

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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Oh, they're only waiting to be seated at your table, but don't let that bother you, Sir...just relax and enjoy your meal!

Guess who's... (sorry!), where we're going for dinner?

Here's a piece of advice to all those who are about to begin constructing new homes: Do not bother building kitchens.

This applies to both individual homes and those that shoot brightly to the sky over the ruins of old buildings, ignoring a couple of small, sad ground-bound facts — lack of parking facilities, and depleting water tables.

Seriously, though, don't waste time and creativity trying to carve out unique hearts-of-homes. A small counter and a couple of shelves will suffice.

For, judging by the crowds that throng our restaurants of all shapes, sizes, cuisines and price-ranges, and by the number of food supply outlets that have mushroomed all over, Chennai prefers to dine out these days.

Home cooking might have to be declared an endangered form of social activity, while standing around in restaurants waiting for a table and trying to guilt those who are already dining into hurrying up is becoming common practice.

This movement gained momentum when the last bastion fell. When the generation that traditionally sniffed in contempt at 'outside meals' discovered the joys of fast food, old eating habits collapsed with a final groan. Three generations humbling out of one vehicle, arguing about what to eat is quite a common sight today.

One side effect: Some of that bequeathed kitchenware is starting to look distinctly cobwebby, and appears to have grown roots.

Ranjitha Ashok

Adyar eco-park plans under discussion

(by Sashi Nair)

Plans for how the sensitive Adyar Creek and wetland area should be restored and an 'Adyar eco-park' be created have been submitted to the Corporation of Chennai by a citizens' group comprising representatives of interested NGOs and public-spirited individuals. The group's proposal not only attempts to implement the orders of the Madras High Court (see box on page 2), it also aims at providing a plan developed by the citizens themselves.

"We are basically looking at the coastal ecology, the role of wetlands in a city and the restoration of coastal wetlands. We identified broad contours of how a wetland can be restored. Our plan is not only to restore the ecology but also to raise important questions such as 'Why is it important to protect the area and what can be done to generate urban civic consciousness about such environmental issues?'" a spokesperson of the group told *Madras Musings*.

Madras Musings understands that a group from Auroville, which has been connected with the Pichadikulam project and which has proven experience in afforestation and conservation of ecology, is to be associated with the proposed Adyar eco-park project and will take note of the citizens' suggestions. "The project is still at a conceptual stage, but we would like the project to be linked with the Adyar Estuary and Adyar River and not be taken up as a quick-fix solution," stresses the spokesperson of the citizens' group.

The restoration, the group's proposal explains, will be an attempt to return a degraded eco-system to a close approximation

of its former natural potential. The action of restoration is to "return its previous stage, recover its formal state, regain its (Continued on Page 2)



Adyar Creek — where the eco-park is to be developed. (Photograph by REFLECTIONS.)

Making Chennai a city of gardens

(by Shobha Menon)

'Making Madras a city of gardens', a headline said in *The Hindu* of February 29, 1948, reporting the inauguration of the Flower show of the Corporation of Madras at My Ladye's Gardens by K. Chandramouli, Minister for Local Administration, who said, 'Flower shows enable people to develop their sense of beauty and finer sensibilities'. Distressingly, in Madras that is Chennai, My Ladye's Garden itself, leave alone its flower shows, is a distant memory that rarely touches public consciousness in Chennai.

O.T. Ravindran, a horticulturist in Chennai for the last 60 years, remembers, "My Ladye's Gardens was one of the best designed gardens I've seen—with well laid-out pond, lawns, trees, plants and exhibition areas. Popular every year was the lovely flower show conducted by the Corporation of Madras over four days, competitions for schools etc. A dynamic Vittalathan, then Garden Superintendent, managed it all efficiently with an even more efficient team of workers."

But does its vanishing mean that Chennai can never be 'a city of gardens'? "It hasn't been known for its public gardens mainly because people here are not so 'garden conscious' as in Bangalore, for instance. Water scarcity has been a major reason. Only a few old institutions with British connections, like the MCC, Madras Club and Race Club, still continue to have garden 'magic'. For most citydwellers, at this point, horticulture is just another way to earn money. Where is the time to see the plant grow and watch the magic of its blooms?" muses Ravindran.

G. Dattatri, former Chief Urban Planner with the CMDA, who moved to Madras early in the 1950s, says, "There is a definite need for such green lungs in crowded Chennai. But appreciation for gardens, I feel, hasn't been much of a part of Chennai's culture. My Ladye's Garden, that began to deteriorate when the Zoo was shifted in the 1970s, need not have been allowed to run to seed thereafter. Like Panagal Park — which aroused so much interest when it was opened but came to be neglected once the area became a busy commercial hub. Naturally, anything unused is

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A reminder to our readers

• It's going to be a year since *Madras Musings* began being a priced journal, offering readers a special annual subscription rate of Rs.100. With that year coming to an end, it is time to remind subscribers to renew their subscriptions and readers who have not yet sent in their subscriptions to do so.

All subscriptions acknowledged by us from January 1, 2005 and subscriptions that we receive between now and April 16th will be considered as annual subscriptions for the year April 16, 2005 to April 15, 2006, Volume XV. As for those who have sent in their subscriptions between April 16, 2004 and December 15, 2004, please renew your subscriptions as and when they fall due. *Madras Musings*, unfortunately, does not have any staff, but only a couple of part-time volunteers to help and, hence, is in no position to send you reminders.

When sending in your subscription, please send it to Chennai Heritage together with the coupon that appears on page 7, duly filled in, IN FULL (including quoting your Mailing List number). We look forward to an enthusiastic response from readers: old and new.

— THE EDITOR

Broken pieces of a glorious past



The Royapuram Railway Station.

The world of travel and transport today is dynamic, gizmo-ridden and submerged in techno-jargon. Yet, somehow, none of this glittering sound and fury can re-create the enigmatic romance of the railway train.

A poignant wail of an engine whistle in the still of the night in the middle of nowhere, the clang-clang of a train being waved on its way through tiny nameless stations that lie quietly on paths strung between huge cities, the majesty of delicious names like 'Great Indian Peninsula', that bring to mind visions of vast, as yet unexplored, vistas — this is the stuff of fables of old.

Right in the middle of the ever-increasing hustle-bustle that is Chennai is a little chunk of such history and heritage — the Royapuram railway station, crumbling and disappearing even as we narrate.

The Royapuram Railway Station, the first station to be built in South India, was declared open by Governor Lord Harris on June 28, 1856. It was the Madras terminus of the first railway line built in South India and linked the capital with Arcot (Wallajahpet) near Ranipet. In his speech, Lord Harris congratulated the Madras Railway Company, its Manager, Major Jenkins, and all who had worked from 1853 on this particular project. Lord Harris looked forward to additional miles of track all the way to the West Coast. Two trains, each with coaches made by Simpson & Co., the leading coach builders of the day, inaugurated the service. One of them carried the Governor and 300 Europeans, for whom a magnificent dinner had been laid out at the end of the line. The other coach, bearing the 'Indian Invitees', as the report delicately puts it, traversed a shorter distance, apparently. The event appears to have been widely covered by the Press, with *The Illustrated London News* giving graphic descriptions of the inaugural train passing through the arid plains of the Carnatic. Many, who had gathered along the way, cheering and clapping, were seeing a train for the first time. There appears to have been plenty of excitement, and some rather comic moments of panic, with cattle and herdsmen alike fleeing in terror from the fire-breathing monsters.

The Royapuram Station is the second major railway station to have been built in the country, and is considered the oldest surviving one. In limited use today, it is frequented by a few suburban trains and a rather bit more freight traffic. Decrepit Ionic pillars in faded yellow-pink look down upon you, still bearing themselves high with pathetic pride — after all, this was a station once described as being "very elegant and most superbly furnished..."

Railway stations in the past were grand affairs, built to reflect the imperial power of the Raj while keeping in mind the special complexities of the rather diverse nature of the passenger traffic of the time. They essentially symbolised the civic and administrative power of the Empire.

The Maratha and Southern Madras Railway, or "M and SM", succeeded to the ownership of the Madras Railway Company and to its headquarters in Royapuram. It was the M & SM

• by
RANJITHA ASHOK

that G.S.A. Saldanha, who retired in 1975 as a General Manager, Indian Railways, and Director of Traffic on the Railway Board, joined in 1941. It was in the Royapuram railway station that he spent several years of his career.

Saldanha disclosed that field training back then meant hands-on working on every job that the officers would later supervise, and so he's run the gamut of posts, including that of ticket collector and working in cabins with signalmen. Saldanha's first training was in Royapuram, and his first posting in 1943, after training, was as Assistant Traffic Superintendent, also at Royapuram.

His later postings took him all over the country. There is a touch of romance, adventure, and an anticipation of the unexpected to life in the Railways, says Saldanha. He speaks fondly of travelling by coaches and saloons, of his journeys on trolleys, meeting so many people, visiting out-of-the-way places. In his 34-year career, he had 17 transfers, but the family felt no strain as all they had to do was "stow stuff away in the wagons and not even pack it". His postings kept bringing him back to Madras, and he retired here.

In Madras he lived in Rostrevor, and in the Haddow's Road complex when he was General Manager, South Zone, but he and his family even today re-

member Royapuram best. As we drive up, struggling to find the right approach into the Royapuram station, Saldanha and his daughter, Marina Mathias, look around, trying to spot landmarks. They speak of 'huge gates' to the station that are no longer there.

"Totally transformed" is their verdict. They point out places where level crossings have now been replaced by flyovers. The surroundings were open ground and you could see the sea. That is no longer possible, as the harbour has crept up, with the docks coming closer, bringing changes to the Royapuram complex.

Former Dutch palaces, adjoining the station, were converted into both housing areas and offices, with residential quarters upstairs and two floors of offices downstairs. Marina recalls living in one of those palaces, and recognises a part of a crumbling ruin as a former home. Nothing remains of the first palace, except mute gashes on the ground, deep furrows that indicate a foundation that once was. The second building, a part of it torn down, is occupied, although in ruins. Marina recalls climbing three flights of particularly steep stairs to reach her home. Her mother often joked that while milk would be delivered thick and pure at the bottom of the staircase, it would become mysteriously watered down by the time it reached its destination three floors up. The stairs are there, but in complete disrepair. All woodwork in the old days was made of 'high cost Burma teak', they told me.

Their home had huge terraces, and the "children would be darkened by the sun by the time they turned in in the evening," laughs Saldanha. Marina recognises areas where other children once lived. "My friend lived here. We used to go to school together."

There was a huge freight yard that has disappeared now. Saldanha describes how, as traffic demands increased, Royapuram began to lose its importance, even as Central Station gained stature as the premier terminus for the city. Royapuram gradually became more about freight and suburban trains. As we walk through the remaining building, huge freight trains go by, drawing brightly coloured containers from all over

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Remembering M.S. — a great musician

My earliest memory of a MS concert is, I am afraid, rather a matter of shame, to me, I mean. I slept through a large part of it. It was 1940 and as a schoolboy of twelve, I had been persuaded by my father to listen to music concerts in the Rasika Ranjana Sabha of Mylapore, of which he was a member. The ticket was made over to me, we lived in North Mada Street and so it became routine to go to the Sabha. The first concert I went to was by Semmangudi and soon thereafter came the performance of MS. I was still a babe in the musical wood and I dropped off halfway through the concert to be woken up by the stronger sounds of the *tani avarthanam*! I will never forget the mixture of kindness and pity in the smile of the old gentleman sitting next to me.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, MS was famous both as a musician and as an actress. But, even though she had become a regular performer in the major *sabha-s*, there was a tendency, among the middle level male musicians and orthodox music lovers, to be somewhat condescending about her musical competence. The alienation from the Music Academy in the wake of the Tamil Isai movement in 1942 did not help either.

Meera marked a watershed. Filmed in Tamil in 1945 and in Hindi in 1947, it catapulted her to fame at the all-India level. The association with Gandhiji, the *bhajan-s* that had universal appeal — *Hari tum haro* at the time of the Mahatma's death and thereafter — made her a larger than life figure. The rift with the Academy came to an end.

I am not suggesting that this is what helped her to pre-eminence in the Carnatic musical scene. She had been putting in tremendous effort to enhance her repertoire and her skills with help from Musiri and Semmangudi, as she always ac-

knowledged; and her technical competence had always been of a high order. It was as though the world of Carnatic music woke up to the realisation that this all-India figure was also a really great performer of classical music.

One gets the feeling that today there is greater awareness of her devotional music, *suprabhatam*, *bhajan-s* et al. It would, however, be a pity if this were to mask the excellence of her classical music output. Efforts should be made to discover recordings not yet in the public domain — whether with AIR or *sabha-s* or private recorders — and make them available to her countless admirers now grieving her death.

K.V. Ramanathan

If one listens to the early recordings of MS (*Marakatavadiyu*), one is struck by a brilliant voice with tremendous ability, but nothing more. She sounds exactly like any other female artiste of the period. But over the four films that she acted, MS appears to have perfected her style. In the early *Seva Sadanam*, one hears MS more or less as she sang in her classical records. In some of the songs of the film, MS does not modulate her voice at all. In *Savitri* too she

bigger say in *Sakuntalai* than in *Savitri* which was not a home production. Was he responsible for getting MS to modulate her voice and thus convey emotion? The director of *Sakuntalai* Ellis R. Dungan may have also played a role in getting MS to appreciate the finer nuances of modulating and emoting.

Certainly, with the arrival of Meera, MS had perfected her technique. Her voice became an



Memories of some of the Sruti Parivar

sings full throated, but in certain songs, one can hear attempts at voice modulation.

It is in *Sakuntalai* that we see MS emoting through her songs. Thus, just by listening to some of the songs, one can understand whether the sequence is a happy or a sad one. What is intriguing is that *Sakuntalai* predates *Savitri* and yet the attempt at modulation appears to have been given up in the later film. A possible reason is that Sadasivam, by then very much on the scene, had a

instrument of the song and took on whatever shades of emotion the song wanted her to portray. Once again the Sadasivam-Dungan combine appears to have worked on it. Whatever be the influences, with the release of Meera, MS was almost the sole female singer who was adept at conveying *bhava* through song. The 'theatrical/film' influence appears to have played a tremendous role in shaping her music. Also it appears that *bhava* did not come automatically to MS, as many suggest today. It was a five or six year development which, to give her credit, she internalised and managed to perfect over the years to follow...

Under the Sadasivam baton, the MS concert ceased to be a purely Carnatic *kutcheri*. There were *bhajan-s*, *sloka-s* and even verses in Bengali and Punjabi. MS, therefore, ceased to reflect the influence of one guru; rather, her music was the confluence of many streams... It goes to Sadasivam's credit that these did not overshadow the Carnatic element and yet managed to give a holistic musical experience to



A rare individual

My earliest memory of MS was of listening as a boy to the twin record *Evart mata* in the early thirties on an HMV player with the large megaphone, itself a much fussed about new artefact in our mofussil home. In all candour, apart from being vaguely impressed by the sweet voice of an unknown singer, I cannot remember its impact on me except in retrospective recall in my latter day admiration for MS. Along with other young people of those days, I was more hooked on the legendary duo Kittappa and Sundarambal.

It was the film *Seva Sadanam* starring MS that made the first serious impression on the provincials of a generation to whom even 'talkies' were a novelty. It was in a malodorous 'tent cinema' that I saw the film and I remember vividly the first stirrings in me of a social conscience that the film occasioned.

By the early 1940s, MS had become an icon and a household name. The decisive moment in her life as a public figure was the series of concerts she gave for raising funds for the Kasturba Gandhi Trust. That was also the moment of her becoming a pan-Indian celebrity. Since then, the beneficiaries of her generosity have been legion. (A recent estimate by Sriram.V, in the website *sangeetham.com* puts her lifelong contribution to public causes at five crore rupees against J.R.D. Tata's personal generosity of a crore of rupees.)

My first meeting with MS was accidental but the occasion provided me a rare insight into the non-musical side of her character — her totally unselfconscious goodness of heart. I had attended a press conference held by Rajaji in *Kalki Gardens* during his characteristically combative election campaign against Congress rule in the early 1970s. Having had my fill of polemics, I noticed MS at some distance, along with a few others. I walked up to her and asked her conversationally what she thought about the raucous political rhetoric across the room. I had vaguely expected partisan support for the political stand that Rajaji was vigorously expounding across the room. On the contrary, she turned deeply unhappy and said slowly that she hoped ardently that all this quarrel would end soon and there would be amity among warring old friends and comrades.

The political naivete of the observation struck me, of course. But I realised at once that here was this apolitical woman who saw politics not as a competitive gladiatorial show but as a shared endeavour in serving the nation. There was nothing put on about her distress over the fact that persons she

loved and admired should be ranged against one another in what seemed a life and death battle. Though without any interest in competitive politics, she had an unclouded vision of a public purpose that these heirs to the Gandhian tradition should be jointly serving. It was a typically feminine reaction and very Indian — the primordial distress of a mother over quarrelling children.

The next occasion I met her personally was in music critic Subbudu's flat in Moti Bagh in Delhi. It was an occasion with a few friends and the conversation was very general. Subbulakshmi hardly took any part. In the unlikely event of a person not knowing who she was, he would have taken her for a gracious Iyer Mami of the neighbourhood.

The only other occasion that I met her was in the 1990s at the small rented house in Nungambakkam to which the Sadasivams had moved after the legendary *Kalki Gardens* had been sold. I was part of a team gathering material for a biography of Ramnath Goenka and Sadasivam was an obvious source. She was very much present doing the honours as the hostess, but hardly said a word. Sadasivam was, of course, forthcoming with information but a benign smile was her only answer to all attempts to involve her in the conversation.

Indulging in a bit of pop sociology, one could perhaps say that the persona that MS had consciously chosen for herself is best exemplified by her total resemblance to a typical Tamil Brahmin housewife at home in gracious domesticity. Her universally acknowledged celebrity status had not touched her at all.

This was no accident but very much a conscious choice and a life-long quest. Given her early background, it has also been an arduous journey...

Right from the day when she secretly left her home in Madurai for Madras after rejecting the plans that her mother had made for her and eventually found a home — quite accidentally — with Sadasivam, there was a clear pattern of a deliberate choice of a destiny very different from the one that would normally have been hers. In many of the perceptions of her life after marriage to Sadasivam, there is a tendency to approximate their relationship to that between Galatea and Pygmalion. But the fact is that for all the appearance of Sadasivam chartering every detail of her life, there was nothing that she did that she would not have done on her own volition. (Courtesy: Sruti)

N.S. Jagannathan

sound, content and rhythm unobtrusively merged as one. Was it this dissolution or *layam* which struck a chord in every heart?

She was almost always immaculately dressed on stage, her entries, exits, her *kutcheri-s* — all seemed to be well choreographed and fine tuned to perfection. Many were her enviable attributes — a remarkable stage presence, no facial contortions; a one in a million voice, no distortions; and above all a *saukhyam*, *visranti* and *savika bhava* that pervaded her music and her persona. All this together must have created the MS magic!

S. Janaki

I have taught some songs to MS. Let me explain the circumstances. I was Music Supervisor at AIR. It wanted to promote Tamil and set about producing new programmes in Tamil. Mayuram Viswanatha Sastri, composer of the popular *Jayati Jayati Bharata Mata*, had set the verses of *Tirukkural* to tune in *kriti* format, with *pallavi*,

and four or five *charana-s* for each song. G.T. Sastri, the then Station Director, invited Viswanatha Sastri to teach them to some artistes he would engage. The latter agreed to do so.

GNB, Ariyakudi, DKP, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer were requested to learn these songs from Viswanatha Sastri, to be broadcast on AIR. All of them declined as they felt apprehensive about how Tamil would be accepted in Carnatic music. Not only that, Viswanatha Sastri was a terror as a teacher — he would even beat or pinch if the student made a mistake! He was a very stern man, somewhat like Syama Sastry of my painting in appearance. He was a good friend to me, though. When all the big vidwans backed out, I was called in for the project. I readily agreed. I went to his house in Mylapore and learnt the *Tirukkural* songs. He had tuned the verses with many *sangati-s* and *odukkal* and *adatal*. Even if a small *matra* was missed, he would slap me. The songs became quite

popular. Later DKP also learnt from him.

At that time, Sadasivam called me and wanted me to teach the songs to MS. He would send the car to my office and I would go to their house to teach MS. She studied everything carefully before revealing her opinion. MS listened to me with eyes closed, asking for it again and again 4 or 5 times. She would listen intently with rapt attention, she would not sing every phrase after me, but grasp the whole within. Finally she would sing a bit. She was able to pick up the songs quickly and was also able to sing them fully. After 5 or 6 days of this, Sadasivam felt that this kind of *sedukkal-sudukkal* singing would not suit her voice and that they were more suited to male singing. I taught her four *Tirukkural-s*, but she did not perform them. It was not used for broadcasting on the AIR, but she did learn these from me.

S. Rajam

(Pictures courtesy: Music Academy.)

Making a city of gardens

(Continued from Page 1)

often vandalised and misused. But there is a spark of hope for the city today, because of the fitness culture that is coming back and pushing parks into the forefront for lack of other open spaces. Like the Nageswara Park in Luz and the Natarajan Park on Venkatanarayana Road which have been revived."

A Corporation official laments, "Except in the major parks, appointing personnel in every roadside park is not feasible. And wherever there is no official representative, the public generally misuse the park. Below the TTK Flyover, we'd planted a variety of colourful shade-loving plants. Now, all of them have disappeared, two or three plants missing every morning! Outside *Raj Bhavan*, we'd planted an ornamental species, that too vanished the next morning. So much for public consciousness! We find passers-by casually removing the growing tips of young trees just because 'they feel like it'. And this happens every time the sapling tries to grow!"

In this context, Sabina Narayan, a resident of Harrington Road for the last 30 years, feels, "The Corporation does need to appoint someone to take charge in public parks, but the community also needs to pitch in, wherever relevant. In the Harrington Road Park, a person appointed by the residents' association works in tandem with the Corporation worker in charge to ensure better maintenance and security." "This arrangement, however, can work in public parks within residential colonies and not in solely public places, where a Corporation worker has to take charge and needs a lot of coop-

eration from the public," points out a Corporation official.

Right now, a 'decentralisation' has happened, with zonal offices given charge of greening their respective areas. There have been a lot of positive changes — officers involved are more proactive, and the city benefits overall. Easier execution and maintenance has been possible. But others say, "Already the zonal offices have too many things to do. How well are they going to take to an added 'burden'? Things will just go from bad to worse."

"Besides the 88 parks already notified, 62 new parks will soon be added. We plant trees along the roadside not only to green the city, but also to purify the entire atmosphere. We've many beautiful visions and plans to beautify Chennai, even to include flowering plants along walkways wherever possible. We only request that people understand that the Corporation is trying to do its bit to beautify 'their city'. The least you can do is not to interrupt this beautification process either by vandalising, or by allowing others to vandalise what's been created," emphasises a worried Corporation official.

As part of Corporation of Chennai's recent efforts to make Madras that is Chennai a 'City of Gardens', here are some heartening facts. The parks and roadside parks developed (and maintained well, according to reports from a few residents) by the Corporation of Chennai during the period 2001-2004 are:

Year	Parks	Roadside parks
2001-2002	1	5
2002-2003	29	1
2003-2004	48	42

Recently developed parks include the Sriramulu Park in Zone II, Tirumalai Park in Zone III, Jawahar Nagar II Circular Road Park in Zone IV, Harrington Road Park in Zone V, Independence Day Park in Zone VII, and the Dharma Park in Zone VIII.

Sabina says, "A few years ago, an open space on Harrington Road adjoining a huge department store was designated as a park, but regressed into a dumping ground slowly for want of attention. Two years ago, residents reclaimed the area by bringing it to the notice of the Corporation officials and, following it up, 25% of this artistic, now transformed, park's ambience is purely due to residents' efforts and private sponsors, but 75% is due to landscaping and maintenance by Corporation officials!"

Says a school teacher from the Nungambakkam Boys' Corporation School, of the Independence Day Park (established in 1947, but neglected for long) that is nearby, "Even a few months ago, the whole area was used as a dumping ground and frequented only by shady characters. Yesterday, I was amazed to see so many men and women enjoying the beautiful green park's ambience during their evening walk."

"We can definitely maintain the parks in Chennai as lovely public spaces. More than huge amounts of money spent on them, they only need a little care and maintenance. And that little sense of being with nature, by all concerned. If the community wants this to happen, it surely will," says Ravindran sounding a positive note.



From February 18: Exhibition of the paintings of Sohan Qadri. (At Apparao Galleries.)

February 19 and 20: *Perchance to Dream*, a collage of extracts of Shakespearean plays staged by the Footsborn Travelling Theatre, UK. (At YMCA Grounds, Nandanam.)

February 20: The Madras Naturalists' Society's one day trip to Vedanthangal is open to the public on first come first served basis, restricted to 35 persons. The bus leave from 'The School', KFI, Damodar Gardens, Besant Avenue, Adyar, at 7 am. Cost on sharing basis and will work out to approximately Rs. 150 per 2 persons. Participants should bring their own packed lunch. Contact Sundaramoorthy at 94441 63914.)

February 20: Susheela Raman in a Carnatic and Blues-based concert.

The music of *Salt Rain*, Susheela's first album, was a collaborative endeavour between Susheela, Sam Mills and a network of people with whom they have performed.

Born in London to South Indian parents, she moved to Australia where she grew up singing South Indian classical music. As a teenager, she branched into more Blues-based music. To bring the two streams together, she came to India in 1995 to study with Shruti Sadolikar, Hindustani vocalist.

Back in England in 1997, she worked with Mills who had made a record called *Real Sugar* with Bengali singer Paban Das Baul. This record inspired Susheela because it enabled Indian music to be expressed to a new audience. Susheela and Mills spent three years developing *Salt Rain*. They discovered new ways to adapt the Carnatic songs she had sung, particularly the work of Tyagaraja and Dikshitar.

The concert in Chennai will include Susheela Raman with Sam Mills on guitar; Aref Durvesh on tabla; Hilaire Hega Penda on bass with percussion by

Djanuno Dabo. (At the YMCA Grounds, Nandanam, 7.00 p.m.)
From February 21: Exhibition of the work of S.N. Venkataraman. (At Vinyasa Art Gallery.)

February 21-27: *Ganesh*, an exhibition by Jerome Mesnager, a Parisian wall artist. He will also conduct a workshop with children.

From February 22: The Japanese Consulate-General displays an exhibition of kites from Japan. (At Lalit Kala Akademi.)

February 25: The Madras Players presents *Mercy*, written by Sivasankari, directed by Mithran Devanesan and performed by P.C. Ramakrishna. (At 7.00 p.m., Museum Theatre.)

February 25: Alumnae of The Sacred Heart Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Madras, Church Park hold their annual get-together, an evening of fun, entertainment and nostalgia with their families. (At 5.30 p.m., at the school sports field.)

Sacred Heart is celebrating its centenary in 2009. Efforts are being made to trace alumnae so that before the centenary year a directory of the alumnae could be put together. Please e-mail names of alumnae to shaacp@yahoo.com.

February 26: *Beuroshna* an intercultural dialogue between music and musicians; flamenco (popular music from Spain) and carnatic music, guitar and mridangam, voice and carnatic violin. *Beuroshna* includes Nacho Corral, musicologist, guitar player and composer, M.T. Jayan, master in *mridangam*, professor of Sanskrit, and Belem Cantos, graphic artist, photographer and a singer who writes lyrics about her experiences in India. (At Alliance Francaise.)

Till March 2: *Emerging Reds*, an exhibition of the work of Louis Van Marissing. (At the Alliance Francaise)

March 1-6: *Made in Germany: Architecture and Ecology*, an exhibition showcasing contemporary German architectural projects that preserve the environment to the greatest degree feasible. Along with the exhibition by the Goethe Institute will be a Symposium (on the 5th) on environment-friendly architecture. (At DakshinaChitra.)

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