

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

INSIDE

- And now, 'Ezhilmigu Chennai'
- Committed to nature
- Two pages of letters
- The songs of Kapali Oduvar
- More athletes & trees

Vol. XII No.23

FREE ISSUE

March 16-31, 2003



Not superstitious, Sir, but we just don't want the luck to change against the Indian team... So, no bath, no shave and no change of clothes till the World Cup is over!

Over?

Saturday, March 1, '03, post-1.30 p.m.

Chennai's roads suddenly emptied, as if a giant hand, wielding a huge sponge, had wiped the streets clean of all traffic.

The reason?

The India-Pakistan confrontation at the World Cup.

The result, of course, was thrilling.

I must confess, though, that I had one more reason to be happy.

I could now leave my chair.

Puzzled?

Well, when cricket-fever hits and Life comes down to TV screens, strange beliefs take hold of even the most rational of people.

Like, if the going is favourable, then apparently it means you cannot change chairs, for if you move, a match many miles away will be lost. So stay put, even if you are dying of hunger.

If the game picks up when you leave the room briefly, you remain banished till the prize-giving ceremonies are underway. If a much-needed breakthrough occurs when you take a sip of water, you can't put the glass down till the match is over. You feel a distinct tickle in your throat, but cannot cough, as a wicket might fall if you do.

All you can do, therefore, is develop a low throbbing headache, and grimly reflect on the price any all-consuming passion extracts.

So make yourself comfortable, keep nourishment on hand — it's a long haul to March 23, '03.

Ranjitha Ashok

Our vanishing heritage...



... reduced to this



Conserving built heritage in need of commitment

India is rich in historical sites and monuments, which need greater attention to be preserved for posterity as an important cultural resource. Some of them are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India while others are under care of the State Departments of Archaeology. But many important structures still remain neglected and uncared for.

Vast portions of our built heritage like traditional streets and settlements, in their natural or man-made environment, also add to a significant part of heritage, but are outside the purview of the Government, which looks after only monuments and sites. The facilities for the conservation of monuments, buildings and spaces are extremely limited, particularly for those which are not under the protection of any department or organisation. Budgetary constraints and civic priorities are major factors in limiting Government's

(Continued on Page 6)

THE OLD...

Our OLD, at the top of the page, are two pictures that appeared in Madras Musings, December 1, 2001, in different circumstances. The picture on left is of Capper House, the first HOME to be built on the Marina, in the late 1880s, then converted into a hotel and in 1914 rented as the home of Queen Mary's College, founded that year as the first women's college in the city. If ever there was a building to be put on any heritage list, it was this — and it WAS on the list prepared by the Heritage Committee of the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority as an addendum to the CMDA's proposed Heritage Regulations that have been hanging fire, like a promised Heritage Act, for several years now. The picture on the right is of a wing of Pentland House, built in 1915 to meet a growing Queen Mary's College's needs and named after Governor Lord Pentland who, together with Miss de la Hey, was responsible for the college's founding. On December 1, 2001, Madras Musings had published both these pictures as well as several others to draw attention to the sorry state the buildings of the college were in and report how the Old Students' Association was trying to drum up support to save Capper House, and have it restored and the other buildings on campus repaired.

Our NEW is Government's answer to these pleas. Not only are both buildings no longer in the picture, but hidden behind cadjan thatch they have been flattened in the last few weeks. Presumably governments think they are not answerable to anyone and can, without public debate, destroy whatever they wish. And destroy they have a bit of the city's heritage, a symbol of the emancipation of women in the city and the offer to them of higher education. What's going to rise in its place here, Madras Musings still does not know. But it certainly is unlikely to have the blessings of Miss de la Hey who did so much to give women a place in the Madras sun. Be that as it may, the Marina will be the poorer for the loss of these buildings; Madras Musings can only hope that whatever comes up in its place does not threaten the city's most important stretch of natural and built heritage. Meanwhile, we wonder whether the CMDA's Heritage Regulations and a Heritage Act will come into the books only after most of our heritage is destroyed. (Photographs: OLD by RAJIND N CHRISTY; NEW by R. EASWARAJ.)

...& THE NEW

From 'Singara' to 'Ezhilmigu' Chennai

A rose by any other name will smell as sweet – provided it turns out a rose. By changing a dream from 'singara' to 'ezhilmigu', are the powers-that-be making Chennai a rose at all? That will happen only if the authorities roll up their sleeves and get down to improving the city and sustaining the improvement, NOT merely by coining slogans, *The Man From Madras Musings* has always said. But that kind of commitment MMM has yet to see. Promises galore, MMM has heard over the years; fulfilment of them is what he and the other citizens of the city have been patiently waiting for.

Let's look at the latest lot of promises the Corporation of Chennai is making.

- GIS is all well and good – provided inputs are supplied, and MMM knows how the CMDA's pioneering system is suffering from non-receipt of inputs – but at the end of the day, how is that going to ensure a more 'Ezhilmigu' Chennai? Even if it improves tax collection, Chennai needs much, much more than what that modest extra bounty can provide?

- A mosquito-less Chennai might make a more liveable city, but it is not going to save the citizens from all else they suffer from in this city, which is mainly based on the lack of a whole lot of other necessities. Be that as it may, to make Chennai mosquitoless, do we really need a high-power committee? And does such a committee really need the Chief Minister to head it? Surely the Chief Minister has more important things to do, like meeting major potential investors in the State and persuading them to come here, rather than chair a civic committee on a project that any competent health and sanitation team of officials could do.

- A 100 crore for better roads is welcome, but is that, MMM wonders, meant for completely relaying the roads or just to lay a 'carpet' over them – which is what is being done and which will crumble at the first rains?

- MMM also welcomes the commitment to spend Rs.10 crore on the conservation and restoration of *Ripon Building*, to make it a headquarters fit for an 'ezhilmigu' city. But MMM hopes the work will be carried out by those knowledgeable about the subject and how carefully heritage buildings should be handled.

- Of course landscaping and beautification of parks and playgrounds has to be a part of any such plan. Without such old standbys, implying beautification, there can be no plans, can there? But having spent Rs.6 crores on such work, what is the commitment to protect that investment by ensuring regular maintenance? No mention is made of such mundane matters when talking of such dreams.

- Each Councillor will have Rs.6 lakh a year to spend. MMM is delighted that this has been made possible. But on what is it to be spent? And will there be accountability for such spending?

- As there is a shortage of playing fields for the public, two stadiums, with meeting halls, are to be built. But stadiums, MMM always thought, were for major competitions, for which considerable expense had to be incurred on maintenance. By building them, MMM is not very clear how the shortage of playing fields for everyday use by the public – for recreational and exercise purposes – is going to be solved.

- Communications are to be improved with 'handsets' being given to hundreds of officers. If the public ever get their numbers, can it expect service in minutes – or will the practice of "in my own time" continue?

- Pre-paid parking cards are promised – and it certainly is a welcome idea if they can be used in any designated municipal parking area and these areas are notified. Will that happen?

Bare mention, but no plans, is made of waste segregation, disposal and conversion, of the unrestricted growth of illegal hoardings, of the lack of pavements, of encroachers everywhere, of filthy markets and a host of other issues.

But if the Corporation can dream of an 'Ezhilmigu Chennai', perhaps we citizens too should dream along with it; after all, dreams are for free and don't necessarily have to materialise.

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

ACM's problems

The Chief Minister is reported as having recently said, "I am sitting on a throne of nails and am wearing a crown of thorns". She was referring to the "unenviable task" of rebuilding a State suffering from a "crippling" financial crunch and a severe drought. Officials *The Man From Madras Musings* has spoken to, as well as others in the know, agree that the Chief Minister has concentrated on this "unenviable task" and has done a remarkable job in taking the necessary hard decisions to keep the machinery of government turning. That government salaries have been regularly paid in these difficult times is only one manifestation of the success with which she has tackled these problems. That she is also becoming more focussed on the forgotten subject of agriculture and has been looking at ways of reducing the farmers' dependence on the rains is also being widely spoken about.

MMM, while commending the Chief Minister and her government on these scores, at the same time wonders why, at the time when we could do with much more investment, foreign leaders have stopped visiting the State, foreign investors have left the State unhappy, and many a local investor has begun to look at other States and even investment destinations abroad. If Tamil Nadu is to become the leading

State it once was – instead of remaining an uneasy fifth – then there has to be, MMM feels, much greater interaction between the Government, the private sector and the non-official sector. The Chief Minister will do the State a world of good if she will interact more frequently with the latter two sectors and take actions that are more consensus-based.

Why concessions?
This column seldom strays from its Chennai beat, but with all of Chennai watching and talking cricket, *The Man From Madras Musings* is sure there'll be no real objection if he strays a bit today. The straying is induced by a letter from reader N.S. Venkataraman, who is associated with an NGO that's been striving to help the deprived for some years now. He writes:

I consider the decision of the Government of India/Finance Minister to extend tax concession to the earnings of the cricketers from the World Cup matches, a most irresponsible one.

What about the millions of deprived and disabled in the country, who need government support to survive? When Government surrenders its tax dues from super-rich cricketers who are more than adequately rewarded, it deprives the deprived of a bit more of what they could get. This is hardly fair play.

I wonder whether the beneficiary cricketers will exhibit greater sense of responsibility than the government by not availing of these tax concessions.

The tax concessions are only the tip of the iceberg, as far as MMM is concerned. No matter how well our cricketers do in this tournament, what is all this song and dance about? Do world champions, or those almost there, in a sport seriously played in no more than seven or eight countries in the world deserve this hoop-la not to say moolah merely because the hucksters have been successful? Do we offer this kind of backing to those winning major laurels in hockey, chess, weightlifting, shooting, athletics, tennis – to name just those disciplines where world class, or even Asian class performances have been turned in – world class performances against opposition from dozens of countries, not just seven or eight?

With the hucksters going all-out to sell cricket in India, and getting the response they want from the consumer product market, the leading cricketers are making more than enough without government largesse. Why doesn't that largesse go to the thousands of other cricketers who have helped nurture these few as well as to those who make a mark in other sports that are more widely competed in? It's about time government stopped going ga-ga over a few cricketers, even if they turn out to be champions among half a dozen other countries, and paid attention to all sportspersons equally. — MMM

A big 'Thank You' to 143 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 1.2.03 and 1.3.03, added to the support *Madras Musings* has already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes *Madras Musings* espouses. — Chennai Heritage

Rs. 100: Abul Ameen, M.A.; Ananchaperumal, C.; Balasubramaniam, Baskar; Balasubramanian, A.; Balasubramanian, R.; Bhaskar, J.; Bhaskaran, R.; Chandrasekaran, R.; Chitty Baboo, R.; Chubby Raj, M.K.; Kothari, D Indira; Damodaran, B.; Damodaran, G. Muthu; Ekambaram, M.; Ezekiel, Khorshed; Ganapathy, B.; Hanrahan, T.G.; Hoon, Vishardha; Jayakumar, M.; Jayaram, S.; Jayaram, T.A.S.; Joseph, George; Kamalakannan, A.; Kannan, R.; Kumar, M. Chethan; Mahesh, C.S.; Manavalaratnam, A.N.; Mani, K.S.S.; Mani, P.B.; Manyam, R.S.; Mathew, A.M.; Muraliedharan, K.; Muthukrishnan, P.R.; Narayanan, R.C.; Narayanaswamy, R.; Palanisamy, A.P.; Parameswaran, P.K.; Parthasarathy, T.S.; Phillip, T.; Ponnambalam, M.; Ponnuswamy, M.P.; Prakash, S.; Raghupathy, M.; Rajagopalan, Sheila; Rajagopalan, V.G.; Ramadoss, S.; Ramalingam, V. Jothi; Ramamurthy, R.; Raman, Dr K.V.; Ramanathan, P.S.; Ramanathan, S.; Ramani, H.; Rangachari, Dr. S.; Ranganathan, K.; Rao, T.Y.C.; Sachidanand, S.; Santharam, V.; Sekharan, T.U. Vijaya; Sethu, S.; Soman, Indira; Sridharan, G.; Sridher, R.; Subramanian, V.; Sukumar, S.; Sundar, Dr. J. Shyam; Swaminathan, A.M.; Swamy, Dr. Mahadeswara; Thomas, Cheryl; V. Manickam, V & Shobha; Veerappan, R.M.; Venkatachalam, S.V.; Venkatachari, Prasad.

Rs. 101: Joseph, P.J.; Kasthuri, Prof. A.K.; Nadanaguru, S.; Prabhu, V Anant; Sridharan, G.N.; Sundar, K. Ravi;

Rs. 110: Raghavan, N.; Venkatachalam, Vijayam; Joseph, I.C.; Sharma, Gp. Capt.(Retd.), K.S.V.; Ramchandrar, K. Arun; Seshan, R Venkata.

Rs. 111: Panchanathan, Dr. S; Venugopal, A.

Rs. 116: Rao, Prof. K.N.; Rao, B. Shankar.

Rs. 150: Ramadoss, Dr. K.; Kamath, Vinay.

Rs. 151: Gowreesan, V.S.

Rs. 200: Bhatt, S.A.; Chitrarasu, A.; Dass, K. Anusha; Fredrick, Suhasini; Ganesan, N.; Jagadish, S.; John, K. George; Krishnamoorthy, N.; Meenakshi Sundaram, A.; Natarajan, Dr. R.K.

Rs. 201: Kalyanasundaram, S.Y.; Somasundaram, R.

Rs. 250: Krishnan, R.; Mizyan, L. Aaqib; Rajeswari, E.H.; Reddy, Dr. P.T.; Shankaran, S. Vidhya; Somadana, S.; Viswanathan, K.V.;

Rs. 300: Tagat, T. Raghun, Joseph, Jaiboy.

Rs. 301: Alexander, Mary

Rs. 500: Abraham, Dr. Jacob; Krishnaswamy, A.; Krishnaswamy, S.; Saldanha, G.S.A.; Shanmugavelayutham, Dr. K.; Som Mehta; Subramaniam, M.

Rs. 501: Pillai, C.T.A.; Premkumar, Dr. B.

Rs. 600: Thomas Tharu

Rs. 1000: Andavan, N. Palani; Ananth, Sashikala; Balasubramanian, R.; Dharmalingam, N.; Joseph, G. Paul; Mani, S.V.S.; Menon, K.P.S.; Mothilal, S.S.; Viswanathan, Mrs.

Rs. 1001: Rajagopalan, Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) P.S.; Sridhar, T.S.

Rs. 1200: Belliappa, I.A.S.(Retd.), P.M.; Paul, F.V.N.; Rajan, R.V.

Rs. 1500: B.Gautham

Rs. 2000: Prabhakar, J. Samuel

Rs. 2500: Devadoss, Mahema

Rs. 5000: Varma, Raghava

CHENNAI HERITAGE

260-A T.T.K. Road, Alwarpet, Chennai 600 018.

I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs.100/Rs..... (Rupees) payable to CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS, as token of my support of *Madras Musings* and the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that it espouses.

Name :

Address:

Present Mailing List No.

Still far from target

(By The Editor)

We are still far from our target of Rs. 5 lakh a year support from readers, but, thanks to the generosity of some readers, we are some way towards that target. What is sad, however, is that of the 16,000+ on our mailing list, we have received support from less than a thousand – even though over 10,000 on that list are people who had specifically written in asking for copies, while others still request to be put on the mailing list.

Perhaps you should listen to the advice of people like Reader B. Gautham, who writes:

Just one good suggestion, like the one from Mr. Dattatri, and see how much money you have raised! It is my ardent wish and hope that the steady stream started by this suggestion turns into a torrential flow.

I, however, do not know how this idea has missed you. **Scrap the mailing list in its totality, in its entirety. Start afresh, start anew.** State in MM that you are scrapping the entire list and those who wish to receive MM MUST fill in the form (the usual form that you publish in MM). Obviously those who have made contributions need not go through this process.

Choose a deadline – it could be six issues of MM or eight issues of MM or whatever. In each issue state the above – that you are scrapping the mailing list and those who wish to receive MM must register afresh. Stick to the deadline.

You will be amazed at the total lack of response from the readers. (This is my guess and I hope I am absolutely wrong.) A reader wrote saying that he has given the names of 25 of his friends. How many of them are really interested in reading MM? We can only guess.

If a person is really interested, let him (hopefully) make a contribution or let him take the trouble to fill in and send a simple form requesting that he be included in MM's mailing list. If you do so, you will be left with a group of dedicated citizens whose number I expect to be small (as stated above) and that will make it easy for you to manage. If a person does not wish to take the trouble to fill a simple form and mail it, why must he receive MM?

However, we plan to take a slightly different route. And that is what we had intended all along. We are in the process of going through our 16,500-strong mailing list and hope, from April 16th (Vol. XII, No. 1), to have a new and smaller one. In it will be those who have

sent in support, those on the lists sent to us by our corporate supporters and those in decision-making positions. We envision a list of around 3000. We then plan to, after weeding out duplications, arbitrarily drop names to get an additional list of around 7000 names. Thereafter, names will be added only on specific request through our regular coupon. For every such name added, we will drop a name from the 7000, ensuring a constant circulation of around 10,000 copies. If we receive support of more than Rs. 5 lakh a year from readers, we will consider increasing that circulation.

One last word. We from time to time receive complaints from readers that they have not received copies. We assure every reader on our mailing list that copies are posted by us at the bulk mailing office on time. But sometimes the address wrapping gets torn, sometimes copies get returned to us for no reason and sometimes they are just plain not delivered. We plan to make the wrapping stronger and are talking to the postal authorities to ensure regular delivery. But if even after that you do not get your copies regularly from April 16th issue onwards, we really do not have an answer to the problem other than to complain to the postal authorities. Please bear with us; for an organisation with no permanent staff – not even your Editor – we are trying to do our best.

Bird-watching an ideal hobby

Bird-watching as a hobby offers you health, fresh air, mental stimulation and pleasure. This is how.

When you go out bird-watching, say, in the Adyar Estuary, you have to make it on foot. All the walking will keep you healthy and fit.

The fresh air of the early morning estuary will fill your lungs and you will literally be refreshed, away from the smoke and smog of Chennai, with its fume-emitting MTC buses. And mental stimulation and pleasure will come from spotting and identifying the birds in, say, the Adyar Estuary or Guindy National Park.

There is a large variety of birds which I have spotted here ever since 1981. In the Guindy Deer Sanctuary, for example, you can see Golden-Backed Woodpeckers hammering away with their stout bills on the trunks of trees. Then, in this migratory season, there are Forest Wagtails – foolishly running and flying in front of you as you walk along the path. The rare Brown Forest Eagle is also a permanent resident of the Park. In fact, there have been 238 species of birds identified in the Guindy National Park by experienced ornithologists.

Other spots where Chennai-vasis can go birding are the Pallikarai swamps, the Adyar river-bank in Kotturpuram, the YMCA College campus, the IIT campus, the Madras Christian College campus and so on. Be sure to take along a copy of the standard *Book of Indian Birds* by Salim Ali and Laeque Fatehally. You will surely get pleasure spotting a bird in the wild and finding its name in this bird-book, along with the illustration.

Bird-watching an ideal hobby for young and old alike, is not only healthy and pleasurable, but will also make you eco-friendly.

K. Karunanidhi



Budding naturalists on the trail... encouraged by the Madras Naturalists Society.

A 25-year commitment to Nature

In January 1980, renowned ornithologist Dr. Salim Ali wrote in the first anniversary souvenir of the *Madras Naturalists' Society* (MNS) that he was "happy to hear of the diverse activities of the MNS". He also stated that he felt that "one year is too short a time for such celebration, and a minimum period of five years' active existence would be a more appropriate period". The MNS has done a lot better than that; it recently kickstarted its celebration of 25 years of active existence at the Chembarambakkam Lake guesthouse amid the many birds that congregate in the area and plans a year-long programme "to educate the public on the beauty of our flora and fauna and the need for their conservation".

It was on May 13, 1978 that 16 people interested in wildlife and nature met at R.V. Mohan Rao's residence on Chamier's Road and decided to form a society. Founded informally in

December 1978 by this group of nature and wildlife lovers, the MNS was formally registered in 1979 as a non-profit, voluntary, non-governmental organisation. The objectives of the Society were to:

- Create environmental awareness and spread the message of nature conservation among members of the general public, especially youth and rural people.

- Organise camps, outings, lectures, slide shows, seminars and also bring out books, journals and bulletins; and

- Undertake studies related to biodiversity and conservation.

The first Secretary was V.J. Rajan and the first meeting was held on June 11, 1979, at the Children's Park Library, with a talk by G.U. Kurup of the Zoological Survey of India on the Silent Valley. It was with Kurup's help and assistance from the Forest Department that the MNS conducted the first census of the Guindy National Park. The initial subscription was Rs. 12 a year (Rs. 6 for students) and a monthly news bulletin was started in November the same year.

Says one of the early members of MNS and current Secretary, V.S. Sudhakar (a chartered accountant by profession), "A remarkable feature of the Society has been the wide cross-section of people it attracts. We have doctors, accountants, government servants and teachers and students. Our members range in age from 10 to 70. Many of our members have made wildlife their profession – Dr. Ravi Chellam of the Wildlife Institute of India, Dr. R. Sukumar of the Indian Institute of Science, the Chairman of the Asian Elephant Group, Dr. Shantaram, well-known ornithologist Dr. 'Hornbill' Kannan, who has done much pioneering work on Hornbills, are a few. V.S. Bhanumathi, a popular environmental consultant, was one of our founder women members

and has made environment her career. The camaraderie among the member naturalists is such that even when they move away, they still keep in touch."

Sudhakar, however, regrets that "Unfortunately the average age of the Society has grown. There is less inflow of the young, who are compelled by pressures – both academic and parental – to keep away from the causes of the environment or conservation. And sadder still is the indirect impact of the channels like 'National Geographic', which have spawned a

breed of 'wildlife enthusiasts' who are more aware of problems in the darkest recesses of Africa and not of what is happening outside their own windows. Not even during travel – which has become a major hobby across almost every income group – do adults or youngsters optimally utilise all those wonderful opportunities to observe, ask questions and learn about the environment. Not for anything in the world would I have missed the indescribable thrill I experienced when I saw a flight of Bar-headed Geese in Nelapattu, and felt they must be the same birds I saw a few months ago, thousands of miles away in far-off Ladakh!

"It is definitely the fault of our education system that we've so few young volunteers. Since the future of our country and the protection of flora and fauna depend on them, our curriculum should be planned so that children learn more about the local environment and geography through projects that are relevant. A student who knows more about the greenhouse effect than the trees that grow within his school compound is not being educated in the real sense."

The Society's quarterly journal *Blackbuck*, which commenced publication in April 1985, is noteworthy for its contributions on all aspects of natural history and conservation by amateur naturalists and researchers, and is much sought after even by foreign wildlife enthusiasts. The Society's wildlife education programme that was also launched in 1985 stresses amongst youth and schoolchildren the importance of conserving wildlife. Over the years, the MNS's focus on spreading environmental awareness has not changed. Slide shows could be organised on a regular basis in more school environments with more support in the form of funds AND volunteers. Regular research projects and involvement in conservation campaigns – like

(Continued on Page 6)

OUR READERS WRITE



Heartrending treatment

Reader Dr. M.S. Jayaraman's letter (MM, February 1st), is heartrending. But while many of us may not know or see what goes on inside a slaughterhouse, the cruelty that is meted out to pets and animals on the road, particularly during their last journey to slaughterhouse, is pathetic, to say the least! What do we do? We are silent, totally helpless!

Just one example. A neighbour used to tie his pet in a small kennel, exposed to rain, heat and dirt, though he has a big compound where it can always roam free. The first one died, the second one was an Alsatian pup, its legs were bent (whether because of the small kennel or polio, I do not know), but it used to cry throughout the day. We requested the owner to look after it, but to no avail. Thereafter my wife and daughter took a couple of persons from the PFA to the house, only to be threatened and abused.

All of a sudden, the pup was missing and was replaced by a Doberman, whose fate was the same. This was one of the reasons we moved house. Why are people in Chennai, so religious otherwise, so insensitive to animals?

A.K. Sehanobis
5, Crystal Park
Plot No. 1317
18th Main Road
Anna Nagar West
Chennai 600 040.

A nasty step

Is this how we beautify Marina? (MM, February 16th) made sad reading. That the State government, instead of taking desired steps to beautify the Marina, proposes to mar the charm of the landmark by taking an ill-advised move to construct a new Secretariat building occupying

a vast area on Kamarajar Salai is a matter of great concern. It would be unwise to construct any new building on the Marina where the existing buildings have a heritage value.

Further, proposals for construction of a new Secretariat building or Assembly as well as shifting of the capital should be carried out only after ensuring approval of all political parties and general public and not unilaterally by the party in power. If the Capital Secretariat and Legislature cannot be shifted to a suitable area between Tiruchy and Thanjavur on the banks of Cauvery, which will be ideal, a suitable area in the suburbs of Chennai should be chosen.

M.R. Pillai
H 64/5, Central Avenue
Korattur, Chennai 600 080.

Save Marina

I am currently a resident of Madurai, working in the University here. However, I did my schooling, a part of my college and my initial research in Madras (not Chennai). It is out of my feeling for Madras as Madras that I hope there will be some means of stopping the maddening rush of the bulldozers and concrete monstrosities.

Both the plans of the current Government for the beautification of the Marina beach and the creation of a *Vidhana Soudha* for the Secretariat on Beach Road need to be stopped. The moves are clear violations of the Environment Regulations governing the coastal areas. Apart from violations, which can always be dodged by insensitive governments by merely changing the law (for, the laws of our democratic country especially operate for and need to be followed only by those commoners who cannot change them), the pollution and damage to

environment are going to be incalculable.

If the Secretariat needs to be moved out of Fort St. George, then it should be moved to the outer Madras city limits, to a place where there is sufficient local train and bus access, possibly between the airport and Tambaram. Regular free shuttles can be provided for people to access the Secretariat from major points in the city. By such a move there will be less pressure on the city infrastructure. The Ministers' and MLAs' housing can also be shifted along with the Secretariat. The currently available housing could be made into residential colonies.

The beautification of Marina should be left to the local residents and fisherfolk. Anti-social visitors and the sheer lack of amenities cause most of the dirt and filth. In fact, a large stretch of the Marina beach road, from the lighthouse to the Madras University buildings, can be closed for traffic.

Plying of fuel-efficient public transport vehicles in both directions on a frequent basis, something like those shuttle buses used in airports to ferry passengers, will help bring down pollution levels.

I wish to contribute in whatever manner possible to any forum or organisation that can be formed to stop the destruction of the Marina habitat.

S. Krishnaswamy
2/154, South Fifth Street
Palkalainagar East
Madurai 625 021.

Greening the terrace

Though I am not an expert on the subject, I do know that birds need a natural environment, like thick greenery, which reader C.S. Baskar (MM, February 16th) says he has. May I suggest that he keep water in trays at different places near the greenery? Possibly, water being another need more birds could gather. Also, if he covers as much of his terrace as he can with wire mesh raised on polls and allows creepers to climb on them, he will add to his present greenery, make his environment cool and provide an attraction for more birds to fly in. He should

not forget that the water trays should be clearly visible while planning the mesh cover and creepers.

T.N. Rajalakshmi
'Arunodaya'
Rajaram Colony A/4
Kodambakkam, Chennai 600 024.

A bird's eye view

I was delighted to find that reader L.C.S. Baskar (MM, February 16th) has a soft corner for birds, as we have in our family. Our interests started several years ago.

Our family used to regularly visit Gujarat and Rajasthan on pilgrimages. There, we were surprised to see right in middle of the roads and junctions ancient pillars, usually covered by a beautifully carved, umbrella-type canopy, with opening on all sides, under which birds of all hues gathered and merrily pecked away at the foodgrains religiously filled in by the townfolk. It was truly a remarkable sight.

Returning after one of these pilgrimages, my father decided to recreate the same ambience here. He would go out on to the terrace much before sunrise (as the birds here are a very shy lot compared to their counterparts in the North) and sprinkle the floor with different types of grain on different days. To his dismay, only a few birds visited our terrace those first days. But, Father was not one to give up easily. And, within a week, the birds swelled to such numbers that it was impossible to keep count. Father then got us to fill a shallow earthen bowl with water and place it in a shady corner for the birds. They appeared to welcome this too. Taking a cue from Father, my uncles, who are our immediate neighbours, joined the bandwagon and, today, there are hundreds and thousands of such birds which frequent our homes several times a day, bringing sheer joy and happiness into our daily lives. We have all since then learnt much about the birds, their traits and characteristics.

Reader Baskar should patiently pursue his dreams. After all, these are not merely flights of fantasy, but wings of beauty and joy forever. He, or other readers, requiring information on this hobby may contact me at Ph: 28278001/28263637.

That plastics ban

A few weeks ago I went to the Children's Park and Snake Park in Guindy. While I was pleased to find that no plastic bag is allowed in, I was surprised that my bag with a plastic water bottle, plastic biscuit packet and the plastic covering the toffees came under scrutiny. I was asked to discard the plastic bag and buy a paper bag (much less stronger than plastic), just near the gate.

Obviously, I could not carry all this in bits and pieces, so I discarded all the eatables and drinking water under the gate, just near the gate.

Plastics have reduced the cutting down of trees to make paper and have even replaced match-sticks made of wood.

So, could we please have a bit of discretion?

K.V.S. Krishna
2A, Parkland Apartments
Kamala Bai Street
T. Nagar, Chennai 600 017.

Professional cricket

The policy of big business establishments to bring prominent cricketers from other states to play for their teams as 'pros' (MM, February 1st) is welcome for the spectators in Chennai, but it has its own hidden disadvantages. These 'pros' are causing slow death to the talents of Tamil Nadu players, spoiling their chances of representing the nation.

The business houses, if they are seriously interested in promoting sports, should join together and put up a coaching school under the control and supervision of former Indian players and should train the youngsters by adopting them and providing them education, health, food, accommodation and employment, instead of spending lavishly on the already rich players of other states.

The sponsors should also not confine their activity to the promotion of cricket only, but should support other sports also.

P. Venugopalan
160/2, Lake View Road
West Mambalam, Chennai 600 033.

Miller remembered

Many of the younger generation, even in South India, are not aware of Dr. William Miller who endowed at the University of Madras the Miller Gold Medal in memory of his father, to be given to the student who takes the B.A. Degree with the highest honours in philosophy. Dr. C.R. Reddy and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan were recipients of the Medal.

Miller was the first 'non-official' to be made the Vice-Chancellor of the Madras University — twice at that, during his stay in Madras as Principal of Madras Christian College. He willed most of his savings to the College.

Miller was a keen student of Shakespeare. He made penetrating studies of 'King Lear and Indian Politics', 'Macbeth and the Ruin of Souls', 'Hamlet and the Waste of Life', 'Othello and the Crash of Character' and of Coriolanus. He also penned seven chapters on the topography of Palestine in relation to its history under the title: *The Least of All Lands*. Will the College republish these studies as well as the two

S. Theodore Baskaran
9/1, 24th East Street
Thiruvanniyur
Chennai 600 041.

New Secretariat at old Marina!

The Oxford dictionary gives a romantic meaning to the word 'Marina': "place with moorings for pleasure-yachts". But our Marina in Madras née Chennai which has, of late, been very much in the news, is different. Here you will find many other things moored, none of them even remotely resembling pleasure-yachts.

Marina in the Madras context is the 12-kilometre long stretch of sea and sand, which once upon a time was hailed as the 'second longest beach' in the world and the pride of this South Indian commercial and cultural hub.

Any tourist-cum-travel guide writing on Madras fifty years ago would have described the Marina thus: "Longest beach of India, comprising 12 kms of golden sand, white surf and a shimmering clean blue sea, is the City's major tourist attraction today. Two rivers — Cooum and Adyar — flow into the sea, the latter forming an estuary of islands, ponds and mangroves attracting multiple varieties of migratory birds. Adjacent to this estuary is the world-renowned Theosophical Society with its vast expanse of pristine forest and the largest banyan tree under the sun. Truly a sight to be seen and cherished".

The 'beach drive' along the sands, a 3.5 kilometre stretch, was made beautiful by the facelift given by Governor Elphinstone Duff in the early 1880s. On this 'drive' is located some of the City's most beautiful buildings, such as the University of Madras, Senate House, Chepak Palace, Presidency College, P.W.D Office and Ice House. These buildings were designed and built to suit the ambience of the sun, sea and sand so that nature was not intimidated.

Madras Marina has been a standing testimony to how immortal nature and mortal humans can live in perfect harmony.

If the same guidebook author were to write on the same Marina today, it would be something like this: "A long stretch of land meeting the staid waters of the Bay of Bengal and comprising several beach segments. These segments are: Marina proper, marked by *samadhis* and sand littered with filth and garbage; San Thomé and Foreshore cluttered with slums, shanties and open lavatories; Theosophical Society where the sands are still clean, and Elliot's Beach, Kalakshetra and Valmiki Nagar over-run with cramped residential layouts. In between flow two open sewers — Cooum and Adyar — emptying the City's waste

into the sea. The erstwhile estuary is now an ugly expanse of slums, garish structures and stinking atrophied ponds where 'not a bird flies'. A stink to be despised and avoided."

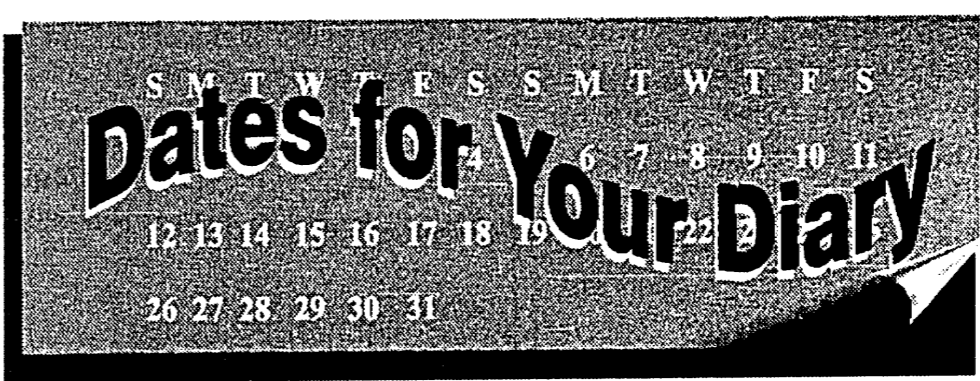
'Beach drive' continues to have the same old buildings with some nondescript ones added on. Facing them is a formidable array of statues of Tamil scholars and two splendid bits of sculpture — the Victory of Labour and Mahatma Gandhi. Between the statues and the sea there is a 'swimming pool' without water and an apology of an aquarium! The plight of Marina today is akin to the 'garland given in the hands of a monkey'.

No need to despair, though, because hope is on the way, high-powered and fast. Posterity will soon record: "Where once lay the white sands of the Marina kissed by the blue waters of the Bengal Bay, now stand the tall towers of multinational companies and massive mansions of the world's embassies. Dwarfing them all is the grandest and most magnificent 'New Government Secretariat' on the 'beach drive' overlooking the walker's promenade. In sheer grandeur and majesty this Secretariat surpasses Bangalore's Vidhana Soudha by several notches. This architectural marvel is the ultimate triumph of Tamil Nadu over Karnataka and convincing proof that the State has become No. 1 despite denial of Cauvery water!"

Environmental and other activists who had targeted the Marina with a flurry of activities to 'clean and spruce it up' can relax, having achieved their purpose of "moving the Government to where the Marina is"! The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority that had formed a Beach Committee to develop schemes for the beautification of the Marina can wind up the committee and concentrate on getting the 'majestic buildings' in place. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board which had prepared a 'laundry list' of strategies to "save the Marina" and had suggested the constitution of high-level and low-level committees to implement the strategies can take it easy too.

Because Government has now taken full control and, like King Canute commanding the waves, will hereafter watch every movement on the Marina, sitting in the spectacular 'New Secretariat'!

M.G. Devasahayam
11-C, South Leith Castle Road
San Thomé, Chennai 600 028.



March / April: Artist of the month: D. Raju, from Maharashtra, at present working in Cholamandalam Artists' village.

Till March 22: *Bags from India*, an exhibition by graphic artist Pascal Colrat. While in artistic residence in India, he has produced a series of 50 graphic works printed on bags. These works are his vision of India. (At Alliance Francaise.)

Till March 23: *Ugadi Utsav*, highlighting the craft and culture of Andhra. Folk performances and craft demos will be staged on all days. Traditional cotton sarees from Andhra, such as the *Mangalagiri* and *Venkatagiri*, will be on sale. *Cherial Dolls* of Warangal, wooden carving and *etikopaka* toys will also be on display and sale. A *kalamkari* artist will demonstrate his work. (At DakshinaChitra.)

Till March 31: *'Tree of Life' Art Exhibition & Sale*, an India-Malaysia exhibition curated by Edric Org, bringing together the creative expressions of the two countries.

In this exhibition the *tree of life* has been captured in carvings, paintings, etchings, carpets, tapestries, rugs, embroidery, pottery, tableware, etc. This is a unique exhibition as Edric involves local

craftsmen to work in tandem with the exhibition and produce works for sale, that travel with the show. Like the tree of life, the exhibition is ever changing, growing and evolving. (At DakshinaChitra.)

From March 24: Painting exhibition by K. Arvind and K. Shankar. (At Vinyasa.)

March 19: *Transmediale* (International Media Art), introductory lecture, 'Current Artistic Strategies in Media Art' by Susanne Jaschko.

Transmediale is an international festival for electronic media-art and media-culture. This year's theme being "Play Global," the festival showcases the latest works/trends from the video-internet and interactive art.

Susanne Jaschko, one of the key persons from the festival, will screen a selection of material from the festival 2002 and festival 2003. (At Max Mueller Bhavan, 6.00 p.m.)

March 21: The monthly rendezvous, *Travelogue*, where you journey through their lives, with celebrities whose rigour, passion and know-how are remarkable. This month, it is M.B. Nirmal, founder of Exnora which works towards a better environment in Chennai. (At Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.)

March 23: *Miracle*, featuring mandolin virtuoso U. Shrinivas, with acclaimed guitarist Michael Brook, Edward Quinn on the percussion and Chris Tin on the keyboard in a first time combination, fusing eastern and western influences. (At the Music Academy.)

March 24: *Art and Society*, a lecture by Geeta Doctor, journalist and art critic. (At Lalit Kala Akademi, 6 p.m.)

March 24-31: A photography exhibition, *Baroque, from India to Brazil*, by an expert on Baroque art, Ferrante Ferranti. This exhibition is a result of his research in churches in countries where Catholicism has blended with the local forms. (At Alliance Francaise.)

March 26-29: *Doctortitis*, presented by 'Masquerade'. The group will present three short comedies about doctors and their sometimes strange inclinations and crazy traits. Ranging from intelligent

humour to raucously raunchy and bawdy, the evening comprises *The Chiroprapist*, *The Gynaecologist* and *The Physician*. The plays are written by John Patrick, directed by Krishna Kumar. (At the Alliance Francaise.)

From March 28: Paintings by Mahima Mody. (At Lalit Kala Akademi.)

March 30: *Bali Aadugal*, a Tamil play by a group from Pondicherry on its return from the National Theatre Festival in Delhi. This original play is about exclusion, the misfortune of the Dalits in their daily life in India. Prof. K.A. Gunasekaran, Head of the Department of Drama, University of Pondicherry, directs; he is a folk musician and Dalit activist. (At the Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.)

April 1: A lecture on *Ethics in Journalism* by Prof. Michael Kunchik of the University of Mainz. Introduction by N. Ram, Editor, *Frontline*. (At Max Mueller Bhavan, 6.30 p.m.)

Want to muse with MUSINGS?

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

Name

Address

.....

.....

Note: Overseas postage Rs. 450/year extra. Cheques payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period February 16th to 28th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Which much-covered role in the Harry Potter series is Michael Gambon signed on to play?
2. Where in Madhya Pradesh is the *bhojshala* that has become a place of dispute in recent times?
3. Which film won 11 Filmfare Awards recently?
4. What feat did Pakistani speedster Shoaib Akhtar achieve with the last ball of his second over against England on February 22nd?
5. Name the daughter of Pt. Ravi Shankar who won five Grammys on February 23rd.
6. In which Asian capital was the latest Non-Aligned Movement summit held?
7. The DRDE, Gwalior, has developed an instant kit, the first of its kind in the world, to detect which common global ailment?
8. The portrait of which 'freedom fighter', an accused in the Mahatma Gandhi assassination case, was unveiled amidst many a protest in Parliament?
9. 'Gardens of the World' is going to come up on which famous site in the US?
10. Who is the richest Indian individual in the world, with a net worth of \$5.9 billion?

* * *

11. 'Thangam' made her debut at the Chennai Port Trust on February 20th. What is 'Thangam'?
12. What was the much-publicised A.R. Rahman concert on February 21st in Chennai called?
13. Which Chennai church has six bells, the largest number for any church in Tamil Nadu?
14. Where in the State did India's second railway line run?
15. Name the character actor, known by his military designation, who passed away on February 28th.
16. Which of Kamal Haasan's innovative films was based on Alexander Dumas' *The Corsican Brothers*?
17. Point Calimere is the anglicised name for which place?
18. Of the *Aanupadai Veedus*, which three have names beginning with 'Ti'?
19. If it was *Annakili* for Ilayaraja, what was it for Vairamuthu?
20. Who was the last Tamil Nadu cricketer to don India colours?

(Answers on page 8)

Conserving built heritage

(Continued from Page 1)

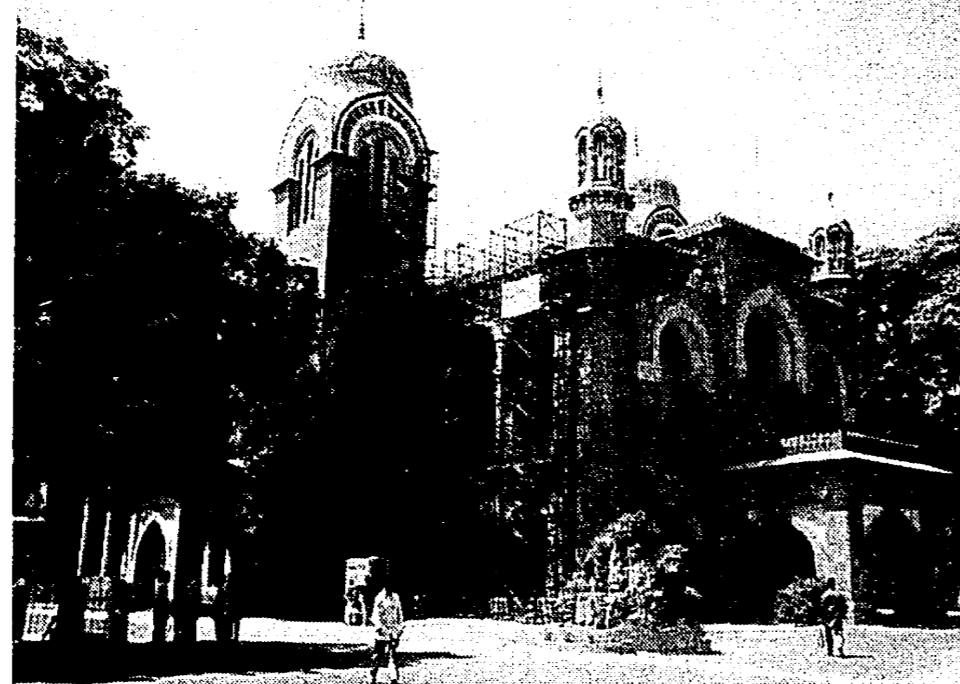
action at a required scale in a growing economy like ours. But if our cultural heritage is lost due to lack of care, it cannot be re-created and future generations will not forgive us.

Conservation literally means "to preserve" or "to maintain without change". In practical terms, however, the main requirements for promoting conservation can be identified as follows:

- Establishment and development of proper conservation facilities in all the Government Departments and organisations looking after heritage structures.
- Training of Conservators and Technicians.
- Creating consciousness about the process of deterioration and preservation, amongst the caretakers and administrative heads controlling heritage structures.
- Scientific research for improvement of conservation methods, and continuous dissemination of new methods and products evolved.
- Creating awareness among the masses of the need for proper maintenance of our built heritage and checking human vandalism, disfigurement or damage to such structures.

Conservation is a developing technical subject and there is need for continuous research to improve conservation techniques and develop materials suited to the climatic, social and economic conditions of our country.

Another need is that of the quality control of materials to be used for conservation purpose. Before a new material is utilised for conservation of any



At last... signs of conserving and restoring Senate House, with permanent scaffolding going up. (Photograph by R. ESWARRAJ.)

structure it is necessary to test its suitability and compatibility with old material used in the structure, to ensure that it does not harm the heritage structure. For example, where building material like lime mortar has been used in a heritage structure, it must not be repaired with cement mortar as both have different binding strengths and contraction and compression characteristics and are therefore not compatible with each other.

It is often thought that for conservation some very elaborate and complicated equipment and techniques are required. We tend to forget that the artisans of ancient times created these exquisite structures with much less equipment and only with traditional techniques. They, however, possessed high skill and expertise passed on to them by their ancestors. Therefore, the conservationist should try to locate traditional workers for practical conservation of old structures using very simple and, often, inexpensive materials and techniques used in earlier times. What really matters is the

expertise and the technical skill of the workers, which must get due recognition in our system.

There is also the need to develop a holistic approach to our heritage, based on cultural pluralism and diversity and respected by professionals, craft persons and administrators.

Education and training for conservators should produce a number of professional conservationists who are able to:

- Read a monument and identify its emotional, cultural and use significance.
- Understand the history and technique of a monument.
- Understand the setting of a

monument in relation to other buildings, garden or landscape.

- Find and absorb all available sources of information relevant to the monument.
- Learn to diagnose intrinsic and extrinsic causes of decay.
- Inspect and make a report on monuments intelligible to non-specialist readers also.
- Give expert advice on maintenance strategies and management policies.

There is in India a lack of conservation facilities, a lack of training, a lack of consciousness for preservation and so on. The recognition of these problems and of concerted effort to solve them is the need of the day. It is time we realised that, every day, a part of our valuable cultural heritage is being destroyed not by theft or smuggling but by the causes which can easily be averted. In the end, we must understand, "It is better to consolidate than to repair, better to repair than to restore, better to restore than to re-build, better to re-build than to embellish." (Courtesy: ICCI Newsletter.)

Divya Pathak

Statement about Ownership and other particulars about newspaper
(As required to be published under Section 19-D Sub-section (b) of the Press and Registration of Books Act with Rule 8 of the Registration of Newspaper (Central Rules), 1956.)

Form IV Madras Musings (Fortnightly)

1. Place of Publication	: Chennai (Madras)
2. Periodicity of its publication	: Fortnightly
3. Printer's name	: Mr. T.J. George
Nationality	: Indian
Address	: Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd. No. 62/63 Greames Road Chennai 600 006
4. Publisher's Name	: Mr. S. Muthiah for Chennai Heritage
Nationality	: Indian
Address	: 260-A, T.T.K. Road, Chennai 600 018
5. Editor's Name	: Mr. S. Muthiah
Nationality	: Indian
Address	: 260-A, T.T.K. Road, Chennai 600 018
6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the publication	: 1. Mr. N. Sankar Director S/o Mr. K.S. Narayanan 292, T.T.K. Road Alwarpet, Chennai 600 018. 2. Mr. M.V. Subbiah Director S/o (Late) A.M.M. Vellayan Chettiar 10, Boat Club Road, Chennai 600 028 3. Mr. S. Muthiah Director S/o (Late) Mr. V.Vr.N.M. Subbiah Chettiar 2-F, Vijay Gardens, I Cross Street Vijayaraghavachari Road T. Nagar, Chennai 600 017. 4. Mrs. Tara Murali Director W/o Mr. N. Murali, 260-A, T.T.K. Road Chennai 600 018 5. Mr. Suresh Rao Director S/o Mr. V.R. Rao 277, T.T.K. Road, Chennai 600 018

I hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Signature of the Publisher)

Shobha Menon

Kapali Oduvar sings of old Mylapore



Kapali Oduvar

my quest to get to know Kapali Oduvar better.

At the end of the concert, which he performs every day from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. and 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., he explains the song on the deity of the temple. The saint, arriving from Thiruvotriyur, is confronted with Sivanesan Chettiar bearing the funeral urn of his daughter Poompavai.

Sambandar, through his song, brings the girl back to life. He refuses to accede to her request to marry him, for in bringing her back to life he is akin to her father.

In each of the ten verses, Kapali Oduvar describes the town of Mylapore, speaks of the festival in a particular month and asks the girl to arise from the ashes. He also praises the town for its groves of Punnai and coconut trees, its dancing peacocks, kohli eyed women wearing many fine bangles and asks Poompavai to arise. He sings,

*In Mylapore of beautiful groves,
The waves creep up to the sea-shore
and then dance on it
As do the fisherfolk who spear the
many fish in the waters.*

Kapaleeswaram in this plenty celebrates the Thiruvadhira festival.

Is it done for you to miss this excitement, Poompavai?



Devotees listening to Kapali Oduvar (Photographs by R. ESWARRAJ.)

In his descriptions of the town and his entreaties, the poet still takes little digs at the Jains and the Buddhists who were bitter enemies in those days of the *Bhakthi* movement.

One among the 63 Saivaithe saints, Vayilar Nayanar, was also a resident of Mylapore. He is famous for enshrining God in himself and offering worship. The *Periyapuranam*, which chronicles the lives of these saints, speaks of Mylapore having wealthy houses for generations and describes it as a city of truth and honesty found in Thondai Nadu. Unfortunately we have no verses that are attributed to this sage.

Engrossing as were the verses of the past he sang, I asked him what changes he has seen in Mylapore in his 58 years of living there. He chuckled a bit and spoke of how he was a witness himself to the destruction of all the groves that the saint had seen. Note that the saint says, "rain-bearing groves" in his poem. Now you know why we have no water. "I live in Mangollai and in my area were once the elephant and the horses of the temple."

I was surprised to learn that Kapali Oduvar does not come from a family of Oduvars. He ancestor was Vinayaga Mudaliar who established a *chattram* in Vyasarpad. His grandfather was a rice merchant. But his father was a singer of the hymns. "My father, Singaram Oduvar, with his tuft of hair in the back, used to look like a proper Iyer and so did I before I cut my tuft off. I learnt many of the songs myself, and practised the various *raga* equivalents to the *panns*. I learnt a few from Dandapani Desikar who used to charge Rs. 600 for a few films. I also learnt from the Dharmapuram Swami. My high point was to have sung for a while in the Tiruvarur Adheenam."

I certainly didn't expect the answer he gave when I asked him about his economic well-being. "Today I get better donations from the public compared to the one or two rupees before. I also sing in the nearby Mundakanni Amman temple, so I have a little to tide me over, though with the kind of rents that I pay things are difficult. But looking at the lot of others in the 38,000 temples Tamil Nadu has, my lot seems to be better," he said.

Just as I was going to ask him to sing me a few verses, he popped a large betel leaf into his mouth! My chat with him was at an end and as I bade him goodbye, I felt relieved that although we have lost all of the scenes Sambandar described, we at least still have people who can sing of them. Kapali Oduvar's children have never been involved with his 'concerts' and, so, with him will die a small part of Madras's musical heritage, making it all the more important that we listen to him while he still can!

Pradeep Chakravarthy

Architects' responsibility to artisans and craftsmen

The role of artisans in contemporary architecture is diminishing rapidly. On the one hand, we are proud of our heritage and showcase it around the world. But, on the other, we find ourselves in the very embarrassing position of not being able to do anything except talk about it.

Universally, the efforts to conserve architectural heritage have focussed extensively on the 'products', which have survived the onslaught of time as well as the change and pace of development. It has, in the process, acquired substantive depth in its approach as well as in the methodologies of preserving/conserving the 'products'. This has not only diluted our understanding of what constitutes heritage but also has ignored the 'processes' which have made the 'products' worthy of being called a part of our cultural heritage. Consequently 'processes' are becoming near extinct. Quite a few of the 'processes' have survived so far, but they are rapidly heading for extinction, more a result of a lack of use, rather than due to any other reasons. If we accept these 'processes' as an integral part of our cultural heritage, then we must also face the reality that ignoring them has been one of the major pitfalls of our 'approach' to the looking after of our cultural heritage.

If the 'processes' and their continued sustenance were still a part of the policy decisions in the present architectural works, the issues of 'Continuity and Change', which seem to be a perpetual topic of debate, would be seen more as issues of 'Continuity and Growth', which are far less contradictory in nature. It is time we recognise that:

- The construction crafts and the body of knowledge of the vast range of traditional materials and technologies are

- The sustenance of our architectural and cultural heritage is directly related to the sustenance of this body of knowledge, as well as to the sustenance of the skills of these craftsmen.
- Unless we wake up to our responsibilities, this body of knowledge is in danger of being lost forever, and that too very soon.

This recognition infers that

- The 'processes' deserve our focussed attention as well as

• by Nimish Patel & Parul Zaveri

The authors are practising architects from Ahmadabad, who have committed their practice to the understanding of the traditions of construction in India, heritage conservation and all its related aspects, primarily through an exploratory process, not an academic one.

neither fully documentable, nor have been adequately documented till date.

- This body of knowledge is passed on from a father to his children, and from a teacher to his pupils, through a system of education vastly different from the one we are presently accustomed to.
- It is this body of knowledge and skills which will be lost, if we remain silent spectators to its unavoidable extinction. We can, and we should, generate sustained opportunities for its use, by changing our own mindsets.

mobilisation of resources for its revitalisation.

- Our current architectural practice will need to create awareness about it, and concentrate on the methods and the means to revitalise the use of these construction crafts, skills, and the body of knowledge embodied in those skills, by generating sustained opportunities for their use.
- Contemporary education has neither been successful nor effective in focussing on such a rich understanding and knowledge, evolved

over centuries, primarily because of our lack of familiarity with the vast range and depth of knowledge.

- There is an urgent need for us to be re-educated by engaging directly with traditional craftsmen to remove our discomfort in dealing with traditional materials and technologies.
- There is also an urgent need to review our educational curriculum and include, as an integral part, all aspects of this less-documented body of understanding and knowledge.

Summing up

- The need to re-establish the relevance of the role of artisans/craftsmen in contemporary architectural design and construction processes is paramount.
- The responsibility of making this happen rests with the profession of architecture and all activities related to it.
- The earlier we recognise the consequence of these responsibilities and the earlier we accept them, the greater will be the chance of the survival of 'processes' as well as the 'products', as integral parts of our cultural heritage.

(Courtesy: Yugam Souvenir of the 45th Annual NASA Convention.)

Champions under development - 3

Five more athletes to watch

We feature today the last five of the 15 sports-persons chosen for Athletics training under the Champions Development Scheme of the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu.

M. Sangeetha won the high jump title at the Fajar Indoor Athletic Championship in Iran last year with a jump of 1.71m. Earlier, in 2001, at the National Open Athletic Championship, she had a jump of 1.75m. Sangeetha has a string of firsts from 1999 onwards - at the National School Games, Inter-State Athletic Championship and the National Junior Athletic Championship. Her showing in sport is all the more praiseworthy considering that she scored 96 per cent in her Class 12 Board examination. After moving to Velachery, Sangeetha, an Electronics and Communications Engineering student, has got herself a new coach. She does physical training every evening at the Anna University grounds and practises her high jump at the high jump pits at the YMCA and Nehru Stadium.

S. Saraswathy displayed her prowess at the 14th South Zone Junior Athletic Meet in Kerala last year when she threw the



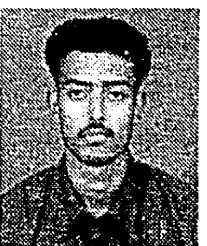
javelin a winning 36.02m. Subsequently, she improved on this performance considerably, at the 14th ITC Inter-Zonal Junior Athletic Championship in Kolkata, with a throw of 42.4m. At the National Games in Hyderabad, she threw the javelin 41.85m but finished fourth. She got back to her winning ways in January this year, coming first in the event at the Junior Nationals in Shimoga.



V. Sureka is a pole vault champion. She won the bronze medal in the event at the National Games in Hyderabad, but it was at the Senior Federation Cup Athletic Championship last year that she set a new meet record with jump of 3.20m. Sureka trains regularly at the Madras Medical College grounds, where she is coached by Manickraj. She was selected to go to the World Junior Athletic Championship in Canada. "I devote most of my time to sport; the little spare time I get, I spend watching sporting action on TV," the second-year student, studying at the MOP Vaishnav College, states.



N. Tharani participated in the 400m and 800m Fajar International Indoor Athletic Championship in Iran last year. It was her consistent performance in both these events at the State and national levels that led to her being selected for the Indian team that went to Iran. In the Junior Athletic Championship last year, she won the 800m and was second in the 400m. She had studied at Jamal Mohammed College, Tiruchi, but now works for the Railways.



Victor Jeba Singh's event is the high jump, first making a mark in this event in 1998 when he became the junior State champion. His string of successes led to his winning the Under-22 National Champion title in 2001. In 2002, at the Tamil Nadu Men's State Meet, he was second with a jump of 1.99m. But he won the decathlon event with 5838 points. In the Under-22 Tamil Nadu State Meet in Cuddalore, he was first in the high jump, this time with an improved performance of 2.03m. In the decathlon, he set a new meet record - 5675 points. Singh's decathlon record improved further, at the Chandigarh National Meet, when he scored 6299 points. He came fifth in high jump at the National Games in Hyderabad.

Sashi Nair

Recommended Trees - 3

For Industrial Areas

Trees for Industrial Estates

Samanea Saman (Rain Tree)
Delonix regia (Gulmohar)
Peltophorum Pterocarpum (Copper Pod Bearer)
Parkia Biglandulosa (Badminton Ball Tree)
Millingtonia hortense (Indian Cork Tree)
Kigelia Pinnata (Sausage Tree)

Trees suitable for Green Industry Campus

Small trees (Specimen / Colourful / Live barriers)
Bixa orellana (Red Indian Dye Tree)
Cordia sebastina (Red Cordia)
Cordia Mixa (Yellow Cordia)
Callistemon Lancolatus (Bottle Brush Tree)
Tecoma Stans (Yellow Tecoma)

Medium Trees (Dust adsorbers / Evergreen)

Hibiscus tiliacus (Yellow Mallow Tree)
Mimusops elengii (Indian Nedlar)
Gauzuma tomentosa (Caterpillar Tree)
Tamarindus Indica (Tamarind)
Ptero spermum acerifolium (Venchampaka)
Ficus Carica (Indian Fig Tree)

Large Trees (Efficient Oxygen recyclers / Perennial shade providers)

Ficus Bengalensis (Banyan)
Ficus religiosa (Peepal)
Azadirachta Indica (Neem)
Terminalia Catappa (Indian Almond)
Aegele Marmelos (Bengal Quince)
Filicium decipiens (Fern leaf tree)

Trees suitable for Polluting Industries sites

Eucalyptus globules
Eucalyptus citriodora (Eucalyptus)
Ailanthus excelsa (Matchwood Trees)
Cochlospermum religiosum (Yellow Silk Cotton)
Cassia Siamea (Kassod Tree)
Thespesia populnea (Portia Tree)

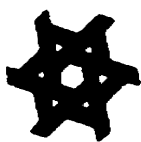
G. Dattatri, K. Hariharan and Prof. S. Dayanandan

Answers to Quiz

- Professor Dumbledore; 2. Dhar; 3. Devdas; 4. He breached the 100 mph barrier with a 100.23 [161.3 kph] thunderbolt; 5. Norah Jones; 6. Kuala Lumpur; 7. Typhoid; 8. Veer Savarkar; 9. The place where the World Trade Centers once stood; 10. Azim Premji of Wipro.
11. A 150-tonne, self-propelled floating crane; 12. Unity of Light World Tour 2003; 13. The Armenian Church of St. Mary's; 14. Madras (Royapuram) to Arcot (Wallajahpet); 15. 'Major' Sundararajan; 16. Aboorva Sahodarargal; 17. Kodikkrai; 18. Tiruparankunram, Tiruchendur and Tiruttani; 19. Bharatiraja's Nizhalgal; 20. L. Balaji.

* * *

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations:



Amalgamations Group



Ashok Leyland



Go Placidly

KASTURI &
SONS
LTD.



CONSTRUCTION DIVISION
LARSEN & TOUBRO LIMITED

LOKAVANI
HALLMARK PRESS
PVT. LTD.



MURUGAPPA
GROUP

Rane
Rane Group

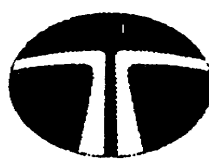
SAINT-GOBAIN
The future of glass. Since 1665.



Sundaram Finance
Limited



Sundram Fasteners
Limited



TATA
TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES



TVS MOTOR COMPANY

Since 1856,
patently leaders
— A WELLWISHER