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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XIII No.7 FREE ISSUE July 16-31, 2003

INSIDE

- That sustainability question again
- Floriculture blooms
- Two pages of letters
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- Round the League

a-MUSING

Please excuse him, Sir, he is a volunteer of the "Road Safety Society" and has a driving licence too... but we didn't realise he didn't know how to drive a car!

Jungle patrol?

Chennai has decided to form road safety patrols – 25,000 of them.

Citizens who get tired of 'solutions' that remain supremely conspicuous by their absence, tend to take matters into their own hands.

While you doff a cap at the effort, you can't help but reflect that these patrols have their work cut out for them.

A patrol, by definition, makes sure people abide by rules... assuming they know them. Therein the snag. Present road usage indicates that our good people are unburdened by any such knowledge. They are free spirits who have turned a certain local expletive into a fact... they really believe the roads are their "grandfather's property".

The patrols will have to be teachers before becoming monitors, dispensing basic lessons. Such as:

Leaning on the horn at traffic signals does not make the colours change faster. There is a reason why drivers signal left and right turns. A two-lane should not suddenly develop extra limbs, especially near the signal. The vehicle in front of you has stopped for a good reason, so try not to shoot around him. Speed limits and designated U-turns are not just fun concepts.

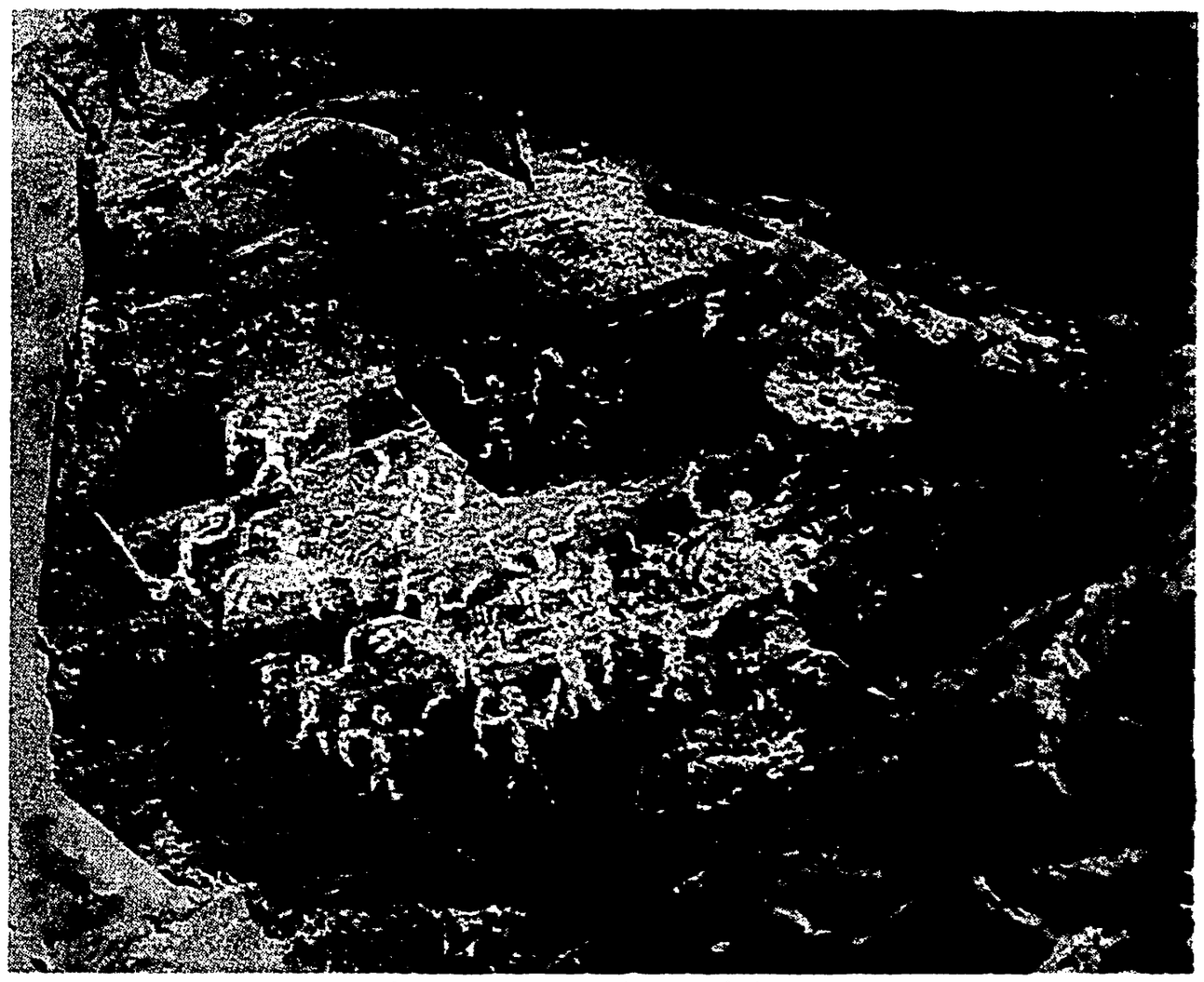
A road is merely a means of getting you from one place to another. It is not an arena for you to show how much better you are than everybody else.

Let the lessons begin.

Ranjitha Ashok

Prehistoric rock art under threat

(By Shobha Menon)



Cave paintings in Pori Varai, Erode District

Over 50 sites in the State that are a treasure trove of prehistoric rock art are under constant threat from elements that are more human than natural. Not many appear to care for world prehistory wherever granite is available for quarrying. One of the newest finds that deserves immediate protective action is in Karikkiyur, near Erode, where an over 1800 sq.ft. rock canvas, covered with more than 500 intricate prehistoric images of men, animals and their various activities, was discovered a few months ago. Dated to about 2000 B.C., the pre-megalithic period, it has been described by experts as 'breathtaking in its sheer immensity and detail', and 'part of an international heritage'.

India has one of the largest concentrations of rock art in the world (South Africa and Australia being the other major areas) and Tamil Nadu has the distinction of having the most concentration of rock paintings in the country, outside the 200 caves in Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. But while Bimbetka is a UNESCO world heritage nominated site, those in Tamil Nadu are either neglected or threatened — generally by political graffiti, loving hearts (pun intended), Forest Department survey numbers or just plain dynamite.

(Continued on Page 7)

More welcome Corporate support

Madras Musings is delighted to find that corporate support of the causes we espouse is growing and we look forward to other corporates joining those who, in the last six months have increased the number of our supporters from 13 to 17. The latest to join the Chennai Heritage team and support *Madras Musings* as a public service is TVS Brakes India Limited. And on behalf of both Chennai Heritage and *Madras Musings* we thank Brakes India for this ever-so-spontaneous gesture. We are also delighted to hear that, in the next couple of weeks, there'll be yet another supporter. At this rate we might, before long, have what we had at our peak, 21 supporters. This was support that enabled Chennai Heritage to go beyond publishing *Madras Musings* and sponsor the awareness-creating and teamwork-building film that preceded, and continues to garner support for, the Tiruvanmiyur temple tank restorations (*MM*, July 1st) and the children's heritage art competition that drew attention to the state of *Senate House*. Chennai Heritage has many more plans for creating heritage awareness in the city but they would be possible only if the growing corporate support, now being seen, continues.

We also thank all those individuals who continue to send us their support, but note with regret a slowing down. We want not only corporate support but support from every reader as a commitment to the cause of heritage. Surely there are just not just a thousand readers committed to this cause? We look forward to the support from the other 10,000 in the weeks to come. Meanwhile, the support we have received from readers as well as the extra corporate support enables us to occasionally give readers, whenever necessary, ten pages or colour, as in this issue.

A big thank you too to all those readers who have taken the trouble to write to us that they are receiving TWO copies. To us, that's as warm a gesture as making a contribution to the causes *Madras Musing* espouses, for each copy costs us a lot more than Rs.100 a year. This duplication has been due to welcome circulation help that we are receiving but which is as amateur as it is voluntary. When it gains experience, we have no doubt these glitches will not only stop, but our response time to acknowledging contributions and acting on complaints will improve. Please bear with us.

And so to a couple of responses to letters we have received. A few readers have expressed the view that we have been discriminatory in stopping copies to outstation readers. In fact, the bulk of the outstation requests for *Madras Musings* came from two places: Orissa and a North Tamil Nadu town. Not one of those readers has responded to our requests for support or even requested that copies be sent to them after we stopped despatches. Most of those elsewhere in the outstations have either sent in support or requested that we continue sending them copies – and we are doing so whenever we get such a letter, responding positively to what is patently interest in *Madras Musings* or the causes it espouses.

As for the question on whether we have eliminated anyone from our Chennai list, the answer is that, from the beginning when we asked for reader support, not one reader on our mailing list with a Chennai address has been left out unless they have requested us to drop him or her or we know the person has left the organisation that was our target.

– THE EDITOR

How do we ensure sustainability?

A couple of days after *Madras Musings'* story last fortnight about the team effort being put into restoring the Tiruvanmiyur Temple tanks, *The Man From Madras Musings* bumped into one of those Rotarians who had played a major role in the restoration of the Tiruvanmiyur big tank a few years ago and a couple of other tanks in Mylapore, Nungambakkam and Purasawalkam. Except for the last-mentioned, the others had all gone to seed the moment Rotary Main's involvement with the restoration was over, despite the promises of the local citizenry who had worked side by side with Rotary Main on the projects and promised to monitor and maintain the tanks thereafter. How would the present effort by the team that INTACH Tamil Nadu had managed to get together sustain itself once the restoration work was over, he wondered.

MMM offered him INTACH-TN's recipe which it was pinning its hopes on.

ONE was an awareness-creating film that had been shown to several groups in the neighbourhood and would continue to be shown over and over again. A response to this has been formation of at least one Heritage Club in a school in the area and a few more in the future are likely to not only work on the tank but sustain awareness of it as a public space to be looked after thereafter.

TWO, getting the involvement of the Corporation of Madras, the HR & CE Department and the temple authorities, the Highways Department and Metrowater – who helped create the means for the road run-off to reach the tanks – and ONYX all to work together. It was hoped the close teamwork these institutions had forged could be sustained if the local citizenry provided them a regular forum to meet and discuss what needs to be done to keep the project going.

THREE, INTACH-TN not walking out of the project once the restoration has been completed but keeping in touch with the citizenry and getting them to interact with officialdom regularly.

Since the foundation-laying for the project has been a little more solid than in previous attempts at restoration, maybe sustainability as hoped for will keep the restored tanks going. And if it does, maybe the INTACH-TN experimental way would be the way to go elsewhere. But it is a big IF, and *MMM* for one has his fingers crossed even more tightly than INTACH-TN, for sustainability of anything undertaken in Tamil Nadu, nay, India, is something *MMM* is always pessimistic about.

Museum aglow

From all accounts, Phase 1 of the restoration of the Museum and its campus that began as a celebration of its 150th year has been a success. These accounts indicate Director Kannan and his team have spent well the Rs.5 crore sanctioned for the work and that a pleased Government has promised more funds to make the campus and its institutions one of the city's major heritage landmarks.

All these accounts point to three attention-catching areas: The Bronze Gallery, the Museum's treasure trove, the Museum Theatre, the landscaping of the gardens and the creation here of order out of chaos. No doubt the critics will have their say on all these areas and other innovations that have been introduced using modern technology and which could cause informed debate. But from the layman's point of view, we certainly now have a Museum at least part way on its track back – to when it was one of Asia's most renowned museums. The question that, however, strikes *The Man From Madras Musings* is the question already asked today: How do we ensure sustainability, how do we ensure that those 8 lakh laypersons who visit the Museum every year – and there could well be more to see the improvements – keep the improvements in the state they are in at present, particularly the theatre and the gardens? We are not exactly the best custodians of public property – so the Museum authorities, heartbreaking as it may sound, have their work cut-out for them.

Meanwhile, another of Dr. Kannan's projects, the restoration of Dansborg Fort in Tranquebar is, *MMM* understands, to get underway again. This will be phase 2. *MMM* has already made reference in these columns and elsewhere that some of what followed Phase 1 needed looking into. Rising damp, indoor lighting and making space come alive are some of the things that need study and improvement. *MMM* heard with interest that the Australians had promised to offer help by way of advice to the Museum. There are several Australian conservationists who have worked in the tropics and are especially familiar with the problem of rising damp. Perhaps the links being forged with the Australians could be extended to this project too.

And one more concern on the same lines. *Madras Musings* today leads off with the threat to the numerous prehistoric paintings scattered all over Tamil Nadu. *MMM* is glad to hear that the Department of Archaeology and the NGO called ROOTS, whose explorations have led to the finding of several prehistoric cave paintings, have met and talked about working together. While forging teamwork is being discussed, *MMM* hopes that immediate actions is taken to protect the new sites where paintings have been found. And that includes warding off at the highest levels granite quarriers.

MMM is happy that in all three cases mentioned above, the first steps taken by officialdom have been positive. *MMM* looks forward to as positive steps in the next phase.

Saving trees

We still await a Tamil Nadu Preservation of Heritage (Buildings *et al.*) Bill, but meanwhile there's a Tamil Nadu Preservations of Trees Bill that's been drafted post haste and, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears, is to be enacted as quickly as possible. *MMM* is delighted with this concern for a part of our natural heritage and hopes that the Bill will, when passed, be implemented with all the rigour at government's command – and THAT rigour, we have noted, can be quite overwhelming when the Government sets its heart on something. *MMM* only hopes this concern will, with equal alacrity, be extended to other forms of heritage, such as built heritage, cultural heritage etc.

The Bill, *MMM* is told, is the outcome of Government's concern over the indiscriminate felling of trees leading to erratic rainfall, soil erosion, recurring famines and floods and consequent ecological disturbances. Under the Bill, there will not only be the prevention of the felling of trees – except for coconut, casuarina, eucalyptus etc. – but there will also be insistence on the planting of sufficient additional trees. And to monitor this there is to be

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

a census of trees, leading to a Tree Registry.

Envisaged under the Bill is a Tree Authority in each urban rural zone demarcated under the Act and the 6-man zonal Authority will comprise the Chief Conservator of Forests, the District Forest Officer, the Collector, the elected head of the municipal body, the chief executive officer of the municipal body and the district environmental engineer. The Authority is expected to appoint a Tree Officer to implement its decision on preserving the zone's tree wealth and his permission will have to be sought if a tree is to be felled.

Illegal tree felling, under the Bill, could draw a prison sentence, in addition to monetary penalties, as well as confiscation of land.

As *MMM* has said often enough before, this country has the best and most comprehensive laws in the world, but implementing them at policing level as well as judicial level is the country's major problem. Will this law be any more successfully implemented? *MMM* wonders, because only the other day, a majestic tree of venerable age was cut down in the premises of a law enforcing institution to make way for new buildings. Which certainly makes *MMM* wonder about laws and law enforcement.

Road safety

Road Safety Week has come and gone some months again. But are our roads any safer, wonders *The Man From Madras Musings*. If road safety is to become a reality, several things need to be done. And they include:

- Pavements on all roads, or at least on roads with heavy vehicular traffic.
- Removal of ALL encroachments on ALL pavements.
- Proper signages.
- Traffic signals that work.
- And vigorous police action against ALL breaking the rules of the road, including VIPs and drivers of public service vehicles, like buses etc.

Many of these things were discussed during the last Road Safety Week when citizens' groups and the representatives of Government and Municipality met at several venues. One of the outcomes of those meetings was the promise by officialdom that several model safety zones would be created in the city and, based on the citizens' feedback, would be introduced elsewhere.

To the best of *MMM's* knowledge, nothing further has been heard about this proposal. But that is part of the course. What *MMM* does not understand why all these meetings are necessary and promises made, when what is required is action. And the four areas where action is needed have been listed over and over again – and once more in a couple of paragraphs earlier – but no action is forthcoming. *MMM* has not in recent years seen one new pavement built or an old one improved, any pavement left free of encroachments, road margins improved, and better signage introduced. Only on the count of traffic signals that work and enforcement has there been some improvement – but in the case of the latter it is the poor cyclist or the two-wheeler rider who seems to be more frequently penalised, while bus and autorickshaw drivers seem to be a law unto themselves. Against this scenario of lack of implementation, can we really expect road safety conditions to improve?

Police ceremonial

This journal has long called for the police to revive the old practice of its Band playing on the lawns of its headquarters compound and present as it once did its Changing of the Guard to the public as a public relations exercise. *The Man From Madras Musings* is happy that a start has been made to revive these ceremonials. And when the hour-long ceremonial was recently gone through – targeted at Police Headquarters personnel and with no fanfare – a goodly crowd stopped to watch.

Now the Police plan to have the band play for half an hour followed by the Changing of the Guard ceremony for another half hour every FIRST Saturday of the month. With a little publicity, the event is sure to attract the kinds of crowds that it did in the past – and the smart display is sure to earn the Police good marks.

MMM would like the event to be a much more frequent one – at least on every weekend – but if that is not possible, surely getting the Police Band to play at Police Headquarters or the Marina crowds on weekends would be possible. That Band, *MMM* thought, went through its notes well – but it could be a little smarter turned out, a little more regimented and a little more active. Drummers alone, trumpeters alone and such smaller groupings in between the entire ensemble playing would certainly increase that rate of activity. As for the two Guard platoons *MMM* saw that evening, the Guard being relieved was certainly smarter than the incoming one. And the Officer of the Guard certainly attracted the attention of the roadside spectators.

Well done, Police. But now, can we sustain it?

— MMM

A big 'Thank You' to 135 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 8.6.03 and 7.7.03, added to the support *Madras Musings* has already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes *Madras Musings* espouses.

A word to all donors. *Madras Musings* remains a FREE issue. Your generous contributions are NOT subscriptions to the journal but a commitment of your support to the causes Chennai Heritage and its publication, *Madras Musings*, espouse.

— CHENNAI HERITAGE

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Floriculture blooms in the State

• by Sashi Nair

Of the 300 agri-export zones across the country earmarked recently for export of cut flowers by the Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA), Dharmapuri and Nilgiri Districts are the two identified in Tamil Nadu. Now, much greater interest is being shown in the cultivation of flowers in the State, which could well be on the threshold of a floriculture boom.

"The export focus will primarily be on the European and Southeast Asian markets, at least initially. In fact, Japan is the major market we will be targeting for cut flowers," says Nathar Bava, Joint Director, Tamil Nadu Horticulture Department. Nearly 60 per cent of the cut flowers exported are roses; gladioli and carnations are also popular. Exotic varieties, such as high-value orchids and tulips, are also fast gaining the export ranks.

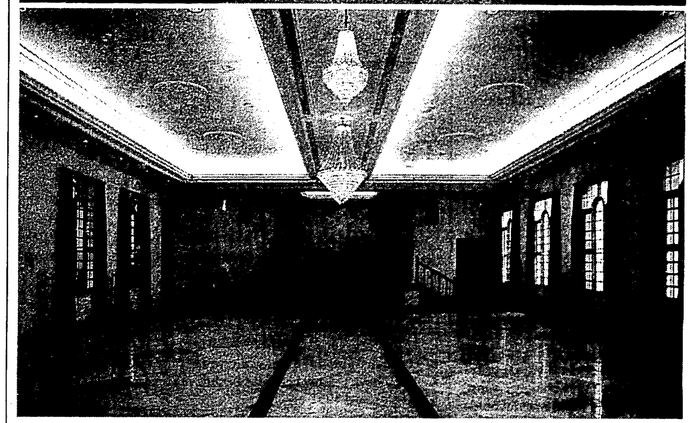
Realising that floriculture has shown very good growth potential (an annual growth rate of 25 per cent), the Union Ministry of Commerce is seriously looking at the industry growing, and export of cut flowers has been identified as a thrust area at the national level, according to Bava. "There will be active involvement of growers and entrepreneurs in this field. As it is a capital-intensive industry, entrepreneurs are likely to come together in groups. One of the main advantages of government participation will be the provision of common infrastructure facilities like storage, packaging and transport for the growers and businessmen. There is also a lot of research and development work being undertaken by governments, to extend the shelf-life of flowers and new technology is being developed," states Bava.

Exporting flowers is not easy though, as much depends on getting the perishable commodity across in record time to the traditional buying centres of Europe and other areas of the world. Estimates reveal an annual world market for flowers close to Rs.100,000 crore. Even a miniscule share of that market will result in sizeable revenue for the country.

"The Tamil Nadu government's thrust will also be on the growing domestic market. Traditional types of flowers, such as jasmine, find excellent markets in Bengal, Delhi and Punjab. In fact, jasmine is one variety that grows best in Tamil Nadu and its cultivation is being encouraged," says Bava. The State has the largest area under flower cultivation – nearly 19,000 acres of the country's 65,000 hectares, under flowers. The Chennai flower market, with more than 400 wholesalers and commission agents, is one of the country's largest and gets flowers from Madurai, Dindigul, Coimbatore, Salem, Dharmapuri and Vellore Districts. Producers in these districts have a turnover of over Rs. 45 crore. There are also around 25 modern floriculture units in the State.

For all that, Bangalore, with its favourable climate, still continues to attract buyers, including Chennai florists. "Bangalore has the biggest flower auction market in South India and we get what we want from just one supplier there, whether it be carnations, orchids or Asiatic lilies," says the manager of Blooming Buds, a city florist. "We procure most of our flowers from Bangalore, although some flowers, such as orchids, we get from Hosur, Udhagamandalam and Chengalpattu," I was told at Ferns 'N' Petals, another city florist.

Why Chennai florists meet their flower requirements from wholesalers and the auction market in Bangalore, when roses, tuberoses, marigold, chrysanthemums and, of course, jasmine are all grown in Tamil Nadu and are available in the Chennai market, is a question the State Horticulture Department should seriously address. Establishing floriculture centres may not be quite enough. Setting up an auction market, ensuring attractive purchase prices and providing incentives for regular and bulk purchases are some of the points that should be considered if the floriculture potential in Tamil Nadu, both for export and domestic market, is to be fully realised.

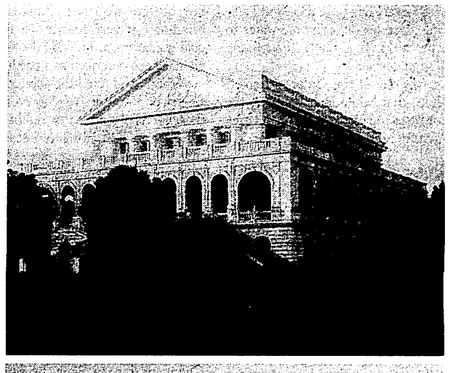


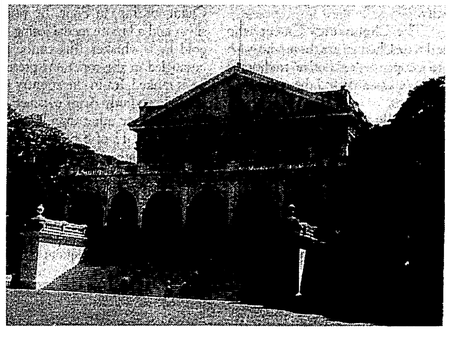
A couple of recent book launches have taken photographer R. EASWARRAJ *to our NEW, which might be quite a contrast to our OLD, but despite the gubernatorial opulence and the landmark qualities of the OLD, the NEW is striking if only for the fact that it is perhaps the most tasteful of new public sector constructions in the city. Our congratulations to the Public Works Department for our NEW, the New Banqueting Hall in the Raj Bhavan campus, just behind the main Raj Bhavan buildings.*

THE NEW...

...& THE OLD

Built at a cost of Rs. 13 million in 1997/98, the gleaming white, classical-styled building, which would have been the richer textured if only the skills of mixing Chettinad mirror-finish plaster still survived. It is a two-room structure with white marble flooring and chandeliers overhead. The smaller room (through the door on right) is pantry space for formal banquets and refreshment space for small informal functions. But it would be more dignified if informality was not taken to the extent of plastic chairs – even be they white – and paper cups and plates.





The hall is seeing much greater use these days because of Governor Rama Mohan Rao's consideration for the public. Recognising that security regulations cause considerable inconvenience to the public attending functions as well as the passers-by, when functions he attends are held in hotels or auditoria, he prefers to invite the organisers to the new banquet hall wherever possible. But a thought is that public inconvenience could be reduced if the 1802 Banqueting Hall (on left, our OLD) was also used – especially for bigger functions. That splendid old building that Governor Edward Clive got his friend, John Goldingham, to build and which was added to over the years, is one of the finest examples of Classical architecture in the South and if it was restored there could be no better public space in the city for formal banquets or large functions – bar Senate House, *if Indo-Saracenic is your choice. Rajaji Hall, as it is known today, cries for restoration and use. Won't the Governor like to lay claims to our OLD, seen here with the additions made between 1875 and 1895, the picture courtesy* VINTAGE VIGNETTES, *and as it is today after further additions early in the 20th Century, the steps becoming a most striking feature?*

OUR READERS WRITE

Pallikaranai riches

Having visited the Chennai area this January, my wife and I enjoyed birdwatching at Vedanthangal, Pulicat Lake and Nelapattu.

We also visited the area close to the city called Pallikaranai, near Velachery, which is a marvellous wetland habitat. What a shame to discover the damage which is going on in this environment with dumping and urban encroachment. Wetlands throughout the world are becoming endangered by man's interference, which introduces drainage, water tapping and landfill by dumping.

Being a visitor to your country, I am not fully aware of the difficulties Chennai faces with a growing populaion and water requirements, but where is the planning? Many natural habitats can be protected which can provide the needs of the local people if foresight and projects were thought through first. From what I saw, the area will become degraded and an eyesore if the dumping continues.

Visitors to Chennai look forward to experiencing its culture and seeing its natural beauty. With Pallikaranai so close to the city centre, it would be an area any city would be proud of. Certainly for the bridwatcher, Pallikaranai could become as well known as Vedanthangal, attracting both local and overseas birdwatchers.

I hope the citizens of Chennai will continue to press the authorities to put into action a plan to save and improve this important wetland site.

Shaun Radcliffe
Bradford Ornithological Group
8, Longwood Avenue
Bingley West Yorks, BD16 2 RX
United Kingdom.

Should not mislead

MMM has made a very relevant point (MM, July 1st) that a newspaper's prime functions are to inform, instruct and entertain. It used to be said that a comment is free but facts are sacred. A section of the Press now functions as if while reporting news, it must make news. The reports of correspondents are so onesided and biased as to make it appear that there is only one side to an issue and it is the newspaper's side. It is time newspapers presented news in a balanced, unbiased manner, even if it is unpalatable to their editorial policy. They should not mislead readers by presenting views as news.

R.V. Chandramouli
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Adyar
Chennai 600 020.

Tiruvanmiyur hopes

The residents of Tiruvanmiyur really appreciate all the efforts of those. engaged in trying to get water back into the tank (MM, July 1st). Every day I see the efforts taking place for diverting rainwater to the tanks. It is really "*Bhagiratha Prayaththanam*".

As one of the senior citizens, I hope that before long I will see the tanks to the brim again and our area getting back its ecological balance.

N. Selvaraj
'Signet Castle'
30/2, Valmiki Street
Tiruvanmiyur
Chennai 600 041.

I love Chennai

It is certainly the best metro.

I have lived both elsewhere in India and the USA and state unequivocally that Chennai is a nice city.

The Chennaiites I meet who criticise Chennai are those who wish to escape the 'restrictive' traditional ways of Chennai and the network of relatives.

Finally, how can you be the 'Cleveland' mami, or 'Bombay mami' unless you criticise Chennai. I love Chennai, even if you do not, Jayanthi Krishnan!

S. Sharma
3, 6th Avenue, C-1,
Chennai 600 083.

Charming Madras

Reader Jayanthi Krishnan's letter (MM, July 1) was not only surprising but also insulting to a Chennaiite.

I wonder how many among the seven million living in the city will agree with her calling Chennai the worst among metros to live in and a glorified slum.

As one having served in World War II, I had the opportunity of living in or visiting many cities of composite India – from Peshawar to Dacca and Simla to Bangalore, each with its own greatness. But the charm and culture of Madras that is Chennai are unique.

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

A rower for gold?

I refer to your brief profiles on athletes of promise in recent months. You have not mentioned one athlete who has chances of bringing our vast country its first gold medal in an individual event. He has been described as a prodigy.

When he entered the sub-junior singles and doubles rowing events, there were objections to his being included in that category because they thought he was over-age. I had to produce the bound birth register books of my nursing home to prove his age. As a sub-junior, he won the sub-junior, junior and even senior events at the Southern and National Rowing Championships, beating the strong Services' rowers. Recently, in the Madras-Colombo Regatta, he won two gold medals in the Singles and Doubles events in Colombo.

At the recently-held All India Championship, in Pune, he won a silver and a bronze medal losing the gold by a whisker (his canoe got entangled in the rope). At present, he is ranked 3rd in the country just behind two burly Army oarsmen.

He is none other than R. Sriram of Standard 12 of S.B.O.A. School and a member of The Madras Rowing Club.

Dr. K. Gandhiraj
10, M.T.H. Road
Villivakkam
Chennai 600 049.

Error in the list

In the list of monuments protected by the Department of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu (MM, June 16th), an error has crept in as far as Nagapattinam District is concerned. The monument in Tranquebar is a **Danish fort** (and not a Dutch fort) and the taluk is Tranquebar itself (and not Mayiladuthurai).

R. Soundararajan
1/46, Sivasakti Nagar
(Opp. Men's Polytechnic)
Nagapattinam 611 003.

Advertising legend

My first meeting with R.K. Swamy, the advertising legend, was in the late 1960s during the All India Indusrial Editors' Conference in Bangalore, where he held the participants spellbound with his brilliant lecture. Later, in the 1970s as the then Publicity Manager of HEC (Ranchi), I had occasion to meet Swamy quite often. In fact, HEC was R. K. Swamy Associates' first client in eastern India, after which it opened a branch in Calcutta, bagging Mecon and other clients later.

After I settled in Chennai in the early 90s, I had the privilege of meeting Swamy a few times. During the Silver Jubilee celebrations of M.K. Raju Consultants, Dr. Prahlad, the renowned management guru, eulogised Swamy's contribution to Indian advertising. In a brief chat with me afterwards, he jocularly remarked that his contribution to RK.Swamy's (then) was nil. No doubt, the advertising agency which still bears in part his name will continue to draw inspiration from the hallowed memory of its founder.

P.V.L.N. Rao
Colts View
Pillaiyar Koil Street
Chennai 600 032.

Waning greenery

I beg to differ with Reader Y. Dandapani (MM, June 16th) that "Chennai still retains a lot of greenery contrary to what people think." Perhaps he is not aware of the many tree-shaded roads that have lost the excellent trees they had. All these trees were ruthlessly cut down by the Corporation and other government agencies in the name of 'development'. Now, half-hearted attempts are made to plant and grow new avenue trees just for statistical purpose, without any arrangements for their survival and growth in the face of increasing atmospheric pollution and vandalism. Whatever trees still remain are being allowed to die a natural death by stifling their roots with cement all round. Elsewhere, trees are just left on the borders of pavements, posing a hazard to motorists and other road-users while the pedestrians struggle to use the ribbon-like pavements.

Unless serious attempts are made to grow more avenue trees and to protect the small number of existing trees, the city will become barren soon. The effect of loss of greenery has been felt this year with the elusive monsoon and the unusually sweltering heat.

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

A gentleman's gesture

M.J. (MM, June 1st) was a great sport. I remember playing for MRC under G. Parthasarathy's captaincy against TCC in what was popularly known as the "Wars of the Roses" in 'A' Division League. Going one down, I had to face M.J's superb bowling, with his inswingers and occasional straight ones, at one end, and C.R. Rangachari's fast outswingers from the other end.

Once, when I made a hundred before lunch, M.J., though he was on the other side, was the first to congratulate me. I can never forget his gentlemanly gesture.

K. Krishnaswami
31, Vaidyaram Street
T. Nagar
Chennai 600 017.

Fundamental wrongs

Regarding the quote from some journal in Reader G. Sundaram's letter in MM, April 1st, namely that spitting is a fundamental right, while the habit is uncouth and betrays a total lack of civic sense, we can never cease to marvel at the Chennaiite's line, length and pinpoint accuracy in spitting even from a moving vehicle. Were a time capsule to be prepared on this Singara City of ours, it will be remembered for the spit and (read backwards) tips (also a fundamental right) as its chief characteristics.

* * *

Despite the exhortations of M. d'Iribarne and the apprehensions of *Madras Musings* (MM, April 1st), Chennai is hardly likely to become a Shanghai in terms of attracting investment, given its poor infrastructure facilities.

However, Chennai is becoming notorious for 'supari' kidnappings, and its railway stations and bus terminals, are teeming with talent scouts from brothels on the lookout to Shanghai, promising victims into their dens. Hence the verb 'Shanghai' has a lot of potential in this once-decent city.

* * *

These nostalgic recollections of vendors of long ago (MM, March 1st) are very much part of revelry in Kondithope even today. I daresay that if Hector of Trojan war fame came to Kondhope, he could hire several stentors (Stentor was a man with a booming voice and used to shout Hector's commands across the battlefield) for a pittance.

In some cases I am sure the son or grandson is hawking the same wares in the same sing-song cadence. Given the enormous lung power required for the job, life expectancy is short; hence surely the ancestor must have perished of punctured alveoli, but the same cry is being repeated by an heir.

I am told that in the 1940s and earlier, some enterprising souls used to hawk *sukku* coffee and soda in the dead of night so that those who had over-indulged could gulp the liquids and find solace. But generally many a thoughtful Madrasi used to keep Spencer's ginger beer at his/her bedside for a nightcap.

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

Surprise omission

I am surprised that WCC (Women's Christian College) finds neither mention nor placing as an Institute teaching the Arts.

I may be wrong, but it should have been rated as the one next to MCC at the very least.

S.J. Prabhakar
11, Manohar Avenue
Egmore
Chennai 600 008.

The long wait

We were having high hopes of getting access to Velacheri from Luz MRTS station. Though it was announced that the project would be completed by the end of June this year, there is still no news on when this will happen. How much longer are we to wait?

P.A. Ranganathan
16, Vedachala Garden
Mandaveli Street
Chennai 600 028.

More on food

May I add my thoughts to those of readers who have from time to time commented on certain food items?

Pachadi is commonly used in Andhra to denote a *chatni* made with sauteed vegetables. Examples are the well-known *gonkoora pachadi, dosakaya pachadi* (*dosakaya* is a kind of gourd with a slightly sour taste), *chintha aaku pachadi* (made with tender tamarind leaves), *vankaaya pachadi* (made with brinjals), *pandu mirapakaaya pachadi* (made with ripened green chillies) and *iguru pachadi*. All except the last are made with red chillies and are hot. *Iguru pachadi* is a mash of sauteed ridge gourd (*peerkankai* in Tamil), chopped green chillies, ginger and lime juice. Adding garlic is optional. Hot oil is added as a preservative.

Amtee is boiled and mashed *tuvar dhal* to which sourness is added by lime juice or dried mango (*aamchur*). If vegetables are added, then it becomes *paathal bhaji*. These are the names in Maharashtra. The Marathi-speaking Brahmins of Thanjavur have concocted a dish known as *ambat bhaji* (literally meaning sour vegetables). The Tamil description '*keerai sambhar*' may be near the mark, but does not do the dish justice. The ingredients of *ambat bhaji* are boiled *tuvar dhal*, tamarind juice, a leafy vegetable such as *mulakkeerai* or cabbage, lightly roasted fenugreek seeds, asafoetida, and a few red chillies. Taste differs from hand to hand, depending on the degree of roasting of the spices mentioned. This is generally a near-bland, gravy-like preparation to be mixed with rice and eaten. Epicures like to have one or more of the following side dishes: *thalippu* of mustard and blackgram dhal (the crunching of the dhal is specially important while eating), fried *moremilagai*, *daunger* (a paste of blackgram flour mixed in curd, seasoned and heaped with chopped coriander leaves), fried *vattals*.

It is said that in the early years of the last century, the Marathi Brahmins of South Main Street, Thanjavur, would go to a well in Sivaganga Park to fetch water to boil the dhal, because its unique quality added to the taste of the *ambat bhaji*.

Raghu Tagat
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Royapettah, Chennai 600 014.

Out-for-dinner maths

Timeri N. Murari, who caught up with this bit of 'Out-for-Dinner Mathematics' writes:

Here's a little bit of fun that's pretty neat; the way it works out is totally bizarre, but it does work! This is not one of those waste-of-time things, it's fun!

DON'T CHEAT BY LOOKING AT THE END FIRST. It takes less than a minute to reach there, so work this out as you read, step by step:

1. **First of all, pick the number of times a week that you would like to have dinner out. (Try for more than once but less than 10.)**
2. **Multiply this number by 2.**
3. **Add 5 (For Sunday).**
4. **Multiply by 50 – I'll wait while you get the calculator.**
5. **If you have already had your birthday this year, add 1753 ... If you haven't, add 1752.**
6. **Now subtract the four-digit year that you were born in.**

You should have a three-digit number.

The first digit of this was your original number (i.e. how many times you want to eat out each week).

The next two numbers are your age! Oh yes, it is! Impressive, isn't it?...

This is the only year (2003) it will ever work, so spread it around while it lasts.

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.

A strange guest

Whenever I give my residence phone number to my friends or clients, they immediately raise their eyebrows and ask, "Are you staying in North Madras?" However, when they visit my house in New Thandavaraya Street inWashermanpet, they enjoy the leaf-rich trees on our street and the gentle breeze from them. But for the efforts of the 'Neo-Thans Welfare Association' (our street welfare association), who planted the gulmohar trees in our street about ten years ago, we would have missed the benefits of these trees, especially the beauty of their golden red flowers which blossom during the hot summer.

I enjoy sitting in my balcony and watching crows and sparrows and also occasional parrots, yellow sparrows and kingfishers. Recently on hearing the cry of crows from the terrace, I went up and to my surprise found a strange bird being chased by the crows. The bird was of a hen's size, had a sharp beak, long legs and was grey and white in colour, with yellow/red patches around the beak (see picture).

I managed to catch the bird using a towel, and locked it inside a room. Then I telephoned Blue Cross to pick it up. However, the bird managed to slip away from the room before the Blue Cross personnel arrived.

I don't know what type of bird it is or from where it came. But it was a very pleasant experience hosting it.

M. Gandhirajan
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Washermanpet, Chennai 600 021.

Tackling noise pollution

Reading your lead story '*Attack on Activists*' (MM, July 1st) reminded me of a pleasant experience I had with a government department about addressing noise pollution.

We are residents of the East Coast Road. More than ten years ago, we moved 32 kilometres away from Madras for peace and quiet and to help decongest the city. In those days in Muttukkadu, the nights were dark, the stars were bright, the only sounds were those of the birds and the crashing waves. The sands were clean and the water pristine.

Five years after we moved in there came up a Mega Noise Resort literally in our backyard with a noise-generating 'Amusement' park and a resort promoting "disco" on most nights. Readers can imagine the nuisance to residents from the unsolicited noise/ music/ announcements on a continuous basis. On New Year's eve, beach parties (which went on till sunrise) left the beach looking like a war zone with PET bottles, plastic cups, footwear, paper caps etc. littered all over - and this was litter that remained. Tall masts were fitted with powerful halogen lamps that shone into homes in the neighbourhood and on to the beach. Wonder what the impact of the lights was on the turtles and their hatchlings? They apparently mistook the lights for the moon and walked away from (instead of towards) the water and met their death as hatchlings.

Representations to the managements of these resorts only fell on deaf ears. One manager apparently said, "You must understand that we are a resort..." (mistakenly thinking that resorts are above the law and that it's quite okay for them to turn the adults of the neighbourhood crabby and the children deaf!).

After being victims for over five years, awareness came to us in the form of my cousin visiting from the US. She cut short her stay at our house on account of the extreme and continuous noise she, her toddler son and her three older children had to suffer. She sent us links to some websites on the effects of noise pollution on children which really shook us. Only on reading the material published by scientists in American universities did we understand the consequence and hazard of continuous noise on children and the long-term effects on their growth and development. We understand now that its effects are much like slow poison – it destroys their personalities (caused by lack of sleep and constant disturbance), it affects their studies, it upsets their biorhythm and sleep patterns, makes them loud human beings and induces violent behavioural patterns, ... the list of noise-induced nightmares goes on!

On the advice of a Good Samaritan activist and short on options, scared, worried and concerned about the effects of noise on our 8-year-old child and those staying on our property, we approached the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board. I am pleased to inform the readers that the Board immediately swung into action, called their officer in charge of that area and took immediate action in investigating our complaint. They corresponded with the polluter and recommended ways and means of staying within the law and stopping the abuse of the neighbourhood.

The relevant Government regulation forbids loud noise between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. and permissible noise levels even during the day can only be to the level of normal conversation. I have also gained by referring to a local website, http://ecconews.-tripod.com, which is not only a meeting place for the common man abused by noise, but also offers a wealth of information on the subject of pollution and its control.

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The computer may provide Tamil script an answer

The views of Readers G. Sundaram (MM, April 1st) and C. Satchitanandan (MM, June 16th) make interesting reading and should provoke scholars and experts in the fields of printing and publishing in Tamil to seriously think about reforming the Tamil script to suit evolving needs.

Purists who insist on the *status quo*, should remember that the written and stone-cut Tamil script has actually undergone many drastic changes over the years. And, according to epigraphists, it has been a continuous process.

The original script of the *Thirukkural* is absolutely unreadable now, except to specialists. And it is just two or three centuries since the 'full stop' and the 'dot' over consonants were adopted.

As Reader Satchitanandan points out, there is no reason to shy away from using the borrowed consonants like 'sa', 'ja', 'sha' and 'ksha'. These were actually in use and are understood by the common man. I am sure that letterpress printers would still have stocks of these 'forbidden' types among their fonts!

In this connection, I offer the following suggestion for consideration by experts. It is purely a brainstorming idea, not a complete solution, but is perhaps worthwhile examining and building upon.

It should be accepted that the main shortcoming of the present-day Tamil script is the lack of distinct letters for the four sounds of the consonants — normal, hard, normal with emphasis and hard with emphasis. All other Indian languages have these letters. The absence of these is a big handicap to the average Tamilian in correctly pronouncing not only propernouns in other languages, but even some common Tamil words. One comes across such instances, often, in Tamil news bulletins on TV!

Now, the computer has the facility for typing letters in normal, italics, normal bold and bold italics forms. Why not use this for distinguishing the four sounds of the consonants? Perhaps some alterations may be necessary to the Tamil font software to facilitate easy typing of letters in the four different modes.

It may be possible to use this system in desk-top publishing and electronic composing for large-scale printing. The old- fashioned hand-composing can also adopt it as the required type fonts are already available. However, handwriting may present some problems, which would have to be solved. But then shorthand writers are already using light and heavy strokes.

In this connection, it may be noted that in the print media this system is already in vogue to a limited extent. The same Tamil letter of a different font is used to denote 'bha' as distinguished from 'pa', ('pavam' and 'bhavam').

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128, L.B. Road
Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai 600 041

Quizzin' with Raman

(Current Affairs questions are from the period June 16th to 30th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. June 17th was observed globally as the day to combat which geographical calamity?
2. Name the high-tech 'stealth' frigate, built by Russia and commissioned into the Indian Navy recently.
3. Name the new President of the International Cricket Council.
4. In which Asian city did the world's first fully-automated, driverless train make its inaugural run on June 20th?
5. Name the author of *Exodus*, the novel about European Jewry, who died recently.
6. Where did the Indian hockey team win its second tournament in a matter of two weeks?
7. Where is Gen. Niazi's revolver, which was erroneously reported to have gone missing, leading to an uproar?
8. Name the Cameroonian footballer who died on the field in a Confederations Cup football match recently.
9. In which Pacific island, which has Port Vila as its Capital, was the world's first underwater post office opened recently?
10. Which is India's first global billion dollar software organisation?

* * *

11. Which historic horological establishment in Chennai is owned by a member of the Karumuthu Thiagaraja Chettiar family?
12. Who is S. Ignacimuthu, who resigned from his high-profile job on June 16th?
13. An MoU between the NLC and the TNEB was signed on June 19th to set up a 1000 MW thermal plant. Where is it going to come up?
14. Who won the women's national football title in Chennai on June 24th?
15. Name Madras' third oldest cinema theatre, opened in 1914, the oldest still in business.
16. What would one find on the place where the New Elphinstone theatre once stood in Mount Road?
17. Which university in the State recently awarded Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa an honorary doctorate?
18. Who was chosen the State's 'Cricketer of the Year' for the second year in a row?
19. What environmental body, envisaged in the Biodiversity Act, is to be set up in Chennai shortly?
20. Name the Chennai-based double international sportsperson (Hockey and Cricket), who in 1934 bowled the first ball in the Ranji Trophy tournament and who is probably the oldest living Test cricketer in the world.

(Answers on Page 7)

The names the roads recall – 1

A fortune saved

• In this series of occasional articles, RANDOR GUY introduces readers to 19th and 20th Century Indians who should be remembered better for their contribution to society than for being road-markers.

Sir V.C. Desikachari, who achieved much within a short span of life of a mere 58 years, is remembered in a road in Alwarpet (which has been abbreviated to Sir Desika!) that once abutted his house. But few remember him as an ardent patriot who served the Indian National Congress long before Mahatma Gandhi came on the scene and was a pioneer of the co-operative movement in the Madras Presidency.

Vembakkam Comanduru Desikachari, from the renowned Vembakkam family of Ayyangar Brahmins of Mylapore, was born on December 31, 1861. The Vembakkam clan contributed many eminent men to Madras and such legal luminaries as Sir V. Bhashyam Ayyangar and V.V. Srinivasa Ayyangar. Vembakkam, where their roots were, is a small village near Chengalpattu.

An American sociologist has written a book on the Vembakkam clan but, sadly, it has not attracted much attention in Madras nor is it easy to obtain copies.

In keeping with the family tradition, Desikachari studied law and was enrolled as a *vakil* of the Madras High Court in 1887. He underwent his legal apprenticeship under his relative, Bhashyam Ayyangar, and also worked under him as his junior for some time. Within just five years, he built up an extensive practice and his clients included many *zamindars* of 'Tinnevelly', 'Ramnad', 'Trichinapoly' and 'Madura' Districts.

Interested in serving the public, he sought election to the Corporation of Madras and was elected to represent Mylapore and Royapettah. He was later elected by the Municipal Council as its representative to serve in the Madras Legislative Council from 1904 to 1908 . There he contributed in great measure to the lively discussions and valuable debates. He was one of the stalwarts who fought against some of the unjust provisions in the Madras Estates Lands Bill.

In 1905, the leading British private bank in the South, Arbuthnot & Company, shut shop, reducing even many of the wealthy of Madras to near penury. At a public meeting presided over by the Governor of Madras, who had himself lost money, Desikachari was elected to organise immediate relief to depositors who had lost their all in the 'Great Crash'. He collected money from his rich *zamindar* clients and others and distributed it to the benumbed depositors who had lost the most.

Not many are aware that a few weeks before the crash, he had felt the way the wind blew and persuaded Sir George Arbuthnot, a good friend, to return the then mega fortune of Rs.60,000, which were Indian National Congress funds and which he, as Treasurer, had deposited with Arbuthnots. He immediately deposited the withdrawal with the Bank of Madras (later Imperial Bank of India, much later State Bank of India) and kept the deposit receipt to himself.

When Arbuthnot crashed, members of the Mahajana Sabha called for a meeting and took VCD to task for having lost a fortune belonging to the Congress Party. In a dramatic gesture, he produced the deposit receipt out of his pocket much to the shock of his opponents and delight of his friends. Nobody was aware at that time that while he had succeeded in taking out the Congress Party money, he had not bothered about his own personal funds, which, of course, he lost like many thousands of others. As soon as the meeting was over, he resigned his office and bade goodbye to politics!

Interested in education, especially of the underprivileged sections of the community, he founded, with his own resources, the Native Middle School in Mylapore. He himself taught English there, along with his brother V.C. Seshachari, who was also a noted lawyer and the founder of the successful and still-going-strong *Madras Law Weekly*.

In 1905, when that successful lawyer Pennathur Subramania Iyer willed his entire property to start a school in Mylapore (the famous P.S. High School), Desikachari handed over his Native Middle School to the new school.

Desikachari was a pioneer in the cooperative movement which gathered strength especially after the crash of the Arbuthnot. When, in 1905, the Madras Cooperative Central Urban Bank was established, he was appointed its Secretary. He contributed in large measure to the success of the Bank and asked his son to serve the Bank even though the remuneration was paltry.

When His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (later, George V) visited Madras in 1905, the Governor of Madras asked Desikachari and Henry King, of the well-known firm of solicitors, King and Partridge to organise a grand reception for the visiting prince. It was a grand success and in appreciation of his services he was knighted and became Sir V.C. Desikachari.

According to many of his friends, including Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, he took the wrong decision by accepting the judgeship of the Small Causes Court, which was a comedown for a man of his talents and skills. Many including his family were surprised over his decision and, in later years, his son, the leading lawyer, playwright and sportsman, V.C. Gopalratnam, told him that the reason why he accepted the judgeship was the state of his health about which his family had no inkling.

In 1915, he suffered a heart attack but carried on working till he retired from his judgeship in 1918. Never recovered from the illness, he passed away in 1919.

Sighting Brown-Hawk-Owls

I was delighted to read the report on the recent sightings of the Brown Hawk-Owl in Chennai (MM, May 1st). And the photograph that accompanied the write-up was superb. Murugavel, who was responsible for both, wanted to know if there had been earlier sightings of this owl in Chennai and hence this note.

I have recorded this owl in Chennai in the campus of the Theosophical Society on three occasions – January 16, January 21 and June 30, all in 1984, and at the Guindy National Park on October 26, 1985. On all these occasions the bird was identified by its calls, which are quite distinctive. The call-notes, which sound like "ku-wook", are mellow and quite unlike an owl's call; they are, perhaps, more like that of a cuckoo and are uttered at dusk and, thereafter, through the night.

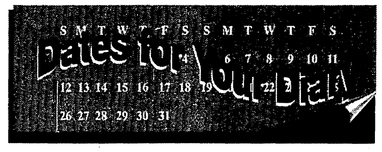
I was introduced to the bird's calls by the late Prof. K.K. Neelakantan, a veteran birdwatcher well-known in Kerala for his books on birds in Malayalam and whose books have created much awareness about birds even among lay people. Prof. Neelakantan happened to be my aunt's neighbour, in whose house I had stayed for four days in November 1983. He described to me the calls of the owls, a pair of which were resident in the locality, which was right in the heart of the city, bang opposite the Secretariat and a fairly crowded area even in those days. As predicted by him, the birds turned up that evening and called from a nearby tree.

These calls were fresh in my mind when I heard the owl a couple of months later in the Theosophical Society campus in January 1984. I got the calls confirmed by P.S. Sivaprasad of Coimbatore, who specialises in bird-calls and records them, in 1985 when we heard it at dusk in the Guindy National Park.

Subsequently, I have heard the bird at several locations (mostly in the forest edges or in habitations adjacent to the forest areas) – Thekkady, Mundanturai, Silent Valley, Peechi, Top Slip etc. I also heard it at Chidiya Tapoo in South Andamans in March 1988. Strangely, I was not able to see it even once on any of these occasions. In April 2002 on a visit to Sikkim, on the outskirts of Gangtok, I heard the Hawk-Owl call at dusk, just as we were unloading our luggage from the bus that brought us from Siliguri. Straining my eyes in the darkness, I was able to see a bird just as it took off from a tall tree and disappeared into the darkness.

Coming back to Chennai, I was quite surprised that the bird has managed to survive in the Theosophical Society campus despite the destruction and loss of wooded areas all around. The bird has perhaps been around all these years, but had been overlooked during this time due to its nocturnal behaviour and the call-notes that are not quite like an owl's. I hope Murugavel, Arun and others in Chennai will get further opportunities to observe the bird more closely and discover its nest and breeding habits.

V. Santharam
Institute for Bird Studies and Natural History
Rishi Valley 517352
Chittoor Dist., A.P.



Till July 23: Adimoolam and Dakshinamoorthy exhibit their recent paintings and sculptures. (At Forum Art Gallery.)

Till July 27: Adiperukku & Ayyanar Festivals. A special rain-water harvesting model will be on display on July 20th. (At DakshinaChitra.)

Ayyanar festival procession, *Therukoothu* performances will be staged on all 10 days.

From July 18: Exhibition of Ashim Chakraborty's oil paintings and water colours. (At Artworld.)

From July 21: G. Madhavan exhibits his painted reproduction of old masters. (At Vinyasa Art Gallery.)

July 22: An evening of Choir Music with the Singing Circle of the City Trier. Ranging from the Classical to Modern through the Romantic, the repertoire offers a musical experience both from the gospels and the musicals. The Vocal Ensemble Saar's Chennai programme with 60 musicians will be for 90 minutes and will present the works of Robert Schuman, Johannes Brahms, Mendelsohn etc. (At Sivagami Pethachi Auditorium, 7 p.m.)

July 25: *The Adventures of Little Mouk*, a performative stoytelling by Masquerade (the third in a series). A performance of storytelling for children between 5 and 10. The story for July is *The Adventures of Little Mouk* by Withelm Hauff and will be in English. Little Mouk, short in stature, but large in spirit, sets out to seek his fortune, wearing only his father's clothes cut down to fit him. Fortune does not come easily and Little Mouk has many adventures before his luck changes and he becomes the owner of a pair of magic shoes and an old walking stick with the power to find buried treasure. Little Mouk's life flourishes after this, and he is taken into the household of the king. But there he finds trouble, it looks like not all the magic in the world can save him. For a century and a half Little Mouk and his colourful adventures have held an honoured place in the children's literature of Germany. (At Max Mueller Bhavan, at 6.30 p.m.)

July 26: *Transformation of Spaces: Mylapore Chapter*, in collaboration with INTACH and *The Mylapore Times*.

A core group selected from those who are already working towards a friendly and environmentally sustainable neighbourhood along with representatives of major users of the locale will meet for a first phase discussion to identify environmental care and issues in Mylapore. This will be followed by a one-day workshop in August with resource persons from both Chennai and other parts of India. (By Invitation : Interested persons please contact, with a short write-up about their background, either Max Mueller Bhavan or *Mylapore Times*.)

July 27: Between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. participating young friends will be taken on a fun-and-learn trip to an offshore patrol vessel of the Indian Coast Guard. (For more information call 24462435 or 95411 4272603.)

July 30: Calling all poets and rhyme enthusiasts! The Culture Cafe Poetry Circle is back and will meet to present a reading on war poetry. Ranging from war-isnpired verse to newly coined war vocabulary, the reading will feature select passages from the *Mahabharata*, World War I and II, world revolutions and Homer's *Illiad*. (At The British Council, 6.30 p.m.)

July 26-August 8: *Chennai Reclaimed* will be presented in association with Forum Art Gallery.

This major new British Council exhibition from the UK celebrates the achievements of a new generation of British makers who have responded in a witty and inventive way to the incorporation of recycled materials in their work. A used teabag, a plastic milk bottle and an empty sardine tin. These may seem strange and unexpected muses for artists and yet it is precisely these common, everyday use objects which are inspiring a group of designers and makers in Britain today. Hailed in the mid-1990s as *New Alchemists*, these makers and designers are metaphorically turning garbage into gold through their imagination, resourcefulness and fresh approach to design and contemporary craft.

Many of the makers featured in the British Council's *Reclaimed* exhibition have established themselves within their own fields of expertise which range from basketry (Lois Walpole) to furniture making (Jane Atfield, Michael Marriott) and jewellery (Brigitte Turba).

August 9: *Dear Liar*, a play by 'Motley', starring Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah and directed by Pandit Satyadev Dubey. This play is an adaptation written by Jerome Kilty, of the correspondence between George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

The correspondence of George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Campbell is one of the most famous in literary history. *Dear Liar* chronicles these by presenting the letters themselves, in all their sparkling glory. Indeed, in the play, the dialogue has such immediacy and communicative power that it is difficult to believe that most of it was written, not spoken. The letters mirror the writers' souls – Shaw, known for his acerbic wit and unmatched intelligence, is shown to have a warm, human side, and Mrs. Campbell, the celebrated actress, is his spirited and feisty foil.

The play is being presented in Chennai by the **Spastic Society of Tamil Nadu and Ellements** as a fundraiser for the projects of the Society. (At the Music Academy, 7.00 p.m. Tickets at 98400 38368 or at the venue from August 5th.)

Threat to prehistoric rock art

(Continued from Page 1)

The first discovery of prehistoric paintings — in white pigment and ascribed to the megalithic age — was made in Tamil Nadu by the Archaeological Department of Madras University in 1980, on a rock in Mallapadi in Dharmapuri District (which also has the largest concentration of rock paintings in the State). Of the 50 or so rock-cut paintings discovered, only five have been declared protected sites where the paintings have been covered with a thin polyvinyl acetylene film, at an approximate cost of Rs.1000/sq.ft. and the area has been fenced and barricaded by the State Department of Archaeology. It is understood that financial constraints (at least till recently) and inaccessible locations (those sites that are on private lands pose even more problems) have hitherto been major constraints. Also, many a time a site not 'protected' has been observed to be less prone to damage — a sad comment on the prevailing trends in public behaviour.

Prof. Chandrasekaran (or Chandru as he is better known) of the Fine Arts College, Chennai, and an expert on rock art, says, "Dating prehistoric sites is rather difficult because this art — that existed before the time of language — is in the form of symbols that we cannot decipher. But the ones we've come upon in Settavarai, Keelvalai and Karikkiyur can definitely be ascribed to at least around 1000 B.C. Most of the rock paintings discovered contain overlapping images, painted by different artists in different periods of time. The paintings are generally found in what were wayside resting places or permanent rock shelters with a water source nearby. Interested locals have discovered many of these ancient treasures. But what is the use, if we allow them to be desecrated and have no check or control over what happens, anyway?"

Art historian Gandhi Rajan says, "Identification of rock art sites, documentation with photographs or videos, and protection from natural (and human) elements are very important. Creating an awareness and pride among local groups to protect such sites is a major challenge. But there are limitations in photographing the rock paintings in certain remote and inaccessible locations. What seems like an ellipse at a certain angle of the lens can actually be a circle." Prof. Chandru feels "Copying the paintings to scale on the spot for later display would be the best alternative."

Laments Ka Kuzhandaivelan, a senior epigraphist who retired recently, "India has one of the largest number of rock-cut inscriptions and prehistoric paintings in the world. But more than 50% of valuable inscriptions and paintings have been destroyed, mostly by 'educated' people in the name of renovation and reconstruction. During 1970-80, Dr. Nagaswami managed to create a lot of awareness in the media, and among public interested groups including even doctors, lawyers and engineers — besides holding workshops for teachers and children. But these days, people seem to have lost all interest in the past."

Meanwhile, current focus of the State Department of Archaeology is on the preservation of heritage monuments of tourist interest, including the 1500-year-old Loganatha Jeenasami Temple in Tirupathikundram and the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai. The Department should look at these rock paintings — they have as much potential as Bimbetka. Funds, it is understood, are not a major issue at this point, courtesy the Rs.5 crore sanctioned for heritage conservation purposes by the 11th Finance Commission in 2000. The Department's plan to utilise a Rs.21 lakh fund to digitise inscriptions, paintings and preserve monuments is now underway. Mobilisation of heritage protection cores by motivating local groups and students with the help of interested NGOs, is next on the Department's agenda. As one expert emphasises, "No amount of theorising on this issue can help, unless people themselves are made aware of the richness of their own heritage and the need for the community's involvement in its preservation."

Our picture of paintings in Pori Varai (near Erode) is from ROOTS, an NGO spearheaded by Prof. Chandrasekaran, formed in 2000 to preserve cultural heritage and sensitise the young and the old to the unique cultural diversity of India, mainly through workshops and related activities, its latest project 'Heritage and Education – An Alternative Perspective', is aimed at triggering the creativity of youth through heritage education. Influencing students to preserve their local heritage, setting up local heritage activity centres near the monuments, and setting up cultural resource centres are all on its agenda. Eventually each heritage site could emerge as a cultural hub with various ongoing activities such as drama, music , poetry, painting and so on.

ROOTS has held workshops on epigraphy, temple culture studies, and tribal folk studies besides documentations of ritualistic art forms of temple festivals and the panels in Mamallapuram. All initiatives are undertaken under the directions of experts from various fields.

Answers to Quiz

1. Desertification and drought; 2. INS *Talwar*; 3. Ehsan Mani of Pakistan; 4. Singapore; 5. Leon Uris; 6. Hamburg (the Hamburg Masters); 7. At the Indian Military Academy Museum, Dehra Dun; 8. Marc Vivien Foe; 9. Vanuatu; 10. Tata Consultancy Services.

* * *

11. P. Orr & Sons; 12. The former Vice-Chancellor of Madras University; 13. Tuticorin; 14. Manipur; 15. Gaiety; 16. Raheja Complex; 17. TN Agricultural University in Coimbatore; 18. L. Balaji; 19. The National Biodiversity Authority; 20. Morapakkam Joysam Gopalan.

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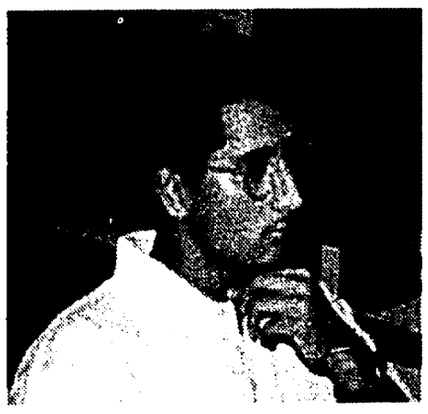
Round the League with V. Ramnarayan

Ramesh makes history with unbeaten 307

The latest edition of the First Division of the TNCA league that rolled out on July 6th in its new three-day format expectedly featured several exhibitions of batting excellence from the State's considerable pool of talent, with tall scores the order of the day. Two teams put up first innings totals of over 500 and Test discard Sadagopan Ramesh made an astonishing 307 not out for Globe Trotters, the highest individual effort in the 70-year history of the league.



Sadagopan Ramesh.

In what at first seemed a less satisfactory development, only one team out of the twelve contestants won its match outright, India Pistons trouncing Mambalam Mosquitos by an innings at their home ground at Central Polytechnic, Taramani, a possible reflection as much of the lack of penetration in most of the attacks as of the friendly nature of largely overprepared wickets. Yet a couple of the opening matches showed encouraging signs that the longer game could also aid the development of bowling skills, especially of the slow variety, with spinners getting to bowl long spells. Off spinner D. Dandapani had a match tally of six wickets in Pistons' win over Mosquitos, while two other bowlers of his tribe, S. Padmanabhan and Huzefa Patel, bowled well for ICF in their match against Alwarpet. Left arm spinner K.R. Sivaprakash (Parry's), leg spinner M.P. Rajesh and off spinner S.R. Ganesh Kumar, both of SICAL, medium pacers S. Sreeshanth (Globe Trotters), K.S. Shahabuddin (IOB), Vineet Sharma (India Pistons), C. Ganapathi and P. Satish (both of Mambalam Mosquitos), and left arm D. Devanand (UFCC, T. Nagar) were the other successful bowlers, though none of them singlehandedly ran through a side.

If Ramesh's spectacular start for the season provided fresh evidence of the high quality of his batting, it was also a continuation of the emphatic reminder he began last season — he scored a hundred and a double hundred in his early outings in the league then — that he has been given a raw deal by the national selectors, who continue to ignore him and the successful partnership he forged with another discard, Shiv Sunder Das. There is about the left-hander a new maturity and lean and hungry look, perhaps born of realisation that talent is only one part of the make-up of a champion. Leading the strong Globe Trotters line-up too seems to agree with him.

There were centuries galore in the opening round, quite a few of them big hundreds. Left hander C. Hemant Kumar (107) was involved in a 256-run partnership with Ramesh, while the biggest stand for any wicket was put on by the Vijay CC pair of southpaw Sunil Viswanathan (152) and J.R. Madanagopal (168) who added 311 for the third wicket, Madanagopal's elder brother D.J. Gokulakrishnan missing out with 95. Jolly Rovers' reply of 440 for 5 to Vijay's 532 for 7 declared was made possible by the Karnataka-Kerala duo of Sujith Somasundar (96) and Ajay Kudua (91) and local batsman S. Badrinath (124). Chairman of the Tamil Nadu selectors, V.B. Chandrasekhar, created problems for his colleauges on the panel by making 132 while returning to the league after a gap, to draw UFCC's tie against Parry's, for whom R.C. Vasant Kumar (150) and C. Sanju (146) added 239 for the third wicket. R Satish made 144 for India Pistons, which also gained from a number of useful knocks by the other batsmen. Another veteran continuing his run of sucess from the last season was Alwarpet skipper D. Vasu who made 79; he also grabbed four second innings against ICF. For the coach factory team, Vijay Gopi was impressive with a defiant 89.

Two imports from Andhra, old hand Amit Pathak (73) and newcomer Y. Venugopala Rao (on transfer from Alwarpet, 145 not out), were prominent in IOB's first innings total of 340 against SICAL, for whom left-hander Satyajit Medappa made 64. With the new TNCA rules allowing two other State players, and the special dispensation allowing local player status to MRF Pace Foundation trainees removed, the old controversy over outside talent smothering local players' progress, seems to have been resolved.

Former State Bank off spinner R. Chandrasekhar's son Vasant Kumar was the most successful offspring of a former cricketer amidst a number of other cricketers' sons on view. Aaditya Srikkanth (4 for 30) acquitted himself well as a left arm spinner in addition to making a useful 45, while his younger brother Aniruddh made a half-century for Mambalam Mosquitos. Sunil Moses made 83 and 61 for Alwarpet from the Chemplast Sanmar stable, reviving nostalgic memories of his father P.S. Moses' sterling contributions to Jolly Rovers and Chemplast in the 1980s. Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan made a compact 43 for Globe Trotters besides picking up a couple of wickets with his left arm spin.

It has been an altogether satisfactory start to the new season, the three-day league probably the only one of its kind in the world outside of first class cricket. If Tamil Nadu's bowling standards improve to match the excellence of its batting resources over the next couple of seasons, there could well be a case for granting the league first class status!

Do good anyway

A reader writes: I came across this in a little-known paper (*People's Reporter*, April 10, 2002) published by the New Education and Welfare Service Trust, Bandra (W), Mumbai, and feel it will interest readers of *Madras Musings* more.

1. **People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centred. Love them anyway.**
2. **If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.**
3. **If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.**
4. **The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.**
5. **Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.**
6. **The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.**
7. **People favour underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.**
8. **What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.**
9. **People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.**
10. **Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.**

From **Curtis Kelly**
Shiga, Japan

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