

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

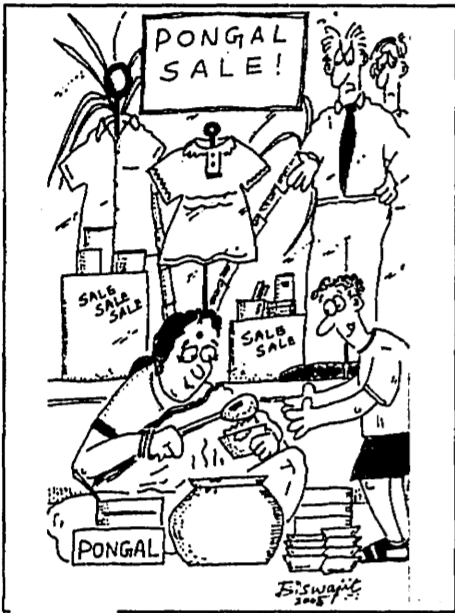
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FREE ISSUE

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This is not fair... we advertise, and she makes the sale!

That's festival-ing!

You know Chennai is gearing up for a festival when the banners appear — hanging from trees, swinging happily in the breeze between conveniently placed telephone or electricity poles, peeping at you at traffic signals. Their size formula is simple — the bigger, the brighter, the better.

They come in myriad colours, displaying large bold print embellished with as many stupendous points (the term 'exclamation mark' seems dull and doesn't do the banners' 'voices' any justice) as can be squeezed in, announcing discounts and selling dreams. Celebration equals shopping sprees apparently, or so we've been told.

Home grown New Year? You must get yourself a washing machine.

Deepavali? So what if you've already succumbed to sartorial temptations... offered at half-price (or so you think)? Surely, you need that car.

Christmas? Did you check out the deals going at that super-mall?

Pongal? How about a new all-in-one stove?

The festivals mentioned are merely the tip of a variety-filled iceberg, given the number of celebratory occasions offered almost through the year.

There is practically no 'item' that does not lend itself to being 'discounted'. The mighty "% off" rules and no one sees anything incongruous in banners decorating concrete jungles with nary a blade of grass in sight announcing that certain plant food is now a mere 25% of its original price. What's more, they get their customers.

Sale-O-Sale!

Happy festival-ing.

Ranjitha Ashok

Development's price at Ennore Creek

(By Shobha Menon)

Much has been written in these columns on the threats to the ecosystems of Kaattupalli Island and the Pulicat Lake from the adjoining thermal power plants and Ennore Port. For local communities who have lived here for generations, their means to even a mere existence are getting more difficult. And while the powers-that-be drag their feet over crucial decisions, the local people, deprived of their traditional occupations, desperately turn to activities that can cause more harm to an already precariously balanced environment.

The massive accretion of sand at the mouth of the Ennore Creek, which had for about six months grounded boats of the fishing village of Mukhadwara Kuppam and also forced its salt production to a

halt, was recently cleared by the Ennore Port authorities in an intensive dredging operation. Even the two thermal plants, it was stated, had been affected, being unable to draw coolant water from the creek. And the fishermen complain, "It'll take another six months for any life form to regenerate in this area. What do we do till then?"

With the Ennore shoal, an underwater sand dune about 5 km from the coast — stretching from the Ennore Port upto Sriharikota Island in the north — also in danger, even traditional fishing grounds will soon disappear. Meanwhile, the relentless erosion to the north of the Port continues, even upto about 100m inland near Kalanji village (and this intensifies during the N.E. Monsoons)!

(Continued on page 2)



• The newest statue on the Marina came up with little fanfare and less notice on 15.12.1997. On a stretch lined by remembrances of those who contributed to Tamil language, Literature and Politics, the newcomer, Subhas Chandra Bose, seems a bit incongruous. But it must be presumed he is less inauspicious than those pointing fingers of doom. And not traffic-stopping. His presence will also no doubt gladden the hearts of all those who thought the State was becoming too parochial. Madras Musings has no feeling one way or the other about the statue, except to note the change and record it. (Photographs: REFLECTIONS.)

Police-citizens' initiative improves road safety

In 2001, there were 708 fatalities on Chennai roads. The figure dipped to 500 in 2002. Similarly, the number of road accidents was more than 1,000 less in 2002 compared to the previous year. This was a result of a concerted partnership forged with the citizens by the Traffic Police on the initiative of G. Uma Ganapathi Sastry, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic).

Sastry, a 1987 batch IPS officer, who recently received the Institute of Road Traffic Education and Prince Michael International Road Safety Award for 2003, told *Madras Musings*, "Frankly, working closely with people has been a whole new experience for the police force. And the efforts are bringing results as you can see. We are learning along the way. Al-

though there has been a marginal increase in the number of fatalities last year (in 2003, there were 559 fatalities), we have to also contend with the increase in the number of vehicle users and shrinking road space."

Sastry's efforts have led to even doctors, lawyers and engineers joining the Citizens for Safe Roads task force. "One of the thrust areas CSRs need to address is the education of autorickshaw drivers. They should try and educate groups of autorickshaw drivers in the evenings and on weekends, to change their attitude and the way they function." With more than 45,000 autorickshaws in Chennai, hundreds of trainers would be required. "Ideally, the number of CSRs must touch 5,000. That is why I have urged

each CSR to recruit one person. I would also like CSR activity to spread to more areas in the city," Sastry said.

At a recent meeting organised by the Chennai Traffic Task Force (CTTF) to discuss the plan of action for 2004, Sastry stressed over and over again, especially while fending questions from the CSRs and the public — questions that sought only to highlight problems — that "People usually comment or criticise but do very little themselves. If you have a problem, come to us with solutions and we will be happy to help you implement them."

Established two years ago, CTTF, a citizens' initiative to assist the traffic police, has grown in spite of several obstacles. Traffic management committees have been set up,

2,500 CSRs enrolled, including representatives from students and autorickshaw drivers and residential welfare association meetings with the local police have been organised.

Addressing the interaction, R. Nataraj, Chennai Police Commissioner, said, "We should set ourselves a target of reducing road accidents by 20 per cent this year. It is achievable."

An estimated 18 lakh vehicles (14 lakh are two wheelers) ply in the city. Understandably, police find it agonising to regulate traffic. The traffic police believe that with the active cooperation of the people, a lot of improvement can take place in road safety. Therefore, the need for more Citizens for Safe Roads (CSRs).

— Sashi Nair

Mapping the city at last — officially

The Survey of India, *The Man From Madras Musings* is delighted to hear, is conducting a detailed survey of Madras in order to bring out a detailed map of the city. Eicher had done it a couple of years ago, but the Survey's publication will have the imprimatur of officialdom. MMM, however, wonders whether it will have the Integral Coach Factory, the Harbour, the airport, Red Hills reservoir etc. located.

Twenty years ago, when MMM spent some time in the cartographic business, MMM had planned not only such a map of Chennai but also of all the other State capitals. The Survey of India — teaming with the Defence Ministry — had in those years been deleting such references as indicated above in even the less detailed maps MMM was involved in producing, making MMM wonder whether it would be worth the effort and expenditure of a ground survey to produce a detailed map which would have many of its entries knocked out by the authorities. And those doubts led to abandoning of the project.

● *The Man From Madras Musings* is getting ready to take a long-postponed break and so not only is this fortnight's column an abbreviated one, but Short 'N' Snappy will also not appear over the next few fortnights.

MMM hopes that official policies are much more liberal these days and that the Survey of India map, when it comes out, will provide the kind of detailed information those moving about in a major city need.

More humanities

When Kanti Bajpai, Headmaster of Doon School, spoke in the city at a memorial lecture recently, *The Man From Madras Musings* was delighted to hear him urge a greater role for the humanities in secondary school syllabuses. Students today, he regretted, could do sums and work computers, but

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

could not understand democracy or world politics or moral philosophy. These are essential subjects for every child in secondary school, he felt.

MMM was happier still hearing him restate something MMM has been urging in several fora in the city for some years now and which formed the lead story in *Madras Musings* five or six years ago. While getting to know the macro-picture about India and the world, it was equally important, said Bajpai, that every child should know the history and geography

of the locality, the city and the State he lives in. MMM has long urged that History, Geography, Environment and Civics be taught as separate subjects from at least classes 3 to 12 and that three years of these be spent on the history and geography of the city/town, district and State in which the school is located. At one time, MMM had hoped the Geography Teachers' Association of India would push the idea, but nothing has come of the push or the idea and India continues to produce more and more students attuned to maths, technology and computers or to business and commerce, and fewer and fewer good ones focussed on the humanities.

Bajpai also pointed out that on the macro-level every student should be "able to critically analyse issues of democracy, economy and social structure in the country" as well as of India's relationship with the neighbouring countries and the wider world. As far as MMM is concerned, it was one of the more significant speeches on education MMM had heard in a long time, but neither did the media pay much attention to it nor did it come in for editorial comment. And that is really the problem with the country. What the young of the country should be getting by way of education seems to be nobody's concern.

— MMM

A big 'Thank You' to 38 of you...

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 9.11.03 and 14.12.03, 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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... & Hoping for many more

● May we once again remind all our readers and well-wishers of the fact that a year has passed since Chennai Heritage sought the support of readers of *Madras Musings* for the causes it espouses. We had at the time suggested the readers contribute at least Rs. 100 annually to not only enable *Madras Musings*, published by Chennai Heritage, to keep going but also to enable Chennai Heritage to play a greater role in creating heritage awareness.

We are glad to announce that not only has *Madras Musings* survived, despatching 12,000 copies every week to those who have offered it to support as well as to decision makers as well as to old friends of the journal in Chennai, but more significantly has taken steps to help create awareness about what is needed for the restoration of Senate House. Chennai Heritage has organised two meetings attended by members of the corporate sector and leading professionals and chaired the discussions on how best Senate House could be helped. Following this up, Chennai Heritage has organised meetings of core groups discussing particularly facts of awareness creation that could help in the raising of funds for the restoration of Senate House.

If in the coming year, Chennai Heritage receive repeated support from those who have also made a contribution, and many more supporters join the bandwagon of contribution, not only can the support extended to Tiruvannamur's temple tanks and Senate House be enhanced, but new awareness building projects can be undertaken. We look forward to our listed support in the next few months and would like to see many more new names in our monthly 'Thank You' ... during 2004.

The Editor

OUR READERS WRITE

Railing beauty - I

The concept of beauty differs from person to person: A camel brought its friend fox to admire the portrait of a horse drawn by the camel. The fox while admiring the portrait wondered why there was a hump on the horse. To which the camel replied, "So that the horse might look beautiful". So is the case with the raised railings of Presidency College (MM, January 1st).

The old wrought iron railings embedded in granite slabs with granite pillars (of short stature) with their terracotta roses were from the University Examination Hall and covered the entire Presidency College complex. Little by little, the wrought iron railings were vandalised by unsocial elements and the entire northern portion of the college compound wall was replaced with a masonry compound wall.

I used to admire the beauty of those railings from the opposite side of the Marina. The railings very beautifully merged with the elegant building of the college. How true is the saying "The old order changeth yielding place to the new!"

T.M. Sundaraman
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Railing beauty - II

You are quite right. The new metal railings of the Presidency College compound wall look very cheap and trashy and totally rob the venerable institution of its grandeur. In fact, it now looks like an institution for mentally challenged.

C.G. Prasad
9, C.S. Mudali Street
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Not the same

Reader Lalitha Dandapani's letter (MM, December 16th) makes a comparison of a marriage with music. But, while she may like to 'graduate' to the state of a true *rasika*, let it not be at the cost of a good performance, affected by acts that annoy and disturb not only the 'true *rasikas*' but also the performers.

A word about digital CDs: No doubt they are good, but they are

Stalwarts of yesteryears

The Apothecary of Achaarappan Street

Medicare has now improved in Chennai beyond recognition. Anytime we feel unwell (especially at dead of night), all that we have to do is dial the year of the Norman Conquest — 1066 — and we can avail medical attention at a '5-star' hospital. It won't burn a hole in the pocket because the seams would have given way and there would be no pocket at all.

In the olden days in George Town, if anyone in our family fell sick the cry was — call Dr. Alagasingiri Naidu of Achaarappan Street. He was a member of that now-extinct species called 'family' doctor who looked after the health of the family and attended all functions — births, engagements, marriages and deaths (mostly in spite of him and some by him).

Dr. Alagasingiri was a tall, strikingly handsome man, always beautifully attired. For some obscure reason, he kept 5 or 6 pens in his shirt pocket. He also secured his trousers both with a belt as well as buckles and held by suspender breeches — probably by way of abundant caution.

Dr. Naidu's bedside manner was quite dramatic. He would shake down the mercury in the thermometer like a man possessed. After removing the thermometer from the patient's mouth, he would gaze at it for several interminable seconds, palpably increasing the tension in the room. Then, slowly, his face would break into a smile and he

would say, "Onnam illingo. It's fever." Doctor used to give 'mixtures' in calibrated glass bottles doled out by Joe and Kanna, his compounders-cum-conscience keepers.

Besides medicines, Dr. Alagasingiri would gravely suggest to his rich Telugu Chetty patients, who were strict vegetarians, to come alone and take 'medicinal tonics' at his clinic in the early mornings. This was nothing but egg beaten in milk and given 'in camera' by Joe and Kanna in steel tumblers. Hence, it was a common sight to see Morris 8s, Austins, Vauxhalls, Hillmans, Vanguards etc. parked in Achaarappan Street in the early mornings. Among Dr. Naidu's die-hard patients was actress Kannamba (Sivaji's mother in *Monohara*) whose lachrymose glands produced gallons of tears. She recommended Dr. Naidu as "aasthaana" doctor for Vaubini Studios.

We once gifted Dr. Naidu a black pup born to our Alastion shed-dog, courtesy of a large street dog. This became a veritable Baskerville hound and bit several callers to Doctor's home and clinic. Naturally, the good Doctor magnanimously treated all such victims free of cost and nobody bore any rancour at all. Dogs will be dogs etc... Madras was full of decent people those days...

C.G. Prasad

9, Conjeevaram Sabapathy Street, Kondithope, Chennai 600 079.

Ever a good scout

Behind his aristocratic exterior, Govind Swaminadhan had a heart full of compassion, fellow-feeling and the spirit to fight for just causes. During the 1942 Quit India Movement, the India Independence League in Sumatra (now Indonesia) had sent groups of young men to different places in India, to establish contact with the underground movement headed by Jayaprakash Narayan and plan joint resistance against the British. One such group of twenty young men led by a marine engineer, C.G.K. Reddy, was caught by the police on reaching Indian shores and they were charged for waging war against the king. These young men were lodged in Madras jail and tried in the sessions court of Mr. Justice E. Mack, who later became a judge of the Madras High Court. Govind Swaminadhan volunteered his services and defended these young men against all odds. Four of them were sentenced to death, Reddy to five years' imprisonment and the rest were acquitted.

Reddy became a member of the first Rajya Sabha and retired as Business Manager of *The Hindu*. When Reddy was detained along with George Fernandes and others in the Baroda Dynamite Conspiracy case during the Emergency, Govind Swaminadhan once again readily offered to appear on his behalf, without any fee. Let me quote Reddy from his book, *Baroda Dynamite Case*. "I cannot ever forget the offer of Govind Swaminadhan, former Advocate General of Madras, who had defended some of us prosecuted for waging war

against the king way back in 1942. He came to see me in the Court at the first opportunity and readily agreed to argue on my behalf. His only condition was that I should not ever mention the word 'fee'."

Govind Swaminadhan was appointed the Chief Organiser of the Bharat Scouts and Guides in Madras State formed through the merger of the Boys Scouts and the Hindustan Scouts, which had functioned as two separate organisations prior to Independence. He organised a State-level camp of the Bharat Scouts and Guides in 1948 at Perungudi near Madras. The then Governor of Madras, Sir Archibald Nye, and Lady Nye were the guests at the campfire and stayed overnight at the camp. He organised a similar camp the next year, when the Maharaja of Bhavanagar, who had succeeded Sir Archibald as Governor of the State, and the Maharani of Bhavanagar were the guests. I had the privilege of attending both the camps as a member of the Ramakrishna Scout Troop of the R.K. Mission Main School, T. Nagar. Govind Swaminadhan was a "Hero" and every one of us wanted to become a Govind Swaminadhan in the Scout movement. That was the last camp of such magnitude organised at the State level.

K. Satyanarayanan
"Yogam"

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Greening ways

Often, when disasters/sabotages happen, there is talk of 'foreign hand'. However, a foreign hand has wrought a remarkable transformation in a small pocket of Chennai. I refer to the Basin Bridge area which was an eyesore with the ugly towers spewing black dust and the surrounding area full of green muck. About 7-8 years ago, the Vasavi-Korean joint venture put up their power plant there and not only eliminated the black dust but made the surrounding area beautifully lush and landscaped like a garden of Eden minus the serpent.

North Chennai desperately requires some greenery. Seeing the Korean endeavour at Basin Bridge, the Governments should follow suit and create gardens in land owned by it. The vast Police Quarters at Peddu Naicken Street, for example, is without a blade of grass and can be easily mistaken for a prison.

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.

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DEVELOPMENT'S PRICE AT ENNORE CREEK

(Continued from Page 1)

Says Dr. Sanjeeva Raj of the Ennore-Pulicat Environmental Protection Forum (EPEPF), "Since 1998, when the land earmarked for the TIDCO Petrochem Park was taken over, there is no cultivation in large areas here. With the shelving of the project, landlords who had received money for their land are in a dilemma, particularly with Government not revealing its hand. Many of the poor villagers are the worst sufferers. People who've depended on cultivation — on cashew and casuarina crops — for generations are now making a living by brewing liquor, or from the sale of seashells! Besides the widespread destruction of the habitat, with indigenous ancient trees being routinely cut for firewood, the fauna itself is being threatened with hungry villagers now turning on them for sustenance. The fisherfolk are also unable to fish in their earlier fishing grounds due to the various 'development' changes that have happened in recent years."

On another tack, a sad-eyed Lakshmi of Kalanji village says, "Our nearest high school is in Minjur, about 10 km away. There are no medical facilities on the Island. Only when we water the casuarina or cashew plantations of the landlords here, do we get any income,

about Rs. 30 a day. Otherwise, nothing."

M. Raman, Chairman and MD of the Ennore Port Limited (EPL), however, says, "We strongly believe that development and nature can coexist in harmony with careful planning. I reiterate what I stated earlier (MM, October 16, 2002) that the Port construction cannot be held as the sole reason for the increased silt deposits in the mouth of the creek. The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) is studying this issue — which depends on various factors like — the quantity of effluent water from the North Chennai Thermal Power Station (NCTPS) flushing out the sand accretions, the quality of the periodic dredging operations, even the monsoon. Their report, expected by 2006, will help scientific planning of the proposed groynes. Currently, an informal arrangement allows local fishermen to come in and fish at periodic intervals. 150 women are employed on our own plantations — 15-day cycles of 50 women each. Any expansion of the Port activities will be within the harbour area — and therefore not affect the livelihood of the community. And any dredging activity will only consolidate the shoreline. The potential of a dyke wall to

check damage by erosion is also being considered."

"As a socially conscious, environmentally responsible corporate, ready to work with stakeholders and demand-driven needs," EPL claims that it is willing to help out with community-based activities. Says Raman, "We are willing to collaborate with the Fisheries Department on necessary measures as soon as they can provide us with a scientific study of this issue. This sustainable land use plan submitted by Consulting Engineering Services (CES) a few weeks ago to mitigate adverse environmental impact will involve, besides other positive factors, a 1000-acre area for environmental upgradation. We are also ready to arrange for the required medical infrastructure for the community, even coordinate with the District Administration, provided we know exactly what the community wants. I hope more interaction with proactive members of the community will soon be possible."

But experts feel that with the so-called 'yearly beach nourishment' itself being eroded (reflected by the increasing volumes of seashells — from the earlier 30 lorryloads a year to the current 100), any further delay in the proposed groyne construction is dangerous.

At present, the North Chennai Thermal Power Plant discharges a part of its effluents into inland waters and into the Buckingham Canal, causing damage to aqua life in these waters. But according to a field officer of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, "The TNPCB's consent order in 1995 directed the NCTP to take coolant water from the sea and discharge it back there. When the Port came up, this arrangement ran into unexpected problems. The water crisis compounded the issue, with part of the Canal being used to recycle scarce water resources. Since January 2003, the effluent (actually condenser coolant water) is being discharged into the creek after travelling 4.5 km within the NCTP's premises so that at the point of direct outfall, it is only about 5 degrees Celsius. The current problem of effluent release (of about 10% currently) into the Buckingham Canal is a temporary issue, due to the logistics of implementing an arrangement to source intake directly from the Port area through a Rs. 32 crore tunnel to be completed by May 2004."

Says Dr. Sanjeeva Raj, "Environmentally sensitive marine engineers need to be involved in the execution of a groyne into the sea, south of the creek. With the consequent erosion to

the north, clogging of the creek will be a non-issue. And the accretion south of this area can remove the effects on the Tiruvottriyur shoreline to its south. With the TIDCO proposal for a massive LNG project not going through, can the land taken over be returned to the landowner so that planting can resume? The local fisherfolk can be either relocated with careful planning or provided with alternate means to livelihood through the coordinated efforts of the Government, landowners and others involved. Income-generating programmes based on local resources can be arranged for the women. And tourism can also be a profitable initiative."

Sadly, a master plan for heritage and eco-tourism development in this area, centred on Pulicat, the 17th Century Dutch headquarters in the East, and whose preparation was to have been supported by the Dutch Government — hasn't yet taken off, in spite of allround local support, due to lack of 'administrative' support.

And so, the debates go on endlessly, with vital issues continuing to remain unresolved. Only, the longer they remain unresolved, the sooner we'll have ourselves to blame for a lost environmental heritage and a people neglected.

Refinery under bonnet cries for attention

The Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* selected S. Gopalakrishnan, Chairman and Managing Director of the Chennai-based Hydrodrive Systems and Controls, a first-generation entrepreneur, as the joint winner of the Asian Innovation Award 2001 for inventing Hydro Drive, apparently the world's first pre-engine catalytic converter.

Outwardly a simple cylindrical product with two wires dangling out and a small nozzle for fitting it to the fuel line, Hydro Drive is an automobile emission controller as well as a fuel economiser for all vehicles running on petrol or diesel.

Tests done by the Metropolitan Transport Corporation, Chennai, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, vehicle dealers and individuals have confirmed that fitting Hydro Drive brings down vehicular emissions at actual fuel/road conditions, while at the same time improving mileage.

order, for retrofits like Hydro Drive would affect new vehicle sales. They also maintain that there is no catalytic converter for diesel engines.

So what next? The FEER award Gopalakrishnan received has attracted the attention of a couple of overseas auto and auto-component players. On the domestic front, "I will continue in my attempts to persuade domestic automakers to look at my product and, at the same time, sell at the retail level," says Gopalakrishnan.

Back in the Eighties, when he was much younger and trying to establish himself as a fluid coupling supplier, Gopalakrishnan, now 51, sent a one-page telegram to the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, explaining his ability to supply fluid couplings to Neyveli Lignite Corporation's (NLC) conveyors. The telegram got him a trial order of two pipes which ran successfully. Another communication to New Delhi ensured that he got half of NLC's final order.

• by Venkatachari Jagannathan

The equipment results in zero emission in the case of new vehicles and in the case of old heavy vehicles that spew dense smoke just what Euro I/II norms prescribe after running 2,000 km, Gopalakrishnan says. "It should be borne in mind that vehicle manufacturers test emission compliances for their products using special/reference fuels — ISO Octane for petrol engines and Cetane 55 for diesel."

Six years ago, when Gopalakrishnan perfected his invention, he was jubilant that auto manufacturers would jump at his product. For there was no catalytic converter for leaded and unleaded petrol and diesel engines as a pre-engine unit fitted to fuel line.

To his surprise, no vehicle manufacturer showed any interest in his invention.

Yet, the Supreme Court has ordered cars sold in metros should be fitted with exhaust catalytic converters, the phasing out of old commercial vehicles plying in New Delhi and the conversion of the capital's public transport buses into CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) fired ones. Vehicle manufacturers were happy with this

The eldest of three siblings (one brother and two sisters), and born to a government employee, Gopalakrishnan is a mechanical engineer from PSG College of Technology, Coimbatore. He also did a post-graduate diploma in marketing from the University of Madras. Immediately after his education, he joined PSG Industrial Institute, Coimbatore, and was involved in a project that indigenised the fluid coupling, which was being imported. Six months later, he joined Greaves Cotton as a sales engineer.

Climbing the corporate ladder fast, he became a divisional manager, but then quit Greaves Cotton when he was transferred to Guwahati. After a one-year stint in Germany, he decided to return to his native Chennai, where he approached TIIC and got Rs. 10 lakh loan to manufacture fluid couplings (a product used in motor drives). His innovation in couplings resulted in power saving and reduction in yarn loss. It made him popular across the textile industry.

"When the fortunes of the textile industry reversed, I started selling to other industries like sugar mills, steel



Our OLD is a 15-year-old picture of the main buildings of the Agri-Horticultural Society, when both buildings and the Society's abbreviated gardens were still landmarks in Madras. The Society was formed as the Madras Horticultural Society and it wasn't long before, in its 22 acres, there came up the colonial-style cottage seen above. Our NEW is of the scene after the cottage was recently pulled down. What's coming in its place behind the thatch, no one seems to know. We only hope it will not be something to mar the garden ambience by not being in consonance. (Picture of the NEW by REFLECTIONS.)



plants, power projects, Indian Space and Research Organisation and coal mines," he recalls.

In the early Nineties, he diversified into solar panels with another innovative product. Instead of all-glass panels, he came out with all-fibreglass transparent glazing — going against IREDA specifications. Faced with problems, he began looking for a market where buyers sought quality rather than subsidy and depreciation.

In 1996, when the recession began and there arose a need for new projects, he decided to look out for other opportunities. "I aimed at a mass item, and out of curiosity checked the auto population and found that the majority were running on diesel." That was the time when led and unleaded petrol and catalytic converters for cars came in.

The first Hydro Drive was tested in his 1985 Maruti Omni, which was due for a rebore. To his surprise he got zero emission as well as mileage improvement.

"I wrote to Maruti Udyog about the results and got another Omni under a special quota to test the product on a new vehicle. Here, too, the emissions were zero and the mileage improved in actual road driving conditions to 18 km/litre from 13 km," he says. That's when his invention began to be cold-shouldered.

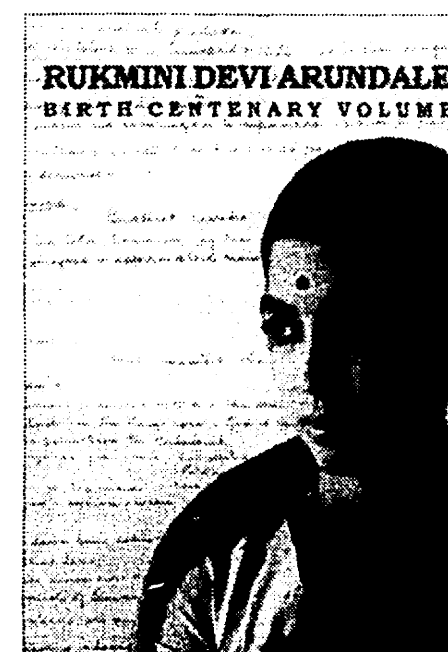
At the retail level, however, car dealers (all makes) have fitted Hydro Drives in cars. They also wrote highly about the product to the automobile manufacturers, but were warned that users would face non-applicability of warranty if outside gadgets were fitted. With the local industry showing

no signs of recognition, Gopalakrishnan decided to take his invention abroad.

Though his paper was accepted at the Society of Automotive Engineers, after being vetted by Ford Motor Company's engine experts and others, it was withdrawn at the last minute, citing US sanctions after Pokhran II. "My supplying fluid couplings to PSLV rockets got me black-listed," Gopalakrishnan says. At this juncture, R.M. Vasagam, former Vice-Chancellor, Anna University, Chennai, and also a PSG College alumnus, helped Gopalakrishnan to get his paper published in November 1998. There's been greater attention to his invention since, but "Isn't India interested?" wonders Gopalakrishnan. (Courtesy: www.domain-b.com)

Rukmini on herself

A birth centenary remembrance



Rukmini Devi Arundale.

The year-long celebrations of the birth centenary of Rukmini Devi Arundale, scheduled to conclude on 29th February 2004, have many aspects to be commended... Among them are a set of publications brought out by the Kalakshetra Foundation highlighting her accomplishments, initiatives and achievements in diverse fields, containing her reflections and views on various matters and also the appreciation expressed from different quarters. The set consists of:

- Rukmini Devi Arundale — Birth Centenary Volume.
- Some Selected Speeches and Writings of Rukmini Devi Arundale. Vol. 1 & 2.
- Shradhanjali — Brief Pen Portraits of a galaxy of great people who laid the foundations of Kalakshetra.

This is a task well done by

the editorial team led by Shakuntala Ramani.

The birth centenary volume, in particular, is a treasure and a collector's item. It contains an autobiographical section and features relating to different aspects of her personality and activity, namely, as a warm human being, dancer and guru, world citizen, humanitarian, educationist, cultural ambassador, founder of Kalakshetra, and the legacy.

The autobiographical section — *Rukmini On Herself* — is highly informative as an authentic account. Perhaps narrated in 1985 (a year before she died), it sets the record straight in many respects. The reader gets to know how the phenomenal transformation from a conservative middle class mofussil (Madurai-born) background to such eminence and international stature took place...

The family support was more in the broadmindedness than in material terms. The interest in music was from the mother's side. Rukmini wanted to study painting and literature along with music; she was not attracted to dance in the beginning. Father Nilakanta Sastri's side had a background of scholarship and he was interested in theosophy; a surprising fact was his signing a pledge against (!) dance in that big debate. The theosophical contacts provided some significant turning points and valuable opportunities, charting the course of her life decisively in a chain of developments resulting in the leap-frogging of the 'leap year born' into international limelight.

The inspiring association with Annie Besant started with an assignment of compiling her address book! Then the meeting in 1917 with George

Arundale, the trusted lieutenant of Annie Besant, the mutual impressions leading to the momentous wedding in 1920... Her own observation: "May be there is a destiny in these matters." True, but in her case it was not one way; she became a destiny-maker too. Bishop Leadbeater, theosophist, clairvoyant and occultist, did make a prediction very early that Rukmini 'would be responsible for a great renaissance in dance' when she was 'not even thinking about it'. How prophetic!

Then started the involvement with Theosophical Society (T.S.) work; travels within the country and abroad leading to wider exposure; the spell cast by the art and the persona of Anna Pavlova of *Swan Lake* fame in 1926; acquaintance with the legendary dancer; editing her photo collection and writing captions; Pavlova's suggestion to learn dance ("She put me in the way and also pointed the direction") lessons in ballet; production of dramas at T.S., the genesis of the mission; captivating impact of the 'very beautiful' Bharata Nanyam presented by Kalyani daughters — Rajalakshmi and Jeevaratnam — at the Music Academy in the December 1932 'season' (with-

nessing the programme at the invitation of E. Krishna Iyer); the determination to learn the art-form — starting lessons from Mylapore Gowri Amma, the journey to Pandanainallur, the interaction with Meenakshisundaram Pillai that was to prove so beneficial — are all part of the account so transparent; (incidentally, these specific references clear the confusion of ten created regarding the identity of the dancer(s) who had made such a motivating impression on her).

The hard practice and the first 'solo' programme at the T.S. annual convention in 1935 are graphically described; her fascination with the *raga Yadukulakambhoji*, choice of the *varnam Sreekrara sugunakara* are indicated. Reference is also made to the 'conversion effect' of the successful programme given in spite of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy's pleading with Rukmini's mother to make her give up dancing. On the other hand 'the won over' included such eminent people as C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, P.S. Sivaswami Iyer and V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. The course of the journey was now firmly set... "there was a great spirit of discovery, a fire in my heart". The ideas for the development of the art-form took shape. The dedication visit to Chidambaram, the dance offering in the crowded main *prakaram*, the feeling of a 'great spiritual experience' and getting 'God's blessings to start the work' were in tune, auguring well for the mission. The commitment was further confirmed with the conviction that 'the work which is blessed can never die'.

The decision to set up a dance academy was taken in an informal meeting in 1935. Originally called International Academy of Arts, the name was changed at the instance of Dr. Arundale 'to reflect the Indian spirit'. Kalakshetra was the name suggested by Pandit Subrahmanya Sastri, the grandfather of Sarada so closely identified with the institution later.

The shelter provided by T.S., the banyan tree, alas now no more, literally created the initial 'atmosphere'; but the need for money to run the institution was a real problem. Yet those days were different; 'there was a great spirit of service'. Rukmini concentrated on the activities — dancing, training, production of dance-dramas. Seeing Bhagavata Mela *natyanatakam-s* in different places in Thanjavur provided a model. *Kuttala Kuravanji* was her first major production so well received when presented in Courtallam. The rest, of course, is history. The grasp of the idiom becomes integrated, 'dance as giving visual shape to classical music'. The services of great music maestros are sought and luckily

(Continued on page 8)

VEDIC CHANTING ON UNESCO HERITAGE LIST

28 cultural expressions from Vanuatu to Brazil have been proclaimed by UNESCO as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. They include India's Tradition of Vedic Chanting.

Director-General Koichiro Matsuura of UNESCO making the proclamations said, "The proclamations are UNESCO's first concrete response in meeting the pressing need to safeguard intangible heritage. The purpose of these proclamations is not simply to recognise the value of some elements of the intangible heritage; they entail the commitment of states to implement plans to promote and safeguard the inscribed masterpieces."

The proclaimed masterpieces will be inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The goal of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity programme is to raise public awareness of the value of this heritage and encourage governments to take legal and administrative steps to safeguard it.

The intangible cultural heritage, which is sometimes called living cultural heritage, is manifested, *inter alia*, in the following domains:

Oral traditions, expressions and language; the performing arts; social practices, rituals, and festive events; knowledge

and practices about nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship.

The intangible cultural heritage, while being transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their historical conditions of existence; the intangible cultural heritage provides people and groups of people with a sense of identity and continuity. The safeguarding of the intangible

cultural heritage promotes, sustains and develops cultural diversity and human creativity.

The Proclamation encourages governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local communities to identify, safeguard, revitalise and promote their oral and intangible cultural heritage. It also aims to encourage individuals, groups, institutions and organisations to contribute to the management, preservation, protection and promotion of this heritage.

AN ENDANGERED TRADITION

Although the Vedas continue to play an important role in contemporary Indian life, this ancient oral tradition now faces many difficulties owing to current economic conditions and modernisation. Experts claim that four noted schools of Vedic recitation — in Orissa, Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka — may be in imminent danger of disappearing.

The Vedas comprise a vast body of Sanskrit poetry, philosophical dialogue and thought, myth, and ritual incantations brought to India by the Aryans over 3500 years ago. Regarded by the Hindus as the ultimate source of knowledge and the sacred foundation of their religion and culture, the Vedas embody one of the world's oldest surviving cultural traditions.

Expressed in elegant Vedic language, the ancestor of classical Sanskrit, the verses of the Vedas were traditionally chanted during sacred rituals and ceremonies and recited daily in the Vedic communities. Although the Vedic texts were recorded in writing some 15 centuries ago for reference purposes, their principal means of transmission remain oral to the present day.

The outstanding value of the Vedic tradition lies

not only in the rich content of its oral literature but also in the unique and ingenious techniques employed by the Brahmin priests in preserving the texts intact over three and half millennia. The complex recitation technique, requiring rigorous training from childhood, is based on a specific pronunciation of each letter, tonal accents and specific speech combinations to ensure that the sound in each word remains unchanged.

The Vedic heritage comprises a multitude of texts and interpretations collected in four Vedas, commonly referred to as "books" of knowledge even though they have been transmitted orally. The Rig Veda is an anthology of sacred hymns; musical arrangements of hymns from the Rig Veda and other sources are found in Sama Veda; the Yajur Veda abounds in prayers and sacrificial formulas used by priests; and the Atharvana Veda, attributed to the legendary sage, Atharvan, includes hymns, charms and spells. The Vedas also provide an extraordinary historical panorama of Hinduism and offer insight into the early development of several fundamental artistic and scientific notions, such as the concept of zero. — (UNESCO.)

Quizzin' with Raminon

(Current Affairs questions are from the period December 16 to 31. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. What feat by Kevin Kochersberger, to celebrate a centennial, failed miserably at Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, on December 17th?
2. On the above theme, how did Spaceship one achieve fame on the same day?
3. John Thain is the new CEO of which famous bourse?
4. What economic feat was achieved by India, for the first time, on December 19th?
5. In which high-profile, 15-year old case was former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao acquitted on December 22nd?
6. Who has been chosen for *Time* magazine's coveted 'Person of the Year 2003' cover?
7. Which famous 17th Century edifice in Delhi was finally handed over by the Army to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture on December 22nd?
8. Name the British-made probe and Europe's first Mars-lander that is presumed to be 'damaged' after landing on December 25th, because of its failure to communicate.
9. Name the Iranian town devastated by a massive earthquake on December 26th.
10. Name the latest magnum opus from J.P. Datta of *Border* fame that has not exactly matched its hype with earnings.

11. Of the two city water reservoirs, one is the Red Hills tank. Name the other.
12. Name the director of such acclaimed films as *Ramanathan Ramanadi*, *Vietnam Veedu* and *Thanga Pathakkam*, who passed away recently.
13. Where in Chennai is an eco-park, modelled on the Tezozomac Park in Mexico, coming up on a 52-acre extent of land?
14. Of which instrument are 'Guruvayur' Dorai and 'Karai-kudi' Mani exponents?
15. A. Sivasailam is the Chairman of which highly respected business house of the State?
16. Who has won the Sahitya Akademi Award for Tamil for 2003?
17. Who presided over the prestigious 77th Conference of the Music Academy this season?
18. Name the Chennai-based player who won his maiden National table tennis singles crown recently.
19. Apart from T.R. Baalu, who was the other DMK minister who resigned from the Union Cabinet recently?
20. Name the oldest Test cricketer and a hockey international, after whom a 'gate' is named at the Chepauk stadium, who passed away on December 21st.

(Answers on Page 7)

What makes the saree modern?



Faced with the question what makes the saree modern, most people would assume that the question is addressed to the saree as textile, to the gradual decline of traditional regional styles of embroidery or to the rise of synthetic materials replacing traditional silks and cottons. But we want to suggest that there is another story to be told which has very little to do with the manufacture of textile and is focussed, instead, on the saree as a garment women wear and which subsequently stands as the boundary between them and the outside world.

This story can only be told through careful observation of how exactly women wear their sarees today and what exactly they do with them in a whole range of activities, from mothers playing with their children, to young women flirting in front of males to senior executives trying to dominate a meeting. Indeed, to go beyond what we take for granted, it may be best to start by focussing on something more fine-grained than the saree as a whole, and fix our attention on just one part of the saree and that is the *pallu*.

The actresses who daily perform these tales of love, comedy and domestic strife in the television serials do not need to be told that their most constant and effective prop in portraying melodramatic sequences of intense emotion is the *pallu*. In this they are the inheritors of a long tradition of classical and folk acting. The actress Deena Pathak noted, when speaking of acting: Most it is the *pallu* which is handled. It is more of the fiddling with the end of the *pallu*. That is usually the coy kind of handling with *pallu*. But there can be so many other ways. You can hold it in a particular tight way in your fist and show anger. With a peasant woman she would hold it in her teeth most of the time, thereby both hiding and revealing her face.

The *pallu* is a haven for an embarrassed face and a cover for unseemly emotion. But, as with so many gestures made with the saree, these ambiguities can in turn give rise to an erotic element: often unintentionally, as when covering the mouth suddenly accentuates the eyes, or screening the eyes draw attention to the lips.

Most Indians have their first encounter with the saree as an infant, before the time of memory. Mothers use it as a multipurpose nursing tool. When breastfeeding they cradle the baby within it, veiling the operation from the outside

world, and use the cloth to wipe the surplus milk from the baby's lips.

For the child, the *pallu* becomes a physical embodiment of their mother's love, a love they can literally take hold of. Like the Western idea of a 'comfort blanket'. A child takes time to understand that it is itself an individual thing, separate from the rest of the exter-

• For some years a research team at University College, London, has been re-exploring the mode and meaning of the Indian Saree. The resulting book has received rapturous reviews and is said to have reconfigured thinking about this iconic garment. Here, the book's authors, PROFESSORS DANIEL MILLER and MUKULIKA BANERJEE of University College, describe the project.

nal world as first represented by the mother and her breast. The *pallu* helps bridge that awful separation and comforts the child during his growing awareness of it.

The relationship established at birth may account for its importance in anxious situations later in life. A middle-class informant in Delhi did not hesitate for a moment before providing an example of a woman incessantly fiddling with her *pallu*: 'A maid being interviewed for a job! This conjures up just the right combination of anxiety and deference that such clutching, twisting and untwisting of the loose cloth conveys.

The ambiguous 'semi-detached' quality of the *pallu* is just as evident in more mundane contexts. As a woman does her household chores, the *pallu* is in constant use as a kind of third arm, lifting hot vessels in the kitchen, wiping the seat she is about to sit on in a public place, cleaning her spectacles, collecting shopping or alms, gathering up rupee notes in a purse-like knot, or protecting her face from smoke and smog. The *pallu's* presence is so constant and available, so taken for granted, that it almost seems a part of the body itself.

Yet the same quality that extends the capacity of a person also gives the *pallu* the power to betray them. When something happens that represents the unwelcome intrusion of the same external world upon the self, it may well have the *pallu* that ends of it. The *pallu* that protects from smog also gets jammed in a car door. It is the *pallu* that, when touched by the wrong hand, can make one vulnerable, or that flies in your face so that you cannot see, or that falls off your head when you are trying to be modest.

What though is modern about this use of the *pallu*? Well, in a sense, talk of 'the saree' is to immediately give voice to what ought really to be called 'the modern saree'. Historically in India there were a hundred or more ways in which this piece of cloth was draped around the body, as has been documented

with the dilemma that women wore saree without a blouse or petticoat inside the house, and this would be clearly unsuitable in public. At first she wore an 'Oriental' costume acquired in Calcutta, a cumbersome dress held together with many pins and tucks made to resemble a saree. But in Bombay she noticed that her Parsi hosts wore the saree with a blouse and petticoat and draped it in the style of the *seedha palla*, i.e., with the *pallu* brought over on the back over the right shoulder, in the manner of Gujarati women. Finding the *pallu* flapping against her right arm inconvenient, she brought the *pallu* around her body and threw it over the left shoulder, thus giving birth to the 'Nivi' style of draping which went on to become the ubiquitous outdoor style for all women in India.

In 1866 the press reported on this original attire as worn by her at a Christmas party hosted by the Governor-General John Lawrence. It can be assumed the style became adopted over the next few decades, alongside the involvement of women in public life. It appears in images of women in the nationalist movement in the early years of the twentieth century, and from there it developed a mass appeal, mainly through its being adopted as the primary style in the film industry on the one hand and by influential politicians, such as Indira Gandhi, on the other.

We would argue that it is highly significant that the dominant style of saree wearing today, was one that developed with women who were in the vanguard of modern aspirations for women in India in general. The point about the Nivi style and the extraordinary flexibility that the *pallu* gives women, is that it is particularly well-suited to the demands of being modern Indian women.

Almost unnoticed and with considerable subtlety the vast range of styles and possibilities of the saree has coalesced around a particular style that is well-suited to this role of being modern.

But to appreciate this we have needed in some ways to move out of the usual realm of saree writing to carefully observe as professional anthropologists and document not so much what people say about themselves, but rather what we can observe by focussing upon the saree and the role that it plays in helping women play their role in modern society. — (Courtesy: *Connecting*, the journal of the British Council.)

George Town six decades ago

• by Cdr. R. Ganapathi I.N. (Retd.)

George Town! The very name conjures up nostalgic memories. My house stood on Ramaswami Street, Man-nadi. Scenes from the 1930s flash before my eyes as though it were yesterday. The early mornings would be buzzing with noisy activity. The milkman would be milking his cow and doling out milk at various door-steps, while shouts of "vendakka, kathrika, molakeerai" from outside would wake the late risers. A green-coloured Bangalore Brahmin Bakery tricycle would be seen in the street with children surrounding it, buying and gobbling up buns and cakes. The womenfolk would wake up very early to attend to the washing, bathing and cooking and also gently stir the household into getting ready for work. Typically, a house would be subtle, with 3 or 4 families living together and sharing the bath and lavatory, *koodam* and *thinnai* in the front.

Before long, children in groups would start walking to schools, while office-goers with tiffin boxes and college students would be rushing to catch a tram or bus in Parry's or an electric train at Beach Station.

The morning chores over and an early lunch taken, the women would rest, browsing through *Kalamagal* or *Ananda Vikatan*. About that time, you would hear shouts of pedlars like "edai edutahlum onraiyina..." and "Poona pathram, pithalai pathram, saman..." The latter was quite popular with women who would eagerly exchange with the vendor old clothes for a vessel or two. As a result, the men would now and then miss a favourite old shirt or *dhoti*! You would also watch a woman around 11 a.m. carrying a *kodam* containing milk. She would bring it all the way from Avadi and was known as "Avadi palkari". On certain mornings, a venerable man in *sadhu's* garbs chanting *pasurams* and *slokams* and carrying a well-polished bronze vessel would make his appearance at your door and the lady of the house would very respectfully offer him a handful of rice as *bhiksha*. A *kunkumakaran* also would come selling *kunkumam*. He would mix his powders adroitly and give you any required colour. Sometimes, with a great fanfare of a band, cinema posters would be paraded on the street.

In the evenings, the boys would play on the road, while the girls would occupy themselves singing *Saralavarisai* be-

fore the Pattu Vadiar accompanied by a harmonium or help mother with her work. A number of *pookaris* could be seen selling *kadambam* and *mallipoo*. Shouts of "ravesu vethalai" and a musical sounding "kodhikudu nilakadalai" would also be heard sometimes! The bell that rang every hour in the Chakarai Chetty house was heard throughout the area and was a great boon to the residents in an

era when watches and clocks were not common.

In summer months, the house *mottaimadi* would be covered with old sarees and *dhotis* on which *appalams* and *vadams* would be spread to dry in the sun along with a few pieces of black cloth and an open umbrella to ward off the crows. Women from different households would team together to prepare those items. The task

would take quite a few hours, but they would do it willingly, talking and laughing in between, enjoying every bit of it! That camaraderie and cooperative living was a hallmark of the period. The young, however, who would go to the terrace to fly their kites, were the first to taste those items!

Whenever father came home early from office, the whole family would get a chance to walk to the Beach and, while returning, enjoy those tasty sweet and savoury dishes in Modern Café! Prabhat and Broadway Talkies also were close by. There was no advance booking those days. Usually, the

whole family would go for the night show after dinner, the fare for the highest class being a rupee and a quarter only! Minerva Talkies in Loane Square was a favourite haunt of the young; only English films were screened there and tickets were of a single denomination!

George Town had a number of temples. The *ther* (chariot) festival of the Mallikewar Koil was famous and people used to throng the streets to witness the chariot with the deity seated on it being pulled by devotees. The procession would take hours to complete. The

(Continued on page 8)

NOSTALGIA A few more steps, Ashokamitran

Had historian Ashokamitran, having entered the Park Town area some 50 years ago, cared to take some further steps to his right from Moore Market, he would have seen another remarkable part of Madras. Having crossed historical Sri Kandaswami Temple, located amidst the din of the city, he would have seen the famous MUC ground where the Luistarians and Khalsa Blues clashed in the Gold Cup hockey tournament; or India's most famous football teams vying for honours in the well-known tournament conducted by the same MUC Club.

A few more steps in and into Mat Bazaar, he would have encountered the White Palace of Chellaram's, followed by Leelaram's and Kewalram's, all well-known shopping houses for clothing. Further on, if he had taken a left turn at the end of the street, a glittering world of gold and silver would have welcomed him. From Vummidiar's to T. Govindarajulu Naidu and Sons, from Pasumarthy's to Veecumsees, from Bapalal to Nathella Sampathu Chetty, an array of leading jewellery shops, interspersed with smaller ones doing the same trade, would have enthralled him. And one of the side lanes housed the famous SRB Silk House; no elite marriage in Madras was complete without a saree from this shop. He could also have had *darshan* at the Pattinam temple as well as at the Sri Amman temple before being attracted by the aroma of Arya Bhavan in Govindappa Naicken Street, famous for its *badham halwa* and attracting the North Indians in the area, too. Having had his sumptuous fill, the author could have tasted 'supari' and dry fruits available at the nearby Rasikal's before continuing his trip into China Bazaar and its by-lanes.

In the adjacent Bunder

Street, another crowded business lane, he would notice the poshest cars of the time parked before a big grocery shop. The Dasai Grocery shop was a favourite for the rich and middle class and its goods spoke of quality. On the next street was the famous Hoe and Coy and opposite the street there was the often-famed fruit market and, by the side of it, the flower market; the rich and poor mingling in itself was a sight. Certainly, the quiet

taste its famous butter *masala dosa* and *mysore bonda* along with the sweet butter biscuits. Energised, he would have continued his trip to see the Ramakrishna Lunch Home and the stately YMCA building, his attention being diverted to the rows of bookshops on the pavement where you could find books of all varieties and bundles of comic books — the lucky reader might even come across an old piece of Sir Walter Scott. Now having met his ilk,

• Inspired by the review of Ashokamitran's book in *Madras Musings* on June 16, 2003.

Appah and Company pharmacy would not have escaped his attention too. A couple of blocks away was Pophan's Broadway, the hub of George Town. At the entrance itself, he would have been drawn by the fine aromas from Ambi's Cafe' and a few more steps away Bossoto Brothers' cake shop, one of whose specialities was the light green Butter Beans.

The Sriramulu Park nearby, with its big shady trees, provided a haven for the labourer who toiled in the many business houses in Armenian Street and the Korwal Chavadi, the heart of marketing. Another 100 yards and he would see the red building near Mannady where *Ananda Vikatan* was once printed, and the Minerva (smallest cinema) and Cinema Central (one of the oldest). All these areas he would have enjoyed with the hustle and bustle of carts, hand-pulled rickshaws and the bell clattering green trams which managed to cruise through the small streets.

If he had retraced his steps and entered the main street again, the sight of two-storeyed Modern Cafe would have beckoned him to enter the hotel and

the author would have seen the General Swadeshi Mart, home of khadar (Khadi), St. Mary's Church and the ornamental structures of the High Court with the Light House cornering attention. He would then enter the cool pavement of Second Line Beach. Enroute, he would have also noticed the red, green, blue P.T. Ltd., SRVS and PPL public transport buses neatly lined up on the opposite side and awaiting passengers!

The tall and richly decorated Imperial Bank building, the General Post Office, the huge Indian Bank building and the Collectorate with a gazebo in front, would have gladdened his heart. The sight of two large anchors, placed at the mouth of the Madras Harbour, would also

have found mention in his glimpses. Further on, he would have come across Clive Battery with its small beach nearby, where he would have seen elderly Anglo-Indian couples sitting on the benches and enjoying the evening breeze, despite the gutter water flowing into the sea. The dismal scene would have vapourised the minute he noticed the small red tram, with its cushioned seats, daintily moving along, on its trip from Mada Church, Royapuram, to Egmore Church, a luxury then for those of the whites living in that area. Any ordinary citizen would have hesitated to board it, so neat and compact the facility when compared to the noisy green trams.

The Badri Maedu and Royapuram Bridge are two more spots which would have been noted down by him before he backtracked and took First Line Beach Road, a calm, shady stretch where the officers of the Harbour and Navy had their residences. Coming out of the street by the side of the High Court beach side of the Fort, he would have been fascinated by the Fort and rifle shooting sand mounds, while the wait at the level crossing would give him the opportunity to ponder over what he had witnessed in George Town.

D.S. Ramanujam

Quiz Answers

1. Recreating the Wright Brothers' historic first powered flight; 2. It became the first plane to break the sound barrier without non-governmental effort; 3. New York Stock Exchange; 4. The country's foreign exchange reserves breached the \$100 billion mark; 5. The Lakhubhai Pathak case; 6. 'The American Soldier'; 7. The Red Fort complex; 8. *Beagle 2*; 9. Bam; 10. LoC-Kargil.
11. Satyamurthi Sagar in Poondi; 12. P. Madhavan; 13. Along the Adyar river creek; 14. *Mridangam*; 15. Amalgamations Group (parent company of Simpson's); 16. Lyricist Vairamuthu for *Kalikkattu Ithahasam*; 17. Sangita Kalanidhi T.V. Sankaranarayanan; 18. Sharath Kamal; 19. A. Raja; 20. M.J. Gopalan.

George Town, six decades ago

(Continued from Page 7)

Kannaadi Pallaku procession of Krishnan Koil was equally famous. In festival times, "puli-vesham" and "karivesham" performances would be presented on the street. Sometimes, a huge Tirupati Kodai would be taken round the town with devotees waiting on the streets to have *darshan*.

We used petromax and hurricane lamps, as there was no electricity in our house. We were never bothered by mosquitoes and also never felt the need for fans. This was probably due to the Madras terrace roofing with Mangalore tiles and also due to effective ventilation provided by the central *muttram* and proximity to the beach.

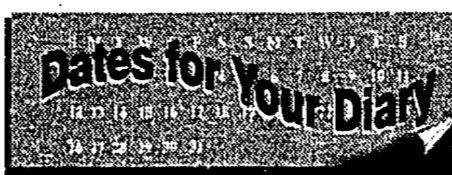
Free medical aid was provided in the area at the Thandava Pillai Dispensary. There was also the Rama Rao Clinic in Thambu Chetty Street where patients had to pay only for the medicines prescribed by the doctor! The Moulvi outside the Masoodis also would attract a good crowd of Muslim, Hindu, and Christian patients for 'manthrikaradhu' - that was secularism at its best! There were also good schools like Ramiah Chetty School, Chetty School for Girls, Muthialpet High School and the C.S.M. Girls High School, all staffed with dedicated teachers. In those days there was no capitation fees, donations or entrance tests. A parent just took his child and admission was secured!

Trams were cheap and so were bicycles. Hand-pulled rickshaws could be hired to

bring you to your door, a *savari* costing hardly a few annas! The T.U.C.S. chain of fair price grocery shops were ever crowded (the present Kamadhenu). Ram Bhavan in Thambu Chetty Street was a popular hotel whose tiffin items were very wholesome and cheap. During the Navarathri festival, music *kutcheri*s were held free in the *koil*s. The *Katha Kalakshepam* rendered by Chidambara Bhagavathar in Gokhale Hall was a great crowd-puller. Also, the *Golu* arranged in the Nattukottai Chetties' houses in Thambu Chetty and Lingi Chetty Streets would attract many a local visitor. Whenever the Congress Exhibition or the Park Fair or a circus was held in the city, the residents were sure to visit them, the families forming large groups which always added to the fun!

Life had its own simple charm, even though we did not have the sophistication of TV, cinema houses with advanced audio systems, modern restaurants or the hectic buzz of today. Everything was affordable and life rolled at an even pace. There was hardly any traffic or crowd on the streets and hence no pollution. Even the Corporation staff used to clean the streets regularly and clear the bins and would feel mightily pleased if we gave them Pongal *inam*! Neither were there any distractions nor open exposure to violence and vice. People still held values in great esteem and lived more or less a puritanic life.

They were the best years of our lives!



January 19-24: India through the eyes of Alain Danielou, 1935-1955. Alain Danielou and Raymond Burnier took many photographs during the 20 years of their stay in India. A selection of these photographs will be presented in this unique exhibition. The exhibition will show not only the unchanging India with its temples and rituals, but also portraits, sceneries and cities. On the occasion of the opening of the exhibition, Jean-Louis Gabin, person in-charge of the publication of the lectures and unedited articles of Alain Danielou will present his life and work. (At Alliance Francaise.)

January 20 and 21: *The Summit* by British theatrical company Ralf. Ralf has toured the world for twenty years, thrilling audiences with its hilarious take on the mannerisms, machinations and

emotions which govern the ways humans politically engage. (At Sivagami Pethachi Auditorium, 7.00 p.m.)

January 23: The Tamil version of Alain Danielou's book on music will be released followed by a *veena* concert by Vidya Shankar. (At Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 6.30 p.m.)

January 27-February 8: *Spring-Summer in Marnay-sur-Seine*, an exhibition of the work of Pampa Panwar. The artist lives and works in India but during her residency in France in 2001, she realised a composition: a kind of kaleidoscope capturing the mood of Spring-Summer in Marnay sur Seine. The exhibition will include around 22 paintings in mixed media. (At Alliance Francaise.)

January 29-February 14: *Birds of the Cauvery* - a series of paintings on birds and the intrinsic patterns of life by Premalatha Hanumanthiah Seshadri, inspired by a stay near a bird

sanctuary in Mysore. (At Forum Art Gallery.)

Till January 28: Acquireables, buyables, collectables of new contemporary art. Farhan Mujib, Sanjeev Khandekar and Alex Stewart offer you art at the price of a five star meal or a designer shirt. All the works will be priced between Rs. 1000 and Rs.5000. (At Apparao Galleries.)

January 27: *Natak*, a theatre festival curated by Masquerade to encourage theatre talent on college campuses. (At the Max Mueller Bhavan, 6.30 p.m.)

January 27: CPR Environmental Education Centre exhibits traditional water harvesting system of India. (At CP Arts Centre.)

January 30-February 1: *Aravaan*, a monologue, written by S. Ramakrishnan, performed by K.S. Karuna Prasad and choreographed by M. George. Drawn from the Mahabaratha, *Aravaan* is a character of sacrifice. (At Alliance Francaise.)

RUKMINI ON HERSELF

(Continued from Page 5)

obtained, for a 'song'... Papanasam Sivan, Tiger Varadachariar, Veenai Krishnamachari, Mysore Vasudevachar, Veenai Sambasiva Iyer, Budalur Krishnamurti Sastri composing music for the different dance-dramas along with gurus like Mylapore Gowri Amma, Chokalingam Pillai, Ambu Panikkar and Chandu Panikkar, ensuring such distinct quality; the relationship assumes closer dimension with their residence at Kalakshetra itself, a symbiosis of enormous value and vibrations, a case of emotional bond and allround benefit.

The 'atmosphere' leisurely and congenial, works wonders - Sivan singing for Rukmini's dance and the latter providing *pin paattu* for Sivan's *bhajan* singing... many such happenings. Her accomplishments be-

come more versatile; *nattuvan-gam* is also a skill acquired. Every pursuit is so purposeful and serious, improving her personal stature as well as that of the institution. She refers to the recognition obtained from the University of Madras for the Sangeeta Siromani course after examination by a 'formidable' panel consisting of A.L. Mudaliar, Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, Palladam Sanjeeva Rao and K. Ponniah Pillai. Some achievement!...

Efforts to develop a separate identity for Kalakshetra independent of the T.S. start with buying land at Tiruvanmiyur 'bit by bit' along the seashore. Arundale's passing away in 1945 takes her to another plane of attitude: "the emphasis on my own life changed from the personal to the impersonal". The T.S. was no longer a 'haven of peace' for her; she was

asked to move all the institutions - Besant High School, Kalakshetra, Weaving Centre - out of the Society grounds. The process of rebuilding is mentioned in detail; the trials and tribulations were very much there. It was an *agni pareeksha* ultimately to have triumphal effect and prove as a blessing in disguise. Not only did Kalakshetra achieve an independent stature, but along with that her own role in public life started growing...

After this stage, the narration does not proceed in any detail regarding later developments...

At the end, reference is again made to the feeling regarding 'divine Will'. The transformation of Rukmini to 'Devi' can be clearly perceived in the account. — (Courtesy: *Sruti*)

Annam

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