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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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Vol. XIV No. 24 April 1-15, 2005

INSIDE

- The crazy Chennai Season...
- ... gallops along
- Saviour of Tamil Literature
- Bosen the Dronacharya
- Cricket coaching the fashion

a-MUSING

That's us before we moved into this 7th floor apartment – and discovered that elevators are also temperamental.

The quest of the guest

Looking forward to moving to the latest high-rise in town, and having all your acquaintances over?

That's nice... "just make sure that your particular collection of nests is well-provided with lifts and parking areas. Staying in touch with the various varieties of the near-and-dear species will prove impossible otherwise.

Remember, visitors obliged to huff up staircases end up revaluing the 'merits' of specific relationships.

And those cold 'No parking for visitors' vehicles' announcements placed strategically near entrances are not exactly conducive to the 'How to win friends....' spirit.

You drive up, anticipating a convivial evening, only to be confronted by this bleak sign. Muttering darkly, you begin searching for parking. By the time you've circled the forbidding walls of your friend's apartment block thrice, you, now in a foul mood, recall what a tick he was in college, and how you've always suspected his wife of having started those nasty rumours about yout nose-job. You may find parking, but you're now a guest from hell. Or, you scrap the idea of a visit, advising your host over the cell-phone while driving away that if he wants people over, he should find a more accessible place ... like Mars.

And sarcasm is acid to any relationship.

Will the enterprising people who create these soaring structures with fancy fixings keep mundane facts like transport, and a disinclination for forced exercise, in mind?

Ranjitha Ashok

Beleaguered — in the name of kindness

Plight of tsunami-affected fisherfolk

(By Shobha Menon)

There were several rather unfortunate incidents involving fisherfolk in the first weeks after the tsunami. A road blockade by tsunami-hit fishermen resettled at Okkiyam, Thoraipakkam, led to the arrest of 42 persons, including 15 women, many of whom were injured in the ensuing police lathi-charge. Their protest: Asking for drinking water and bus services to their relocated settlement in Kannagi Nagar. In another instance, near Royapuram, more than 650 families of fisherfolk living in Anna Nagar Pallam were issued 'shifting coupons' one morning and immediately asked to vacate their homes. A resident said, "Those who questioned the officials were threatened. What else could we do?" Such incidents bring into renewed focus the burning issue of 'concern' for fisherfolk and 'assuring safety' from natural calamities, by relocating them away from the coast.

Consultant ecologist Dr. P. J. Sanjeeva Raj, who has been working with fisherfolk communities for the last 40 years and more, says, "Ecological dislocation of this kind means economic dislocation and degradation in the quality of life of this economically weak society. Ultimately, it will reflect on our national productivity itself."

In February, Collectors of tsunami-affected districts were asked by the State to 'compulsorily' relocate houses within 500 m of the High Tide Line. And if the topography demanded it, houses falling between the 500-1000 m of the HTL could also be considered for relocation. The directive was issued by the Revenue Administartion Disaster Management Department in the districts of Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur, Thanjavur, Villupuram, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Pudukottai and Kannia-

(Continued on Page 2)

Chennai fisherfolk (Picture courtesy: Madras the Gracious City)

How green was the revolution?

• Four decades after the Green Revolution, India's soil and water have been poisoned, posing a serious challenge to the country's food security all over again.

50 years ago, politicians started mouthing the slogan: *Jai jawan, jai kisan* (Long live soldiers, long live farmers). Now it has started to sound like a raucous chant, at least to the farmers struggling to survive. They till the soil harder, increase their spending to replenish their patch of land, but nothing helps. It is the marriage between science and farming practices that has failed. The more they try to revive it, the more they get bogged down in the mire.

The maze encompasses the use of high-yielding varieties of crops, spraying pesticides to ward off uninvited guests from their fields, and rejuvenating the soil with fertilisers. All this to ensure that their crops have all the ingredients for a good harvest.

The Green Revolution (GR) was what this practice was called when it started in the late 1960s. India was then reeling under a severe drought. Its dependence on imports to feed its rising population was unprecedented.

The objective of meeting the shortages was met. Food production registered a phenomenal increase during the next two decades. From 10 million tonnes in 1967, food imports dropped to 0.5 million tonnes by 1977. Today, India imports very little wheat, and no rice. Unfortunately, though agricultural production has continued to increase, the rate of yield per hectare has started to decline.

• by KUMKUM DASGUPTA

Today, many stand disillusioned. With the benefit of hindsight, many are trying to understand where India went wrong. "At the time GR was adopted, the sustainability issue was not the criteria. The only way out was to pump in the inputs so that production rose," says a member of the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, Ministry of Agriculture. Furthermore, it was a grain revolution, not a green revolution. Wheat and rice became the kings among crops. These were not the traditional varieties. With GR came the water-thirsty, chemical-intensive hybrid varieties. Even M. S. Swaminathan, the father of GR and former director of Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, had warned of the dangers when GR was adopted.

Addressing the Indian Science Congress at Varanasi in January 1968, he said: "Exploitative agriculture offers great possibilities if carried out in a scientific way, but poses great dangers if carried out with only an immediate profit motive. The farming community should become aware of this. Intensive cultivation of land without conservation of soil fertility and soil structure would lead, ultimately, to the springing up of deserts. Irrigation without arrangements for drainage would result in soils getting alkaline or saline. Indiscriminate use of pesticides could cause adverse changes in biological balance and lead to an increase in cancer cases and other diseases, through the toxic residues present in the grains or other edible parts. Unscientific tapping of water will lead to exhaustion of this wonderful resource left to us through ages of natural farming."

His words were prophetic. Without the management systems, agricultural disaster, rather than prosperity, has

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The beleaguered fisherfolk

(Continued from page 1)

kumari. Officials said that "structures like beach resorts, hotels and farmhouses currently existing within the 500 m limit would not be covered under the relocation plan". Why the discrimination as far as 'safety concerns' are concerned?

Says Babu Mathew, Country Director of Actionaid, India, an NGO that has been actively involved in the relief work, "I see this as an ill-motivated transitional approach to clean up the beach. And even this is being done selectively, to deprive the poor of their ancestral homes and protect the rich who arrived recently! CRZ regulations explicitly provide that fisherfolk have the traditional right to stay within the 200-500 m zone from the HTL (according to CRZ III). Yet we have the State itself issuing a notification that they be permanently relocated beyond that level. Such communication is illegal. Not only does it violate Article 21, but also all environmental protection laws."

He goes on to charge, "It is a mistaken form of kindliness, all this hue and cry about relocating the fisherfolk elsewhere. Everyone concerned with relief and rehabilitation needs to address sensitively the livelihood issue and the various connected aspects. How the fishermen live is an inextricable part of their way of life. Treating it as an independent housing issue betrays an utter ignorance of their way of life. To use *kattumarams* and fishing nets, the fisherfolk **must** live on the coast. How can we destroy a tradition that has existed on the seacoast from time immemorial? The tsunami must not be used to achieve such cruel solutions for those who, though poor, lead a dignified existence. People cannot live in new shelters without a source of income, which the State cannot provide indefinitely".

By a 'sensitive' relook at the issue of fisherfolk livelihoods, Mathew means that "the State, in consultation with fisherfolk and civil society, must work out a master plan to handle this issue". He explains, "At the level of each *kuppam*, it is necessary to identify the land nearest (the *kuppam*) in a manner that the fisherfolk have access to and control over the beach area, so that they can keep their *kattumarams* and fishing nets within sight. As people who observe the sea and decide when to go fishing, they cannot be placed anywhere else but close to the coast," he feels.

Says Dr. Sanjeeva Raj, "All along the 6100 km coastline of India, fishermen have, since ancient times, settled at points that ensure sustainability for their fishing. In the course of generations, living in the same seaside niche, they have come to thoroughly understand the topography of the local continental shelf as far as their country craft can go fishing, tidal pattern, ocean currents, winds, even movements of fish at various seasons. All this would utterly go to waste if they are bodily displaced overnight to a new place on the seaside itself, leave alone away from the coast, where they have to restart all over again, to observe, experience and adapt to new environment."

"There is an imperative need for scientific guidelines to be followed by our decision-makers – politicians, administrators and judges – so that simple human justice can be meted out to people who only want a right to an honest means of livelihood at basic levels," points out Dr. Sanjeeva Raj. "The beach is a natural buffer between the ocean and the land and it belongs basically to the fisherfolk. Within 500 m from HTL there is no business for encroachments like beachhouses and resorts. The fishermen can be relocated to an elevated area of their choice within the 500 m range. This will be accessible to the sea and convenient to berthing and landing of their crafts," he adds.

Says Mathew, "There is also the imperative need to understand that the livelihood issue should address all those who are dependent on the present coastal economy. Primarily the fisherfolk, but there are also those who give support services to them – the Dalits, tribals, like the Irula, etc. – in the form of repair of fishing nets, boats and so on, as well as the petty traders who provide informal services for these folk. But unfortunately, relief is being denied to many affected sections. The State cannot distinguish between citizens affected by the same calamity under Article 14."

In December 1985, in the 'beautification drive' on the Marina, the police without any prior notice, confiscated the *kattumarams* of the fishermen — and then till the Supreme Court came to their rescue. Now, in the wake of the all-round devastation caused by the tsunami, the fisherfolk are again beleaguered. And that too, in the name of 'kindness'!

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

HOW GREEN WAS THE REVOLUTION?

(Continued from page 1)

taken place in barely three decades. Increased demand for water led to over-extraction of groundwater. Channeling of water from rivers or streams followed. The natural drainage pattern was destroyed. Now, some GR regions are turning to deserts due to water depletion while other places are suffering from severe waterlogging. The latter has also led to unproductive saline fields.

Besides, indiscriminate use of chemicals and intensive cropping have robbed the soil of its nutrients, poisoned the groundwater and contaminated crops.

No other state illustrates the ugly face of GR more than Punjab, the state that supplies food to almost all the states in India. While trying to feed the rest of the nation, Punjab has lost its prime land. Central districts face a desertification threat, while the southwestern districts are swamped in excess water. The state on which the rest of India relies for foodgrains is in grave danger.

In 1997-98, Punjab and Haryana produced 12.8 per cent and 30.6 per cent of the total rice and wheat, respectively, in the country. Of the total 82.5 million tonne total rice production, the two states accounted for 10.5 million. During the same year, of the total 66.3 million tonne wheat production, the two states accounted for 20.3 million tonnes.

Solutions

With problems surfacing in Punjab, solutions have also emerged. From the demand for a thorough agriculture policy catering to the local requirements to doing away with 'mindless' subsidies, experts have been crying hoarse their suggestions to keep away from the imminent doom. To stick to the status quo will invite environmental and social disaster.

Says Swaminathan: "Punjab and Haryana alone cannot feed our country. We must make every part of our country self-sufficient so that diversification of farming will be possible. Assam is now on the road to self-sufficiency in rice. The remarkable progress being made by Assam in rice production is triggered by shallow tubewells. We need a million shallow tubewells in Assam to enable the state to make the flood-free season into a major cropping season. Similar strategies will have to be developed on an eco-regional basis."

In the coming years we have no option except to produce more from less per capita arable land and irrigation water, says Swaminathan. "GR is another name for productivity, improvement-based production increase. What we require today is an evergreen revolution rooted in the principles of ecology, economics, gender equity and employment generation," he adds.

Agriculture policy

There should not be one policy for the whole country, but different policies based on the ecological needs and situation of each area, say experts. Where subsidies are concerned, the pricing policies for fertilisers, water and power should have a long-term sustainability dimension. "It should not be based on immediate socio-economic, technological and political concerns," says S. K. Sinha, former national professor, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi. Similarly, the water pricing policy should be changed to ensure that water excess of recharge capacity is not pumped out. Policies like free power that encourage tapping of groundwater should also be done away with, says Swaminathan.

One of the main drawbacks is the failure to provide adequate incentive to other crops. The minimum support price of wheat is much higher than world prices. Other crops do not enjoy the same status. "Rice-wheat cultivation has become an opium. Because it is lucrative, people do not want to produce any other crop," says the Commission member. To undo the damage done in the last 30 years, India needs to do two things — reduce the area under rice cultivation and encourage production of leguminous crops, for which the government can start a subsidy system. "Pricing power will also make people break from the water-intensive rice-wheat cropping pattern," he adds.

Agricultural research

Research is around 10 years behind in India. There is no understanding of field problems in research and this gap is a big setback." What is required is a paradigm shift from commodity-centred to ecologically-sustainable farming systems. For this, scientists will have to generate and implement new technologies. Technologies like biotechnology, meteorology and microelectronics are "powerful tools", but they need to be used with great scientific care and discretion.

Sinha has suggested that more research is needed to develop rice and wheat varieties, which have a higher yield potential, for areas in the country where the yield is less.

Undoing the damage

Meanwhile, only community mobilisation, education and regulation can repair the damage that has taken place. For instance, farmers can be taught about the benefits of organic farming along with integrated soil healthcare systems involving the use of green manure, biofertilisers, composting and the minimum essential mineral fertilisers. "The majority of our farmers have holdings of 1 ha or less. They often do not own cattle; therefore, organic manure alone will not be adequate to meet the needs of our hungry soils," says Swaminathan. – (Courtesy: CSE/*Down To Earth Features*.)

OUR READERS WRITE

Readers' service

Apropos *Madras Musings*' recent announcements, I suggest that we the subscribers form a small, viable closely-knit unit in a central area covering adjoining colonies.

In case any one of us has not received his or her copy, we can interact amongst ourselves for delivery/receipt/exchange etc.

I live in Mahalakshminagar area in West Velachery. The landmark to reach my house is Lord Sri Subramanyaswamy Devasthanam in Brindavannagar of Adambakkam Postal Delivery Zone. My address is New No.5, Seventh Cross Street, Mahalakshminagar, West Velachery, Chennai 600 088. My telephone numbers are: Res: 2253 1118. Off: 2253 3298 / 2253 3452.

Likewise, subscribers who have missed receiving copies can form a Madras Musings Readers' Family (or any other appropriate name). Subscribers can also give their copies to nearby libraries for the benefit of the general public.

The YWCA, Poonamallee High Road, Chennai, has displayed a collection of old issues of *Madras Musings* in a neatly bound book and it is available for residents and guests.

K. Thyagarajan
Chennai 600 088

Editor's Note: We are glad to note reader Thyagarajan's enthusiasm and willingness to help readers of *Madras Musings* whose copies sometimes go astray in the mail. We look forward to hearing from other such volunteers.

Language of song

Reader N. Rajagopalan is absolutely right when he says (MM, March 1st) that the Tamil Isai Movement was intended to bring back the glory of Tamil songs. Their glory can even now be seen in the compositions of Oothukadu Venkata Kavi, Gopalakrishna Bharati, Papanasam Sivan and many others.

However, it is unfortunate that chauvinism replaced the noble ideals of the Movement and petrified the Tamils' legitimate pride in their past. It is one thing to make the past a source of inspiration and it is another to make a fetish of it.

Not that Tamil is inferior to Telugu. But the aptness of the pitch in the sense of *sa ri ga ma pa da ni* (sharp and flat) for the various vowel sounds occurring in Thyagaraja's songs is a matter of his genius. I quote a few lines form his *kritis* as examples to show how the letters have been aptly chosen so as to present a "musical feeling":

a) *Tu la see da la mu la chay santo sha mu gaa poo jin tu;*
b) *A ti laa va nya Raa ma ka nu laa ra choo da raa;*
c) *E laa gu da ya va tsu no;*
d) *Nee ma na su nee di nu su nee so ga su vay ray;*
e) *May ru sa maa na dhee ra va ra da Ra ghu.*

You have to have an ear for Telugu words. In Telugu, conjunct consonants are absent to a large extent. If they occur at all, they are soft and sweet, e.g. *tsu*, *nya*, etc. This is the unique feature of Telugu. But many Tamils come to Carnatic music without any knowledge of Telugu. That causes the problem!

Reader Rajagopalan is right when he says: "What were available as 'songs' in Tamil for concerts were insufficient for concerts". There cannot be a Carnatic music concert without Telugu *kritis*. Without them, a concert will be like a wedding feast without *paruppu*, ghee and a sweet!

M.K. Chubby Raj
403, Sai Niketan
6, Lock Street, Kotturpuram
Chennai 600 085

Killjoys at concerts

I fully endorse the view expressed by Reader P.A. Ranganathan (MM, March 1st). The interlude of conversation in otherwise smooth-flowing concerts is unnecessary and uncalled for. It appears that questions are bandied by many persons, more to exhibit their familiarity with the intricacies of Carnatic music than to clear genuine doubts. Some musicians take the opportunity to reminisce and elaborate on their experiences. This results in waste of time for other listeners.

The organisers and musicians should remember that listeners have paid to listen to music and not for discussions of matters which are not relevant to them. They have a duty to listeners and must satisfy the listeners with an uninterrupted flow of music.

If necessary, time may be allotted at the end of the concert and those interested may stay and discuss various points without jeopardising the interest of other listeners.

M. Sethuraman
'Sankrithi', 6 Second Cross Street
Mahalakshmi Nagar
Adambakkam, Chennai 600 088

Looking back

In connection with the article "Another side to the tsunami" (MM, March 16th), I would like to invite reference to MM of 16.4.2002, as also the letters on the subject (MM, May 16, 2002), wherein the submergence of the earlier structures (temples?) was discussed. Now the tsunami has confirmed the belief. It is upto the Indian Institute of Oceanography, Goa, and the Archaeological Survey of India to bring to light these long-forgotten structures. A similar undersea exploration is called for at Poompuhar (Kaveripoompattinam) where, also, legend has it that there were 'Saptha Chaayavanams', of which only one now survives.

Despite thousands of heritage sites and buildings which dot our country, it is a pity no worthwhile 'Heritage Act' is in force. It is earnestly hoped that government will hasten this issue in the interest of our nation and future generations.

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

No action, & now...

A long time back, some good samaritan had filed a PIL in the Madras High Court objecting to the presence of fishermen colonies on the Marina adjacent to Santhome High Road. Justice Jagadeesan delivering judgement in the case, went to great lengths to explain why the colonies should be vacated. His Lordship pronounced that the fishing slums faced a very real threat on account of proximity to the cruel sea and, therefore, for their own safety, the fisherslums should be provided alternative accommodation. He, therefore, ordered the police to evacuate them.

However, the police did not pick up courage to execute the court order, although the non-action amounted to contempt of court. Everyone soon forgot about it. Now, the tsunami has proved the judge's fears true. I hope at least now they are evacuated to safer areas protected from the vagaries of the sea.

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

Not virus-caused

With reference to the letter 'Bacterial or viral disease' (MM, March 16th), I would like to state that leptospirosis is definitely NOT caused by a virus. In my article on leptospirosis sent for publication, I had not mentioned that it is caused by a virus. It had been edited by MM to read "caused by a virus".

A prestigious daily newspaper in Madras too recently carried an article stating erroneously that leptospirosis is caused by a virus.

Leptospirosis is caused by bacteria (spirochete) called *Leptospira interrogans* which have 20 serogroups and 200 serovars. Autumnalis and Icterohaemorrhapiae are the common serogroups in Chennai.

Leptospirosis responds to antibiotics very well. The major problem today is nonavailability of diagnostic facilities, especially in rural areas. It is usually mistaken for viral fever or viral hepatitis and antibiotics are not given, causing a high mortality.

I thank reader Venkataramani (MM, March 16th) for showing keen interest in this topic. Public awareness is the key to eradicate this illness, as environmental hygiene is essential for eradicating leptospirosis.

Dr. S. Shivakumar
3362/0, AE 8th Street
Anna Nagar, Chennai 600 040

Editor's Note: We regret the editing error.

Dirtying the city

Reader Kailasanath has kindly offered financial help (MM, March 1st) to teach manners and courtesy to auto and transport drivers. While courtesy is important, cleanliness, civic sense and traffic sense are of paramount importance for a city. In this regard, I wrote a letter to the Deputy Mayor a few weeks ago and pointed out the following.

Chennai should be made not only a litter-free city, but action should be taken to stop people spitting and urinating on the roads. Almost every phone or electricity booth in the city has become a urinal. Even on Dr. Radhakrishnan Road, where I live and which is on the CM's route, the pavements opposite the CSI Kalyani Hospital and St. Ebba's Church and School have become urinals. The frontage of Dr. Radhakrishnan's house itself is used by passers-by and auto-drivers as a urinal.

To tackle this problem, the Corporation should mount an awareness and educative campaign in the newspapers and on the TV. There are good educational films on such matters with the Doordharshan. Well-known actors should offer their services free to act in such films.

At the same time, the Police should charge people who urinate on the road (they charge even the people who spit in Singapore). This used to be done in all towns some twenty years ago under the Madras City Nuisances Act which applied to the whole State.

A question to ponder over in this connection is why men should urinate on the road while women avoid doing it.

Of course, the Corporation should build modern toilets in different places in the city which do not look like toilets at all from outside, as in Delhi.

At the same time, the public should co-operate with Corporation officicals and the police. The attitude of throwing litter on the road and blaming the Corporation for it should stop — either through education, persuasion or punishment.

Dr. G. Sundaram I.A.S (Retd.)
'Burma House'
33 (Old No. 18), 9th Street
Dr. Radhakrishnan Road,
Chennai 600 004

What's the action plan?

I read with interest the statement of the IT Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu, that one million jobs in the IT sector would be created in Tamil Nadu by 2009 (MM, March 1st).

It would have been more appropriate if the IT Secretary had provided his strategies and action plans to achieve the target instead of just mentioning the figures. While the unemployment scenario is a very serious issue facing engineers and technologists, a lot of unsubstantiated claims and announcement are being made in recent times from several quarters about job opportunities, perhaps to keep morale high.

Recently, Anna University stated that it was arranging campus interviews for the students. But only around 200 persons were offered employment. This is a negligible figure compared to the 50,000 and more engineering graduates passing out every year in Tamil Nadu alone, apart from around 1,50,000 diploma engineers.

Government should understand the intensity of the unemployment situation and make some very careful assessments of the scenario before making announcements about opportunities ahead. Such announcements would only add to the frustration amongst unemployed engineers in the long run, apart from affecting the credibility of government.

One million jobs for IT professionals in Tamil Nadu alone in four years means 2.5 lakh every year. This is a far-fetched claim. I wonder what action plan government has to achieve this target.

Even large organisations like Infosys would find it difficult to recruit more than 3000 persons a year. There are employment limitations for BPO and call centres also all of which depend upon orders from Western Europe and US, over which India has no control.

N.S. Venkataraman
M-60/1, IVth Street, Besant Nagar,
Chennai 600 090

Readability, please

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more handwritten letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i-s' and crossing the 't-s'.

Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

THE EDITOR

OUR ADDRESSES...

- **For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: CHENNAI HERI- TAGE, 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.**
- **For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: *MADRAS MUSINGS*, C/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.**
- **On editorial matters: The Editor, *MADRAS MUSINGS*, C/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.**

No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

... & MISSING COPIES

- **A few readers write to us whenever they do not receive a copy of *Madras Musings*. We mail a copy to every person on our mailing list. If there is non-delivery by the Postal Department — as is often the case with Book Post deliveries — there is not very much we can do about it, except to assure readers the copies have been posted.**

We do not have the staff to mail substitute copies, when copies are lost in transmission.

THE EDITOR

Glimpses of the Chennai Season

● There was a regrettable tendency among musicians to sing *Maitreem bhajata* and *Kurai onrum illai* in concert after concert as their idea of a tribute to the memory of MS. It was perhaps a case of carrying things too far when even instrumental soloists decided to follow suit. What many chose to overlook was that after hearing MS rendering those songs, no one else can come close to her standards of perfection.

● Inaugurations, barring those at the Music Academy and the Narada Gana Sabha, followed the time-honoured tradition of lack of punctuality, poor quality speeches and low value awards with high-sounding titles. Quite often, the same VIP inaugurated more than one *sabha's* programmes and so repeated the same speech on all occasions.

● In terms of crowd-pulling capacity, Sanjay Subrahmanyan and Aruna Sayeeram continued to remain at the top, with T.M. Krishna and Sudha Ragunathan following close behind. Taking men and women performers together, Aruna was clearly the leader.

● The Academy concerts series was dedicated to the memory of M.S. Subbulakshmi, who had contributed immensely to the institution in many ways during her lifetime. The elegant Academy stage had a blow-up of the Sadasivam-Subbulakshmi duo. But unfortunately this was placed precariously on a stool and everyday the photograph was knocked off its pedestal by someone or the other on the stage. Audiences and artistes waited each day with bated breath to see when it would happen and once it was over and done with, the relief was palpable.

● Falling standards in lecdems are the norm, with those who can sing being poor presenters and those who can present being better off presenting and not singing. It would appear that primary research is absent and many converted the lecdem into a concert opportunity. But there were a few refreshing exceptions. Dr. N. Ramanathan, along with Dr. R.S. Jayalakshmi and Dr. R. Hemalatha, provided what can only be termed a monumental presentation on the *Pradarsini*. It not only brought to light the significance of the book, but also the effort put in by Subbarama Dikshitar which, in today's age of desktop publishing, is completely underestimated.

● Yet another set of presentations that was unique was organised at the Raga Sudha Hall by the archival centre Sampradaya. Paying homage to a series of great musicians such as Tiger Varadachariar, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Ariyakudi , Chembai, GNB, Musiri, Alathur Brothers, Madurai Mani, MLV and MDR, Sampradaya had their disciples talking about the salient features of the *bani*. Recordings of the maestros were played, though these were not of great quality and, in some cases, were edited badly. The emotional homage paid by Prof. S.R. Janakiraman to Tiger and MDR was easily the high point of the series.

● The R.R. Sabha too broke from tradition and for the first time in its history did not hold its performances in its age-old Sundareswarar Hall. The programmes were held at the Shri Mahal Kalyana Mandapam in Mandaveli, which is not exactly known for its acoustics. The old Sundaraeswarar Hall is to undergo renovation and we all know what that means. Razing down of a heritage building and the coming up of a spanking new auditorium complete with airconditioning. Strangely, regulars at the old venue have never felt the need for it.

● The browsing and sluicing, as Wodehouse would have put it, had its share of upheavals too. Arusuvai staged a comeback at the Music Academy, while Chellappa, long the toast of marriages, made his debut at the Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha. Jayaraman and his Gnanambika Catering continued their unbroken record of ministering to the hungry at the Narada Gana Sabha. Barring Gnanambika, hygiene levels at other places left much to be desired.

● Instances of bad behaviour:

— The mobile phone will perhaps soon cease to qualify as bad concert behaviour and be accepted as authentic concert "pantha". It continued unabated.

— Members of the audiences shouting out requests at many concerts, in particular during the Kartik Fine Arts festival at the Narada Gana Sabha. Oh, whatever happened to the sweet young things who used to sashay up to the artiste carrying chits from uncles/aunts/parents?

— Front row occupants insisting on banging the *talam* away, often erroneously, much to the irritation of the main artiste.

● Will concerts be soon out in DVD formats? One saw many concerts being recorded on camera by a reputed recording company during this season.

Sarvalaghu

* * *

● I must say a word in defence of the annual Madras music season. The late Pattabhi Raman was very critical of this 'festival' and unwilling to find anything good in it. This was one of the things on which I disagreed with him. Yes, there is excess, there is too much strain on the artistes, audiences tend to be thin for many events, it is a social as well as a musical season, a mela or carnival as much as a serious music festival and, of course, also a gastronomical jamboree. I see nothing wrong with that combination. When one has made all the criticisms, the annual Madras music festival remains a unique phenomenon, a remarkable and extended celebration of classical music, which has few (if any) parallels elsewhere in the world. It is an annual renewal and reinvigoration of Carnatic music. While the quality of the music varies a great deal, there is enough good music to make the festival worthwhile and memorable.

● There is no need for any anxiety about the state of Carnatic music. Undoubtedly it struck a lean patch after the Golden Age. In the 1970s and early 1980s the scene was not very encouraging. There were indeed several new singers, but none — with the exception of K.V. Narayanaswamy and Nedunuri Krishnamurti — seemed to appraoch the stature of the stalwarts of the Golden Age. Among the instrumentalists, there was an efflorescence of talent, with T.N. Krishnan, Lalgudi Jayaraman and M.S. Gopalakrishnan taking the violin far beyond the levels achieved by the earlier generation, and with a number of mridangists of considerable competence (even genius in some cases) emerging and proving themselves to be worthy successors to Palghat Mani Iyer and Palani Subramania Pillai. Nevertheless, there was a general feeling in the late 1970s and early 1980s that Carnatic music was in a state of decline. Fortunately, that perception, justified or not, was short-lived. The springs of Carnatic music were not running dry, and by the middle of the 1980s, new figures had come up on the horizon. U. Shrinivas had made a dazzling appearance; A. Kanyakumari was steadily gaining strength; Aruna Sayeeram had appeared on the scene and showed much promise; and Sudha Ragunathan was emerging as a brilliant performer. By the mid-1990s, it was clear that a resurgence of Carnatic music was in progress. This is surely a period of unprecedented activity in the world of Carnatic music. Consider some of the prominent names in Carnatic music today, leaving out the older figures (this is not an exhaustive list): Sanjay Subrahmanyan,T.M. Krishna, Neyveli Santhanagopalan and P. Unnikrishnan among the men; Aruna Sayeeram, Sudha Ragunathan, Bombay Jayashri, S. Sowmya, and Ranjani/Gayatri, among the women; U. Shrinivas, A. Kanyakumari, N. Ravikiran, and E. Gaayatri, among the instrumentalists: they are not all at the same level, but ignoring that, that is surely an impressive enough roll-call. At least some of those names can be unapologetically placed alongside of the names of the Golden Age.

● Turning to Bharatanatyam, I went to Alarmel Valli's performance at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha on December 25 with anticipations of a great experience. I regard her as one of the two great Bharatanatyam dancers of today (the other being Malavika Sarukkai), and have in the past found her dancing exciting and exhilarating. However, I suppose even great artistes are sometimes not at their best. At any rate, her performance at SKGS, interesting and competent as it was, did not rise to great heights. The *Devi-stuti* and *Pada varnam* were good. Of the two pieces that followed, the poem from *Kalitogai* was interesting and offered possibilities for good dance, but the other one, a thematic piece on the cycle of rain, was disappointing, as most such thematic presentations are. One wishes that Alarmel Valli, a very intelligent dancer, had not succumbed to this current trend. The tillana, which I eagerly looked forward to, was less than satisfying.

● There is one development that I am uncomfortable with, namely the tendency to convert all Bharatanatyam performances into lecture demonstrations. Before every piece, the dancer goes to the microphone, and gives a brief explanatory introduction to the piece, accompanied by some sketchy mudra-s or dance movements. It seems to me that it serves no useful purpose. To the initiated, the introductions are unnecessary; and an unwelcome intrusion to the uninitiated as they are quite inadequate. The best course would be to circulate fairly full explanatory notes as an aid to understanding, beyond which the dance will have to speak for itself.

Ramaswamy R. Iyer

* * *

● Many musicians tried to pack as many songs as possible in their kutcheri-s. As a result, there was not enough time for them to do justice to the RTP, nor was there enough time for the *tani* — the percussionists had only a short time to go through the motions of a *tani!* Better concert planning is called for!

● The tendency of the audience to applaud anything and everything — be it good, bad or indifferent — continued, even when a concert was unbearably noisy or when the artiste had obviously left the sruti back at home! Fortunately the exodus for the *tani avartanam* has come down; only a few get up and leave.

● The attitude of the musicians to ask for increased amplification has not changed. What if the listeners decide to walk out *en masse?* Wish that would happen sometime! Even when speakers are provided on the stage for their sake they are not satisfied.

● Now about the VIPs. Many of them have openly accepted that they do not know much music. But all the same they are invited and they come there only to mark their presence. They may sit for one song or less. Do they have to walk to the front row only to get up after a few minutes to walk back disturbing both the artistes on the stage and the audience? Sometimes they stand in front of another VIP and have a chat! Perhaps if they ever have to buy a ticket, they would realise what others who have paid to attend the concert feel when they are thus disturbed.

● For some men and women the concerts are occasions to meet friends. From the moment they take their seats till the moment they leave the hall, they discuss affairs of the home and country non-stop. If at times one of them is a little late in arriving you must see how woebegone the friend who is already there looks!

V. Karpagalakshmi

* * *

(Continued on Page 8)

The galloping figures of the Mad, Mad, Season

"It was a dull grey season," said a music and dance rasika. "The passing away of MS, the devastation that the tsunami left in its wake, all added to the gloom of a season no different from the preious ones."

Although public reaction to the latest season has been lukewarm, the statistics indiacte a galloping trend in the number of organisations in the fray as well as in the number of music and dance programmes showcased during the 2004-05 season.

There has been a rise in the total number of organisations from 67 in 2003-04 to 74 this season.

There has been a marked increase in the total number of performances from 2103 in 2003-04 to 2487 in 2004-05. And yet many felt that the season was dull and uninteresting! Two main factors could be responsible for this quantum leap: (1) more performers in the fray with opportunities given to all and sundry resulting in overall mediocrity; (2) the existing artistes presenting more and more kutcheris, which again is not a healthy trend. It has often led to overstrain, burnouts and 'mechanical' presentations.

The number of music programmes, including regular kutcheris and music ensembles, jumped from 1723 in 2003-04 to 1984. The number of programmes by 'senior' musicians increased from 573 in 2003-04 to 618 in 2004-05. The number of programmes by 'other' musicians too rose from 1143 to 1355. This possibly goes to show that Carnatic music is popular — with more young musicians learning and singing on stage. Ah! If only one could say the same about the composition of the audience – there seem to be more grey heads in the concert halls!

The total number of dance programmes (solos + groups) soared to 503 this season from 380 in 2003-04. During the last season the percentage of dance prgorammes to the total was 18.1 whereas this season the corresponding percentage was 20.2. The supply of dance far exceeds the demand; in fact, the audience for dance programmes this season was poor in most venues. It was intriguing that although there is a dwindling audience for dance, as many as ten organisations organised festivals devoted only to dance during this season.

This season there were 15 organisations which conducted two festivals, two organisations organised three festivals, and two organisations presented four festivals.

A good trend has been set by some organisations who are conducting their festivals in places like Villivakkam, Madipakkam, Velachery, K.K. Nagar, Nanganallur, Ambattur, etc., thereby helping to disperse the density or concentration of programmes in the heart of Chennai city. — (Courtesy : *Sruti*.)

● *Remembering the birth centenary of...*

The knight who saved classical Tamil literature

Tamil has been declared a classical language, recognising the existence of *Sangham* literature which is more than two thousand years old. Much of this would have been lost for ever but for the commitment of a Tamil scholar who made it his life's mission to rescue it from the white ants and the wanton destruction of palm leaf manuscripts on which it remained in oblivion. But due recognition has eluded U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar, more popularly known as U.Ve. Sa.

Aiyar was born on 19.2.1855 in Sooriya Moolai, not far from Uttamadhanapuram in Thanjavur District. His father was very poor and managed to eke out a living by giving religious discourses. He wanted his son Venkataraman (that was the given name; he was renamed Swaminathan by his teacher) to learn English or music to enable him to pursue a career. But young Swaminathan had a mind of his own – a rare trait 150 years ago – and wanted to pursue Tamil studies. There were no schools and the only way was the gurukulam way – to stay with a teacher in his residence and learn what he taught Swaminathan was entrusted to the care of Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, a renowned Tamil poet in Mayavaram. His Tamil instruction from Pillai lasted five years. Midway during this period, both shifted to Thiruvaaduthurai, where the head of the Mutt gave them shelter and support.

A new phase of Swaminathan's life began when he was appointed Tamil lecturer in Kumbokonam Government College, thanks to Thyagaraja Chettiar, another student of Pillai, who recommended Swaminathan to the post he was retiring from. Swaminathan appeared before an interview committee which questioned him at random from a miscellany of literary works, besides asking him to compose verses on a specific theme. He came out with flying colours and got the job on a generous monthly salary of Rs.50; he was just 25 years old. Aiyar demonstrated his gratitude by naming the house he bought many years later *Thiagaraja Vilasam*. His descendants still live in this house near Triplicane. He also instituted a scholarship of Rs. 48 per annum in his mentor's name for a student taking Tamil as the main subject in the Kumbakonam college. Aiyar made a mark as a teacher through his way of explaining verses in simple language, a noteworthy feature of all his writings also.

The turning point in his life, which was to earn him a lasting reputation as the saviour of Tamil, came in 1880, when he met Ramaswamy Mudaliar, the new munsif in Kumbakonam. Aiyar was fond of the company of Tamil scholars and Mudaliar was one such scholar. However, Mudaliar did not seem to be impressed with Aiyar's learning. Instead, he asked Aiyar whether he had studied *Cheevaka Chintamani*. Aiyar had to confess his ignorance, but it was through no fault of his. This epic poem belonged to the *Sangham* period, along with a host of other works, estimated to be 2000 years old or more. Classical Tamil is difficult to understand and no one bothered to learn or teach it those days. What was taught then was medieval literature, collectively known as *Prabhanthankal*, consisting of devotional or titillating verses. *Sangham* literature remained buried in palm leaf manuscripts, being choice food for white ants; many a time, ignorant owners consigned them to the flames or threw them into the Kaveri to save storage space!

The text of *Cheevaka Chintamani* that Mudaliar gave him opened up a new world for Aiyar and he started studying it in detail. As this was a Jain-related epic, he made friends with Jain scholars to fully comprehend it. He managed to get 23 other copies of the text; this was necessary as each copy was partial and contained omissions and errors. A complete text was not available from a single source. After bringing it into shape by deciphering and comparing the variants, he came to Madras to get the book printed during the summer vacation of 1886, but it took one year before the project could be completed. The limited facilities available then required that each section of the book be composed, proofread and printed before the next part was taken up.

When the bound copy was delivered, Aiyar was elated. Innovations introduced by him were the addition of a preface pointing to the glory of the *Sangam* period, a biographical sketch of the author and an index of references, features unknown in Tamil books. Aiyar devoted the rest of his life to publishing Tamil works that included seven other classics of the *Sangham* period, by enabling Tamil Nadu to discover its ancient glory. He undertook extensive tours in Tirunelveli District and other places to locate manuscripts. In fact, he visited more than 50 villages to gather palm leaves of the classic *Silappathikaram*.

Aiyar was transferred to Presidency College in Madras after 23 years in the Kumbakonam college and there he retired 16 years later. He had taught Tamil for 39 years. Later, for three years, he was Principal of Meenakshi Tamil College, the nucleus of Annamalai University. At the request of S.S. Vasan and 'Kalki' Krishnamurthy, he started writing his autobiography, a pioneering attempt, which was serialised in *Ananda Vikatan*. This was left half-finished as he passed away in 1942. It was left half-finished as he passed away in 1942. It would be a fitting tribute to his service to Tamil, if it could be completed.

S. Subramanian

Tamil Thaththaa

Mahamahopadhyaya Dakshinathya Kalanidhi Uthamadhanapuram Venkatasubbaiyer Swaminathan Iyer (1855-1942) was popularly known as "Tamizh thaththaa" (the grand old man of Tamil).

He took upon himself the arduous task of collecting the palm leaf manuscripts of great literary works that lay scattered not only in Tamil Nadu but even outside. Starting with *Jeevaka Chintamani* in 1887, he printed and published *Manimekalai* (1898), *Silappathikaram* (1889), *Paththuppaattu* (1889) and *Puranaanooru* (1894), all appended with scholarly commentaries. Although he brought out about 100 works in all, including minor poems, many of the manuscripts that he gathered remain unpublished.

The hundreds of palm leaf manuscripts he gathered have been stored in the Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer Library, Besant Nagar, Chennai. Functioning since 1943, a year after Swaminatha Iyer died, the library is a fitting memorial to this relentless researcher. Besides the palm leaf manuscripts, many of which have yet to be transcribed, it has a number of books used by the scholar, transcribed literary works in his own handwriting, the notes he prepared for various publications, copies of books published by him, and so on.

Swaminatha Iyer's search for Tamil manuscripts began at the time he joined the Kumbakonam college as a teacher. After *Jeevaka Chitamani* was published in 1887 and proved an instant success, donations from Tamil lovers poured in. Then began Swaminatha Iyer's long search for the original texts of ancient literary works. It was a search that lasted until his death.

***Silappathikaram*, *Puranaanooru* and *Manimekalai* were received by Tamil lovers with a lot of enthusiasm. *Puranaanooru*, which mirrored the lives of Tamils during the Sangam period, prompted scholarly research on the subject. In a span of about five decades, Swaminatha Iyer published about 100 books, including minor poems, lyrics, *puranas* and *bhakti* (devotional) works.**

Another significant contribution made by Swaminatha Iyer is in the realm of Tamil music, wrote Dr. Animalam S. Padmanabhan, a researcher and academic, in a paper on the Tamil scholar. During the previous four centuries, Telugu and Sanskrit dominated the music scene in Tamil Nadu in the absence of any valuable information on Tamil music. Swaminatha Iyer's publications threw light on the presence of Tamil music in the earlier centuries and paved the way for serious research on the subject.

Tamil poet and nationalist Subramania Bharati, who inspired the freedom movement with his powerful songs, was a distinguished contemporary of Swaminatha Iyer. Paying glowing tributes to Swaminatha Iyer in one of his poems, Bharati called him 'Kumbamuni' (the saint from Kumbakonam) and said: "So long as Tamil lives, poets will venerate you and pay obeisance to you. You will ever shine as an immortal."— (Coutesy : *Frontline*)

S. Viswanathan

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current affairs questions are from March 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. The 75th anniversary of which historic event in the Indian Independence movement was observed on March 12th?
2. Who is the present Chief Minister of Jharkhand sworn in after much controversy over an earlier choice had shaken the nation?
3. According to *Forbes*, who is the Indian who is the third richest person in the world?
4. Which former British Prime Minister was made an honorary life member of the Cricket Club of India?
5. Name the great chess player who announced his retirement from the professional game after winning the City of Linares title.
6. According to a global survey by AC Nielsen, which country's residents are the 'greatest sleepers'?
7. According to a recent CT scan of a famous mummy, it has been proved that the boy-king was not murdered as thought by many an expert. Name the boy-king.
8. Who is the current Duleep Trophy champions in cricket?
9. What is the new name of the South African capital, Pretoria?
10. The ICC, the governing body for world cricket, is set to move its headquarters from London to which Asian city?

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11. Why was Judge A.S. Pachhapure in the news recently?
12. Which Chennai-based college recently got the distinction of being the first in India to get a licence to set up a community FM radio service?
13. What distinction does T.V. Subba Rao have as far as the history of the Music Academy goes?
14. Who is the latest Tamil writer to win the prestigious Jnanapith Award?
15. What is the Tamil for computing?
16. Of which Tamil daily is R. Krishnamurthy the Editor?
17. Which historic edifice in Chennai has been modelled on the 'Athenian Temple of Theseus'?
18. The 'Chennai Cheetahs' are the national champions in which game enjoying its revival in India?
19. Who is the Leader of the Opposition in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly?
20. Royapettah High Road (especially near the Pilot Theatre) in Chennai is famous for which type of shops?

(Answers on page 8)

A Dronacharya in every sense

Two pages of Sport

• by A.J. DE SOUZA

Entering Loyola's portals was elating. We, the 1955 freshers, were the first Pre-University batch. However, we were soon brought down to earth. There was an elite group who met in the parking lot or reclined on the lawn near the cycle stand before classes started, during the lunch break and free periods. It was made up of those who represented the college in at least one game. You had to be on a sports team to join this exclusive group.

I was a sports enthusiast, but had none of the motor qualities a player needs. Meanwhile, half a dozen of my PUC batch made various teams.

I nursed the ambition to win college colours the next year. I clutched at a single straw. Having won 'B' division hop, step and jump in my school final year, I thought opportunity beckoned.

I approached a leading athletics coach and the short discussion went something like this:

"I need your help to train for the hop, step & jump..."

"What's your distance?"

"37 feet".

"When you do 47 feet come to me."

Deflated but not discouraged, I kept practising in a backyards sand pit. Then, one day, I heard that a messiah type coach was holding training sessions at the Doveton Corrie School grounds. He was the National javelin champion but also excelled in high jump and hurdles. I was going on 18, had a less than 90 pounds bony frame with only a shred of muscle, and my personal bests were a 12.85 100 metres, a 15-feet long jump and a 37-feet triple jump. I diffidently entered Doveton grounds and saw for the first time Ken Bosen. He was a handsome six-footer and was surrounded by a bunch of collegians and state athletes who paid rapt attention to him. They then dispersed to complete the tasks assigned to them.

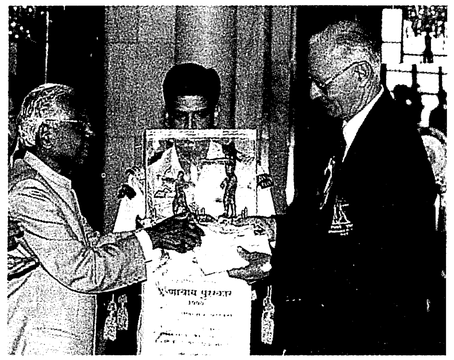
He noticed me – taking a step forward and, then, may be, two back – and strode across.

"Do you need any help?"

"I would like to be trained for the hop, step..."

"If you have come prepared, warm up and take a few jumps".

So I laced the heavy, black leather shoes with rigid iron plate soles to which spikes were welded. Warming up was something I knew little about, so I did a few stride-outs, toe touches and jump jacks. He accompanied me to the pit. After half a dozen jumps, he said, matter-of-factly, "Your coordination is good. Come tomorrow at 4.30 and I'll give you a schedule."



Kenny Bosen receiving the Dronacharya Award from the then President of India, K.R. Narayanan.

Next evening I was handed a neatly written page, with details on how to warm up, warm down and daily workouts. Coach Bosen sat beside me and explained the charter. I was thrilled to be given the same attention as the university athletes he was training. That was motivation enough.

Within a year, I upset the favourite with a triple jump of 43 feet at the college meet, taking the first step towards inter-collegiate wins, a Madras University blue and, after graduation in 1959-60, 1st or 2nd place certificates in three events at State meets, and open competitions in Bangalore, Coimbatore and Trichur with best performances of 100m in 10.9 sec, a long jump of 22'3" and a triple jump of 46'10".

A coach should be assessed on the improvement he brings to a trainee within a year and, thereafter, from year to year. The colts in Coach Kenny Bosen's stable always show much progress, even when he coached at national camps and handled the teams of the Indian Railways, TISCO and Steel Plants. Later, as an NIS professor he groomed scores of athletics coaches. This made him a true Dronacharya and I often wondered why the award was not conferred on him till 2000.

He translated a large fund of knowledge into texts:

- Several of his papers were published in India and abroad
- He provided the NSNIS with excellent teaching material when he was Chief Coach, T&F
- His books included two national award winners – *Training without Straining* (1972) and *Pole Vaulting* (1977).
- His joint presentation with Fred Wilt, *Motivation and Coaching Psychology*, was a *Track & Field News* best-seller. It was my privilege to illustrate his section of this book and also *Training without Straining*.

I have always treasured the time he spent with me as a teacher and friend. Bicycling furiously after college or office to Doveton or Rajarathnam Stadium, a few of us would recharge with lime juice after the workout and follow him to his cottage on Clemens Street. There, till 7.30 p.m., he taught us to understand rules, appreciate organisation and encouraged theories. Then came the breaks – short ones at first and then longer periods:

- His assignment as Indian Railway coach
- Enrolling in the first batch of coaches when the NIS was inaugurated and passing out first class first
- Joining the NIS faculty
- Successive national coaching and preparatory camps
- His US tour to study athletics activity there, courtesy Fred Wilt
- An advanced diploma in athletics at the Institute of Sport, Leipzig
- Conducting IAAF coaches' workshops in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and South Korea.

He always kept me abreast with these assignments through letters and when we met:

- He admired his NIS course director Dr. Arthur Howard's grasp of track & field, teaching skills and clever programming
- He would convey his course experiences and make me feel as if I was seated in an adjacent desk
- He described the scientific and objective German approach to athletics be had found in Leipzig.

Firm Friends, another link, was forged when he joined the late Fr. McFerran and me and helped found Don Bosco Athletic Club in 1960. He regularly guided on programmes and, during annual holidays, directed some of the summer camps.

Ken Bosen got timely recognition when he was nominated India's Athletics Coach for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Perhaps that was the last appointment on merit. Thereafter, the managers and coaches of most teams seem to be nominated as rewards for long service or loyalty to the establishment.

Bosen was from a family of estate developers in the Nilgiris and Yercaud. His father, who retired as a senior police officer, spent more of his time in and around Coimbatore with a short stint in Madras. Ken Bosen schooled mainly at Stanes, with his Madras years at Doveton Corrie.

His first love was cricket and he was a talented pace bowler. Playing for the City Police Recreation Club, he used to open the bowling with Test fast bowler C. R. Rangachari. Before switching completely to athletics, Bosen led Madras District. While champion javelin throwers have become great medium fast or fast bowlers, like India's Roger Binny, Australia's Jeff Thompson and South Africa's de Villiers, Ken Bosen was a fast bowler who turned to javelin throw. After joining the Southern Railway, he topped the national lists being the first Indian to throw over 200 feet (over 60 metres). He was a medal hope for the Second Asian Games in Manila but meningitis laid him low. The setback was severe and made him transfer to field coaching.

His technical and organisational expertise was considerable. During his tenure as TISCO's athletic coach, he organised the 1972 Open Athletics Championships at Durgapur under the auspices of the Steel Plants Sports Board. The event remains an example of a meticulously conducted meet.

His growing love for the academics of the sport lured him back to Patiala. The break lost him seniority, but he quickly re-established himself and retired as Chief Coach, Athletics, NSNIS. Ken Bosen was twice

(Continued on Page 8)

Mushrooming cricket coaching clinics

Do they really fulfil their objectives?

Come summer and newspapers are deluged with news snippets announcing the start of cricket coaching clinics in Chennai and the suburbs. Thanks to their pride and ego, parents who, unmindful that their children have carried bag-loads of books throughout the school year, do not mind their wards trudging long distances with a different kind of load on their backs – cricket kit bags. They brag that their children are attending summer cricket coaching camps – and think that one day their boys will don national colours.

Cricket coaching clinics in summer have become the fashion of the season. Come April, and a whole lot of them sprout in vacant spaces. Many unheard of names announce the start of these clinics. Few of them realise that cricket coaching is a highly specialised job. Individual attention is a must if a boy with talent is to develop into a good player. In most academies this is absent and the boys, after a few doses of physical exercises, are grouped into teams without proper regard for their ages. A big-built, tall lad may be only 13 but he'll be clubbed with the 19-year olds.

Few coaching clinics offer individual attention. It is imperative that each boy gets a minimum of 15 minutes of personalised attention. If the aspirant is a batsman, he needs to be tested by good quality bowlers under the watchful eye of the coach. The coach himself should start the bowling stint by delivering the ball from 11 yards rather than the full 22 yards. This would enable both the teacher and the taught to iron out the flaws in techniques. The coach would be in a better position by standing in the middle of the nets and bowling spin or cutters and keeping a vigilant eye on the batsman's footwork and body movement for the kind of deliveries that he is required to face.

When the coach watches the batsman from close quarters, he is able to spot more easily the defects and is effective in suggesting to the batsman the required technical adjustments and modifications. This author himself had the experience of this kind coaching from no less a person than the famed British coach, A.W. Wensley. Some coaches, like the late A.G. Ram Singh and former Tamil Nadu skipper Robin Singh, resorted to this coaching method and achieved good results.

The coach in this manner can set right footwork errors, inculcate proper shoulder positioning and recommend the right grip adjustments while facing different kinds of deliveries. For example, the youngster is in better position to learn which ball to play and which to leave. The coach could also vary the pace of hurling the ball. Again, while playing a stroke on the on-side, the batsman should be instructed to adjust his chest movement and footwork accordingly. While playing a stroke to the on-side, his chest too should be facing the leg side and the right leg positioned forward. Many a player commits the cardinal error of positioning his chest towards the offside with the left leg fully forward. The lad who is thus coached will be mentally more alert to learn the finer points of stroke-making from a coach at 11 yards, rather than 22.

Similarly, while playing off the backfoot, there should be proper movement of the legs to enable the bat to meet the line and direction of a delivery that warrants such a stroke.

Many participants – especially the younger boys – at a coaching clinic aspire to be batsmen. Hence, there is a shortfall of good quality bowlers. Bowling involves hard work and appears less glamorous than batting. Hence, the reluctance to use the red cherry for long spells is visible at all camps. The coach should ensure that quality bowlers are available to bowl at the camps. He should also be able to spot the strong points in an aspiring player and groom him appropriately either as a batsman or as a bowler.

Coaching has become highly commercialised in modern times, as parents are only too eager to make their children cricketers. Many a parent does not realise that cricket is a tough game that calls for tremendous mental resilience. With the craze for the game mounting, coaching camps have also started mushrooming in all corners of the city.

It is here that the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) should step in and prevent such ruthless commercialisation that exploits gullible parents and children alike. The TNCA itself could start coaching camps for promising lads in the Under-13 and Under-17 age groups and organise tournaments. The Association could take special care of the selected boys. For the others, lest they be disappointed, the TNCA should, instead of turning them away, offer practice facilities and charge a moderate fee for batting and bowling practices.

For example, a boy could be asked to pay Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 for each stint at the nets. The batsmen ought to be exposed to the bowling machine throughout the day. The ground staff can be rotated in shifts to enable them to be fresh and enthusiastic.

Another suggestion is to discourage selectors from running private coaching clinics, as it sends misleading signals to parents as well as the boys. When a camp is run by a senior selector, the wards feel that they'll get 'preferential' treatment at the time of team selection for any age group.

It is imperative that TNCA, by at least word of mouth, spread the message that coaching does not automatically guarantee a place in the big league. Constant practice and match-playing, alongside developing physical and mental strength, are essential for shaping a good player. Guts, concentration and suitable temperament are characteristics that make a cricketer. It's no point in flaunting big brand kits at the ground; parents should not fall for this glamour.

Cricket may have become far more commercialised than in the past and flourishes today like a giant industry. Gone are the days when boys played the game for sheer love of it. In the past there was no sophisticated protective gear or equipment as in modern day cricket. How did the Vijay Merchants, Vijay Hazares, Polly Umrigars, Chandu Bordes, Kapil Devs and Sunil Gavaskars reach international levels? It was through their commitment to hard work, irrespective of the physical dangers that they were exposed to. Did not Tamil Nadu's Lakshmipathy Balaji say that his rise was the result of "Work, Work and more Work?" (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

S.R. Jagannanthan

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.

An ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of just Rs.100 covers only a part of our costs. Corporate support and YOUR support will continue to be essential for Chennai Heritage and *Madras Musings* to play a greater role in creating awareness about the city, its heritage and its environment. We therefore look forward to your sending us your contributions IN ADDITION TO your subscriptions.

If in the coming year Chennai Heritage receives repeated support from those of you who have already made contributions, and if many more supporters join the bandwagon, we will not only be able to keep *Madras Musings* going, but also be able to continue awareness-building exercises on on-going projects as well as undertake one or two more such exercises.

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to *Madras Musings* for 2004-5 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

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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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: .....

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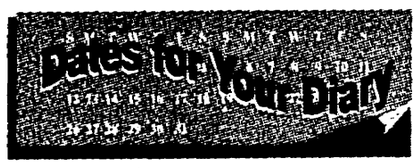
I am an alumnus/alumna/heritage lover and wish the project all success. My college was .....

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



April 9-24: India through the eyes of Alain Danielou, 1935-1955. This exhibition, organised by Alliance Francaise of Madras and DakshinaChitra, features the work of Alain Danielou and Raymond Burnier who took many photographs during the 20 years of their stay in India. The selection of photographs at the exhibition will show not only the unchanging India with its temples and rituals, but also portraits, sceneries and cities. A sensitive portrait of India by a Frenchman who has so deeply studied as well as loved it (at DakshinaChitra).

April 11-23: *Sum of infinity*, an exhibition of the work of V. Anamika. She will present a collection of recent abstract paintings which include a series of sceneries as seen from the sky (at Alliance Francaise).

April 14-May 8: A (Tamil) New Year and new beginnings! In in-

augurating the new auditorium, Magic Lantern and Alliance Francaise of Madras invite you to several activities dedicated to Theatre, in all forms, to performing arts, dance, music. There will be new plays and fresh adaptations or interpretations, a showcasing of South Indian folk theatre forms, a series of films on the best known contemporary directors, and workshops on theatre and scriptwriting for adults and children (at Alliance Francaise).

April 6-16: An exhibition of the work of Duccio Berti (at Artworld).

Glimpses of the Chennai Season

(Continued from Page 5)

● The elegantly refurbished Vani Mahal complex with one large and two smaller halls at T. Nagar, and its resurgent owner, Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana sabha, should be ranked high in terms of programme variety and audience response. This is a gratifying achievement in its Diamond Jubilee year and a fitting tribute to the memory of its Founder President Chittoor V. Nagayya in his centenary year.

Annam

* * *

● It was a pleasure to attend the programmes of the Brahma Gana Sabha at the Sivagami Pethachi Auditorium on Luz Church Road. The hall is cosy, has good acoustics, the sound system is good and is well managed from start to finish — no assault on the senses.

● Guru Krishnakumari Narendran presented her 50th dance production during the season. *Sri Maha Ganapathi* was a spectacular multimedia presentation with dance, narration, colourful sets and costumes, depicting numerous tales about Ganesa.

● The music and dance festivals organised by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Kala Pradarshini were not ticketed and they drew housefull audiences.

● 'The Other Festival' has carved a niché for itself in Chennai and features music, dance and theatre of a 'different' kind. The response to its ticketed programmes was good this time. It has set high standards of providing hospitality to the artistes who come from different parts of India and abroad. A special feature of the 2004 fest was the cultural outreach programme in which famous artistes went to select colleges to interact with students' theatre groups, and some performed at Tidel Park for the IT professionals. The organisers have helped to form a very efficient and committed team of student volunteers called *studentconcepts.com*

● Some programmes that left a lasting impression this season were:

— The Sikkil Trio on the flute at the Brahma Gana Sabha. It was delightful music which lingered on "long after it was heard no more".

— Astad Deboo and the eight girls from the Clarke's School for the Deaf in Chennai. It was simply amazing — the way the girls (who cannot hear) moved in synchronisation and contraposition with not a movement out of place.

— *Kumara Sambhavam* by Anuradha and Shridhar from Bangalore. Kalidasa's epic was translated into visual poetry by the dancing duo and their fine-tuned orchestra.

S. Janaki

(Courtesy : *Sruti*)

Bosen the Dronacharya

(Continued from Page 6)

nominated National Coach, but both tenures were short as he was on a different wavelength to the establishment. His last assignment was with SAI to groom Indian women hammer throwers and he completed the contract three years ago.

A Dronacharaya to the core, Ken Bosen motivated several young men and women to exceed their expectations. He could explain the mechanics and dynamics of athletics to a 14-year-old or to an engineering student in their own language. Besides helping athletes of all ages, he tutored scores of coaches. He had his share of pressures, but remained cheerful, preserved a sense of humour and always had a sincere, caring approach.

His death is a loss to the nation. The turnout of mourners at his funeral at Patiala went beyond persons connected with athletics and the NSNIS – shopkeepers, students, personnel of Government departments and other services, all paid homage.

His family has presented several keepsakes to the NSNIS which he devotedly served for years – diplomas, honour plaques, uniforms, photographs and mementoes. Hopefully, the Institute will create a museum in his name. Perpetuating his memory should go beyond condolence meetings, speeches, rolling trophies or awards (that disappear within a few years).

When he was eventually conferred the delayed Dronacharaya award, West Bengal, Karnataka and Maharasthra quickly responded with their own expressions. Tamil Nadu did not go beyond the state association presenting a handicraft item when he happened to be around to attend a Federation meet. Monfort School, Yercaud (where both his sons studied and he used his holidays to hold training camps), and his alma mater, Stanes School, Coimbatore, may institute awards in his memory. What is Tamil Nadu going to do?

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Mahatma Gandhi's 'Dandi March'; 2. Arjun Munda; 3. Lakshmi Niwas Mittal; 4. John Major; 5. Garry Kasparov; 6. Chennai; 7. King Tutankhamun; 8. Central Zone; 9. Tshwane; 10. Dubai.

* * *

11. He is hearing the disproportionate wealth case against Chief Minister Jayalalithaa at Bangalore; 12. MOP Vaishnanv College for Women (91.2 MHz); 13. He was the first ever president of the Annual Conference of the Academy; 14. Jayakantan; 15. Kaniyam; 16. *Dinamalar*; 17. Pachaiyappa's Hall; 18. Rugby Sevens; 19. K. Anbazhagan; 20. Furniture.

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