Reg. No. TN/PMG (CCR) /814/03-05 Licence No. WPP 506/03-05

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India under R.N. 53640/91

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XIII No.2 FREE ISSUE May 1-15, 2003

INSIDE

- A welcome reprieve
- Punjab Heritage Act
- The Ranis of Chennai
- New series: Tamil writers
- Promising racket-wielders

a-MUSING

Mr. Kumar, your life and heart lines are excellent but sorry to say your 'Star' line is very weak! But it may suddenly improve and surprise you.

Stars above!

The Cable TV Wars going on right now in Chennai help validate a long-held belief – that the poor human being is like a small little leaf, destined to be blown hither and thither by the capricious winds of Fate.

For years you ambled along, with your *Chithrahaar* on Wednesdays, and one grudgingly-shown movie every Sunday. You were bored, but content.

Then along came these Star people. Waving magic wands, they opened Aladdin's cave and each day became a 24-hour picnic of soap operas, movies, music. The cable world grew – like Pinocchio's nose.

And now, suddenly, blameless citizens have been ripped out of their happy cable-TV-induced stupor, left with blank screens, or unwanted substitutes, in a selective fashion, to boot.

"I get all the Zee stuff, but no Star," discloses one viewer.

"Really?" frowns the other. "I get STAR ."

The two argue which 'bouquet' is better and, before long, there is a loud 'pop' and a lifetime friendship lies in ruins at their feet. As if the already existing divisive lines amongst our people are not enough!

Deprived viewers gaze at the succulent programme lists newspapers continue publishing nonchalantly and weep bitter tears into their pillows.

"Is this just?" they cry. No one listens.

They search the distant horizon for Stars, with nary a twinkle in sight – as I write.

Ranjitha Ashok

EDITOR'S NOTE: The stars are shining bright as this goes to press.

Please, tell us it is not so, Mr. V.C.

(By the Editor)

A recent report stated that Anna University proposed to raise a one lakh sq. ft. state-of-the-art administrative building in its Guindy campus. What was not stated in the report was the location for what was also not stated, the name of the building, which we hear might be the Jubilee Building.

Please tell us Vice-Chancellor that what is being spoken in hushed whispers in alumni circles is not so. What those whispers state is that this commemorative building is to be built **smack in front** of the landmark Guindy Engineering College building. Please tell us again, Mr. V.C., that it is not so. But if indeed there are such plans, someone has dreamed them up who has no sense of aesthetics, leave alone heritage. And we take it, it is no one connected with the University's Institute of Architecture.

(Continued on Page 6)

Reserved, but still threatened

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Kancheepuram District Collector has notified the classification of 548.14 hectares of the Pallikarnai Marsh as 'reserved land'. This is a welcome first step to save this endangered wetland, a major natural resource of the city. But this is only a beginning to protect this natural waterbody. Much more has to be done.

The boundaries have to be demarcated first with the Revenue Department's co-operation and, then, a Forest Settlement Officer has to be appointed to settle the claims. Only thereafter can the Forest Department claim ownership of the wetland. After demarcating the boundary of the reserved land, the Forest Department will have to totally fence the reserved area. Only this will help in attracting more birds to the waterbody, which will in turn improve the groundwater table and help activists get Pallikarnai included in the Ramsar list of waterbodies.

Despite the Revenue Department agreeing to complete its work at the earliest and hand the wetland over to the Forest Department, its progress has been slow, it is reported. Already, a large number of houses have come up on one side of the marsh and *pattas* have been issued to individuals, it is stated. How?

Further, a sizeable portion of the land here has been allotted to various organisations, including the Film Employees Federation of South India (FEFSI), a private school, Alandur Municipality and Chennai Corporation (for dumping garbage), the International Flower Action Centre, the Judicial Academy, the Dr. Ambedkar Law University and the Institute of Labour Studies. How, again?

Even after announcing the area as 'reserved land', the private garbage collecting company, CES Onyx, continues to dump garbage on one side of the land. Environmentalists point out that the private company is day-by-day eating up the marsh by slowly extending its dumping area. It is not only the dumping which is causing concern, but also the burning of the solid waste, whose smoke engulfs the entire area and creates a disastrous environment for the birds here. The company laid a new road a few months ago to reach the road connecting Pallikarnai and the Old Mahabalipuram Road, and all the Onyx lorries use it to enter the dumping yard

(Continued on Page 4)

Down to 13,000

With this issue, we have brought the circulation of *Madras Musings* down to 13,000 from 17,000. We are sorry, but we really have had no choice.

The trimming of our mailing list is now complete, but new reader serial numbers will come into operation only from May 16th. As announced, on April 16th, we have dropped from the list only duplications and readers who live outside Greater Chennai. The new list therefore includes all Greater Chennai readers, whether they have sent in any support to Chennai Heritage or not, as well as those outstation readers who have mailed in support. As we also stated, we will add to this list all those sending in support together with the new coupon appearing in every issue from April 16th and will from time to time, eliminate names from amongst those who have not sent in any support for the causes *Madras Musings* espouses.

New supporters of *Madras Musings* and outstation supporters of *Madras Musings* whose contributions have reached us before April 7th will be on the present list. Such supporters sending in contributions after that will get on the list *only from the issue dated the 16th of every month.* Regular outstation readers who send in their support late may therefore miss an issue or two, given the volunteer sort of logistics operation we run. Please bear with us.

—The Editor

A reprieve that's welcome, but...

Settling the status of the Marina is, *The Man From Madras Musings* believes, not as simple as adding a rule or two to the existing rules on coastal regulation of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. The rules recently introduced are welcome, because they have given Queen Mary's College a new lease of life. But is that to be a permanent lease or will it prove to be purely temporary, is something *MMM* is concerned about.

Environmentalists and heritage lovers from the city had sought, at the height of the controversy, the re-classification of the area from the Cooum Estuary to the Adyar Estuary and inland to the west bank of the Buckingham Canal as CRZ-1 from its present CRZ-2 status. If that re-classification in terms of enacted norms had come through, as *MMM* too would have wished, it would have been even more welcome than the present additions to the rules because it would have helped in giving the area a heritage status and encouraged its improvement for this reason. Without such reclassification, it is only a revision of rules that has taken place — and a re-look at those revised rules can occur any time, particularly if a Minister more favourable to the State Government in power takes over or a Union Government seeking State support wishes to oblige. An enactment would make such actions far more difficult if not impossible.

In this context, another point or two should also be considered. In the first place, even under CRZ-2 as it exists today, for any development to take place, a total management plan of the area has to be notified to the public, opinions received and discussed, amendments made and only then implemented. That is really what should have been done in the QMC case. And if it had been done, the management plan would have had to reveal what was so sacrosanct about building the new Secretariat on the QMC site, the expenditure planned for the building (one leading architect says that the planned building would not have cost Rs.60 crore but Rs.150 crore!), and the effect it would have on development in the whole area, the environment and on the citizenry's free movement. By taking a *suo moto* decision, not only was a controversy fuelled but an opportunity provided for the creation of further rules when what CRZ-2 mandates already existed.

Not new

That said, *MMM* should point out that similar thoughts were discussed when the CRZ rules were being framed that back in 1991 and it was considered management plans – and their public hearing – would adequately take care of contentious issues in CRZ-2. With CRZ-1 totally protected no further detailing was thought necessary for either. The point to be noted here is that though it was a Union Minister with DMK affiliations who ordered the present rules, the rules — or similar ones — had been thought of long before his time. The need to re-introduce them has only been because the faith the originally codified rules had imposed on the States was not reciprocated in this and several other cases in other States with CRZ-2s.

What the present case, however, clearly points to is that no matter how well-intentioned rules are, if the States do not go along with them in the spirit they were framed, then the rules will have to be tightened. In fact, what strikes *MMM* in this case is that, with States dragging their feet on Heritage Acts, Conservation Regulations and Coastal Zone issues, it becomes necessary for the Centre to urge immediate such enactment and action by the States or decide to do so itself.

Heritage prizes

With neither a Heritage Act nor Heritage Regulations in urban areas in Tamil Nadu, the question of awarding prizes for heritage preservation does not arise. But such awards are well-entrenched in Bombay, *The Man From Madras Musings* finds. And that is not surprising, because Bombay was the country's first city to introduce and implement heritage regulations. And arising out of those regulations have emerged conservation projects that since 1998 have been winning prizes donated by the city's — Indian Heritage Society — and showing the way for others to follow.

To give readers an idea of what was considered prize-worthy in Bombay, *MMM* briefly presents the prizewinners here:

— St. Andrew's Church, Bandra, for being maintained with a deep respect for the past and re-adapted in a fashion sensitive to the original the extension made in 1966 to the 16th Century Church.

— The Parsee General Hospital, Cumballa Hill, which has had its east-west wing refurbished, retaining the old stone construction while modernising the rooms and facilities and cleaning the verandahs and exterior.

— The Red Building of the *Bombay Samachar Press*, Horniman Circle, where the vintage brick facade has been 'refreshed' and the interior cleaned without any modifications.

— The Bandra Talao (tank), which was cleaned, making it attractive for water-birds, and developed, with recreational facilities, as a vital lung for the area. And this was done by the Municipal Council!

— And last but not least, Subhash Sampat, who was named Citizen of the Year, for 25 years of crusading to save the green cover of Bombay.

Just looking at the new lease of life Bombay has given these buildings and spaces in 2002, *MMM* can't help but regret the lack of attention to similar heritage places in Madras. Like: the Armenian Church (on which work is expected to start later this year) and St. Mary's Cemetery on the Island; the main block of the General Hospital that was pulled down and the Royapettah Railway Station still surviving in hope; *Senate House* and the Bharat Insurance Building; and the Tiruvanmiyur tank.

MMM wonders whether we too can't hope that there will be a day not too far off when we too could celebrate a few prize-winners among our heritage spaces.

Changing guard

Changing of the Union Coastal Zone rules almost overnight might well have had something to do with the political affiliations of all those concerned, but *The Man From Madras Musings* can't blame a minister for being exasperated with a State government that has made little use of the bounty that has been bestowed on the state — be it before its ascent to power — and does not seem to want to act on plans already in place.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests had sanctioned several hundred crore for the cleaning up of the City's waterways. A considerable sum was released and work on the Adyar and the Buckingham Canal began. But now that work has almost ground to a stop — and no further work seems in sight on any of the city's waterways, despite all Government promises and the money being available. Has the changing of the guard at Fort St. George had anything to do with this disinterest, wonders *MMM*.

The same attitude is reflected in a news story featured on another page of this journal. The Nanguneri Industrial Park, linked with the development of Tuticorin and its hinterland, is not only in limbo, but the Minister from the changed guard who is involved feels it perfectly in order to dismiss the lack of progress with the words "Gone with the wind".

If projects dreamed up by one regime are neglected by the next one, Tamil Nadu is never going to see any progress, considering that Governments could well keep changing every five years and need at least two years to find their feet. If such neglect is not to continue, we will have to have one party always being returned to power to carry out the promises it makes.

MMM expresses this concern in the context of promises made for long-term development of the city by the present government. These include:

— Restoring the Chennai Metropolitan Area to its "rightful position as the premier city of South India".

— The restoration of *Ripon Building*.

— The development of six-lane highway from Sardar Patel Road, Adyar, to the East Coast Road along the alignment of the Old Mahabalipuram Road.

— The development of Siruseri on this road as a major IT centre, and Madurai, Tiruchi and Coimbatore as secondary IT centres.

— The revival of the Guindy and Ambattur Industrial Estates.

— The development of the second TIDEL Park.

— The resettlement of all slum-dwellers at present living on the banks of the city's waterways.

— The shifting of the Central Jail to Puzhal

— The opening of the second bench of the High Court in Madurai.

— New schemes to supply water and power to the city.

MMM welcomes every one of these plans. *MMM* only wonders when virtual reality will become brick and mortar reality throbbing with life.

Pedestrian space

It was good to hear that the Chennai Corporation was planning to get a private developer to raise a multistorey parking lot, on a Build-Operate-and-Transfer basis, in the Panagal Park area. *The Man From Madras Musings* was also glad to hear that the parking lot would not be on the site of the Park — which itself would be beautified as part of the development — but in the present parking space facing G.N. Chetty Road.

While this might ease the search for parking space in that busy commercial quadrangle, it could easily generate more traffic. And that traffic is worrisome to *The Man From Madras Musings*. As it is, with the present traffic, crossing any one of the roads round the quadrilateral is a nightmare — with neither a signal nor a policeman in sight to control the whizzing one-way traffic. With increased traffic, this nightmare could only get worse unless, as part of the development, subways or low overbridges are developed to cross the road.

The lack of attention paid to pedestrians in this city is a downright display of callousness, *MMM* regrets to state. But *MMM* hopes that further development will not help make bad worse.

The CII view

A multi-pronged strategy is what the Confederation of Indian Industry has recommended to the Government of Tamil Nadu for a State Domestic Product growth of 8% and an industrial growth of 10%. The areas which CII wants the Government to focus its attention on are: The IT industry and biotech. Describing the State as an "intellectual powerhouse" — a description that *The Man From Madras Musings* would consider gilding the lily — CII feels the State can induce many multinationals to set up R&D centres here. It also suggests the State develop 'knowledge industry townships' and develop the Old Mahabalipuram Road as an IT Corridor — and, presumably, NOT as an Administrative City for Government.

Infrastructure development, with particular focus on power and highways — in fact, expressways — and increasing energy production to reduce power costs is essential, CII states.

In a welcome departure from tradition, CII suggests implementing plans to assure a 5-6% growth in agriculture. The CII recommendations stress the need for development of cold storage, warehousing and food processing facilities.

Spreading development, particularly to the under-developed, neglected southern districts of the State is another recommendation. This *MMM* would think, would necessitate the considerable development of Tuticorin and its hinterland — which today does not even have an airport — and put pressure on the Central Government to push the Sethusamudram and Nanguneri Schemes through. The former will need stringent impact assessments and could vie for preference with the proposed Indo-Sri Lanka bridge link or could be designed supplementary to it, if the latter is looked at as a chunnel.

And last but not least is the CII's newest focus, the development of the State's tourism potential, particularly conservation, restoration and maintenance of the State's natural and built heritage destinations. *MMM* has long urged that tourism be given priority status in the State, but we have allowed Kerala and now Andhra and Karnataka to steal marches over us. But if the State decides, as CII also seems to think, there are numerous economic benefits for the State in tourism, then the State must decide to give the private sector a greater opportunity and introduce professionalism in public sector tourism.

The CII's recommendations certainly do have merit. But it takes two to tango — so if there is to be growth in all these areas, there needs to be government will to work with the private sector and, in fact, with the industrial sector too in the same areas.

— MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

OUR READERS WRITE

A new secretariat

If building a new Secretariat complex is a must, then it should be a modern, smart, energy-efficient and functionally efficient building reflective of the age (early 21st Century). It should be set in an eco-friendly environment of greenery with tall trees and the building itself towering above.

Imposing though it is, the Bangalore Vidhana Soudha is a relic of the late 19th Century concept and space is inefficiently used.

As in Mumbai and Kolkata, the Assembly should be in a separate building. In fact, in Madras, too, during 1953, the Assembly functioned in what is now known as Kalaivanar Arangam, which could now be restored to its originally intended use as the Assembly. This would be convenient for the MLAs.

For siting of the new Secretariat building, I would suggest shifting the Central Jail near Park Station. Create a thickly wooded park (so that the Station's name will no longer be a misnomer) and erect the Secretariat tower there, which could be seen from a long distance, even from the Bay of Bengal near the mouth of the Cooum.

S.P. Sankaranarayanan
E-7, Prithvi Apartments
104, Kali Amman Koil Street
Natesa Nagar
Chennai 600 092.

Secretariat sites

If the Namakkal Kavignar Maligai in Fort St. George is in a bad condition, why has the government not appointed a committee of eminent engineers to go into the structural aspects and the strength of the building? Why has this revelation been made only now?

There is construction going on even now — perhaps for a big lift — at the southern end of the building costing a huge amount for a poor State. If the building is bad, structurally unsound and unsafe, the government need not have embarked on this extension.

The *Raj Bhavan* area is vast and will serve the purpose well. The open space, opposite the *Raj Bhavan*, occupied by PWD and Highways Departments, can also be acquired for car park and an underground passage built connecting this place to *Raj Bhavan*. This place is nearer to airport also. Government, if it is really venturesome, can take on the racecourse also, connecting it to *Raj Bhavan*. This will be ideal. And the Island Grounds is another option.

Though it may be said that sanction of the Central Government or the Defence Department may have to be obtained in some of these cases, it can surely be got for a good cause.

P.S. Venugopalan
Old 160/2, New 80
Lake View Road
West Mambalam
Chennai 600 033.

Chennai a Shanghai

While I agree with your remarks on the highrise aspect of the subject (MM, April 1st), I wish Indians, particularly Chennaiites would emulate the dedication, determination and discipline of the Chinese. They have not neglected their heritage, as the Editor fears, in preference to modernity. For instance, the world-famous temple of the jade Buddha and another Buddha temple have traditional hotels attached, where the food is purely vegetarian, but with a non-vegetarian taste! and non-vegetarian names such as crab-meat and ducks-tail — the Chinese are adept at this type of cooking.

China gets more than 25 million foreign tourists visiting heritage sites like the Great Wall, Forbidden City and so on, while our arrivals are stagnant at hardly three million, half of whom are from neighbouring countries or businessmen. As *The Economist* of London reports, the Chinese have become car-crazy and cellular-phone-crazy and Shanghai has already banned the two-wheelers in downtown. The suburbs will also be free from two-wheelers by 2004 so that it is a first-world city. I am of the opinion that our two-wheeler manufacturers, instead of exploiting this market and killing people, should produce small and sturdy two-seater cars with electric drive and sell them on long and easy installments. (I have seen one or two such cars in Chennai.)

G. Sundaram, IAS (RETD.)
'Burma House', 9th Street,
New No. 33, Old No. 18
Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai
Chennai 600 004.

Saving the Cathedral

San Thomé Cathedral-Basilica, one of the proudest heritages of Christianity in India, an imposing piece of neo-Gothic architecture built in 1896, is the centrepiece of the Catholic Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore and is managed by the parish priest of San Thomé. When the centenary of this magnificent church was celebrated seven years ego, extensive repair and maintenance were undertaken at huge costs.

Yet, if one goes by the reports appearing in several local newspapers (MM, April 16th) recently, it would appear that the Cathedral is in a "sad state today and is in urgent need of restoration". These reports suggest that the Archdiocese is not in a position to raise about Rs. 60 lakh required to undertake urgent repairs. Of particular concern is the statement by "the managers of the diocese" that "they are staring at their empty coffers and hoping God will come to their help". Nothing could be more uncomplimentary to the Catholic community of Chennai who regularly contribute their mite for the upkeep and maintenance of churches from their modest earnings.

The fact is that if only there had been proper, efficient management of the valuable properties and assets of the Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese, it could have been one of the richest in the world.

For instance, a property of about 54 acres at Tambaram was plotted out and 260 plots sold for Rs. 3.25 crore. Due to problems with planning permissions and the allottees' demands, a liability of Rs. 10 crore was incurred.

The way in which huge and highly valuable properties in Adyar bequeathed to the Diocese by John D'Monte in 1820 to serve the poor, orphans and the indigent has been handled is a long and sad story. Fortunately, before the last of these properties could be disposed of, some of the laity have intervened and the matter is now in the Madras High Court.

In the event, the helplessness being expressed by the 'church managers' is difficult to understand. This is particularly so since they have been seized of this matter since 2001 and within days had prepared an estimate of Rs. 2 crore for renovating the Cathedral. For the past two years money has been collected for this purpose from the parishioners and others and work has been carried out on the grotto, meditation centre, community hall and canopies. As for the Vatican, though they promised a handsome amount last year, the same has been held up. Could reports of mismanagement have anything to do with this?

Under the circumstances, the 'managers of the diocese' would be well advised to raise resources by prudent and transparent management of assets instead complaining about 'empty coffers' and invoking God to fill them up. For "God helps only those who help themselves!"

M.G. Devasahayam, IAS (RETD.)
Forum for Catholic Unity
(Clergy & Laity:
Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese)
'East Lynne'
110, Jothi Venkatachalam
(Atkinson) Road
Chennai 600 007.

'I beg to differ'

Four little words, "I beg to differ" were the *mantra* the former DGP, R. Rajagopalan, used when opening up and telling the citizens of Chennai what a sorry state the city is in, especially with regard to its 'chaotic traffic'! Not many DGPs would have had the candour to say what he said at a recent seminar on Traffic Management. The DGP went on to give a graphic description of the traffic conditions in Anna Salai. What was ironic was that while he was addressing the gathering, a tragedy had occurred right in the middle of Anna Salai. Anywhere else in the world, the civic authorities and the police would have been hauled up in court and would have had to face damage suits running into millions of rupees. But not so in India. The Press publishes it as "hot" news on one day and forgets it the next day. As for the authorities responsible for the accident, they hide behind the facade of the bureaucracy. And the people? The Chennaivasi is the strangest of the lot. The tragedy is a point of discussion for the day, only to be forgotten the next morning, when sipping their hot, steaming 'degree' coffee takes priority. As far as the road is concerned, the *status quo* continues. I can vouch for it. I saw it that day!

Some years ago, a scoundrel tried to frighten a young woman who was returning home on her moped, causing her to suffer a fatal head injury. And what did the media and people do besides feeling sorry for the young woman? Nothing. The same with the Sarla Mehtas and Ranjeetas. As for the police, it is just another statistic in their long list.

What was once the prerogative of the water tanker lorries has been handed over to the MTC vehicles. They happily go around mowing down people all over the city. Irrespective of age, sex, colour or creed. The great levellers, the MTC!

Have we all become dehumanised? Are we back to the stone age? And we claim ourselves to be part of the oldest civilisation in the world! What irony! The 'native' can only hope that the new incumbent to the post of DGP takes a cue and sets right the traffic problems of Chennai before it becomes a nightmare beyond redemption!

P. Madhusudan
AL-122, 3rd Street
12th Main Road
Anna Nagar, Chennai 600 040.

A city dying

When there was a proposal to construct buildings in the 'Island Grounds' by the Defence Department (who, I believe, are the owners) Rajaji had opposed it tooth and nail stating that the lung space of the city should in no way be encroached upon. He was not the Chief Minister then. Of course, now there are buildings on the Island Grounds and, unfortunately, there is none of the calibre of Rajaji to advise.

Let us recall how our once beautiful city sported very many garden-houses on Nungambakkam High Road, Casa Major Road, Commander-in-Chief Road, Montieth Road, Marshall's Road etc. and now...! Would anyone believe me if I say that I used to walk the entire distance from Old Madras Club to Sait Colony in Egmore, reading books on my way! Would it be possible now? Notwithstanding the development rules and the creation of the CMDA, the city has become a concrete jungle, without any infrastructure, most importantly water. Unless and until the development rules are strictly enforced without any fear or favour, there seems to be no deliverance for the City. Rajaji had clearly foreseen such a future for the city and hence his advice, as quoted by *Madras Musings* of April 1st. This city seems to be dying and judging by what is happening, or rather not happening, it looks as though it will never regain its past glory: the comfort of a city with a village-like ambience. It is all gone for ever!

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

Smaller roundabout

With the traffic problems growing day by day from Tambaram to the city, I have a suggestion for the traffic authorities with regard to the Kathipara Junction.

The statue roundabout is too big. If it can be made smaller, it will be a boon to vehicle users of all kinds, indirectly broadening the road as it will.

C.S. Baskar
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004.

CHENNAI HERITAGE

260-A T.T.K. ROAD, ALWARPET, CHENNAI 600 018.

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.....) / I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

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. Please put me on your mailing list.

Name : .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

.....

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.**

Punjab acts to save its heritage

(By A Special Correspondent)

Taking a cue from Maharashtra, Punjab on April 2nd modified an existing Act to include provisions to conserve heritage sites and structures, reports *The Times of India*.

What's more, Punjab's conservation requirements, now incorporated into the Punjab Regional and Town Planning and Development Act, 1995, are far stricter than those in operation in Maharashtra since 1994.

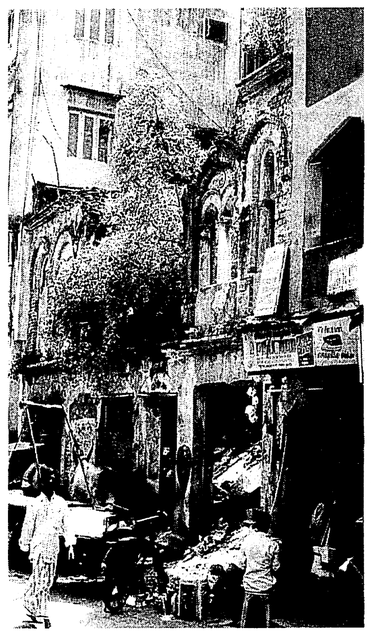
Punjab's Chief Minister, Capt. Amarinder Singh, the driving force behind this Act, said Mumbai-based heritage activist Shyam Chainani, had been lobbying for heritage legislation to be introduced throughout the country. "I hope more State governments, especially Goa, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Pondicherry, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, where heritage guidelines are ready, emulate Punjab's example soon," Chainani told the *Times of India*. (Editor's Note: Tamil Nadu's were ready long before all of them, but no action taken on enactment.)

Chainani also emphasised that Maharashtra, which took the lead in formulating and notifying heritage laws, should now tighten its laws and ensure that they are introduced throughout the State.

Unlike Maharashtra's provisions, the Punjab Act specifically includes important environmental features like lakes or forests in its definition of heritage sites. It also provides for protection of heritage sites located in areas outside municipal limits but which come under the purview of the regional plan.

The Punjab Act tightens the conditions on developing sites and stipulates that any "development affecting the heritage site or its vicinity" has to have the prior clearance of the local heritage committee. These 'developments' include changes to interiors of buildings, village structures, maintenance and construction of highways, roads and streets (which are normally exempt from heritage planning permission).

Of course, developers have the right to appeal against the decisions of the planning authority. But the Act makes it clear that these appeals must be decided in conformity with the master plan or regional plan and that the appellate authorities cannot act at their will.



The New... ...& the Old

Our 'The New... ...& The Old' is a bit different this fortnight; it should, more accurately, be titled 'The Older... ...& The Old'. Both, however, are in sad shape today and deserve better attention paid to them.

Our Old this fortnight is the town house (on left) of Manali Muthukrisha Mudaliar – and is little better than a crumbling shell. Manali Muthukrishna Mudaliar, the best known of the late 18th Century dubashes, *was responsible for contributing to, and raising the rest of the funds for, the 'Town Temple', when the Chenna Kesavaperumal and Chenna Mallikeswarar Temples, once on what is now the High Court campus, were rebuilt in the present Flower Bazaar area after their first* avatars *were pulled down as part of the process of creating the Esplanade. He was also the patron of Ramaswami Dikshithar and his sons Muttuswami, Chinnaswami and Baluswami and helped establish in Madras this family revered in the world of Carnatic Music.*

The Old is the Manali Hostel established across the road from his town house by the philanthropic Mudaliar. The Hostel, still used by students, could be in better shape, but, as it is, is in far better condition than its founder's home. Once, the vasanta mantapam *in the Hostel used to be visited by Chenna Kesavaperumal when He was taken in procession from the Town Temple during the annual* utsavams. *George Town's congestion in recent years has put an end to that practice. But should Manali Muthukrisna's contribution also be relegated to history? His town house is the type of building that in many other parts of the world would have received heritage status.*

'Danish gem gets a polish in India'

— The Economist

Receiving notice recently in the Asian Section of the prestigious international journal, *The Economist*, has been a little bit of Tamil Nadu and the coast of Coramandel. Will this help persuade the Tamil Nadu Government to restore Tranquebar and other settlements and make the Coramandel coast a major tourism destination? The article, headlined 'Memories of colonialism: A Danish gem gets a polish in India', and subheaded 'Tranquebar, The fort that rivalled Hamlet's', reads:

'The Danes are Europe's forgotten colonial power. They did not confine themselves to the chilly territories of the North Atlantic, Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes. They also maintained sizeable possessions in the Caribbean, and for more than 200 years a trading post in south-eastern India, Tranquebar.

This part of the Indian seaboard, the Coromandel coast in present-day Tamil Nadu, is dotted with forts, warehouses, cemeteries and other relics left by the European colonial powers from the 16th century onwards. The British Raj began in Madras. French India was based in Pondicherry. There are also surprising numbers of Dutch and Portuguese sites.

The Danish one is quite unexpected. Old Tranquebar has the neatly planned King Street and Queen Street, stuccoed churches and pillared colonial buildings, Fort Dansborg, sitting on the Bay of Bengal, was second only in size to Elsinore, Hamlet's castle, in the Danish canon. It was built in 1620 by a Danish admiral whose main aim was to secure pepper imports for his kingdom. The settlement was sold to Britain in 1845, but over the years Tranquebar became derelict. Now Danes and Indians have an ambitious restoration plan.

Poul Petersen, an amiable, bearded headmaster from the Danish island of Funen, has been visiting Tranquebar for 13 years. With a group of friends, he formed the Tranquebar Association. One wing of the fort and the town's old entrance gate have now been renovated, paid for by the association and the Indian and Tamil Nadu governments. Supervised by Indian government archaeologists, the original Danish construction techniques have been replicated.

This could be a major fillip for modern Tranquebar, called Tarangambadi in Tamil. The district in which it lies has 1.5m people. Farming provides most jobs, but it is mainly reliant on the monsoon rains, which frequently give the region a miss.

Sudeep Jain, the local representative of Tamil Nadu's government, believes tourism can boost Tranquebar's economy. He visualises a future for the place in which "people will sell handicrafts and open small restaurants and entertainment areas". Hoteliers have been eyeing the Governor's House, another building ripe for restoration.'

Reserved, but ...

(Continued from page 1)

from the Thoraipakkam side, say bird watchers.

Tapping groundwater from the marsh is another recent phenomenon. A private firm has sunk a borewell and is tapping the groundwater, for sale to residential areas in the city.

A recent study points out that the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) operation at Perungudi is rapidly damaging the marsh eco-system. With the absence of power supply to the pipeline system that brings the sewage to the treatment plant, the waste is being released directly into the wetland, without even the basic filtration process. However, the authorities call this 'natural treatment', say the researchers.

This sewage water being let into the marsh at Kaiveli by the STP has been flowing back into the low-lying areas of Madipakkam and Velachery, reports the neighbourhood fortnightly *Reach Velachery*. As a result, groundwater in these areas has been polluted and the wellwater has become unusable. The Federation of Velachery Welfare Associations has represented matters to the Metrowater Board. Officials of Metrowater, who visited the polluted areas, found that untreated sewage water from the STP being let into the marsh was a consequence of pipelines from the Perungudi plant to the Buckingham Canal being blocked at Thoraipakkam. Unauthorised dumping of garbage along the sewage canal had led to the blockage, the fortnightly states.

Environmentalists, NGOs report, also allege illegal shooting and poaching of birds in this marshland considered another Vedanthangal by bird lovers and naturalists.

With these several factors endangering Pallikarnai, even after it has been declared 'reserved land', will this marshland be saved? asks *Reach Velachery's* B. Vimala.

The Queen of Hearts

• by Ranjitha Ashok

When the story of beleaguered Queen Mary's College and its fight for survival was an on-going feature in the media, recently, many enduring images of up-in-arms students, past and present, appeared in the newspapers, drawing the city's attention to the many faces of heroism.

But around April 7th, while glancing at the daily photographs I noticed a particularly feisty face. White-haired certainly... but then so were so many of the others around her. Something, however, caught my attention, and I quickly looked at the caption beneath the photograph. And learned that the lady plumb in the centre of the slogan-shouting throng was in fact 102 years old.

She had walked 20 steps, sat amongst the alumnae, and raised one thin, but apparently firm, strong hand in protest. She later said, "Foolish idea! It should remain as it is and go on." These words were met with spontaneous applause, and she was treated like royalty.

This Queen of Hearts is Olive Paul. She is the oldest among the Queen Mary's College alumnae, belongs to the 1923 batch, and is filled with an undiminished passion for her old college and is ready to fight for it.

Olive Paul... hitting a century.

She was born Olive Sebastian, on December 2, 1900, in Madras. The family lived in Broadway and she studied in Bishop Corrie High School. She joined Queen Mary's in 1921, for the two-year Intermediate course, choosing Natural Science as her subject. Science classes were held at Presidency College in those days, and she remembers all the students travelling to and fro by *jutka*. She completed her Intermediate, and was then 'given a job' by the missionaries who involved her in the temperance movement. Her name, she discloses, apparently came to the missionaries in a dream as an answer to a prayer asking for help to choose the right person. "They took a liking for me," she says.

She became part of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Her work involved travelling all over the then Madras Presidency, stayng in the homes of local gentry and in missionary homes. "I was very young. And a little diffident about going and talking to people older than me about temperance and all," she admits.

In 1925, she married C.S. Paul, in the Garrison Church at St. Thomas Mount. She had met him in Machilipatnam earlier. Her husband taught at the Andhra Christ College, Guntur, famous because of a tidal wave that had once hit that area years earlier, sweeping away thousands of people.

Olive Paul's father, himself a professor, was very particular about providing an English education for his children. Uma Franklin, her daughter, and a teacher herself, adds that this was a family that valued its Indian roots. The result has been a happy amalgam with a strong sense of values. What is history to most people were events that happened during Olive Paul's life. She saw the Union Jack being lowered. She watched as Gandhiji's ashes were carried through the streets.

C.S. Paul was at one time General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement in India, Burma and Ceylon. This, after '47, became India, Pakistan and Ceylon. "So, have Causes and Movements always followed her?" you ask, and the family laughs in agreement.

What was QMC like? "Very friendly," comes the brisk reply. That's what stands out the most in her recall of her days there. She stayed in the hostel, as her home, then at St Thomas' Mount, was too far away for her to commute daily.

She says that the college was a mix of different religions and communities, but there was never any divide along these or any other lines. "We enjoyed our life." The open grounds had a good, unobstructed view of the beach. And it was all very clean.

Being the first women's college in the city, it was easily amongst the most prestigious of institutions at the time, and her classmates came from the elite of the city. She remembers Sarojini Naidu's sisters, and reels off other prominent names. They loved the hostel and she talks of the unencumbered sea breezes that blew ceaselessly, night and day. And some of her professors meant so much she has total recall of all their names till today. "There was great attachment between professors and students." Any college is built on the love of its students. It is as simple as that. There is no, nor is there any need for, further rhetoric to explain her stand.

Initially, she learnt about the QMC situation from the papers; then an old college colleague who still has a connection with the college told her what was going on. And she decided to be there.

Bright-eyed, of clear sharp mind and speech, she tells you proudly that "all my faculties are intact. I am never ill." "She can eat *biriyani* and *mysore pak* with no problems at all," her great granddaughter, Varsha, smiles.

Why does she feel the College must be allowed to exist, untouched and unchanged? Tradition, history and a sense of continuance, she answers. You have to keep connections with your past; 'Heritage' does not refer only to buildings. "We were a happy group." In 1993 the irrepressible Olive Paul joined a nephew in a dirt-track race, proving that neither age nor being a traditionalist need stop anyone from adapting to and enjoying new experiences. They drove a jeep, and "came third", the family tells you, with pride.

Her daughter Uma says that she always had this knack of motivating people from different backgrounds, social and religious, to get together as a group, coaxing even the shy and the orthodox out of their restrictions. "They used to find her very active."

What does the family think of her today? Scattered all over the country and the world, they are thrilled, very proud and a little overwhelmed.

"This is so amazing. Suddenly I have become a celebrity, thanks to her," laughs Varsha.

• This photograph taken at Queen Mary's College, Madras, circa 1927, is probably of a hostel group, rather than a class, judging from the informal postures and apparent absence of faculty. I wonder whether the location of the steep wooden staircase (fire escape ladder?) leading rather curiously to an upstairs 'window', is still identifiable in any of the surviving structures at QMC. The original photograph (6" x 8", or 15cm x 20cm, taken by M Doss & Bros.) is available with me in good condition and, if it would be of interest to any one preparing an archive of QMC history, I would gladly make it available. Besides this I have only my mother's degree certificate, and memories of her oral accounts of college days. My mother (Susanna Tharu) is on extreme left in the picture.

— Thomas Tharu

The Ranis of Chennai

Even the most incurable Mary-Poppinsians, die-hard optimists that they are, would have to admit that the last few weeks have been depressing, morale-lowering, even frightening. Channel surfers have done the BBC-CNN two-step incessantly, while also trying to get the latest update on SARS. Apropos of which, things have gotten so bad that someone just has to sneeze an ordinary dust-up-their-noses sneeze for people to draw away in a marked manner.

But gradually, through all this gloom, doom and dyspepsia-inducing despair, has come a fresh spirit, a cool new note. It began as a little glimmer here, a sparkle there, gathered momentum, and before you knew it, turned into a full rushing beam of bright light as the battle to save the Queen Mary's College or the 'Rani Mary Kalloori' got underway. Just as you thought that maybe it was time you packed your bags and left this planet, that the capacity of the human race for self-destruction had finally and completely triumphed over its genuinely better self, a whole bunch of bright young women reminded you what the human spirit is really all about. And you recalled once more all the reasons why, all over the world, cutting through geographical, political, social and religious boundaries, the human race has managed to survive the way it has.

The facts about a Queen Mary's College are all there... written about often enough. But this isn't about mere facts. This is about those images that have jostled with facts for space in the media in the recent past.

Images of girls, including visually impaired and otherwise challenged children, leaping over walls as the college gates are locked, barging and breaking through police barriers. Lunch hour agitations. An announcement that the hostels would be shut down, while angry students refuse to vacate. "Most of our girls are from rural areas. Where will they go?" Over 1000 students maintain allnight vigils... haunting photographs of young faces lit by the light of candles, or the sight of tired children asleep on dusty grounds in sweltering summer heat, resting between their protests.

Puzzled, worried parents, throwing their support behind their daughters all the same. "Many of us come from a lower middle class background," some girls inform the media. "Our parents have already undergone a lot to send us here."

The canteen is shut down. Hundreds of hostel students are not served breakfast... but no matter, teachers and day scholars pool in resources, buy food from outside and serve them. Newspapers report that water is turned off, electricity is shut down... even toilets are shut and barricaded for a day. But there are no signs of fatigue or defeat. And the children retain enough energy for humour. They say that authorities are suffering from SADS — Severe Acute Demolition Syndrome.

Even the teaching and non-teaching staff join in, holding open-air classes.

The voices grow louder – old students, other colleges in the city, activists, writers, poets, historians of the city, centenarians, and noted academics.

'Rani Mary' — You wonder what the grand old lady must be thinking as she watches her children fight for her, as she waits. One can almost hear an ancient quivery voice, shaking with pride and emotion, yet admonishing — you can never take the teaching out of a teacher, can you – saying: "Quiet, please."

Are these students right?

Most say yes, although there are some dissenting voices.

Will they win?

Who knows?

Are they heroines?

Yes, absolutely – for they've proved that all that's best and bright in people is still not dead.

Not yet.

R.A

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Which Nobel Peace Laureate and former head of his country is to write a historical novel called *The Hornet's Nest*?
2. During the recent shooting of which film was Aishwarya Rai injured?
3. Who won the accident-prone Formula One Brazilian GP in Sao Paulo on April 7th?
4. Who set a new world's best in the women's marathon during the prestigious London Marathon recently?
5. Who is to have the distinction of being the first Indian actress to be on the jury of the famous Cannes Film Festival?
6. Which French footballer was voted English Premier League's 'Best Overseas Player' of the last decade?
7. Two famous journalists of the early 1970s have sold their original investigative papers for $ 5 million to the University of Texas. Name them and their globally-famous story.
8. Name the VHP leader in trouble for distributing and propagative the symbol of *trishuls*.
9. Whom did India beat to win the Asian youth boys' volleyball championship in Viskhapatnam recently?
10. Why has the American Jay Garner been in the news for some time now?

* * *

11. Name the eminent Tamil writer, winner of the Sahitya Akademi award for *Veril Pazhutha Pala*, who was killed in a road accident in Chennai on April 1st.
12. In an attempt at achieving universal registration of births and deaths in Tamil Nadu, where would 'National Identity Cards' be introduced in the State first?
13. What public office in Chennai was created by a Royal Charter issued on December 30, 1687.
14. On the above theme, who was the first Indian head?
15. What 'tall' feature in Chennai was the result of an idea expressed by the first Chairman of the City Improvement Trust (now TNHB), Gnanavolivu?
16. Emil Vartazarian, an Armenian, has been brought to Chennai to promote and coach in which world-famous sport which is not so very popular in the country?
17. What 'health measure' is to join low-cost sarees and tea-packets on the shelves of PDS shops in the State?
18. Name the new four-star luxury hotel in Chennai that is the only one to offer an exclusive women's floor.
19. Where in the State is to be set up the country's first bone bank to help cancer and orthopaedic patients?
20. Where would you come across *Pentland House*, *Stone House* and *Jeypore House*?

(Answers on page 8)

'Gone with the wind' with change of government

"Gone with the wind," was the State Information Technology Minister D. Jayakumar's cryptic reply when a member in the Assembly enquired about the fate of the multi-crore high-tech industrial park which was to come up at Nanguneri in Tirunelveli District.

The member wanted to know about the project since it was envisaged to provide employment opportunities in the southern districts.

(The project had figured prominently in the report submitted by an expert commiteē constituted during the DMK regime suggesting measures to develop the economy in south Tamil Nadu.)

Jayakumar said the DMK Government, which had promoted the concept and announced proposals to set up a high-tech industrial park, had not acted further on the project.

The proposal had gone with the wind, he said.

The present Government was focussing on information technology-related initiatives and these could help generate investments and employment opportunities.

It was also looking at setting up an industrial estate in each district, he said.

It may be recalled that the Hi-Tech Industrial Park in Nanguneri Taluk, Tirunelveli, was to be promoted by the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation in association with the INFAC group and Axes Technologies Inc., USA, at an estimated cost of Rs. 700 crore. Over 2,094 acres land had been acquired and the Centre had "in principle" recognised the park as a Special Economic Zone. (**ED.:** This was reported in *Madras Musings*, March 1, 2001.)

The master plan for the project was prepared by JTC. Singapore.

The industrial park was to provide international standards of infrastructure to non-polluting industries, such as electronics, telecommunication components, information technology and pharmaceuticals. The then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi, laid the foundation stone for the project in February 2001 in a high-profile function in which various union ministers, including the then Commerce Minister, Murasoli Maran, had participated.

On various occasions, Government officials had told the media that the project was either close to financial closure or that the funds had been tied up.

The private sector promoters, too, had told the media in Chennai before the foundation stone was laid that they would be wooing major industries in the US and other countries, especially those involved in semiconductor chip manufacturing as the industrial park would provide the kind of pollution-free environment that was required for these facilities. (Courtesy: *Business Line*.)

Brown Hawk Owls comes to school

I have always been fascinated by owls. So I have always been on the lookout to spot an owl species during my trips to forests and sanctuaries. But you need not travel long distances to watch them, for they are often at your doorstep, if only you will stop to notice them. The Spotted Owlet *(Athene brama)* is still a common sight in Chennai's gardens and parks and the Eurasian Eagle Owl *(Bubo bubo)* and Barn Owl *(Tyto alba)* in the ravines, scrub jungles and cultivations in the outskirts of the City.

But I certainly did not expect to sight a pair of Brown Hawk Owls *(Ninox scutulata)* in Chennai. It all started when I got a call from Arun, a teacher in The School, KFI (Krishnamoorthy Foundation of India), Adyar. He asked me to come to the school if I wanted to see a not-very-common species of owl. He also said he had been seeing this species, a pair of them, in the school campus for the past two weeks or so and he was not sure about their identity. From his description, I tried to place them, but couldn't.

The next day I went with another keen birdwatcher, Jayasankar, to Arun's quarters in the school campus. I carried my binocular, camera and *A Field Guide to the Birds of India* by Mrs. Kazmierczak for reference. Arun was a little apprehensive whether we would see the owls in the same spot where he had been seeing them.

But we were lucky. The birds were there in the same spot where they had been roosting for the past two weeks or so during the day. We saw them resting in the shade of the thick foliage. We moved quietly, focussing our binoculars on them. Watching them at close quarters and with the information from the field book, we concluded the species to be Brown Hawk Owls.

The Brown Hawk Owl is not a common owl in this part of the country. Though field guides, and even Salim Ali's *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, mention the presence of the species in Chennai, it has always been based on individual and isolated records. Brown Hawk Owls prefer to live in forests and woods, sometimes near water sources and feed on insects, reptiles and even small birds. These birds are approximately 32 cm in height. They have a characteristic chocolate brown colour and are also devoid of ear tufts. The face is less owlish, as they lack a very distinct facial disc. The tail is another distinguishing feature, for it is relatively long and boldly banded. The colour, body shape and flight pattern, bear a strong resemblance to those of the hawks and, hence, they are named Brown Hawk Owl. The call of the Brown Hawk Owl is supposed to be a 'hooowup... hooowup'. Arun confirmed this is what he heard at nights, listening to their calls.

Perhaps there are other birdwatchers in Chennai who have seen this species fly or roost in and around the city.

Text and picture:
T. Murugavel

Please, tell us it is not so

(Continued from page 1)

In the first place, we do not know what's wrong with the existing administrative building necessitating a new one; with the present building built less than 25 years ago, surely it's not in the same shape as that sore thumb sticking out of Fort St. George that Government feels is unsafe? Even if it has been built by the same builders, surely it would have been supervised during construction by the State's leading engineering university – and they couldn't have been as indifferent as those who supervised what was raised in Fort St. George, Could they?

In the second place, does a Silver Jubilee warrant such a grand, Rs.20 crore commemoration? Surely, we would have thought that the 200th year of Guindy Engineering College — the oldest engineering institution outside Europe — is what would have warranted such attention and not a university barely into its majority.

But even if the present administrative building is possibly in bad shape and even if this is the age of youth and not of age, must the proposed building be built right in front of the old? Surely there must be other places on campus for it? It's all very well to say that the new structure "will be architecturally harmonious with the old building". And it's been even more diplomatic to inform the half a dozen architects — none from its own Institute — who have, we learn, been invited to participate in a closed competition to provide a design, that they should keep in mind the architectural heritage of the old building and not in any way detract from its majesty.

Anyone with a sense of aesthetics would undoubtedly point out to these architects, and the planning committee and any others involved in dreaming up a 'state-of-the-art' building that the whole majesty of the old building — and a reflection of the building heritage of the time when it was built — is due to an uninterrupted view provided between the tree-lined avenue and the open vista out of which the building emerges. The setting and planning of a building are as much part of the architectural heritage of a building as its age, design and history. This, we are sure, is taught in the University's own Institute. Do the powers-that-be plan to make nonsense of all that is being taught on the same campus? Of course, that's quite possible, what with the debate we have been hearing over wanting to do away with aptitude tests for entrants to the University's School of Architecture. Obviously someone thinks computer art is greater than traditional manual skills and aesthetic appreciation. Please tell us it is not so, Mr. V.C.

• Beginning an occasional series on Tamil writers

A pen-name that made a magazine boom

One morning in July 1928, S.S. Vasan, then unknown but who had only recently then taken over the struggling monthly *Ananda Vikatan* (for a mere Rs. 200!), sat in his modest one-room office in Mint Street, reading an article that the post had just brought in. It came from rural Thiruchengode in the Salem District and its writer gave his name as 'Kalki'! Even as Vasan read the article and burst out laughing, little did he realise that a new age in Tamil writing and journalism was dawning.

The more Vasan read the article, the louder was his laughter. He read it to his mother at home that evening and she laughed equally loudly! Such was the rich humour in the article. A sample... the anonymous jutka-man has possibly never seen his cusotmer earlier and may not see him again and yet during that time he sits in his cart, he is the greatest well-wisher for he constantly tells his customer, in Tamil, "Munnukku vaango, sir... munnukku vaango!" ('Come forward,' literally, but 'may you progress' in the idiom.)

The article attracted enormous attention and readers wrote to Vasan to find out if Kalki would continue to write for *Ananda Vikatan*. Vasan sent the writer Rs. 5 as remuneration and asked him to send further contributions. But he also suggested a method of submission of articles which is perhaps the only instance of its kind in the world of journalism then and now. He wrote to Kalki that he could send his work by VPP (Value Payable Post) and he would accept delivery — unaware contents, unseen! That was Vasan!

Kalki was Ra. Krishnamurthy, who was born on September 9, 1899 to a middle class orthodox Saivite Brahmin family in Putthamangalam, a village near Mayavaram. His father Ramaswamy Iyer was the Karnam (village official) of a neighbourning village, Manalmedu. After his education in Mayavaram and Tiruchi, Krishnamurthy was drawn to the Indian Freedom Movement. He was 22 when, giving up further studies, he courted imprisonment and served a year in prison. In 1923, he met Rajaji and became a lifelong disciple. Noticing the spark in Krishnamurthy, Rajaji encouraged him to write and take it up as his profession. Even in the best of times, writing has been a highly insecure and hazardous profession, but Krishnamurthy was not unduly bothered or discouraged. Following Rajaji's advice and with a recommendation to the Tamil scholar, patriot, schoolmaster-turned-journalist-publisher, Thiru Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, he moved to Madras in October 1923 to become a journalist and writer.

While he worked in *Navasakthi*, he wrote on a variety of subjects under many pen-names. Those included 'Agasthiyar' (Krishnamurthy was a short man, like the sage) and 'Thamizh Thenii' ('Tamil Honeybee' — perhaps because he was always busy as a bee!). He used the pseudonym 'Kalki' for the first time in the article he sent Vasan. Little did Krishnamurthy know that the new pen-name would make the word a household name wherever Tamil is spoken to this day in the world. A road in Adyar, Madras, where he lived for many years, is named 'Kalki Krishnamurthy Road'.

(Why did Ra. Krishnamurthy use the pen-name 'Kalki' when he submitted that first article to Vasan? Thereby hangs a tale, indeed more than one! Another article is needed to tell the full story! There was much speculation about the name, and the writer with his characteristic sense of humour allowed such stories to circulate for long!)

Kalki continued to write for

Kalki Ra. Krishnamurthy

Ananda Vikatan from Thiruchengode, living in the Rajaji ashram and helping him to run a Prohibition journal *Vimochanam*. But Vasan, after much persuasion, succeeded in getting Kalki to come to Madras and join *Ananda Vikatan* as associate editor in 1931. There he wrote a variety of material: fiction, both long and short, humour, politics, editorials, travelogues, reviews of films, plays, music, dance and gramophone records. His versatility was indeed amazing! His criticism of fine arts under the pen-name 'Karnatakam' attracted wide attention and a collection was later published with success, a rare event in that day.

Like many creative writers, he was drawn to the new medium of the talking motion picture in the 1930s and worked on a screen story built around a real-life bandit. However, he did not find takers. On Vasan's suggestion, he published it as a serial in *Ananda Vikatan* under the title *Kalvanin Kathali*. (Many attempts were made to film the story, but it was produced only in the mid-1950s with Sivaji Ganesan and P. Bhanumathi in the lead roles.) His magazine serials became a rage with readers and in 1939 he penned a serial with strong social relevance and with the silver screen in his mind. Vasan, by now a successful mediaman, entered the world of movies by bankrolling the production of this magazine story into a film by that lawyer-turned-pioneer film-maker K. Subramaniam. The film was that classic *Thyaga Bhoomi* (1939). Kalki and Vasan came up with an innovative idea. While the story was being serialised and the film was under production simultaneously, instead of the usual Indian ink drawings as illustrations, still photographs from the film in progress were published. This was a sensation at the time and helped boost the sale of *Ananda Vikatan*.

Misunderstandings arose with Vasan over Kalki's participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement and left him with no option but to resign from *Vikatan*. Kalki then started his own weekly *Kalki* in 1941 with the support of his close friend T. Sadasivam and his wife M.S. Subbulakshmi. From the very first issue, the weekly was a success — making it obvious that his pen-name, which he gave it, meant something to the public. *Kalki* created waves amongst readers when he began to write exciting historic fictions as long-running serials in the journal. *Parthibhan Kanavu* (1941)... *Sivakamiyin Sabatham* (1944)... *Alai Osai* (1948, it had a contemporary ambience)... and his masterpiece, *Ponniyin Selvan* (1950)... all these ran for years in *Kalki*. That was not all. Some of them were re-serialised after his death by his son Ki. Rajendran and the reader-response and popularity were as great as before.

The serial historical novel bestowed on Kalki immortality and he became a role model for writers. While he was busy creating these classics, he was active in other fields too, like spreading the message of Mahatma Gandhi. He travelled all over India, and to nearby countries like Sri Lanka, and his experiences found expression in his exciting travel journalism. He also scripted the Ellis R Dungan-'MS' musical movie classic *Meera* (1945).

After a life of hectic creative activity and carving a niche in modern Tamil literature, he passed away on December 5, 1954. He was hardly 55.

His novels are in great demand even today, not only in India but also around the world wherever Tamil-speaking people live. Recently his *Ponniyin Selvan* was translated into English with equal success. His talent still shines bright.

Randor Guy

Documenting tradition

Some recent items in the latest issue of *Sruti*, that pre-eminent journal on Classical Music and Dance, drew attention to the welcome fact that the classical traditions were at last being documented and urged that more be done towards this end.

Paying tribute to the late N. Pattabhi Raman, the founder-Editor of *Sruti*, famed critic Subbudu wrote:

'Pattabhi's greatest achievement was the documentation of the history of Indian music and dance, a thing totally absent in India. All that we have had all along is a plethora of cock and bull stories relating to culture, like some vidwan mortgaging his Todi for moolah, a great piper thrashing a stationmaster and having five wives to boot. Pat with his co-workers marshalled and prepared documentaries on our great masters and dancers ensuring that every line was authentic and supported by concrete evidence. I would even suggest that the Sangeet Natak Academy take over all these specialised documentaries and enrich their records. In fact, they should commission *Sruti* to undertake this great objective by sanctioning it sumptuous grants. They should entrust *Sruti* with preparing video recording also.'

And K.S. Nagarajan, from Bangalore, also paying his tributes, added:

'But for *Sruti* Pattabhi Raman, how many of us would have known the dedication behind the attainments of many achievers in our cultural effulgence during the late 20th century both within the country and abroad? How many of us would have got, in proper perspective, the strides made by the likes of E. Krishna Iyer, besides Rukmini Devi Arundale and T. Balasaraswati, while spotlighting the accomplishments of later-day achievers like the Dhananjayans, Kalanidhi Narayanan, Padma Subrahmanyam, Alarmel Valli, Sudharani Raghupathy, Chitra Visweswaran *et al*, in the field of Indian classical dance?

Similarly in the music field, apart from musicians adorning the performing platforms, quite a few teachers and trainers in classical music were brought to the limelight through in-depth, analytical studies of their norms and modes of pedagogy that helped shape so many of our current 'stars' in the musical scene. So much academic, archival and socially relevant material, documenting the ebbs and flows in India's contemporary cultural history, lies between the covers of the 200-odd issues of *Sruti* — a veritable back-up resource for any serious researcher, on practically any aspect of our performing arts.'

Elsewhere in Chennai, a research documentary *Marainduvarum Marabugal*, on the disappearing traditions of Bharata Natyam was premiered. Produced by Tapasya Kala Sampradaya and supported in part by the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), the film documented the contributions to the art of Bharata Natyam by several famed families involved in the field for several generations.

A souvenir, also titled *Marainduvarum Marabugal*, was released on the occassion. And it contained much information about several families like those of the Thanjavur Quartet, Veena Dhanammal, and the Kondi and Pudukkottai *parampara*-s, with pictures of and articles by members of the respective families like K.P. Sivanandam and P.R. Tilakam as well as scholars like B.M. Sundaram, Devesh Soneji and Douglas Knight. Dedicated to the memory of the late Natyacharya Kittappa Pillai and his wife, the souvenir is an attemp to renew interest in the roots of Bharata Natyam.

A.S.S. writes:

'The film, a labour of love for art and tradition, opens with a dedication to guru Kittappa and explores the history of the

(Continued on page 8)

Racket-wielders of promise

We today present four racket-wielders, in squash and tennis, to benefit from support given under the Champions Development Scheme of the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu. **Joshna Chinappa,** the daughter

of a coffee planter in Coorg, is the British Open Junior champion. She is the first Indian girl to win the title, widely regarded as the Wimbledon of Junior squash. In the final, she defeated the top seed, Sara Badr of Egypt.

Even while an 11th Standard student — of Lady Andal Venkata Subba Rao Matriculation School — Chinappa won India's senior national championship, that was in 2001, when she also won the Malaysian and Singapore Juniors. "I have benefited immensely from the psychological workshops conducted by SDATN and have been able to set goals for myself. Financially too, SDATN helped me to go abroad and play in the Dutch Juniors in Amsterdam last year," she says.

This year she went on to win the Asian Junior Championship in Pakistan.

She enjoys playing and, when she is not, reading or watching television. "My school teachers are very supportive. My friends help me copy the notes I've missed. But right now, squash is my priority and I thank my parents for encouraging me so much."

Vaidehi Reddy was the Japan Junior Open Squash champion in 2002 and

runner-up at the French and Swiss Junior Open Championships. She has been representing India in international squash tournaments since 1999 and her first triumph abroad was at the Singapore Wilson Junior Squash Open in 2000. Reddy has just enrolled herself in the CDS and her first international tournament this year was the Asian Juniors in Pakistan. She practises at the Indian Squash Academy mornings and evenings, six hours a day. Her coach is Cyrus Pooncha.

M. Jeevan Nedunchezhian, one of the youngest in the CDS, won the under-14 title at the prestigious Nike Junior Masters Tennis Tournament last year as a result of which he was selected to play at the Nike Junior Mas-

ters Tour Championships in Sun City, South Africa. There, he won the backdraw championship (not the main event). Last year, he was ranked No. 2 among the Asian juniors.

"The All India Tennis Association has been funding his activity so far. Now, we hope SDATN will help us meet his travel expenses. Whatever talent we have, and there is plenty, it cannot blossom unless there is monetary support. These youngsters need to take part in as many tournaments as possible and finance is required for that," stresses Dr. Kalyani Madivanan, Nedunchezhian's mother. Nedunchezhian practises at the tennis court at home. His grandfather accompanies him to tournaments outside Chennai.

Samarita Sekar plans to turn a tennis professional soon if all goes well. And well she might, because she has been

winning gold and silver medals in tournament after tournament from 1999 onwards. Samarita won the International Tennis Federation Women's Circuit Singles title last year, followed by gold medals at the All India Inter-University Meet and the National Sports Festival for Women. She also helped the Tamil Nadu team win the team gold at the Chandigarh National Games last year. The Ethiraj College B.A. Literature student likes listening to music and reading classics. She plans to study law eventually.

Sashi Nair

Answers to Quiz

1. Jimmy Carter; 2. *Khaki*; 3. Giancarlo Fisichella; 4. Paula Radcliffe; 5. Aishwarya Rai; 6. Eric Cantona; 7. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the *Washington Post* reporters who exposed Watergate scandal; 8. Praveen Togadia; 9. Iran; 10. He is to lead the U.S. led interim administration in Iraq.

* * *

11. Su Samuthiram; 12. Thuruvadanai taluk in Ramanathapuram District; 13. The Corporation of Madras; 14. P. Theagaraya Chetty; 15. The Ashok Pillar; 16. Rugby; 17. Condoms; 18. The Residency Towers on Sir Thyagaraya Road; 19. The Government Hospital in Chennai; 20. In the Queen Mary's College, campus.

Recommended Trees – 6

TREES SUITABLE FOR TRANSPORT FACILITIES LIKE RAILWAY & AIRPORTS

(Very specifically colourful in winter months, poor fruiting & seeding and not self-perpetuating, preferably erect growing without thorns)

Trees for Railway Lines & Roadways

Pongamia *Pinnata* (Indian Beech)
Tabeubia *rosea* (Tabibi)
Gliricidia *Maculata*
(Spotted Gliricidia)
Ficus *Benjamina*
(Java Fig)
Nerium *Oleander* (Oleander)
Grevillea *robusta* (Silver Oak)

Trees for Airports

Bauhinia *Purpurea* (Purple Bauhinia)
Caryota *Urens* (Fish Tail Palm)
Ardesia *Crenata* (Spice Berry)
Bixa *Orellana* (Annato)
Acacia *Auriculiformis*
(Australian Phyllode Acacia)
Spathodia *Campanulata* (Indian Tulip)
Thuja *Orientalis* (Arbor Vitae)
Guaicum *Officianale*
(West Indian Tree of Life)
Mussaenda *erythrophylla* (Mussaenda)
Caesalpenia *Coriaria* (Divi Divi)

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

DOCUMENTING TRADITION

(Continued from page 7)

Thanjavur Quartet and their art. Pandanallur and the home of Meenakshisundaram Pillai are shown and the teaching techniques of this family are brought out. The brilliance of the Dhanam tradition is experienced through the music of Mukta who also traces the family lineage. The *bhava* of Balasaraswati, the music of Jayammal, the tradition continued through Lakshmi Knight, with lucid elucidation by T. Viswanathan are also brought out. Tilakam talks of the Kondi parampara and demonstrates sequences from the *Tyagesa Kuravanji*. Other areas focussed on are the Pudukkottai parampara of Sivarama nattuvanar and the Tirukazhikundram artistes. The views of various artistes have been compiled and the dignity and artistry of the hereditary artistes vividly captured. The beauty of the Thanjavur court and the grandeur of the temples which were centres of cultural activity, are well brought out in the film.

I cannot help feeling that the idea of capturing on an audio-visual medium, aged resource persons talking about their art in their natural ambience, should have been given effect 30 years ago. If it had been, much more material could have been saved.' (Courtesy: *Sruti.*)

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

Amalgamations Group
Ashok Leyland
Dax Networks — Go Placidly
KASTURI & SONS LTD.
ECC — CONSTRUCTION DIVISION LARSEN & TOUBRO LIMITED
LOKAVANI HALLMARK PRESS PVT. LTD.
MURUGAPPA GROUP
Rane Group
SAINT-GOBAIN — The future of glass. Since 1665.
SANMAR
Sundaram Finance Limited
Sundram Fasteners Limited
TATA — TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES
TVS MOTOR COMPANY
UCAL AUTO PRIVATE LIMITED
Since 1856, patently leaders — A WELLWISHER

Published by S. Muthiah for 'Chennai Heritage', 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018 and printed by T J GEORGE at Lokavani-Hall Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., Chennai 600 006. Edited by S MUTHIAH.