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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Nothing changes in Madras
- Improving the less privileged
- The ICF at 50
- That 50-year-old win
- Tara's winners abroad

Vol. XV No. 2 **May 1-15, 2005** **Rs. 5 per copy (Annual Subscription: Rs. 100/-)**

a-MUSING

Don't you think the girl in that hoarding has lovely hair?

Peril at crossroads

Chennai is a city of hoardings – no getting around that fact.

May we suggest, though, that some thought is given both to the placing of said hoardings, and the possible effect of their specific contents on innocent citizens, when 'spots' are chosen?

If you must use a handsome hunk for a shampoo commercial, with the obligatory thick, black mane streaming backwards as he challenges howling gales with a careless smile, go right ahead, but be careful where you plant that particular hoarding.

A few weeks ago, newspapers reported an imbroglio of fairly massive proportions at a particularly busy traffic junction. Two nubile young creatures, looking up and locking eyes with their hero as he gazed dreamily at them, promptly forgot that 'Green' means 'Go', thereby unleashing an impressive amount of road ire directed at themselves. Harsh words, shaken fists, and wounded feelings, filled the air, before the thoroughly embarrassed, delicately-nurtured could drive off.

Presumably, those hoardings highlighting the female of the species have a similar effect on the other half of the sketch.

At traffic signals in particular, can we therefore have only those hoardings that spell out lofty messages designed to improve and elevate the minds and souls of the populace?

The sort of stuff that gets road users, determined to avoid the boring and depressing, to move along briskly?

What a great way to avoid traffic congestion.

Ranjitha Ashok

Chemicals polluting Cuddalore

(By Tarangini Sriraman)

The State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) industrial area in Cuddalore was recently declared a "global toxic hot spot." Nityanand Jayaraman, environmental activist associated with the International Campaign for Justice, and Shwetha Narayan, SIPCOT community environment programme co-ordinator, researched the industrial area in Cuddalore which houses pesticide, agrochemicals, dye and pharmaceutical industries and confirmed emissions of at least 22 toxic chemicals. Residents of Semankuppam and Sangolikuppam in Cuddalore complain of exposure to toxic smoke from chemical industries. "Gas trouble: Air Quality in SIPCOT, Cuddalore", a report released by the SIPCOT area community environment monitors (SACEM), shows that four factories were using 14 of the 22 toxic chemicals such as trichloroethene, carbon tetrachloride, acrolein, methylene chloride and hydrogen sulphide. Narayan explains that while 13 of the 22 chemicals are used as raw materials in SIPCOT industries, eight are known carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) in animals and/or humans.

Narayan explains that the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report, released every year, requires companies to conform to guidelines concerning the emission of chemical effluents. She says, "Industries discharge effluents indiscriminately into the river Uppanar in the SIPCOT area. The river which was home to 36 species of fish now has only 14."

Jayaraman, in his article, "Hold your Breath: You're in SIPCOT, Cuddalore" (*Agenda*, Issue 1, Dec. 2004) writes,

(Continued on Page 7)

No legal status for biosphere

The Nilgiris, an offshoot of the Western Ghats, harbour an unique and threatened ecosystem. They were once full of grasslands, wetlands and forests. Today, we see only broken wilderness. The unique biogeography of the Nilgiris is, however, still holding on to its tenuous character despite all the stress placed on it by human beings. A good chunk of the Nilgiris is still under forest cover, under whose canopy a bewildering variety of animals and plants survive, some rare, some gravely threatened, some endemic and some endangered. Barring the Northeast, no other region in India has such a large contiguous forest like the Nilgiris.

In the 1980s, the entire region was constituted into the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve (NBR) with the hope that a comprehensive conservation strategy could be evolved and adopted to protect this valuable wilderness. There is no appropriate legal status and the NBR concept remains in a state of limbo. On the other hand, the NBR faces a huge threat of fragmentation due to heavy biotic pressure. The NBR includes the protected forests of Nagarhole, Begur, Mudumalai, Bandipur, Silent Valley, Mukurthi, Wyanad and a number of bio-diversity-rich Reserved Forests (RF). Some Reserve Forests include areas in Sathyamangalam,Moyar, Thengumarahada, New Amarambalam and Nilambur forests. The entire belt comprises a continuous 5,520 sq.km. tract.

However, the scientists who demarcated the NBR left out Gudalur, which has one of the best forests, and is amidst Mukurthi, Silent Valley, Mudumalai and Wyanad. Gudalur was not included due to the Janmam estate disputes that are still not settled. What this means is a free-for-all situation in Gudalur. More and more encroachers, land grabbers, poachers and loggers, mostly from across the border (from Kerala to be precise) have been encroaching on virgin forestlands in Gudalur. The result is a decrease in rainfall and loss of some endemic and endangered species of flora and fauna. There is also an increase in man-animal conflict. (Courtesy: CPREEC Eco News.)

— R.K.U.K.

GUDALUR – the land of encroachers

History tells us that someone has always encroached upon Gudalur. The *Sanga Illakiyam* says that Cheraman Vaganan, a Tamil king belonging to the Chera dynasty, once ruled in the Gudalur area. All the forests were under his control. Chera Vaganan's territory was known as Payal land or Payalnad (meaning land where water flows). Today, it is known as Wyanad in Kerala. The King's Payal country had a small hill, known as Aangan Kunru, which still exists in Wyanad.

Some three hundred years ago, Gudalur was ruled by two kingdoms: Nelliyalam Arasi ruled the Nelliyalam Block (Pandalur block); Nambalkotti Arasar ruled the Nambalakottai block (Gudalur region) called Valavanur. The King of Nilambur happened to visit Gudalur and fell in love with the place.

● by R.K. ULLAASH KUMAR

He developed cordial relationship with the Nambalakottai king. The Nambalakottai king died young and his wife Parvathy ascended the throne. The Nilambur king invited Queen Parvathy and her nine-year-old son to Nilambur. When the Queen and her son visited Nilambur, the Nilambur king killed the Queen and her son and took over all the land of the Nambalakottai kingdom. At the same time, around the year 1707 AD, the Nilambur king also got the lands under Nelliyalam Queen for a pittance, at twelve annas for an acre. Thus, the king of Nilambur was the first encroacher.

The Kovilagam people staked ownership of a vast tract of land in Gudalur and Pandalur. Out of about one and half lakh acres of land that is Gudalur and Pandalur, around 80,000 acres belong to the Kovilagam property. The British planted tea, coffee, spices and other varieties of monoculture by cutting some of the best forests in Gudalur and Wyanad.

Some big plantations also took land on lease for a pittance from the Kovilagam. In 1969, the Janman lands abolition act was brought in and the lands were brought under Ryotwari *patta*. The ryotwari *patta* came into force from November 6, 1974. Under this order from the Supreme Court, the *status quo* of the land must be observed. But the big planters kept encroaching into forests, which was also part of their lease ownership,

(Continued on Page 2)

NOTHING CHANGES:

In 1939 too, they were asking, What's wrong with us in Madras

People in Madras who are full of envy and admiration for well-laid-out and cared for cities do not apparently realise the enormous potential of Madras city. The Women's Civic Group is tired of hearing Madras residents praise the beauties of Bangalore, Mysore, Colombo and Rangoon. The avenues of Madras, if we wished, could be as clean and shaded by trees, and as stately as those in other cities. We are also weary of envious descriptions of the squares of Paris and London and other great cities. Almost all the main roads of Madras open at intervals into squares — many of them, it is true, can scarcely be recognised as such, so rapidly are they being ruined by the encroachments of new buildings but, still, the possibilities are there, if only they are realised.

The Women's Civic Group believes that within its present budget much more could be done by the Corporation to make our city cleaner and more attractive. It does not ask for greater expenditure, but for wiser expenditure.

Although the Women's Civic Group criticises the work of the Corporation, it must not be forgotten that the Corporation can do nothing without the co-operation of the citizens. Other cities in India appear to be fortunate in being able to arouse the pride of residents in their city. This pride seems sadly lacking in the citizens of Madras. Men are responsible for planning the lay-out of the city and its buildings. Men are in control of all the business houses. Men design and build our business buildings. Perhaps each is too busy with his own affairs to consider his street or city as a whole. The Women's Civic Group notes that other cities have found that business improves and property values increase when the main streets are made attractive and safe for vehicle and pedestrian traffic, when the health of their cities is safeguarded by an adequate supply of pure water and a safe and sufficient drainage system. The Women's Civic Group is certain, therefore, that it is simply good business for each firm or property owner to try to make his place not only clean, but an attractive, law-abiding addition to the street in which it is situated.

At present, we have no streets in Madras that are either pleasing or impressive. The Women's Civic Group is now making a study of the various main roads and open spaces, hoping to secure publicity for its comments and criticisms. We have selected Mount Road for our first consideration as it is the most important thoroughfare of the city. The most obvious criticism to be made about Mount Road is the hopeless alignment of the buildings from Government House onwards, due entirely to the haphazard way in which it has developed over a long period of years. But the days of haphazard growth should be over, and if the city is to command the respect due to it, its citizens must feel a sense of responsibility in these matters, for such improvements as are possible now and for careful planning in the future. It is hoped that these suggestions and criticisms we have to offer will rouse thought and that eventually increased civic pride and a more attractive city will result.

From *The Municipal Gazette*, March 1939

The following observations were made during a drive, starting from the Fort, along the banks of the Cooum to the Island Bridge, and thence back to Mount Road.

In the first place, it is suggested that trees should be planted along the banks of the Cooum River, from the Marina Bridge upto the bridge near the Ripon Buildings. Apart from the obvious advantages of this, trees on the Island would provide a charming and picturesque setting for the domes of the University Library. The road that runs from the Marina, along the Fort to the overbridge, could also be bordered with flowering trees. Previously, in the triangular bit of riverbank near the War Memorial, there grew a quantity of picturesque date palms. Most of these have died through age or neglect, and should be replaced.

The godowns close to the War Memorial are a hideous sight. It is entirely impossible for us to understand why they must remain a perpetual eye-sore not only to those passing by on the Marina, but to eveyone on distant Mount Road from which they are all too clearly visible. Formerly, they were partially screened by a fine avenue of trees. These have died of old age and have not been replaced. We cannot, in fact, too strongly deplore the barren, haphazard appearance of this entire area.

The War Memorial, provided by public subscription, designed as a place of remembrance and pilgrimage, was placed in an imposing situation, with no provision whatever for a suitable setting. Even the Taj Mahal owes much of its beauty to the appropriate gardens surrounding it. The Civic Group again offers to design an appropriate garden setting and planting of trees for this area, within the present Corporation budget.

If we return to Mount Road, and stand at the Fort Gate, while attempting to visualise a more attractive Madras, the situation may be described thus:

Mount Road is a wide street, leading from the Fort directly to St. Thomas Mount. It was at one time shaded by great trees. Some of these remain. The road crosses the Fort and Willingdon Bridges. Before it reaches the city limits, it opens out at intervals, into what might be five imposing squares, but their effect is damaged by the irregular property line which, apparently, our Corporation officials cannot control, in spite of laws giving them the authority to do so.

Mount Road could be an imposing thoroughfare. Madras is the capital of a great Presidency. Its main street, at least, should be worthy of a capital city. The

(Continued on Page 7)

OUR ADDRESSES...

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- **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

Steps towards zero discharge

(By A Special Correspondant)

Chemplast Sanmar Limited (Chemplast), which has been manufacturing chemical products at Mettur over the past 37 years, is now implementing plans to achieve zero discharge of effluents in all its manufacturing facilities. It has, at a cost of Rs. 20 crore, embarked upon a major environmental initiative at its PVC and Caustic Soda plants in Mettur to reach zero treated effluent water discharge status.

In its PVC plant at Mettur, Chemplast has already brought down the quantity of effluent discharge from about 2485 kilo litres per day (KLD) to 1375 KLD in the last four years by implementing various steps for the recycling of process water and reduction of effluents at source. The company is now implementing plans to reduce the treated effluent discharge from 1375 KLD to 'Zero' KLD. Towards this, Chemplast has recently commissioned a Reverse Osmosis plant which will treat about 300 KLD of effluent. To address the balance effluent discharge, it is proposed to install further plant and equipment adopting advanced Reverse Osmosis technology. The rejects at this stage will be further treated in a thermally efficient evaporator to be set up. The rejects from the evaporator will be fed into a crystalliser / drier that will evaporate the water completely, leaving behind a small quantity of solid salt which will be disposed of in a secured landfill according to the guidelines of the Central Pollution Control Board.

After these steps are initiated, Chemplast will also embark upon achieving zero discharge of treated effluent of around 400 KLD from its Caustic Soda plant at Mettur.

On completion of these initiatives, the company will spend Rs. 3 crore every year towards R.O. plants' maintenance and additional power charges required to sustain the zero discharge operation.

Chemplast's PVC facility has already received ISO 14001 certification and the Chlorochemicals facility will receive the same shortly.

The effluents generated at the company's Industrial Alcohol plant at Panruti are being utilised to make biocompost, a high nutrient that is used as organic manure. On completion of the biocompost project, the company filled the discarded lagoons with earth and has planted cashew trees there.

The company's Caustic Soda/Chlorine plant in Karaikal will shortly commission a sea water desalination plant which will greatly reduce the factory's dependence on groundwater.

Encroachers in Gudalur

(Continued from Page 1)

thus increasing their plantation areas and violating the Supreme Court order. The State Government also brought in repatriates to work in tea estates. There are many people coming from across the border to settle in this beautiful land. Thus there is heavy biotic pressure. Since the disputes have not yet been settled in court, many are encroaching on these lands.

The ecology is being destroyed badly. Devala, which used to get the second highest rainfall in the country, hardly has any of the thick forests it used to have. Some say a *makhna* — a male tuskless elephant — was caught from the Pandathorai forests, not because it was a killer, but to remove some good forest cover. The *makhna* could protect a large chunk of forests. Gudalur is also an important elephant corridor. But, sadly, all the corridors are now sealed. Elephants cannot move freely today and their status is pathetic. They charge human beings in estates. People pour hot tar on the back of the elephants to drive them away or use burning sticks.

It is high time that the court order is implemented. Under the court order, even the Government cannot issue *pattas* to anyone since it comes under Section 17. But some long-time settlers must be given small *pattas* and the big encroachers removed. Then the Gudalur area must be brought under the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. To add to this, the entire Nilgiris must be brought under Environment Protection Act (EP Act). This will go a long way towards protecting the Nilgiris. There is very little hope that the Gudalur encroachments will be brought to a stop and the forests there saved. The Supreme Court order to save the Nilgiri Forests in response to a public interest litigation filed by Godavarma Thirumalpad, is a beacon of hope in a sea of despair. — (Courtesy: CPREEC *Eco News*.)

(Details of the history of Gudalur are taken from *Vivasaigal Thoilargal Munnetra Sangam* (VTMS), People's Movement working in Gudalur.)

OUR READERS WRITE

The public voice

It is good to know that the Tamil Nadu Government has withdrawn its proposal to draw water from the Perambalur region in order to augment the supply from Veeranam lake after protests from the residents of Perambalur and surrounding areas. While it has been announced that the proposal is being dropped out of respect for public opinion, I wonder why the public views were not sought earlier, before announcing the project.

Some time back, a proposal to build a new Secretariat at the site where the Queen Mary's College is located evoked considerable protest, forcing the Government to drop the idea. Later, the Government took steps to locate the Secretariat building in Kotturpuram, but after strong public protests there seems to be a re-thinking.

More recently, the Government's move to locate the industrial solid discharge site at Gummidipoondi has met with considerable opposition, forcing the Government to drop this proposal.

It would appear that Government is not communicating effectively with the people and does not feel the pulse of the public before announcing such decisions on sensitive subjects.

Perhaps, top bureaucrats should tour the districts more frequently and better understand popular expectations. The problem is that most senior bureaucrats confine themselves to their offices, leaving the district administration to the district collectors, most of whom are very young and inexperienced.

N.S. Venkataraman
M-60/1, IV Cross street
Besant Nagar, Chennai 600 090

Less engineering focus

The article 'Engineers aplenty, but where are the jobs?' (MM, April 16th) should serve as an eye-opener to those parents and crazy wards who are keen on taking up engineering studies, especially the discipline of Computer Science, with dreams of a golden future. The lure for such studies gained root with the advent of software companies which offered lucrative jobs even to freshers.

Exploiting the situation, there has been a mushroom growth of engineering colleges started by private managements with monetary aims. Out of the 200+ engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu, only about 20 provide the required standard of teaching. The availability of jobs is in inverse proportion to the present strength of graduates, most of them with poor marks.

IT concerns, like BPOs and call centres, cannot create the vacancies they promise. Parents would do well not to spend huge sums of money on engineering studies but should try to choose a job-oriented course which is within their means and for which their children have the aptitude. All substandard colleges which are unable to secure even 30% pass results should be closed.

M.R. Pillai
H 64/5, Central Avenue
Korattur, Chennai 600 080

Restoration & inspiration

I learn from press reports that U.V. Swaminatha Iyer's house is very old and needs to be reconstructed. I once had a chance to deliver a lecture in that holy place for a day.

If all Tamil scholars, Tamil pandits and those who speak about Tamil and live in the name of Tamil co-operate to help, the house can be restored. I appeal to all Tamil scholars to undertake this work.

Tirisirapuram Maha Vidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai who taught Tamil to U.V.S. Iyer has also been forgotten by the people. He was the Asthana Vidwan of the Sri Tiruvavaduthura Aadheenam which celebrates his birthday every year. Pillaival has composed nearly one lakh Tamil poems. Kambar had sung about 12,000 stanzas but Pillaival exceeded that number and was called 'Paththu Kambar' (Kambar-ten-fold).

In each and every place in Tamil Nadu, a libraryshould be named after him, or a block in every school or college should be named after him.

If we study the life story of Maha Vidwan Pillaival, the autobiographies of U.V. Swaminatha Iyer and his contemporary Thyagaraja Chettiar who was also a student of Pillaival, we will get deeply interested to study Tamil. In 1940, when I was young, a chapter on one of these scholars in a SSLC book inspired me to become a Tamil lecturer and writer. I wish everybody becomes a good Tamil scholar by studying these books.

A Tamil Vidwan
Chennai 600 061

Railway nostalgia

The article 'Broken pieces of a glorious past' (MM, February 16th) took me back half a century when M&SM was Madras and Southern Maratha and not as mentioned by the author.

My uncle was the last General Manager of the then Mysore State Railway, also colloquially known as "Howdappa Railway', because of the loyalty most of the users had for the Royal family to whom the Railway belonged.

Just before nationalisation, my sibling and I had the privilege of travelling with my uncle in his personal saloon from Bangalore to Mysore. We children used to feel like maharajas, as at every station the entire staff, led by the Station Master, used to present themselves in their best attire with turban etc. to look after the needs of their boss. As the train with the saloon passed manned level-crossings, the gatekeepers used to salute the GM of the State Railway as if he was the representative of the Maharaja.

If my memory is correct, it was Modern Cafe that was the official caterer of the Railway. It used to supply hot *masala dosas,* snacks and steaming hot coffee at every halt, apart from running the kitchen in the saloon.

MWO A. Venugopal
Air Force (Retd)
3/686 Annai Vel Nagar
Ph 1 Extn
Madhanandapuram
Chennai 600 116

Sea solar power

'Now, sea solar power – Is there an opportunity for Tamil Nadu in this?' (MM, January 16th). I wonder who will answer the question in the same spirit of concern for the State.

Apart from the technology and progress made in the US as stated in MM, the UK and Japan have reached a stage in their research efforts to provide unlimited supplies of cheap energy. Nuclear fusion offers the potential of vast quantities of cheap power from fuels such as seawater, without creating significant waste, according to reports I have read.

In Germany, a new source of energy to derive electricity from seawater by fusion research has been influenced by the thought that Stagnation is Retrograde, since the equilibrium is not static but dynamic. A fusion yield of 10 megawatts was achieved a few years ago. There is world-wide co-operation, involving European, Japanese, American and Russian fusion research scientists, on such possibilities as a plasma providing energy for lengthy periods with a fusion power of 1000 megawatts.

As a country we are second to none in the world in technical manpower resources. We should begin to pay more attention to these new areas of research.

I am happy with MM's endeavour to interface environmental measures with heritage.

P.J. Joseph
The Trinity
5, Kandigai Road
Korattur
Chennai 600 076

Correct name

Re. my letter 'Readers' service' in MM, April 16th, my name should be **T. Kaleeswaran** and office telephone number **22533432.**

T. Kaleeswaran
New No. 5, Seventh Cross Street
Mahalakshmi Nagar
West Velachery
Chennai 600 088

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

The products of Sarukkai

Sarukkai (*MM*, April 16th), a very tiny hamlet, was an insignificant village without even the basic needs in those days and when I was newly married my husband's grandmother used to tell me that whenever somebody died he had to be taken across the river for cremation as there was no facility in Sarukkai. But it has given birth to some very eminent personalities like Dr. Rangachari, Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachari, one of the most famous lawyers of Chennai (grandfather of Mrs. Y.G.P.), S.R. Jagannathan who served as Reserve Bank Governor and also the World Bank, the famous danseuse Malavika Sarukkai, the editor of *Femina,* Asha Saran, Priya Sarukkai Chabria, eminent poet and novelist (sister of Malavika), S.R. Chari who retired as the General Manager of Telephones India, and the popular drama and movie artiste, the late S.R. Veeraraghavan, apart a number of others. Being a very small village most of us are related in one way or the other. My grandfather the late S.R. Ragavachari who retired in the early 1950 as the Vice-Principal of Coimbatore Agricultural College was a first cousin of the famous Rangachari.

Coming back to Dr. Rangachari, he performed an operation somewhere around 1927 in our ancestral house 47, Egmore High Road, one of the oldest houses in the area along with T. Rangachari's house (the famous lawyer). I have heard a lot about this operation, which lasted nearly four hours. With very little facilities and with just an assistant, he had performed this operation on a person who was more than 70 years old! The doctor did it more as a favour for a close relative. I also have heard about this woman whose delivery he personally attended near Kanadukathan (Chettinad). It seems she had a number of miscarriages and he had promised her that he would personally attend to her delivery. True to his word, he flew all the way from Madras in his plane and delivered her first normal child without taking any remuneration.

Memories of the beginning of the Jaganatha Sabha, the Presidency Girls' School where most of the girls in the family studied, the huge tank (or was it a lake?) – 'Spur Tank' – the one that was near the Purasawalkam temple, the musicians, the dancers like Indrani Rehman, Mrinalini Sarabhai, G. Kausalya who learnt from Pandanallur Chokkalingam Pillai also on Egmore High Road, all make me want to put the clock back to those golden days. One very eminent visitor to Egmore house, who used to shock me literally with his simplicity those days was Karuppaiah, as G.K. Moopanar was fondly called by my grandfather. Another thing that makes me envious is when my husband and his friends, including Justice R. Balasubramanian – Bala to all – associated for nearly 50 years, all from M.Ct.M. School, meet at least once in 15 days and get nostalgic, talking about their school days, the old enchanting Egmore and the great teachers like Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar, their very strict English master. When I watch them still going nostalgic, they give me the feeling as if they are still the buddies of M.Ct.M. day and have not got old.

Our house today has become a wedding hall – 'Sundaravadani' – and Egmore High Road has lost its charm with the overflow of shops and traffic.

Geetha Rajagopal
Director, Sampradaya

House in ruins

Sarukkai (MM, April 16th) is a hamlet near Kabisthalam (of Mooppanar fame) and the river Kaveri divides it into two halves, Vada (north) Sarukkai and Then (South) Sarukkai. We belong to Then Sarukkai, while S. Jagannathan, former Governor of the RBI, belonged to Vada Sarukkai. Dr. S. Rangachari's house was next to ours. My father was a cousin of his.

I visited our village for the first time some three months ago and was horrified to see the ravages in this near-deserted village. Dr. Ranga's house is in total ruins, with a big banyan tree growing in the middle of the house. His wife, Kamala, was a great philanthropist and acted fully according to the wishes of her husband by donating all his wealth for public charity without her or her husband's name appearing anywhere.

Dr. Rangachari's Kensington Nursing Home was taken over by Dr. A.L. Mudaliar and the hospital continues to function without any break.

Dr.S.S. Rajagopalan
New 30 (Old 17)
Kamrajar Street, Gandhi Nagar
Saligramam, Chennai 600 093

Twice-told tale

Regarding the incomparable late Dr. S. Rangachari (*MM*, April 16th) wasn't it in *Madras Musings* that I read in a letter that the priest of a Muruga temple near Arakkonam had no money to perform the daily rituals and that Lord Muruga appeared in Dr. Rangachari's dream and instructed him to drop a bagful of money on the temple and the noble doctor did so flying low over the temple in his Puss Moth? Verily, Dr. Rangachari was no ordinary human being.

Certainly not anything like today's *Vasool Rajas*.

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

Name restoration

Will Chennai Corporation restore Dr. S. Rangachari's unamputated, hallowed name to what is at present 'Dr. Ranga Road' in Mylapore?

N. Dharmeshwaran
'Aparanji', 14, 10th Cross
Maruthi Extension, Vyalikaval
Bangalore 560 003

● Improving the lot of the less privileged

A community college and other changes

Positive interventions within the community are always laudable, specially when they go beyond the customary 'doling-out' exercises. More so when these are initiated by joint partnerships between service organisations, government and non-governmental organisations.

In Bheemannapet, off CPR Road in Alwarpet, a signboard outside the Community College for girls proclaims a joint initiative between the Corporation of Chennai, Covansys (India) Pvt. Ltd. and the Rotary Club of Madras East (RCME). It is a partnership five years old. Inside a classroom, a few girls are having an animated discussion with the teacher-coordinator. Others are working diligently on the computers. Says the teacher in charge, Sujatha, "Every year, of the around 20 girls who pass out, most find employment in well-known organisations. One exceptional student (whose father was a sweeper) was absorbed by Covansys a few years ago and now earns Rs. 26,000. Last year, 28 girls passed out, trained in Office Management and software skills. Many are employed at AVT Leather's Quality Control and Software Departments.

"Most of the girls are from lower middle class families. For six months they are taught interpersonal and life skills. The rest of the year they are taught a combination of office management and software skills. Some other community colleges offer Screen Printing, Tailoring and Nursing too. Classes generally go on from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Application forms are available from the Chennai Corporation."

Shreen Raghavan, Director, Vocational Services, of the RCME for the last two years, says, "The concept of the Community College was the Chennai Corporation's. Basic infrastructure, like land and building, belongs to the Corporation, while Covansys and RCME share the expenses for provision of computers, instructor salaries and miscellaneous administration expenses. We also get involved by organising talks, vocational and half-day seminars twice a year. Once the course is over, we find the students placements, through our personal contacts, in department stores, theatre complexes and other corporate groups, either by bringing companies to them or vice-versa. Our initial expectations from this project were very modest, but you must see how professionally 20-year-old Bhavani, who passed out from here last year to join as an Instructor in the Juvenile Home we adopted, takes care of its entire computer facility." But we do need to put in a formalised database and placement centre to ensure smoother placement,

● by **SHOBHA MENON**

says Raghavan. "Maybe a common selection programme for all the four Community Colleges could ensure more opportunities."

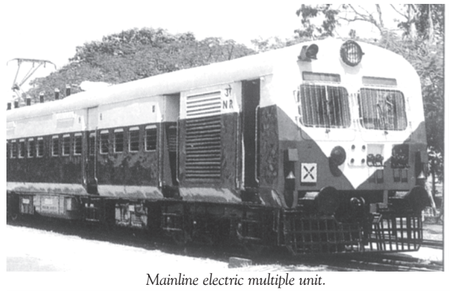
At the Juvenile Home in Purasawalkam, the RCME works with the Corporation and Relief Foundation, an NGO into Child Welfare. The 300 girls in the Home have markedly improved in their self-esteem and confidence levels because of the improved food, education skills and the periodic counselling sessions. And it has shown in their 100% pass this year. The RCME is in the process of setting up a Vocational Centre for them. About 100 girls undergo training aided by adult education software provided by Tata Consultancy Services and C K Technology's Tamil Office software. Equipment for Screen Printing and Carpentry have been donated to the After Care Home for these girls in Vellore (for those older than 17) set up jointly with Lucas TVS to impart skills and create revenue models, besides tying up with an NGO based in Kerala to make bamboo-based products.

Another initiative has been the model slum developed at Annai Sathya Nagar behind Kasi Theatre in Jafferkhanpettai, Ashok Nagar, at a project cost of Rs. 25 lakh under the aegis of the Chennai Willingdon Corporate Foundation (CWCF), RCME and the Corporation of Chennai. From a survey of 75 slums, this one was chosen because "its residents were willing to participate in its development". The objective of the project was "the integrated development of a model slum in Chennai with the idea of making it a model community easily replicable at other slums and the inmates of the community to see the benefits of access to civic amenities, minimum health care, basic literacy programmes and a sense of participating in the community's development."

I met a confident Shanthi, a 'V Std pass', who is the leader of one of the 20 women self-help groups here. "Before this project began, we had miserable toilet facilities. We'd either use the vacant grounds nearby or walk a long distance to access a toilet. And children used the thoroughfare for this purpose, adding to the filth. The new toilets and pucca draingage connections along with proper roads (laid by the Corporation) have drastically improved our hygiene and reduced illnesses. Garbage is now collected at source. We've also started to pay taxes. A new Community Hall has also been built so that we can hold our functions there. More important, the SHGs (there are four SHGs formed by the men in the area) have reduced our dependence on moneylenders. The members who are behind this initiative have even encouraged us to elect a woman volunteer (who is provided a uniform) on each street who will look into civic and relevant health issues and approach the necessary authorities for help. We've even formed an Annai Sathya Nagar Residents' Association!" she says proudly. Her friends Chitra and Mallika affirm their collective sense of pride and confidence. "Our lives have changed very much, thanks to this project. There is more money to spend on what is priority." Says K. Ananth of the

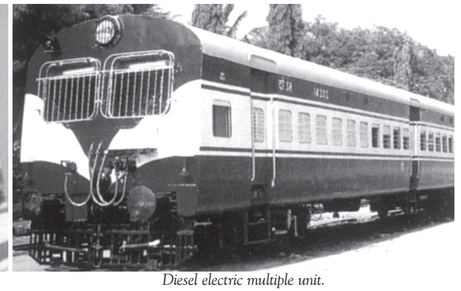
A community classroom in progress.

(Continued on page 7)



Mainline electric multiple unit.

An early coach.



Diesel electric multiple unit.

Integral to prosperity

The years immediately following the euphoria of Independence in India marked the beginning of the renaissance of India's railway system. Integral to that rebirth was the nation's commitment to self-sufficiency. That revival was focussed on what the country's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, alluringly called 'Temples of Modern India'. One of the earliest among those was the Integral Coach Factory (I.C.F.) at Perambur, Madras.

The London-based owners of the principal railway systems of British India started making wagons and coaches in their workshops from quite early days. These were mostly wooden-bodied carriages. In the post-Independence era, the need for an integral light-weight coach was felt keenly. The idea was to be able to haul more carriages, each mounted on bogies axled at each end, using the same tractive-effort of a simple locomotive, thus effecting considerable saving. This central idea had been completely ignored by previous railway administrations.

I.C.F. derives its name from the design of the carriage which incorporates an all-welded trough floor integrated with the body, thus forming a sort of hollow tube with closed ends. In this configuration, the working forces sustained by the coach are more or less equally distributed over the entire body of the carriage. The chief features of an I.C.F. coach, which set it miles apart from its earlier counterparts, with wooden bodies and later steel enclosure, are comfort and safety of passengers, smooth running, light weight but extra strong and, above all, its anti-telescoping construction.

This revolutionary design was developed by several manufacturers of rolling stock in Europe and America, such as Metro-Camell, Breda, Alstom, Budd, Fiat, Swiss Car & Elevator Manufacturing Corporation Ltd (Schlieren), Linke-Hofmann-Bush, St. Louis Car Co., Pullman Wegmann and others. After negotiations with some of these firms, the Government of India zeroed in on the Swiss Car & Elevator Manufacturing Corporation Ltd., Schlieren-Zurich, for an Agreement of Technical Collaboration which would include initial supply of parts in CKD condition and eventual transfer of technology to the Indian company. ICF opened for production in 1955.

I.C.F.'s initial production was a coach with a 70-foot body, Schlieren coiled spring bogies (trucks) and increased use of plastics. These vehicles offered passengers somewhat higher standards of safety and comfort, well affording a higher passenger:ton ratio. It is true that First Class passengers had less space than in the older coaches, but this was in line with the policy of re-designating the former Second Class as First Class. The First Class standard coach, unlike its predecessors, included a side corridor, which is why the space per passenger was reduced. There were five four-berth compartments and two twin-berth coupes, making a total of 24 berths or 36 seats. The compartments no longer had their own lavatories, but one European style and three Indian style toilets were installed at the ends of the corridor. One fold-up seat was provided for the coach attendant.

The corresponding third-class coach afforded 80 seats in the conventional arrangement, but only four lavatories; one lavatory per 20 passengers was not altogether agreeable, especially in the early morning when the 70 gallon (315 litres) water tanks tended to run dry. Later, two significant variants based on the standard underframe and shell were the two-tier and three-tier third-class sleeping cars. In the two-tier version, there were upholstered upper berths so that in addition to the 80 sitting passengers, 24 sleeping passengers could be carried. In the three-tier sleeper, the middle berths formed backrests during the day, and since there was sleeping accommmodation for 75 passengers there was no difference between night and day capacity.

I.C.F. subsequently built integral coaches for metre gauge routes. The Third Class variant included 64 seats, six doors and three lavatories. The coach body could withstand a 120-ton compressive load. Legroom was increased from the previous 4'10" to the broad gauge standard of 5' 7". Designers appeared to have imagined at one time that passengers on the metre gauge lines were smaller than those on the broad gauge routes, and that only dwarfs travelled on the narrow gauge!

Subsequently, I.C.F. forayed into construction of air-conditioned carriages, restaurant cars and pantry cars, chair cars, vestibuled coaches, and many more innovations. The factory also began to build electric multiple unit rakes, with silicon rectifiers for operation on commuter networks electrified at AC of 25KV single-phase at 50Hz per second, which sustained DC traction, and now it has started making EMUs with AC traction as well.

G.D. Patwardhan

ICF – 50 years of achievement

In the pre-independence era, railway passenger coaches were imported, mainly from England. In 1948, a decision was taken by N. Gopalasamy Ayyanagar, the then Minister for Transport and Railways, that a factory for the indigenous production of coaches be established in India. Designs from various global coach manufacturers were considered and those of a Swiss coachbuilder, M/s. Swiss Car & Elevator Mfg. Corpn., Zurich, for manufacture of all-steel, all-welded 'integral' shells were accepted. As Indian engineers had no experience of such coaches, a technical aid agreement was entered into with this firm on 2.10.53 to provide assistance in setting up the plant and training manpower. The agreement ended on 27.5.61.

The Ministry of Railways decided to locate the Integral Coach Factory in Perambur, northwestern suburb of Madras. The factory initially consisted of 10 shops with a covered area of 8,84,600 sq.ft. laid out on the then most modern lines. This and other constructions were completed in a record time of three years. It was envisaged that 4000 persons would be employed.

Identification and procurement of modern plant and machinery was simultaneously taken up. Though machines of indigenous manufacture were considered, manufacturing capacity in the country was not yet fully developed and it became inevitable to import the bulk of them. However, the first machine to be installed was a Kirloskar 8½" centre lathe, which was inaugurated by the then Railway Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, on January 20, 1955.

A Technical Training School (TTS) was inaugurated by O.V. Alagesan, Dy. Minister for Transport & Railways, on March 20, 1954. Candidates were trained both in the School and on the shop floor in trades like welding, fitting and machining. TTS helped in forming a nucleus of skilled craftsmen to help start production in the factory. Practical training in the workshop was given under the expert guidance of Swiss instructors. A technical society was also formed where lectures by Swiss engineers and Indian engineers were arranged on various technical matters.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the factory on October 2, 1955. K. Sadagopan was its first Chief Administrative Officer.

Production began in a modest but steady manner in 1955 and seven third class coach shells were flagged off from the shell division by the CAO, Sadagopan, on February 22, 1956 for Central Railway. The first indigenous coach was rolled out by the then President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, on August 14, 1956.

The cost of production of coaches had from the first batch itself registered a systematic downward trend. The cost of a Schlieren shell received in knocked down condition and assembled in the factory was Rs.1,65,000. However, then cost of an indigenously manufactured shell was only Rs. 89,000. Similarly, the cost of furnishing a coach dropped from Rs. 97,000 to Rs. 76,000 in the second batch, thereby amply supporting the government's policy of 'self sufficiency'.

When the factory was initially planned, it was decided that coach shells produced would be furnished in railway workshops. With increasing production and consequent increase in the workload in the railway workshops, Railway Board decided to set up a furnishing annexe to ICF so that the factory could deliver complete coaches ready for service.

The first furnished coach was flagged off on January 16, 1962. The division was formally declared open by S.V. Ramaswamy, Dy. Minister for Railways, on October 2, 1962.

In April 1959, a second shift was introduced in the shell factory and by March 1960 the shell outturn reached 447 and furnishing outturn 249 coaches. Thus began the diversified production in this factory, with increase in targets year after year. ICF has produced over 35,000 shells since its inception and furnished most of them. Till now 170 varieties of coaches have been produced.

The first air-conditioned two-tier sleeper coach was launched in October 1968 and coaches for Rajdhani superfast trains in November.

On the export front, what started as mere two bogies to Thailand in 1967-68, and 113 coaches to Taiwan in 1971-72,

● by **SHIVENDRA KUMAR**
General Manager, ICF

now includes exports of various types of coaches to Zambia, Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda, Bangladesh and Vietnam, and Malaya.

K.P. Jayaram, who retired as a Member of the Railway Board adds:

I was a member of the 1942 batch of Special Class Apprentices recruited by the Indian Railways for management posts. I was on a two-year training stint in the UK (1946-1948), when the Railway Board deputed one of its senior mechanical engineers, B. Venkataraman, to attend the International Railway Congress in Europe in 1947. The Board also wished him to study the production of a new design of integral steel-bodied coaches in Switzerland. Venkataraman, who retired as Chief Mechanical Engineer, Southern Railway, was greatly impressed by what he saw in Schlieren, Swizerland. He advised my batch in the UK to visit the plant and arranged with the factory management to provide us facilities.

Railway coaches at the time were built with a wooden body, bottom sides, pillars cant rails and roof sticks, panelled over with MS steel sheets and waterproof rubberoid materials over the roof. This wooden body weighed a lot more than it needed to be. The Swiss Car Elevator Manufacturing Corporation had begun to build a coach body as a completely steel welded unit somewhat in the way an airplane is built. With steel structurals fabricated from sheet metal, welded throughout to form a coach body, the coach was mounted on all-welded steel bogie trucks. The net result: a strong all-steel railway coach, greatly reduced in weight (at least by 7 or 8 tonnes). Interior furnishings in hardboard too were lighter than customary wooden furnishings. All the way, lightness and strength were the ruling factors in the construction of the coach.

Venkataraman's report to the Railway Board and his encouragement of the integral steel-bodied design for railway coaches led to Indian Railways, five years later, negotiating with the Swiss, company.

The post-Independence period was notable for setting up three new production units to provide Indian Railways with indigenously manufactured rolling stock and so enable it to become self-sufficient. Chittaranjan, the centre for steam locomotives, Perambur, for coaches, and Varanasi, for diesel locomotives, were trailblazers. Among the three, and in a comparative assessment, I would venture to suggest that ICF could well claim a little more glory for a variety of reasons. It had to contend with greater skills in its manufacturing practices, which called for more intensive apprenticeship skills and training methods, and it had to develop export potential.

The formative stages were under K. Sadagopan. It was a collaboration phase, with Swiss guidance. In any organisation, this is a very crucial phase. It has its own intricacies and sensitivities; egos, jealousies, inter-rivalries, carry their own risks and pitfalls for acquisition of skills from transferor to transferee. Development schedules are liable to be hit sometimes and delayed if these problems are not fully overcome. Sadagopan, a finance man, was indeed a shrewd captain. He had an easy smile and winning ways. He made this phase a great success, smoothening ruffled egos on all sides! The fledgling ICF plant was laid on solid, firm foundations in his time, with technology transfers faithfully adopted and applied.

His successor, Iqbal Hydari, a determined and motivated leader, formed well-motivated and willing teams in ICF. A sound mechanical engineer and administrator, he fostered results on the shop floors; disciplined activities and willing worker involvement flowed naturally under his guidance. He was ever caring too about worker welfare and living conditions. No exaggeration when I say you could see the glow on the faces of ICF men around him those days, along with genuine respect for their leader. Here was the right successor to the 'start-up' man, Sadagopan, in later years.

My direct involvement with ICF was only in its Silver Jubilee year in 1980. I remember how a clamour developed for the gifting of a HMT watch to every worker as a token offering for the Silver Jubilee occasion. After long consideration, the Board favoured the idea of an independent hospital, which at present has a 100-bed capacity. In retrospect, I see this facility as more long lasting than a wrist watch!

S. Srinivasan, who retired as Secretary to the General Manager, adds:

I had completed a 4-year Diploma Course in Mechanical Engineering (LME) at the Central Polytechnic, Broadway, in 1953, did my one-year apprenticeship in Sundaram Motors. When ICF advertised for Trade Apprentices to undergo training in its School, I joined the institution.

76 of us reported to the Basic Training Workshops on 15.3.1954. We were welcomed by the Principal, U.A. Kamath. There were two foreigners by his side whom he introduced as Swiss instructors, and who would impart practical training. We were asked to give our preference: Fitting or Machining?

Frei was the Swiss instructor who came to impart fitting training. Ghalor was the Swiss instructor for the machinist group.

The first instruction Frei gave us was to take the brush and clean the vice, the table and the floor beneath it. It was too much for some of the diploma-holders, but we had no choice. Only later I realised our workplace is our worship place and we have to keep it clean and tidy.

Frei would demonstrate every skill and we had to follow suit. He would go to each apprentice and correct him. He would not let any apprentice move on until he had acquired satisfactory level in the skill. Our training commenced at 7 a.m. on dot and he would be there five minutes ahead of us at the workspot. What a training we received at the hands of this dedicated Swiss instructor! Thus was ICF made one of what Nehru called "the temples of modern India". — (Courtesy : *ICF Golden Jubilee Souvenir.*)

At 80 n.o., he recalls a 50-year-old win

Fifty years ago, in the 1954-55 season, he was the captain of the first cricket team representing this State (then Madras) to win the Ranji Trophy championship Balu Alaganan, now at 80 n.o., wonders why Tamil Nadu has not won the Ranji Trophy more since then. "Today, the State has a highly talented lot of boys representing it and I am amazed that we won the Trophy just once after the 1955 win, and that was in 1988."

Balu Alaganan's innings as a player was much shorter than his tenure as the game's administrator in Tamil Nadu. Five years as President and 25 years as Vice-President were indeed a barometer of his popularity in the cricketing circles in the State. He is also a respected figure in Indian cricket too.

Always modest, it's hardly surprising that he attributes that Ranji triumph to his team mates rather than to his role as Captain. "You see, I was reluctant to play in the side and yet was pushed in as player first and then made captain. The transition was all like a trance," he reminisces.

Going down memory lane, Balu justifies his statement about himself, saying how the number 11 batsman of that victorious Madras team, M.K. Murugesh, was the motivator. "When Murugesh came to the wicket," he recalls, "the gutsy player inspired me and said, 'Skipper, just feel that I am a Number 3 and not a Number 11.' I realised how valuable that advice was to me, for we got associated in a decisive 93-run partnership that tilted the scales against the more fancied Holkar, who had in their ranks players like Mushtaq Ali. It was a winning partnership made possible by the confidence Murugesh displayed."

Balu then adds, "I immediately announced my retirement on winning the Ranji Trophy. That was my motivation level!" he says with an expression of contentment in his style. "I have always been a reluctant customer," he admits, and hence had to be forced into playing from time to time.

Balu regrets that some players in that victorious side, like A.G. Kripal Singh and C.D. Gopinath, did not play more often for India. "They were the top batsmen in my team and I thought Kripal would score a lot of runs in international cricket," he adds.

Balu Alaganan.

Speaking of his stint as a popular commentator with All-India Radio, he recalls, "During the 1987 Bangalore Test against Pakistan, I was sure that India would win the game and announced my retirement on the microphone. But India lost the game by 16 runs. The AIR authorities asserted that I had not given my retirement in writing and so I had to commentate on the victorious January 1988 Test against the West Indies when Narender Hirwani took 16 wickets in his debut match. After this game, my retirement became permanent."

The reluctant cricketer's introduction to the game was in Ceylon where he had gone from his native Bodinaiyakanur, where no one had ever heard about cricket, for his schooling. In 1934, he joined St. Thomas' College boarding in Colombo and got inducted into the game — again reluctantly. "I hardly understood the game, yet began playing for the school."

In 1942, he joined Madras Christian College, Tambaram, and played for the college team. He played for Madras University in his second year and became its captain the next year. At this time, he was called for trials to select the Indian Combined Universities team. Balu's Ranji debut came in the 1947-48 season. But he had to be pushed to play for the State. "I never played continuously, but the Madras Cricket Association Secretary, Srinivasa Raghavan, was very particular that I should captain the State side and the Chairman, C. Ramaswamy, backed him." Balu recalls a sad experience that occurred at that time. The Madras Cricket team left for Hyderabad by train. "That night, there was an unfortunate air crash and Srinivasa Raghavan was one of those killed. Imagine my mental state at the time!"

After retiring from the game, Balu was again "forced" into doing something, this time running commentary for All India Radio. "I did commentaries for Ranji games as well as for Test matches. I enjoyed working with Ananda Rao and R.T. Parthasarathy. I have worked with Vijay Merchant, Devraj Puri and Berry Sarbadikary. I went to England in 1986 at the instance of Jasbir Singh. I was very reluctant, but he cajoled me to make the trip as a commentator. Only after he told me that we would be taken care of by the Indian High Commission in Britain was I convinced to make the trip". But he refused to go to Pakistan on three occasions when he was repeatedly invited to go.

As an able administrator, Balu managed Indian teams within the country on several occasions. He also managed the Indian side to Sri Lanka in 1974 when Ajit Wadekar was the captain. "Fortunately, India never lost a single game when I was the manager," he recalls.

But he has bad memories of his visit to the West Indies in 1976 as Treasurer of the team. After India savoured a win at Port of Spain, successfully chasing a target of 403, it had a terrible match in the Test that followed at Kingston, Jamaica.

After India was 178 for one on the first day of the Test, the West Indies selection panel, headed by Clyde Walcott, hatched a plot that night to attack the Indian batsmen on the legside.

"First, Anshuman Gaekwad was seriously hurt and I had to take him to hospital. Next, Umrigar, the manager, brought G.R. Vishwanath to the hospital with a fracture, then Ghulam Ahmed, who was on the trip as Board Secretary, escorted Brijesh Patel to the hospital after he had been struck on the mouth by Vanburn Holder. The nurses laughed at us and asked whether the boys were hit by a 'wet ball'!" Balu recalls sadly.

"It was from my commentator friend Tony Cozier that I learnt about the plot to maim the Indian batsmen. However, one player defied the pace attack with great guts and that was Dilip Vengsarkar", he added.

At that time, some English players, including the legendary off spinner Jim Laker, were in Kingston. "They too laughed at us and said that when the Windies came to England that summer, they would be given a dose of their own medicine. But it was different. Their captain Tony Greig made some uncomplimentary remarks and had to face their wrath and rout on the field."

Reverting back to Madras cricket, Balu recalls with happiness his 25-year stint as Vice-President of the TNCA and his five years as President and thereafterwards as Patron of the Association. "I took over from M.A. Chidambaram just after we had won the Ranji Trophy in 1988, but we never won after that," he says with a tinge of disappointment in his voice.

He has happy memories of rubbing shoulders with some 'high class' players in the Madras league circuit when he played for the Egmore Recreation Club. "There was 'Jaggu' (SR Jagannathan) who was simply outstanding as a leg spinner and a dour bat, Murugesh, a great left-arm spinner, Sundaravadanam, wicket-keeper D.L. Chakravarthy, R.M. Perumal, J. Sydney, N. Krishnamurthy (who scored six successive centuries in the league circuit), all of whom should have made it to the higher grade. Another was Edward Prabhakar, who would have definitely led the Madras team if he had not joined the Navy. He was a brilliant fielder at extra-cover and would set an example on the field."

The reason for Balu's reluctance to turn out in flannels was he was busy as a planter in Bodinaiyakanur. Besides, he also loved playing tennis, a game that gave him tremendous physical fitness in later years. Today, at 80 n.o, he awaits Tamil Nadu winning the Ranji Trophy again. — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

Bhaskeran Thomas

Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan is on vacation. His column will resume on his return.

Yet another miss for Tamil Nadu

The cup that missed the lip was let to slip. That was Tamil Nadu's predicament in the one-day Ranji Trophy championship that recently concluded in Mumbai.

As one of the teams strongly fancied to win the tournament after impressive performances in the earlier rounds, the southern outfit disappointed in the final against Uttar Pradesh. Tamil Nadu was all set to win the final, but the game ended in a tie.

A close finish will certainly enthrall the cricket spectator. But to an ardent supporter of Tamil Nadu, it was a big disappointment.

But for the cool display of two young players, Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan and Anirudha Srikkanth, the match could well have ended in a loss for the team. What made the outcome galling was that U.P. was on the mat, with nine wickets down and 34 runs to make to win. Tamil Nadu simply could not separate the final pair till that brilliant throw by Srikkanth to Vidyut saved the team from defeat.

Thus concluded the 2004-05 cricket season rather disappointingly, with the team unable to make it to the Ranji Trophy final round because of its shoddy show in the field. And the tie in the one-day tournament, which was played by the Subbiah Pillai tournament winners, was a sad experience for Tamil Nadu supporters.

However, the tournament had its heroes. Vidyut, who slammed a splendid 123 in the semi-final against Bengal and a breezy 41 in the final, did well with the bat. He was pretty useful with the ball too, as he bowled some tight spells at crucial moments and helped his side win.

I wonder when the national selectors are going to cast their eyes on this talented youngster. It's thought by many that he is the 'Salim Durrani' of the future.

Skipper Hemang Badani fared well in the final, hitting 69 and showed that he had marvelously overcome the ill-effects of a broken arm. Former skipper S. Suresh came up with a good all-round performance in the first game against Baroda.

Sridharana Sriram gave a good all-round performance in the tourney, which helped him earn an India recall for the Fifth One-Dayer against the visiting Pakistanis. Who can forget that memorable hat-trick that he achieved with the ball at a crucial juncture in the match against Bengal.

Test wicket-keeper Dinesh Kaarthick made only small scores as he ran himself out on a couple of occasions just when he was looking good.

Badrinath and senior batsman Sridharan Sharath were disappointing because of getting themselves run out. Running between wickets continued to be of great concern in the tournament and it revealed that none in this country has mastered the art of running between wickets.

Among the bowlers, left-arm spinner Ramkumar and paceman Jesuraj were as impressive as they were in the five-day Ranji version. They showed excellent temperament and adapted themselves well to the changed format.

Unfortunately, Vasudeva Das the batting find of the season for Tamil Nadu, did not get any opportunities to play in the tournament. He should be given more opportunities because he is an Indian prospect in the not too distant project.

Only the Tamil Nadu and U.P. lads were outstanding in the tournament. Suresh Raina of U.P. is an exciting prospect and should don an India cap soon. (Courtesy: *Straight Bat*)

A Special Correspondent

Polluting Cuddalore

(Continued from Page 1)

"Villagers have for years complained about the intense chemical odours that pervade their homes at all times of the day. Villages like Kudikadu, Thaikal, Eachaangadu and Sonnachavadi lie in a virtual gas chamber with chemical factories on three sides and the river on the fourth." While fishermen frequently develop rashes, residents in general have nausea, eye-irritation, muscle fatigue, narcosis and cyanosis.

Both the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and the Factories Inspectorate, which monitor the environment, have not conducted any scientific study to identify the toxic chemicals. Farmers are given no protection when chemicals destroy agricultural land.

Narayan who probed the gender dimensions said that women in the villages of Semankuppam and Sangolikuppam have undergone miscarriages and stillbirths apart from bearing deformed babies. Girls attain early puberty, while women complain of high morbidity levels of children in this area. Chemicals like hydrogen sulphide affect the central nervous system and retard mental growth of children.

Mothers inhaling gases and chemicals can transmit toxic effects to their children, through breast milk, affecting the brain development of the child. Women from the SIPCOT Industrial Area cannot get married because of their deteriorating health and because they are labelled as SIPCOT women. Residents complain about inadequate hospital facilities, with the nearest government hospital being 12 km away. SIPCOT villagers in Cuddalore have petitioned for continuous air monitoring, long-term health supervision and a ban on expanding the industrial area.

Narayan says, "What is appalling is that the government has authorised the setting up of more industries which use volatile chemicals." Since some of these are small companies, they do not fall under the purview of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA). – (Courtesy: *The Word*, journal of the Asian College of Journalism.)

A reminder to our readers

• It's a year since *Madras Musings* began being a priced journal, offering readers a special annual subscription rate of Rs.100. It is now 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 this page, 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

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

CHENNAI HERITAGE

260-A T.T.K. ROAD, ALWARPET, CHENNAI 600 018.

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.....) / I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

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A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

(Continued from Page 4)

RCME, "Once they stand on their own, we can move on to creating more Sathya Nagars."

"We're now reaching a very critical segment of the project, going from infrastructural community development – facilitated over the last 3 years to the community's emotional and social development – yoga classes, de-addiction camps, special tuition for middle school and primary schools (with the aid of Pratham, a Mumbai-based organisation in the field of primary education which works with us). We don't expect miracles overnight, but positive change is bound to happen," says R. Venkatakrishnan, currently President, RCME.

To take off shortly is another ambitious initiative where the RCME teams up with 'Hot Breads' Mahadevan, who has opened outlets across the world. An existing building within the same Community College campus will be used for Practical Classes for the Chennai Culinary Institute which is on the anvil. Another building will come up in 5-6 months for the Theory Classes that will be conducted by the well-known culinary expert Chandri Bhat. Eighty students will be trained in each batch and Hot Breads has already imported Rs. 20 lakh worth bakery infrastructure. Students who pass out – 50% of them drop-outs from Corporation schools and the rest from economically weaker sections – will find placement within the Hot Breads chain of bakeries. Says S.S. Rajsekar of the RCME, "Giving exposure to children in different industries is so important. Not only the kind of intervention, but the right timing is crucial. Not to mention the spark from the student that matches the intervention!"

What's wrong with us in Madras?

(Continued from Page 2)

Women's Civic group realises that Members of the Chambers of Commerce, Trades Association, European Association, Rotary Club, etc. are busy men. But members of these organisations **can** use their influence to improve Mount Road if they wish. In other cities, and other countries, such groups of businessmen unite in continued efforts to improve the appearance of their cities. They do this because it is good business and because they wish to be proud of the city in which they live. The women have no power to act. They can only appeal to the men to consider their suggestions, to improve upon them, and then to act before our main thoroughfare becomes a hopeless mess.

Senate House Conservation Fund

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

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

Dear Registrar,

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

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

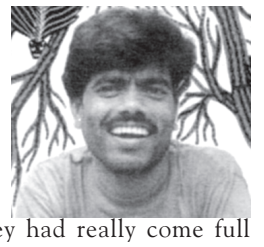
.....

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

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

***The Miracle of Flight**: The heaviest animal I have ever seen is an elephant. So, that is the creature that came to my mind when I painted the plane. A plane taking off is as much of a miracle as an elephant flying. I have put the trees upside down in the sky, and the clouds below, because flying turned my world upside-down.*

A Gond in the London Jungle



These were some of the comments that *The London Jungle Book*, by a tribal artist and published by Tara Publishing, received when it was launched in London.

Bhajju Shyam, a brilliant young artist from the Gond tribe in Central India, was invited to London two yeas ago to paint the interiors of an Indian restaurant. Tara Publishing first met him in November 2003, at an illustrators' workshop that it had organised.

Bhajju entertained the Tara team for a whole week with stories of his travels, and they were completely charmed. What struck them was not just the originality of his view, but also the lightness with which he was able to make acutely profound observations. They were convinced that there was a brilliant visual travelogue in there. So they worked with him over the next few months – and *The London Jungle Book* was born.

Combining innocence and sophistication, Bhajju had succeeded in turning London into an exotic bestiary: the Underground was a giant earthworm, Big Ben merged with a giant rooster, and English people were bats that came out to play at night.

"I would like to give it to every one I love, when they are travelling by choice or necessity." — John Berger.

"Delightful ... a travel book with a difference"— *Time Out*, London.

"A startlingly generous and colourful collection of image, capable of making the most jaded metropolitan refocus and smile."— *The Independent* .

Tara felt right away that this was a very important book. It was both an extraordinarily creative leap in the life of a traditional artist, as well as a deceptively light and playful reversal of the anthropological gaze.

The book was co-published with the Museum of London and released there with an exhibition of original art in November 2004. Bhajju's return to London for the release of his book was a very proud moment for him. He was completely overjoyed at the reception his work was receiving and amazed at the variety of merchandise that the museum had created. He spent a week in the foyer signing books, meeting fans, and painting a mural specially commissioned by the museum for its collection. For Bhajju, his journey had really come full circle.

The exhibition, which was in great demand, had two more stops in the UK – the Museum in the Docklands and the Horniman Museum – before it continues on a tour through Europe and the US. In India, the book was released in collaboration with the British Council in Bangalore in March 2005, with the noted art critic and curator Jyotindra Jain as a special guest.

The London Jungle Book has already been translated into two foreign languages – Italian and Dutch. Tara will also be launching the book in the US in October this year.

The Artist

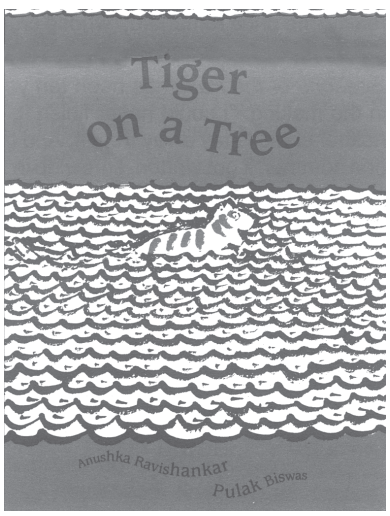
33-year-old Bhajju Shyam lives and works in Bhopal. Like most Gond children he grew up helping his mother paint the walls of their village home. Bhajju's family was too poor to keep him in school, and so when he turned 16 he came to Bhopal in search of work. He worked at several odd jobs, before becoming an artist's apprentice. Bhajju's prowess as an independent artist grew quickly, and in 2001 he received a State award for Best Indigenous Artist. His work has since been exhibited in the UK, Germany, Holland and Russia. Now, fifteen years after he set out to seek his fortune in the city, Bhajju has truly arrived. His has been an incredible creative journey: from decorating the walls of his village home to changing the way we see one of the greatest and most loved metropolises of the world. (Courtesy: *News from Tara*)

'Tiger on a Tree': 6th Award

Tiger on a Tree (Anushka Ravishankar/Pulak Biswas), Tara Publishing's successful title, has received another important international award: inclusion in the 2005 American Library Association's Notable Children's Book List. It is the first Indian children's book to have made it into this prestigious list. The ALA chooses books on the basis of overall literary quality, originality of text and illustrations, use of language, excellence of illustration and design, and the likelihood of acceptance by children.

This is the sixth international award for *Tiger*. Earlier in the year, it won the 2005 New York Book Show Award in the category of Children's fiction. Other award, for this handmade children's classic include the Andersen Award, Italy; the Book of the Week, CCBC; Biennale of Illustrations, Bratislava; and the Star of Excellence, French Union of Culture.

Originally published by Tara in India, the US version has been brought out by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Tara has also sold rights to the book to publishers in France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Korea. Locally, a version in Tamil is forthcoming. (Courtesy: *News from Tara*)



Sport on page 6

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