

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

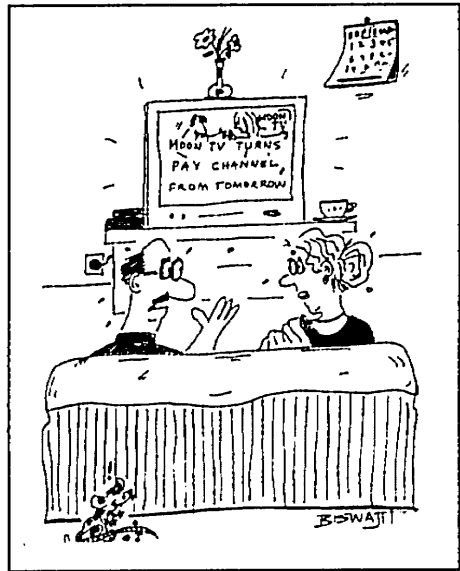
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And just when we've reached the climax, too!

A penny for your watching?

Great business people... all these guys behind various channels on Cable TV.

Such a simple business ploy, if you think about it.

First you get your viewers interested by bombarding them with song and dance sequences, glitz, glamour, and endless yarns. Then, just when they've got to the point where the saucer-eyed daughter-in-law is all poised to sip from the glass of milk which the wicked mother-in-law has spiced with a mysterious white powder, and the old grandmother is going to finally disclose the true identity of the man the family has so far thought of as the benign old neighbour, you black out the channel in question and announce: "No pay, No watch."

'Agony' is the only word that comes even close to describing the emotions of the bereft viewers, leaving them biting their pillows at night wondering how it all came out.

Since the arrival of Cable, most people apportion their days into neat time capsules that are connected by relevant signature tunes. Everything else in between is a grey, hazy area under the heading, 'Life-in-General'.

Given the prevalent obsession for easy-on-the-mind entertainment, the guys in charge just cannot lose.

Of course, people will pay — and continue to pay.

Just remember, good citizens, it is never very wise to give a bottomless, ever-hungry pit too much control.

Ranjitha Ashok

Tourism focus is on E.C.R.

(By A Special Correspondent)

Tamil Nadu, second in domestic tourist arrivals and third in international tourist arrivals, is planning a new tourism policy to improve on this. The State has already allocated Rs.17 crore for tourism in 2001-2002, and plans to increase it to Rs.32 crore for 2002-2003.

The State proposes to set up a separate company, the Tamil Nadu Tourism Infrastructure Development Corporation (TNTIDC), as a fully-owned subsidiary of the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation to, among other things, identify new tourist destinations in the State and setting up tourism infrastructure facilities on a joint venture basis.

New tourist destinations identified in Tamil Nadu include:

- **Alamparai Fort**, 120 km from Chennai, on the East Coast Road (ECR). With its excellent backwaters it will prove an ideal destination for development of water sports. Muttukadu, on the same road, will also be further developed for water sports.
- **Idaikalikadu**, 60 km from Chennai on the ECR, to be developed as a major houseboat destination.
- **Palaverkadu (Pulicat)**, 60 km north of Chennai, to be developed as a bird sanctuary.

The TNTIDC will, it is stated, prepare project feasibility reports for these destinations and invite private participation in their development.

Infrastructure development to be studied includes:

- Air taxi operations, linking major tourist destinations in the State.
- Ferry services from Chennai to Mamallapuram and from

Rameswaram to Kanniyakumari.

- Ferry services in the South Buckingham Canal.
- Houseboats in Muttukadu, Kodaikanal and Pykara.

(Continued on page 6)



The East Coast Road, one of the best in the State bar a couple of uncomfortable curves, is likely to need even greater development if the State's plan to make this stretch its tourism focus materialises. The present creation itself is not without its hazards, as our picture today shows. A shortage of transport on the route leads to overcrowding of vehicles — and life-endangering travel at high speeds is what you see regularly.

Let's move away from water-intensive crops

For full 28 years after the expiry of the 50-year agreement on sharing the Kaveri waters in 1974, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu continue to quarrel over an acceptable sharing formula.

Sadly, the quarrelling States continue to blind themselves to reality. Unlike the Ganga, the Kaveri, at the best of times, is not a perennial river that provides copious flows round the year. The centuries old practice of depending on the Kaveri for water-intensive crops like rice and sugarcane is in crying need of a change. Mandya District in Karnataka or Tiruchi and Thanjavur downstream in Tamil Nadu are profligate in the use of water. The two States have a lot to learn from Maharashtra which manages its

agriculture so much more efficiently. And that State is endowed with much less water: against 44 per cent of irrigated area in Tamil Nadu, the coverage is only 14 per cent for Maharashtra. Yet, that State tops in the production and export of a variety of fruits including Alphonso mangoes, mandarin oranges, Cavendish bananas, grapes, pomegranates, *seeta pal* and even strawberries! It accounts for a third of sugarcane production by effectively focussing on this crop in select areas and using technology like tissue culture and irradiation to much benefit! And it continues to focus on the production of coarse cereals, much in demand by the rural population.

Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are not large producers of

foodgrains. Their shares were respectively 8.9 million tonnes and 9.9 million tonnes in a total production of 209 million tonnes in 1999-2000. And even this level of production is sustained by hefty subsidies. The time has come for a massive switch from centuries-old addiction to water-intensive crops to alternative crops like pulses, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables. In fact, this switch-over can also be made more remunerative to the farmers. This can be achieved with help from the respective State governments through a change-over incentive for a limited period, with assured support for procurement and marketing. — (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*.)

S. Viswanathan

PLASTIC WASTE FOR ROAD-LAYING

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Chennai Corporation plans to use polymer waste blended with bitumen to lay roads. To start with, polymer bitumen will be laid on the stretches of roads damaged by Metrowater tankers and other heavy vehicles.

The Corporation authorities, who recently saw a demonstration of the process, feel that it is a feasible proposition. As enough plastic waste will not be

available from the two dumping grounds in the city to lay all the roads in the metro, the Corporation plans a mass campaign to segregate plastic waste at the source.

R. Vasudevan (Head of the Department of Chemistry, Thiagarajar Engineering College, Madurai), who discovered the polymer-bitumen combination's potential, had tried it on a 1,000 sq. ft. area in the col-

lege. "The condition of the road has been satisfactory for four months now," he told the Corporation.

Vasudevan pointed out that this was the best way to use polymer waste and said other modes of disposal, like burying, would result in groundwater and fertility of soil being affected. Burning of polymer waste was also hazardous, he pointed out.

Revival's possible, but how do we sustain it?

For some years now the Rotary Club, Main, the oldest in the city, has been attempting to revive some of the 39 temple tanks in the city. It started with the Tiruvanniyur Tank, but not long after the revival and the holding of the first float festival in years, the tank was back to its cricket maidan-public latrine state, the Rotary having moved on, leaving the tank with no one to tend it. That had been the fate of a couple of other tanks Rotary had cleaned, though a greater degree of success was achieved in one or two others they revived.

The case of the Tiruvanniyur Tank interested INTACH-Tamil Nadu which decided to study the reasons for the failure and look for ways to make such cleaning up projects a success. Apart from the technical needs, the INTACH study stressed the need for committed public participation, particularly of those around the tanks, in keeping the tanks clean and 'alive'. This, it was felt, needed sensitising the public to the problems and issues and persuading them to make the necessary commitment. A film focussing on this, INTACH felt, should be made and screened at various places in Tiruvanniyur together with speeches, debates and performances on streetside stages where the film would be shown. Getting sufficient volunteers in the area to form a Tiruvanniyur Tank Protection Group would, it was hoped, result from such screenings. If the experiment was successful, it could be replicated wherever else Rotary cleaned up a tank. And cleaning up the 39 temple tanks in the city — which it recently got INTACH to document — is what Rotary Main would like to help with.

It was against this background that *The Man From Madras Musings* went recently to see a preview of the film made by Latha Menon, with Dr. Anandakrishnan of the Citizens' Action Group and a leading academician, playing the anchor role. Help with the making of the film came from Chennai Heritage, the publishers of *Madras Musings* and supporters of awareness-building in such fields as heritage, the environment and civic improvement. The film certainly grabbed the attention through the sheer spontaneity of the utterances of those who lived and worked around the tank. To hear them tell it, every one of them would like to play a role in doing what the citizenry of Pammal have done for THEIR tank. But despite all the enthusiasm, MMM tends to remain sceptical about the wisdom of a "leave it to the people" approach that seems to be the underlying suggestion in the film.

Some of the issues mentioned in the film had been considered by many a viewer as something said just in passing.

There were, however, other more optimistic viewers who felt that what those in the film said about wanting a beautiful tank and that all of them would help in keeping it clean and beautiful was a cross-my-heart commitment on which they would not go back. To MMM, however, those almost *sotto voce*, in-passing comments tell another story that needs much greater examination if its sustainability is to be achieved.

Encroachers in the area and those who have put up shop while stating willingness to leave, always added "but ensure we get an alternative place". Others offering help always added "tell us what to do". And watching the activity that goes on in the dry bed of the tank, the question asked again is "where is the alternative space".

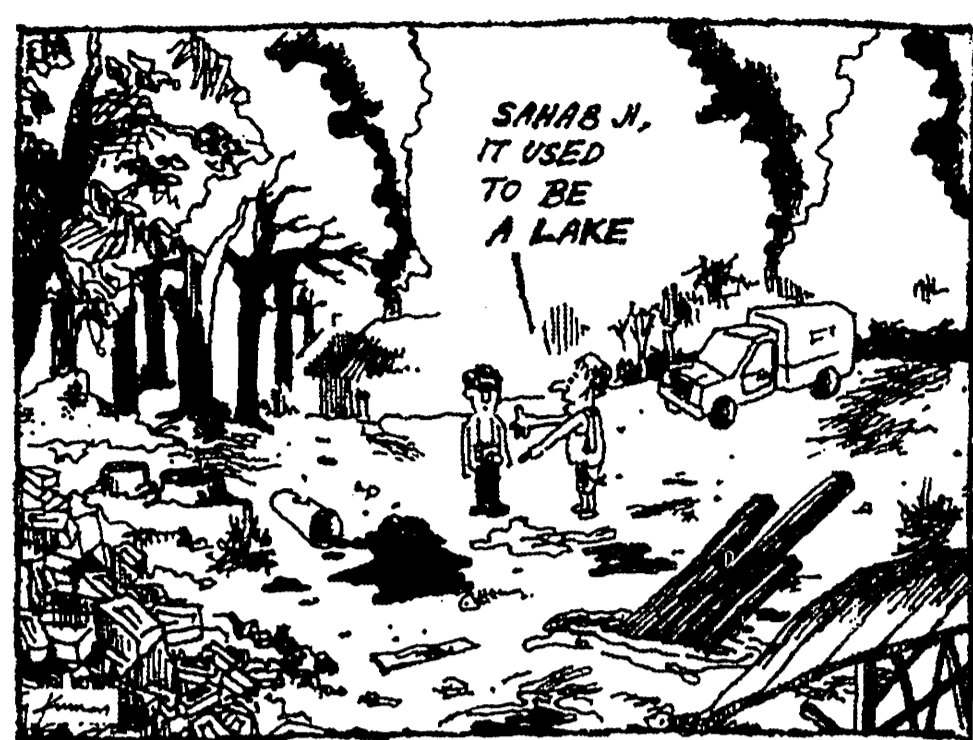
Issues ahead

While the film will certainly create awareness of the need for people's participation and might indeed get the people to participate in supporting municipal and NGO efforts at reviving the Tiruvanniyur Tank — based, it is hoped, on INTACH's techni-

cal recommendations — the fact remains that several issues will have to be faced before the cleaning effort and then sustaining the revival. These will include, clearing the area of encroachments, clearing the clogged drainage channels, encouraging the development of waterharvesting in the area, and, most important of all, keeping the drains and roads free thereafter to sustain the revived tank.

All this would indicate the necessity of a committed local volunteer group which will support municipal efforts on a permanent basis to keep the tank 'alive'. To MMM, the difficult part of the exercise is raising such a volunteer group that will put in a sustained effort to support the Municipal efforts and will work with all those in the film who kept saying, "we'll help, but tell us what to do". Telling them what to do on almost a daily basis will have to be also a part of the commitment of that local volunteer group.

MMM wonders how many people can be found for such a volunteer effort. That, at the end of the day, is the crux of the problem in such revival efforts. Awareness-building is one thing, one-time revival is another not too difficult a thing, but what is most difficult is sustaining such civic projects through volunteerism which often gives up the fight in the face of the indifference of those it is working with. How those in Tiruvanniyur tackle this situation could be the most important part



This cartoon from the eco-journal Down to Earth may have been published with reference to the vanishing lakes of Gujarat, and particularly Ahmadabad, but could equally apply to the vanishing tanks of Chennai.

of the learning experience. If they succeed, then both film and what's learnt could well be replicated by Rotary and other groups anywhere they attempt such revival of abandoned facilities.

Ahmadabad lessons

In connection with the plans underway in Chennai to give new life to old temple tanks, some

where, particularly once an order has been watered down. MMM hopes that when Authority looks at tanks and waterbodies in Madras it not only adopts something like the final verdict in Gujarat but also considers what the interim order had intended there.

A clean Marina

That there is an earnest effort being made to improve the

this, MMM feels, will have to comprise:

- Immediate capital expenditure to provide equipment and facilities for keeping the Marina clean.
- The daily cost of keeping the Marina clean.
- The daily maintenance cost.
- The cost of other beautification measures.

The cost of beautification measures to be taken up at a later stage should include that of landscaping the existing walkways, roads and gardens. This is a process that needs, apart from the aesthetics of it, botanical inputs to get the right flora that will thrive in the sandy soil of the area with little water. Most of the flora grown at present here suffers from being unsuited to the soil and from lack of water. But as MMM has said above, this is not the priority, but planning for it can begin. The priority is cleaning up the Marina and then, as in the case of the tanks of the city, sustaining the effort. If and when it is formed, MMM hopes the Authority will succeed in sustaining its efforts and its commitment to a clean Marina.

In brief

* The old Elphinstone Bridge across the Adyar in Adyar offers one of the finest views of the Estuary and the birdlife in it. *The Man From Madras Musings* is aware that for nearly ten years there has been talk of making it a beautiful promenade with small parks at either end, seating arrangements and telescopes for birdwatching. Sadly, a forest of 'hoarding legs' at either end has held up such plans and the bridge has become a public latrine. Now at last, MMM hears, plans are being drawn up again along the same lines, with the CMDA willing to create the promenade and parks if the Corporation removes the hoardings. Both organisations have offered a glimmer of hope on each playing its part. MMM looks forward to wishes turning into reality.

* After the initial promises by the University of Madras to take up the restoration of *Senate House* on a priority basis, there has been the quiet again of the ages past. *The Man From Madras Musings* wonders why. For some weeks now, MMM has been hearing rumblings of discontent in academic circles in the University. Vested interests, unionism, resistance to change and intentions to sweep clean often get into conflict and that could be the reason for the unhappy undercurrents people like MMM feel when they are in the company of those from both the Marina and Taramani campuses. That preoccupation with such conflict will lead to little attention being paid to *Senate House* is bad enough. But if they stall other, more cerebral activity in an institution given five-star status, it would be even worse. MMM hopes things will soon be resolved. — MMM

OUR
READERS
WRITE

Hoping for the best

When I came to Madras from Bangalore in 1950, my first visit to the Marina provided a vision of fine grains of crystalline sand and opposite it a stretch of road with spaced, majestic buildings. There was even a playfield. That playfield that hosted major hockey, cricket matches and inter-collegiate athletics is today a patch of rubble and weeds. The beach itself has lost its sheen, with volumes of sugarcane fibre, litter and refuse giving the sands a muddy character.

In the late 1960s and 70s, the Marina was a conditioning and training venue for athletes and other sportspeople. Now, no one can run barefoot, because glass splinters from nips and pints, smashed after the imbibers had their swig, can cut soles into ribbons.

Hopefully, the Beach Management Committee-to-be (MM, September 16th), will arrest the trend, if not reverse the disaster.

A.J. de Souza
Chennai 600 102.

Missing Maharajah

In the extracts from *A Corner of a Foreign Field* (MM, September 1st), there was a line reading "Famous patrons of cricket included the rulers of the States of Bhopal, Baroda, Holkar, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Dungarpur, Cooch-Bihar and Natore."

Missing is the name of Patiala. The old Maharajah of Patiala, Bupender Singh, was a patron on the Board of Control for Cricket in India. He was a member of the All-India team which toured England in 1911 and his batting record was creditable. He played for M.C.C. against the Quadrangular winners in Bombay in 1926, and was President, Cricket Club of India.

Later, the Yuvarajah turned out to be a forceful batsman besides giving support to the game.

The old Maharajah's hospitality was well known to many top cricketers of the time. Besides, he would sometimes invite leading editors to spend time with him in Patiala. On one occasion, while staying in the guesthouse, my father, Pothan Joseph, then editor of the *Hindustan Times*, had occasion to play bridge with Frank Tarrant. During one of the rubbers, he developed a queer feeling that his brother George Joseph in Madurai, who was ill, was dying. Here's how he described it in his memoirs:

"That fateful afternoon in the Guest House, I felt some grip in the heart region. Frank Tarrant, the great cricketer, was with me deploring my lack of finesse as partner in a game of bridge. I excused myself on the plea that I was disturbed and explained the reason. He called me superstitious, but I walked away... I was right... I got the news soon that my brother had passed away." Incidentally, Frank Tarrant coached the Yuvarajah.

Taramani: Poverty amidst plenty

Taramani can claim to be the poorest village in Tamil Nadu but with the richest tenants. Since Independence, its land has been taken by institutions, government, business houses and voluntary organisations. Investment in this village during this period has surely crossed the thousand million dollar mark. Yet, the over 10,000-plus population of this village lives without roads, drains, school, hospital, dependable power supply, transport and telecommunication.

Several years ago, the University of Madras, Anna University and the Murugappa Chettiar Research Centre occupied all the vacant land between the Buckingham Canal and the eastern fringe of the village, thus substantially obstructing its natural drainage. The Indian Institute of Technology in the 1950s took away much of its highland on its northeastern fringe, pushing its inhabitants from their generations-old homesteads to low-lying marsh in the southwestern part. Because this part is low-lying and marshy, this part also took all the rainwater. The displaced were relocated with some compensation and huge promises of development and benefits from the research institutions in the area.

Over five decades later, the village is yet to experience any benefit of being in a rich and hightech neighbourhood. Of course, as their backyard, it takes a lot of garbage and untreated sewage from the institutions. Villagers today cannot even walk across to Guindy or Kotturpuram using natural footpaths traversed by their ancestors. To avoid trespass, they must circumambulate via Adyar or Velachery, making a 3 km distance at least twice as long.

The remaining bits of wash-land between the northeastern fringe and the Buckingham Canal have, in recent times, been taken over by a number of government organisations — the Southern Regional Centre of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Technical Teachers Training Institute, Structural Engineering Research Labs, Institute of Mathematical Science, Central Polytechnic, Women's Polytechnic and others.

A cricketer my father came to know well at the time was Amarnath, a guest of the Maharajah.

Jaiboy Joseph
Chennai 600 031.

Discovering friends

I am thankful to your publication for helping me discover in Mayiladuthurai the address of friends. When I saw their address, I wrote to them wondering if they were the same couple who were our friends in Bombay in the mid-Fifties and whom we had met briefly again

Musings giving our friend's name and address! It was really strange but wonderful that I read the letter and managed to discover them after nearly thirty years!

Parvati V. Menon
Chennai 600 015.

Addresses or not?

The decision to withhold the addresses of correspondents to MM seems to have stirred up a hornet's nest. It has made the editors of MM wonder whether their decision requires reconsideration. The present decision may irritate some readers, but correspondents do need some protection from annoying solicitors. In case I need extra information or an explanation from a writer, I address the writer care of the editor of the concerned periodical. The editors are good enough to redirect my letters to the writers. I always enclose enough postage stamps for a reply. In case I expect a very short reply, I send a reply card. This method has always been successful.

When the postman rings, a person expects letters from his near and dear and not tearjerker and embarrassing supplications.

M. Sethuraman
Chennai 600 088.

Of crows & a dog

I read with amusement Reader A. Rajaram's "Of crows and trees" (MM, September 1st). The incident reminded me of my dog Argus. He was absolutely obedient and fiercely brave and I used to demonstrate these qualities to my friends by giving him commands. But I did not realise that he was stupid too; it took two crows to demonstrate this to me.

I would every day place a basin of meat and rice before Argus and walk away, then wonder why he was still hungry and beg for food, until I saw what was happening.

More recently, TIDEL Park, the TN Government's software real-estate, a holiday resort, and the overhead railways of the Mass Rapid Transport System have moved in, rendering the Buckingham Canal a part of history now. Taramani is now doomed to remain water-logged the year round, condemned to be drowned in its own sewage and in the sewage of its rich lessees. The Voluntary Health Services (VHS) Hospital, also on its northeastern fringe, is about the only organisation of any use to these villagers.

The Corporation of Chennai has substantial gains from the institutions here. As the institutions are on the fringe of the village, all these institutions have access to good drainage, roads, power supply, telecom, etc. But the Corporation seems to have forgotten to look behind the institutions at those who've lived here long before the institutions.

Actually, the villagers would be more grateful if the Corporation had left them to themselves, rather than taking half-hearted measures in the name of development. Take the road here, for instance.

Nearly every year, and somehow always during the monsoon, a layer of earth, brick mortar and tar is added to the road which is either washed away by the ongoing rains or is dug up and removed by Metrowater and other City agencies. But remainders of the effort always survive and, as a result, the roads in the village are a metre and a half higher than they were a decade ago.

The ground floor of any house that was built here even a decade ago, is now at least about half a metre below the road, leaving a good deal of rainwater from the road and the drains which, in the absence of free flow due to blockage and logging, have sometimes a reverse flow. Residents here do not know what to pray for — rains or no rains. Their lives are miserable either way. Will someone help them?

Shreesh Chaudhary
Chennai 600 113.

Two crows would fly down from nowhere as soon as the basin was placed. One would hop almost right up to the basin, then fly away diverting Argus's attention, while the other crow would have its fill. Finding the second crow feasting at the basin, Argus would charge at it, whereupon this crow would hop away making sure that the dog's attention was on it. This kept happening until the basin was empty. I couldn't believe my eyes.

After this incident, I always look upon crows with respect. There was a crow with part of its beak broken. I used to feel sorry for it and fed it regularly. But it was always wary of me and flew away if ever I came near it. Is it true that if humans touch crows, the community of crows would ostracise it or kill it or is it just a myth? I have never heard of a pet crow.

Another thought. Who was it who said: "Most people dislike crows because they are just like we are. They hang around in groups and make a lot of noise. They're troublemakers who like to take the easy way out?"

Dr. K.S. Srinivasan
Chennai 600 080

A clever crow!

A crow has astonished scientists by deliberately bending a straight wire into a hook and using it to extract food from a container. Oxford University researchers watched her successfully repeat the feat nine times in a laboratory, using more than one technique. It is said to be the first time any animal other than the human has shown a clear understanding of cause and effect, and fashioned a tool for a specific task using new materials not encountered in the wild. — (Courtesy: Pitta.)

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.
- Madras Musings does not accept letters by e-mail.

Losing a 5-year legal battle

A newsletter of the Citizen, Consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG) recently reported on CAG's attempt to stop the privatisation and destruction of the Adyar Estuary. By a one-line order dated March 15, 2002, (ironically, World Consumer Rights Day), the Supreme Court of India declined to interfere with an order of the Madras High Court that put an end to a five year legal battle to save the Adyar Estuary.

Crucial to the final outcome of this case was a report of IIT-Madras. This report was prepared by the IIT in its role as a private consultant to a client. Throughout the case, CAG met an array of scientists and academic institutions none of whom was really interested in the protection of the Adyar Estuary.

This apparent absence of public interest among scientific institutions raises important questions on the future of environmental protection in our country.

Narrating the history of the case, CAG Reports states:

"In 1997 CAG filed two public interest petitions seeking to protect the fragile Adyar Estuary from repeated privatisation and destruction.

The writ petitions were a follow-up to a signature campaign that was addressed to the State Government and sought the immediate cessation of construction activities along the Adyar Creek and Estuary and called upon the Government to formulate and execute a comprehensive action plan to conserve and protect the area. The campaign carried the signatures of over 2,500 residents of Chennai and others concerned about environmental degradation, including representatives of Exnora Naturalists Club, WWF-India, Madras Naturalists Society, Environment Society of Madras, INTACH and Theosophical Society. The signatures were handed over to the Chief Secre-

tary, Government of Tamil Nadu, but no action was taken.

In the writ petitions, CAG asked for the declaration of the Adyar Estuary a 'protected area' under relevant environmental statutes, and for the demolition of a large residential complex that was being built on the edge of the river.

The Madras High Court responding to the first petition felt that the decision to declare the Adyar Estuary and Creek a protected area was one best left to the Government. Therefore, they directed the State Environment Secretary to take a decision on this request within six months. Till date (five years later), the Government is yet to take a decision and, by inference, it appears that it is not concerned about protecting this area.

On the second petition, the High Court summarily rejected CAG's objections to the residential complex.

• A CAG report

In between, the builder had approached the Court alleging that the Corporation of Chennai was arbitrarily denying him 'building sanction', which would authorise him to begin construction. Significantly no construction should have taken place on the site without sanction — but it had. In its counter, the Corporation did not offer any explanation for the delay in granting building sanction and merely said that they were waiting for the CMDA (Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority) to inform them if the building was in violation of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification. The Corporation failed to mention that they had issued a show cause notice to the builder for commencing construction without permission.

Noting that the Corporation could not offer any explanation for the delay in granting permis-

sion, the Court directed them to do so within 10 days. In light of this order, CAG's petition was dismissed.

CAG appealed against both these orders. In the appeals, CAG argued that the Corporation had not given 'building sanction' only because it could not do so, as the building was in violation of the CRZ Rules. CAG produced copies of show cause and demolition notices served by the CMDA and the Corporation on the builder, for commencing construction without a permit. CAG also produced letters from the CMDA to the Corporation stating that prima facie the site may be affected by the CRZ Rules and directing them not to issue building sanction without satisfying themselves as to the applicability of the CRZ Rules.

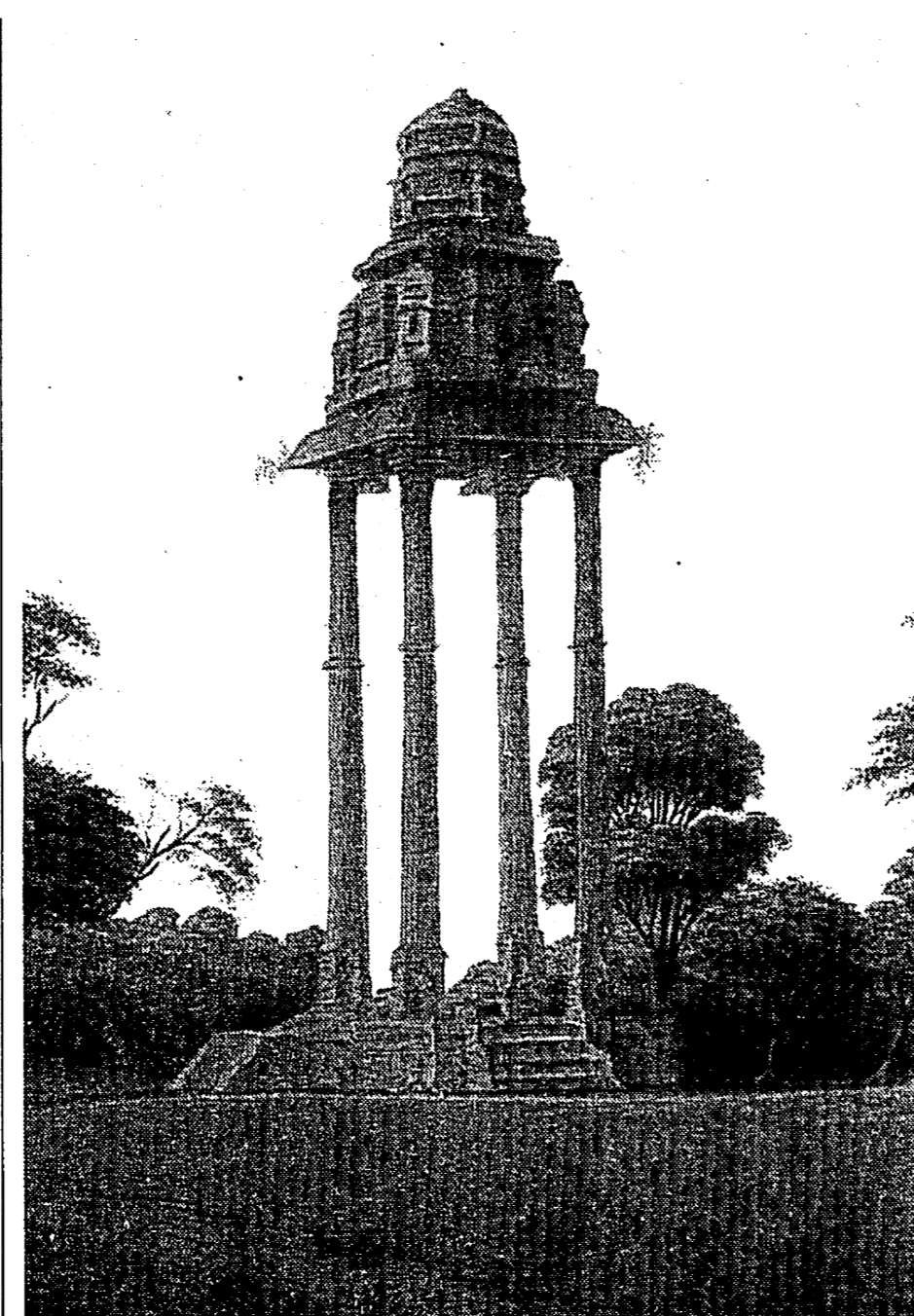
CAG had also observed that a road was being built along the edge of the water, encircling the building, and complained repeatedly of the road being built in violation of the CRZ Rules. CAG even produced photographs showing the road being laid. Filing a third public interest petition, CAG argued that the road was being constructed in violation of the CRZ notification. The High Court stayed the construction of the road.

Under the CRZ Rules, Chennai is classified as a CRZ-II area, which means that no new construction can take place on the seaward side of an existing structure. Therefore if a road existed between a building and the water, such building would not be affected by the CRZ Rules. However such road should have existed in February 1991, the date of the CRZ Rules.

CAG argued that the building was on the water front and as such in violation of the CRZ notification. However the Court decided to rely on two reports produced by the builder — one from the IIT-Chennai that stated that the building was beyond the scope of the CRZ Rules, and the other from the Tahsildar of Mylapore, that said that a road has existed on this property, along the water, for over 25 years.

CAG also produced satellite maps taken in 1991 and 1994, which do not show the presence of any road between the building site and the estuary. However, despite CAG's best attempts, no scientific institution or body in Chennai agreed to interpret the maps and state officially.

Whereupon the Court chose not to interfere in the issue,



(Continued from last fortnight)

The Danish colony of Tranquebar consisted of a number of villages and a city with the same name. The area was 15 km from north to south and 7.5 km wide. The density of population was considerable, the censuses from 1790 and 1802 revealing there were just over 20,000 people living in the country districts and almost 4,000 in the city. The number of Europeans was approximately 150.

The name was a Danish version of the local Tamil name, Tarangambadi, as the city is called today. It means the place with the singing waves. There was no harbour, so the ships anchored where they could, but this does not seem to have been a problem. The climate was hot and relatively humid, diseases and troubles flourished, the post was irregular, and the houses were easily invaded by white termite-like ants that were more than unpleasant. In addition, the food was not the best. It was impossible to get hold of pork and beef. The menu therefore

merely stating that "it may not be a proper exercise of jurisdiction for this Court to substitute its own judgement to that of an expert body".

CAG filed a further appeal in the Supreme Court. However, at the admission stage itself the Supreme Court did not feel there was any reason for them to interfere in this case. In a one-line order which reads "the special leave petitions are dismissed", CAG's petition to enforce the CRZ notification and to save the area was rejected. — (Courtesy: CAG Reports.)

The OLD... ...& The NEW

Did Mahabalipuram really look like this in the 18th Century with gardens surrounding the monuments? Could our OLD today, a painting by the artist-Governor of Tranquebar, General Paul Anker, offer the new master planners of Mamallapuram some ideas? Anker titled his watercolour-and-gouache simply 'Free-standing building with columns at Mahabalipuram near Madras'. He made no mention of it being a kind of entrance to what was called a 'Royal Pavilion' behind. Certainly, both are little noticed today.

A few years ago they indeed deserved even less notice, for as our 'New' on right shows they stood amidst the urban clutter the city of Mamallapuram has nurtured. A couple of years ago, however, the Archaeological Survey of India decided to restore the tower that had been ignored till then and work began on it (right, middle), resulting in our NEW today (extreme right), much more noticeable today with much of the signing, parking etc. removed, but still in surroundings that are a far cry from what Anker saw (—or imagined?). Maybe the new Master Plan — will it be the third or fourth in the last 30 years? — will improve on Anker's view, but if it does, it is hoped that the improvements will not be on paper only, as they have been during these past three decades, and that implementation will take place to make the main part of the Pallavas worthy of having been designated a 'World Heritage Site'.



Anker — the artist of Tranquebar

consisted of fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables and relatively large quantities of alcohol that came with the ships from Europe.

* * *

There is no doubt that Peter Anker made alterations to the governor's residence, and his drawing showing the facade with open doors onto a garden area is dated 1793. In 1794 a new verandah was added. The remaining parts of the residence were altered in the years after 1794 and it became both appropriate to its status and comfortable. The houses behind the main building were also extended so that during Peter Anker's time the governor's residence became just as representative as those his equals lived in.

Of the hall in the governor's residence Bluhme says that he has never seen anything so magnificent, except for the Knights' Hall at Christiansborg. It was very high, and two windows went from loft to floor. At the tables there was room for 36 people, and the room was lit by 34 lamps, of which 18 were mounted on the walls, while the rest hung down from the loft — a dignified frame around the traditional grand banquet on the King's birthday. On those occasions not only all the city's civil servants and their wives came together, but many high-ranking English officers from the nearest garrisons. After the banquet with speeches for His Majesty, there would be a ball, and the evening

would be brought to a close with a festive firework display.

It is also worth noting that the governor's country residence at Tillally underwent major alterations in the years after 1788, and new materials were used. Here the governor himself no doubt decided how the estate was to look. We can imagine that he was proud of the result. In his own picture of the place, the house is beautifully situated between massive trees and the river flows peacefully past. Guests could come by boat up the river from Tranquebar to be met in the garden before walking up to the house.

* * *

Peter Anker's pictorial production mainly spans the 18 years he lived in India. There is much to suggest that he painted most during the first-years, and with the exception of a watercolour at Berg Museum at Kragero, no works are known to have come from his hand after his return home to Norway.

A large number of the pictures in the Peter Anker Collection can be said with certainty to have been produced by Peter Anker. These are signed and/or they bear inscriptions that accord with his own handwriting. In addition to these there is a group with inscriptions that can be identified as Carl Johan Anker's hand, and then a group with English inscriptions as well as some with French ones.

The Peter Anker Collection

consists of roughly 130 watercolours and engravings which have on the whole been ascribed to Peter Anker himself. On closer examination it turns out that there are a number of artists behind them. Peter Anker himself can with great probability be credited with 62 of these works. In addition he made some maps, and there are also other works from his hand in the National Archives and in private ownership.

Peter Anker used paper of different qualities, rag paper and vellum, with and without a watermark, thick and thin, ridged and smooth. He worked using a hybrid technique in which he often combined gouache, watercolour, pencil, India ink and whitewash. In some pictures he applied the colours in several layers, and in some works he used a type of varnish. He often painted with short, close brushstrokes and was surprisingly meticulous about details. This is shown particularly in his treatment of foliage and the crowns of palms.

It is not easy to see a development in his strokes or style in the course of the nearly twenty years he was in India. There are certain things that seem to be characteristic of Peter Anker's watercolours. In the first place there are his light, almost colourless skies. In fact it is only in four watercolours that Peter Anker has anything that might resemble treatment of the sky. Also characteristic are the dark, green colours in trees and plants

and the dominating crowns of the trees that are usually placed at the side of the motif, right in the foreground. It is true that this is a pure 18th century tradition, but it is distinctive and recognisable in Peter Anker. He has a taut and fairly precise reproduction of architecture, but is more uncertain when it comes to animals. Throughout he does not depict human beings very often, apart from in his pictures of crowd scenes. He does use the odd figure in a landscape but these are pretty small in relation to the rest of the composition.

The signed Peter Anker pictures are usually landscapes with monuments or buildings, landscapes with fortifications or town views. His pictures are rich in detail, meticulously painted, and sometimes almost overdone. His pictures contain so many details that one must reckon that they

were time-consuming to create. They are surprisingly dark, even though one easily imagines India as a sunny country.

Most of the pictures have a melancholic, peaceful tone and contain an obvious admiration of the Indian buildings. In many ways his pictures can be experienced as expressions of what one cannot put into words. It may seem as if Peter Anker came to a culture with an aesthetic quality and beauty that overwhelmed him, and for him painting was a necessity, in order both to perceive and to absorb, but also to communicate.

Peter Anker was very much a child of the Age of Enlightenment, and his delight in recording and reproducing stands in glaring contrast to the attitude of those setting sail for India which became clear later in the 19th Century.

Anker's admiration for India is reflected not least in his at times detailed inscriptions, which may include everything from a single sentence to longer accounts. It is clear that his pictures were produced for a public that did not know India.

His interests cover botany, architecture, archaeology and folk life. It seems that he made an effort to give as broad a picture of the country as possible.

In contrast to professional artists who chose motifs they believed they would be able to sell to the public, cf. Daniell, or engineering artists, who reproduced what was to be the basic material for map production and topographical descriptions, Peter Anker was free to depict those motifs he found interesting. His pictures played no political role and they are never mentioned in connection with his professional affairs.

The landscapes he produced were not imaginary ones, nor were the buildings he copied figments of his imagination. His purpose seems to have been a need to register and communicate. If he did fail on odd matters of detail, he was certainly more than exact enough. This is especially clear in the pictures from Mahabalipuram.

In all the enthusiasm for the landscape, the light and the colours, there run an undercurrent of interest in traces of human culture. It is this enthusiasm that marks Peter Anker.

To the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences he sent in 1793 a collection of insects from Tranquebar, together with conches from the Nicobars and a bird of paradise from Borneo. As late as 1818, ten years after Peter's return to Norway, Carsten sent some stuffed birds that the former had acquired during his stay in India. Descriptions of his home in Denmark tell of collections of books, maps, pictures and other objects. There are still items in the family's possession stemming from his years in India. These include costly gifts that Peter Anker received on various occasions from Indian princes.

Seen in this light Peter Anker was a typical representative of the interest in collecting that was characteristic of the Age of Enlightenment.

Dorthea Hysing

(Excerpts from the catalogue of the 'Memories of India' exhibition of Governor Peter Anker's work during his 20 years in Tranquebar, held recently at the University Museum of Cultural Heritage, Oslo, Norway.)

(Concluded)

Want to muse with MUSINGS?

If you would like to be put on Madras Musings' mailing list, just fill in the form below (use block letters/type) and post it to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, CHENNAI-600 006.

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Wanted freelancers

Madras Musings wants young, enterprising and enthusiastic freelance photographers to supply it regularly with pictures. The photographers should be interested in heritage, the environment and civic issues in Chennai and be able to work by themselves on such subjects.

Madras Musings is also looking for freelance writers who can contribute articles on all sport in Chennai. Cricket writers are welcome, but Madras Musings would also welcome contributors interested in other sport in the City/Tamil Nadu. Also welcome are those who can offer nostalgia pieces on sport in Chennai/Tamil Nadu.

— The Editor

**Quizzin'
with
Raminan**

(Current Affairs questions are from the period September 1 to 15, 2002. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Name the unreleased Beatles track of 35-year vintage that Paul McCartney is intending to release soon.
2. Who set a new world record of 9.78 seconds in the men's 100 metres recently?
3. What is India's first exclusive meteorological satellite, launched on September 12th, called?
4. Who recently became the first batsman to be adjudged 'leg-before' by the Third Umpire?
5. Where did a Rajdhani Express derail recently leading to more than 125 deaths?
6. What was the Indian team's logo changed to by Sahara, before fully pulling out of sponsorship?
7. Which European country is the 190th and the latest member of the United Nations?
8. Whom did Mahesh Bhopathi partner while winning the U.S. Open men's doubles crown?
9. How many cuses of water has the Cauvery River Authority directed Karnataka to release to Tamil Nadu?
10. What was SEPTEMBER 8th celebrated as by UNESCO?

11. The Government Survey School, founded in 1794, is the 'first version' of which venerable institution in Chennai?
12. Name the Chennai-born engineer who is heading the U.S. Federal probe into the WTC collapse in New York.
13. In what way is 'Reginet', inaugurated by the Chief Minister, a big help to property owners in Chennai?
14. The largest public health drive in Chennai, since the Polio campaign, was launched in September. What is it aimed at?
15. To provide financial assistance to which medical institution in the city's suburbs has the Government signed an agreement with the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, U.S.A.?
16. What new facility, in tune with the times, was introduced by the Southern Railway on September 9th?
17. Name the two colleges in the city that were banned from procuring laboratory animals because of abysmal rearing conditions.
18. Which high-profile leader lost his elected post, after a Madras High Court order on September 6th, following a *quo warranto* plea?
19. For which 'special' category of prisoners has a separate 'security block' been earmarked in the Chennai prison?
20. In which two spots in the city is the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board doing a '24-hour' monitoring of air pollution?

(Answers on page 8)

TOURISM FOCUS ON E.C.R.

(Continued from page 1)

Tamil Nadu has declared the following areas as Special Tourism Areas:

- **Mamallapuram** (from Muttukadu to Pondicherry)
- **Tranquebar** (and areas falling within a radius of 10 km from the town)
- **Kancheepuram** (including future municipal limits).

Among other incentives being offered in these areas is Government land at concessional rate for tourism projects.

The Government has declared the following places as tourist centres and pilgrim centres:

Tourism Centres: Kanniakumari, Madurai, Mamallapuram, Ooty, Rameswaram, Thanjavur, Tiruchi and Tranquebar.

Pilgrim Centres: Madurai, Nagapattinam, Nagore, Palani, Velankanni, Rameswaram, Thanjavur and Thiruvannamalai.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has also declared 38 towns in the State as Heritage Towns and intends to take steps to provide infrastructure in these towns and protect them from urbanisation.

Government sees its role as being limited to that of a facilitator and catalyst and will provide the platform for accelerated growth of tourism in the State. It will focus on publicity within the country and abroad, with joint participation of the private sector, offer the private sector a package of incentives and speedy single window clearance of investment projects, and harness human resources.

The role of private sector is seen as providing quality infrastructure facilities in major tourist destinations in the State at competitive rates.

Keeping in mind the importance of domestic tourism, the Government proposes to declare at least two centres in each district as District Tourist Centres. These could be selected from the existing tourist spots in the district, viz. pilgrim centres, hill resorts, waterfalls, beach resorts, etc., e.g., Courtallam in Tirunelveli District.

City Entertainment Centres are also being considered for smaller towns near the district capital which may not have any natural or other attractions. These centres are likely to be initially created near Tirunelveli, Kanniakumari / Nagerecoil, Tiruchirappalli, Salem and Thanjavur.

A Buddhist Travel Circuit is also to be studied, focussing on Nagapattinam, Kaveripoompattinam and Kancheepuram, where there exist several Buddhist monuments.

Heritage Tourism is also to be encouraged and supported in Mamallapuram, Kancheepuram, Chidambaram, Kanniakumari, Rameswaram, Tranquebar, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Srirangam, Tirunelveli, Palani and Sripurumpudur.

The policy envisages several annual events for which travel agencies can organise cultural package tours (see Table 1).

To promote Adventure Tourism, the policy promises support for trekking, hand-gliding, para-gliding, parasailing, balloon expeditions, and water sports. It also hopes trekking routes will be identified and developed in and around Kodaikanal, Ooty and other hill stations.

Village (Rural) Tourism, as envisaged by the Government of India, is to be looked at with the villages to be identified by the District Tourism Advisory Committees. Tourists will, it is planned, meet and mingle with the village community, halt overnight and observe the lifestyle of the rural folk. Adequate infrastructure facilities will be provided.

Ecotourism and Jungle tourism will be encouraged by the provision of infrastructure facilities. Ecotourism destinations will include the biosphere reserves in the Nilgiris and the Gulf of Mannar, the Kurasadai group of islands near Rameswaram, and Kolavai Lake, Muttukadu and Pichavaram.

Jungle tourism will centre on Mudumalai, the Anaimalais, Kalakkad, Mundanthurai and Point Calimere.

Ayurveda, yoga, golf and caravan-travel are other attractions for tourists that the policy proposes to develop.

How liveable is our city?

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Citizens' Alliance for Sustainable Living (SUSTAIN) and a network of institutions for a liveable Chennai plan to celebrate World Habitat Day, October 12th, with a panel discussion on 'Making Chennai an international city — Initiatives needed and learning from initiatives of other cities'.

Laying the foundation for the discussion, the organisers have sent us the following questionnaire. *Madras Musings* would be glad to receive responses from readers to enable us to make our own assessment as well as pass it on to the organisers.

— The Editor

Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 6, from Excellent (1 — needs very little improvement) to Very Poor (6 — needs a lot of improvement), and mail to *Madras Musings*.

Economic Opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6
Road and Traffic Conditions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Public Transport	1	2	3	4	5	6
Quality of Drinking Water	1	2	3	4	5	6
Quantity of Water	1	2	3	4	5	6
Solid Waste Collection	1	2	3	4	5	6
Landfill Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6
Quality of Breathing Air	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cleanliness of Public Places	1	2	3	4	5	6
State of Waterways	1	2	3	4	5	6
Housing for the Poor	1	2	3	4	5	6
Hospital/Medical Care	1	2	3	4	5	6
Educational Facilities for Children	1	2	3	4	5	6
Playgrounds for Children	1	2	3	4	5	6
Public Parks/Beach	1	2	3	4	5	6
Maintenance of Heritage Buildings	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cultural Activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
Feeling Safe/Secure	1	2	3	4	5	6
Policing and Public Security	1	2	3	4	5	6
Access to Local Govts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Redressal of Complaints	1	2	3	4	5	6
Govt Disaster Response	1	2	3	4	5	6
Availability of Development Information	1	2	3	4	5	6
NGO collective action on City level issues	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conformity of citizens to legal requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6
Honesty/Trust among people	1	2	3	4	5	6
Care of Environmental Resources						
Wetlands	1	2	3	4	5	6
Waterways & Tanks	1	2	3	4	5	6
Underground Water	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tree Cover	1	2	3	4	5	6
Coastal Environment	1	2	3	4	5	6
Biodiversity	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conservation of Energy	1	2	3	4	5	6

(Based on Habitat II — How Good is Your City?)

Table 1

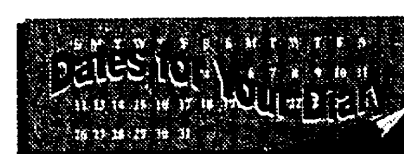
Festival	Place	Month
Summer Festival	Udhagamandalam	May-June
Summer Festival	Kodaikanal	May-June
Summer Festival	Yercaud	May-June
Chitirai Full Moon Festival	Manora	May
Chitirai Full Moon Festival	Poompuhar	May
Car Festival	Thiruvarur	May
Velankanni Madha Festival	Velankanni	August/September
Pongal Festival	All important tourist spots	January
Mango Festival	Krishnagiri	June
Dance Festival	Mamallapuram	January
Trade Festival	Chennai	January-March
World Tourism Day	All important centres	September
Silk Tourism Festival	Kancheepuram	November
Chennai Festival	Chennai	December-January

Two U.S. celebrations and one recollection

Two Indian schools of dance in the U.S. recently celebrated anniversaries.

Ramya Harishankar, a Bharata Natyam exponent trained in the Vazhuvor style, settled in California in 1982, started teaching the art-form to a handful of students under the banner of Arpana School of Dance. The school, located in Irvine, CA, has been a pioneer in Southern California in many ways: one of its students was the first to have an *arangetram* in the area with a live orchestra from India which included Ramya's guru; it has conducted annual programmes over the last ten years, raising over 60,000 dollars for charities worldwide; and it has presented over 30 visiting Indian dancers or companies to local audiences through the Arpana Foundation.

Jothi Raghavan, another Bharata Natyam dancer who lives and works in the United States, founded and heads a dance academy named *Nrityanjali* in Boston, Massachusetts, 25 years ago. In celebration of this milestone she recently held



Till October 6: Art/Installation: 'Sexuality of Water'. The Max Mueller Bhavan lawns once again will play "home" for yet another installation work from painter, designer and installation artist M. Natesh. A combination of sculpture, painting and graffiti arranged in a spatial grid.

Till October 6: V. Kalyanam, who was personal secretary to Mahatma Gandhi, and the Madras Coin Society hold an exposition on 'The Spirit of Gandhi'.

The exhibition will highlight Mahatma Gandhi's life and his contribution to the nation, through photographs, letters, news articles, cartoons, coins, currencies, stamps, first day covers, special covers, postcards, books etc. (at Culture India Gallery, Teynampet, Opposite SIET College, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.).

October 5-13: *Dusshera* and *Navaratri* festivals will be celebrated at Dakshina Chitra. Nobody does Golu better than Dakshina Chitra.

October 14: 'Response to Hermann Hesse in India — Reliance or Reverence?' — a lecture by Prof. Ganeshan. He will also give a short introduction to the film 'Siddhartha', made by Conrad Rooks, which will be screened at 7.30 p.m. (At Max Mueller Bhavan at 6 p.m.)

the *Arpana*, a dance festival, which was inaugurated by Shanta and V.P. Dhananjayan. Lakshmi Viswanathan, the Bharata Natyam dancer known for her *abhinaya*, was the chief guest.

Dance presentations on the occasion included *Vata Vriksha* (*Banyan Tree*), a tribute to the late Rukmini Devi Arundale, choreographed and produced by Lakshmi Viswanathan. It presented the history and evolution of Bharata Natyam as perceived by her, with focus on the role played by Rukmini Devi.

Writing about Lakshmi Viswanathan's presentation of *Vata Vriksha*, *Uma Parameswaran*, of the University of Winnipeg, Canada, states:

'She made some minor changes in the version premiered several years ago. This time, seeing as there were so many white individuals she could include, she devised an extra scene with two 'English gentlemen' to narrate how dance, frowned upon by missionaries, had deteriorated into prostitution, whereby the Englishmen hired nautch girls for their entertainment. Anna Pavlova, whose dance influenced Rukmini Devi, was enacted by a local ballerina who brought a touch of authenticity to the narrative. If I were to choose one moment above all others for highlighting, it is when Rukmini Devi gestures her request that Anna Pavlova teach her how to fly like a swan.'

What characterises Lakshmi's approach to choreography is the lightness she brings to the usual high-seriousness associated with classical dance. As some of us might know, E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi played key roles in the early 20th Century renaissance of the dance now known as Bharata Natyam, while Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy wanted the *devadasi* system abolished. There was yet another furor when Rukmini Devi, a Brahmin, took to dance. The tussle between Krishna Iyer and Muthulakshmi Reddy, and then the gossip mill as word spread about a brahmin woman's flouting of social norms, were scenes that sent the audience into splits of laughter. And all of this without straying a jot from the beat and purity of traditional Bharata Natyam.' — (Courtesy: *Sruuti*)



These Junior India Stars from the back-of-beyond village of Kodangipatti, near Madurai, recently attracted considerable attention in The Netherlands, where they demonstrated the potential of this village with a long artistic tradition that needs to be professionally nurtured.

Rural talent showcased for world festival

A recent performance presented by the Junior India Stars Group in Chennai, titled *Rhythms and Movements from Tamil Nadu and Kerala*, was the grand finale of the WereldKinderFestival (World Children's Festival) earlier conducted in the Netherlands and Belgium.

The Group, put together by the ASEEMA (Without Boundaries) Trust for a special project and consisting of 12 children of ages 10-16, Santhanalakshmi, Prithvirampammal, Udayakumar, Ramesh and Nagarajan from Jamin Kodangipatti village, Tamil Nadu, performed Devarattam and Oiyattam; Prabhakaran from Muttukadu village near Chennai performed Tappattam; and Anjaly, Surya, Praveen, Prajil, Agil and Babin from Chavakkad, Kerala, performed Kalaripayattu. All the children came together for Kolattam, Patayani mask dance and the final jugalbandi.

The project began with an e-mail. Lucien Ravensberg, the director of the WereldKinderFestival, in Utrecht, Holland, sent me a message saying he was coming to South India to look at various folk arts and select participants for this year's festival, which was the 15th such festival aimed at bringing child performers from many different cultures to the Netherlands each year.

Ravensberg came to Chennai in December 2001, watched Bharata Natyam performances as well as some vidEOS and then went to Kerala to look at different forms. He made up his mind that he would present Kalaripayattu this year and met Krishnadas, who belongs to the eighth generation of a family of traditional practitioners of Kalaripayattu under the patronage of Vettath Raja.

I was very sure I wanted to present folk forms from Tamil Nadu and definitely children from the communities that perform the dances as a ritual and social dance. Ravensberg agreed with me.

We went to Jamin Kodangipatti village (80 km from Madurai) to look at Devarattam and Oiyattam.

The village is backward: only the village school has a chair and a toilet; and Kumaraman (recipient of a Kalamamani award from the Eyal Isai Nataka Manram of the State) is the only one in the 600-family village he heads to have a telephone connection.

When we arrived, the school had just been left off to let the children watch in the fields

by
V.R. DEVIKA

some 20 of their friends performing Devarattam and Oiyattam and a group of Tappattam dancers who had come from Thanjavur.

Ravensberg instinctively knew which five children enjoyed their dance and communicated well. It took him just a minute to decide that Santhanalakshmi (13), Prithvirampammal (10), Nagarajan (10), Ramesh (13) and Udayakumar (13) were the ones he wanted to invite to the world festival.

In Chavakkad, he just as quickly spotted and selected 10-year old Anjaly who is Krishnadas' niece and belongs to the ninth generation in the Sri Vallabhata Kalari family. The others he chose were Surya (10); Praveen (16); Prajil (14); Babin (15) and Agil (12).

I thought we should add some colour and visual grandeur to the predominantly

physical forms by including Patayani masks and a light-hearted dance with Kolattam. Patayani is a ritual dance-form of Kerala in which masks of birds and animals made from coconut and palm fibres and areca fronds are used. The rhythmic movements of birds and animals are imitated.

I organised a residential camp for the children in May to get them used to being away from home, learn to look after themselves, etc. as well as be trained to use Western toilets. We also had to put the show together.

The Group gave 23 performances in 14 cities in the Netherlands and one in Antwerp, Belgium. Some 14,000 Dutch school children and some 5000 adults witnessed them. The children adjusted to every kind of situation. Neither sound checks, nor having to face equipment which were new-fangled to them, nor fantastic auditoriums unnerved them.

The Netherlands 3 tv channel dedicated one entire afternoon to India in honour of the Junior India Stars Group. Shyamala Coshik, India's Ambassador to the Netherlands, attended the final show at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. She drove three hours from Groningen to be there for the show, even though the Indian Government was not involved in the tour. ICCR had said it could not provide travel grants for children even though they belonged to families of traditional performing artists.

Now the tour is over, ASEEMA is trying to get funding for the education of the children and seeing to it that the degree of professionalism they acquired during the tour is sustained, so that a professional team emerges from the village of Kodangipatti in Tamil Nadu — (Courtesy: *Sruuti*).

The Shylock experience

• Shakespeare has taken Shakespearean actor and director Gareth Armstrong to over thirty countries as actor, director, and teacher. On October 4th and 5th he will present in Chennai, courtesy the British Council, his one-man play, *Shylock*. Apropos the play, he writes:

There is an honourable tradition of tolerance towards Jews in India. Their presence was recorded two thousand years ago and over the centuries they settled in communities from Kashmir to Cochin and especially in the cities of Kolkata and Mumbai. They were made welcome and flourished until the 1940s, when migration to the new state of Israel, to Europe and America reduced the numbers to the few thousands who remain today.

But I believe the Jewish legacy lives on, especially in Mumbai where the Jacob Circle and Flora Fountain memorialise the notable Jewish family of Sassoons. And then, of course, there are the synagogues in that city. I am told there's also one in Ahmadabad. In any new city, I always like to know if there's a synagogue and if it is open for worship.

Not that I will be worshipping there. I am not Jewish. My interest is really professional, not religious, because I spend a lot of my life impersonating a Jew in my one-man play, *Shylock*. A Jewish presence in a city can influence the size and response of my audience.

When I first played Shylock

in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* I had no idea how much the character would take over my life, and how strongly I would come to identify with him and his people. Earlier in the same year, I had played both Richard III and Macbeth, eponymous characters who totally dominate their plays. Shylock is not even the 'Merchant' of the title; he is only in five of the play's twenty scenes and has barely a quarter of the lines given to the evil King Richard. Yet Shylock turned out to be the most intriguing and most complex part I had ever played. I wrote a play to explore my reactions to this phenomenon, and to share with an audience something of what I had learned

of the character and his legacy.

In the entire Shakespeare canon there are only two Jewish men: Shylock and his sole ally, another Venetian moneylender called Tubal. I use Tubal as my narrator, and as Shakespeare has chosen to give him only eight lines in *The Merchant* he grasps the opportunity to step centrestage and regale the audience with his take on life as a small part player, a Jew, and the friend of one of fiction's most troublesome creations. There is history, drama, and I hope laughter on the journey that Tubal takes.

Shylock had modest beginnings and modest ambitions but, since its first performance

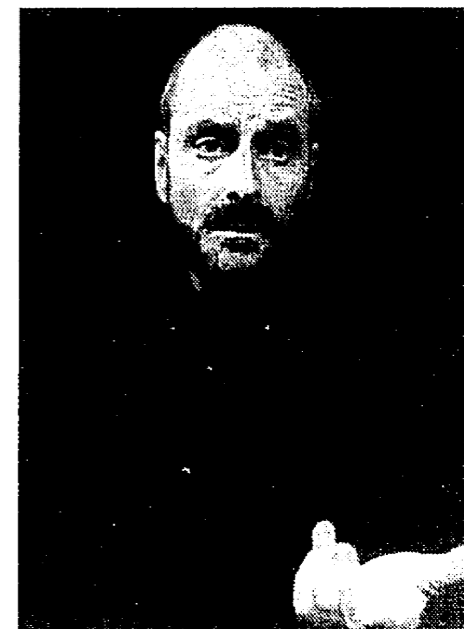
in an English provincial theatre five years ago, it has taken off on a proverbial magic carpet and, with the frequent co-operation of the British Council, taken me all over the world.

As well as the pleasure and privilege this affords me it has also given me the opportunity to compare the reactions of different peoples to both text and performance. Within a period of months I played in the capital cities of both Austria and Israel. Unlike Germany, Austria seems not to have truly confronted its fascist past. And when I was there Georg Haider, the neo-Nazi leader, was elected to a position of power. Whilst some of the population exulted, others were profoundly

• by GARETH ARMSTRONG

depressed and dispirited. As *Shylock* inevitably confronts the issues of anti-Semitism, there was a palpable silence when I recounted how Vienna had used Shakespeare's play as anti-Jewish propaganda during World War II.

Silence of a different kind was discernible in Tel Aviv. There my audience was almost exclusively Jewish and their silence was one of identification and communal remembrance of the atrocities visited on their race for so many centuries. Also I hope some realisation that a character like Shylock, who is so basely treated by his neighbours that he seeks a murderous revenge, may be moti-



Gareth Armstrong (above), whose one-man play *Shylock* comes to town this week, is seen here in the two faces he wears in it, *Shylock* and *Tubal* the narrator. (Courtesy: Connecting.)



vated by more than just evil intent.

Just before a performance in England last year, I heard on the radio that children of one Christian denomination were spat at and verbally abused on their way to school by adults from another sect. Uncivilised, tribal behaviour, and supposedly in the name of God. It was in Belfast, that most troubled

part of the United Kingdom. How many societies can be complacent about racial and religious violence within their communities?

Because of his race and his religion Shylock is excluded, despised and demonised. In seeking to kill his Christian foe, as he does in the play, his actions are unquestionably villainous, but Shakespeare's genius is to reveal a motivation and humanity in a character taken straight from a preposterous fairy story. You cannot approve of, or excuse, his behaviour but through the drama you may start to understand it. And that's a beginning. — (Courtesy: *Connecting*, the journal of the British Council, Chennai.)

Answers to Quiz

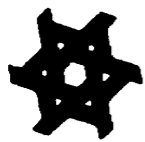
1. 'Carnival of Light'; 2. Tim Montgomery of the United States; 3. METSAT; 4. Pakistan's Shoaib Malik; 5. Rafiganj; 6. Subrata; 7. Switzerland; 8. Max Mirnyi; 9. 9000; 10. International Literacy Day.

* * *

11. The Anna University; 12. Sivaraj Shyam Sunder; 13. It's an online link between 20 Sub-Registrars' offices providing reg-

istration facilities; 14. 'Malaria-free Chennai' campaign; 15. The Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine, Tambaram (T.B. Sanatorium); 16. Booking of tickets on the Internet (www.ircctc.co.in); 17. Kilpauk and Stanley Medical Colleges; 18. M.K. Stalin as the Mayor of Chennai; 19. Policemen; 20. Adyar residential area and at the Kilpauk traffic intersection.

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