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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

INSIDE

- A sanctuary, yesterday & today
- Valparai views
- 2 pages of letters
- Ace at fifty
- More sting to Mosquitos

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Vol. XIV No. 7 July 16-31, 2004

a-MUSING

It's no use writing this exam; the latest news is that the college has scrapped the entrance exam!

Wanted: A Pied Piper

One can't speak for the adults in this country, but one has to hand it to the children here.

They are a wonderful, patient, trusting lot, displaying constant faith in the adults ruling their lives – a faith that said adults do everything they can *not* to live up to.

Witness the chaos over all these various 'entrance' exams, for instance.

Traditionally, by the time the dreaded season for these exams rolls around, parents and children are worn out with the sheer effort of wading through foggy mists of contradictory information, trying to make effective decisions (that include dreams as well) in the process.

It's hard enough picking which examination to take; which one to ignore....

And now a fresh bogey has raised its head:

There are no guarantees whether said examination will have any relevance at all when the time comes for seats to colleges to be allotted.

How crazy is that?

Children go through endless trauma and stress to somehow achieve as-it-is absurdly high percentages, only to have some rule-making adult state with studied nonchanlance:

"Er...you know that series of exams you took a while ago? Well, actually, those results do not count any more. Sorry. Too bad."

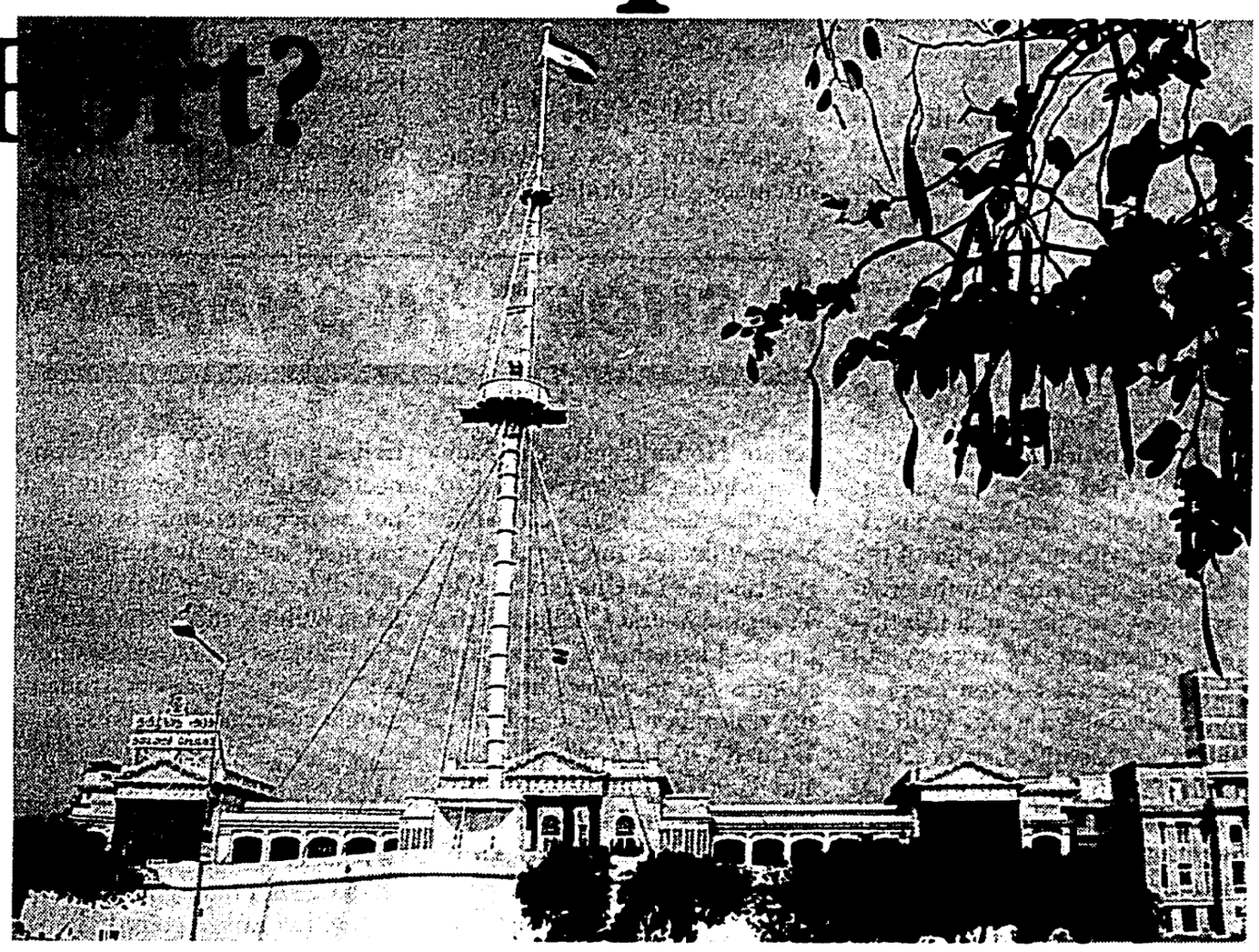
The need of the hour: a gentle, wise Pied Piper, to pipe children to a better world, where their minds are free from fear; untouched by the actions of goofy adults.

Ranjitha Ashok

When will we push for our Fort?

What's V.T. got that Fort St. George hasn't?

(By The Editor)



Fort St. George in the 1980s. (Courtesy: Madras – The Gracious City.*)*

Indeed, what's Chhatrapati Sivaji Terminus, still known better as Victoria Terminus in Mumbai, got that our Fort St. George hasn't? Obviously a Government pushing for it. Isn't it about time ours began to push for UNESCO declaring the Fort a World Heritage site?

We can understand Gangaikondacholapuram and Darsuram being pushed by Government to be included in UNESCO's World Heritage Site List, though it is a bit of a mystery why the fourth of the great Chola temples, Tribhuvanam, was ignored. But surely, urging the inclusion of these sites in the List should not preclude making out a case for Fort St. George? As a historical site there is no more important one in modern India than this one.

Fort St. George is where modern India was born. It was from here that virtually every modern institution in India spread. From the Indian Army to the Civil Service, from record keeping to municipal governance, from the school system to engineering, from the land surveys to the scientific surveys, from medicare to Indo-Saracenic architecture, they all have their roots here. Surely, historically speaking, that is a record unmatched by any other building site in the subcontinent.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee appears to have been quite thrilled by the 116-year-old Victoria Terminus's

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Unique partnership to tend *Senate House*

(By A Special Correspondent)

What was described as "an unique partnership in Tamil Nadu" was recently formed to manage the *Senate House* of the University of Madras and enable it to once again become the landmark it was between the 1870s and the 1950s. The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust will create awareness about *Senate House*, be responsible for all aspects of the restoration of the building, raise funds for this purpose, ensure the maintenance of it after the restoration and manage it as a living space on behalf of the University of Madras.

The uniqueness of the Trust lies in its composition. Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras, it will include the Secretary for Higher Education and two members of the Syndicate, and a representative each from the Willingdon Trust, which has made a substantial contribution towards the restoration work, Chennai Heritage, which has helped in the creation of awareness about the project and with the fund-raising, and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Tamil Nadu Chapter, which has been helping with technical advice on authentic restoration measures. It was Vice-Chancellor S.P. Thyagarajan's persuasive approach and the Syndicate's appreciation of the case he presented that enabled this pathbreaking step in restoration management to be taken. This step, and the restoration work – which is being documented step by step – will, Dr. Thyagarajan hopes, prove a model for other such projects involving the restoration of heritage buildings. Some such buildings that come to mind are Gokhale Hall, Raj Bhavan, Government House, Bharat Insurance Building, the Ophthalmic Institute campus and the 'Red Fort' – the Anatomy Block – of the Madras Medical College.

The Trust which was registered at the end of June and which had its first meeting on July 10th had begun its work a few months earlier. Upto the end of June, it had collected about Rs. 2.5 crore and spent about Rs. 70 lakh on completing the 1st phase of the work (the roof) and starting on the 2nd and 3rd phases of the work (the brickwork, wall decorations, woodwork and stained glass). Business, banks and industry have contributed about 60% of the sum collected, while affiliated colleges, alumni and students have contributed the rest. But apart from the private

(Continued on Page 2)

Things look up for *Senate House*

Things are certainly looking up for *Senate House*, with all involved adopting very positive attitudes towards ensuring the restoration of the heritage building that has been talked of from the 1980s. *The Man From Madras Musings* is particularly struck by the alacrity with which Vice-Chancellor S.P. Thyagarajan follows up on any suggestion and ensures that action is taken. *MMM* compliments him, for having successfully persuaded the Syndicate to agree to the formation of a private-public partnership to manage *Senate House* for the University, and the Syndicate for appreciating the need for such a Trust.

While the Trust will raise funds, monitor the work and manage the restored building, the work in progress is being watched over by a Technical Committee whose Works Sub-committee meets every week to discuss how best every aspect of the work, from waterproofed roofing to brickwork, from frescoes to glass- and woodwork, is carried out. The Works Sub-committee, *MMM* notes, has been experimenting with one quarter of the building, exploring how the original work was done and identifying artisan-experts to carry out what was, and is even more so now, specialised work. With experts now identified, work scheduling has begun and Larsen & Toubro will undertake the entire work at a very special rate, working with their team as well as with the identified experts. This teamwork of professional construction specialists and artisan-experts and those with traditional skills is one of the features of this restoration effort that has struck *MMM*.

At the end of the day, it is expected that the restoration work would have been carried out as true to the Chisholm original as possible. About 80% of the original material is likely to remain *in situ*. But new material – as close to the original as possible – used to replace such damaged items as wood, glass, bricks and metal will, naturally, not have a weathered look. That weathering will take time is something that will have to be appreciated by viewers. They will have to also appreciate what's happening in the interior of the building.

In the 19th Century, the interiors of grand buildings were heavily frescoed in lavish colours. Many of these buildings in the 20th Century had their interiors painted over in uni-colour as tastes changed. The National Art Gallery in Britain, for instance, not so long ago discovered that this had happened in its case and has begun considering restoration of its halls to the original decorative state. The archaeological experts working on *Senate House* have discovered much the same thing at *Senate House*. Under layers of uni-paint, that appear to have varied in colour at the time of each re-painting, there have been found original fresco work. And this is what will be brought to life again when *Senate House* is restored. The restoration will not only give *Senate House* an interior that will seem totally different to what those in the last few decades have grown used to, but might even in patches seem new wherever the old has been touched up. But this too will weather – and needs to be viewed with that understanding. *MMM* hopes that that understanding – and, more important, appreciation – will be forthcoming for what is proving to be a bit of classical restoration in its authenticity.

Honouring past help

Attending the Press Conference announcing the formation of the Senate House Trust, *The Man From Madras Musings* was glad to hear that nearly Rs.2.5 crore had been collected for the project ever since Vice-Chancellor S.P. Thyagarajan and Chennai Heritage had launched a drive a few months ago to collect funds for the restoration of *Senate House*. With Rs.70 lakh already spent and Rs.50 lakh given as advances towards work to be completed in the next few months, more money needs to accrue before long so that the work as no time is brought to a halt for want of funds. It is in connection with the additional funds needed that *MMM* wonders what happened to the funds that were originally collected when Professor Sathik was Vice-Chancellor.

If *MMM* remembers right, approximately Rs.1.1 crore was collected against a target of Rs.3 crore, but work could not progress because University red tape and the consequent unwillingness to form a trust, as has now been formed, halted the restoration before it even began. That money, however, lay for a while in a separate account, till a few years later it was used for various other needs of the University.

That original corpus included a grant from the University Grants Commission and contributions from a few industrial houses. Their contributions were for SPECIFIC use in the restoration of *Senate House* and could not be used for any other purpose, no matter how laudable – or essential, like toilets!

MMM feels that, given the University's new commitment to the restoration of *Senate House* and its enthusiastic support to the Senate House Trust, the whereabouts of this original collection should be ascertained by the University and the money put into the Senate House Trust Fund, even if it has to be in instalments.

Too often, Government organisations – not to mention many a private sector business – get funds for one purpose and use them for another, thereafter completely forgetting the original purpose. *MMM* feels the University should set an example by not forgetting the original purpose and ensuring that funds it had collected for that purpose but put to use for other purposes are restored to the Senate House Restoration Account and used for that specific purpose. Such a gesture will certainly generate a lot of goodwill and make any approach for additional contributions easier. Such approaches will be easier also if there is seen to be a regular contributory flow of funds from students, past and present, which would reflect participation by ALL those connected with the University and not participation only by outsiders interested in the heritage aspect of the building. If it is to be a living building that is the heart of the University again, every alumnus and every present student should contribute, *MMM* feels.

Water project

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's grand gesture, read out with a rather pointed smile, promises Rs.1000 crore for a water desalination plant for Chennai. *The Man From Madras Musings* welcomes the gesture but sees it as only as that, a gesture that is no more than a vague proposal.

The Finance Minister has subsequently promised that this money will be handled by the Tamil Nadu Government, presumably by the Desal Corporation being set up by Metrowater. But if the sum has to be specifically used for the capacity-generation cited by the Finance Minister, then the State Government could well find itself having to search for an additional Rs.500-1000 crore required for the delivery system necessary. Will it agree to put in that money, or will it suggest downsizing of the project to enable both water-generation and delivery to be created within the amount promised?

It has also been suggested that the whole project be handled by the private sector on a build, operate and transfer process. Major issues any private contractor will face are acceptance of the rates he will charge and collection of dues. The Coimbatore Bypass and the East Coast Road experienced considerable uncertainly on these grounds. The problems will only be compounded by greater mass use and thousands of more collection points. Tamil Nadu's citizens have not been the most compliant of persons when it comes to paying for services – making every investor considering participation in public utilities' development think twice.

Indeed, any payments Governments in India, State or Union, suggest their citizens pay are always an issue. Nowhere in the world has MMM seen so much debate on annual budgets as in India. Pages are devoted to it in the newspapers and journals, TV, especially the business channels, focus entirely on it for days on end, and wherever people meet, there is always heated discussion, and many an educated person is even willing to take to the streets to get something or other reduced, as has been seen in Mumbai over the shares transaction tax. *MMM* has seen nothing like this focus on fiscal matters anywhere in the world except in neighbouring countries. What makes South Asians react in this fashion to contributing to Government's coffers which need replenishing to provide a welter of services, including helping the disadvantaged, *MMM* has long wondered and never got any answers.

— MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

A big 'Thank You' to 41 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.06.04 and 15.07.04, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *Madras Musings*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

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Unique partnership for *Senate House*

(Continued from page 1)

sector, colleges and students, the Trust is pinning its greatest hopes on the alumni, and, more particularly, those who received their degrees in this historic hall, coming forward and contributing to their *alma mater*. With no records available of current addresses of alumni and not even the addresses of many of the older alumni, say, from Independence, the Trust is faced with a massive and difficult task of reaching out to the alumni – who include engineering and medical graduates. The Trust looks forward to alumni not only sending in their contributions in response to the public appeals by the University and the Trust, but also in providing the University their latest addresses so that it could take this opportunity to compile an alumni list.

Senate House, apart from being the venue of Convocations and all major functions of the University, was in the past used for many important public occasions. These included the first meetings of the State Legislature, the Music Academy's sessions and concerts during the Season, and many a public oration or meeting, plays and other performances. It also housed the offices of the Vice-Chancellor and hosted the meetings of the University Syndicate and Senate. The Trust will encourage use of the Hall once again for such purposes, once the building is restored, to generate the funds for continuous maintenance and to ensure the building does not fall into the sad state it has been in during the last three decades.

The first Trustees of the Senate House Trust are Dr. S.P. Thyagarajan, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras (Chairman), the Secretary for Higher Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, T.P. Imbichammad and Dr. N. Sivagnanam, representing the Syndicate, M.V. Subbiah (Willingdon Trust), S. Muthiah (Chennai Heritage) and Tara Murali (INTACH-TN). The Trust is targeting the completion of the major part of the work by December 2005 in order to have the hall ready for the launch of the celebrations of the 150th year of the University, 2006/07.

Editor's Note: As a further contribution by Chennai Heritage, *Madras Musings* will from today publish a coupon every fortnight which, it hopes, will stir alumni – and heritage-lovers – into contributing towards making *Senate House* a landmark in the city again. **The first coupon appears on page 7.**

● We take a different look at the OLD and the NEW today, featuring two articles on the Guindy National Park, seen 25 years ago and a few weeks ago.

A sanctuary in the city...yesterday...

Blackbuck at the Guindy National Park. (Photograph courtesy: Madras — The Gracious City.)

● by WILSON P. DURAIRAJ, IFS
(Wildlife Warden)

Forests or woods are seldom found within or in close proximity to municipal limits of metropolitan cities. It is indeed fortunate, nay, providential that Madras is blessed with the Guindy National Park within its city limits to serve as a sanctuary, away from the hustle and bustle of the daily noisy routine.

The Government of Madras bought in 1817 what was then known as *Guindy Lodge* from its owner Gilbert Ricketts. It served as the county residence and week-end resort for the Governors of Madras from 1825. It was constituted as a Reserved Forest in 1910. It became the permanent residence *(Raj Bhavan)* of the Governors of Madras from 1947 when the then Governor gave up the city residence in Government Estate. The total area was then about 500 ha.

The then Governor of Madras, A.J. John, offered to relinquish the bulk of the extensive park area (about 400 ha) attached to *Raj Bhavan*, as a contribution to the public amenities of the city and as a measure of austerity. While approving that proposal, the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, expressed the hope that the park area would be preserved and a portion utilised as Children's Park. Accordingly, the Forest Department took over the area in March 1958 and maintained a part of it as Children's Park with a mini-zoo and amenities for children. After parting with portions of the Park for the Indian Institute of Technology, the Guru Nanak Educational Society, the Cancer Institute, memorials for Gandhiji, Rajaji and Kamaraj and setting aside the extent required by *Raj Bhavan*, an area of 270.57 ha was declared as a National Park in 1978 under Section 35 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972.

The park is the most easily accessible area for botanists and is one of a very few areas left with the natural Carnatic Coastal evergreen thorny scrub jungle of the southern dry zone. The vegetation has been modified only by a few additions of ornamental and fruit trees that have been progressively planted in the blanks. There are more than thirty species of trees, including sandalwood, and numerous species of undergrowth.

The Indian Antelope, popularly known as the Blackbuck (Antilope cervicapral), and the spotted deer (Chital-Axis axis) are the largest fauna in the Park. It is not known when the deer were introduced in the area. Naturalists hold that this scrub jungle is not the normal habitat of either of these two animals, yet they have flourished in the area and breed without fear of human beings.

The incidence of Blackbuck, the entire population of which in India is now estimated to be only about 15,000, is noteworthy. Blackbuck has been recorded from the days of Alexander the Great in the 4th Century B.C. Records giving detailed accounts of blackbuck are, however, available only from the 16th Centruy A.D., the days of the Moghuls, when hunting blackbuck with cheetahs and staging blackbuck fights were prevalent.

According to one estimate there were once 4 million blackbucks in India.

While parts of the Deccan plateau and the Northwestern India were noted for the greatest abundance of the animals, they were distributed all over India except in the West Coast, the southern tip of the peninsula, the Gangetic deltaic region and the Himalayan tract. Their numbers and distribution dwindled to 80,000 in 1947 and to 8000 in 1964 according to estimates by the Wildlife Preservation Society of India, the largest concentrations being in Bhavnagar District of Gujarat, Rajasthan in the northwest and in the Guindy National Park and Point Calimere sanctuary in the South. The reasons for the marked decline are not far to seek. The main cause was the destruction of the habitat, triggered by World War II and by the human population explosion. Indiscriminate killing contributed partly to the destruction.

A few rare whitebucks were brought from Bhavnagar and introduced in the Park by the then Governor of Madras, the Maharajah of Bhavnagar, about three decades ago. They have been breeding with the normal buck.

Among the other animals in the Park are the prolifically breedy spotted deer or chital. These animals do not shun human habitations and keep constantly moving into and out of the park straying into the Indian Institute of Technology campus, the Highways Research Centre, the Engineering College, Central Leather Research Institute, Ranithottam and other neighbouring areas.

Bonnet monkeys, jackals, jungle cats, small Indian Civet cats, the common plain civet cats, common mongoose and jungle hare are other mammalian fauna which have their abode in the park. Reptiles and insects are also well represented in the park.

A rich variety of avifauna can be met within the park which is a paradise for bird-watchers. Herons, kingfishers, migratory waders like sand pipers, snipes and black winged stilts are met with in the two perennial tanks. Larks, yellow wattled capwings, the grey partridge, cuckoos, shrikes, robins, wag-tails, bulbuls, warblers, bee-eaters, woodpeckers, crow pheasants, blue jay, doves, minivets, munias, barbets, Parakeets and the paradise fly-catcher are the notable birds seen in the park. The checklist of brids in the park prepared by Selvakumar and Sivakumar enumerates 112 birds. There is a network of roads, foot-paths and nature trails which offer excellent accessibility for viewing the wildlife amidst their natural sylvan settings. (Courtesy: *Blackbuck*, the Journal of Madras Naturalists' Society.)

... & Guindy National Park today

Although Guindy National Park offers a quiet retreat for Chennai's harried citizens, only a handful are familiar with the Park's rich biodiversity.

With over 350 species of flora, the Park is a dry evergreen deciduous forest. Teak, mango, neem and tamarind are some of the common trees here. A surprise find is sandalwood trees.

According to S. Kamaraj, a biologist at Guindy, "It is rather interesting to find sandalwood trees in the park. But, surprisingly, the required soil type is present in a particular part of the reserve."

Thanks to the different varieties of trees, the animals in the Park get food all year round. They also enjoy a cool environment to live in, as the temperature here is always two degrees below that in other parts of the city. Kamaraj explains that the emphasis is on preserving the natural state of the park.

"For instance", he says, "even if a tree falls, it is not cleared, as an entirely new life cycle forms in and around the area."

According to the latest census there are 650 blackbucks and over 2,500 spotted deer. The spurt in population of the spotted deer is of grave concern among environmentalists, who consider it a threat to the blackbuck.

About 135 species of migratory water, land and arboreal birds are a special attraction at the Park. Apart from the more familiar birds, Guindy has a touch of exotica with its paradise fly-catchers. During December, January and February, the Park lays out the welcome mat for birds like pond herons, dabchicks, whistling teals and the Indian moorhen.

The Park has about 60 different species of butterflies which include ten migrant species. Common rose, crimson rose and common crow are just a few of them. Apart from about five species of snakes, certain species of tortoise and turtles, lizards, geckos, chameleons and the common Indian monitor lilzard are also found here.

Despite Chennai's acute water scarcity, the Park has few water problems, if at all. There are three main ponds here: the Kathankulam Tank, the Applankulam Tank and the Bohi Tank, which cater to the animals and birds.

"These tanks are filled with water throughout the year, as we have been practising rainwater harvesting for the past three years", says Kamaraj. "If the rains fail this year then we will have to buy water, which will be let into an artificial pond", he adds.

The Guindy National Park has played a significant role in the ecological environment of Chennai. In spite of being in the middle of a concrete jungle, the park can boast of a rich – and unspoilt – biodiversity. It serves as a green lung to the city. (Courtesy: *The Word*, the lab journal of the Asian College of Journalism.)

Amrita Swamy

Valparai : Tea and rainfall

EDITOR'S NOTE: Several readers have responded to Reader D.S. Wilkins' letter (MM, July 1st) and other recent stories on Valparai that have appeared in *Madras Musings*. We publish below excerpts from some of these letters.

* * *

Valparai, in the Anamalai Hills (that part of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu) is about 40 miles from Pollachi. After 15 miles in the plains the ghat section begins at Aliyar, where the beautiful Aliyar dam with garden is situated. The famous Tamil movie *Kathalikka Neramillai* was made here. Though the road is steep and narrow in some places, it is in excellent condition. There are 40 hairpin bends in this 25 mile ghat section.

After travelling a few miles, you suddenly come to an area where you will see only tea gardens for miles and miles before you reach Valparai. Beyond Valparai are also only tea gardens till you reach the road leading to Chalakudy in Kerala. This is a plantation country where, apart from tea, coffee and cardamom are also cultivated. The famous Government Cinchona Plantation and factory are also here.

Valparai caters to the needs of the people working in the estates. It is a township with all facilities like bank, hotels, etc. (In the past, Spencer's had a big shop here.) The famous Anamalai Club in Valparai served the plantation managers till it closed down. There are plenty of buses plying between Valparai and Pollachi. The tea gardens belong to Hindustan Lever, Shaw Wallace, Kothari's, Birla's, Tata's, Parry's, etc.

In the past, before roads were developed, the companies transported their goods by a ropeway operated by the Anamalai Ropeway Co. Ltd. After the ghat roads were laid, the company dismantled the ropeway and began transporting goods by lorries under the same name. The road to Chalakudy was developed later, shortening the distance to Cochin, where tea is mainly auctioned.

As you travel on that road to Valparai, you reach a place called Mt. Stuart, the highest point on the road, where stands the statue of Carvin Marsh with a tea plant in one hand and the other hand pointing to Valparai valley, which provides a beautiful sight. He was the first person from the plains to discover this wilderness and start planting here.

Valparai gets the maximum rain during the Southwest Monsoon. Not even a drop of water is wasted. The multiple dams, weirs and canals of the Parambikulam Aliyar Projects are in this area. The water stored by Aliyar dam, Sholayar dam, Kadamparai dam, Nirar dam etc. is utilised for power generation and irrigation and is shared by both Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Dr. K.S. Venkatachalam
15/7, Suryakiran Apartment, 3rd Main Road
Gandhi Nagar
Adyar, Chennai 600 020

* * *

Valparai is in the path of BOTH the S.W Monsoon and the N.E. Monsoon. The water generally flows down the hills and joins the numerous rivers that flow down the Western Ghats.

Vasantha Ravindran
Sridevi Apartments
5/2, 4th Trust Cross Street
Chennai 600 028

* * *

Heavy monsoon rains, with rain almost every day during the monsoons is a common feature of the Western Ghats, a long strip of land that falls partly in Tamil Nadu, starting from the Nilgiris to Kanniyakumari. The Ghats range from 1000 to 2000m elevation and more than 80% of the land is towards Kerala, leading the water to the Arabian Sea. June, July and, sometimes, August (during the Southwest Monsoon) are the wettest period in the Anamalais, which are in the southern reaches of the Western Ghats.

Here are some data for 13 years from the UPASI rainfall gauges.

Year	June	July	August	June	July	August
	Anamalais (Tamil Nadu)			High Range (Kerala)		
1991	1272	1203	552	1221	1442	724
1992	1318	1462	677	1485	1505	834
1993	649	1206	834	559	1482	943
1994	1333	1644	617	1318	1574	851
1995	710	934	817	640	1075	794
1996	575	1003	351	1026	1358	563
1997	373	897	705	268	1229	897
1998	810	983	586	1026	1151	478
1999	535	1056	555	623	1271	424
2000	854	410	1138	1144	592	1642
2001	864	1016	424	944	1375	676
2002	496	343	825	636	550	1123
2003	464	622	544	456	662	665
2004 May			**937**			**506**

While most of the water of Thekkadi lake, in Kerala, is diverted by ponstocks to a powerhouse at Lower Camp in Cumbum Valley and to a reservoir at Vaigai Dam for irrigation in Tamil Nadu, the Idukki dam serves to generate power and lets the water go to the Arabian Sea.

Conservation practices and control of erosion are well organised, with the same tea plants planted 100 years ago doing quite well. Tea yields of the Anamalais are the highest in the world. The high per capita incomes at Valparai taluk is, therefore, not a surprise. The overall investment per manday is around Rs. 150 or more. However this may not last long due to the uncertain tea crisis.

During the Southwest Monsoon, an annual rainfall of 75 cm to 250 cm is recorded on the windward side of the Western Ghats, with Kanniyakumari getting 10 cm and Tuticorin a meagre 2.5 – 5 cm. While 250 cm is recorded on the Kerala side, a meagre 10 cm is recorded on the Tamil Nadu side within a distance of 60 to 70 kilometres. The rain shadow in Tamil Nadu runs from Kanniyakumari upto Coimbatore and is 100 to 50 kilometre wide and cuts across the Palk Bay. The post-monsoon rain (October–December) in this region adds 30-40 cm, making a total rainfall of 40 to 50 cm including the rainfall during January/May. The overall position is that there are two poor regions in Tamil Nadu. One is the Coimbatore-Palani-Trichy-Salem-Coimbatore pocket and another at the Tirunelveli, Sivakasi, Pambam region. Valparai, however, is blessed.

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

OUR READERS WRITE

Numbering houses

A few years ago, the Chennai Corporation undertook the task of re-numbering all city houses. Obviously, the task has not been completed properly. This has resulted in all sorts of confusion on Chennai roads. There is a new number and then an old number to search for. In some localities, it is a fraction, a new number on top of the old number. People are put to all types of hardship. The process of identification becomes very difficult, resulting in a lot of wastage of time and money.

The Corporation of Chennai should once again take up the task of re-numbering properly all the houses in Chennai within a proper time-frame. This task must be attended to urgently.

Dr. S. Shanker Dev
'Kylas', New No.13, Giri Road
T.Nagar, Chennai 600 017

Editor's Note: We too feel the numbering should be done, but only after due discussion with each house-owner/tenant who will know the history of the building and its site.

SSI & pollution

Our forum is highly concerned about the decision taken by the Tamil Nadu Government, through its Small Industries Department, to encourage cluster development of small industries with a view to increasing production and upgrading the infrastructure for this. It is significant that the Secretary of Small Industries Department of the Government has not so far given the break-up figures of the nature of the SSIs coming under the proposed scheme.

It is an indisputable fact that most SSIs are hazardous industries responsible for environmental and harmful health conditions prevailing in Tamil Nadu. The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, has submitted a report on some of the harmful industries like tanneries, dyeing, chemicals, etc., wherein it has pointed out that 'cluster' development of such industries is not advisable since the pollution levels prevailing in cluster scheme industries are very high when compared to industries where individual effluent treatment plants are set up. Further, hazardous industries cannot be included in the SSIs, since the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Factories Act, 1948 and the Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939 apply to all kinds of industries whether they are big, medium or small.

The Secretary of Small Industries Department has stated that the SSIs will enjoy the protection and encouragement of the Government and the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 will not be applicable to them. We fail to understand how this can be justified

P.S. Subrahmanian
Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum
and Consumers Protection Council
Vellore

Water crisis

The New Veeranam project, water from the mofussil borewells and the proposed desalination plants will, hopefully, mitigate the water crisis in Chennai.

At the same time, there is mounting concern over the growing exploitation of groundwater in and around Chennai and the falling watertable levels. The gradual disappearance of waterbodies and open spaces in the city, the indiscriminate construction of concrete structures and paving around buildings, etc. have affected natural rainwater harvesting, preventing recharging of watertables. Meanwhile, with the rapid growth of population, the demand for water continues to surge.

Augmenting water supply is only one side of the coin. Equally important is the need to restrain the burgeoning demand for water. Government should regulate construction of multistoried buildings and highrise flats, analyse the reasons for the growing migration of people to the city and take steps to check the growth of population in and around water-starved Chennai. A holistic approach to the water crisis is thus called for.

J.W. Thomas
9, Ritherdon Road
Chennai 600 007

The 1954 batch with 101-year-old N. Srinivasachariar...

... and with 92-year-old M.S. Kasturi Iyengar, their mentors.

NOT FORGOTTEN OVER THE YEARS

T.S. Ananthaswami Row (A-6, Lakshmi Enclave, 16 (New)/23 (Old), First Street, Abhiramapuram, Chennai 600 018) traced the whereabouts of his classmates and was instrumental in organising a reunion of 24 students of the Ramakrishna Mission High School (North Branch), Bazullah Road, T. Nagar, who passed their SSLC in 1954. To celebrate this Golden Jubilee, they met and paid their respects to their Headmaster, N. Srinivasachariar, who is now 101, at his residence in Kothandaramar Koil Street, West Mambalam (picture on left).

With a sharp as ever memory, he was able to recall their parents, their accomplishments and the places from which they came to the school. Later, they met their 92-year-old teacher M.S. Kasturi Iyengar in his home.

When they gathered in the evening with their families for a get-together, they decided to create a "1954 Batch Endowment" in their alma mater.

T.S. Ananthaswami Row
Chennai 600 018

Some unusual trees

After retirement, I've been going for my evening walks to the YMCA grounds and have spotted a few unusual trees.

One of them is the *Baobab* and it can be seen between the church and main pavilion. There is only one such tree here.

This tree, the *Adansonia Digitata*, of tropical Africa belongs to the Silk-Cotton family. It has an extremely thick trunk (five trunks are together just above ground level at the YMCA), large pendulous white flowers and a hard-shelled, fleshy fruit called 'Monkey Bread'. This edible acid fruit resembles a gourd. The tree's bark is used to make paper, cloth and rope.

A mature *Baobab* is a reservoir of water. Inside its wrinkled bark, the spongy wood is saturated with moisture, capable of storing more than 25,000 gallons. Thirsty elephants attack the great trunks with their tusks, leaving them dying wrecks. Old *Baobabs* are often hollow. They are sometimes used as houses, and one famous tree served as a bus stop accomodating as many as 30 travellers. Ref :

1. *Reader's Digest* Universal Dictionary, 1988.
2. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Ed., 1993.
3. *Reader's Digest* publication, *Family Guide to Nature*, 1984.

Another tree is the *Sausage* tree, also a native of tropical Africa and Madagascar. There are at least three such trees in the YMCA Grounds, one on the road leading to the Ladies' Hostel, facing the main basketball ground, a second on the eastern side of the Boys' School where they practise cricket, and the third close to the Adyar River. Since then I have spotted such trees on Burkit Road, the right side of Velachery Road leading from Little Mount to Concorde on S.V. Patel Road, the open ground diagonally opposite Concorde, and on the Marina Grounds opposite Q.M.C.

Most trees and plants depend on insects or, more rarely, on birds to pollinate their flowers. The 'Sausage' tree is different. With sausages dangling in appetising array, this tree looks like an open-air delicatessen. But the sausages are not edible. The sausages develop from clusters of dark red flowers that appear during the dry season when the tree is leafless. The bats in their search for nectar find the blossoms conveniently suspended before their very noses.

Ref : *Reader's Digest* publication *Family Guide to Nature*, 1984.

I also spotted two tall trees that are straight and have no significant branches on the eastern side of the tennis court – Beginner's Court. They have large, thick and long green leaves. Their raw fruits are bright green and in clusters of four or more. They are bulk and heavy too. When the fruits ripen, the colour is a very attractive red. The fruit opens up like a human mouth and drops the seeds. When the fruits dry up, two brown shells drop to the ground.

Similar trees are found in Karumuthu Centre, opposite Appollo Cancer Hospital.

Can any fellow-readers give readers the name of this tree and any other details?

M. Murugesan
E-4, Anand Bhavan
78/26, South Boag Road
T. Nagar, Chennai 600 017

North Chennai agonies

With Chennai itself a grotesque caricature of what Madras once was, north Chennai wallows in an agony of neglect. This is compounded by uncivic behaviour. Now that Government has ordered that garbage shouldn't be dumped in the bins but put in bags and given to the Corporation carts like trophies, some people living in high-rise apartments on streets which are barely six feet broad, clandestinely hurl the rubbish from their heights into the street below in the late hours. Sometimes unwary pedestrians get hit by these filthy missiles.

There are 'Welfare associations' but they seem to have given up the ghost. As more and more people in north Chennai sell their houses and leave, these associations will do well to change their names inside out to 'farewell associations' and give the departing citizens a send off.

Other north Chennai agonies are pavements and roads.

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

Memorable days!

I read with tears what awaits Gokhale Hall (MM, July 1st). My memory goes when I bought a ticket for 8 annas to witness famous Carnatic concerts by M.S., Madurai Mani Iyer, GNB and others in 1947 and before. I also heard the oratory of Rajaji on BCG vaccination here. The big white pillars usually received the curses of the listeners sitting behind them. Alas the grand old days! Will they come back?

S.S. Ramanathan
"Punarvasu"
R.12, 65th Street
10th Sector, K.K Nagar West,
Chennai 600 078

AN ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREA

We are a group of wildlife researchers based in Valparai and were surprised to see Valparai listed as the fourth richest taluk in an *India Today* survey (*MM*, May 1st). However, we disagree with the view that Valparai is losing out on the chance to be a vibrant tourist destination. The 'hill station' tab is the last thing that Valparai needs right now, given the pressures already present on this fragile landscape. It would indeed be a pity if Valparai went the way of other hill stations such as Kodaikanal, Ooty and, more recently, Yercaud.

The 'hill station' adage has been the bane of these scenic places (the residents in these areas will testify to this) and led to the destruction of their landscapes, natural resources, wilderness and wildlife. Ironically, the promise of the livelihoods of locals improving with the promotion of tourism in their hometowns has only led to a situation where they have started to see the ugly side of tourism — such as acute water shortages and garbage disposal problems. At the risk of raising hackles, we believe that the concept of ecotourism still does not exist in India. There are hardly any examples of ecotourism ventures which have helped protect areas and improve the livelihoods of the local people. Some businesses in these areas may thrive, no doubt, but probably at the cost of the locals and with the destruction of resources.

Tourism that is not ecologically sensitive will be a disaster in a place like Valparai. Although about 70% of the Valparai plateau is planted with tea, the area is still very important for wildlife because of the small pockets of rainforest which lie tucked within private tea estates. These small (1-200 hectares), often disjointed, patches of rainforest hold highly endangered and endemic (not found anywhere else in the world) animals like the lion-tailed macaque, Great Hornbill and probably many species of frogs, reptiles, and invertebrates yet to be discovered. Recently a species of frog was rediscovered in one such fragment after over 80 years. Research in these areas has shown that there are still numerous species new to science yet to be described. With only about 4.5% of India's land area under protection in wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, it is vital that even these small remnant habitats are preserved in their entirety.

The forest patches in the Valparai region are under continuous pressure because of fuelwood collection, illegal felling and girdling of trees, and other forms of degradation. Opening up Valparai to tourism will only add to the problems that these extremely valuable forests already face because:

1. **There is absolutely no land available for the kind of infrastructure required for tourism. As most of the areas in this 'tea town' are in private hands, conversion of these estates for the promotion of tourism will not take place here and the fear is that it will be only these small patches of forests which will be targeted for infrastructure development.**
2. **Ecologically sensitive tourists just don't exist in India as is evident from the plight of protected areas such as Bandipur and Mudumalai. Even in the foothills of Valparai, there exists a popular tourist destination called Monkey Falls that was recently opened up for tourism. People visiting these areas and using the highways while passing through throw garbage and plastic out of their vehicles, break speed limits, play loud music, run over animals while crossing these highways and, in general, do not maintain the behaviour required when in a park with wild animals. If tourism is promoted in Valparai the same situation is likely to arise here, as the road from Pollachi runs through forests that hold a wild variety of wildlife.**

Tourism in Valparai cannot be about boating and artificial lakes. If tourism has to be developed in Valparai, it has to be centred on the natural beauty that Valparai holds and done in a sensitive manner which attracts the right kind of people and helps in protecting these forests into the future. The fragile landscape of Valparai just cannot sustain tourism of any other kind.

Vena Kapoor
Ecologist
Rainforest Research Station
8/364, Co-operative Colony
Valparai 642 127

WHY NOT FORT ST. GEORGE?

(Continued from page 1)

"outstanding 19th Century railway architecture." But they might have been more thrilled if Fort St. George's outstanding 18th Century architecture had been pointed out to them together with its historical significance. They may even have been as thrilled if Chepauk Palace had been pointed out to them and the fact mentioned that that was the site where the seeds of Indo-Saracenic – or Indo-Gothic, if you will, as in the case of Victoria Terminus – architecture was sown in the 18th Century, a full hundred years before Victoria Terminus.

Unfortunately, with Governmental obsession with the ancient past, too often the more recent contributions of possibly even greater significance get forgotten. Can we hope that someone will now start thinking of Fort St. George, even at this late date, a place described by an Archaeological Survey or India official as the finest 18th Century fort in India – and perhaps even in the world?

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Of which State is a former Lok Sabha Speaker, Balram Jhakar, the new Governor?
2. What major political power transition occurred on June 28th, two days ahead of announced schedule?
3. Name ace-cricketer Imran Khan's wife whom he divorced on June 22nd.
4. Name the autobiography of former U.S. President, Bill Clinton, which hit the stands on June 22nd.
5. Name the first privately-manned spacecraft which took to the skies on June 21st.
6. Which Indian footballer and ex-National coach has been given a FIFA Centennial Award?
7. Who is the world's highest paid athlete, according to *Forbes* magazine, with an annual income of $ 80.3 million?
8. Which Indian portal was bought by the world's largest auction site, eBay, for about Rs. 230 crore?
9. Leopards straying from which National Park and in which city struck terror killing at least 10 people before being captured?
10. The Golden Jubilee of which historic Indo-Sino endeavour was celebrated on June 28th?

* * *

11. Who was instrumental in building the Gokhale Hall in George Town, Chennai?
12. Where in the State is the only Zoo School of the country?
13. According to the recently-released 'RK Swamy BBDO Guide to Urban Markets', which Tamil Nadu city, apart from Chennai (fourth position), figures in the Top 20?
14. Where in Chennai is a 10,000 square feet space going to be earmarked for a permanent book fair for Tamil publishers to whet the appetite of readers of Tamil literature?
15. What is the stage name of the world-renowned singer, Gerry Darcy, who was born in Madras?
16. Which famous Chennai resident made her debut in K. Subrahmanyam's *Seva Sadanam*?
17. What 73-year-old service in Chennai came to an end, amongst poignant scenes for many, on June 30th?
18. Which famous Tamil Nadu industrialist was elected to the Rajya Sabha on a Janata Dal (S) ticket from Karnataka?
19. Who has bought Aircel, one of the major mobile telephone operators in the State, for Rs. 1600 crore?
20. Which popular magazine was launched on November 15, 1947 by S.A.P. Annamalai and P.V. Parthasarathy?

(Answers on page 7)

Ace at fifty

M.S. Venkataraman, the founder.

The idea of starting a basketball club was born in 1954, when I was captaining the Loyola College ball team. Loyola fielded a team in the State Championship for the first time in 1954, and lost by just one point to the formidable Central Polytechnic team, whose quintet was responsible for Madras winning the National title in 1952. At the end of the academic year, mainly with the players from Loyola (R.J. Selvaraj, Sankar Raja, S.V. Ramaswamy, R. Rajagopal and myself) and from Pachaiyappah's (Ganesh Raja), we formed Ace Basketball Club, so named because my friend Sourirajan and I thought its initials, ABC, would prove catchy.

The question of club colours and monogram was then considered. Loyalty to my old club in Bangalore, Young Pioneers Sports Club, which I joined in 1949, gave me the inspiration for golden yellow shorts with dark green vests. As far as the logo was concerned, it was T. Paul Joseph who suggested the symbol, having got the inspiration from an old *Life* magazine.

● by M. S. VENKATARAMAN

Being essentially a club of college players, the only practice we could arrange was at various college campus courts. With the intention to get a ground of our own, we met the Corporation Councillors, and they suggested the Somasundaram Grounds in T.Nagar, which had no basketball courts. The Corporation erected basketball boards (dismantled from elsewhere) and created mud courts. They gave way to bitumen and cement in 1953. The old board gave way to the 4' projection equipment which was designed by Easwaran, made in the Corporation workshop and installed in 1960, at the Somasundaram ground.

In 1962, the idea of organising a tournament was mooted and S. Padmanabhan, who has been associated with me in the game from 1957 and with Magnolia Dairy Products, came forward to institute a trophy.

The inaugural tournament had the Ace Club playing a dual role, of taking part in it and organising the tournament. We finished runners-up to Southern Railway. A feature of the tournament was the tent which was the dressing room and office during match hours and the watchmen's shelter at night. During the day, it was the meeting point for postmorterm discussions. The watchmen's duty was performed by our own players who fought bitterly for a place in the tent. Another highlight of the tournament was the stacking of the chairs after the matches were over. About 400 chairs were folded every night and till they were neatly stacked, counted and 'All OK-ed' – Souri would not let any Ace member leave the ground.

By the time the Magnolia Trophy Tournament was started, I had managed to convert some ardent cricketers to fanatic basketballers. Players used to line up at the ground by 4.00 p.m. and there was such a crowd that players could hardly get 20 minutes continuously on the courts. While I played and coached and trained the team, Souri looked after the administration and Mohan Rajan groomed the children, the Biddies as we called them.

In 1963, I had to leave Madras on joining the Army. And Swaminathan and Ganesh Raja joined the Southern Railway. Till then, the Ace Club had ranked one of the leading combinations in the State. It had won the League title, the C.C. Abraham tournament and the All-India tournament conducted by the Egmore Friends Union. However, one title which had eluded us was the State championship title. We were destined never to win it. Our arch-rivals Madras Nationals (founded mainly by Law College students) beat us in the finals or we lost to a lowly-placed team in the earlier rounds.

In the final of the 18th State Championship, we met Southern Railway, who in the very year of its inception had won All-India titles at Tenkasi, Karur and Kottayam (joint holders with HAL) and the Inter-Railway title. We had only five players throughout the tournament, myself, Easwaran, Ramaswamy, Jagadeesan and Lakshmanan. At half time Ace led 37-28. With ten minutes to go, it was Ace leading 55-42. Three minutes from the final whistle, Railway managed to get a one point lead, but Ace lost the services of Lakshmanan and Ramaswamy on fouls. With just three players on court, Ace fought bravely to avert the onslaught, but in the end Railway clinched the title 62-59. Thereafter institution teams began to dominate the game and club teams dropped out of it. Today, Ace no longer has a team, but it focusses on promotion of the game, organising coaching camps and tournaments. But in its heyday, Ace produced Indian All-stars: M.S. Venkataraman, T. Paul Joseph and M.A. Ganesh Raja.

As Ace celebrates its Golden Jubilee, I look back with a great deal of satisfaction at the 25 Magnolia tournaments we have organised from 1962. It was only between 1982 and 1996 that we failed to organise the tournament, my personal preoccupations keeping me away from the court. But since 1996/7 we are back on track and we look forward as usual to crowds attending the 26th All-India Magnolia Tournament at the Montfort Indoor Stadium, San Thome, from August 1st.

When ABC was a power

When we entered the grass courts at the Saidapet YMCA in saffron uniforms to play the city league match on a rainy afternoon in August 1954, I doubt even today whether anybody thought about the next 25, leave alone 50, years. Much has happened since then. Saffron gave way to yellow; four feet projections at Somasundaram grounds have grown to six feet; and the court was transformed to bitumen, then concrete; permanent floodlights have replaced the temporary ones; little biddies who had to be hoisted up the score board and given instructions about the difference between six and nine grabbed rebounds from me and became banking and accountancy experts.

It was almost routine for ABC to reach the finals of any tournament held in Madras during the 1950s. However, reaching the last stage of the C.C. Abraham tournament in 1958 was a special occasion. It was the first basketball tournament conducted with gates and was extremely successful too. We were pitted against Young Pioneers, Bangalore, then considered invincible, in the semi-finals. Moreover it was the club with which Venkataraman (Vengadi to all of us) started his basketball career. It was a hard-fought match and my special memory was the scoring of a basket in the dying seconds, lying on the ground, which ensured the victory.

Technically more satisfying was the victory over our traditional rivals, Madras Nationals, in the Vepery YMCA tournament in 1958. Our defence, Paul Joseph and Ganesh Raja, bamboozled the opponents, cutting in for frequent lay-ups from passes from me and Swaminathan and emerged the top scorers. Incidentally, it effectively silenced them and complaints about my ball-hogging were not heard for some time!

The winning of MYC tournament in 1959 was a landmark in our playing history. Ganesh Raja and Swaminathan had left the club by then. The replacements were Jagadeesan and Lakshmanan. It was the first big tournament for them and they rose to the occasion. This was to be repeated again and again in the future; younger players who had come up the hard way by practice at the club grounds effectively filled the vacancies left by State players. We overwhelmed the newly-formed Southern Railway in the semifinals in a fast-paced match and my personal tally of 39 points was made possible by the pinpoint passing of Paul Joseph and openings created by Venkataraman and Jagadeesan.

Our performance in Madurai later in the year was still more remarkable. Easwaran accompanied us in place of Paul Joseph. Due to unavoidable circumstances, we had only five players. We outfought the Southern Railway team in the finals and led by 12 points with 8 minutes to go. But three of us had to leave the field with five personal fouls and that sealed our fate. Sad to say, the coach of the State team and some members of the selection committee were not there to see this remarkable performance.

In July 1961, we had been handsomely beaten by Southern Railway in the finals of Magnolia trophy tournament. We met them again in the semi-finals of the State championships later that year. For twenty minutes we gave one of the best displays of all-round basketball and at half-time the score was 42-20 in our favour. However, the usual foul troubles cropped up and we lost the match in extra time. Another match that comes to memory is the semi-finals against Southern Railway in Magnolia trophy tornament in 1963. Southern Railway were then Inter-Railway champions with three or four All-Star players. Our youngsters were not overawed by the reputation of Railway players and we had the upper hand till almost the end. My last second attempt to pass, instead of taking a shot when well-positioned, deprived us of victory and we lost by a single point.

S.V. Ramaswamy

Remuneration adds sting to Mosquitos

Yet another season has unfolded in the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association league. As always, there has been a realignment of forces in the senior division, with a number of players making moves that promise to take them places, by way of either better remuneration or perceived opportunities for more rapid progress in their cricket careers.

The annual transfer drama was enlivened this year by the entry of Godrej Sara Lee as a major new sponsor, reportedly bringing salary packages undreamt of in earlier years. When Mambalam Mosquitos, the club they are supporting, arrived on the Madras league scene back in 1949, their sting or lack of it was the target of some badinage, but this time around they have stung their opponents even before a single ball has been bowled in anger in the league — by doing some deft headhunting with days to go for the new season. Their star recruit has been the former Test opener Sadagopan Ramesh, who has shifted from MRF-Globe Trotters. Over the decades, it has been fashionable to condemn cricketers for their lack of loyalty to their clubs, but you really can't blame a sportsman, particularly someone treated as roughly by the selectors as Ramesh has been, for wanting to capitalise on the opportunities that come his way during what is essentially a highly insecure profession. And when the carrot on offer is as juicy as the one said to have been dangled by Godrej Sara Lee, it can test the best of us.

Veteran all-rounder B. Ramprakash, off-spinner S.R. Ganesh Kumar, and leftarm spinner K.R. Sivaprakash add real sting to the Mosquitos in the spin department, while Jacob Martin and Pravanjan Mullick offer exotic variety. Not content with all the slow men at his disposal, Ranji selector and senior Mosquito P.C. Prakash — whose father P.S. Chander is a co-founder of the club — has also roped in the services of Kerala's Prashant Chandran to support the other medium pacer C. Ganapathy. Wicketkeeper Reuben Paul, left hand batsman Badri Attavar (with two hundreds under his belt in the first two matches), and the Srikkanth brothers, Aditya and Anirudh, complete a balanced blend of youth and experience.

Round the League — V. RAMNARAYAN

Four times in a row champions Jolly Rovers seem as strong on paper as before, despite losing a couple of young players of promise, and the almost certain, continuous absence of India player L. Balaji. Dinesh Mongia is playing for Lancashire in the English county circuit and making a fair first of it. They have brought back ex-Rover Tinu Yohanan, the pace bowler whom the Indian selectors tried and discarded, and that should make up for the exit of Prashant Chandran. Other prominent additions have been Vasanth Saravanan who has moved from SICAL, and D.S. Vinay Kumar of Andhra. Railway off-spinner Kulamani Parida continues to assist the club. Hemang Badani, S. Badrinath, Ajay Kudua, R. Ramkumar, Sujith Somasundar and Vikram Kumar are among the Jolly Rovers mainstays who make the team such a formidable outfit.

Globe Trotters should have struggled a bit initially with two of their players, skipper Kumaran and Aashish Kapoor, serving a two-match ban imposed on them by the TNCA, but have actually done very well so far, winning their opener against State Bank outright and gaining a valuable first innings lead over Jolly Rovers. Tamil Nadu wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik, who scored hundreds in the Ranji Trophy semifinal and final last season, has continued to blaze away, with hundreds in the first two matches, the second one a thrilling assault against the Jolly Rovers attack at well over a run a ball. In both matches, left hander Hemant Kumar too scored centuries in great style. It's perhaps time for the Tamil Nadu seletors to make sure this talented batsman—who plays for Kerala in the Ranji Trophy—turns out for his home State again. Former Jolly Rovers batsman Harish is a new recruit expected to deliver the goods for Globe Trotters, while two young lefthanders, all-rounder Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan and batsman Vasudeva Das enter their second season for the team. Off-spinner Gurukedarnath, a promising talent in age-group cricket, getting his first taste of the adult world that is the senior division league, has straightaway been among the wickets. S. Sriram is one batsman the Trotters will miss in the first part of the season when he will be away on India A duty.

Without major new recruitment, State Bank of India and Indian Bank will struggle to stay in the top division, and so will Parry's, given the competitive nature of the league. The other bank, Indian Overseas Bank, with their Hindu Trophy triumph last season and their band of tried and tested players like Y. Gnaneswar Rao, Amit Pathak, Ananthapadmanabhan, Shahabuddin, Nagini Kumar, *et al.*, are a much more confident bunch.

S. Ramesh

TNCA league cricket always has its share of senior cricketers who compete fiercely with their younger, better-rewarded counterparts. All-rounder N. Raghavendran of Parry's belongs to this category of players who keep the spirit of club cricket alive, and he has made major contributions with bat and ball in both matches concluded so far. Fellow off-spinner K. Kubendran of State Bank is another veteran to be among the wickets this year.

Every year, there's hope in the air that Tamil Nadu will regain the Ranji Trophy after a long gap, and this year is no exception. Will the team discover the magic formula again? Will the three-day format of the senior league continue to prepare the State's players for the sterner contests ahead? Questions every Tamil Nadu cricket supporter would like answered in the affirmative.

Subscriptions and contributions

● As readers are already aware — and hundreds have responded positively — we have no other alternative but to price *Madras Musings*. From April 16th (Volume XIV, No.1), *Madras Musings* has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to 'Chennai Heritage' and send it, together with the COUPON BELOW, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 260-A, TTK ROAD, CHENNAI 600 018 or C/O LOKAVANI-HALL MARK PRESS PVT. LTD., 122, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

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We look forward to all readers of *Madras Musings*, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions. We are indeed sorry we can no longer remain a free mailer.

— The Editor

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Answers to Quiz

1. Madhya Pradesh; 2. The U.S. handed over political authority to Iraq; 3. Jemima Goldsmith; 4. *My Life*; 5. SpaceShipOne; 6. P.K. Banerjee; 7. Tiger Woods; 8. Baazee; 9. Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai; 10. Panchsheel.

* * *

11. Annie Besant; 12. Vandalur; 13. Coimbatore (16th); 14. At the Museum; 15. Englebert Humperderick; 16. M.S. Subbulakshmi; 17. The metre gauge electric train services; 18. M.A.M. Ramaswamy; 19. Hutchison Essar; 20. *Kumudam*.

Senate House Conservation Fund

● The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust appeals to all alumni of the University of Madras and heritage lovers everywhere to contribute to the Senate House Conservation Fund which the Trust is managing for the purpose of restoring *Senate House* to its old glory by December 2005 and maintaining it thereafter in the same condition.

Cheques should be made out to the Senate House Conservation Account and sent to the Registrar, University of Madras, Chennai 600 005. Contributions are eligible for benefits under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

Dear Registrar,

I am pleased, to enclose a cheque for Rs. ..... as my contribution to the restoration and maintenance of *Senate House*. Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

.....

I am an alumnus/alumna/heritage lover and wish the project all success. My college was .....

Date: ..... **Signature:** .....

From Naval Hospital to research lab

At the flag end of World War II, the British decided to construct a hospital at Mandapam Camp for Naval personnel injured in action. Due to the proximity to Ceylon this area was a scene of action. They located a huge area adjacent to the Ceylon government Quarantine Camp where passengers bound for Ceylon were detained if not inoculated till they were cleared to take the ferry service between Dhanushkodi and Talaimannar (that existed till Dhanushkodi and adjacent areas were washed away after a tidal wave in December, 1964).

The British constructed the Naval Hospital on a war footing. It was built of coral stone, the only local material available. All the old buildings along the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay were constructed with coral stone, including the famous Rameswaram Temple and the church built by the Dutch at Tuticorin in 1750. Now, construction of buildings with coral stone is banned to conserve coral reefs.

The labourers worked day and night with the help of petromax lights to complete the building in time. The hospital consisted of four long wards connected in the middle by a passage. A portion of the third ward was used as an operation theatre. There were separate cubicles for the doctors and nurses. It was used as a hospital only for a very short time, when some injured persons were brought for treatment. Fortunately, World War II ended in 1945 after the surrender of the Japanese.

After World War II ended, the buildings were vacated and abandoned and taken over by the CPWD. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute came into existence in the Zoological Department of the Madras University in 1947. Based on the recommendations of Dr. Seymore Sewell, who was the Director of the Zoological Survey of India at the time, Mandapam Camp was selected as the headquarters of CMFRI. The naval buildings were renovated and remodelled to suit the needs of a research laboratory. Later, when the Institute became a permanent establishment, staff quarters were constructed.

The research laboratory, which was under the control of Ministry of Agriculture, was shifted to Mandapam Camp sometime in 1948. The research institute came under the administrative control of Indian Council for Agricultural Research for better co-ordination and greater autonomy, in 1967.

The headquarters of the institute was finally shifted to Cochin in 1971, since Mandapam Camp was found to be too remote for a headquarters. At present, the regional centre of the institute is located in the same buildings at Mandapam Camp. One of the wards was converted as a museum and a new building with running seawater for the aquarium was constructed. Because of the coral reefs and the rich fauna and flora associated with them, Mandapam Camp is still considered one of the best places for marine research. I worked there for more than seven years when it was headquarters. During that time, we succeeded in rearing, for the first time, a couple of dugongs in the aquarium and they attracted large numbers of visitors from surrounding places. The Films Division made a documentary on them for wider publicity and they lived in the aquarium for a number of years.

Sadly there is no plaque to indicate the history of these buildings.

— D.B. James

Dates for Your Diary

From July 17: Stained glass paintings on exhibition. (At Prakrit Art Gallery.)

From July 18: Exhibition of the works of Tapan Kar and Ramakrishna Vedala. (At Prakrit Art Gallery.)

July 19-24: *History of Temple Art & Architecture of South India* with special focus on Chola Art & Architecture by K.T. Narasimhan, Superintending Archaeologist, Temple Survey Project, ASI, with special lecture on Bronzes by Dr. Desikan, former Curator & Assistant Director, Madras Museum, on July 24th at Savera Hotel. (For details: Hayagriva Study Circle. Tel: 2491 5913, 98401 25797.)

From July 21: Exhibition of paintings and drawings by Mark. (At Vinyasa.)

July 21-24: *Bearing witness to the Cambodian genocide* by Rithy Panh, the Cambodian film-maker who asks in his single-minded work: "*What is the future of a country that has ignored its past?*" Through his films, he tries to revive a memory and a 'conscience' for his country battered by a genocide that caused two million deaths in less than four years (1975-1978), even while awaiting a supposed trial of the Khmers' Rouge leaders. Thanks to the film-maker's long and arduous work, the four exceptional documentaries that will be screened show the painful road of an entire nation to the truth.

July 21: *Site 2 around the borders.* Rithy Panh, who at the age of 15 lived in refugee camps, comes back ten years later to one of the camps on the Thai border and focusses on Yim Om, a mother who fled Cambodia and who settled in Site 2 after moving from camp to camp.

July 22: *Bophana, a Cambodian tragedy.* The true and tragic destiny of a couple of young intellectuals, Bophana and her husband. Disgusted by the corruption of the Shihanouk regime, Bophana's husband joins the Communist underground movement. During their separation, the young couple write each other many love letters and are reunited after the fall of Phnom-Penh. But they are denounced, arrested, tortured and forced to make false confessions. Finally, they were executed in 1976.

July 23: *The land of wandering souls.* Survivors of a genocide, some Cambodian families dig trenches amidst human fields to lay an optic fibre cable network from East to West. These persons traverse not only the country but also their history. The trench reveals the haunting presence of millions of dead people without tombs.

July 24: *S21 The Khmer Rouge killing machine:* Under Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge regime, between 1974 and 1979, around 20,000 people were imprisoned, interrogated, tortured, then executed in S21, the detention and torture centre in the heart of the city of Phnom Penh. Seven of them survived, three are still living. They tell their side of the story in the very same place, the former S21, that has been converted into a genocide museum. (At Alliance Francaise, 6.30 p.m. each day.)

July 19: International Dance Alliance's two-day dance festival, *Creations and Connections,* will feature twelve groups performing over the two days. (At Narada Gana Sabha.)

From July 25: One-man show paintings and sculptures by Marianand. (At Lalit Kala Akadami.)

July 25: Terracotta jewellery workshop. This one-day workshop is conducted especially for the Young Friends of DakshinaChitra at nominal rates. (For more details: 2446 2435 or 98414 23149)

July 19-August 20: Children's Mela: Bullock cart rides, magic shows, street acrobats, folk performances, exhibitions, street plays, puppet shows – and most of them interactive! (At DakshinaChitra.)

July 23-August 2: *Adiperukku & Ayyanar Thiruvizha,* two festivals unique to Tamil Nadu. While the former marks the importance of water in our lives and also coincides with the onset of the monsoon, the latter is celebrated in honour of the village guardian-deity Ayyanar. The students of Sankara Vidyashram are putting up an interesting exhibition on management of water resources as part of the festivities which include special folk performances on all days.

On August 1st, the small Ayyanar shrine at DakshinaChitra will be the focus as the two new terracotta bulls crafted by Ramu Velar will be taken in a procession to be offered to the deity. The procession marking *Ayyanar Thiruvizha* will have schoolchildren singing and dancing with other folk performers.

Ongoing: Show of the works of senior artists from all over the country. (At Artworld.)

Ongoing: An exhibition of sculptures by Rajkumar Panwar and Pushpa Devi. (At Apparao Gallery.)

SPORT on Pages 6 & 7

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