

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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You know, Alamelu's recital is accompanied by Natesan's *bonda* and Sarada's by Cheenu's *badam kheer*. How do we choose between the two?

The right note

Come December....and Chennai begins to sing and dance.

It is a time of intense creativity, talent on display, and earnest *sabha*-hopping.

But for many, December isn't only about the Arts, you know.

(Note: This little piece has nothing to do with the Arts. The writer doffs a reverent hat at all the immense talent and knowledge displayed by those on and off the stage. So please put away your brickbats, thank you.)

For some, December is really all about attire. After all, weeks of attending at least two, sometimes even three, events in a day... that's a lot of sarees and matching jewellery to plan on. The good news is — it isn't only silk sarees these days. Ethnic chic rubs sophisticated shoulders with good old *pattu podavais*.

For some, the flitting-between-*sabhas* is so they can check out the new line of young adults and go bride- or groom-searching, as a sort of side benefit.

And for our NRI cousins, who come in invasion strength, they stand apart. Especially the ladies, thanks to their slightly outmoded blouse-sleeves and *kurta* lengths. (Can't blame them. Fashion changes too quickly for almost everyone.)

Harassed souls these, packing in about two weeks of trying to "catch a *kutchery*" between all the relatives-visiting.

As for the speed with which shared tickets whiz between *sabhas*. This relay-race requires
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How do we sustain *Musings*?

(By The Editor)

As *Madras Musings*' mailing list keeps growing every year, now well over 16,000, the corporates joining Chennai Heritage, the non-profit company which publishes the fortnightly that cares for Madras that is Chennai, have not kept pace with that growth. In fact, from the high of 23, the number of corporates supporting Chennai Heritage has come down to 14 and might drop further. While appreciating the generous help since 1996 from those corporates still supporting Chennai Heritage and from those who have done so for brief periods in the past, the possibility of a crisis ahead needs to be addressed.

With the number of supporters still committed to Chennai Heritage in these difficult times much diminished, it not only means no surplus to support Chennai Heritage's civic, heritage and environment awareness-building programmes, but it also makes the present circulation of *Madras Musings*, Chennai Heritage's main focus, unsustainable. Indeed, maintaining the present numbers and managing the growth of a thousand extra copies every year is well-nigh impossible with the present support. It also almost rules out the occasional issue with extra pages or colour.

To ensure maintaining the present circulation of *Madras Musings*, to help it to publish when necessary extra pages or pages in colour and, most important of all, to support the spread of awareness about the City's heritage, environment and civic needs, Chennai Heritage appeals to:

1) **Corporates** to join Chennai Heritage by contributing Rs. One lakh a year (in equal quarterly instalments). Their support will be acknowledged in every

issue of *Madras Musings*, over the year, with the display of their name and logo in the panel of supporters on the back page of the journal.

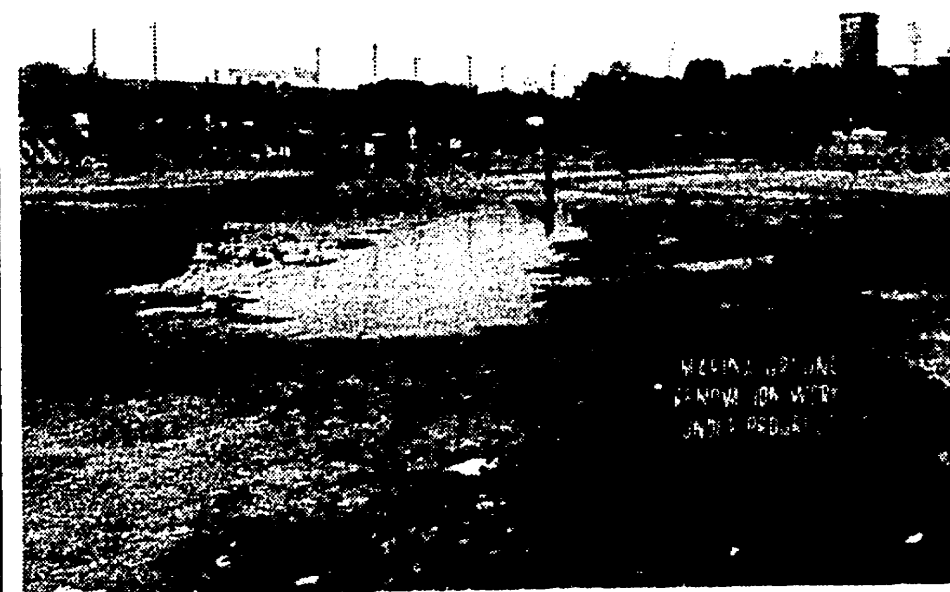
2) **Our readers.** In the past year, a few of them have sent us amounts ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 1000, while a few contributors have returned their honorariums as token of their support to *Madras Musings* and the causes it espouses. We look forward to more joining them from now onwards, contributing at least Rs.100 a year to support the cause of awareness-building on heritage, the environment and the city's civic needs.

If this appeal to new corporate supporters and to readers proves successful, we will be able to sustain *Madras Musings*' current mailing list and fulfil

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The Marina Ground, in the days when Subbu of revered memory tended it for Presidency College, was a good enough turf pitch for a Ranji Trophy match when the Ranji Trophy competition meant something and drew crowds of thousands. In recent years it has fallen into a total state of neglect, become more a dumping ground than a playing field. Several attempts to negotiate with sponsors to save it all failed. Today, gali cricket thrives on it — even when it is waterlogged — but a more heartening sight is the signs that have come up on it, put up by no one is quite sure whom. It promises restoration — but as a ground fit for first class cricket or as one that will give the gali cricketers a more user-friendly playing ground? *Madras Musings* looks forward to the saving process. (Photographs by E. PRAKASH and D. KRISHNAN.)



Action plan advocated for helmet usage

(By Shobha Menon)

An Action Plan to introduce and enforce helmet usage in Chennai was framed at a recent workshop on 'Helmets and Safety' organised by the Consumer Association of India (CAI) in which those participated included high-level officials and key personnel in Traffic and Safety.

The action plan envisages:

• A scientific study to observe the health effects of wearing helmets, brandwise, so that the incidence and cause of the problems can be more specific.

- Education as a prerequisite for enforcement in view of the current minimal usage level.
- Helmet rule being first enforced on all police personnel and doctors who use two-wheelers.
- Two-wheeler manufacturers be requested to supply a helmet along with adequate storage space to facilitate helmet usage by riders.
- Ensure available helmets in the market are ISI certified.
- Review the Standard IS

4151:1993 itself, to make helmets user-friendly (stipulating ventilation slits, replaceable inner lining, and less weight).

- Penalties to be imposed on culprits of two-wheeler accidents (who have no or do not use helmets) by curtailing their insurance claims.
- Initiating creation of awareness among children to wear helmets, taking up from the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation's campaign in

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Signs of conservation, signs of threat

In a commitment to focus on heritage buildings and the need to restore and conserve them, Apparao Galleries and the Apollo Educational & Research Foundation recently teamed to present the work of Sri Lankan artist Senaka Senanayake against the backdrop of Senate House. Lit though it was with only the lighting for the pictures, one whole side of the century-old building glowed, having the guests oohing and aahing over the splendour of Senate House even in its dilapidated state. Tell us how we can help to save the building and ensure it is restored and used for events like these, visitor after visitor requested the Editor of *Madras Musings*, *The Man From Madras Musings*, *The Man From Madras Musings* was told. That so many connected *Madras Musings* and *Senate House* may have pleased the Editor no end, but he really had no idea how this willingness to help could be channelled. Perhaps, Vice-Chancellor Fr. Ignacimuthu would like to convene a Citizens' Committee to support the efforts of the Advisory Technical Committee he has already formed.

The Technical Committee, MMM hears, met after several weeks and there appears to be some consensus on how to get the work going once the rainy season is over. The first priority would necessarily have to be the roof, to prevent further damage by the elements, then there is the need to look at the brickwork and structural strengthening. So far, the Technical Committee seems to be working quite well together, though there are differing views on some aspects of the restoration. One is the question of foreign experts. Let's face it; there are enough conservation experts in India who know about conservation in our climatic conditions, but even if some feel someone from overseas would be better, could they please look for someone who has worked with conservation in the tropics? Another issue is the need for permanent scaffolding to ensure REGULAR maintenance. Asking someone to lend it to you may be OK for one-time use, but if regular maintenance of Senate House and other University buildings is to be done, the University must invest in its own scaffolding, MMM feels. Without it, it would be only too easy for the University's maintenance crew to say, 'no facilities available for regular maintenance of tall buildings'. But these are all minor differences; on major points of conservation, all are agreed, and so can we hope to see the work get underway after January 15th? It's time the University of Madras showed the rest of the city what conservation is all about.

Undiminished danger

But while the threat to Senate House appears to have receded and there's hope in the air, the same cannot be said about the buildings of the first Madras Club. *The Man From Madras Musings*

hears, even as these lines are written, that a Court ruling is likely in the next few weeks. But if it helps to save the buildings, what next? It is in this building of the Madras Club that every other major sports club in the city was founded and these clubs, together with the Madras Club itself, were responsible for the introduction into South India of almost every major modern sport.

What better way to mark that contribution than by restoring the building and its immediate outbuildings and establishing a sports museum in them. This is something, MMM feels, the State's Sports Authority could team with the CMDA and representatives of the various clubs founded here, to establish. It could, if well done, become a major landmark in the city and a means of promoting sport in the capital and the State.

Getting hold of that one area in the large estate would, however, be the problem. And much would depend on the attitudes of

would use it. And that is indicative of lack of planning.

MMM would be the first to agree that the CMBT was essential and that with all mofussil buses using only this facility, the traffic situation has eased considerably on the roads in the city. But, for any such scheme to succeed, it is making life easy for the prime users of it that should have been the start of the exercise. That planning should have right from the beginning looked at passenger and crew comfort and equal facilities for State-owned and private buses.

Passengers need information, which means numerous information kiosks and clear and frequent signage, regular announcements that can be clearly heard, a wide range of creature comforts—not least for the elderly—wide publicity in the media as to which buses leave from where, and easy means of reaching and leaving the terminus, (through public shuttle bus services, and through

SHORT N' SNAPPY

the Court to heritage and the landmarks of the city and on the owners of the property who seem bent on pulling down such a landmark. MMM can only hope that the stars will look favourably down on the conservationists.

Lack of planning

If *Senate House* is restored, what use is to be made of it in the future and how do you ensure the maintenance necessary for that use being sustained?

If, as *The Man From Madras Musings* hopes, the first buildings of the Madras Club are saved, what next? Is there a possibility of restoration and MMM's dream of a sports museum being fulfilled?

Saving and restoration as a one-time operation are always comparatively easy. But making best use of what's been restored and sustaining both building and its use thereafter is the commonest problem old buildings given new life face. Which is why MMM has always held that planning for that future should be done even as plans for restoration get underway.

This lack of early planning is one of the plagues besetting major programmes involving new development in this part of the world. And a typical example of this is the Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus in Koyambedu. The whole concentration of the developers was on raising the building and creating an aura of impressiveness with the structure. Not enough attention was paid to what was needed in and around the building and little thought was given to those who

the vans of the private operators) and easy accessibility to the doorstep of the terminal for private transport, either rented or owned. Central Station or the Airport are not perfect, but much could have been learned from them and put in place before the CMBT was inaugurated.

As for the bus crews, apart from looking after their creature comforts—particularly rest facilities—there was the need to brief them and take them on familiarisation tours of the routes to be used. Whether those routes could stand this heavy extra traffic also needed to be studied. And the roads to handle this sudden extra traffic volume needed to be relaid, strengthened and cleared of obstructions and encroachments.

All this needed enormous planning. And there was plenty of time to do it, given the months since the main building was ready and the years since work on it got underway. But, sad to say, we too often think only of that impressive building and not creating an impressive facility with everything in it being user-friendly. MMM has long felt that the way governments and bureaucracies in this part of the world function, the user, the general population, is the least of their concerns. Building mausoleums, organising elaborate inauguration functions and using descriptions like 'Asia's biggest' appear to be a greater priority.

If ever *Senate House* is restored and the 'first' Madras Club saved and restored, MMM hopes end-use and users would have been remembered from the beginning of the work.

New-look plans

A major facelift is underway at the Museum in one great hurry to get it ready for the commemoration of its 150th year in January in the presence of the President. Landscaping, a part of the compound wall, the Museum Theatre, the main Pantheon building, a couple of the galleries are all having attention paid to them.

The Museum has several persons aware of what 'proper' restoration is all about, but given the hurry with which the work is being executed, *The Man From Madras Musings* only hopes that the executing agency will do the restoration to the satisfaction of not only those knowledgeable about conservation in the Museum but those outside as well. As far as MMM is concerned, proper conservation and restoration cannot be done in a hurry, just as roads can't be relaid in a hurry. MMM daily sees the patchwork going on on our

roads; hopefully that will not be the technique used in the Museum.

Another new-look plan that is a matter of some concern to MMM are plans to be drawn up to "develop Mamallapuram as a living heritage township", subsequent to interaction between the Central Government tourism officials and State Government officials about six months ago.

When they met they talked of a Rs.10 crore plan that repeatedly mentioned landscaping areas around the Shore Temple, the Five Rathas and Arjuna's Penance and developing areas for cultural festivals and crafts displays. To MMM, all this beautification and addition is only going to detract from the splendours of that open-air museum. What Mamallapuram needs is clearing of all construction in the core area, making it entirely a pedestrian area, adding a minimal amount of greening and shade and ensuring there is neither litter nor touting. If that can be achieved in the first place, as has been in places like Sarnath, we'll be well on our way to creating what is truly a heritage township and not one embellished to look like what it never was.

Talking terrorism

When the Satyamurti Centre for Democratic Studies organised its annual national seminar recently, this time on "Responding to Terrorism: Dilemmas of Democratic and Developing Societies", it had a high profile participation, starting with Police heads like K.P.S. Gill, Ved Marwah, and our own Governor, P.S. Ramamohan

MMM wonders, now that the seminar is over, what next? When a Commission's report, like the one on the Police, can be studiously ignored, who, MMM wonders, is going to pay attention to the recommendations of a seminar?

Rao. Apart from a host of other senior police officers, the participants included several senior armed services personnel, heads of Intelligence and former top level Civilians. Together they seemed to rather outnumber the academics, the journalists and the occasional NGO representatives. Rather conspicuously missing, *The Man From Madras Musings* felt, were the jurists, the lawyers and the civil rights activists. The result was a near consensus on tightening the laws.

To be fair to the organisers, MMM must admit he did not sit through the 15 hours of discussion over the two days, so he might have missed something, but MMM did listen to all the major speakers, the plenary session and the summation. And at the end of it all, MMM still felt that the democratic process as it exists did not weigh too heavily with too many of the speakers. A co-sponsor of the seminar was the German organisation, the Kornad Adenauer Foundation. MMM couldn't help but wonder how they reacted to this consensus, in the light of the way they had tackled their Red Army problems.

Be that as it may, there was equal unanimity that terrorism was the result of a lack of response to the grievances of a section of the people and that to answer their problems good governance was absolutely essential. But good governance itself raises several issues, starting with the view that one man's freedom fighter is another's terrorist and who do you, as an allegedly JUST government, favour in a democratic set-up that always sees might (read majority) as right?

Against this background were the following suggestions that the main speakers appeared to agree on. Do they constitute a truly democratic answer to terrorism—or freedom-fighting?

- We must have political consensus on dealing with terrorists. (Would consensus make a war a JUST war?)
- We must have a new legal framework. (Ending legal delays and stalling tactics MMM can agree with, but is reducing the standard of proof a democratic answer?)
- A federal agency to tackle cross-State-border terrorism. (Unobjectionable.)
- Improve collaboration between all agencies. (Unobjectionable.)
- Strict weapons laws. (Unobjectionable.)
- Must be seen as a national problem and not a State problem.
- Police Commission report must be implemented.

MMM

The documentation of Indian flora...

The interaction between Britain and India has been long and complex. Among the many positive aspects of the relationship, few can be more worthy of celebration than the contribution of Scottish medical botanists to the documentation—both written and illustrative—of India's rich flora.

Scottish medics played a major role in discovering, recording and classifying knowledge about various aspects of India, especially in the field of natural history, during the period covered by the drawings in the collection in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh (RBGE). This period is taken from 1793, when William Roxburgh went to India, to 1868, when Hugh Francis Clarke Cleghorn returned from India. For most of this period India was administered by the East India Company who employed the medics and artists concerned. The influence of Edinburgh waned when the administration of India passed to the British Government and Kew became more and more imperialistic in its attitude to Indian botany.

The scientific documentation of the Indian flora was started by William Roxburgh and continued with Robert Wight; both men were concerned with both written and pictorial presentation of data, which led to their important publications. These included the unillustrated volumes of Roxburgh's *Flora Indica* (1832), and Wight and Arnott's *Prodromus Florae Peninsulae Indiae* (1834), and lavishly illustrated works such as Roxburgh's *Plants of the Coast of Coromandel* (1795-1820), and Wight's *Icones Plantarum Indiae Orientalis* (1840-1853) and his *Illustrations of Indian Botany* (1840-1850).

Worries about deforestation and its effect on health and climate also began with Roxburgh, but large-scale, effective action was not really taken until the third generation (Alexander Gibson and Cleghorn), with the writing and publication of important Reports, which led to the setting up of governmental Forest Conservation systems. By this time, a great deal of the primary documentation of the flora had been achieved, though this was not brought together comprehensively until the monumental *Flora of British India*, 1875-97, written at Kew by Sir Joseph Hooker, a medical graduate of Glasgow University.

Written descriptions of plants (in whatever language) are notoriously inadequate. From early times the impor-

ance of supplementing these with pictorial representations was realised.

On the limitations of the written word, we may quote Wight: 'The insufficiency of language alone, to convey just ideas of the forms of natural objects, has led naturalists ... to have recourse to pictorial delineation to assist the mind through the medium of the senses'.

• by H.J. NOLTIE

Dried plants in the form of herbarium specimens contain vastly more information than can be recorded in words, but these too have limitations. For example, an illustration can depict different stages of a plant not observable in a single specimen. Moreover certain plant families are notorious for making poor dried specimens, and illustrations can record essential supplementary information.

In India the Scottish botanists were lucky to find a school of painters, albeit used to working in a different tradition, whose source of patronage had died out, and who were adaptable and willing to work in a new way.

Until recently communication of scientific information

was limited to the spoken and written word. Printing caused a revolution in access to knowledge.

The use of the then new, less expensive, printing techniques such as lithography was rapidly adopted in India. The willingness of botanists to use new technology can be seen in Wight's learning lithography in Glasgow while on leave in Scotland between 1831 and 1834. He took a lithographic press back with him to India in order to reproduce his illustrations and herbarium catalogue.

The link between the origins of environmentalism and the critical role of the Edinburgh-trained medics in India has only recently been realised. This subject has been explored by Richard Grove in his book *Green Imperialism*.

University of Edinburgh lectures had a profound effect on William Roxburgh who, in India, became (to quote Grove) 'a pioneer in the collection of tropical meteorological data ... detailed measurements over many years that facilitated his diagnosis of climate change and famine incidence, the basis for his more generalised critique of the colonial impact on the Indian environment'.

...& the Indian artists who made it possible

The Indian artists who undertook work for the Scottish botanists are generally taken to have had their origin in schools of painters trained in the Mughal miniature tradition. With the collapse of the Mughal Empire, this source of patronage was in severe decline by the end of the 18th Century, but the artists were adaptable to the demands of new patrons who wanted records of plants, animals, costumes, architecture and other subjects. In the words of Ray Desmond, "these Indian artists were compelled to paint flowers in a naturalistic idiom completely alien to the traditional school of meticulously executed miniatures ... A certain stiffness and lack of suppleness ... endow[s] the flower drawings with a naive decorative appeal". Others, however, have responded more positively to the charms of this distinctive school of botanical art, with its hybrid East-West style.

The use of these painters was enthusiastically espoused by Scottish botanists in their assiduous efforts to record the largely unknown flora that they encountered. Their value was of particular importance at a time when there were no established herbaria in India and the keeping of dried plant specimens was fraught with zoological and climatological difficulties. Teams of botanical artists were employed at the East India Company gardens ... Although they were highly appreciated at the time, the names of many of these Indian artists are unknown, including all of those used by Roxburgh.

Maria Graham (sister-in-law of Robert Graham, Regius Keeper of the RBGE) visited Roxburgh's team of artists in 1810 and commented: "They are the most beautiful and correct delineations of flowers I ever saw. Indeed the Hindoos excel in all minute works of this kind". Another contemporary comment, from 1790, by William Tennant, an East India Company chaplain, also notes appreciatively the "laborious exactness with which they imitate ... the smallest fibre on the leaf of plant".

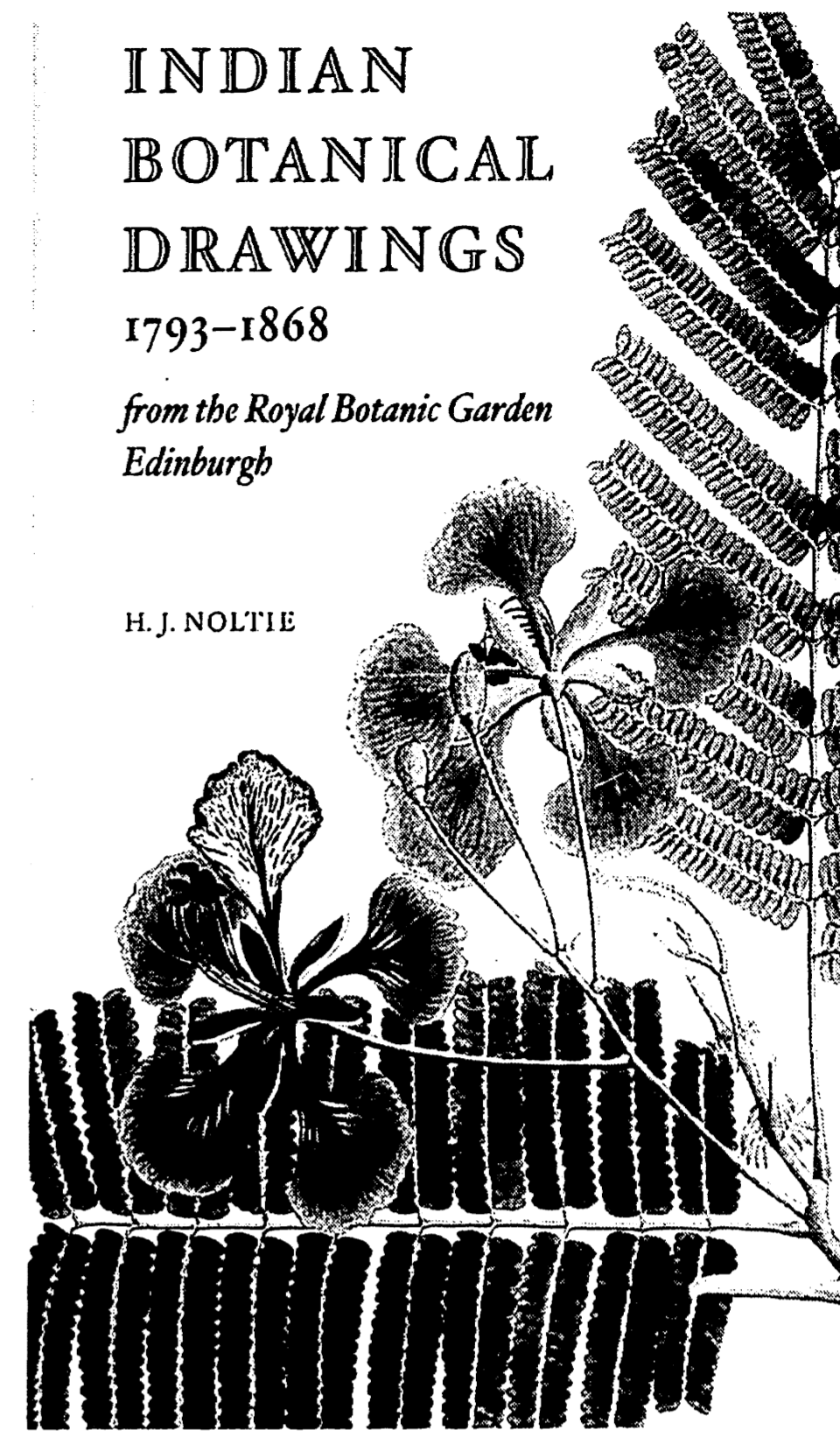
Of the artists whose names we know Vishnupersaud (Vishnu Prasad) was first used by Buchanan and later by Wallich and Royle. Wight was unusually appreciative of his Madras artists and recorded their names scrupulously on all their published illustrations. He used two in particular—Rungia and Govindoo—though nothing is known about them and even their names have puzzled linguists. Govindoo seems to have been used later by Cleghorn, but the names of the other artists used by Cleghorn and the one employed by Gibson have not so far been discovered.

INDIAN BOTANICAL DRAWINGS

1793-1868

from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

H. J. NOLTIE



Grove (goes on to speak) on the importance of the next generation of Edinburgh graduates in the environmental sphere. "Alexander Gibson, Edward Balfour and Hugh Cleghorn became enthusiastic proselytisers of a conservationist message which proved both highly

alarming to the East India Company and very effective in providing the ideological basis for the pioneering of a forest conservancy system in India on a hitherto unequalled geographical scale." — (Courtesy: The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.)

Mughal painters were interested in pattern and in obtaining rich colours by means of opaque paint, heightened with gum arabic. By contrast, these pre-Darwinian Western scientists were more concerned with a typological approach—the representation of the 'essence' of a species and magnified analytical details. The botanists were also particular about naturalism and the correct rendering of perspective. Westerners brought up to appreciate transparent watercolour moreover had an aversion to the use of opaque gouache, a prejudice that can still be seen today. This combination resulted in a new synthetic style of botanical illustration; these botanical 'Company Paintings' are characterised by:

- Use of rich watercolour, often heightened with gum arabic.
- A lack of interest in perspective, but with a highly developed sense of pattern.
- An aversion to empty space around the images.
- A characteristic layout of the images, with the plants often going off the edges of the paper.

The extremely fine illustrations from the late 18th and early 19th Centuries are relatively well known and have often been reproduced. However, those from the later 19th Century, in which the Edinburgh collection is particularly rich, are almost completely unknown and unpublished. Although they are undoubtedly cruder in execution than the earlier work, they are, nonetheless, vibrant and decorative, and represent an important chapter in the history of botanical illustration.

A note on the RBGE

• The RBGE 'Cuttings Collection' is an enormous collection of some 250,000 items, a major resource of illustrations and information about plants mounted on herbarium sheets (pieces of thick paper 26 x 43 cm) and filed taxonomically according to the plant illustrated.

The size of the Indian collection is not yet known accurately but amounts to approximately 3000 original drawings and several thousand ink and watercolour copies after printed illustrations.

H.J. N.

The devadasi and the saint

Bangalore Nagaratnammal who died 50 years ago this year, was known by many honorifics. Vidya Sundari was one, Tyagaraja Seva Saktha was another. But all that mattered to her was her devadasi pedigree of which she was inordinately proud and her total devotion to Tyagaraja, the saint composer.

Bangalore Nagaratnammal was born on November 3, 1878, to Subba Rao, a wakil in Mysore, and his mistress, a devadasi, Puttulakshmi. When the child was 1½-years-old, the father abandoned Puttulakshmi as a result of which she and her daughter were reduced to penury. Puttulakshmi was offered patronage by Giribhatta Timmaiya Sastri, a Sanskrit scholar in the Mysore Royal Court. He taught young Nagaratnam Sanskrit, while her mother took care of her music. When Nagaratnam was nine, Timmaiya Sastri suddenly withdrew his support to mother and daughter.

Puttulakshmi took a vow never to return to Mysore until her daughter's talent was recognised, and together they went to Kancheepuram in search of a guru. When her meagre resources ran out, she turned to Bangalore, where her brother Venkitasamappa was a violinist. Living on an income of Rs.40 a year, Puttulakshmi spent most of it on getting her daughter tutored in English, Kannada and Telugu, besides music and dance. When Nagaratnam was 13, her mother died, leaving her in the care of Venkitasamappa whom



Bangalore Nagaratnammal.

she charged with fulfilling her vow. In 1893, Venkitasamappa presented her at a concert at the residence of Veena Seshanna, an artiste of the Royal Court. Her performance was greatly appreciated and next day an invitation arrived from the Mysore Court, asking her to perform there. In the audience was Giribhatta Timmaiya Sastri himself. Puttulakshmi's vow had been fulfilled.

Nagaratnam remained a Court dancer and singer till 1903, by when she was famous all over South India as a scholar and artiste of high repute. In 1903, at the invitation of her then patron C.S. Rajaratna Mudaliar, she moved to Madras, then the fast emerging hub of culture. She settled in 3, Srinivasa Iyer Street, George Town, a spacious mansion she had built for herself. The housewarming was attended by friends such as Veena Dhanammal and Salem Meenakshi. Her guru, Bidaram Krishnappa of the Mysore Court, performed on the occasion. At her request he

sang Kannada songs throughout his programme. Settling in Madras, she adopted the Rama Temple at Thatha Muthiappan Street, George Town, and lavished her patronage on it. On her mother's death anniversaries, she performed special worship and also funded a procession of the deities.

At around the same time as Nagaratnam's arrival in Madras, yet another devadasi, Kolar Nagaratnam, was also very popular as a concert artiste. In order to differentiate herself, the newcomer took the name Bangalore Nagaratnammal. By then she had bid goodbye to a career in dance and had put on considerable weight. Her fans called her BNR Ammal and likened her appearance to the majestic and amply proportioned engines of the Bengal Nagpur Railway. BNR Ammal branched out into *Harikatha* besides giving vocal concerts and was equally popular in both. Her erudition and learning were much respected by scholars and poets of her time.

Between 1905 and 1934, BNR Ammal, her faithful violinist Sivasubramanya Iyer in tow, travelled to 116 towns in South India and gave over 1200 performances. Being a very organised and financially prudent woman, BNR Ammal noted down details of every concert in a diary. It is said that she was one of the earliest artistes to pay tax. To accompany in her travels, she designed a collapsible *tambura* that could be assembled whenever needed. Great musicians have vouched

A two-page spread of nostalgia for the Chennai Season

for the excellent tonal quality of this instrument.

BNR Ammal was immensely rich and used her wealth to fight the causes that she took up. There are three significant events with which she is associated. In 1910, while attending a meeting of scholars in Rajamundhry she found many of them praising a scholar of the 18th Century called Muthu Palani, who had translated the *Tiruppavai* into Telugu. BNR Ammal, shocked at their ignorance, explained that Muthu Palani was actually Muddupalani (1730-1790), a learned devadasi who was one of the concubines of the Tanjore King Pratapasimha. The assembled poets did not readily accept that a devadasi could be so erudite. BNR Ammal, smarting at this insult to her ilk, decided to pub-

Anti-Nauch issue. In 1927, the devadasis suffered a major blow. The Madras Legislative Council passed a resolution recommending that the Madras Government take steps to prevent the dedication of girls to temples. This was not the first time that their community had come under attack, but the virulence of the new development took them by surprise. In 1929, the Council amended the HR&CE Act to disenfranchise devadasis from temples and also take back land and pensions given as grant. Then, in 1930, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, a pioneer medical practitioner, who was of devadasi stock herself, took upon herself the wholesale outlawing of the devadasi system.

Dr. Reddy told the Madras Legislature, of which she was a member, "The *dharmakarthars*

• by V. SRIRAM

publish one of Muddupalani's works. She selected *Radhika Swantanamu* (also known as *Ila Deviyam*), an erotic bout beautifully structured work and published it at her own expense in 1911. Some of her detractors brought to the notice of the Madras Government the nature of the book. It was proscribed as pornographic and all copies were confiscated and destroyed. BNR Ammal filed a suit and prayed that a Judge who knew Telugu be appointed to evaluate the work. But the suit was dismissed. *Radhika Swantanamu* was banned till 1948, when a new edition was brought out.

The second cause for which BNR Ammal fought was the

(temple heads) and general illiterate public imagine that the Gods in the temple want these dasis for service!" Dr. Reddy was supported by several other members of the House who appeared to be infected with a particularly virulent form of puritanical zeal. The devadasis were caught completely unawares. Many were abandoned by their patrons who wanted to curry favour with the Establishment.

It was now that BNR Ammal and a few of her friends decided to form the Madras Devadasi Association. Its Secretary was BNR Ammal. Other prominent members included such famed devadasis as Veena Dhanammal, her daughters T. Rajalakshmi

and T. Lakshmiratnam, and others such as Salem Meenakshi and Mylapore Gowri (who was attached to the Kapaleswara Temple). They had thousands of handbills printed and distributed them outside the Assembly buildings and also at prominent locations of the city. In courtly and elegant language, these bills set forth the position of the devadasis. They traced their origins to *Saiva Agamas* and *Sastras* and compared themselves to the Mutt Heads and similar guardians of the faith. While confessing that some degree of prostitution had crept into their clan, they begged that they be given greater education and training, especially in the fine arts, so that they could once again shine with their talent for music and dance. The Music Academy, then a fledgling institution with lofty ideals, led by its dynamic Secretary, E. Krishna Iyer, fought on behalf of the devadasis and even sponsored dance performances to showcase their talent.

In 1932, when the Raja of Bobbili was elected Premier of the Madras Presidency, his friends (many of whom were supporters of Dr. Reddy in her fight) held a nauch party in his honour. One of BNR Ammal's students performed at the function. The next day, there was a vitriolic letter from Dr. Reddy in *The Hindu*, which drew sharp response from E. Krishna Iyer. And so the battle went on. But in the end the victims were the devadasis themselves. The Bill introduced by Dr. Reddy was passed and, in stages, it became law in 1947, a law that killed the devadasi system but could never finish off prostitution.

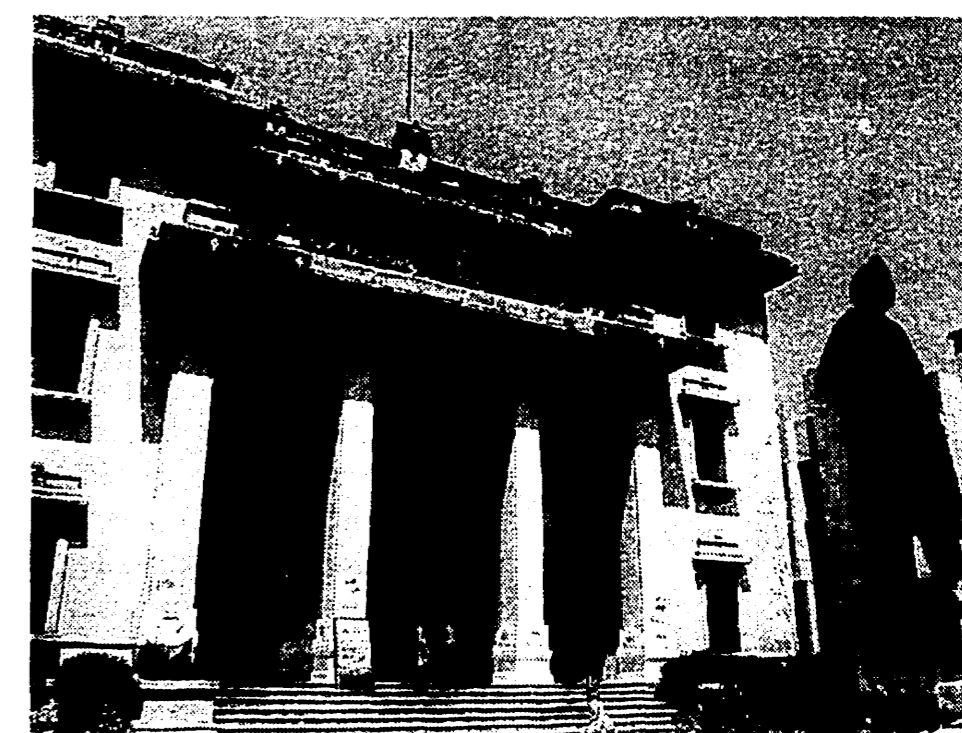
(Continued on Page 6)

More on sabhas and halls

Though the Tamil Isai Sangam is junior to the Music Academy by about 15 years, it was the first *sangeetha sabha* to erect an auditorium of its own, the Rajah Annamalai Manram, for music, dance and drama performances. This was made possible by the philanthropic Rajah of Chettinad and a few other Nagarathars who built this grand edifice. In my opinion, the auditorium deserves to be listed as a heritage site.

While the Tamil Isai Sangam holds a series of concerts only once a year, its auditorium gave a fillip to the growth of *sabhas* in the George Town area. Leaving aside the Indian Institute of Fine Arts, and the Sri Sukrutha Lakshmi Vilas Sabha which did not have a monthly programme, there was only the Kachaleeswarar Gana Sabha which held concerts in the Kachaleeswarar Agharam and the Rajah Annamalai Manram to stage the plays of T.K.S. Brothers who innovated with sets, lighting and other refinements. The Hall used to be filled to capacity and many had to return disappointed.

Realising that a good play brought full houses, other *sabhas* soon began to spring up in that area. The first was Bharat Fine Arts, whose important functionalities were from the Customs Department and the Port Trust. They used their influence to build a membership which almost filled the hall. Taking advantage of the demand, Kala Niketan whose main activators were also from the Port Trust, came into being. Soon followed National Arts Combine, sponsored by the then well-known sanitary engineering company, King & Co. (wholly



Rajah Annamalai Manram

Indian-owned, unlike the British-owned Richardson and Cruddas), and supported by the officials of the Import-Export Control Department which was a powerful organisation in the 1960s. The last to be established in the 1960s were Elango Fine Arts (actively supported by the middle rank officers and staff of Madras Telephones) and Kandan Fine Arts Academy (supported by the Telugu Chetty mercantile community of Kandakottam). Besides these regular users, *sabhas* from other areas, such as the Egmore Dramatic Society and the Chintadripet Fine Arts, and schools and convents of the area also began to patronise the Manram.

The Manram used to get fully booked for two or even three months well in advance. Some *sabhas* began cornering all the week-ends and festival holidays, which created a situation of unhealthy rivalry. Fortunately, this was not allowed to go out of hand by the deft handling by the Manram's Secretary, S. Sriraman (of the cricket fraternity as well) who drew up a rota of regular users and the week-ends/holidays they would get. The concept that the Hall attracted large audiences only on holidays lost its zing when the truth was discovered that the patrons who bought the daily tickets were commercial visitors

to the city who, after finishing their main business, treated themselves to an entertainment, unavailable in their own towns, until they could catch the state express bus at the terminus right opposite the Manram. An additional attraction for them was the Ambi's Cafe canteen which purveyed a few select dishes.

Alas, the Manram has become aged today and could do with some rejuvenation. The *sabhas* which clamoured for dates have gone, together with the active members who nurtured them.

George Town has lost its place to the Music Academy Hall, the Narada Gana Sabha's Gnana-nanda Auditorium, the Rani Seethai Hall and Kamaraj Arangam, all of which get booked for most of a month, and in advance too. The University Centenary Auditorium, whose seating capacity is about 3200, is no longer let out for entertainment.

Running a *sabha* is not an easy affair. It should have a permanent membership, and yet must have a few seats in the front rows to cash in when there is a demand. The middle and the last rows, even though they may get filled, do not pay for even themselves, from either membership or counter sales. For instance, the Music Academy's TTK Auditorium is rented out at about Rs. 13,000; it has fixed seats to accommodate 1600, which means that whether it gets occupied or not, each seat costs roughly Rs.8. On top of it, there are the artiste's remuneration, service charges for electricity, the amplification system, getting the necessary police licences and bandobust, and other services, such as ushers. Last minute headaches arise when a highly-placed official decides to see the programme and the minions of his department ask for complimentary tickets. The secretary of any *sabha* having a popular programme will have high blood pressure from an hour before the curtain goes up until half an hour thereafter. Lobbying by artistes gives rise to accusations of favouritism or scams. Praise be to those sturdy souls who brave it all to provide entertainment to a host of people.

Note: Readers' corrections of dates and events would be welcome, as I did not keep notes.

V. Raghu Tagat

An exhibition unique for its time

The Madras Exhibition of the Arts and Industries of South India, to give it its full name, opened on Monday, December 27th, 1915, and closed on Sunday, January 15, 1916. It was not the first exhibition of its kind in the city, another one having been held twelve years previously, but in terms of the sheer variety of exhibits and the crowds it drew, it was unique for its time.

There had been considerable talk and discussion on holding such an exhibition since 1914, but with the outbreak of the Great War (later styled as World War I), all plans were shelved. In August 1915, these were exhumed, as by then the necessity for contributions to the War Effort was pressing and it was felt that the Exhibition could be a good fundraiser. A committee was formed under the then Gov-

ernor of the Madras Presidency, Lord Pentland. A suitable venue was the first item on the agenda of the committee.

The South Indian Athletic Association, a powerful body of those times, which used to function in the vicinity of the People's Park (behind Ripon Buildings) held its Sports Meet every year during the Christmas week. This was a great crowd-puller and the exhibition committee approached the Association to seek permission to hold the Exhibition at the same time, in the Association premises. The Association went a step ahead and planned to hold a Fair of their own, the proceeds of which it offered to donate to the War Chest.

This gave a much-needed fillip to the Committee's efforts and soon it received wide support from members of the Govern-

ment, local *Zamindars* and ruling Chiefs as well as prominent citizens of the Presidency. The General Committee comprised 96 members, ranging from the Maharaja of Travancore to P. Ramaraya Ningar (later to become the Rajah of Panagal). It had many Justices of the High Court, led by Dewan Bahadur (later Sir) C.V. Kumaraswamy Sastry, prominent lawyers like S. Srinivasa Iyengar, businessmen such as C.H. Higginbotham, C.B. Simpson and Robert Stanes, philanthropists led by Dewan Bahadur Govindoss Chaturbhoojadoss and administrators such as Sir Bernard Hunter and A. Butterworth, ICS. In addition, an executive committee comprising 20 members, with S.D.

Pears as Chairman and T. Vijayaraghava Acharya as Secretary, was formed to spearhead the activity. M. Martineau, Governor and Consul General of Pondicherry, made a donation of 5000 francs as a token of "sympathy and goodwill".

It was decided that the theme of the Exhibition would be 'Villages and Industries' of the area and an appeal was made to district authorities and war fund committees to send in exhibits. In addition, various lectures on diverse topics, ranging from Agriculture in Madras, Forestry, Fisheries, Health and Hygiene, the Victoria Technical Institute, the School of Arts, to Travancore and Cochin as model States, were planned. Montague

Thomas designed the layout on the "vacant ground behind Moore's Pavilion, where numerous helpers assisted in putting up the stalls".

The Exhibition buildings and a Model Village (an integral part of the event) spanned an area of 20 acres to the north of the Pavilion. The main entrance was placed prominently opposite the Bandstand in People's Park. An avenue led to a bridge over a pond (could this be Lily Pond?) to a 'Triumphal Entrance Archway', leading to the 'Court of Art and Industries'. This archway was 20 feet wide and 25 feet high, surmounted by a dome supported on columns of elaborate design. The Court of Art and Industries was 250 feet long and 210 feet

wide, with 35,000 square feet of buildings designed in the Indo-Saracenic style. Gardens were laid out in formal style, with a bandstand to accommodate forty bandsmen. The lecture theatre was also a part of this complex.

The Model Village dwelt on the theme of eco-friendly (NOT a term then used) housing, suitable to Indian conditions (pity nothing came of it). Model town houses were built in groups of six, with conservancy lanes at the back. Two houses had complete plumbing for water supply and drainage. The village houses were built according to religious beliefs (Hindu and Muslim) and showed latrines, cow sheds and a separate passage for easy movement of cattle and removal of

refuse. A model cow shed and dairy was also put up. Many prominent companies in the construction business showed samples of their work in these buildings. The Model Village had a bazaar selling fruits, sweets and soda water. There were two restaurants, one for Europeans and the other for Indians.

The Travancore and Cochin Governments put up special pavilions to display their crafts and agricultural and forest produce. It should be mentioned here that both Governments were at the time under a cloud for insufficient contributions to the War Effort. Postwar, Travancore was downgraded in status from 21 gun salutes to 19.

A miniature hospital ship,

Madras, was placed within an enclosure with a separate admission fee. In keeping with the traditional image of India, there was an area earmarked for snake charmers, jugglers and the odd rope trick. *Fakirs* on beds of nails are not mentioned in any records. Two other attractions were the Gliding Tower and the Floating Bandstand. The former was 50 feet in height and visitors could "experience the delightful sensation of sliding from the top to the bottom of the tower". This was sponsored by T. Namberumal Chetty. The latter was a Band Pavilion on water, where Indian music could be heard in comfort, under the shade of trees surrounding the tank.

All this was made possible by the munificence of such noted building contractors as Rao Sahib T. Namberumal Chetty, P. Loganatha Mudaliyar and

Kuddus Batcha Sahib. G. Duraiswamy Ayyangar lent a motor car. Binny and Co. Ltd. exhibited woollens, cotton and silk fabrics, East India Distilleries and Sugar Factories of Nellikuppam (the EID in today's EID Parry) exhibited and sold sweets, Parry's exhibited fertilisers, Best and Company electrical machinery and companies such as Macmillian's and Longman's exhibited books and school material.

All was set for the inauguration by His Excellency...

V. Sriram

(To be concluded next fortnight)

Source: *The Book of the Madras Exhibition of 1915-16.*

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. How much has Bill Gates, Chairman of Microsoft, pledged to the country, during his latest visit?
2. Name the web-based film rental service launched by Hollywood's five major studios recently.
3. Name the Spanish tennis player, winner of four Grand Slam titles, who retired recently.
4. After which famous woman Freedom Fighter is India's first Fast Patrolling Vessel of the Coast Guard named? It was commissioned only recently.
5. Which of Queen's rock classics has been voted the greatest hit of last 50 years after a worldwide poll?
6. Who is the new Chief Justice of India?
7. What new revolutionary personal computer was launched globally on November 7th?
8. Who is India's latest chess Grandmaster?
9. Name the Royal butler whose revelations about Princess Diana are causing embarrassment and shock around the world.
10. Who lifted the Santosh Trophy, the symbol of supremacy in National football, at Imphal on November 5th?

11. What feat has got 14-year-old Raghav Somani of Chennai into the Guinness Book of World Records?

12. The Archaeological Survey of India's decision to take over which historic temple in the State has created a controversy?

13. Which well-known corporate house of the State is the latest to win the prestigious Deming Prize?

14. The first modern technical training institution to be established outside Europe was in Chennai in 1794. Which institution?

15. Name the world-famous flying eye hospital that paid a visit to Chennai.

16. Where would you see Dansborg Fort in the State?

17. Name the fixed wireless telecom service launched in the State on November 9th?

18. In which temple town was a new Rs. 1.30 crore railway station inaugurated on November 8th?

19. What did Guindy Mode in the State become after Independence?

20. Which famous South Indian movie mogul once sidelined an all-time great thespian with the remark: "You will never make it in films, stick to the stage?"

(Answers on page 9)

Devadasi and the saint

(Continued from page 4)

among her personal effects sent there being her silver encased walking stick and her daily articles of puja. She sold her Madras house in 1929 and donated the proceeds to the *samadhi*. Her vast collection of jewels was sold to conduct the anniversaries of the saint. In 1945/46, at her request, Chittoor V. Nagaiah used the earnings from his film *Tyagayya* to build a resthouse at Tiruvaiyyaru. This became BNR Ammal's home. In 1948, BNR Ammal made a will donating all her earthly possessions to the *samadhi*, with two provisos, namely that the annual celebrations must be conducted out of the income and that women must always be allowed to perform at the shrine. In 1951, the squabbling groups were united largely due to BNR Ammal's efforts and a common Aradhana was conducted, inaugurated by C. Rajagopalachari. He said in his speech that BNR Ammal was a *samnyasini* worthy of worship. In response all that BNR Ammal said was that she was a *Devar Adiyal*, a handmaiden of God.

In 1952, her health gradually began to decline and on May 19th she breathed her last at Tiruvaiyyaru. Born out of wedlock, she had known grinding poverty, had scaled dizzy heights of success. She was extremely affluent, at the same time her private life had been one of loneliness, until Tyagaraja entered her life. In his cause she immersed herself and attained immortality. Prior to her death, she had selected a spot for her cremation on the river bank. But the citizens of Tiruvaiyyaru unanimously decided that her memorial must be close to Tyagaraja and nowhere else. Her *samadhi* is in the same complex as that of her mentor.

Action plan for helmets

(Continued from page 1)

Vietnam on 'Helmets for Kids'. Observations made in the day-long workshop included:

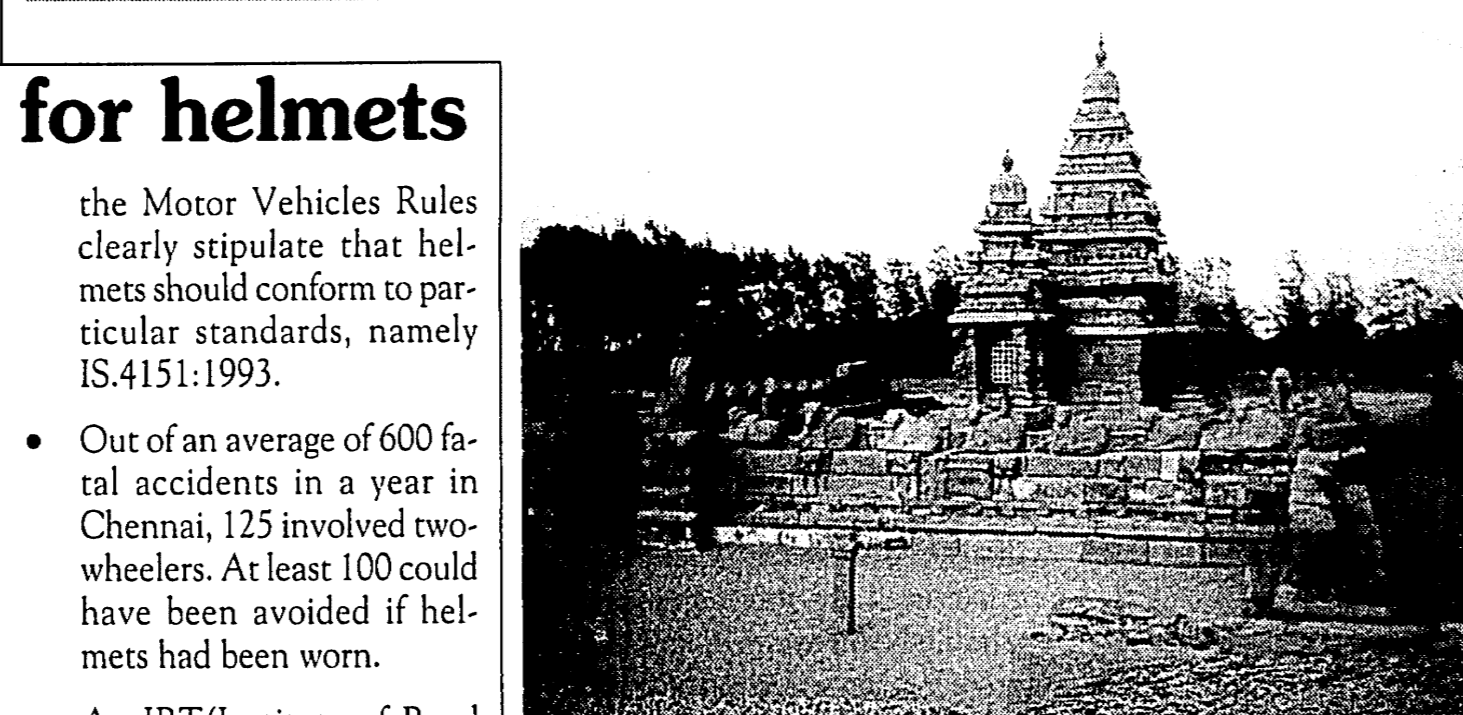
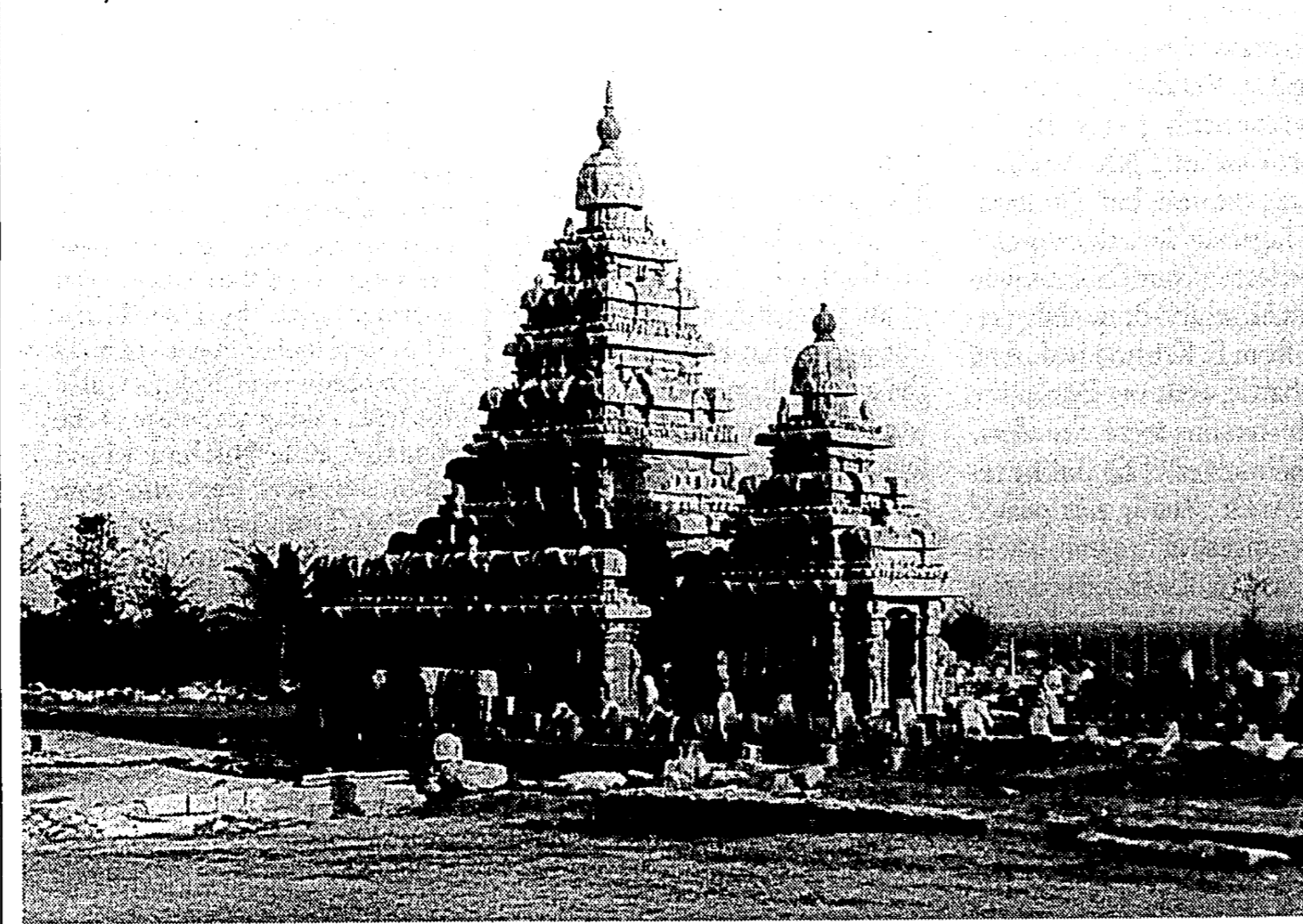
- According to the Motor Vehicles Rules, helmet wearing is legally compulsory throughout the country and applies to all two-wheeler riders (except certain categories of people who can be exempted) and is a rule that CAN be enforced. However, a Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers' survey shows that only 12% of two-wheeler riders in the country wear helmets.
- Most users are unaware that



At a recent exhibition of a tiny fraction of the thousand and more pictures in the Vintage Vignettes Collection of late 19th, early 20th Century pictures, our OLD (above) was spotted, the Mamallapuram Shore Temple with a rock not far from it on which sculpture has stopped mid-stroke. Such rocks are to be found in several other places in Mamallapuram, everyone who notices them wondering what made the sculptors stop so abruptly. In this case, however, the viewers wondered what had happened to this particular rock; none of them could recollect having seen it during visits to Mamallapuram over the last couple of decades.

THE OLD...

Our PRESENT (below) shows two views of the Shore Temple today, the bigger picture featuring the towers of the temple in almost the same position as in the OLD. In neither is there such a half-sculpted rock. Instead, there is clearly to be seen a half-sculpted rock. Also to be seen is a considerable attempt over the years to wall in the temple with the bits and pieces found during excavations and instal other finds within the "enclosure" created during the last few decades. Did the half-sculpted rock fall victim to the creation of an open-air museum or is there another explanation for all those at the exhibition not having seen it in real life? (The OLD, courtesy VINTAGE VIGNETTES; The PRESENT: D. KRISHNAN.)



wearing helmets, such as sweating, headaches, hearing impairment, neckache, hair loss, besides problems with helmet designs and storage space.

CONCERT, the Centre for Consumer Education, Research, Teaching, Training and Testing, has promised to initiate a scientific study in helmet usage and education of users as well as initiating campaigns in schools. The CAI has agreed to take up the relevant issues with two-wheeler manufacturers.

...& THE PRESENT

OUR READERS WRITE



Water contribution

A well-designed rooftop RWH system was implemented in our residential colony of six multi-storey buildings with an effective collection area of 1800 sq.m. in the first fortnight of October this year. As the rains commenced the day after completion, we started "harvesting" 18,000 litres of rainwater per cm of rain-channeled into two underground sumps, two open wells and percolation boreholes near three borewells in our plot.

Between October 19th and November 22nd, 38 cm of rain fell in the area, according to published weather reports, giving us about 680,000 litres of rainwater. The accumulation could be plainly seen in the open wells/sump whenever it rained, before being raised to the overhead tanks. With normal Northeast Monsoon rain till December, we expect to collect an additional 950,000 litres of useable rainwater in the three storages.

The population of our colony is 400. With a per capita consumption of 80 l/d, our water needs for 51 days, at least during the rainy season, are met by RWH, in the absence of which we would have drawn this quantity from the groundwater table. Therefore, this quantity of water should be treated as our contribution to the groundwater table. We request Government to consider grant of a monetary incentive in the form of reduction of water tax or property tax as is done in developing as well as developed countries around the world, for communities implementing RWH.

We strongly recommend RWH for multistorey buildings with a number of flats as the cost of RWH system per flat is much less than that for a single family house on a similar plot.

T.V. Chari
Executive President
Syndicate Residency
Maintenance Society
No. 3, Dr. Thomas Road
1st Street, T. Nagar
Chennai 600 017.

Note: Till November 5th, the seasonal total has been 53 cm. Another 25 cm of rainfall for the season till December-end in Chennai

THE RIGHT NOTE

(Continued from page 1)

patience, great juggling skill ... and a good memory. Otherwise, *rasikas* end up in *sabha* lobbies, staring perplexed at tickets, knowing that they were supposed to be handed to someone somewhere at sometime ... except that they've forgotten who, where and when.

Then there's the "where's-the-best-food?" competition. This requires a great deal of fine-tuned planning and haring up

will bring the total to 78 cm, the normal rainfall for the season.

'Not so bad' Chennai

The Editor's assessment that "it would probably be more fair to say that Chennai is an average city....", appears to be a half-hearted attempt to boost the image of the city. Thirteen most important civic items (including Public Transport, Solid Waste Collection, Feeling Safe/Secure, Policing and Public Safety, Conformity of Citizens to Legal Requirement, Honesty/Trust among people) out of 26 items are below average. Roads, Water of all sorts, Cleanliness of Public Places, Housing for the Poor are all Poor. Stormwater Drains and Sewerage System are not mentioned.

"Honesty/Trust among People" is below average. In a democracy, people will get the Government they deserve. Therefore, the city is what it is today.

So, how bad is Chennai?

M. Susikaran
8, 1st Street
Nandanam Extension
Chennai 600 035.

The street's there

I refer to Reader N. Dharmeshwaran's letter (MM, November 16th). There is a Bhimasena Garden Road (officially R.H. Road, 4th Street) near Jamma Buildings on Thiru. Vi.Ka. Nedunchalai in the Mylapore postal zone. The street is named after H. Bhimasena Rau, an Accountant-General belonging to the Financial Civil Service (F.C.S.) of the British era. He owned the entire stretch of land extending from Royapettah High Road on the east to the perimeter walls of the buildings on Sullivan's Garden Road. He built houses for his sons and daughters and some of his other relatives on this tract of land and, until the 1960s, the area was occupied only by members of his family. Since then, properties have changed hands, giving place to multi-apartment buildings. Bhimasena Rau's grandchildren and great-grandchildren still own the houses in which they live on this street. It is said that Bhimasena Rau brought the property from his father Hanumantha Rau, Professor of

I apologise to readers for the faux pas.

To atone and without least fear of contradiction, I wish to draw attention to a street off North Usman Road: Chari Street. Incidentally why truncate Usman!

If de-casteing is to be applied, will the street be called "Street" and enter the Guinness!

Another peculiar name I came across recently is "Kalvivaru Street" in Mylapore. I do not know whether it is a corruption of Kal Varu Street (stone collection) or Calvary Street, associated with Jesus Christ!

Mylapore veterans may throw light.

I generally take care before putting pen to paper and especially to Press; but sorry I slipped in the matter of Bhimasena Garden Street.

Ranjitha Ashok

The lessons of Madras Harbour

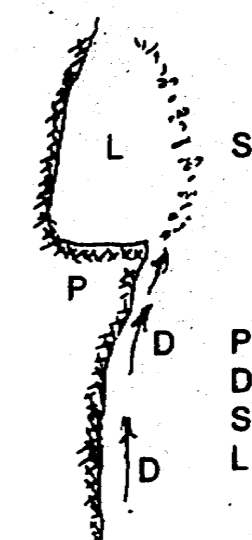
I refer to the letter (MM, October 16th) from Ennore Port Chairman M. Raman.

Pulicat Lake, at it is known, is really a lagoon. The so-called Ennore Creek is a segment of this lagoon, with an opening to the sea.

A lake is a body of either fresh or salt water occurring in land, such as the Kolleru lake in East Godavari District, or the salt water lakes of Rajasthan.

A lagoon, on the other hand, is a body of seawater that is enclosed by a barrier of sand called a 'spit'. The spit is formed by drifting sand which settles after striking a promontory or other obstacle. On the Coromandel Coast, the drift is from south to north. Hence, the spit here is formed to the north of the obstruction, as shown in the sketch.

The environment in a lagoon is subject to severe changes in salinity. In summer, desiccation causes increase in salinity, and salt is recovered in salt pans, for the monsoon season, the freshes



P Promontory
D Drift
S Spit
L Lagoon

brought in by the streams entering the lagoon lower the salinity. The sharp changes in the salinity have adverse effects on the molluscan fauna, whereas the fish migrate towards the sea.

Vegetation, under lagoonal conditions, is specific. Trees with pneumatophores (breathing roots) survive. Broad-leaf algae are seen thriving in the backwaters, or lagoons, to the south of Kodikkarai (Point Callemere) to the south of Ramaratham reserved forest.

With regard to trees that survive in sandy soil, the casuarina

and the cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*) are prominent.

The Ennore Port authorities should take note of what happened after the construction of the Madras Harbour. Sand accretion, to the south of the groyne, extended the Marina and isolated Fort St. George from the shores of the Bay of Bengal, where it was originally located. Coastal erosion, between Royapuram and Ennore, required protection. Further, the drifting sand from the south to north entered the harbour basin, and to maintain the draft, i.e. depth of 30 ft., constant dredging was needed. The dredged sand was deposited to the south of the groyne "to keep the sea busy", as it was stated by Dr. Trask, a well-known sedimentologist, engaged by the Harbour authorities.

R.N.P. Arogyaswamy
E-1, Deer Park Apts.
101, Velachery Road
Chennai 600 032.

Mathematics at the Madras University, in whose name there is/was an endowment for awarding a prize to the best Mathematics student passing out.

Another street name in the Mylapore area which is intriguing is "Kalvivaru Street" connecting Mundaga Kanni Amman Koil Street to Kutchery Road. Could it be a corruption of "Kalvai Ora" (Canal Bank) Street. There are Canal Bank streets in Triplicane and Raja Annamalaipuram without undergoing a change in their English names.

Raghu Tagat
4 (New No. 7)
Sri Krishnapuram Street
Chennai 600 014.

Reader N. Dharmeshwaran adds: "I had a call from Reader V. Shrinivasa Rau, IOFS (R) (of Virugambakkam) to say that Bheemanna (Mudali) Street still exists and Bhimasena Gardens is slightly farther and is named after one Bhimasena Rau, Accountant General (Retd)."

I apologise to readers for the faux pas.

To atone and without least fear of contradiction, I wish to draw attention to a street off North Usman Road: Chari Street. Incidentally why truncate Usman!

If de-casteing is to be applied, will the street be called "Street" and enter the Guinness!

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Mylapore veterans may throw light.

I generally take care before putting pen to paper and especially to Press; but sorry I slipped in the matter of Bhimasena Garden Street.

Saving the Estuary

The Adyar is a surplus outlet and a drainage which gathers all waters that could not be impounded and is in flood for brief periods. When in flood, it carries heavy flows all of which go to the sea. Nothing is impounded, though it passes through and amidst heavily populated, water-scarce urban areas. The greater part of the flow is unutilised.

Much of the areas, especially those within urban limits, suffer from scarcity of water. Hundreds of washermen make use of the water, good bad or dirty. They have no other go. Thousands of poor families living on and near the banks have no access to adequate water for two-thirds of a year, even for essential human uses. The deleterious results on public health and the pernicious havoc wrought in social life and conscience can be easily gauged. Thousands of cattle are kept near the banks without facility for bathing. Even now, you can see hundreds grazing on the upper reaches of the estuary and above.

If a submersible dam is constructed near the confluence of the river with the sea, it would make available adequate water for about a quarter of a kilometre for men, animals and birds. The stagnant water so impounded would help in raising the water table in the vicinity. Tree and plant life would be nourished and the attendant benefits would include the development of a bird sanctuary right in the heart of Chennai for the joy of the locals and tourists who want to spend a little time away from the worries of urban strife. The submersible dam, or causeway, as it may be ultimately designed, will help communication connecting the north and south of the river too. Owing to neglect, the river is widening due to erosion continuously during flow. This too could be arrested.

A.P.K. Roy
Sembiam, Chennai 600 011.

Chennai should urgently survey and design a plan for a dam-cum-park not far west of the confluence of the river and execute it at the earliest. It should not cost much, but the benefit would be colossal.

N. Rajagopalan (IAS RTD)
"Mayur Apartments"
No. 7, 24th Cross Street
Indira Nagar, Chennai 600 020

Save the palms

I am a horticulturist. I note with concern the deadly wilting disease striking palm trees. I have noticed throughout Tamil Nadu the Palmyrah, Coconut and Date palms being infected with this disease. The leaves dry first, then begin to wilt, leaving the trees sapless stumps.

Unless drastic measures are taken to check the spread of this disease, the palm trees in the State will be completely destroyed. Palm gur and tender coconuts will be things of the past and posterity will never know there existed palmyrah and coconut palms which were considered *Karpaga Vrikshas*. This will affect the rural economy to a considerable extent.

Will the scientists of the Agricultural University take serious note of this and arrange aerial spraying of effective pesticides to control spread of the disease?

A.P.K. Roy
Sembiam, Chennai 600 011.

More letters overleaf

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.

OUR
READERS
WRITE

A crackerless Deepavali

We celebrated Deepavali this year without crackers. My 13-year-old grand-daughter said emphatically that she would not light a single one. Another grand-daughter, her cousin, all of 12 years, echoed her sentiment. Her younger sibling agreed with her sister, a little hesitantly, I thought.

"Pollution," said the 13-year-old by way of explanation.

"And child labour," added her cousin.

The youngest nodded her assent, not quite comprehending what pollution and child labour had to do with their hard decision.

And so we had a crackerless Deepavali, only lighting some lamps and wearing new clothes.

My mind went back to all the Deepavalis that enlivened the years of my life. As children, we would wait eagerly for the distribution of crackers by my father. We would plan to get up very early in the morning to have the ritual oilbath and light the crackers, but invariably would be woken up by crackers lit in the neighbourhood.

After receiving the new clothes and the blessings of our parents we would rush to the bathroom. The huge pot of boiling water would be decorated with flowers, and a silver coin would be put into it for the maid to pick up later. And then we would rush to the front of the house, where oil lamps made a pretty picture before sunrise, to start lighting the crackers. The house would be full of smoke. The

crackers that made the loudest noise would be lit with both bravado and caution and would be greeted with much applause and appreciation. The house would be full of laughter.

With the first rays of the sunrise, we would sit on the floor and partake of all the delicacies until we could eat no more. And then would come the *lehyam* made from many spices to tickle the digestive juices into digesting what we ate.

What a wonderful festival Deepavali was! My grandchildren will never have the memories that I have. I felt a little sad as I looked at them. But very proud. They are very much into environmental sciences and I know that I shall have to look up to their expectations.

Radha Padmanabhan
A1, "Alsa Regency"
165, Eldams Road
Chennai 600 018.

Even in India

Shashi Tharoor's piece on P.G. Wodehouse (MM, November 1st) brought back nostalgic memories. Most of my generation grew up as fans of Wodehouse and never missed an opportunity to read him. Bertie, his two aunts, Jeeves and the Empress, evoked such spontaneous mirth. You wouldn't find a person engrossed in a volume of Wodehouse looking grim! Not so today. My children have enjoyed him but not my grandchildren!

Caught in Germany, when World War II broke out, people thought him unpatriotic for his broadcasts from Germany. In the hands of the enemy, he had no option. There is a delightful book written in the form of letters to his wife about life in Germany during

the War years, called *Performing Flea*. It is hilarious. It was birthday gift from my brother, who was himself a fan of Wodehouse.

* At an advertising club meet in Bombay recently, some referred to P.G. Wodehouse. A young woman sitting at the other end asked, at question time, "P.G. Wodehouse! Which firm is he working in?" So for Wodehouse today! Even in India, Shashi!

Anna Varki
Chennai 600 010.

Some comfort

I fully endorse and wholeheartedly (or heavily-heartedly) second the lament of *The Man From Madras Musings* over the total breakdown of civic order in this once beautiful city, compounded by the apathy of its citizens (demizens?) (MM November 15th).

The final denouement came with the recent rains causing complete anarchy on the drains we laughingly call our roads. Still, as incurable optimists, we find comfort that G.N. Chetty Road has more water than the Kaveri! The grim humour is that less people die of rains, open manholes, live wires and collapsing houses than the number run over by Metrowater tankers. Macabre comfort this. Everything is costly in Chennai except human life.

My personal favourites are Wodehouse's classic use of transferred epithets — "That will not do my boy, said Lord Emsworth wagging a reproachful gun". Gopinath's description of Basil Earle's ascent of the Munro statue *a la* a Drones Club member sounded like a Bertie Wooster episode.

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

Dining out then

Many readers have been writing about their gastronomical experiences over the years in the City. That has prompted me to 'enlighten' the present generation about the delights of the Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan in the 1950s. It had a restaurant which served wholesome preparations following Gandhian principles, like hand pounded rice, khandasari sugar and honey. The items served were not only prepared hygienically, but also be very reasonably priced. The waiters would be well-attired, like the 'Air India Maharaja', in keeping with its neighbour, the India Coffee House, which also offered good fare and very good coffee.

Because of its low rates, perhaps, Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan could not continue its enterprise.

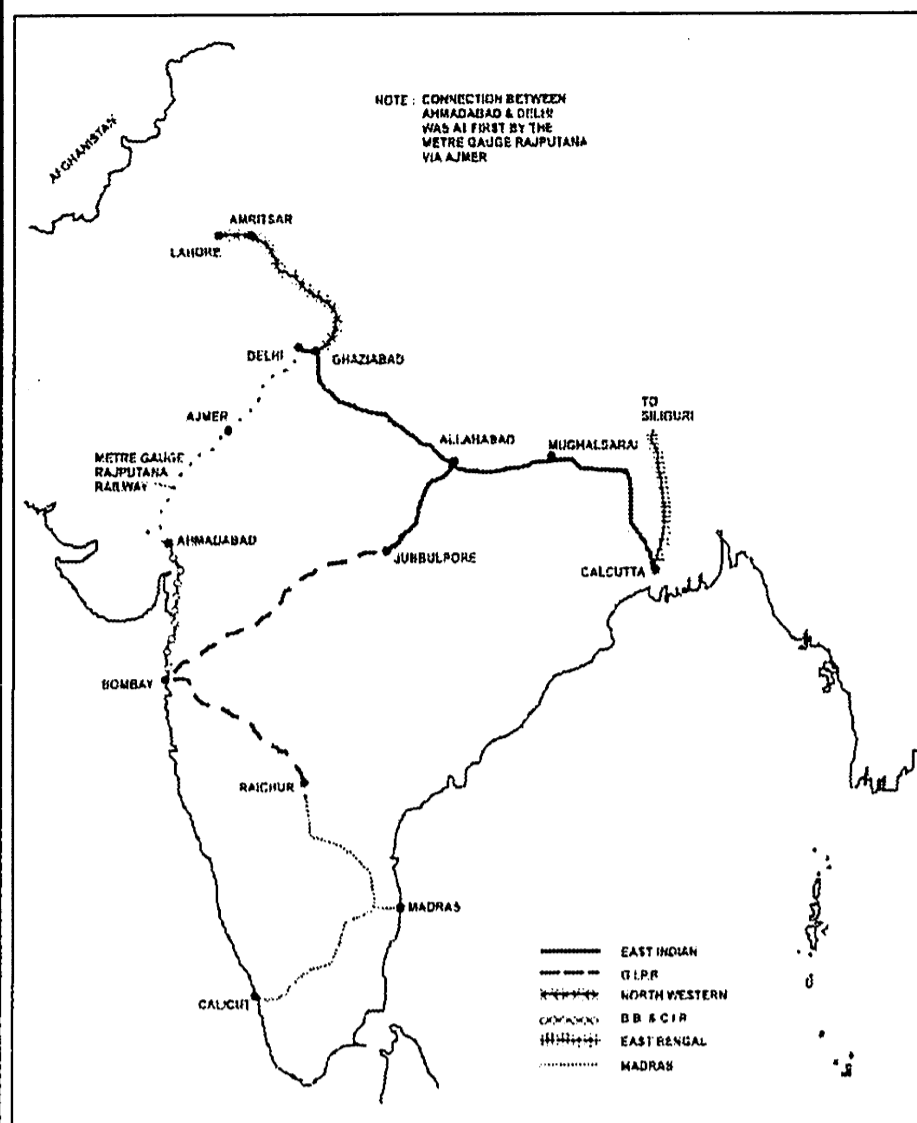
Annapoorna Cafeteria, sponsored by the Women's Guild, opened shop at Victory House. Its foods would not be handled by hands but would be taken by tongs and the plates would be steam-boiled and sterilised.

Hotel Dasaprakash used to have a moonlight dinner at Rs.4/- per leaf in its roof garden every Full Moon Day and this would get advertised in the papers.

Normally, a good full meal cost only 8 annas (50 np) in any good hotel like Ambi's Café etc., while the monthly tickets of 60 meals cost only Rs.26/-.

T.M.Sundaram
Chennai 600 004.

The capital connection



The Dalhousie Plan: The first main line network in India.

A glaring lacuna in the basic railway network of British India has gone unremembered by many; there was no direct rail connection between Madras and Calcutta which was the first capital of British India!

Construction of the country's primary railway network was completed in 1871, exactly as envisioned by Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India (1848-1856). The accompanying railway map of the subcontinent shows that travel by rail between the two cities was circuitous, whereas by road it would be fraught with risks, not to mention its cumbersome.

Inter-city commerce under the Raj was fast developing during those times. When some influential landlords from Balasore pressed for a railway from Raniganj to Puri, via Bankura-Midnapur-Balasore-Cuttack, nobody would have thought that such a connection would be the beginning of a through line between the two presidency towns. In the event, the Balasore-Puri line remained a pipe dream, but the initiative in laying a railway along the east coast was taken by none other than the Government of Madras Presidency. It ordered the survey of a line from Vijayawada to Cuttack in 1889.

Surprisingly, the "discussion tradition", which has been the hallmark of all government workings in this country to this day, was avoided by the Madras Government; not only that, it got the survey work speeded up. More importantly it managed to sell the scheme to the Government of India within a short period. The result: Construction of the 516-mile line was undertaken by the Central Government, meaning financed and entrusted to the Public Works Department. The first segment — a 91-mile Vijayawada-Vizianagaram line, including the Kakinada and Visakhapatnam branch lines — was opened to traffic in 1893, a record of sorts, considering that the inauguration of the maiden stretch of the line took place within four years of ordering the survey.

The East Coast Railway, as the project was named, was opened on January 1, 1899, connecting Calcutta and Madras. Four years down the line, the East Coast Railway was sold to the Bengal Nagpur Railway Company.

G.D. Patwardhan
11a, Rajaramwadi, Old 96 a, Hill Road
Bandra (W), Mumbai 400 050.

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Breaking the Bombay jinx

The joke doing the rounds in Tamil Nadu cricket circles over the years has been that the only way the State could possess the Ranji Trophy was to steal it. In the over 50-year-old history of the Trophy, the supremacy in national cricket has come to Madras only twice. Quite often, the State had done well enough to suggest that it could regain the trophy but always there have been two stumbling blocks — Bombay and Delhi. Twice, Tamil Nadu made it to the title round, in 1967-68 and 1972-73, only to go down to Bombay each time. The oft-crowned champions also got the better of the State in the semifinal encounters in 1976-77, 1980-81 and 1984-85.

For veterans like me, who have been keenly following the exploits of the Tamil Nadu (or Madras) team in the Ranji Trophy for over 40 years, and also carefully — if regretfully — monitoring successive defeats the State side has suffered at the hands of Bombay (or Mumbai) from the 1930s to the 1990s, it was a gratifying sight to see the home team get the better of the western state and oft-crowned Ranji Trophy champions in 1995-96. For the first time in 14 encounters the Robin Singh-led Tamil Nadu side finally broke the jinx in Tirunelveli, at a time when I had begun to accept I would never in my lifetime see Tamil Nadu get the better of the 34-time champions. I could even think of Tamil Nadu defeating Delhi, though the record against the northern state read: played 6, lost 6. But there was just no way that Tamil Nadu could beat Bombay — or so I thought.

I am sure I will be excused for having this defeatist outlook as, by the mid-1990s, there were many cricket followers in the State like me who shared this pessimism after their side had lost 13 consecutive times. What made this fact even more difficult to stomach was that on many occasions, Tamil Nadu went down when Bombay was not even at full strength. Probably the best-known occasion was in 1967-68 when Madras, having won all its six matches, prepared to take on Bombay in the final at Brabourne Stadium. The reigning champions had

made arrangements for booking their tickets to Bombay for the final. But a combination of good bowling, astute captaincy and a never-say-die attitude saw Tamil Nadu pull off a major upset.

In a match of low scores, the visitors won by 24 runs, immediately after tea on the third day. The batting, as was the case during the season, proved vulnerable, but Venkat and Kumar backed by medium pacer B. Kalyanasundaram held the runhungry Maharashtra batsmen in check. The first innings lead was kept down to manageable proportions and then, displaying exemplary fighting qualities, Tamil Nadu shot out a rather over-confident home team for 96 runs when the victory target was a meagre 121. More than anything else the victory came about through shrewd leadership. Leading both by personal example and tactical acumen, Venkat brought the best out of his young team.

The triumph raised hopes of Tamil Nadu regaining the Ranji Trophy for the first time since 1954-55. The fact that the title clash was to be held at Chepauk augured well for Tamil Nadu — or so all the cricket fans in Madras thought. The authorities also prepared a pitch tailored

for Venkat and Kumar, hopeful that this would neutralise Bombay's batting might which then consisted of six India players in Sunil Gavaskar, Ramnath Parkar, Ajit Wadekar, Ashok Mankad, Dilip Sardesai and Eknath Solkar.

But Tamil Nadu were hung by their own petard. The authorities in preparing the kind of underprepared wicket, which one veteran journalist described as deserving to be thrown into the adjacent Buckingham Canal, reckoned without the home team's brittle batting — and the presence of Padmakar Shivalkar in the Bombay side. In an amazing final which has become infamous with the passage of time, Shivalkar had match figures of 13 for 34 including a haul of eight for 16 in the first innings.

Midway through the first day, the feeling that Tamil Nadu were on their way to regaining the Ranji Trophy gained strength, for Venkat and Kumar had bowled out the strong Bombay side for 151. In the process, Venkat broke Ramakant Desai's record for the most number of wickets in the national competition (50) that had stood since 1958-59. By the

number of airline baggage tags; 12. Arunachaleswarar Temple at Tiruvannamalai; 13. TVS Motor Company; 14. The Madras Survey School in Fort St. George; 15. ORBIS; 16. Tranquebar; 17. Tata Indicom; 18. Kancheepuram; 19. Raj Bhavan; 20. S.S. Vasani to Sivaji Ganesan.

11. For collecting the largest



Ranji Trophy Champions 1987-88 at Chepauk. Standing L to R: M. Venkataramana, B. Arun, V. Sivaramakrishnan, Bhoothalingam of VST Industries, S. Venkatraghavan, S. Vasudevan (Captain), Bobjee (VST), L. Sivaramakrishnan, D. Girish, V.B. Chandrasekhar, D. Vasu, M.L. Jaisimha. Squatting L to R: N. Gautam, P.C. Prakash, K. Arun Kumar, M. Senthilnathan, R. Venkatesh, Robin Singh, U.R. Radhakrishnan.

end of the game, Venkat had raised the record to 58. And Tamil Nadu, by scoring 62 for two by stumps on the opening day, seemed to have given itself an excellent chance, despite the fact that they had to bat last on the treacherous pitch.

On the second day, a crowd of some 15,000 — yes, that many came to watch a Ranji Trophy final 30 years ago — saw the kind of action not one of them could have bargained for. As many as 27 wickets fell and by the end of the day, Bombay had virtually retained the Ranji Trophy for the 15th time in succession. First, there was Tamil Nadu's dramatic slide as they went from 62 for two to 80 all out, thanks principally to Shivalkar who turned the batting inside out with a spell of seven for eight. Fighting back, Tamil Nadu dismissed all the six India stars with only 62 runs on the board. The Naik brothers, Ajit and Sudhir, then added 51 runs for the seventh wicket and Bombay were 113 for six. A few minutes later, they were all out at the same score, courtesy a hat-trick by Kalyanasundaram. This gave the bespectacled medium pacer a triple distinction. It was the first hat-trick by a Tamil Nadu bowler in the national competition, the first against Bombay and the first in a Ranji Trophy final.

But even at this stage, it was obvious that his heroics would go in vain for, on a minefield of a pitch, getting 185 runs for victory was going to be an uphill task. No one however could have bargained for Tamil Nadu's abject surrender for the second time in a single day. By stumps, Tamil Nadu at 61 for nine were one wicket away from defeat. And it only needed one delivery on the third morning to end the match with Solkar joining Shivalkar in the spoils, each taking five wickets as Bombay registered a 123-run victory.

I remember well the assiduous manner in which Tamil Nadu prepared for its semifinal against Bombay at the Wankhede Stadium four years later. There was a long camp, systematic preparation and ev-

erything was geared to the players' comforts off the field. The result: a Bombay victory by ten wickets. Again, in 1980-81, 1984-84 and 1985-86, Bombay were not at full strength, but this did not stop them from winning on first innings' lead.

It all started back in 1935-36 in the title clash and a three-day thrashing by an innings in the quarterfinal in 1994-95 made it 13 out of 13 for Bombay. The teams next met in the same round the following season. In the meantime, much was made of the fact that during its triumphant campaign in 1987-88, Tamil Nadu had the good fortune of not having had to meet either Bombay or Delhi. That might have been a contributory factor to the victory, though the victorious skipper, S.Vasudevan, thought otherwise.

By the time of the Tirunelveli game, the mood was predictably downbeat. Shortly before the match commenced, I left for Sri Lanka to cover the World Cup matches. I wasn't in Madras when the State side registered a famous victory by 153 runs and learnt of it only after coming back. That's why it was rather a special moment for me to be at hand when Tamil Nadu scored its second win over its opponents who had given it a tough time in the past. That was at Guru Nanak grounds in 1998-1999, when Tamil Nadu completed an emphatic 139-run with more than a day to spare in a pre-quarterfinal match. There is little doubt that Robin Singh and his boys had shattered the psychological hold that the western state had for so long and it indeed was only the superlative unbeaten double century by the one and only Sachin Tendulkar that prevented Tamil Nadu registering a second successive victory at the Wankhede Stadium in the semifinal in 2000. As that game and events at Tirunelveli and the Guru Nanak College ground have proved, the jinx has been well and truly broken and Tamil Nadu can take on Mumbai on level terms from now on. Will we see that happen this year?

The semantics of periodicals

The question raised by Thomas Tharu (MM, October 16th) led me to look up some references. The Concise Oxford Dictionary, seventh edition, defines these terms thus:

1. **Biannual:** appearing etc. twice a year.
2. **Bicentennial:** Lasting, occurring, every two hundred years.
3. **Biennial:** Lasting, recurring, occurring, every two years.
4. **Bimillenary:** (festival) of the two thousandth anniversary.
5. **Bimonthly:** (periodical) produced or occurring every two months or twice a month.
6. **Biweekly:** (periodical) produced or occurring every two weeks or twice a week.
7. **Biyearly:** (produced or occurring) every two years or twice a year.
8. **Diurnal:** of the day, not nocturnal, (Astron) occupying one day, daily, of each day (Zool) active in day time.
9. **Fortnight:** period of two weeks.
10. **Fortnightly:** (produced or occurring) once every fortnight.

It may be noted that the definitions of items 5 to 7 are equivocal.

Let us see what H.W. Fowler has to say about this subject in his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (2nd ed.).

Bi — prefixed to English words of time (*bi-hourly, bi-weekly, bi-monthly, bi-quarterly, bi-yearly*) gives words that have no merits and two faults; they are unsightly hybrids, and they are ambiguous. To judge from OED, the first means only two-hourly; the second and third mean both two-weekly, two-monthly, and half-weekly, half-monthly; and the last two mean only half-quarterly, half-yearly. Under these desperate circumstances we can never know where we are. If it were not for *bicentenary*, which lacks a vernacular equivalent, there would be no reason why all the *bi*-hybrids should not be allowed to perish and the natural and unambiguous *two-hourly* and *half-hourly, fortnightly* and *half-weekly, two-monthly* and *half-monthly, half-yearly* and *half-quarterly, two-yearly* and *half-yearly*, of which several are already common, be used regularly in place of them.

It is obvious that Fowler is not happy with the usage of the prefix *bi* —

M. Sethuraman, Chennai 600 088.



To showcase State's tourism potential

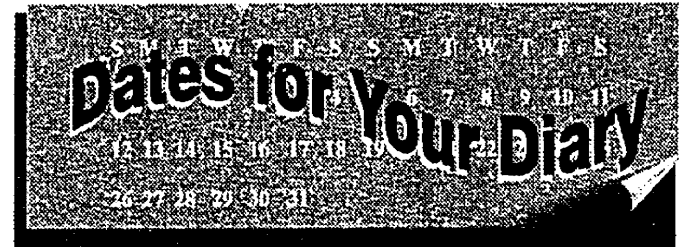
Chennai Fest organised by CII (Tamil Nadu Chapter) and the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation is all set to take off from December 20th – but in a much lower key than originally envisaged. From December 20th to 30th it will showcase opportunities in tourism and related sectors in Tamil Nadu. With international participation expected from the governments of Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka, the

Fest is being described as “a cultural extravaganza for all and a great business opportunity for industry and related players”. The Fest hopes to create awareness of Chennai being the cultural capital of South India, will focus on Chennai and Tamil Nadu being the gateway to the Golden Triangle of the South, will promote tourism and related sectors among the SAARC countries, and will highlight the potential of different States in India and the neighbouring countries as tourist destinations.

The Chennai Fest will feature the following activities:

- Conference (20th and 21st December)
- Exposition (20th and 21st December)
- *Son et Lumiere* (Sound and Light Show)
- Treasure hunt
- Concerts
- Food festivals and hotel discounts
- Leaders' Golf Tournament (20th December)
- Shopping Bonanza (December 20-January 19, 2003)
- Quiz Contest
- Mamallapuram Dance Festival (December 15-January 15, 2003)
- Cultural, heritage & environment related activities on the East Coast Road, in Mylapore, Pondy Bazar, Mount Road and Nungambakkam, which would include a shopping festival, Christmas decorations, classical music, folk dances, gifts sales at crafts shops, kolam contests and crafts fairs.

Central Minister of Tourism and Culture, Jagmohan, will inaugurate the Fest on December 20th at the Conference in which the Tamil Nadu Minister of Tourism, A. Miller, and the Central Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, Rathi Vinay Jha,



Till December 9: An exhibition of paintings by Anwar. (At Apparao Galleries).

December 13-18: Attacks on Right-Wing Violence, a poster exhibition. The posters were a response to the attacks on foreigners in the 1990s in Germany. The poster exhibition is the result of a competition organised in 2001 by the AGI Alliance Graphique Internationale for art students in Germany. Students from 26 art schools, academies and universities in Germany participated in the competition and a total of 454 posters entered the competition. (At Lalit Kala Akademi.)

December 18-January 3: K.J. Yesudoss will preside over the 70th South Indian Music Conference and Festival organised by the Indian Fine Arts Society. He will be conferred the title “Sangeetha Kalasikhamani”, and Saroja Vaidyanathan will be honoured with the title “Natya Kalasikhamani” by the Society. (At Balamandir German Hall).

From December 5: Making easy the *rasika's* task of choosing concerts or locating his favourite artistes during the season, is the *Kutcheri Season 2002 Guide Book* from *KutcheriBuzz* being published on December 5th. The book is circulated free.

During the peak period of the 'season', from December 12 to January 1, 2003, the *KutcheriBuzz* newspaper will also be circulated at all the leading *sabhas*. The paper is free and rolls out at around 5 p.m.

The best place to access all the information, details and buzz of the 'season' is the *KutcheriBuzz* website (www.kutcheribuzz.com). For more details, contact at 499 3767 / 499 4599 or email: season2002@kutcheribuzz.com

December 14, 15 and 25: Heritage tours of Mylapore, George Town and Triplicane, on December 14, 15 and 25 respectively, conducted by V. Sriram, who writes on music and dance heritage in *Madras Musings*.

The houses of prominent musicians of the past and also a few concert locales, which were famous, will be covered.

(For details and bookings, Tel: 2540392/0519/0520; 98400 24200; e-mail at: sangeetham@sangeetham.com)

will participate. The key sessions at the Conference will be:

- The Southern grid
- The international experience in the Tourism sector
- The Chennai advantage
- The social side of Tourism, Heritage & Environment
- Island of superior living
- Gateway to Southeast Asia
- The Success Story

The key topics during these sessions will include Retailing, the Textile tapestry, Chennai cuisine, Culture and Heritage, Quality of life in the city, Education, Social security, Environment – the emerging challenge, and Integrated development.

There will be speakers from the private and public sectors from all the southern States and New Delhi, besides some expected from other parts of India and the neighbouring countries.

The concurrent exposition will bring together the travel, tourism, hotel and related organisations on a single platform to promote tourism, culture and business opportunities.

HOW DO WE SUSTAIN MUSINGS?

(Continued from page 1)

new requests for copies. If, however, the additional support does not materialise, we will have to review the position in April 2003 and decide how to reduce circulation from Volume 13, starting April 16, 2003.

The coupon below will appear every fortnight hereafter to serve readers as a reminder that Chennai Heritage needs their support. *Madras Musings* looks forward to a generous response from its loyal readership.

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