

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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FREE ISSUE

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The new mosquito repellent formula we are working on... it has some minor side effects!!!

What's the buzz?

"Now that summer's here, the mosquitoes will disappear," someone (with an incurable obsession for silver-linings) gushed the other day. Well, I hate to burst anybody's bubble, but I can tell you someone forgot to tell our winged, disease-spreading, scratchy-bite-creating friends that they are expected to head for the hills in summer. The city is under a moving, flowing, buzzing curtain of tiny, but deadly, little insects. The look of the season is 'red bumps and spots tastefully scattered over all exposed areas'. And conversations are invariably punctuated by short, sharp reports that sound like slaps or gun-shots. This can be rather disconcerting. There you are, buzzing along, conversing amiably on all things non-controversial, when suddenly your fellow-conversee leaps in the air like he's been pierced by a needle, then slaps himself in the face or arm, causing you to do a bit of leaping yourself, mostly backwards, biting your tongue in the process. Well, yes, you realise soon he wasn't going to attack you, but you never know, in these turbulent times. It pays to be on guard, after all. Everyone has 'the best possible solution' to tackle this problem. I think the mosquitoes are smarter. They listen to our theories, laugh themselves sick, and then proceed to get us, deadlier than ever. Can you hear that buzz?

Ranjitha Ashok

Rush for estuary land

(By A Special Correspondent)

The rush for land by the Adyar Estuary has begun. Who is going to stop it being encroached on, built on and converted from what was earmarked to be a wildlife sanctuary into one more bit of urban jungle?

A report in the *Adyar Times* states that attempts are being made to convert a part of the Adyar Estuary into a housing colony. There is, it is reported, a sudden spurt of marking of plots in areas adjoining Urur Kuppam and the Theosophical Society boundary. Clearly, signs of plot demarcation are to be seen in the area.

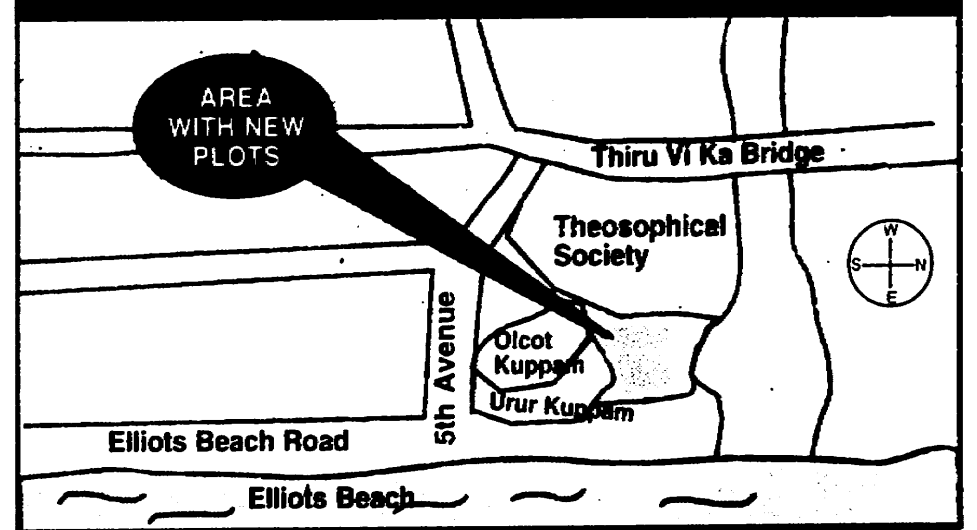
Unknown persons in lorries

have been mining the banks of the river for several months now. The lorry workers claim they are doing it to dredge the river bed. But it is not clear if that is indeed the reason or if the sand is being 'diverted' for commercial sale.

Machinery has been brought in to level the area by the Theosophical Society wall. The process of plotting the land is believed to be to accommodate the growing families of the oldtimers of Urur Kuppam.

Meanwhile, local activists have undertaken a signature campaign appealing to the Chief Minister to stop this destruction of the eco-system of

ROUGH MAP SHOWS AREA WHERE NEW PLOTS HAVE COME UP



the Adyar Estuary through the ever-increasing pressure of human activities, such as sand-mining, increasing hutments and new buildings.

Sand-mining activity and vehicular traffic must be banned on this stretch of the beach in order to preserve this unique ecosystem, they state, adding that "this unique estuary in the heart of a metropolis with

about 170 species of birds and innumerable other amphibians, fishes and plant species, is severely endangered due to human habitation and pollution."

While the northern side of the estuary is being fast developed, "this southern stretch of beach is the last buffer to protect the estuary from further damage," they point out.

(Also see page 2)

Reaching out to the child as a consumer

The Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), which works for the protection of the rights of consumers on various issues, is also involved in the areas of corporate responsibility, transparency, environment, public health and safety. CAG's main concern more recently has been in strengthening the consumer movement by creating consumer awareness in schools.

With the increasing changes in economic conditions, children especially are becoming consumers at an early age. Young adults must learn to obtain information about goods and services, understand the psychology of selling and advertising, learn to shop wisely and distinguish between wants and needs. They must also understand the

alternatives of conserving and saving rather than buying and consuming.

With the support of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai, CAG has over the last two years covered over 5000 children in 27 schools all over Chennai. The programme was conducted for 9th and 11th Standard students and focussed on health, economy, information, environment and social issues. The sessions were aimed at imparting practical skills and the critical ability needed to cope with changes.

CAG has now brought out a folder, which aims to guide and inform children of the basic issues involved in becoming intelligent consumers. The folder (excerpts below) is available free of cost to schools and children. Contact: 4914358/4460387.

Yes. There is the CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT (1986)

What happens if my rights as a consumer are violated?

You can and must make a complaint

When can I complain?

If the product you bought is:
Defective, spurious, fake, substandard or in reduced quantities,

If the service you paid for is:
Not carried out, deficient in quality or delayed

If the price you paid is:
Excessive and above the MRP

If you have been misled by a representation

Who can file a complaint:

Advertising

- Consumers must be provided with information to make 'informed choices'
- Main purpose of advertising is to provide information
- Purpose is also to persuade the consumer to buy what he may not necessarily need.

WATCH OUT, many advertisements are:

- Highly exaggerated - example 'full of vitamins'
- Make false claims - example 'rebuilds hair' or 'health foods'
- Give incomplete descriptions of products
- Make misleading comparisons
- Bait and switch advertisements - to switch to another product which is costlier
- Always check the advertisement details especially those which offer gifts or exchange offers before purchasing a product.

Environment

It is the Fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including, forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures.

- Environmental Protection Act (1986) empowers the government to protect and improve the environment.

Hazards to nature

- Unustainable and increasing use of natural resources
- Increasing pollution (air, water, land, noise)
- Loss of forest cover and wildlife habitats
- Excessive concentration of harmful chemicals in the atmosphere and the food chain
- Growing risk of polluting technologies and environmental accidents

To conserve the environment it is important for the:

- Polluter to pay for cleaning up the pollution
- Pollution Control Boards set up in all States for the prevention, control and abatement of pollution

of services such as:

- Safety and quality certification,
- Cost - MRP
- Ask the store persons to explain the stores return or exchange policy
- Read and follow the instructions on the product
- Insist on a bill for purchases
- Use the product only as recommended by the manufacturer
- Do not try to fix the product yourself
- Read warranties
- Read the forms given for your signature carefully
- Don't assume it is a bargain just because it is advertised as one.
- Resist sales pressure
- Keep all sale receipts, warranties and instructions
- If trouble develops report the problem as soon as possible

Now altogether, let's degrade the Adyar!

Yet another seminar on the Adyar River was held recently. And *The Man From Madras Musings* was delighted to hear that the official, unofficial and academic sectors all agreed ONCE AGAIN that the Adyar River is badly polluted. As usual, they also agreed on the need for another database — and no doubt international funding to prepare that.

One speaker blamed the industries along the banks of the Adyar, another the slums, and a third the discharge of sewage into the river. But in the all-morning discussion, MMM did not hear anything said of what's happening unhindered on the banks of the Adyar and the Adyar Creek, a reserved forest area that was once earmarked to be upgraded as a wildlife sanctuary and then forgotten all about with the removal of the boards promising that sanctuary.

Between Creek and River, highrise and commercial facilities are proliferating, with Government itself one of the most active developers. The earthfill around the Ambedkar Memorial that the Courts ordered removed still remains. Elsewhere in this issue today, there's a report of plotting out of land by the southern bank of the estuary. And worst of all there are those official bungalows built on what can only be described as encroachments on the riverbed (see pictures). Which Authority has given permission for all this? Take those official houses IN the river, for instance. Is the land owned by the Corporation or the PWD? If the PWD are the builders and the Corporation the owners of the land, was a transfer of land officially made? And who gave the necessary permission to build on this 'land' — the Corporation or the CMDA?

Yes, the Adyar is in a terrible state. But responsible for that are all those who were not talked about at that most recent seminar and many more before it — those who develop the banks of the Adyar and the Creek unfettered and undeterred, who do exactly as they please, not one whit worried about what they are doing to this city or the examples they are setting by circumventing the law or skirting its edges.

Not so long ago, MMM was at a meeting discussing a highrise Government was planning, that would overshadow several heritage buildings. The Government builders had already moved in equipment and a few present wondered who were the planners who gave the builders the go-ahead. The senior representative of the building department nonchalantly said, "It's all in the same family, so where is there the question of one Government department getting another's prior permission? We are doing as we usually do, and will regularise matters after the work is completed!" Well, now we know; build first, even with unap-



Jetting into the Adyar riverbed and 'protected' by a stone wall (above) is a new government enclave, numerous houses strong (below).



proved plans, and regularise later. When Government departments set such examples, what can we expect of private developers, even the most honourable of them? It's against this background that MMM sees the Adyar River and Creek area doomed to degradation in the next five years. If it doesn't become a congested urban area by then, very little different from an inner city area, we must consider ourselves lucky.

Tourism and the Adyar

The latest official authority to get interested in the Adyar River is the State's Tourism

this major issue of giving this destination a welcoming face?

Outside the city, MMM is glad to hear that facility-less Gangaikondacholapuram with its splendid restored temple, Point Calimere, Valparai and Mudumalai are all to get guesthouses/travellers' lodges. But are the proposed facilities likely to be better than those two examples of government issue MMM is most familiar with, the motels at Ulundurpet and Ranipet? Will the new facilities offer greater comfort and cleanliness, better service and food? MMM has still to find a Government-run hostelry in the State to be of internationally acceptable standard. So, is offering such space for private hoteliers, with a proven track record for middle class comfort, to develop the way to go? Such facilities available in neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka are something the local authorities might take a closer look at.

MMM is also delighted to hear that the State's Tourism Authority intends to landscape monuments in Mamallapuram, develop and upgrade Kanniyakumari and bring new life to Pulicat. But landscaping is the last thing that should be done to heritage monuments and development is the last thing that needs to be done to heritage precincts. Surely, in the case of Mamallapuram, is there anything more to be done than ban all traffic in the core area, regulate the crowds in it, ensure the absence of touts, pedlars, beggars and ALL commercial stalls, strictly enforce, with stern penalties,

Tourism push

The State, it would seem, is determined to give Tourism an encouraging push, to judge by all the plans that *The Man From Madras Musings* has heard about. He hopes that a year from now it can be said that all the promises

peace for the visitor, can improve the destination immeasurably at the least cost.

As for Pulicat, MMM hears that the restoration here — NOT development, MMM hopes — is to be based on some INTACH suggestions. These have been discussed in the columns of *Madras Musings* several times in the last couple of years. But the most important of these suggestions is the need to conduct a more detailed study before recommending how best the broad suggestions could be implemented. The news from the Tourism Department appears to indicate that the Department has no time for such studies, but would like to rush in with development where many a heritage-lover or environmentalist would fear to tread.

MMM is glad to hear that tourism is becoming a priority in the State, that there is some money being allotted to it, and that there is a keenness to get things done in some interesting new tourism destinations. But could the tourist authorities in the State interact a little more with those with some expertise in tourism, heritage and environment and heed their advice on implementation?

Whose heritage?

Whose heritage does *Madras Musings* focus on, *The Man From Madras Musings* has heard it asked often enough. There was, in fact, a postcard floating around the office the other day which wanted to know whether, in *Madras Musings*' view, heritage conservation stopped with buildings and precincts.

As far as *Madras Musings* is concerned, the heritage of this country derives from rulers of several different dynasties — from the Cholas to the Mahrattas, from Kalinga to Vijayanagar. It also derives from various conquerors and settlers, like the Mughals and the British, the Dutch and the Danes. What is important is that all this heritage, all they have left behind, belongs to us, belongs to every Indian. And that heritage, whether it is built, or is cultural, or is in systems left behind, it all belongs to us — and that is what *Madras Musings* looks at, particularly if it relates to Madras that is Chennai and/or Tamil Nadu.

Another aspect of heritage is natural heritage which pertains to our land, our rivers, our mountains and the air we breathe. These too belong to every one of us and preserving them as best as possible is also what *Madras Musings* looks at. So our environment in Madras that is Chennai is another focus of this publication.

Madras Musings' focus on heritage, however, takes many forms. Sometimes it is descriptive, sometimes it is critical comment, sometimes it is nostalgic retelling. But always it looks at trying to prevent any loss of heritage making us the poorer for the loss.

— MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

ism Department, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears. In its usual fashion, it's probably got boating and watersports on its mind. But as it plans for all that — and offers the Madras Boat Club an opportunity to pour out its heart — perhaps it would also like to pay a little attention to all that MMM has said above.

Clearing the sandbar might enable the regular flushing of the river, but what is all the development going on along its banks going to do to its tree-wealth and other flora, especially its mangroves, its fauna and its groundwater? Surely a single-focus concentration on flushing is not going to solve the problems of the Adyar? What further action would the Tourism Department be willing to take to save the area?

Rather similar is the Department waking up to a "serious public hygiene problem" and deciding to build public conveniences at all places of tourist interest. MMM hopes that the main roads of Madras will get a few of these, but that's just by the by. Of more significance is the fact that the major problem in the country is not building well or adequately but the disin-

have been kept and the money spent in a manner that will encourage tourists to visit Tamil Nadu.

The international fellowship group of the travel trade, the Skal Club, is planning to host its annual congress here in October 2003. Expected to attend it are over 1500 travel trade leaders from all over India and from many parts of the world. The Tourism Department has promised the congress not only all help but also a state-of-the-art auditorium and conference centre in a new block to be raised as part of the Chennai Trade Centre campus. Much as that will prove necessary, what steps are Government and the travel trade planning to make Tamil Nadu as attractive a destination as God's Own Country? Perhaps the first step should be the cleaning up of the city, bringing order to its roads, making its official and private facilities — including official service counters and shops — friendlier places, re-creating a clean Marina and renewing heritage buildings and precincts as places that could be shown to visitors with pride. Has the Department — or even the local travel trade — addressed itself to

laws against littering, spitting and other acts that dirty or deface the area, and make all permanent structures already in place conform to these and other regulations that might apply to them? And if these facilities are made available in a more ORDERLY fashion outside the core area, won't that make a visit to Mamallapuram an even more attractive proposition?

Similar kind of planning is necessary both at Kanniyakumari and Pulicat. Core areas must not be threatened by people or conveniences provided them; that, MMM has learnt, is the international rule to make heritage precincts welcoming and attractive, NOT landscaping. In the case of Kanniyakumari, more than its monuments — in reasonably good condition despite the crowds — and its temple, with its ugly access, the main attraction is the beach and watching sunset and sunrise. That means ensuring a beach that's spotlessly clean, its sands in all their rainbow hues safe to tread on and sit on, and clean and comfortable seating arrangements along the outer edges. Here again, stopping traffic outside the core area and keeping out the tout, the pedlar and the beggar, to ensure

OUR
READERS
WRITE

Playing with place names

Would someone please contribute regular snippets to *Madras Musings* explaining the origins of various not-so-evident road and place names in Madras? For instance, no one has yet been able to tell me what the 'DMS' bus stop at Teynampet on Mount Road refers to. Also, the two 'power houses' at Pandy Bazaar and Arcot Road (are there any more?), besides road names like Lake View (in West Mambalam), Tank Bund, Spur Tank, etc., etc. Or why is the Teynampet PO at the Alwarpet junction and the R.A. Puram PO in Mandaveli?

Following Reader M R Pillai's logic (MM, April 1st) on the naming of Chennai, can we soon expect to be ruled from *Nayee Dillee*, or some more exotic places, like Kurukshetra perhaps, while Allahabad becomes *Prayag* and all current names having Muslim or British/foreign associations get obliterated in favour of more obscure original versions, whether real or imaginary or artificial (as in the case of Udhagamandalam)?

Name changes lead to obvious practical problems like confusion in alphabetical lists, travel plans and tickets, letterheads and official documents, and endless other headaches. Those infernal computers are likely to reject wrong spellings, and I have already come across variations for my home town ranging over Thrisur, Thrisoor, Thrusoor, Thrisuvaperoor, and even Thiruchur (the last in a former Madras phone directory list of STD codes, probably in some imagined analogy with Thiruchchi or whatever its 'proper' spelling may be). I am told that post offices in foreign countries still recommend the continued use of familiar names like Bombay and Madras to avoid mail going astray.

Of course, there is always a class of babus and touts who will stand to gain from any such confusion created, as it has happened with the old/new street numbering for postal addresses.

Thomas Tharu
Kasyap A-7
Nehrunagar Fourth Street
Adyar
Chennai 600 020.

An eyesore

Vani Mahal auditorium in T.Nagar, a nearly 60-year-old building, is being pulled down and a new auditorium, fully air-conditioned, is to come up, together with a mini hall for small gatherings. Once *Vani Mahal* is replaced by a new auditorium, with another 3-star hotel coming up nearby, the whole G.N. Chetty Road area would look more attractive, if it wasn't for an eyesore a semi-permanent structure for a snack stall obstructing the pedestrian's way at the junction of G.N. Chetty Road and Dr. Nair Road.

Since the stall is on a pavement by a busy traffic signal, road-users are put to great difficulties, being compelled to walk on the road at grave risk. In spite of several complaints to the authorities, no action has been taken to remove this stall,

Planning for transparency

I refer to MMM's piece "And know they look for transparency!" in MM, April 16th.

It is unbecoming of a newspaper to denigrate a whole class of people because they are either ex-civil servants or have crossed the age of 60. The whole piece is hardly complimentary to a publication supported by public-spirited corporates as a public service. MMM begins by saying that "it is time to take a good look at the organisation" when the organisation is just a few days old. Then to dismiss the launch of the TII-TN Chapter for the reason that MMM had detected in the audience a couple of ex-civil servants who, in his judgement, were less than transparent in their service days, is a low point in responsible reporting.

MMM's advice that what is needed to fight corruption is that all like-minded NGOs should get together under one umbrella is as hackneyed as it is naive. This can be said of any area of activity anywhere. It shows little appreciation for the variety of valuable roles that non-profit and other voluntary bodies play in a multitude of areas of their expertise and interest in a vast and diverse country. Indeed, one could say, for example, that the drive for better governance would get a tremendous boost if the sponsors of *Madras Musings* could get together on this issue. But can they? Will they?

It would have been more proper for MMM to have at least

informed his readers what TII-TN is all about, who are the promoters and what are their immediate plans.

The Members of the Managing Committee of the TN Chapter are:

M. Anandakrishnan, former Vice-Chancellor, Anna University

Raja J. Chelliah, Chairman, Madras School of Economics

H.H. Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, Prince of Arcot

N. Ravi, Editor, *The Hindu*

J. Kanakaraj, Retd. High Court Judge

V.R. Lakshminarayanan, I.P.S. (Retd.) former DGP, Tamil Nadu

L.M. Menezes, I.A.S. (RTD.), Convenor.

The immediate plans of the organisation are to work on the issues of Right to Information, Citizens' Charters of select departments/organisations providing services to the public, and devolution of powers and resources to local bodies/panchayats. Indeed, one of the top priorities of TII-TN Chapter is a campaign to persuade citizens to behave more ethically in their day to day dealings. This was mentioned by several speakers.

As for the long rigmarole of the two tales of some citizen's entanglement with bureaucracy, what exactly are the points of the convoluted stories? Is it that the septuagenarian who only paid half the bribe that was demanded would have done

better if he had paid it in full? And in the second story... now let me guess. That queues should be done away with?

L.M. Menezes
4G, Prof. Subramaniam Street
Off. Vasu Street, Kilpauk
Chennai 600 010.

MMM REPLIES: Now that the Editor has listed the eminent names Reader Menezes wanted listed, what are they going to do to make life better for all of us? Reader Menezes lists the various things Transparency International India-TN Chapter is going to do — obviously he missed MMM's direct quote from TII-TN's statement of commitment that stated what the organisation was all about — and MMM finds it plans to do many of the same things many another NGO has already been working on (Citizens' Charters, Right to Information, etc.). So what's going to be different? But, as Reader Menezes says, it's early days yet. Should MMM look at Citizens' Charters, Right to Information, Devolution of Powers, etc. a year from now? Or three years from now, which is how long a 'Sustainable Chennai' programme took to demonstrate a lack of sustainability?

As for that "convoluted" storytelling, people who call themselves "storytellers" do get their stories rather convoluted in the telling, but they usually get the moral of the story right! In this case: "Isn't it time NGOs, nipping at the heels of

corruption, began to take big bites into time-consuming systems and inefficient and rude members of it? Even if you get rid of corruption, will we ever rid ourselves of inefficiency, rudeness and feelings of power within whatever kingdoms bureaucrats reign in, no matter how small?" Perhaps Reader Menezes missed all that about systems, inefficiency and rudeness? But then veteran civilians do tend to see facts only through their eyes — and not in what's down in black and white or that's before them. If pointing out the absence of youth at TII-TN's meeting, if pointing out the dominance of the official and semi-official sector (all now retired) at the meeting and the absence of the other sectors, and if calling for unity is naive — particularly when all the groups MMM named are those in which many of the Managing Committee's eminent members are active — such views only convince MMM even further that nothing changes with a Civilian even in retirement: He's always right and always knows what's proper.

As for MM's sponsors joining together to take up issues of governance, all of them are members of chambers and federations that do take up such issues and sponsor debates on them. Whether they could do more is arguable, but that they do support MM which doesn't always agree with the establishment is an indication that they sometimes do a bit more too.

which survives despite the High Court's direction to remove all pavement structures.

J. Krishnama Chary
"Jagannath"
3, Singara Mudali Street
T. Nagar
Chennai 600 017.

One paisa short

I read with much interest 'A ten paisa deal' by Reader M. Sethuraman and 'Annas and paise' by Reader T.M. Sundararaman (MM, April 1st). The following anecdote has relevance to both.

I was studying in the Physics Department of Annamalai University in 1963. The C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer library there is one of the best of its kind. The penalty for delayed submission was one anna a day. My friend Chandrasekharan delayed with his book for four days and had to pay a penalty of four annas. The naya paisa concept had not settled in fully. Government had announced that 6 paise equalled one anna. My friend gave a 25 paise coin. The library clerk made all the entries. On seeing my friend waiting, he asked what he wanted. My friend replied, "my balance". "Balance, what...?" The clerk was bewildered. "I gave you 25 paise. You have to give me one paisa balance".

A series of arguments followed. The clerk said that the penalty was 4 annas which was one quarter of a rupee which was 25 paise. Chandrasekharan argued that the

penalty was 4 annas which was 4 x 6 paise which was 24 paise. The matter was represented to the Registrar and, finally, the library paid one paisa as refund.

It may be of interest to know that there was a move to name the new coins as *Nehru paisa* instead of *naya paisa*. While asked to comment on the suggestion, Rajaji replied, with his typical wit and wisdom, "Yes, it deserves to be named after Nehru, because this is the only useful thing the Nehru Government has ever done..."

B. Sathyanarayanan
(Old 32) New 22,
South Ganga Amman
Koil First Street
Choolaimedu
Chennai 600 094.

Who benefits?

Reader M. Sethuraman (MM, April 1st) did well in demanding the balance of ten paise from the shoe shop. It is not as if the company is 'naive', but they think that the customers are naive enough to believe that the prices are less!

Be that as it may, what about the Government-controlled oil companies who fix prices of petroleum products, including cooking gas (LPG), in fractions of rupee, which benefits neither the consumer nor the oil companies but only the dealers and the delivery boys? Government had long ago ap-

pointed a Committee (the K.P. Geethakrishnan Committee) to go into the question of rounding off of the rupee to the nearest integer and, according to its recommendations, even insurance premia, which are of the nature of a contractual obligation, were rounded off. But in other cases, its recommendations are observed more in the breach than in practice.

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

Passing the word

Although at home we are practising methods to conserve water — a precious commodity — the article "Saving water" (MM, March 16th) has given certain important details. Adopting the details with some modifications, I am going to print a hand-out and issue the same to all my contacts.

K. Radhakrishnan
28, Second Main Road
CIT Colony
Chennai 600 004.

Reader N. Dharmeshwaran adds: Using a wetted and squeezed turkish towel to wash hands and faces, using only bucketfuls of water for a bath, using a hose with rosehead sprinkler for watering plants, using suitable cloth wetted and squeezed for washing a car, save much more!

Switch to glue

A new trend has emerged in the sealing of envelopes — simply staple them! While this may be easy for the sender, it is very painful for the recipient to remove the pin, especially if he has just cut his nails. The staple removers are not very handy.

What happened to good old-fashioned glue? Envelopes stuck with glue can be easily opened with a letter opener or simply torn open.

Through the columns of *Madras Musings*, may I request one and all to desist from using staplers and revert to glue.

B. Gautham
137 (old 122) Wallajah Road
Chennai 600 002.

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.

JOTTINGS

by Vincent D'Souza

The red & the green

Every now and then, we get loads of mail from Exnora International. And we make it a point to scan it when time permits to ferret out information that could be shared with the community.

I admire some of the core community projects that Exnora has pursued in great earnestness, but I have been cynical about the mushrooming Exnora units for cyclerickshaws and cyclists that popped up and then withered away after the loud launches.

Obviously, Exnora's founder and Chairman, M B Nirmal (it used to be just Nirmal) and his team need to audit Exnora.

● Vincent D'Souza, Editor of some of the popular community weeklies in the city, often comments on issues dear to Madras Musings' heart. We can do no better than publish them from time to time.

But in the mail recently was a useful booklet from them. One which can guide a community to make its neighbourhood a 'model area' in zero waste management.

With simple illustrations, info nuggets and dense explanations, the book encourages every section of the community — colonies, apartments, schools and institutions — to manage waste.

The story can begin with a 'green' and a 'red' basket in our homes.

The green basket accepts vegetable peelings, food waste, leaves and ash and coir and stuff like that.

While the stuff that goes into the green basket can be

composted in a yard created at a street corner or at the local playground and turned into 'zero waste', the stuff in the red basket can be recycled at factories that deal with either wood, paper or plastic.

It makes sense then to separate garbage at source so that we make waste management a reality.

If the people in all our houses and flats follow the green and red basket system and we then arrange a garbage collector to handle the two wastes separately, some degree of 'zero waste' can be achieved.

Exnora suggests that compost gardens can be set up even on terraces. It even suggests that in apartments, a huge green and red drum may be placed in the backyard and maids or residents of each apartment can dump the different wastes at this point, making separation easy.

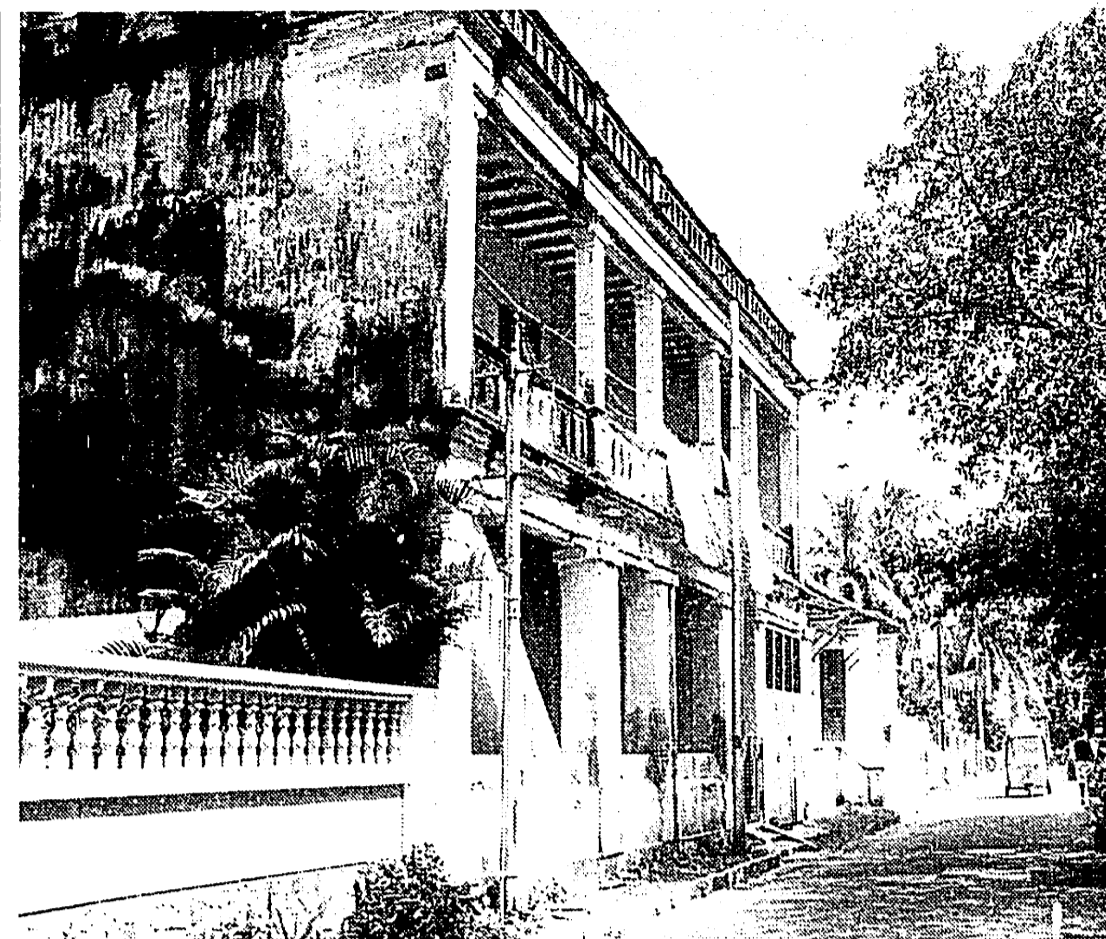
It needs some effort from all of us to start the green and red basket system. It calls for greater effort to get someone to convert the green waste.

This is where imaginative community action management can produce results. After all, most may want to follow the line of least resistance — dump all waste into the green Onyx bin!

At my apartment, my red basket always overflows — the snail mail fills up my mailbox.

So I have a white bag placed next to the red — a space for covers and envelopes I can reuse.

Excuse me if you ever receive a cover from me that has someone else's address scored out. — (Courtesy: Adyar Times.)



THE OLD... ...& THE NEW

Go down the narrow bylanes of San Thomé and you are sure to find several houses out of the colonial era. Their beginnings were in the Portuguese — and you will still find houses echoing Goan homes — but over the years they have had French and British influences contributing to them.

Our OLD this fortnight reflects such influences in one large house in Nimmo Street that could do with a bit of attention. Check by jowl with it, paying scant attention to a once and former style of building, is our NEW that is in fact not so new, but is more late 20th Century. Our third photograph this fortnight is yet another OLD, also in Nimmo Street, that could well be older than the first-mentioned one, but which, with a little attention to it, has become an eye-catching attraction in the lane.

Seeing these houses, the question arises how examples of this type of architecture can be safeguarded and preserved. Madras Musings learns that there is every chance of the long-awaited Heritage Regulations being introduced by the CMDA in the next few months; perhaps those regulations will have some answers for owners of such heritage properties.



Where Chennai scores over Bangalore

I refer to MMM's recent comments on Bangalore (MM, March 16th), stating that it looked a lot better than Chennai. As someone who travels very often to Bangalore, I agree that the roads have vastly improved and the city still has a verdant charm about it, never mind the ravages of buildings and traffic. But I thought you would be interested in reading this piece from a recent article in *Business Line* about Bangalore.

Clean roads, green city — all seem superficial when Bangalore seems a hotbed for respiratory disorders, as this article says. In Chennai, at least, we

have that wonderful sea breeze which, hopefully, flushes out some of those poisonous toxins. If not anything, that at least should score a great big brownie point for living in Madras, warts and all!

V.K.
Chennai 2.

D.S. Madhumathi writes in *Business Line*:

Along with sobriquets such as the 'Garden City', 'Silicon Valley of India', 'Pub Paradise' and others, Bangalore may soon add a new tag to itself — the 'Lead City.'

The air here is apparently so loaded with lead that it has

started telling quite early on its residents, particularly in the blood samples of youngsters.

It shows up as low IQ, hyperactivity, lack of attention and learning disabilities among children, abnormally early onset of osteoporosis among women, low backache, pain in the joints and persistent anaemia. In the worst cases, it causes encephalopathy, paralysis and death.

At around 40 micrograms/decilitre, Bangalore's lead scenario is pretty bad and among the worst in the country, says Dr. T. Venkatesh, Director of the National Referral Centre for Lead Poisoning in India (NRCLPI), at the St John's

Medical College Hospital. "Lead may be a wonderful thing with several uses, but only as long as you keep it out of your system. The treatment is expensive and the only way is to regulate and keep pollution under check," according to Dr. Venkatesh.

About 15 years ago, 16 per cent of Bangalore's pre-teens showed lead content of more than 10 micrograms per decilitre. Today this has increased to over 40 per cent. According to him, no other city has the kind of dubious growth in lead absorption as Bangalore.

This growth, he says, correlates well with the city's phe-

nomenal growth of vehicular traffic. Unleaded petrol — which is not quite fully lead-free — can help only to some extent.

Bangalore, like Kolkata, has large, unorganised groups of battery recyclers who buy from individual vehicle-owners. The Environment Ministry's new rules that lead acid batteries should be collected back by registered manufacturers are yet to catch up. These unorganised recyclers are often beyond the control of the Pollution Control Board. In India, on an average, 53 per cent of recyclers show above the 10 mg/dl limit — much higher than a bigger lead user, the US.

When the S.R. was formed

The formation of the Southern Railway in April this year (1951) by the amalgamation of the former Madras & Southern Mahratta, South Indian, and Mysore State Railway systems marks the opening of a new chapter in the history of Indian Railways. As is well-known, the growth of railways in India was not the result of any planned development. The idea of regrouping and reorganising the country's railways on a rational basis has been the subject of discussion for the last thirty years or more. Though the principal railway systems were owned by the State, their management by private companies, till recently, was not conducive to any large-scale scheme of regrouping. Besides, the existence of a number of comparatively small railway systems in the erstwhile princely states was also an unfavourable factor when schemes of merging the major systems were considered.

South India have a geographical, economic and cultural unity of their own. Trade winds and the monsoons play an all-important role in the economic life of the people. The territories are to a large extent economically interdependent. The advantages of having a unified railway system under one administrative control are obvious.

It may not be out of place here to briefly sketch by way of retrospect the history and development of the three railway systems which, in merging with each other to form the Southern Railway, have ceased to exist as individual systems.

M. & S. M. Railway

The M. & S.M. Railway Co. came into existence on 1st January 1908 by the merger of the broad gauge lines owned by the former Madras Railway Co. (with the exception of the Jalarpet-Mangalore section) and the metre gauge sections, Katpadi-Gudur and Pakaladhamavaram, of the South Indian Railway, with the lines belonging to the former Southern Mahratta Railway Co. The Madras Railway Co. had been one of the three earliest railway companies which were permitted to construct railways in India and had constructed in 1856 the first section of railway in South India between Rayapuram (Madras) and Arcot (now Walajah Road). The Madras-Bangalore section was completed in 1864 and the Arkonam-Raichur section in 1871. The line on the East Coast was constructed by 1893

and, with the completion of the bridge over the Krishna in that year and that over the Godavari in 1900, through communication was established between Madras and Waltair.

The construction of metre gauge railways by the Southern Mahratta Railway Co. received a stimulus after the great famine of 1878 which underlined the need for constructing more railway lines in the country. The M. & S.M. Railway Co. also worked till 1919 a number of sections which were subsequently handed over to the Mysore Durbar.

The years 1920-39 saw many notable improvements in construction and operation. Centralised train control was introduced on all main line sections. Many important stations and yards were remodelled or rebuilt. Several branch lines were constructed. The lines in the Madras suburban area were rearranged and the railway's biggest marshalling yard at Tondiarpet was constructed. The M. & S.M. Railway was finally taken over for management by the Government of India on 1st April 1944.

South Indian Railway

The lines formerly owned and worked by the Great Southern India and the Carnatic Railway Companies were amalgamated on 1st July 1874 to form the South Indian Railway which was purchased by the State on 1st January 1891 and handed over to a new Company — the South Indian Railway Co. — for working together with

• Last fortnight's feature on the 150th anniversary of the railways in India had ANNA VARKI, a long-time railway person, sending Madras Musings this article about the formation of the Southern Railway (on April 14, 1951, when the M & SM and the S.I.R. companies were nationalised along with the Mysore State Railway).

This article, which she found among her husband's papers, first appeared in the Overseas Railway, London, in 1951.

Anna Varki adds, "Many of the names of the railway com-

panies that existed before nationalisation were parodied. The SIR was known as the 'Srirangam Iyengar Railway'. The Oudh Tirthut Railway was aptly known as the 'Old and Tired Railway' — it was extremely slow. Then there was the E.P. Railway, now a part of the Northern Railway. It was a very small railway and was known as the 'Entirely Private Railway'. The North Eastern Railway was the 'Never Ending Railway'. Every railway before the formation of the zones had these nicknames. Unfortunately, though I knew them, I can't recollect them."

Villupuram-Guntakal line. The Dharmavaram-Guntakal section was made over to the Southern Mahratta Railway Co. in 1893 and the Jalarpet-Mangalore section of the Madras Railway Co. was transferred to the S.I. Railway in 1908, which in turn handed over the Katpadi-Gudur and Pakaladhamavaram sections to the M. & S. M. Railway.

During the years 1920-1939 much development and construction took place on the S.I. Railway. New lines were constructed, several stations and yards were remodelled and the 17-mile suburban section in Madras was electrified. The Government of India took over the management of the S.I. Railway on 1.4.1944.

Mysore State Railway

The first section of railway to be constructed in the Mysore State territory was the line between Bangalore and Mysore in 1881-82 and it was intended as a famine relief measure. The Southern Mahratta Railway Co. constructed and worked most of the lines in the Mysore area until these were handed over to the M. & S.M. Rly in 1908.

The Mysore State Railway was constituted as an independent unit in 1912 with the opening of the Mysore-Arsikere and Bangalore City-Bangalore sections. By 1938, the Mysore Durbar had taken over all the sections till then managed by the M. & S.M. Railway Co. With the integration of Mysore State in April 1950, control over the Railway also passed to the Government of India.

Traffic problems and resources

During and since the war years there had been a steep rise in the demand for transport, while the resources available with the railways had not kept pace... The general food shortage in the country rendered necessary heavy movements of foodstuffs over long distances. The movement of coal from Bengal to various destinations in the south to feed the railways, electricity systems, textile and

other industries, presented a major problem which had to be tackled...

During the year under review a number of new engines, both passenger and goods, were received from abroad and put in service. This relieved the power position to an appreciable extent and it was possible to undertake the overhaul of many old engines which was long overdue...

Train services which had been withdrawn during war time were progressively restored. New passenger coaches built in the railway's workshops and in the Hindustan Aircraft Factory at Bangalore were put in service. These coaches provided a much better standard of comfort than the old type of coaches...

Amenities to passengers at stations also received careful attention and much progress was made in the following directions: Refreshment Rooms and Stalls of improved design were provided at a number of stations. Platforms were improved and passenger shelters were constructed on them. Station approaches were made more convenient by improvement of the roads and the provision of better lighting. Electricity has been provided at a number of stations, the present policy being that wherever there is supply of electricity in the town, the station should also be electrified. In a large number of third class compartments and waiting halls electric fans have been provided...

With the limited funds available, the remodelling of some important stations has been undertaken. A 17-mile metre gauge link between Arantangi and Karaikudi is under construction at a cost of Rs. 41 lakhs. The Madras-Mangalore broad gauge main line is being diverted between Sulur and Singanallur so as to bring the important industrial centre of Coimbatore on to the main line. Surveys have been undertaken for constructing railway lines between Quilon and Ernakulam and between Chamrajnagar-Satyamangalam-Coimbatore...



The present Southern Railway Headquarters soon after it was built as the headquarters of the Madras and Southern Mahratta railways.

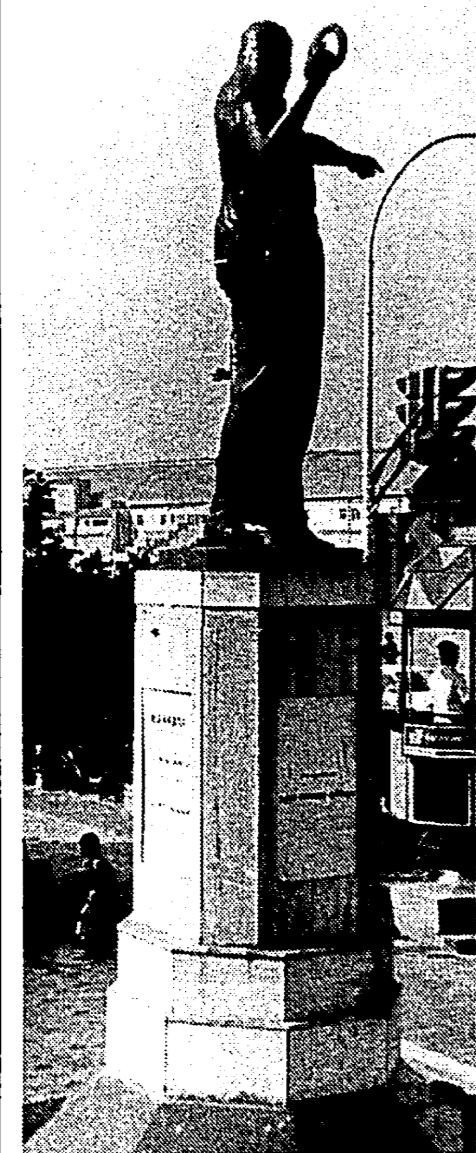
Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period April 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

- Which Indian cricketer is one of 'Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year'?
- Which 'feline' is still the 'king' of the U.S. Masters golfing event?
- Which newspaper won a record 7 of the 14 journalism Pulitzer Prizes recently?
- Where was the much anticipated and hyped-up press conference of LTTE supremo V. Prabhakaran held on April 10th?
- Name the chairman of the Jumbo Group and one of the most aggressive and controversial takeover business magnates who passed away recently.
- Where was the Palestinian Authority leader, Yasser Arafat, 'held' after an offensive by Israel?
- Where was the BJP National Executive Committee held recently?
- Where in the country was a regional Rail Museum, the first such museum outside the National Rail Museum, opened recently?
- Who regained the prestigious National Football League crown in Margao on April 15th?
- Where in Ahmadabad were scribes, gathered for a peace meeting, assaulted by the a mob on April 7th, leading to nationwide condemnation?
- What is the name of Chennai's first pub?
- About which historical place in Tamil Nadu was J. Goldingham the first to write about in 1798?
- India's second railway line was built in the State. Where?
- What is the present name of the imposing city edifice, designed by J.H. Stephens, which was built for W.E. Smith & Co.?
- Name the State's first private basic telephone service, launched in Chennai on April 3rd.
- Who is the present Commissioner-in-Charge of Chennai Corporation?
- Which prestigious place of learning and training in Chennai has become a tourist spot since April 13th?
- Which district has been chosen for implementation of a pilot project aimed at toning up the Statewide noon meal scheme for schoolchildren?
- Name the four stations on the Tambaram-Beach route where the BG EMU trains don't stop.
- Name the upcoming actress-sister of popular heroine Simran who was found dead recently.

(Answers on page 8)

A statue for Madhavi



— Now that Kannagi has vanished

Many may think that it is not a good idea to rake up sleeping issues. Particularly if it is tinged with political undercurrents. But I could not help speaking to some people recently about the Kannagi statue. Most of them had forgotten the media-hype of not so long ago. Some couldn't care less. As for me, I thought, a bare pedestal most inappropriate in our beautiful city.

I distinctly remember the World Tamil Conference held in Madras back in 1968 which inspired our politicians to remember the great contributors to Tamil literature and culture and to instal hurriedly-crafted statues of these unsung heroes all along the Marina beach. I heard elders at that time remarking that some of the statues did not do justice to the originals. Moreover, they were plaster models which they thought may not last... and many wondered how and who would take care of them, considering that even the Mahatma received a wash-down from the blessings of birds only once a year, in January. Even at that innocent age I could see the point that many made regarding the wisdom or artistic merit of choosing the film star Vijayakumari to be the model for Kannagi. Flippantly we remarked, "Why not Saroja Devi? She is, after all, prettier". Nobody mentioned that she did not quite qualify, being a Kannadiga.

Looking at the statues now, with the wisdom of maturity, and putting them in proper perspective, I feel the time is appropriate to demand a statue of

Madhavi. In fact, I cannot see the logic of putting Kannagi there in the first place. When did she enter the perception of the Tamil people as a writer, or an icon of anything to do with culture? Culture, as normally understood, means something to do with art, education, literature, etc. In fact, are not all the statues of historic character? Was Kannagi a historic character? Scholars and pundits have never mentioned her in any history book. She is a character in the epic poem, the *Silappadikaram*, written by a princely Jain monk of the Chera dynasty, Ilango Adigal. Why did someone not suggest a statue for HIM? After all, his poem is the *magnum opus* of Tamil literature. Surely he deserves to be recognised. In fact, the Tamil conference should have honoured U.V. Swaminathalyer by erecting a statue for him. For it was he who brought the manuscript of the *Silappadikaram* to the notice of the Tamil people and earned the title Tamil Thatha (grandfather of Tamil) for his extraordinary research and exemplary scholarship.

To stretch my argument further, I personally think, Madhavi should be honoured with a statue, if at all our politicians think that one of the heroines of the *Silappadikaram* should be honoured. Madhavi, the ultimate beauty will truly beautify the Marina. We can commission a sculptor to make the best from various Tamil beauties over the ages, and make a perfect statue in a dancing pose. Chennai being the home of Bharata Natyam today, has earned a reputation worldwide. What better way to honour the art of dance than to have a statue of the ideal dancer, Madhavi. She stands for everything great in our culture...she was trained in all the 64 Arts for seven long years before her *arangatram*. She, according to Ilango Adigal, could sing, play many instruments, knew all the nuances of dance and drama and, above all, she could create her own Tamil poetry. Kannagi did none of these things. In fact, she is portrayed as a sweet and submissive wife, who is wronged by an errant husband. Somewhere in our long history she came to be identified with a village goddess named 'Pathini Deivam'. If I am not mistaken, Kannagi is not even a mother in the epic, let alone being a mother goddess. On the other hand, I can see Madhavi striking a pose on the Marina, beckoning tourists from across the seas to this citadel of culture. She would be the

(Continued on page 7)

• With Lakshmi Viswanathan writing of statues, this piece which appeared in The Times of India seems a most appropriate bit of musings.

They stand, uncorrected

I doubt if archaeologists would derive too much satisfaction from digging up Mumbai — its hard rock and the tempestuous sea over which piles and miles of dirt have been poured to extend the landfill. I doubt if much in the way of ancient civilisations would be discovered — perhaps some fossils of long gone marine creatures appropriate to the memory of a little fishing village, or going even further back, a volcanic protrusion into the sea, which would give us a desirable gloss of antiquity.

If someone from the future were looking for explanations, it is our stately buildings — best seen floodlit — that lend us that sense of metropolitan sophistication, and a sense of the past. Driving by that elegant sweep of the Institute of Science extending to the old C.J. Hall, the wonderful high court and Bombay University with its mellow stone Rajabai Tower, one gets a sense of living in a world capital. I love that other long Gothic stretch from VT down the length of Dadabhai Naoroji Road to Horniman Circle up to the classical dignity of the Asiatic Library. I visit the Asiatic for another reason as well, to stare at its magnificent statues of Brit viceroys and governors general, the Curzons and the Cornwallises, so Roman in their lineaments and imperial

We have hidden away these noble visages as if we were hiding a guilty secret. Poor Queen Victoria, once Empress of India. Her fine statue which I remember seeing as a child at the corner where the Videsh Sanchar Nigam now stands, is supposed to have been tucked away in some dusty corner of Jijamata Udyan along with the moth-eaten animals that peer out in desperation from their cages.

Certainly, post-independent India has not created any statues to compare with these. Delineating Gandhi has always been a disaster, anywhere in India. The few statues of him scattered around the city make one wince. It is strange how his charm, so apparent in photographs and old film clips, is impossible to depict in this medium.

Nehru, too, is seemingly impossible to portray in marble or bronze. The sad effort at Mantralaya reveals nothing of his handsomeness or his intelligence. Odd that the Nehru Centre has nothing to com-

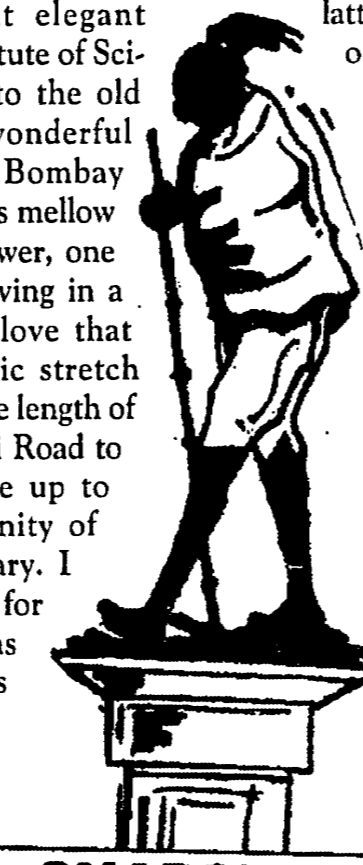
memorate his vitality and sophistication.

Who commissions statues in Mumbai anyway? Why don't people have more of a say in whose figures they would like to see immortalised? Unless there were to be a revolution, I cannot imagine that the present lot of freedom-fighters would get pulled down like Lenin's more-than-life-size figure did in Moscow during the liberation from communism a few years ago. For sheer lack of aesthetics the present lot ought to be pulled down, however politically incorrect that may sound.

I doubt if Netaji at the corner of Babulnath was, in actuality, such a pygmy. Both he and Ambedkar — the latter's statue can be seen on the corner of Madame Cama Road — were really interesting men even if official historians have not given them their due. But I doubt if they would have liked to have been remembered with that didactic finger pointing northwards. Unkind comments spring to mind each time I pass them. Do we really need statues, anyway? I see it as a sign of being a politically immature and needy people. Leadership is not a call to deification. They came, ruled or led, and passed on. Their political legacies become as distorted as the message of any religious teaching does once the guru goes. Perhaps one could say Christ was the first and last Christian, the same for Buddha, Marx, Freud, whoever.

Oddly enough, Rajiv Gandhi's statue at Cooperage, which his widow inaugurated a few years ago, is the only interesting one at the moment in Mumbai. It captures something of his essence, it has movement, it reaches out. I shudder to think of the excesses that will be inflicted on the long-suffering public of this city when the present lot of political figures (I will not call them leaders) passes on. Perhaps a law ought to be passed. If they are still alive in public memory after a hundred years, only then — and even then, only if they are beautiful — need they be carved in stone.

(REVATHY GOPAL's weekly column in The Times of India, Mumbai edition, aims to capture that quintessentially Mumbai state of mind.)



— SNAPSHOT —

Going Bust

A response

Tenants of the house of blue mangoes

• Read against the background of the two pieces on David Davidar and *The House of Blue Mangoes* in Madras Musings, April issues, this article reflects some rather different thoughts.

David Davidar is a first class literary editor, but not a first class writer, as his first novel shows.

The House of Blue Mangoes begins promisingly — with a rape — but soon rambles, through dramatic and separate incidents, in all directions, indifferent to its own mysterious purpose. Like a stream thinning into a hundred shallow pools in rocky terrain. The tone of the novel is expositional — a sort of rhetoric that denies the characters the troublesome virtue of depth. There is not one single sentence whose bare lyricism might make sense of your life. Or give you a lift.

That sounds stringent. But more damagingly — to me — that sounds ungrateful. I am a two-bit writer myself, and my first two poetry collections were published by Penguin Viking at David's generous instance. Both David and the reading public know poetry is now a posthumous art, and that there is neither money nor much fame in it. Poetry is a suicidal trade in a killing country.

Despite the odds, David did publish the volumes and there the matter uneasily rests, like a corpse with his eyes open. My quarrel, though, is not with David's novel. Most people write what they must. There are many reasons for this. But the crucial one, I think, is that men and women are afraid to reveal their true selves in the Word. What if you are found wanting when you finally emerge out of the closet, wearing just your word for a figleaf? Well, for one, their books will remain unsold.

We are told this is a permissive, all-accepting world. The opposite is the truth. These are times of extreme standardisation, in terms of icons and values. Never has there been a more uniformly democratic fear of rejection. But that doesn't mean David may not win a Booker. Stick at writing long enough and he may even win a Nobel — with luck. If Naipaul can, who can't?

My quarrel is with the media. By 'media' I mean feature writers, columnists, critics and anchor-men. David is not just any

novelist. He is also the CEO and the chief editor of Penguin India, the largest book publisher in the country. The sad trouble is, just about everybody in the media knows David's strategic positioning in the literary world. An irresponsible and widely perceived piece of knowledge, as it turns out. Since the release of the book, the media has gone to town on the novel. Newspapers and magazines, TV and sites on the Net have been without exception fawning and drooling on David and his book. An interminable blowing of the horn. A remarkable orchestra, really.

It is not David's book that bothers me, so much as the flattery that is conjured up at the faintest glimmer from the dim-

mest light at the end of the farthest tunnel. That applies to the babies as well as to the daddies of the game. Ah, the brazen sport.

We all know that everybody has a book in him — however terrible it might be. But, in the English media in India, everyone has several books in him, and wants them all published as well. Which is why *The House of Blue Mangoes* is everybody's novel. David just got to write it first. But a hundred aspirants and achievers throng the gates of the temple. Just now they are too busy appreciating David's novel, and putting it on record, for future reference. Their future. — (Courtesy: www.prdomain.com)

C.W. Surendran

Remembering in song and dance Kalki Sadasivam

The Kalki Sadasivam Centenary celebrations held recently in the Kalakshetra Auditorium included an absorbing cultural programme titled *Manadil Urudhi Vendum*. In this audio-visual presentation with Anuradha Kannan and Thiruppur Krishnan reading/enacting the script, the life story of Sadasivam was unfolded from his early childhood.

Most of us have known Sadasivam, the founder and former editor of *Kalki*, as the husband of M.S. Subbulakshmi and as the man behind her achievements. But *Manadil Urudhi Vendum* was a revelation, for it showed what a multifaceted personality he was.

His deep study of the Vedas, his scholarship in English and Tamil, the in-depth knowledge he had of Carnatic music, his nationalistic fervour and his dedication to values were effectively brought out. In addition,

his administrative acumen, his sense of humour and, above all, his leadership and go-getter qualities were highlighted through filmstrips screened. Gowri Ramanarayana is to be congratulated for the excellence of her script and direction; it could not be otherwise coming from the granddaughter of the inimitable Kalki. Bombay Jayashree and Vijay Siva, with their accompanists, provided the background music, singing specially suited to what was being enacted. They even sang a Sikh *bhajan* and a devotional song on Allah to exemplify Sadasivam's secular attitude and his love of all religions. Towards the end, Urmila Satyanarayana danced to that lilting Meera Bhajan, *Ganashyama Ayari*. And Kalki's daughter, Anandi, narrated a few anecdotes.

Sadasivam's keen business sense was illustrated by the fol-

A STATUE FOR MADHAVI

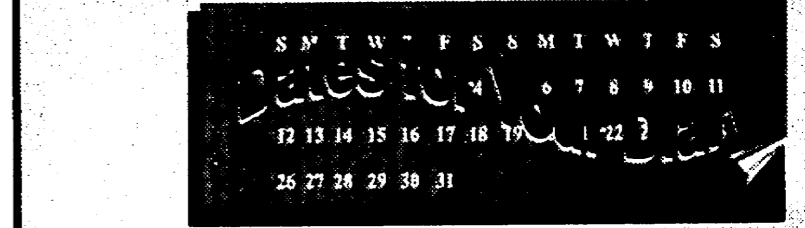
(Continued from page 6)

lighthouse of our culture, steering wandering ships to this shore of beauty and poetry. A contrast to Kannagi, who looked as if she was ready to burn down Triplicane.

It is time for change, or rather re-invention. The Tamil

Woman of today may want to be more Madhavi than Kannagi — accomplished, erudite and, of course, beautiful. And with a Chief Minister, herself a dancer, having made a dazzling comeback, surely Madhavi deserves to be put on a pedestal.

Lakshmi Viswanathan



Nature workshops and camps this summer

Nature Orientation Workshops and Camps are being planned by the World Wide Fund For Nature - India, an NGO working for conservation of nature and natural resources, and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, a centre for Herpetology located near Mahabalipuram.

The purpose of these programmes is to bring children closer to nature during the summer vacation, through interesting activities like nature trails, reptile identification, slide and video shows, field project work, creative sessions, quizzes, nature games and interactive sessions with reptiles.

The one-day workshops and three-day camps will be held at the Madras Crocodile Bank premises between mid-April and June 2002. Here the children will get to meet crocodiles, turtles and other reptiles.

During the programmes, the children will discover India's fascinating wildlife, play exciting games which will teach them about nature, check out their knowledge of nature and wildlife, find out about nature cures from plants, try their hands at producing green creations, visit a sacred grove, take a trip to the cosmos and more.

Those interested may contact the organisers on Phone: 4994827/4997107; e-Mail: www.wfnso@sify.com

May 5th: The Nandini Trade Centre for Products of the Disabled (promoted by Nandini Voice For The Deprived and supported by Tamil Nadu Handicapped Welfare Federation Trust and Help to Live) is holding an exhibition and sale of products made by disabled persons (orthopaedically disabled, blind, deaf and mentally retarded). Drawings, paintings, toys, dolls, presentation articles and other items of common use will be on sale. (At C.P. Art Centre, 10.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m.).

lowing incident. When Vasana appointed him Editor of *Vikatan* magazine on a salary of Rs. 75 a month, with a mandate to improve sales, he quickly replied, "Give me Rs. 150 a month and you'll have no worry about the sales." In a few months the sales grew from a few thousands to 80,000 copies! Whenever he approached a Tata or a Birla for an advertisement in *Kalki*, he would not ask for a half-page or a full-page, but bluntly say, "Please give me an advertisement for Rs. 20,000!"

He took an active part in the national movement, rubbing shoulders with many a national leader. He considered Rajaji his guru. When he was given khadi development work in the South, he dedicated himself to getting good results. Once, when he and his mother visited Mahatma Gandhi, the latter, with his usual wit, exclaimed, "O, Sadasivam, your mother — in *khaddar*!", which shows how successfully he could influence even an orthodox and conservative woman like his mother to wear khadi!

Sadasivam was known for his sense of humour and quite a few witticisms of his were interspersed in the programme. I was witness to his wit at the Music Academy when M.S. gave the *Kanchi Mani Mandapam* concert under the auspices of

"Swaralaya Puraskaram", New Delhi, a few years ago. When Sadasivam started his thanksgiving speech, saying, "I am 95 and my wife is 80 plus and we have a baby..." the audience was dumb-founded! After a deliberate pause, he explained, "I mean Mr. Baby, who is here on the stage and who was the man responsible for organising the function in Madras as M.S. was not fit enough to travel to Delhi". And the laughter was uproarious in the auditorium.

He was also a very religious man. He and his wife worshipped Kanchi Maha Periyaval as Prathyaksha Kaliyuga Kadavul Himself! Known for their philanthropy, they made donations to the tune of Rs. 4 crore out of the collections from concerts to charitable institutions. At the same time, he never liked publicity. He would rather help poor students who came for help, by giving them food and clothing and paying their education fees than donate to universities and big organisations, "for which there are enough millionaires," he used to remark. It was no exaggeration when Dr. Ramamurthy, in his presidential address, compared the couple to the mythological Savitri-Sathyavan!

Cdr. R. Ganapathi (Retd)

Nostalgia

Blighted hope

Masefield's poem had nothing to do with my initiation into the art of sailing. The reason was much more basic. Men. The young man who taught me to sail I did in fact marry in the end, but when he first asked me if I'd like to go down to the Yacht Club, visions of gorgeous, bronzed, handsome young men in blue jeans and striped T-shirts came to mind. With alacrity and a smile he probably thought was for him, I accepted the invitation.

Alas, my frivolous heart sank when I arrived. With due respect to current members, all appeared to be ancient and married (to each other, so not even a little harmless flirting). Worse still, all they could talk about was boats. Jibs and judders, benders and pleats. I supposed that they were quite sane people who kept the wheels of industry and domesticity turning all week, but you would never have thought so from listening to them.

We had a rather wobbly trip in the dinghy across the oil in which the boats are moored (someone tried to tell me there was water underneath, but I'm not that daft), during which I

had time to notice that my escort not only didn't wear a striped shirt, but that he had no shirt at all and was displaying a hairy chest and three folds of stomach, each resting on the one below, with the bottom one draped gracefully over the top of his shorts. We gently bumped the boat and clambered in.

'Rigging the boat' was the next excitement. I managed to thread two bits of rope through two metal rings with what I

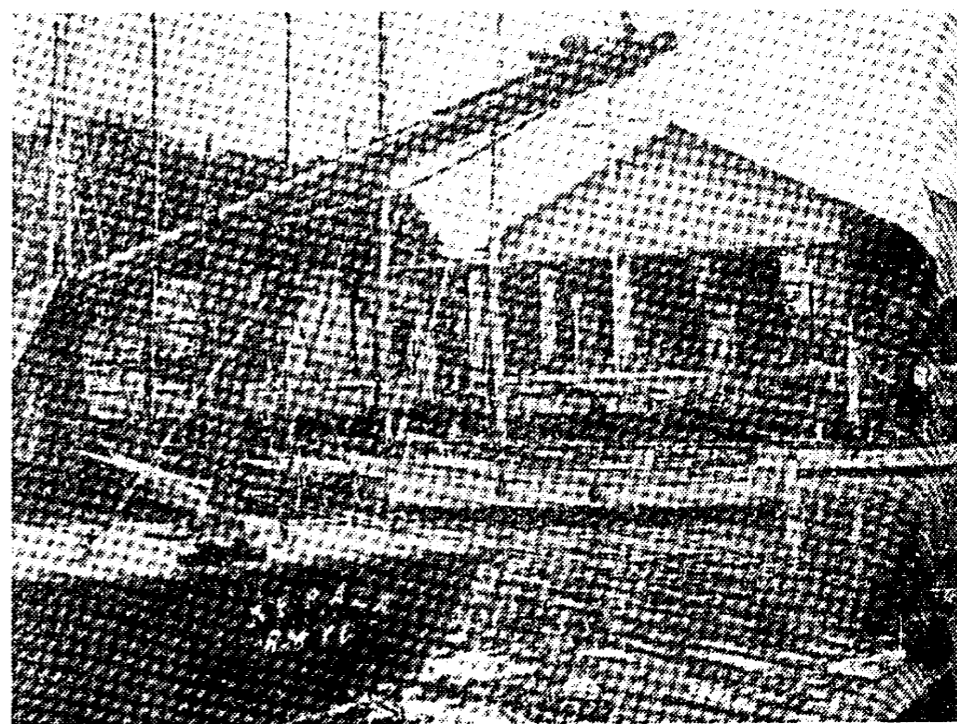
● **Josephine Felton, of Littledean, U.K., wrote this piece for the Royal Madras Yacht Club's magazine in 1967 and sent it to Madras Musings on reading the piece on the state of sailing in Chennai, which appeared in the April 1st Issue.**

hoped was a nautical air, and was informed that these were my responsibility. Up went the mainsail and I was told (not 'asked', 'told' — manners seem to be forbidden in boats) to "push off". This involved crouching on a tiny piece of triangular wood at the front, with a small sail flapping round my ears, so that just when I stuck out my hand and shoved, the

sail blocked my vision and I pushed nothing and nearly fell overboard. Eventually I managed to push against something which resisted me and we slid quietly backwards into clear oil. "Haul in the fenders," yelled The Voice, a finger indicating the four lumps of melting liquorice hanging outside the boat.

"Right. Now sit down and take hold of the jib sheet." The only thing even vaguely representing a sheet which I could see was the sail, and that wasn't the snowy white or pastel blue I'd dreamed of, but a filthy, patched set-square of terylene (where was the canvas of legend and song?). I dutifully grabbed the only bit I could reach, thinking that whoever designed such things could at least have put in a few extra handles, when a verbal blast from the back end made me let go and seize one of my original two ropes. Why couldn't he have said that's what he meant in the first place?

We sailed smoothly into the main harbour (real water now) and I managed to carry out some simple instructions fairly successfully. I was fascinated by the cargo ships, the different coloured flags and the fretting little tugs. We headed straight for an enormous, grey vessel which was obviously in Madras to deliver aeroplanes, as these were clearly visible on the flat deck. This was moving sedately in our direction; the gap between us closed to a couple of boat lengths but I knew that steam had to give way to sail, so that was all right. Suddenly, "Ready about. NOW" — bang



The RMYC's Clubhouse in 1967.

went the boom, almost scalping me; slither, rattle, went the oars and baling can across the floorboards; flap, crack, went the sails; lurch, crash, "Ow", went me "What on earth did you do that for? You might have taken it slowly," I howled, unravelling ropes from around my feet and nursing a battered knee. "What do you mean slowly? Can't you blasted well see an aircraft carrier ahead? You're supposed to keep a look-out." How was I to know that the rule about steam and sail doesn't apply within a harbour?

About this time I decided that sailing wasn't such fun after all. My hands were sore, I couldn't pull any tighter for all the tongue-lashing I received. The brass cleats which some idiot had chosen to screw into the middle of the plank on which I was sitting had hooked and torn my shorts and as I was not then married, my dignity was suffering. I had a crick in the neck from ducking under the boom and a rope burn in a place unmentionable, caused by the centre plate being drawn up sharply with no warning. I'd had just about enough.

Shortly, to my relief, we turned and sailed slowly back to the Club House in the now dusky evening. Why we had to zig zag all the way instead of go-

ing straight, which would have been much quicker, I don't know. I suppose my helmsman did it for the fun of making me leap from side to side, knowing that I daren't hit him or go on strike in case we capsized. (It's so easy to convince a beginner that if he so much as breathes too deeply, the boat will tip up and he'll DROWN.)

We moored alongside the other boats, transferred wearily into the dinghy and I silently thanked Neptune for releasing me back on to dry land. The greatest surprise of all was that not only did my man revert to his usual good temper once his feet lost contact with his boat, but he asked me out to dinner that night. Perhaps I was wrong when I assumed that sailors are sane. They're not, they're all at heart bits of Jeekyll and Hyde.

Felton adds, "The Club's fleet in 1967 comprised five Bembridges (Ailsa, Heather, Kerala, Minx, and Kittiwake) and 21 Waterwages (Naiad, Jaystle, Iris, Kestrel, Pixie, Mosquito, Curlew, Phyllida, Blackcat, Swallow, Foam, Spindrift, Gannet, Norma, Teal, Tern, Gerobi, Walrus, Ann and Pandora). The *Vestral* was Simon's (her husband-to-be's — he proposed to me on the roof of the Madras Club!) and is still in the water, I'm told."

Answers to Quiz

1. V.V.S. Laxman; 2. Tiger Woods; 3. *The New York Times*; 4. Killinochchi; 5. Manu Chhabria; 6. Ramallah; 7. Panaji; 8. Chennai; 9. Mohun Bagan; 10. Sabarmati Ashram.

* * *

11. Geoffrey's; 12. Mahabalipuram; 13. Madras (Royapuram)

to Wallajah (Arcot) line; 14. Bharat Insurance Building on Mount Road; 15. Touchtel from Bharti Telenet Limited; 16. A. Karthik; 17. Officers' Training Academy; 18. Tiruchi; 19. Tambaram Sanatorium, Tirusoolam, Meenambakkam and Chetpet; 20. Monal.

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