

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Let's name him 101010101... With a name like this, he is bound to succeed in the computer field!

Name that baby

"This is precisely why fancy, odd-shaped gifts should be avoided," I remarked, watching a friend struggle to wrap a gift, succeeding more at wrapping herself up instead. "Who's this for, anyway?"

"X and Y's new baby." She replied. I read the card with the presumption of long friendship. "You've merely said: 'To the little one.' Don't you know the baby's name?"

My friend looked away, biting her lips.

"I do know," she mumbled.

"Then why haven't you written it?"

"It's bdmdbm bdm."

"Eh?"

"Bdmdbm bdm."

"What?"

"Oh, all right," she exploded. "It's 'Jagadwikshyat' – and I don't know how to spell it, or even pronounce it, okay? Don't you dare laugh."

She needn't have worried. I wasn't laughing. Just the previous week, a young NRI family member told us that she was calling her little one 'Icchudhanva'. (It's a good thing she informed us via e-mail). Incidentally, her older child is 'Vikalinikamba'.

There seems to be a trend of late towards names that wear their cultural history a little heavily.

Sure, we have some of the most musical, meaningful names in the world. However, one should pause before imagination catches fire at their sheer beauty.

Remember – the name has to survive playgrounds, schools, teasing classmates, nicknames, perhaps future fame; it must be suitable for cooing and, more likely, being yelled or screamed at.

Note: Children rarely forgive their parents' lapses – especially slightly over-enthusiastic ones.

Ranjitha Ashok

Environmental education's challenges

(by Shobha Menon)

Although the recent Supreme Court directive on the inclusion of environmental education in schools has been welcomed by environmentalists, it has raised several issues such as whether environmental education prescribed in the school curriculum will really prove useful to students or end up making them compartmentalise nature, or whether environmental education should be imparted as a separate subject or infused into the existing curriculum through 'greened' textbooks. However, Indian education itself, according to ecologist P.J. Sanjeeva Raj, is currently "at the threshold of an environmental revolution that is expected to bring

about an integration of the varied subject disciplines and move towards holistic and purposeful education".

A. Shankar, Joint Director, Elementary Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, says, "As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, environmental education has actually been introduced since the inception of new education policies, 1986 onwards, at various school levels, much before the historic Supreme Court directive of December 18, 2003 that directed the NCERT to prepare model syllabi for environmental education as a compulsory subject for implementation

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Provide children messages of hope

Teachers, not necessarily biologists or zoologists, first need to be committed to environmental issues to be able to convey the right information to students and children. And environmental education need not be focussed on how useful it is for human beings. It must provide children messages of hope in a fast degrading world. These were some of the messages that came out of the deliberations at a recent workshop titled, 'Field Work for Environmental Education,' organised in Chennai by the Pulicat Lake Bird Lovers' Society, which saw a lively and informed debate on the subject.

There was no disagreement over the point that environmental education had to focus on ecological understanding and a greater responsibility towards the environment. One participant suggested that environmental education, apart from imparting knowledge, needed to be action-oriented, relevant to daily life and partnership oriented.

Other suggestions included getting naturalists involved, using common names to familiarise and stimulate interest in biodiversity, getting schools to adopt a tank or lake nearby and help restore and maintain it, introduction of audio-visual teaching aids, projecting environment as a career option for students from different disciplines, creation of an environmental network connecting schools, local environmental authorities and research institutions and publishing printed material in the vernacular to facilitate easy communication.

The Vandalur Zoo as an ideal training ground in wildlife research and conservation, and the Pallikaranai Marsh for studying flood control, drainage, groundwater recharge, food consumptive value, and nature camps conducted by organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund were cited at the workshop as areas that would interest students in environmental education.

S.M.



(M.S. Subbulakshmi: 1916-2004)

THE END OF AN ERA

• Madurai Shanmukhavadiyaru Subbulakshmi, or M.S. as she was better known, was born on September 16, 1916. Initiated to music young, M.S. learnt her first lessons from her mother Veena Shanmukhavadiyaru, a veena player. She appeared first on stage when she was only 13. In 1936, when she moved to Madras, she was a popular Carnatic vocalist. Four years later, she married T. Sadasivam, who was a major influence on her life and helped her craft her career.

In 1954, M.S. received the Padma Bhushan and in 1956, the President's Award. She became the first woman musician to be honoured with the Sangita Kalanidhi title by the Music Academy, Madras, in 1968. The Ramon Magsaysay Award came her way in 1974, followed by the Padma Vibhushan in 1975 and Kalidasa Sanman in 1988. In 1998, a year after Sadasivam passed away, M.S. was honoured with the Bharat Ratna.

M.S.'s singing was remarkable for its spontaneity; she matured into a sort of spirituality that was just as spontaneous. For more than seven decades, her soul-stirring music was heard in teashops and temples alike. She introduced Carnatic music to the West at the Edinburgh Festival in 1963, at the United Nations in 1966, and played for Queen Elizabeth II at the Royal Albert Hall in London. She was conferred the degree of Doctor of Letters by many universities, including the University of Madras (1987).

Starting with 'Seva Sadan' in 1937, M.S. acted in four films. Her performance in 'Meera' (1945, re-made in Hindi in 1947) brought her national fame. Despite becoming a legend in her lifetime, she retained a child's heart and remained as modest as ever, untouched by the overwhelming adulation. Indeed, her life was an epitome of bhakti.

M.S. Subbulakshmi passed away on December 11 at 11.30 p.m. Madras Musings pays tribute to her by publishing (on page 4) T. Sadasivam's recollections of her. The article was published in MM over a decade ago.

Three pages of Carnatic music

Fond recollections of Subbulakshmi

It is an exciting and fascinating profile and into its make-up have gone a number of things over a period of some decades. First there is the mother, the guardian-angel of her childhood. Veena Shammukhavadi of Madurai is the inheritor of a great tradition. Her playing and her music have won the praise of musicians like Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer, Venkataramana Das of Vijayanagaram and Veena Seshanna of Mysore. It was a home where music was truly valued and where musicians and votaries of music always gathered. Into this was born Subbulakshmi, on the 16th of September 1916. Her precocity was soon in abundant evidence. Before she was ten she could accompany her mother at recitals.

Soon the young girl was to blossom forth into a soloist in her own right. By the time she was seventeen she was giving major performances at institutions like the Madras Music Academy — at a time when some of the senior viduans of today were aspiring for junior honours....

Thus wrote Dr. Narayana Menon formerly Deputy Director General, All India Radio, and presently Secretary, Sangeet Natak Academy, when he contributed a profile on Subbulakshmi to a leading magazine.

It was an afternoon in April 1944 when Rajaji paid us a visit. He had just then returned from Sevagram after seeing Babu. In the course of our talk Rajaji told us that he had promised Babu five benefit music recitals by my wife, Subbulakshmi, for the Kasturba Memorial Fund. I said his word to Babu would be fulfilled.

What Subbulakshmi treasures most is the blessings she received from Babu after benefit recitals for the Kasturba Memorial Fund. He wrote to her in his own hand "Rajaji has told me everything about your good work in connection with Kasturba Memorial Fund by using your musical gifts. May God bless you."

Gandhiji heard Subbulakshmi for the first time in 1941. Subbulakshmi and I were going to Calcutta from Bombay in connection with the picture *Savithri* in which Subbulakshmi was featured as Narada. We broke our journey at Nagpur to have the darshan of Gandhiji at Sevagram.

We were sitting along with the other Ashramites to participate in the evening prayers. Evidently, quite a few recognised Subbulakshmi and they must have apprised Gandhiji of

Subbulakshmi's presence. I do not remember who actually asked Subbulakshmi to sing in the prayer. She sang a few bhajans. I felt Gandhiji who heard Subbulakshmi for the first time was quite impressed with her devotional singing.

The late-lamented Manu Gandhi, who was attending on Gandhiji in those days, wrote in her *Gujarati Diary* (which has been published as a book):

"In the evening Hari tuma haro janki bhir was sung by Smt. Subbulakshmi Ben in prayer...In the prayer Babuji also commended Subbulakshmi Ben for the sweetness of her voice and bhajan and said, 'Her voice is exceedingly sweet; she loses herself in bhajan. During prayer one must lose oneself in God. To sing a bhajan is one thing; to sing it by losing oneself in God is quite different!'"

I think it was some time in September 1947 that there was a message from New Delhi through A.I.R. Madras asking me if Subbulakshmi could go to New Delhi to sing a few bhajans for Babu on the occasion of his birthday on 2nd October. I had to express with profound regret our inability due to some domestic difficulties. But Subbulakshmi recorded a few bhajans from Tulsidas, Surdas, Kabirdas and Meera and had the recordings sent to Delhi through A.I.R. for Babu to listen to on his birthday.

On the morning of 1st October we heard from A.I.R. Madras that they had received a call from Sucheta Kripalani who was then attending on Babu in New Delhi. She had said that Babu was very keen to hear *Hari Thuma Haro*, a Meera bhajan, sung by Subbulakshmi. I asked A.I.R. to inform Sucheta that Subbulakshmi had neither learnt that piece nor set it to tune and I suggested that Babu listen to that particular piece from any other artiste in Delhi.

Later the same evening we had another message from Delhi to say that Babu would prefer to hear *Hari Thuma Haro* spoken by Subbulakshmi than sung by others. That left us no choice. We went over to the A.I.R. studios and with the assistance of one or two friends well versed in music we had the piece set to tune. It was long past midnight when Subbulakshmi recorded *Hari Thuma Haro*. The recorded tape was taken by the morning plane to New Delhi by my nephew Sri R. Ananthanarayanan and Babu

heard *Hari Thuma Haro* rendered by Subbulakshmi on the evening of his birthday, 2nd October 1947.

Little did we imagine that that was going to be his last birthday and much less did we imagine that favourite bhajan of Mahatmaji, which was sung for his birthday, was going to be played by A.I.R. stations all over the country less than four months later on the death of the Father of the Nation.

On the evening of 30th January 1948, Subbulakshmi was casually listening to the radio in our home. There was a sudden pause. Then came the sombre news of Babu's assassination, quickly followed by *Hari Thuma Haro* sung by Subbulakshmi. Subbulakshmi swooned. For nearly a year thereafter she could not even attempt to sing *Hari Thuma Haro*.

Rajen Babu (Rajendra Prasad) was immensely fond of Subbulakshmi's singing. Twice when we were in Delhi, he sent for us to hear Subbulakshmi at Rashtrapati Bhavan. On both occasions, it was just a quiet recital, for the Rashtrapathi and members of his household. Subbulakshmi sang to the accompaniment of only the Tambura. Rajen Babu, the great and good soul that he was, used to be deeply moved by Subbulakshmi's renderings of Meera, Surdas, Kabirdas and Tulsidas.

Subbulakshmi and I, with my daughter Radha, were in Delhi during November 1947 in connection with the premiere of our picture *Meera* in the distinguished presence of Lord Mountbatten. Our beloved Prime Minister (Jawaharlal Nehru) took enormous interest in this preview of the Hindi version of *Meera*.

While presiding over a recital given by Subbulakshmi in aid of the Ramakrishna Mission in New Delhi in 1953, Nehru said, "Though accustomed to public speaking, I find it not too easy to address on this occasion. Subbulakshmi's music has a moving quality and whenever she visits Delhi there is a thrill among the people whom she carries away by her melody. Who am I, a mere Prime Minister before a Queen of Songs?"

This tribute had been paid by Jawaharlalji to Subbulakshmi once already. He called her the Queen of Songs as early as 1949 when he presided over her recital in New Delhi for the benefit of the Madras School. Jawaharlal



'Meera'

Nehru repeated the same tribute for the third time when he presided over Subbulakshmi's recital in Madras for the benefit of the Music Academy in 1956.

My wife and I went with a group to Rishikesh in November 1953. Soon after we returned to New Delhi, we had another recital there under the auspices of a premier music sabha. It was a record gathering for a sabha recital. T.T. Krishnamachari, Govind Vallabh Pant and many other dignitaries were present. Subbulakshmi sang for more than five hours and Krishnamachari sat through the recital right up to the end. He was all praise for Subbulakshmi's music. Ever since, whenever and wherever possible, T.T.K. never missed a recital of Subbulakshmi.

Sarojini Devi paid us a visit to our home in January 1945. She came, she listened and she was conquered. Ever since, Sarojini Devi became a great fan of Subbulakshmi. When we were all coming out of the theatre after the press show of the Hindi version of *Meera* in Delhi, the late Sir T. Vijayaraghavachariar, a great friend of Sarojini Devi, asked the poetess, "Now do you surrender your title, the Nightingale of India?" "I have already done it," was her prompt and gracious reply.

Sarojini Devi was first taken up by Subbulakshmi's music. Later, she was taken up by Subbulakshmi herself. She became a fond of her as of her music. She loved to hear again and again a Meera bhajan by Subbulakshmi, *Mai Hari Charanana Ki Dasi*, and also *Yad Ave*, *Yad Ave*, a composition by Rehna Tyabji which Subbulakshmi had rendered in the film *Meera*. The fact that Sarojini Devi so readily agreed to personally appear on the screen in the picture *Meera*

in order to introduce Subbulakshmi to the people of the North is ample proof of the depth of Sarojini Devi's love for Subbulakshmi. In Sarojini Devi's sad demise Subbulakshmi felt the loss of a mother.

The late Maharana of Udaipur appreciated Subbulakshmi's music very much. It was in 1944 that we were in Rajasthan for location shooting in connection with our picture *Meera*. While we were in Udaipur a recital was arranged in the Durbar Hall for His Highness, the Maharana of Udaipur. A day after the recital, when I approached the Maharana to assist us with a few horses and elephants for some scenes which we wanted to shoot in connection with the film, he said, "The Kalyani raga rendered by Subbulakshmi is still ringing in my ears. In return for that one raga I shall give you not only elephants and horses but whatever other assistance you need for your film."

Savithri was a Tamil movie in which Shanta Apte was featured in the main role. Subbulakshmi took the role of Narada. It was actually 'charity beginning at home', for Subbulakshmi was acting in this film solely for the purpose of earning the necessary finance to start *Kalki*, which is now a highly respected Tamil weekly in the South. Subbulakshmi is thus one of the founders of *Kalki* along with me and my late lamented friend and colleague R. Krishnamurthy.

The picture *Savithri* was shot in the famous New Theatres of Calcutta. I still remember how all the artistes and technicians in that big studio would gather to hear Subbulakshmi whenever she had a recording programme. Alladiya Khan who was known as the Mount Everest of

Hindustani Music was about 90 when we called on him at his residence. My wife and I wanted to pay our respects to that grand old man of Hindustani Music. Subbulakshmi sang for about half an hour without accompaniment.

The great Alladiya Khan was visibly moved and gave her his blessings. He was particularly pleased with the raga *Panthuvavali* which corresponds to *Purya Dhanasri* of the Hindustani system. I have perhaps said more than necessary about my wife and me. But when I think of the two great benedictions that are continually, and almost palpably, basking us and guiding us every day in our lives I simply struggle for words.

The light that is constantly guiding us is, of course, from Rajaji the saint in politics. We have been living in the protecting umbrage of this embodiment of Truth and Dharma for many, many years now.

It is Subbulakshmi's greatest good fortune that His Holiness Sri Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham has heard her on many an occasion and conferred his boundless *anugraha* on her.

Subbulakshmi has no doubt sung before many memorable and mammoth gatherings all over this mundane earth. But she considers that her music reached its consummation on the three or four Maha Shivaratri nights when she sang for hours on end before His Holiness during his Puja.

T. Sadasivam

(Courtesy: The Music Academy Souvenir 1992, M.S. — *The Queen of Song*)

Musical movements in Madras – III

The story of a magnum opus

A M Chinnasami Mudaliar, was a Roman Catholic who worked as a Superintendent in the Madras Secretariat. He was enchanted by what he referred to as "Hindu Music" and, in 1892, he began looking seriously at bringing out Carnatic music in staff notation. Using his own meagre resources, Chinnasami Mudaliar contacted disciples from the Wallajahpet School of Tyagaraja, such as Krishnaswami Bhagavata, and obtained over 800 songs which he reduced to staff notation. He then had violinists trained in Western music perform them directly from the notation so as to satisfy himself that the notation was faithful to the original music.

This done, he embarked on an ambitious project of bringing out a periodical that would carry the notations so that Carnatic music would have wider appeal. Titled *Oriental Music in European Notation*, the periodical was printed at the Ave Maria Press, Pudupet, Madras, and was first released in 1893. Mudaliar himself sent complimentary copies to several publications and prominent personalities of the time. Overnight, the periodical became the hot topic of discussion. Englishmen praised Mudaliar, the *Madras Mail* devoted column after column to it, the Madras Jubilee Gyana Samaj debated it and several Zamindars wrote letters of commendation. But not one was willing to help Mudaliar financially. A minor functionary in the Government that he was, he had limited resources and by 1896 had exhausted himself physically and financially. It had been an exercise in futility.

The silver lining in this was the friendship he developed with Subbarama Dikshitar, Asthana Vidwan (Court Musician) at Ettayapuram. Dikshitar came from an illustrious pedigree. His mother was the daughter of Baluswami Dikshitar, younger brother of Muttuswami Dikshitar. Subbarama Dikshitar (b 1839) was given in adoption to his grandfather Baluswami and accompanied him to the court of Ettayapuram at the age of five. In due course of time, he became a formidable authority on music and succeeded his adoptive father as Court Musician.

By 1890, the songs of Tyagaraja had attained wide renown. This could not be said of the works of Muttuswami Dikshitar. There were two reasons for this.

The first was that Muttuswami Dikshitar's songs were in high-flown Sanskrit and were considered difficult to learn. The second was that Muttuswami Dikshitar never lived at one place during his lifetime, travelling as he did all over South India. He thus taught songs to those who came to him wherever he went and thus his creations were scattered far and wide. If there was one repository who knew them all it was Subbarama Dikshitar and he was not a man to part with his treasures unless he was certain that the recipient was worthy of them. The works of Muttuswami Dikshitar thus

Dikshitar had decided that if there was anyone worthy of learning the songs, it was Mudaliar. The Ettayapuram estate funded three trips of Dikshitar to Madras between 1897 and 1899 and he stayed at a house in Mirshahipet and spent several hours each day with Mudaliar. But by then Mudaliar had completely burnt himself out. Hours of writing, typesetting and proofchecking his *Oriental Music* had ruined his eyesight and he had also been disowned by his own family, tired as they were of seeing his income being spent on what they felt was a worthless cause.

In 1899, Mudaliar travelled to Ettayapuram to attend the coronation of Jagadguru Rama Venkateshwara Eddappa and personally appealed to the Raja that the task of publishing Dikshitar's collection of songs be taken up by the estate. This was agreed to and in 1901 work began. But, sadly, Mudaliar did not live to see the book in print. He passed away that very year, in abject penury and want.

His life is an example of complete selfless service to music. Subbarama Dikshitar, in the meanwhile, mourning internally for his friend, went ahead with the book. In an era when electricity was not prevalent and typesetting and printing technologies were nowhere near what they are today, the old man laboured on. Not for him a mere book that would just set out songs of his ancestor in notation. Subbarama Dikshitar devised a scientific layout for the book.

The work was set in two volumes comprising 1700 pages with a pathbreaking biography section that, perhaps for the first time in Carnatic music, gave out the life stories in brief of seventysix personalities associated with music over a period of three centuries. In this the old man was not above bias, for he carefully left out a few whose music he did not agree with! He had an exhaustive section on the theory of music and on how to sing various ragas and also problems associated with their renditions especially on the *veena*. He then organised 229 songs of Muttuswami Dikshitar on the basis of the 72 parent scales of Carnatic music and presented them accordingly. Wherever he felt it was necessary to include songs of other composers to illustrate a point or two, he did that



Sri Subbarama Dikshitar as well. Another first to the book was the development of special typesets to identify the various gamakas (oscillation of notes) used in the notation.

The *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini*, for this was its name, was printed at the Vidya Vilasini Press, Ettayapuram, and set in Telugu, came out in 1904. The printer T. Ramachandra Iyengar must also get his share of plaudits for the immaculate work, that has even a detailed errata section. Writing about the book and what went into its creation, many years later, V. Raghavan, the eminent scholar, said, "What a great store of musical lore the work is and how it has proved to be the mainstay of our musicians and music scholars. In the twenties and thirties of the present century, there was a fresh awakening in our national arts, several voluntary organisations were founded for codifying our music.... For all this, the *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini* became the one indispensable book of constant reference and everlasting source material."

Subbarama Dikshitar immediately began working on a sequel to the *Pradarshini* that promised many songs of Muttuswami Dikshitar, Tyagaraja and Syama Sastry, but he was called to his maker in 1906 and his manuscripts were inexplicably lost.

His son refused to let anyone see the palm leaves in the family's possession and till date they probably remain locked up in some descendant's family vault.

It was a far cry from Muttuswami Dikshitar who freely taught disciples from all communities, be they Devadasis or Brahmins.

Ironically, within thirty years of the *Pradarshini's* publication, the language in which it was set, namely Telugu, and the students whom Muttuswami Dikshitar taught, the Devadasis, were to be the cause of great schisms in the music world. Carnatic music is still recovering from these divisions. We will see these in the next and concluding part of our series.

V. Sriram

My thanks to Pradeep Chakravarty for giving me information on the correspondence between Chinnasami Mudaliar and Subbarama Dikshitar.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. What feature at the Taj Mahal was reinstated by the Supreme Court after 20 years?
2. What 'joint effort' popular movement celebrated its centenary in the country on November 26th?
3. Which country won its maiden Fed Cup, the symbol of supremacy in women's team tennis, recently?
4. The International Film Festival of India was held at the new permanent venue for the first time this year from November 29th. Where?
5. Which first home-built fighter aircraft was handed over to the IAF on November 28th?
6. Name the common man's 'Palace on Wheels', catering mainly to budget pilgrim tourists, flagged off on November 29th.
7. Name the Indian who won the World Junior chess championship in Kozhikode on November 30th.
8. Where was the third India-ASEAN summit held recently?
9. The President, Dr. Abdul Kalam, has henceforth declined to do what gesture in the Parliament House?
10. Name the new video game, launched on the 41st anniversary of a famous death on November 22nd, that has raised a controversy.

* * *

11. Who is the new AICC secretary-in-charge of Tamil Nadu?
12. If it's S.P. Thyagarajan for Madras, who is it for Anna?
13. Name the scion of the TVS Group and danseuse who was a co-initiator of 'The Other Festival'.
14. Who is the United States Consul-General in Chennai?
15. One for the Rajini fans. Who is playing the lead actress role opposite the 'Superstar' in *Chandra Mukhi*?
16. Name the Chennai-based Pentamedia Graphics Limited's animation feature that is in the running for the Oscars next year.
17. Name the erstwhile party of P. Chidambaram that merged with the Congress on November 25th.
18. What is Ilayaraja's new, ambitious composition on Manickavasagar's works called?
19. On the above question, name the European who translated Manickavasagar's opus?
20. Who is the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court?

(Answers on page 8)

It's that time of the year in Chennai

It's that time of the year. As I ignore a light drizzle and set out on my morning walk, I witness the Chennai equivalent of the sighting of the first cuckoo in the English summer. I see my first intrepid muffler-clad warrior to brave the bitter cold of Margazhi Madras. The lady I encounter is well equipped for an Antarctic expedition, but of vital significance is the secure wrapping she has subjected her ears to, allowing no entry to the treacherous winter wind.

I immediately experience the familiar goosebumps of the seasoned concert-goer of the Madras cutcheri season in withdrawal, someone whose poor time management skills have denied him the pleasures of month-long sabha-hopping for some Decembers running now. (It used to be only fortnight-long not very long ago and it was still possible to take leave from the office for the whole music festival.) For, who doesn't know that the time the Madrasi brings out his or her winter finery is the time the Seshagopalans and Unnikrishnans have to keep their fingers crossed and throats hot-water-gargled to do battle with their audiences of *mamas* and *mamis* swathed in their warm woollens and swirling silks, and entice them away from their copies of *Kutcheri Buzz*, distributed by overzealous volunteers just before the start of the concert?

The same evening, I am driving homewards and as we cross the Adyar bridge and turn into Besant Avenue, I ask my companion if the annual convention of the Theosophical Society is still the big event it used to be — one of the high points of the year for young residents of South Madras, because it was a time you could hang out with members of the opposite sex from different parts of the world — and the answer is in the affirmative. I wonder if the convention is any longer a big draw with our youngsters who have enough else on their plate — unless of course they happen to be precocious theosophists in the making.

We soon enter Kalakshetra Colony, the residential enclave that once belonged to Rukmini Devi's Kalakshetra, prime real estate the institution sold to the lucky residents of the area, choosing to locate the college of fine arts in the area further south with its profusion of lotus ponds and coconut palms, its relative proximity to the local cemeteries notwithstanding. The ponds have dried up but

Kalakshetra is in the heart of thick woods lovingly nurtured by some of its founder's closest aides after it moved here from Adyar in the 1960's. Another legacy Rukmini Devi has left behind, the annual Art Festival at the Kerala-style auditorium in Tiruvanniyur, is round the corner, and soon scenes from the Ramayana will unfold before a mesmerised audience, though old-timers will rue the

Lakshmanan, Vairamangalam Lakshminarayanan and Kadayanallur Venkataraman are names that readily come to mind. We'll miss them.

But this is no occasion for grief. It is celebration time. The usual excitement of anticipation catches up with you. The young tyros you watched make their spectacular debuts a couple of decades ago are today masters of their art, occu-

● by
V. RAMNARAYAN

passing of the good old days and the stalwarts of the past.

It's early days yet for the migratory birds from all over the world to gather at the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary but it's the time of the year overseas Indians swoop down on Madras. In the past, they came to listen and watch; today some of them come to sing and dance as well. While the rest of sabhadom is in the throes of scheduling concerts featuring the top stars, Hamsadhvani of Indiranagar showcases NRI music talent!

NRIs are not the only strange birds the season brings to Madras. There is quite a sprinkling of foreign nationals dotting the scene, ranging from wide-eyed seekers of nirvana to serious scholars of music and dance whose thoroughness and dedication can shame the best of local students. And if you read the programme cards carefully you will see that some of the morning lec-dem sessions are by experts from quite distant lands.

The rarest of rare birds was that delightful American vocalist, the late John Higgins, who made the Dhanammal School of Carnatic music his own way back in the late 1960's, never to be emulated with quite the same measure of success by another Occidental. His guru T. Viswanathan and many of the other representatives of that school are no longer with us. We shall also miss the patriarch of Carnatic music, Semmangudi Srinivasier, who left us barely a year ago.

Many other great artists have passed away and we shall miss them sorely, and I don't mean the big stars of Carnatic music and dance alone. Many solid performers, composers and teachers who were an integral part of the music scene have left us recently — Krishnaveni

the new year at the Music Academy. Pandit Jasraj, Hariprasad Chaurasia, Amjad Ali Khan, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Zakir Hussain, Rajan and Sajan Mishra, Veena Sahasrabudhe, Rashid Khan, Ajay Chakrabarty, are all Hindustani musicians familiar to Madras audiences. This season too should bring some northern delights, hopefully, undiluted to short-change local audiences.

As always, there will be some variations of the theme for those who seek a change from the standard cutcheri fare. That brilliant Carnatic violinist Sriram Parasuram will also perform Hindustani-Carnatic vocal jugalbandis with wife Anuradha Sriram. O.S. Arun will sing Tamil ghazals. A number of percussion ensembles will thrill lovers of rhythm, led by such *laya* wizards as Karaikudi Mani, Vinayakram, Tiruvurur Bhaktavatsalam and Karthick.

For those harking back to the past, there will be at least one four-hour vocal concert — by Malladi Brothers.

For the first time in living memory, there will be no concerts at the Music Academy this season. A tremendous vacuum, no doubt, but hopefully the many spanking new venues, like Chettinad Vidyashram, the renovated Vani Mahal auditorium, and the Sivagami Pethachi auditorium, will provide quality fare that will offer some solace to diehard *rasikas*. And the many sabha canteens will vie with one another to produce fare that will equal if not surpass the music on offer. It's that time of the year.

There was a time long years ago, when Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Allah Rakha rang in

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:

A house full of literary memories

Newton House, on Jeremiah Road, off Poonamallee High Road, hidden by several trees, is a stately Palladian-style garden house, built in that style so beloved of the British in Madras in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. A few polished granite balusters indicated the one-time presence of several of these placed at specified intervals and connected by wrought iron chains.

We made it to the front door where the dim tubelight cast a faint pearly light on a fine wooden staircase. "Geetha Mahendar lives upstairs", we being told, we climbed the stairs and met her in a small drawing room. As Anusha spoke to

Geetha, my eyes kept straying to the stained glass arch of a two-faced eagle — very similar to the Imperial Russian emblem. The chinks of cobalt blue revealed tinged images of a large painting hung over another door. Curiosity got the better of me and I stammered an excuse of being a sucker for old houses and wondered whether I could see this one. Geetha was amused, but agreed.

She ushered us to a long hall which had three rooms opening on to it. Even today, with a lot of new furniture, the hall retains the grandeur it would have undoubtedly had when it was built in the 1900s for the

parish priest of the nearby St. Mathias' Church. Probably called *Newton House* at that time, it is said to have been renamed *Anand Bagh*, before reverting to the older name. The windows looked on to 13 grounds of spaciousness in which could be seen the crumbling remains of old kitchens, stables and servants quarters. This state of wildness only seemed to reinforce the mystery of Dewan Bahadur Saravana Bhavanandam Pillai. His handsome face looked down upon us from the huge oil portrait above what used to be his pooja room.

He used to climb the stairs, leave his ceremonial sword and stick on the custom-built sockets in the staircase, enter his small prayer room and spend hours in front of the gigantic oil painting of Lord Muruga with His two consorts astride a peacock. Even his *rudraksha* rosary is preserved. The drawers under the painting hold a veritable treasure trove I hoped to see one day.

It was a bright sunny afternoon when I made my second visit. The hall was awash with light from the tall windows and the stained glass added its bit. The Dewan Bahadur was born to Tanjore Muthuswamy and moved to Madras where he added the title Pillai to his name. The family of his sister, Manonmaniam Ammal, lived with him, as probably did his step-sister's son, Kumbakonam Kailasanatha Krishnaswami Pillai. An illustrious Professor of Geology in the Presidency College, Madras in later years, Krishnaswami Pillai was credited with the identification of a rare stone. It is said that the property in Vijayaraghavachari Road that belongs to the Andhra Club was where his bungalow once stood.

Little is known whether the Dewan Bahadur wrestled with the dilemma of being against the nationalist cause as an employee of the Government, while also being a fervent propagator of Tamil culture. "My grand-uncle would rush through the ground floor that was overflowing with racks of Tamil books — many that he had published — go up to the pooja room, say his prayers to spend time creating his plays and then have a dinner suitable for a diabetic," says Karthika Devi relating what she had been told (she was born after his death in 1932).

Bhavanandam Pillai has his plays published as books. A few faded photographs show the actors (the men were dressed for female roles) wearing elabo-

rately embroidered garments and looking very solemn. He had set up a small Bhavanandam academy for the propagation of Tamil literature and a photo shows the plans he had drawn up for its building. Another faded photograph shows the reception that was hosted when he returned from Ooty after setting up the academy. Unfortunately, we don't even have a list of the holdings the academy in Ooty had.

The library he had in Madras was a substantial one. So fervent was his love for Tamil, that much of his Will speaks of the maintenance of the library and only passing reference is made to legacies to his relatives — he himself had been a bachelor. The library was gifted to the government in the 1950s by Karthika Devi's father and Sarvana Bhavanandam's nephew Shanmugasundaram Pillai. In fact the will specifies that the latter and his heirs can live in the house.

Among Bhavanandam's publications are Nachiarikiniyar's commentary on the *Tholkapiyam*, translations in Tamil of Shakespeare, and a play that he may have written on King Harisichandra. Several photos are of his official life, and show him in various uniforms at various parades. For a man who was one of the first Indians to be a senior officer in the Police and a Sheriff of Madras, so little is known of his professional achievements except a listing which reads, "FRHS (Lond), MRAS (Lond), Rao Bahadur, Member of the Tamil Board of Studies, Member of the Tamil Composition Committee, Madras University, and Member of the Text Book Committee and School Book and Literary Committee."

V.C. Gopalaratnam makes a passing mention of him in an article in *The Hindu* in August 1959, referring to "the twins of the twenties and early thirties — Messrs Bhavanandam Pillai and Parankusam Naidu. They rose from almost the ranks to positions as Assistant and Deputy Commissioners. They were good servicemen and always tried to help the public in every possible way. Mr. Pillai was a good Tamil scholar who has also left us some fine dramatic and other works and who founded the Bhavanandam Academy to encourage the Tamil study and literature. No social or sporting occasion was considered a success if the twins were not present."

The contents of the letters will be of interest to music lovers, for they contain references to other books published that had notated Carnatic songs. The letters also throw light on the opinions of several notable people of the day and of journals and magazines.



Dewan Bahadur Saravana Bhavanandam Pillai.

This peep into Bhavanandam's life also provided a glimpse of the plight faced by another forgotten name, A.M. Chinnaswamy Mudaliyar of Puduket. Chinnaswamy took it upon himself to convert the songs composed by the Trinity into staff notation that was easily understandable to those familiar with Western classical music. A lifetime of effort, partially supported by Subbarama Dhikshitar, a descendant of one of the composers, resulted in one book *Oriental Music* being published by Ave Maria Press, Puduket, in 1893. This seems to have been the first volume of a monthly journal he wanted to publish. It did win a gold medal in the Wembley exhibition of 1923, but that was after the death of the author. *The Madras Times* in September 1896 carried the cost of the exercise, Rs. 28,205/6/11 paise, a large sum at the time, all borne by the author. Another volume, *Academy of the Divine Art*, was published in folio size with several sheets, in 1892. Chinnaswamy's works seem to have found their way after his death to Bhavanandam who may have had plans to re-publish them. Unfortunately, on his death, the project never materialised and his nephew handed over the sheets of notations to Government. What Shanmugasundaram Pillai retained was the correspondence Chinnaswamy had with many people on his work and the reviews of his book. The 74 pages, patiently typed from the original correspondence, throw a light on the passion of one man and his zeal to enlist support that was feeble at its best.

Pradeep Chakravathy

Three decades of service to TN cricket

Bharath Reddy turned 50 on November 12 – a fact difficult to digest for someone like me who first saw him as a sprightly teenaged schoolboy in the early 1970s. It is said that first impressions last the longest and it has certainly been that way as far as Bharath is concerned. For me, he will always be the lively, high-spirited youngster who led the Indian schools team to England in 1973, no matter how much he ages physically.

Throughout my association with him over the last three decades and more he has been full of energy, full of beans, very enthusiastic about various aspects of the game and particularly with regard to his interest in young cricketers. He has always held the view that they are the game's future.

The number of budding players who owe much to Bharath's help and guidance is legion and the latest in the long line is Dinesh Kaarthick. The current Indian wicket keeper has gone on record in expressing his gratitude for all the help and encouragement he received from 'Anna' Reddy.

Anyone who engages Bharath even in a brief conversation will soon be aware that behind that bubbling and fun-loving exterior is one of the sharpest cricketing brains that the State has produced. Bharath eats, sleeps and thinks cricket.

When playing, he took his role seriously – enough for him to be a regular understudy to Syed Kirmani and play four Tests in England in 1979 when the senior man was unaccountably dropped. Besides the tour of England, he also went to Australia in 1977-78, to Pakistan in 1978-79 and to Australia and New Zealand in 1980-81 as the deputy wicketkeeper.

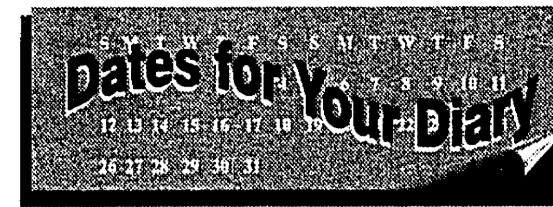
The State selectors found him shrewd enough to pick him as captain of the Tamil Nadu team in 1984-85 and the following season. Succeeding a player of S. Venkataraghavan's stature was never going to be easy but Bharath led the State team to the knockout rounds on both occasions. Each time they went to Bombay, in the semifinal for the first time around and in the quarterfinal the following season.

After his playing days ended in 1986, Bharath stayed closely involved with the game in various capacities. He always fancied himself as an administrator. In a radio interview with me in the late 1980s, he argued that since he had played the game at the highest level he was able to feel the pulse of the cricketers and expressed confidence that he would make a good administrator. He did serve two one-year terms as Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association but despite good intentions he could never really overcome the hurdles that

came in the form of the establishment. The elderly group of administrators could not accept a young thirty something 'bacha' taking over and with some radical thinking to boot. Indeed, Bharath was elected on the theme of player power and because of his ideas. Not one to compromise, he had to endure successive setbacks in elections to the post with the establishment group being too strong and his all too brief career as an administrator ended abruptly.

A cheerful disposition always helps in overcoming disappointments and, far from being discouraged, Bharath now leapt headlong into his ubiquitous post of coach, administrative manager and creative ideas man for the Jolly Rovers team. And I can not do better than to quote from a recent article written by my good friend V. Ramnarayan in *Madras Musings* on Jolly Rovers' record fifth successive triumph in the TNCA senior division league. By any yardstick, it is a notable achievement and as Ramnarayan notes: "Bharath Reddy, the administrative manager, coach Abdul Jabbar and assistant manager Ram Mohan Rao have all been with the Sanmar Group (the company that sponsors Jolly Rovers) for over two decades, first as players and then as executives. Of all these individuals, it is Bharath Reddy who has really masterminded the strategies of Jolly Rovers not only on the field of play but also in team selection and personnel management over the years."

For all his cricketing acumen, it is Bharath's management of personnel that has been his trump card. He has always had a way with players and has been able to bridge the generation gap. An excellent public relations man, his interaction with the media has been exem-



Dec. 17: Celebrate Christmas at DakshinaChitra with carol singing by Sharada Shafter and her group, and the *Margazhi Thirupavai* with song and dance. The programme starts at 4.00 p.m. and tea will be served.

Dec. 17: International Film Festival at S.I. Film Chamber of Commerce. This International Film Festival presents six French films. *Stand by*, director Roch Stephanik, *Sauve Moi/Save Me*, director Christian Vincent, *La Ville est tranquille/Life is peaceful*, director Robert Guediguian, *Comment J'ai tue mon pere/How I killed my father*, director Anne Fontaine, *Mademoiselle/Lady*, director Philippe Lioret and *Repetition/Repetition*, director Catherine Corsini. For invitations please call 2475 5209.

Dec. 17: Max Mueller Bhavan presents English and German films. Films like *Cobra Verde*, *Fitzcarraldo*, *Wings of Hope*, *Death for Five Voices*, *Wheel of Time*, *Pilgrimage* and *Heart of Glass* will be screened. For more details visit www.goethe.de/chennai. (At the S.I. Film Chamber.)

Dec. 18: A seminar on dance that will be convened by dancer Radhika Shurajit and advisors dance gurus Prof. Sudharani Raghupathy and Chitra Viswes-

waran at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Call 2495 2695 for details.

Till Dec. 19: 'Emerging Directions 2004', an exhibition of art. (At the Apparao Galleries.)

Dec. 20: Vegetable carving workshop. The workshop will be conducted by experts from the Taj Group of Hotels. Course fee: Rs. 200. (At DakshinaChitra from 10.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.)

Dec. 25: Nungambakkam Cultural Academy Anita Ratnam will premiere 'Utpala, a thousand petals, a thousand lives'. The performance will be held at Sree Krishna Gana Sabha on 28th, at Narada Gana Sabha Main Hall on 30th and at Bharat Kalachar on 31st.

Dec. 26: A nine-day art festival with dance drama by Kalakshetra artistes, Odissi dance by Aloka Kanungo and Kathakali. (At Kalakshetra Foundation. Please call 2491 1169 for details.)

Dec. 25 & 26: Traditional and contemporary toy-making workshop for adults. (At DakshinaChitra.)

Jan. 9, 2005: A vintage car rally which culminates at DakshinaChitra at 12.30 p.m. Some of the best vintage cars in the city will be taking part. There will also be a village festival.

plary. He has always been progressive in his thinking and this is underscored in the manner he organised his benefit match in 1989 by bringing in some of the leading players in the world and by having the game played in an innovative format. Bigger things could well be in store for Bharath but, whether that comes through or not, one is sure he will continue to serve the cause of Tamil Nadu cricket in his own dynamic manner — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat*.)

Partab Ramchand

Answers to Quiz

1. Night viewing; 2. The Co-operative movement; 3. Russia; 4. Panaji, Goa; 5. Sukhoi 30 MKI; 6. Village on Wheels; 7. P. Harikrishna; 8. Vientiane, the Capital of Laos; 9. Unveil portraits or statues; 10. 'JFK Reloaded' that re-creates Kennedy assassination.

* * *

11. Ambika Soni; 12. E. Balaguruswamy. They are the Vice-Chancellors of the Universities; 13. Amita Ratnam; 14. Richard Haynes; 15. Jyotika; 16. *The Legend of Buddha*; 17. Congress Jananayaka Peravai; 18. 'Trivasagam in Oratorio'; 19. G.U. Pope; 20. Justice Markandey Katju.

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