

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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A city polluted

— With noise & noxious air

(By A Special Correspondent)

Air pollution and noise pollution are the bane of Chennai. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board keeps stressing these threats to a better quality of life in the city, but to little avail. Its numerous appeals, the campaigns the Board and various NGOs team up on and a host of seminars, workshops and lectures organised by NGOs to come up with ideas to tackle these twin menaces have all produced little or no results. But that's about par for the course in Chennai — where only if there is the political will, to support the efforts of bureaucrats and NGOs, will things move, even obstructions like statues vanishing in a jiffy and new roads built overnight.

Vanishing statues and new roads where none is needed will not help the city's citizens. But a little less noise may make all of us a little less deaf, and a little less noxious fumes and particulate dust will make us all breathe a little easier. Will the political will support the efforts of bureaucrats and NGOs by giving enforcement authorities a free hand to enforce the Law? Without that support, various proposals being discussed by the Pollution Control Board and dedicated NGOs will mean nothing.

One NGO, concerned about the level of noise in cinemas, discos, pizza parlours and coffee shops, and religious institutions, wants to make a study of the noise level in several such places in the city. They will undoubtedly find that the noise is deafening. But what next? How do you ensure all of them keep the decibel levels down?

The concern of this NGO, however, does not spread to political meetings, other blasts

from roadside loudspeakers (both of which blare into the late hours) and the incessant honking that goes on on the roads of the city. These are in many ways worse, for they generally affect the citizenry in a whole area whereas those institutions being earmarked by the NGO are generally likely to only affect patrons and the immediate neighbourhood. Perhaps it should, therefore, widen its concern when it begins recording decible levels.

The same NGO writes, 'Motor vehicles and their fuels are major contributors to the air quality problem. In the U.S., the European Community and many other countries, major changes in gasoline and diesel fuel properties have already been implemented and major improvements in air quality have occurred. Indeed, these changes in fuel properties have

(Continued on page 7)



Three Madras lots at 'Art of India' sale

• A magnificently printed catalogue of Christie's annual 'Arts of India' sale (the 2001 auction was held last September) was a New Year gift again from Josephine Felton of Littledean House Hotel, Littledean, Gloucestershire.

The lots up for auction ranged from water colours and oils to artefacts, wall hangings, furniture and splendid jewellery, listed estimates ranging from £1000 to an unlisted price for a spectacular 17th Century engraved emerald of size 2" x 1½" x ½". It must, however, have been well over at least £ 500,000, because the highest listed price was just that for a diamond, emerald and enamel turban ornament in Mughal/Deccani style. A lone Kashmiri sapphire was going for around £ 200,000.

Of the 130 lots, only three had links with Tamil Nadu. One was a 15" x 18" ink-and-watercolour painting of 'The Temple at Tiruttani' done in the 1790s by Sir

Alexander Allen, who served with Madras Infantry during the 3rd and 4th Mysore Wars. It was the lowest priced lot on offer, probably going for around £ 1500. Expected to go at about £ 45,000 were two albums comprising 72 paintings of the Tanjore School, each 15" x 11", depicting trades, occupations and costumes of couples of various castes.

The third Tamil Nadu lot was the picture featured above. A William Daniell oil-on-canvas, "East Indiamen on the Madras Road" was painted in 1792 in a size 27" x 35". It was expected to go for £ 15,000 to £ 20,000. A description of the "masoola" boats seen in the painting states they were generally made of "planks of mango wood and sewn together with coconut fibre" and usually had to traverse about half a mile from shore to ship.

— The Editor

Nilgiris looks at heritage & ecotourism for hill country development

(By A Special Correspondent)

Inaugurating the Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) in Udthagamandalam recently, the Nilgiris Collector, Supriya Sahu, stated that pottery making and honey collection, the traditional profession of the Kotas, Kurumbas and Irulas, would be revived under the HADP. She announced that it was proposed to set up a mega facility at the Poomaalai complex to facilitate the marketing of tribal products. A research compilation, *Honey Hunters of the Nilgiris*, is under

publication by Keystone, an NGO based in Kotagiri, she announced. All this, she stated, was part of the efforts being made to revive the art and culture of the Nilgiris tribals, and to document them.

INTACH's Nilgiri Chapter, which participated in the inauguration, had recently organised a seminar on 'Nilgiri Heritage and Eco-Tourism'. The focus of the Seminar was on ways and means of tapping the immense tourism potential of the Nilgiris, which would generate

increased revenue for conservation and other development activity in the district.

There are very few hill stations in the country which are so richly endowed with a wealth of architectural, cultural and natural heritage. Any preservation and conservation method in the district must have a holistic view, where the preservation of the rich cultural tribal diversity, the legacies of the British Raj and, of course, the mega diversity of the Nilgiri Biosphere should be taken into

account. This was the unanimous view of the Seminar. It was resolved at the Seminar to urgently recommend to the District Administration, State and Central Governments that suitable and prompt action should be taken to preserve the rapidly eroding tribal, architectural and natural heritage of the Nilgiris District in a manner in which it can be conserved and protected and handed over to future generations as their rightful legacy, "because we do not own the earth, we only inherit it".

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Questions 1 to 10 are from the period December 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Which Nobel Laureate has been chosen to receive the International Gandhi Peace Prize?
2. Which Indian cricketer is to have a suite named after him at Marylebone Cricket Club?
3. Who has been chosen to head the interim government in Afghanistan?
4. Which two outfits were declared 'terrorist organisations' under POTO on December 5th?
5. Name the Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner and doyen of Indian cinema, lovingly called Dadamoni, who passed away on December 10th.
6. Who is the new CBI Director?
7. Which prestigious global award celebrated its centenary ceremony on December 10th?
8. Name the new Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.
9. What is the Indian hockey team's latest achievement, having won a tournament in Kuala Lumpur?
10. Which two terrorist outfits have been named as being behind the suicide attack on the Parliament complex on December 13th?
11. Name the new Commissioner of Chennai Corporation.
12. What distinction can Veena S. Balachandrar's 1954 film *Andha Naal* claim as regards Tamil movies?
13. What change has the State Government decided to undertake as regards free electricity given to farms?
14. Which American body is all set to embark on a multi-sectoral collaborative venture with the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine at Tambaram?
15. What 'safety' measure has been introduced at the Marina from December 2nd?
16. What was AVM's first film?
17. What is the name of the building of the city's first women's college which its old students are attempting to save and restore?
18. Name the three railway stations commissioned on the Chengalpattu-Kancheepuram section on December 5th?
19. Which college hostel saw rioting on December 8th, leading to many injuries and a major stand-off between Police and students in Chennai?
20. Who is K. Vijay Kumar?

(Answers on Page 7)

Perambur Station

— the way to go!

Chennai may be better known for its Central and Egmore Railway Stations, but it is the Perambur Railway Station that can pride itself of being a leader of sorts. The versatility and perseverance of the Station Manager, S. Murugadoss, who has been nearly 25 years with the Railways, have ensured that Perambur is an out of the ordinary Station that has to be seen to be believed.

Murugadoss is a man committed to making a difference in the area of passenger amenities. And, being an exceptional ideas man, he has been able to do that despite working in a system that does not help making a difference in this area particularly easy.

Working as a Train Superintendent for 15 years has, however, "ingrained in me a primary duty towards passenger facilities", says Murugadoss. And he began to look at Perambur Station through those eyes. Perambur is a key station in Chennai. On an average day, 25,000-35,000 people use the platform and the station's amenities. Suburban train traffic is at its peak between 8.30 and 9.45 a.m. and 5.30 and 7 p.m. And all express trains, other than the Lalbagh and the Bangalore Express, stop at Perambur Station.



Ramp (above) and signage to help the public.



Between 4.30 and 7 a.m, at least ten express trains stop there and around 50% of the passengers alight to areas in and around Perambur junction. "Which is why I've been endeavouring to convince the authorities of the necessity to provide more facilities. Our Government, with the various demands on it, has other priorities. So, with the permission of the seniors in my Department, I decided to approach an NGO to help with improving facilities at Perambur Station".

"Do you know that 7000 cycles are housed in the cycle stand here every day as well as 300-400 scooters?" asks, Murugadoss. Considering such passenger traffic, it was only natural that Perambur was accorded an A class station status in 1998. But acquiring amenities for such traffic has been a slow process, with Perambur being a small station. Put things began to change when Murugadoss got permission to seek outside help. That's how the Lions Club came in, to sponsor water coolers and clocks on the platform. The Lioness Club pitched in by offering to clear and maintain a lawn in front of the station premises (that had earlier been a bald patch dirtied regularly and used as an urinal by the public).



The greening of Perambur Station.



New glow signboards displaying express train timings have been sponsored by a private organisation. The huge hoardings that obstructed public view have been strategically relocated. A pay-and-use toilet is already in use. For the benefit of passenger traffic, 15 autos are attached to the station, and the drivers issued a licence from the Station Supervisor-in-Charge on payment of Rs. 100 for six months. Three cycle-rickshaws also perform similar duties on payment of Rs. 25 for six months. Wheelchairs have been provided for the elderly and the sick, and there has been a tremendous response to them. An additional peak hour terminal has been added at the Booking Office, with extra manpower sanctioned by the Department. And January 2001 has also seen the augmentation of the platform to 26-coach capacity.

Future plans include relocating the existing police station and cycle stand to ensure more space for four-wheeler movement and parking. According to Murugadoss, "There is at present a major traffic problem in front of the station and free flow of traffic and passengers obstructed because there is hardly space for two or three cars (while 22-25 cars need space during peak hours). Already the Railways has sanctioned Rs. 8 lakh for this project. The cycle stand will move to the extreme end of Platform 1, towards Vyasarpadi Station, and the Police Station will also move to Platform 1."

Putting up a suburban railway timetable on a glow signboard, improving the eco-friendly ambience of the station with plants and well-maintained lawns, providing better water facilities AND managing manpower optimally for all these duties are also high on this Station Manager's list of priorities. His is a job that requires "sustained physical effort", but it is the "personal touch, that ensures efficiency" from his staff.

His pet project at this point, however, is the reopening of the Perambur subway that was closed to passengers five years ago, because of waterlogging and lack of maintenance. An optimistic Murugadoss says, "In fact, there is no other sloped subway in the whole of Chennai like the one at Perambur. We receive a lot of enquiries from members of the public wanting to know when they can start using it. Currently, the only option for the passengers is the overbridge and that is difficult for many to negotiate. We only need to make a few strategic changes and they will make a world of difference for passengers. But, for this we need someone who can sponsor some lights in the approach passage. We should be able to open the subway to passenger traffic any day now, with just a little help from well-wishers. As for maintenance, the staff of the Perambur Station will take full responsibility."

For developing the existing Railway facilities both aesthetically and functionally at the Perambur junction, Murugadoss has already been recognised as 'Best Station Manager' four times by various Department Heads in the last three years. Commenting on what he and his staff have achieved, Murugadoss says,

(Continued on page 8)

The house that Erik the Dane built

(By A Staff Reporter)

Danish-born Hans Kjaersgaard, who works for an American company and has an English wife and homes in the U.K. and Holland, was in Chennai recently on business, but was determined to visit the house his grandfather had built in Nellikuppam and the nursing home in Rundall's Road where his mother was born. He did the first, but could not find the second.

Grandfather Erik Valdemar Gøtzche, an architect who "saw the light", became a missionary and came out to Nellikuppam as a 28-year-old in 1896 with his wife Ellen Margrethe née Johnson, whom he'd married just a year before.

In Nellikuppam, Grandpa Erik put his training to good use, particularly the building craft every architecture student in Denmark of his day had to learn. He had learnt brick-laying and carpentry and, in Nellikuppam, he got the villagers to make bricks the Danish way for the house he designed, all bearing the DLY mark of the Danish Lutheran Overseas Mission! His carpentry skills he put to use everywhere in the two-storied bungalow with stepped, tiled roof, broad verandahs enclosed with brickwork arches around the raised ground floor, and wooden pillars and railings on the first floor.

Writing about his visit to Nellikuppam, Hans Kjaersgaard says,

"I found the Danish Mission School which is in a compound that includes the house built by Grandfather and where Mother

lived during the first months of her life. The house has been changed, but was still recognisable from the photograph (Editor's Note: Our OLD this fortnight). The terrace has been 'filled' in and the only arches still present were visible at the entrance (Editor's Note: Our NEW this fortnight). Unfortunately, due to the proximity of the nearby school, I could not take a picture from the same angle as the old photo, but my pictures do show that it is the same house. Needless to say there is no longer a garden next to the house, but some of the trees are still there although now a lot bigger.

I found out that after my grandparents left in 1908, two more Danish missionaries lived there. In 1922, the school which is still there was started. This is known as the Danish Mission School and its different blocks have Danish names. Ten years ago, the latest addition to the school was named the *Grundvig Block* after the most prolific contributor to the Danish hymn book.

Grandfather's house became the school office and subsequently served as the Kindergarten. In 1979, a large church was built and the house became the residence of the Bishop of the Arcot Lutheran Church in South India. The Bishop's newly married youngest daughter, Selvamary, showed me around the house. It was quite an emotional experience to be there, such a long way from both England and Denmark and walking on the floors my grandparents had walked on and on which my mother had crawled!

I then drove to Pattambakkam and saw the church where my mother was christened Helene Louise Eleonora Samantham Gøtzche, one of the names reflecting the fluency in Tamil Grandfather had gained by then. The church was very small and had been replaced by a much larger Lutheran church which was consecrated in 1989 by a Bishop Graesholt from Denmark. We then drove for nearly three hours to try to find the Tiruvannamalai hospital where her immediate elder brother, Viggo Asirvatham (he was the fifth of eight children) had died as a child, but on arrival I found my 'guide' had taken me to a wrong hospital. I decided that we could not spend another three hours to go to the right place and so returned to Chennai. At the hospital we did visit, a doctor told me that Danish doctors and missionaries were largely responsible for the health services in the area and that they still had regular visits of doctors and nurses from the Scandinavian countries to help with specialist surgery and treatment."

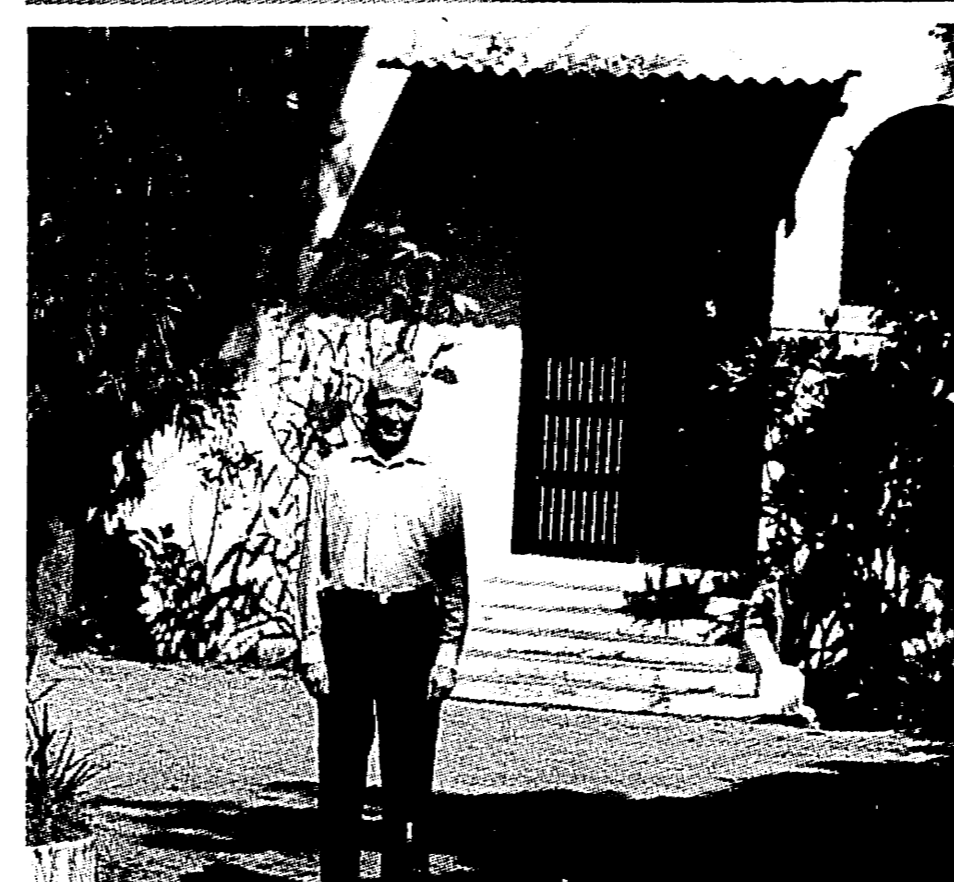
Editor's Note: After the Gøtzches returned to Denmark in 1909, Grandfather Erik was given a parish church and Grandma Margrethe began writing stories with a South Indian background for children. Fifteen published books made her a fairly well-known writer. Samantham Gøtzche, born in 1908, lives in Denmark in a house full of Nellikuppam memories. In it is a Shiva bronze idol dug up when the foundation for the Nellikuppam house was being laid, a large double bed well off the floor and waiting for mosquito nets, and a large teak table made by Grandpa Erik from the teakwood packing cases the family's goods had been shipped back in. It's also where you can always get a home-cooked Madras meal, says Hans Kjaersgaard.



Our OLD is of the house that Erik Gøtzche built in Nellikuppam with open verandahs on the ground and first floors. The picture dates to the years the Gøtzche family lived in the house and remains in the possession of his daughter Samantham in Denmark. The NEW shows how the open verandahs have been made enclosed ones in what is now Bishop's House. Samantham's son, Hans Kjaersgaard, who sent Madras Musings these pictures

— he figures in the picture at the bottom — writes: "I would have had to go into a classroom in a building on the left to take the same — and a more recognisable — view, but I didn't want to interrupt classes. But it's the same building — the arches are recognisable, so is the gabled roof and the verandahs, if you can imagine them without the 'fill-ins'."

THE OLD... THE NEW



A CITY POLLUTED

(Continued from Page 1)

successfully reduced emissions of all pollutants: hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and toxic air contaminants. This has been achieved by regulating both fuels and vehicles through an integrated regulatory approach.

In order to implement such a strategy, it is critically important to have both good air quality data and a reliable emission inventory. The air quality data are required in order to: (a) understand the severity of the air quality problem, and (b) the health effects associated with the air quality concerns. The air

quality data would help to identify air quality objectives for the region. The emissions inventory is needed to understand the contribution of various sources, including fuels and motor vehicles, to the air pollution problem. This understanding together with the air quality data would enable us to target air quality improvement strategies directly on the sources, thus achieving higher pollutant reductions with minimum possible costs."

It therefore proposes a professional study be conducted and, having found what's wrong, it proposes to develop guidelines for enhanced monitoring and help with this monitoring. Here again, who is going to do the implementation?

There is undoubtedly a need to put a stop to Air and Noise Pollution throughout the city, where both air and noise are increasingly threatening the quality of life. But laws already exist to tackle both; what is needed is their strict implementation. And implementation certainly does not appear to be a preoccupation of the authorities. Perhaps the NGO should make a concerted effort to change THAT mindset and the factors lying behind it than trying to take already existing strictures a step or two forward.

Answers to Quiz

1. John Hume, the Irish peace activist;
2. Dilip Vengsarkar;
3. Hamid Karzai, the Pashtun commander;
4. PWG and Maoist Communist Centre;
5. Ashok Kumar;
6. P.C. Sharma;
7. The Nobel Prizes;
8. Ranil Wickremasinghe;
9. It has qualified for the Champion's Trophy 2002;
10. Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba.
11. P.R. Sampath;
12. It was

the first songless, danceless Tamil film; 13. It has decided to instal meters to monitor usage; 14. Centre for Disease Control, Atlanta; 15. Five full-time life-guards to prevent accidents; 16. Alli Arjuna in 1935; 17. Capper House at Queen Mary's College; 18. Reddypalayam, Pazhayaseevaram and Nathampettai; 19. The Dr. Ambedkar Government Law College Students' Hostel; 20. The new Chennai Police Commissioner.

TNCA should stem exodus

A few weeks ago, leading English newspapers reported briefly that upcoming left-handed Chennai all-rounder Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan would turn out for Haryana this Ranji Trophy season. I was appalled to read the news and deeply distressed at the exit of this talented 20-year-old from his home state.

This young man is not the first one to be unhappy over the politicking that goes on in Tamil Nadu cricket circles, both among officials and players. Others who have taken their talents elsewhere are or have been Tanveer Jabbar (batsman); Satyajit Medappa (all-rounder); Gokulkrishnan (paceman); V.B. Chandrasekharan (opener) and M. Senthilnathan (batsman).

And Reuben Paul and R.C. Vasanta Kumar, I understand, are moving out to play in Ranji Trophy for other States.

The charge against Vidyut, I understand, is that he is said to be a poor fielder. Vidyut is too good a player for fielding to be used as the reason for forcing him to look beyond his home State. The State should have nurtured and developed him.

Vidyut's father, V. Sivaramakrishnan, too turned out for Bihar for a few seasons in the Seventies. However, that was for professional reasons and his track record in the East Zone was as impressive as in Tamil Nadu. It was unfortunate that the Indian batting lineup in the late Seventies and early Eighties – till 1987 – was so strong that he could not get a look in. I still felt that Siva should have made it at the cost of, say, Anshuman Gaekwad or Yajuvendra

Singh simply because Gaekwad had lost his elegance ever since he was converted into an opener and Yajuvendra's batting was sketchy though he was a good fielder.

Coming back to Vidyut, he has such a lovely bowling action. He reminds many of the mercurial Salim Durrani, that wonderful all-rounder who kept out of the side for non-cricketing reasons during his peak. I recently got an e-mail from former Madras captain P.K. Belliappa, from Canada, making enquiries about this star of yesteryears who had also turned out for the Jolly Rovers in 1962-63 and who is now, reportedly, facing poverty.

Durrani, Vinoo Mankad, Vijay Manjrekar were all players who moved from State to State as cricket was their bread

and butter. Vidyut didn't have to do that. He has the potential to form a lethal combination with the "turbanator", Harbhajan Singh, in the not too distant a future.

I saw Vidyut bowling against the England Under-19 team and it was a treat to watch him stride to the wicket to deliver the ball. It had a silken touch about it. His faster delivery and arm ball were lethal and his bowling would have done Bishen Bedi (who was no great shakes as a fielder) proud that day.

Talking of fielding, Vidyut is young and with the availability of modern coaching methods and advice, I am sure he would improve by leaps and bounds. What about some of the fielders of yesteryears, whose poor fielding did not stand in their

way of selection to the Indian team, particularly in the Sixties? Many a Test which should have been won by India were either lost or drawn because of poor catching. Yet, the erring players were never dropped.

Vidyut is not the only player to quit the State for new cricketing pastures. Anand George Joshua is another who might consider the option. It has been frustrating for all of them, especially after they have scored tons for Tamil Nadu against strong attacks. Both Anand and R.C. Vasanta Kumar play with a lot of freedom because of their mobility at the crease. Anand will make an ideal one-day international player, being very much a Krish Srikkanth in the making.

What is the solution to this problem?

It's high time that – as has often been suggested – Tamil Nadu fielded two teams. One

team could represent Chennai (as in the case of Mumbai and Hyderabad) and another Tamil Nadu. This would be the ideal way to nurture the immense talent in the State which is now going waste as opportunities are limited. It is sad that boys, highly successful at the Under-14, Under-16, Under-19 and Under-22 levels, are unable to turn out for their State in the Ranji and, later, Duleep Trophy.

Two teams would certainly offer more opportunities for the State's talented youngsters and provide larger pool at the national level. The President of the TNCA and other officials should start giving serious thought to this. Rather than bringing young men from Punjab and Karnataka to play in the First Division league, it would be happier to help our own boys who are looking for opportunities. Charity begins at home! – (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

Baskeran Thomas

PERAMBUR STATION

(Continued from Page 6)

"Station staff must appreciate that they run stations for the benefit of the public. We need to provide amenities for the public before they even suggest them to us. It is imperative, therefore, that we look at these requirements from the viewpoint of passengers." As for Perambur, he adds, "There are a lot of areas that could still do with some help from private organisations. Contributions by them would help them publicity-wise, so I'm going to keep knocking at all possible doors. I'm sure things will happen, maybe a little bit at a time, but each little bit will help make a better station."

Shobha Menon

ONCE UPON A MUSICAL HUB

(Continued from Page 5)

brothers of Tachur. They were both violinists and composers. They were also pioneers in publishing books on Carnatic Music and had at least five titles to their credit. The elder Singaracharlu, a Pandit at Pachaiyappa's College, organised regular performances of his students. The younger (1834-1916) was also a veena player. Today there is no trace of a house in that lane. It is a thriving plastics market.

Govindappa Naicken Street and Mint Street were also home to a number of Ramanuja koodams, bhajana mandirams and temples that organised fes-

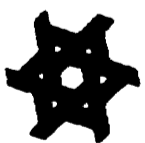
tivals in which music performances were an integral feature. One of these was the Rama Mandiram on Mint Street, in whose festivities Jalatarangam Ramaniah Chetty (1878-1961), a businessman who ran a chit fund, played a prominent role. Ramaniah was close to every important music artiste and was pointed out with pride by the entire Komutty clan for his knowledge of music. His mother was known for her repertoire of music and he acquired them from her and passed them on to many a young musician. His mother was known for her repertoire of music and he acquired them

from her and passed them on to many a young musician. His house at Thatha Muthiappan Street, opposite the Select Theatre, was open to all indigent musicians. Ramaniah was a member of the Experts Committee of the Music Academy and was one of its founders. He played a prominent role in furthering the career of the dancer Balasaraswati.

Balasaraswati, herself, spent her childhood in the house of her grandmother, the formidable Veena Dhanam, who lived at No. 6 Ramakrishna Chetty Street.

(To be concluded)

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