slight modifications. He began the work in 1769, and completed most of it in 1770. The work involved the constuction of 3½ miles of ramparts along the north and west fronts of Black Town as well as a portion of the south. The ramparts included 17 bastions, connected by curtains, each averaging 300 yards in length. The work was completed at a cost of 1,50,000 pagodas. The western face was demolished in the middle of the 19th Century and much of the north wall sometime thereafter, the only major stretch still left being where the park was developed.

In the city layout of today, this wall would have been located between the Clive Battery flyover and Basin Bridge railway station in the north and from that station to the Central Station junction at Poonamallee High Road in the west.



What was once called Pully Gate, *the entrance leading to* Maadi Poonga, *was once called at the end of Thambu Chetty Street, Thiruvottriyur (Monegar Choultry) Gate at the end of Broadway, Ennore Gate near the north end of Mint Street, Elephant Gate at the end of the street named after it, Chuckler's Gate near Rasappa Chetty Street and Hospital Gate near the present General Hospital were the main gateways in the fortifications. Our NEW (on left) is a* Maadi Poonga *renovated at a cost of Rs. 15 lakh by the Corporation of Chennai. The park has been landscaped and floodlit. The old wooden gates which once graced the entrance have been replaced with metal grill gates. And the pond has water in it again. Now only maintenance has to be assured.*

P.S.: In the NEW, note the ornamental gates, the painting and the ASI board (circled) proclaiming the protected monument status of the wall.

(Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

Two pages of sport

Chennai Test: Neither side deserved to win

Rahul Dravid

'Men of the Match', Matthew Hayden and Harbhajan Singh

(Photographs by K.V. SRINIVASAN)

The Chennai Test match has ever been an occasion to meet old friends and talk cricket, past and present. The most recent one, in which India narrowly beat Australia, was no exception and it was wonderful to catch up with many with whom you had played, argued, even violently disagreed with, in the past but now greeted with genuine warmth as Anno Domini had magically removed all barriers.

On the heartstopping denouement of the match, I had occasion to exchange notes with Saad bin Jung, a junior colleague of mine who played two unforgettable innings — against the touring West Indies when hardly 16, and against Venkataraghavan and Vasudevan on a raging Chepauk turner more than two decades ago — and was now writing for *Asian Age*. "If there had been another tie, I would have had a heart attack," I observed, to which he replied, "A tie was the only fair result, because neither side deserved to win". (This was in sharp contrast to what happened in 1986, when neither side deserved to lose.)

I couldn't have agreed with him more, for I was convinced that both Australia and India had thrown away the advantage during the match, after batting themselves into strong positions. Australia's inexplicable collapse on Day Two resulted in considerable loss of face for me. On the opening day, I had declared with a flourish to my usual Test match mates, Jaishankar of Landmark and Gautam of Eastwest Publications, that Australia, in particular Adam Gilchrist, would thrash spinners Kulkarni and Bahutule and would win the match, as India would bat last. What actually happened is of course history now. Not only did the Aussies capitulate once again to the persistent off spin of Harbhajan Singh, they actually treated the Mumbai slows with much respect, Gilchrist letting me down totally.

Watching Laxman bat was an undiluted pleasure. The Hyderabadi used to play across the line a bit, flicking and driving in the Azharuddin style, but it seems he has worked hard at eliminating technical flaws and bats much straighter now. He made batting look so easy, and aesthetically, God forgive me my sacrilege, he gave joy in a way even Sachin Tendulkar did not. Tendulkar's was a determined effort, not one of his best in terms of the kind of mastery he can exert over most bowlers. Rahul Dravid's batting was magnificent, easily the most domineering and fluent I have seen from his blade.

The main culprit in the Australian batting line-up was, in my opinion, Mark Waugh who had no business to hole out when he did. Steve Waugh's was, as always, a disciplined effort, and would have probably taken his side to a much bigger total, and **safety**, but for his momentary aberration. If the hand of God scored a goal for Diego Maradona, in Waugh's case, it turned out to be rather an act of God. For Gilchrist, his hara kiri was unforgivable.

• by V. Ramnarayan

In my book, the Australian batting performance at Chepauk was a sweeping failure, except for Matt Hayden's powerful innings which was characterised by a more judicious choice of deliveries to hit. He employed the sweep shot to deliveries pitching outside the off stump rather than those on the stumps, thus minimising the risk of an lbw dismissal.

Making sacrilegious statements is becoming a habit with me. His bowling in the Chennai Test, which rarely rose to great heights, coming on top of his rather pedestrian performance at Kolkata, coupled with his outrageous behaviour, have made me revise my opinion of Glenn McGrath, the fast bowler. Perhaps in the near future, he will give further proof of his greatness, but in India he has failed to do what other pacemen like Lindwall, Holding, Roberts, Wasim Akram, Kapil Dev and Ian Botham have done, i.e., win matches for their teams on our dead wickets. His crude gestures and offensive signalling to Tendulkar and the invariable head-shaking by his batting colleagues at every leg before decision — only to be made to look like fools later by television replays — suggested that many of these players are yet to shake off traditional prejudices and arrogance. I found McGrath's attitude to Indians particularly offensive and was perversely delighted when he was reduced at both Kolkata and Chennai to bowling well wide of the off stump in a negative line. A number of times in the series, he, Justin Langer, Shane Warne and Adam Gilchrist flirted with the code of conduct for players and got away with it, and match referee Cammie Smith, who is much harsher with Indian players, was seen in an unflattering 'Uncle Tom'-like light.

The Australian tactics on the field were puzzling. Shane Warne does not seem to believe in bowling an orthodox line at all. Instead of obsessively attempting to bowl round the wicket on the rough, had he only concentrated on attacking the off-and-middle, and tempted the batsmen to come down the wicket to him, he might have enjoyed much more success against the Indians, inspired by Laxman's great Kolkata innings. In the event, Warne ended up bowling to the batsmen's strength most of the time. By the time Colin Miller realised it was futile to bowl his off breaks fast on Indian wickets, the match was almost over. And what were the Australians trying to achieve by making 'Funky' Miller bowl medium pace to Tendulkar and spin to Ganguly in one spell? The current Aussie love (theorising) rivals that of English teams of yore, which complicated the game most unprofitably.

Finally, a great personal disappointment was when my favourite cricket crowd failed to applaud the gallant Aussies in the same grand manner in which it gave a standing ovation to the victorious Pakistan team at the same venue a couple of years ago. For all their uncharacteristic submission during the first four days, Steve Waugh's men fought back magnificently on the last. They deserved thunderous applause. Chennai disappointed.

Tied Test II reunion

India cements bonds with the Aussies

It was a sweltering day at the India Cements-Guru Nanak College cricket ground. That is where the similarity between the venue of Tied Test Two and the replayed charity match ended. In place of the concrete cauldron of the MAC stadium, here the ambience was that of the village green, with colourful shamianas sheltering an invited audience lending a festive air to the proceedings. The airconditioned dressing rooms upstairs with a sweeping view of the ground were of international standards and allowed the superannuated stars assembled in Chennai for a worthy cause to rest their aching bones in luxury rather than mere comfort.

The match itself became a one-sided contest with the Australians delivering a knockout punch to the Indians. There was clearly no attempt at match-fixing to reproduce a tie! The result was anyway immaterial to the enjoyment of the occasion and it was a revelation to the spectator who had seen the stars in their youth to find that there had been no diminution of skills, only a slowing down inevitably brought about by the aging process and, in many a case, the onset of prosperity.

The Indian openers Sunil Gavaskar and K Srikkanth showed glimpses of the excellent form which had marked their vital contributions to the Chepauk tie. Gavaskar had scored 90 in delightful style then and Srikkanth had made runs in both innings. This time round, Gavaskar made some drives of pristine purity, while, after playing and missing a few, the former Tamil Nadu opener played some trademark shots square of the wicket. Srikkanth fell to a brilliant diving effort by bowler Greg Matthews, the eccentric off spinner who bowled the historic last ball of that Chepauk Test besides claiming eight other wickets in the match and making 44 and 27 not out.

Nothing much had changed in Greg Matthews' appearance or demeanour, except for some inevitable mellowing and thickening of the waistline. He still bowled with his cap on and still moved around briskly. He spun and flighted the ball well enough to return figures of 4 for 39. Dean Jones of the double century fame must have been relieved it was not a frame-for-frame replication of the earlier occasion when he made a marathon 210 and was so dehydrated he had to be hospitalised. He looked trim and fit, moving lithely and throwing as swift and accurate as ever. His batting too seemed to have suffered little deterioration, his six-studded half century hinting he is still active in the game.

David Boon, the little Tasmanian, can probably walk into a Test side even today, so perfect was his timing in a fluent, attractive three figure innings that won him the man-of-the-match award. Allan Border was quite the distinguished elder statesman stressing the importance of such matches that served to remind us of history-making contests of the past. He enjoyed the off-the-field fellowship; it was a great opportunity to share a few beers with his rivals and mates of 15 years ago. Border had made a sporting declaration that in the first place made the tie a possibility, but he had also indulged in some typical Aussie aggro on the field as the match seemed to be slipping away from his grasp. There was none of that gamesmanship on view now, nor was it needed. Of the visitors, Simon Davis was another who seemed to be as fit as in his youth and he had reason to celebrate when he clean bowled Gavaskar.

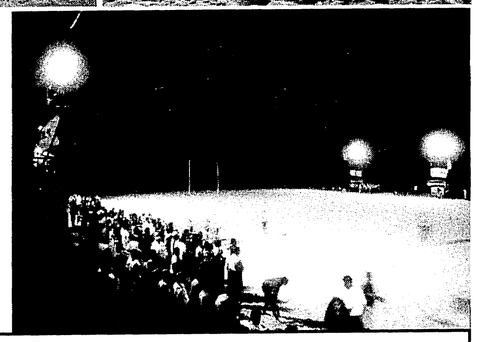
Of the two wicketkeepers who had figured in the eleven in the tied Test, Chandrakant Pandit put up an impressive all-round display this time, bowling some steady medium pace and batting solidly. Pandit is a current player who leads Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy. He made useful runs in both innings of the tied Test for which he had been selected as a batsman. He ended up keeping wickets almost throughout the match, as Kiran More had suffered food poisoning and gone off the field as early as the first morning of the game. This time More encountered no such problems and was named best fielder.

The match was a triumph of organisation for India Cements, who had paid careful attention to every little detail. The outfield was a flawless green carpet and the wicket a beauty. Their volunteers also stepped in to make alternative arrangements at a moment's notice when many pressmen were left in the lurch by the careless handling of lunch arrangements for the media by those responsible for the arrangements.

The proceeds of the match, courtesy the sponsors India Cements Limited, Home Trade and Professional Management Group, were donated to the Gujarat Earthquake Relief Fund.

V. R.

The Armenians win on beach sands



Scenes from the Chennai Sevens tournament that brought rugby back to Madras... and how! On the beach sands, under the floodlights and before crowds.

• Pictures and text by RAJIND N CHRISTY

Competitive rugby returned over a March weekend to Chennai after a lapse of 37 years. After the South and Southeast Asia Rugby Football Championship was held here in 1963, the game died out in the city; a couple of years earlier it had been given up in most of South India's planting districts.

Expatriates began reviving the game in Chennai from 1997, but a demonstration of rugger putting down firmer roots in the city was a recent tournament that made a mark in more ways than one. An all-India Sevens competition, it was unique in being not only the first rugger to be played competitively in Madras since 1963 but also the first to be played in India on the beach sands and also under floodlights. And on the large crowds that came to 'discover' the game, and stayed to cheer the local teams on with the 'Mexican Waves', the tournament certainly made sufficient impression to augur well for the game not only in Chennai but also in Tamil Nadu.

The Chennai Sevens, conducted by the Tamil Nadu Rugby Football Union (TNRFU) at Besant Nagar beach, featured 18 teams, including 'Sevens' from Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Manipur, Orissa and Pondicherry, apart from the four home teams. The teams were divided into two divisions of nine teams each and each division was divided into three pools of three teams. A team winning two league matches or the team topping the points table qualified for the Cup competition, the second-placed teams in the pool played for the Plate and the third-placed teams for the Bowl. The rules were also modified to suit the beach, with the length of the pitch being altered to 70 metres and the width to 45 metres, and one or two other changes being made.

The Calcutta Police, Tambaram Dragons, Royapettah Rams, Delhi 'B' and the Chennai Old Boys (the over-35s, and mainly expats) qualified for the Bowl competition. Delhi 'A', Pondicherry, Manipur 'B', Orissa, Young Rugby Club, Calcutta, and Chennai Sharks played for the Plate. The Cup was contested by Bombay. Gymkhana A & B, Armenian Sports Club, Calcutta, Manipur 'A', Bangalore, and Chennai Cheetahs who included two who had represented India Under-19 in the Asian Championships in Sri Lanka recently, Sathish and Sharif.

The Bowl final was contested by Calcutta Police and Delhi 'B', and the experienced Police won 19-0. Playing for the Plate, the Chennai Sharks, who upset Manipur B, met Pondicherry in the finals. Captain Jonathan from Uganda helped Pondicherry win 5-0 in the dying moments of the game with a try.

The two best and most experienced teams in the tournament met for the Famous Grouse Trophy. Bombay Gymkhana 'A' drew first blood and led 12-7 at half time. But some fine running by the Armenians in the second half, particularly a wonderful sprint by Mandal for the winning try, enabled them to win the match 21-12 and take the Cup.

The most promising team in the tournament was the Manipur Rugby Club.

Speaking of rugby...

Veteran rugger player Arsham H. Sookias, Hony. Rugby Secretary of the Armenians of Calcutta, told *Madras Musings* that it was difficult to raise a team this year as most of the Calcutta Armenians had emigrated to Australia. But two who stayed back, Emil Vartazarain and Henrik Terchounian, represented India last year. The Armenian team that came for the Chennai Sevens was the first ever with non-Armenians in it. Sookias recalled that he had visited Madras as a player in 1961 when he had played at the Gymkhana grounds. But watching his wards win a Championship on beach sands was a totally different experience.

The Manipur Rugby Club captain Jeet Singh said that when a few of them decided to get the game going in Imphal three years ago they inserted an advertisement in the local newspapers to recruit players to the game. The response was so good they have three 15-a-side teams, he enthused. He, however, regretted that they had no guidance and had to solely depend on the video clips of international matches to improve their skills and learn more about the game.

The Bangalore Rugby Football Club captain, the energetic Kenyan Amos Akaya, said the Club was formed in 1997 with expatriates training the team. The team today is run by local students. It also has a junior team.

The Orissa club captain Tapan Das said they were being helped by the Bombay Gymkhana in fostering rugby in Bhubaneswar. The Bombay Gymkhana Club was the club with the oldest rugby connection in the tournament. Chaitaniya Singh of the Gymkhana said they have teams that play Fifteens as well as Sevens. The current all-India champions are popularising the game in Western India by introducing it in the schools, where they have had a good response, he said.

The Pondicherry Rugby Club was formed by a few Frenchmen four years ago. It is now captained by an Ugandan national player, Johnathan Kamukama, who said the game was growing in popularity in Pondicherry.

The Delhi Rugby Football Club entered two teams. Captain Kuldeep Bist said expats had introduced the game and today there are about 70 players registered with the club. The club also promotes the game by holding a State Sevens Championship regularly, in which teams from neighbouring states have taken part.

The Calcutta Police have been playing the game for several years now — but the call of duty prevents them forming a cohesive team. Inspector Verghese Kunjhachan, who coaches the team, is one of the moving spirits behind rugby in Calcutta, the heartland of the game in India.

Sri Lankan Dilroy Fernando, representing the International Rugby Board and said to be the best referee in Asia, said the tournament was a good one as a beginning but if the standard of the game was to get better, refereeing in India would have to improve considerably. On behalf of the Sri Lankan Society of Rugby Football Referees, he invited Indian referees to Sri Lanka to undergo training and also study the finer aspects of the game so that they can help knowledgeably in the development programmes in India. Sri Lanka, where rugger is a passion only a bit less than cricket, plays China every year to help popularise the game there; India too could play Sri Lankan teams regularly, suggested Fernando.

The tournament director and secretary of the Tamil Nadu Rugby Football Union Patrick Davenport said plans were afloat to promote the game at the school and college level in the State. The President of the TNRFU, U. Mohan Krishna, added that a rugby enthusiast, Deivendran, had been recruited by the TNRFU for this purpose. The association also planned to talk to the Police and Defence Services about taking to the sport.

Neil Wijeratne, official Recorder of the Sri Lankan Rugby Football Union, said over 600 schools play the game competitively in the Island now and 3000 schools are the SLRFU's target by February 2005.

Pramod Khanna, President, Indian Rugby Football Union, said the tournament was a good exposure for rugby in Chennai and hoped South India would produce quality rugby players, as in the past, to represent the country. He also hoped the corporate sector could support the promotion of the game in a big way in this part of the country.

All those whom *Madras Musings* met at the tournament commented on the sudden change of playing surface — none of them, including the local teams, having played on beach sand. But with the ground the TNRFU had been promised suddenly not becoming available, the association had no alternative. But once the tournament got underway, every team was delighted with the novel experience, even if it slowed the game down a bit and playing barefoot had to be got used to. Wijeratne said that, in Sri Lanka, beach rugby was a form of training and was played as 'touch rugby', without any tackling. But the fast action here really provided "fun and entertainment" for the large crowds.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Questions 1 to 9 are from the period March 1st to 15th. Questions 10 to 12 pertain to Chennai. Questions 13 to 20 relate to Tamil Nadu).

1. Name the gun that fires coin-size pellets ten times faster than a bullet that has been developed in the U.S.
2. India's first non-life insurance company, with licence to operate in the liberalised insurance sector, began its operations on March 12th with HQ in Chennai. Name it.
3. According to Forbes, who was the highest paid sportsperson of 2000?
4. Which precocious 5-year old comic character celebrated his 50th birthday recently?
5. Who dethroned Evander Holyfield to win the Word Boxing Association heavyweight title recently?
6. Which Indian ISP won the 'ISP of the Year' award at the second Internet World Asia Industry Awards 2001?
7. Which of the Spice Girls became the latest to pull out from the all-girl band?
8. The merger of Bank of Madura with which bank came into effect from March 10?
9. Which horse won the Indian Turf Invitation Cup, the blue riband event of Indian racing, in Chennai on March 4th?

* * *

10. Where has the Pollution Control Board asked the private biomedical waste treatment company, contracted by the Chennai Corporation, to locate its plant?
11. Where is the city's biggest lorry station located?
12. Which Chennai hotel got the coveted 5-Star Deluxe classification recently?

* * *

13. Where was a Bharathi Archives Centre, to preserve the nationalist poet's works, opened recently?
14. In what form is Vishnu depicted in the temple at Srimushanam?
15. Name the new Tamil satellite channel launched by Zee TV in association with Asianet.
16. Name the State Minister for Information, who was sacked by the Chief Minister on March 8th for assaulting a Government official in Dharmapuri District.
17. With whom and for what value has the State Government signed an MoU to build a modern port at Colachel?
18. The State Government has ordered the dissolution of two Municipal Councils for failing to discharge their obligations. Name the two.
19. Which temple tower soaring to a height of 236 feet is the tallest in the world?
20. Which campaign won the Kalki Sadasivam Memorial Award for best Tamil print campaign recently?

(Answers on Page 10)

The mark of a Boy(d)

I was born in 1929 in a home in Thambu Chetty Street, not far from the original Madras Christian College premises.

My first visit to the Tambaram M.C.C. took place in 1937. My subsequent visit was in June 1947, as an applicant to the prestigious three-year B.Sc. (Honors) course in Physics.

I faced a piquant situation after gaining admission. The manager of the Bursar's office refused to accept the fee from me on some flimsy ground. The Principal, A.J.Boyd, was coming down from his office on the first floor, on his way to one of the three prayer halls for the morning worship. He helped me pay the fees and get enrolled as a student.

After completing seven terms, I found myself again in October 1949 in a similar situation. I was unable to pay the college fees for the last two terms and the University exam fee. I went to the Principal's room and told Mr Boyd that I had no alternative but to leave the college. After some questions about my background and the amount required as fees for two terms and the examination fee, Boyd promptly announced that I deserved an instant scholarship and asked me to get back to my class and prepare for the University examination. The next year, I secured a First Class in the B.Sc. (Hons.) Physics, with First Rank.

I then applied for the post of Demonstrator in Physics at M.C.C., and got appointed. After 37 years' service in various capacities in the Dept. of Physics, I retired in May 1987.

In 1947, Tambaram was a sleepy little village on GST Road (now NH 45). The Madras Christian College was one of the most prestigious institutions and A.J. Boyd had reputation to match. He shone like a bright moon, and was surrounded by a myriad stars in the shape of about 1100 students.

Only here the stars did not twinkle — it was only the moon which sported a pair of twinkling eyes.

This Principal had a reputation for knowing everything about every individual student, his name, the course he was doing, his past (antecedents), his present (academic standing, record of extra-curricular activities including mischief) and his future (higher education, career, etc.). He always addressed a new student as 'Young Man' and every out-going student as 'Old Boy'. This 'moon' had only two phases — 'Full Moon' from 1st June to 31st March and 'New Moon' from 1st April to 31st May (when the Principal went to the 'Hills' for the summer recess).

He was very much against the abolition of the 'Intermediate' and the introduction of the 'Pre-University course' and promptly resigned in 1956.

The heritage of a city or a nation is not made up of battles and buildings alone but also by extraordinary men who lived and rendered exemplary service. Alexander John Boyd was one such man.

C.B. Rajagopal
Professor (Retd.)
Plot No.36, A N Extn.
No.16 Sudarsan Nagar 4th St.
Selaiyur, Chennai 600 073.

OUR READERS WRITE

Focus on Madras

One small thing about *Madras Musings* that makes me feel uncomfortable, now and then, is: Why should your concept of heritage start and end with the British period? Am I wrong if I feel that our heritage is much more than the British times?

A.R.Krushnan
A-27 Annanagar East
Chennai 600 102.

Editor's Note:

1. *MM* does from time to time include features on other aspects of Tamil Nadu and Indian heritage.
2. *MM*, by its very name, focusses on Madras which is a city of the British period. The Editor's own specialisation is also the period after 1498. Therefore, the greater interest in the British period which has shaped this city.
3. There are numerous other publications which focus on Tamil Nadu and Indian history. The Editor very much wishes that these were made more readable and easily accessible to the public.

Museum pieces

The destruction of the quaint old building on Royapettah High Road (Stanchart Bank premises) is very sad.

The Police Inspectors Quarters on Wallajah Road perhaps tells us that some of the old Police stations are really museum pieces — in a state of total disrepair and filth, sprawling, untended back gardens and sheds with junk. Still, they represent an important link with the past, having been home to a police force which was respected by people of the time.

These buildings should at least be given a coat of paint and photographed for posterity before the pressure of space and march of time take over.

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

Three mills

As to why Paper Mills Road in Perambur was so named (MM, March 1st), there were indeed three mills; two cloth mills and one paper mill in the area. Buckingham & Carnatic Mills was producing cloth like tussore, fine tussore, hanara, drill, palmbeach, ricera, zodiac, twill, tastalin, casement cloth, pagree, turkey towels etc. Choolai Mills was producing *dhotis*, towels, sarees and *gada* cloth.

In those days there were no postal zone numbers. The paper mill was situated in the present Postal Zone No.11, Perambur.

N.Venkataraman
31, Subramania Mudali Street
Saidapet, Chennai 600 015.

Back breakers

The so-called 'speed breakers' on many of Chennai's roads are examples of very poor masonry work, making travel a very bumpy experience, indeed.

The Indian Road Congress, a technical body (not an offshoot of the Grand Old Party), has specifications and drawings relating to speed breakers. Either the authorities concerned are not aware of this or, like so many other matters, the law here is observed more in its breach.

N.Dharmeshwaran
21 Kumaran Nagar
Guduvancherry 603 202

Captivated by design

Some of my favourite Madras views are through the windows of St.Mary's Church, Fort St. George. The lush foliage and the ancient stone are enhanced by glass. I'm tantalised by the floral designs that fill the arches!

To which period does the work on glass belong?

J.Rodriguez
C/o Syed, 1A Jade Apartments
27 Balfour Road
Kilpauk, Chennai 600 010.

No cigarettes, please

Smoking is injurious to health (MM, January 16th). The ban on smoking in public places is most welcome, though belated. Will it be possible for the state to implement?

I am an ex-serviceman with 30 years and more of service, a victim of nicotine. Though I can defend myself saying it's only a habit, I know I am an addict. Umpteen times I have resolved to stop smoking, but in vain.

I am well over 60 and have no moral guts to advise youngsters. How did I form this habit? Who was to blame? Who was responsible for getting addicted to nicotine? I will outright put the blame on the Government.

I joined the services as a 17-year old. When I was less than 19, my first posting was to a high altitude base in the northern sector. It used to take three or more days to reach the base from the front camp. For most of us, snow and sub-zero temperatures were a first-time experience. At every night halt we were given 60 ml. of hard liquor and a few cigarettes to keep ourselves warm.

Imagine the temptations of a teenager! What freedom for a lad coming from a conservative family! On reaching the unit every day, the liquor and a weekly ration of four packs of the cheapest and unheard of brand of cigarette became part of our lives. Some toffees were given in lieu of cigarette only to a particular community. I fell prey to temptation and the habit has continued ever since.

However, youngsters posted to formations located in the plains were not entitled to the above luxury and a majority of them thus escaped falling prey to nicotine. Now, tell me who is to blame for my ill habit?

I don't know if smoking is still encouraged in those high-altitude, dismal terrains. If it is so, the Ministry of Defence should think of some healthy alternative to keep our men warm and fighting fit.

A.Venugopal
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Chennai 600 116.

Mikeless treats

Is there any greater bliss than listening to Carnatic music with a totally involved audience and a musician who sings mellifluously without a mike, and in total alignment with *sruthi* and the mood of the audience? It has been a singular fortune for MMM to have been treated to such a performance, making him observe, 'If this be Carnatic music, play on...' (MM, February 1st). Palghat Mani Iyer was totally against the mike and in his later years preferred to play in mikeless cutcheries.

However, in large auditoria with poor acoustics, the judicious use of the mike can make music performances more enjoyable. If I remember right, at the time of the construction of the Music Academy, it was planned to have good acoustics totally eliminating the mike and speakers, but unfortunately the effort was not successful. What was not achieved here in more recent times was successfully achieved by Raja Serfoji in his Sangeethamahal inside the Thanjavur Palace complex. Incidentally, why did this not find a place in the 'Heritage Quest' (MM, December 16th)?

Is this heritage auditorium being put to proper use at present?

T.M. Sundararaman
19, Nallappan Street
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004.

PLEASE NOTE

- All letters for The Editor's attention should be addressed to The Editor, c/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.
- All business correspondence should be addressed to The Director, Chennai Heritage,260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.

Decade of awareness

(Continued from Page 1)

goodwill and on treating it as an image builder for an organisation. If Madras Musings *is to continue, it will have to pay its way. And that can only come through advertising — from those who care about Madras and those who see it reaching those who can afford to make a contribution to Madras. If that advertising support does not grow in the next few months, there will be one less voice to be heard crying for this city. And that, most readers will agree, would be a pity.'*

Despite the lack of response to that support we had sought in that lead story of April 1,1992, the publishers, Messrs. Lokavani-Hall Mark Press, convinced of the journal's need and its appeal, stuck with us gamely and kept publishing *Madras Musings* every fortnight.

And so we reached our 50th issue and felt confident enough to proclaim above our masthead *"We care for Madras"*. When in August 1996, Madras became Chennai, a change we led the campaign against and fought one more losing battle — something we were becoming quite used to — our only concession was to proclaim, "We care for Madras that is Chennai".

By that time, Lokavani-Hall Mark Press had begun to feel the strain of publishing the journal without the necessary support from advertisers. And so, on April 1, 1996, we wrote our swan song only to find a well-wisher respond to it from out of the blue.

N. Sankar, Chairman of the Sanmar Group, was to prove the catalyst in reviving *Madras Musings*. He felt many in the City were interested in the survival of the journal. He was confident that he would be able to muster corporate support to keep the journal going. Within a week, he had got confirmation from eleven other industrial groups that they would contribute the funds necessary to sustain *Madras Musings*. Later, more companies offered support and at one time there were 23 groups supporting *Madras Musings* as a free mailer, and enabling a corpus fund to be built. Not one sought any editorial space advantage from *Madras Musings*, not one tried to influence its content or its policies. Today, there are 16 corporates who help bring out *Madras Musings* with that thinking unchanged.

In August 1999, these corporate houses decided that there was the need for a larger, more city-representative organisation to not only publish *Madras Musings* but also support activities which created greater awareness about the City's heritage and what needed to be done to achieve a better Madras. Thus was born 'Chennai Heritage', a non-profit organisation, to publish *Madras Musings* and fund such awareness-building activities as seminars, workshops, exhibitions, etc., on the City and the issues facing it. Lokavani-Hall Mark Press generously handed over its publishing rights to Chennai Heritage in April 2000 and its handsome gesture is acknowledged by considering it as one of *Madras Musings*' supporters.

Today, *Madras Musings*' mailing list ensures it reaches 16,000 homes, institutions, libraries and offices of professionals in Chennai. The magazine has a readership of well over a lakh and is still growing. The readership is wide and varied but bonded by one common interest, 'MADRAS, OUR CITY'.

Looking back over the decade, what gives us the greatest satisfaction is that, over these ten years, we have been able to create an awareness about Madras that had long been forgotten. It has been a major catalytical contribution in getting other publications to show a greater interest in the City. The extra pages on the City, the supplements and pullouts in newspapers, all reflect this greater interest now being taken in our MADRAS. Not only has 'heritage' become part of the city's vocabulary but there are now many more voices focussing attention on "a better Madras". But for Lokavani's faith in us and this generous corporate support both in spirit and kind, *Madras Musings* would not be here today to continue speaking for a better Madras and for continuing to play this role. To them the city should be ever grateful.

As we enter our 11th year, all we can say is that we are happy to have been a seminal part, in this awareness-building effort and are grateful to all those publishers, sponsors, contributors and readers alike, who have helped us to play this role through their unstinted support and loyalty. Thank you all for giving *Madras Musings* the opportunity to serve OUR CITY, Madras that is Chennai.

RAISING THE BAR...

(Continued from Page 3)

about. The children here are so friendly. In spite of their appalling living conditions, I think there are more smiles here than anywhere else!" And for her colleague Jill Swanson, it was truly a fascinating experience coming to Chennai and being part of the community even for a short time. "Though we did see poverty in all the ports we visited, here it is different. The poverty is the same but the people here are more cheerful and friendly".

After pitching in, as a token, with the community's effort in building the hall, the students spent an hour interacting with the residents of the slum. Their halt in Chennai also included a visit to a Dalit village, a project that has been successfully organised for the past ten years by the Dalit Liberation Education Trust, and which has been one of the most highly-rated port experiences offered by the University of Shipboard Education. Here, the students also witnessed a local cultural programme, and spoke to the people of the village.

For most of the overseas visitors, it was a very enriching trip, where they learnt a lot about generosity and humility. They found the unity displayed by the village community very encouraging.

"I came away with more insight into a close community that appeared to have so little but yet presented themselves as a happy, healthy community. These people have wealth that exceeds that of many people in the U.S. The experience has lifted my spirits," remarked a student.

But will all of this make any difference to the Kousalyas and Ramus? Said Henry Thiagaraj, Managing Trustee of the Trust, "We have been involved in setting up about five such centres with the foreign students. Since only education can empower an oppressed people, we focus on educational projects. Such projects serve to focus attention on the beleaguered communities, so that some kind of positive networking results. There are benefits both ways. While the foreign student benefits from the experience, the local people might benefit, if the visit generates an interest in government circles. We act as a catalyst. Positive results are expected to happen." We hope they will.

Shobha Menon

Answers to Quiz

1. Z Accelerator; 2. Royal Sundaram; 3. Michael Schumacher with $ 59 million earnings; 4. Dennis the Menace; 5. Johnny Ruiz; 6. Satyam Infoway; 7. Melanie Chisholm a.k.a. Sporty Spice; 8. ICICI Bank; 9. *Storm Again*

* * *

10. Melakottai; 11. Kannapar Thidal; 12. Le Royal Meridien

* * *

13. Ettayapuram; 14. Bhuvaraha; 15. Bharathi; 16. V. Mullaivendan; 17. The Malaysian Government, for Rs.4500 crore; 18. Nagapattinam and Vellore; 19. The *Rajagopuram* of the Srirangam Ranganathaswami Temple; 20. HTA's Ashok Leyand campaign.

• Sport on Pages 7 & 8

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