

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

INSIDE

- For a better Chennai
- The 'greening' of the city
- 41 Nadu Street's heritage
- A nice person's letters
- Time for another championship

Vol. XV No. 7

July 16-31, 2005

Rs. 5 per copy
(Annual Subscription: Rs. 100/-)

My wife believes in multi-tasking... today it's Swimming with Biology, tomorrow it will be Violin lessons with Calculus!

Oops, you did it again?

If this isn't exactly the Age of Aquarius, it certainly is the Age of the Catchy Acronym.

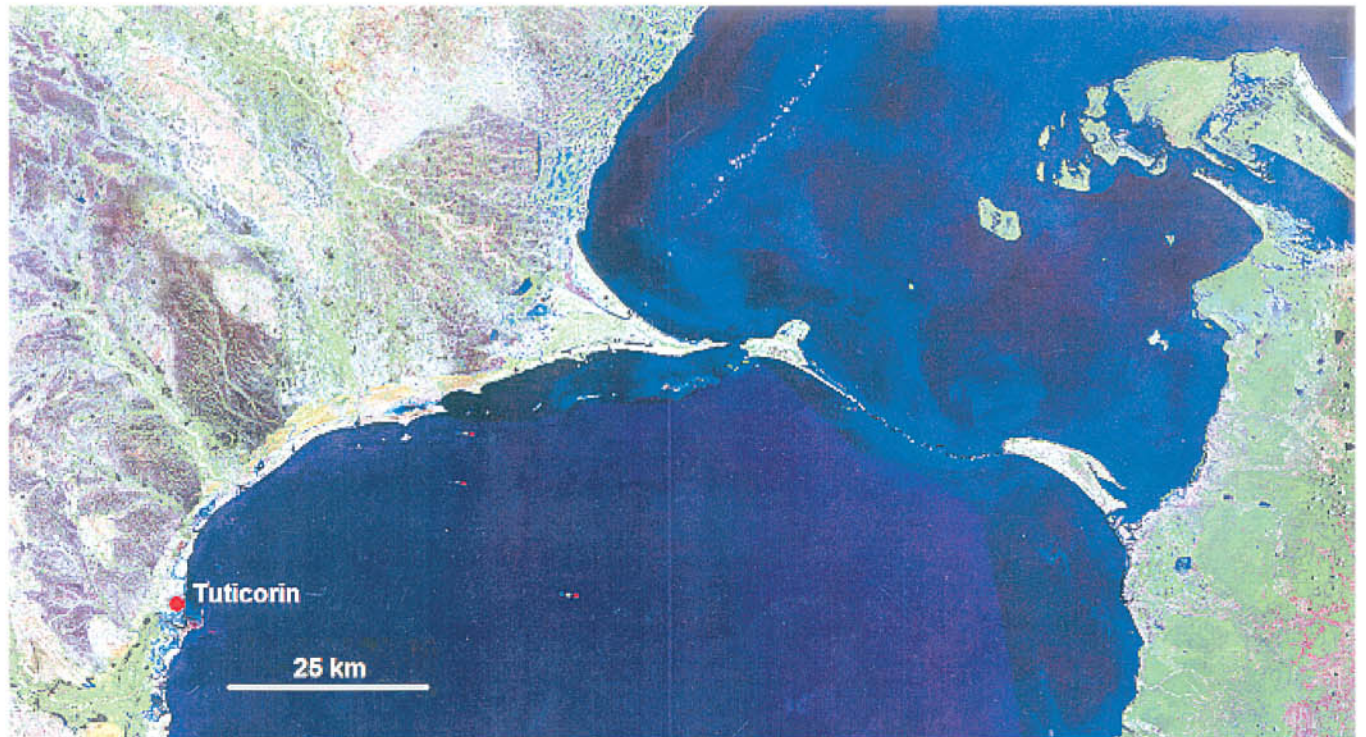
Look what they've done with the time-worn 'Oops', for instance. Apparently, 'Oops' need no longer mean an admission of clumsiness, self-confessed ineptitude, and apology thereof. According to a recent newspaper report, it could very easily mean (especially if you should employ it while tripping over diverse parental feet) that you consider the tripees in question Obsessive, Oppressive Parents. To be honest, this particular breed does seem rampant today.

Two young mothers were overheard discussing their respective offspring, extolling the importance of placing them only in those peer groups that will encourage them to "push boundaries, and explore the child within". (Given that these particular offspring were three years old, those aforementioned exploratory journeys must be very short.)

This was followed by learned, laudable discourses on healthy eating, and how parenting has to be a "strictly 'No-Anger' zone". Now, if you belong, like I did (and still do - even with 'grown-up' children), to the 'I'm-your-Mom-that's-why' school of parenting, complete with raised voice, V-shaped eyebrows and threatening stance, with meal-times being a get-it-over-with chore, this sort of analysis can be depressingly complex-inducing. Happily, before things worsened, said youngsters were spotted quietly chomping away on the damp, business-end of half-eaten chocolate bars, offered by their sympathetic peers.

Bless children - and their sturdy common sense.
Oops, indeed!

Ranjitha Ashok



The Palk Strait region, showing the Indo-Sri Lanka gap, the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, along with Rameswaram Island and Adam's Bridge. Most significantly, all the shallow areas, coloured light blue, are north of Pamban, Rameswaram, Adam's Bridge, Talaimannar and Mannar Island as well as off coastal Sri Lanka. The entire

The Sethu Project

dredging is going to be done only in these shallow waters, as the sea, south of Adam's Bridge, is quite deep. The satellite images above and on page 8 are from an Australian source and were received from K.V.S. Krishna together with the captions.

Can an independent look be taken?

Even after the high-powered, politically-slanted inauguration of the Sethusamudram Canal Project, there are many who continue to believe that here is an ecological disaster in the making. It is suggested by Manitham, an environmental non-profit organisation, as well as others that independent international experts or, alternatively, the UNDP be requested to give an independent opinion without any emotional strings being attached to the technical findings.

Such an investigation needs to look into the following aspects of the project.

On all the bickerings over how to go about implementing the Sethu Project, all its supporters do not seem to have given weightage to the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve's findings. It is estimated that 65% of the existing coral reefs in the project area are already dead, mostly due to human interference.

The Mannar resource base has already suffered. More than 40,000 fishermen in a population of 1,60,000 in 125 villages directly depend on the fast depleting marine resources. This situation is aggravated by agriculturists from the mainland

switching to fishing activities, exerting further pressure on marine resources.

When the project is implemented and during the course of implementation, the balance 35% coral reefs too would be damaged. Coastal development and dredging ravage reefs. Even building seaside homes, hotels and harbours contributes to this damage.

When deforestation and degradation of land take place, topsoil washes down the rivers into coastal eco-systems.

The development of a coral reef requires salt water, sea temperature between 20°C and 30°C, and water shallow

enough for sunlight to penetrate to the ocean floor. It also requires high oxygen input and low levels of silt, sediments and other impurities. Coral does not thrive near river mouths because the silt and lower concentration of salt reduce sunlight. When the Sethu project takes place, such disturbances will be unavoidable while dredging, transporting and

• by K.V.S. KRISHNA

dumping the material at 20 to 30 m depth. Further, the problem would continue throughout the period when construction activity takes place, damaging the coral reefs beyond repair.

Corals are called the 'Evergreen Forests of the Sea'. The activity of corals worldwide creates a balance in CO2 reserve in the atmosphere, as they act as carbon sinks, trapping as calcium carbonate and releasing oxygen. Various ecosystems of the oceans put together perhaps purify the atmosphere much more than all the evergreen forests of the world. This activity is not seen as it is all in the Ocean and therefore many people are not fully aware of the dangers in playing with the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve and the Palk Strait region. Corals and their eco-system sustain several food chains to keep the balance in nature, develop and sustain fishes, dolphins, whales

(Continued on Page 8)

• *For a better Chennai* Issues that need resolution

(Continued from
previous issue)

Improper development in the city is affecting in various ways Chennai's natural resources. The following issues need resolution.

● Pollution of waterways

The four waterways of Chennai (the Buckingham Canal is manmade, but the others are natural drainage courses) are all severely polluted on account of "development activities" – particularly the discharge of sewage, sillage, garbage and industrial wastes. Their main role as flood carriers has been seriously affected and damage to housing and infrastructure has become a recurring feature.

● Loss of tanks, waterbodies and wetlands

The Metropolitan Area was studded with dozens of tanks and several waterbodies and wetlands. The imperatives of urban development, particularly housing, has led to the reduction of this resource. Given the vagaries of the monsoon, the tanks were an ideal form of surface storage of water and for groundwater recharge. Some of the tanks have been polluted by letting sewage and sillage from nearby areas into them. Tanks also constitute an important form of wetland ecosystem. The loss of tanks means the loss of flora, fauna and other biodiversity which are supported by the waterbody. The disposal of garbage in Pallikarai and industrial development close to Pulicat are threatening these unique wetlands in the urban setting.

● Groundwater pollution

Groundwater is an important source of drinking water in parts of the CMA not covered by public water supply systems. The industrial complex in Manali, tanneries in Pallavaram, and other small units in industrial estates have severely polluted the groundwater in their vicinity. Fluoride contamination in Manali may have also contributed to fluorosis with its debilitating impacts on the resident population.

● Intrusion of seawater

Excessive pumping of groundwater to meet the escalating drinking water require-

ments of the city has led to intrusion of seawater in Minjur (in the North) and to warnings about intrusion in the southern suburbs along the coast.

● Coastal pollution

The pollution load of the waterways ultimately ends up in coastal waters. The disposal of the enormous quantities of flyash also pollutes the marine environment. The port contributes oil, heavy metals and other contaminants. Thermal pollution of the sea results from the discharge of used cooling water from the Ennore Thermal Plant and the Kalpakkam Nuclear Plant. (The latter is technically outside the CMA, but the impact is likely to be felt in the CMA.) Development along the coastline has contributed a variety of wastes, spoilt the pristine, beautiful beaches and disrupted the lives of the traditional fishing communities.

● Air/noise pollution

The air-sheds of the city are getting increasingly polluted and noisy on account of "development" activities. The largest contribution is from vehicular emissions, particularly along the major arterial roads. The extensive use of diesel as well as the lack of any form of emission control has resulted in a significant increase in the load of air pollutants and has caused an increase in the number of people being affected by respiratory diseases, allergies and other ailments.

● Loss of agricultural land/vegetation

The indiscriminate conversion of agricultural land, its owners being lured by escalating land prices, is an unfortunate consequence of 'development'. Promotion of urban agriculture (flowers, fruits and vegetables) is necessary to maintain a green belt around the city. Vegetation helps to mitigate the ill-effects of air pollution and to improve the microclimate of a city.

● Loss of open space and common land

The mushrooming of slums and squatter settlements has drastically reduced the availability of open spaces and common land. In a city bereft of parks, the lack of open space for

(Continued on Page 7)

New lease of life for heritage sites?

(By A Correspondent)

About a hundred heritage sites in Tamil Nadu are expected to get a new lease of life over the next five years, during which period Rs. 40 crore is to be provided by the Union Government to the State Government for their renovation.

A committee headed by the Chief Secretary is to be formed to implement the projects identified. The funds are also meant for improving museums.

What is not clear is whether the money is meant only for the 90 or so sites listed as heritage monuments/buildings by the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department and those looked after by the Museums Department, like the now-closed National Art Gallery, or whether the numerous unlisted heritage buildings, like Victoria Public Hall, will also qualify for assistance.

To create a 'Chennai Forever', beautifying the Marina begins...

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Corporation has started work on "greening" the Marina between Napier Bridge and Lighthouse. This, says the Corporation of Chennai, is part of an initiative called 'Chennai Forever', which has the Chief Minister's blessings. About Rs. 1 crore is to be spent on the beautification of the Marina.

A large park, with fountains, flowerbeds and Korean grass

lawns, is to be set up near the Napier Bridge. The Labour Statue's environs will be beautified with more Korean grass. There will even be a skating rink – near the Gandhi statue!

A 6-foot high chain link fence is coming on a 200-foot stretch across the Slum Clearance Board, to separate the lawns that have been laid here from the pavement. The dam-

aged service road between this lawn and the beach is to be re-laid.

Also due for 'greening' are a couple of kilometres along the Cooum bank from the Napier Bridge, westwards.

The Corporation has come into the picture after responsibility for maintaining the Marina was transferred to it from the PWD.

... but there's little action on promised eco-park ...

For about a year now there has been talk of creating an eco-park in the backwaters of the Adyar Estuary to the west of San Thomé High Road (there's a bit to the east too). This area was enclosed some months ago to prevent encroachments and plans were

sought by the Corporation for the development of the area as an eco-park. Nothing significant has happened since then. With 'Chennai Forever' now being launched in some areas, will there be a favourable nudge for the proposed park?

In this connection, we recently came across a story in *BusinessLine* in which MENKA SHIVDASANI describes an eco-park that is proving popular in Mumbai. Is there a lesson for Chennai in the story reproduced below?

— The Editor

... which could take a cue from Mumbai

The Maharashtra Nature Park is right in the heart of the city – in fact, it is cheek by jowl with the Dharavi slums.

Thirtyseven acres in extent, 27 of these acres comprise the nature park, a thick woodland with nearly 14,000 plants in about 300 varieties and 100 species of trees, including the baobab, of which there are barely 50 in Mumbai. There are also 115 species of birds, both

common ones such as cormorants, and more elusive ones such as the Little Green Heron.

What makes the park remarkable is that it was once a municipal landfill site, buried under tons of garbage, and touching a creek reeling under effluents. Then, in 1983, the idea of a nature park originated, and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) approached the

World Wildlife Fund-India to oversee the rebirth of these grounds.

Dr Salim Ali, the well-known ornithologist, planted the first tree and, over the years, several thousand saplings were planted. The Maharashtra Nature Park was eventually opened to the public on April 22, 1994 – Earth Day.

No artificial fertilisers or chemicals were used in the transformation. Instead, vermiculture programmes and rainwater harvesting have made all the difference. The park's rainwater harvesting project is designed to collect 22,500 kilolitres of rainwater, making it independent of the municipal water supply. The water collected from the project will be stored in an open pond, encouraging water birds and aquatic plants, and providing a backdrop for the Rain Education Centre.

Today, when an average of 150-200 people visit the park on weekends, it's hard to believe this was once a smelly, uninhabitable municipal landfill site. Instead, there are nature trails, butterfly walks, bird-watching, treasure hunts, plant shows, and many other activities.

A big 'Thank You' to 43 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.6.05 and 15.7.05, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *Madras Musings*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

Rs. 50: Ganesan, N. —Chennai Heritage

Rs.51: Godfrey Phillips India Limited, (Mumbai); Prasad, Sai, Dr. P;

Rs. 70: Pushparaj, Joseph William, B.

Rs. 100: Anand, P.; Anantha Lakshmi, P.M.; Buch S.H; Castelino, Christopher; Chandrasekaran, A.P.; Chari, (Maj. Gen. Retd.) C.T., (Hyderabad); Dasan, Maitreya, S.; Jagan, Radha; Kannan, G.; Kasinathan, Narana; Krishnamoorthy, R.; Menon, Parvathi V & Menon, Deepa; Muraleedharan, K.; Parameswaran, Dr.A.; Prasad, Dayal, P.S.; Premkumar, Cdr.; Raj, Gopal, C.; Ramamoorthy, N.; Roy, A.P.K & Roy; Kiruba; Satyanarayana, Dr.K.N.; Sriram, T.V.; Subramanian, D.V.;

Rs. 150: Balakumar, M.; Natarajan, B.; Venkatachari, Prasad;

Rs. 200: Ahmed, Mustaq

Rs. 300: Janakiraman, S.; Mistry, Zarin;

Rs. 400: Ananthachari, K.; Chettur, S.; Jayaraman, Lakshmi ; Manoj, K.M.;

Narasiah, K.R.A.; Subramaniam, M,

Rs. 500: Ramesh, P., A.P.

Rs. 900: Dastur, R.K.

Rs. 901: Ramachander, S.

Rs. 1000: Sundar, Satish B.

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Heritage protection

Not a word can be removed from the editorial 'Monumental sites' (MM, July 1st) which points a finger at the failure to protect and restore the State's ancient monuments and heritage sites.

We have an abundance of ancient temples, forts, palaces and other landmarks which remain dilapidated and decaying for want of repairs, renovation and preservation. Hill resorts, sea coasts, rivers, sanctuaries and forests are also neglected due to our apathetic attitude.

There will even come a day when the historically important, sprawling Fort St. George complex may be sold to apartment builders and rich hoteliers! The time is therefore ripe for forming Heritage Societies with enough power to prevent the destruction of our heritage sites.

M.R. Pillai

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

Totally unconcerned

Such environmental health hazards and social irresponsibility, as I describe below, are commonplace in Chennai. When are civic and corporate responsibilities ever going to emerge in this city of ours?

Renovation and repair work has been going on for the last three-four years inside a commercial complex neighbouring a residential colony. All ripped-out materials and debris removed are dumped in an open area just behind the blocks of the colony. This causes a lot of pollution problems to the colony. There is no sign of the debris being removed. Instead, garbage and waste are daily added to it, instead of being put into Corporation garbage bins for removal every day. This has been going on for some years now. Lots of dusts generated from this debris continuously settle

inside apartments in the colony, polluting utensils and affecting health.

Barbed wire laid by the Housing Board over the compound wall has been removed by the neighbouring contractors, jeopardising the security of the colony. More than this, the temporary huts put up for their workers have been built against the wall of the colony. This is trespassing! The workers use wood for cooking. By chance, if fire breaks out, the situation will be dangerous as much of the nearby debris is wood, plastic and rubber.

People also use the debris-dump as an open toilet.

Several appeals have been made to the owners of the commercial complex, the Corporation of Chennai, MLAs, MPs, Union and State Ministers and government officials, requesting for removal of the debris and installation of Corporation garbage bins for the daily waste. But no one has bothered to react.

This place is located in the heart of the city. Does no one care what commercial organisations are doing to our city?

S.R. Rajagopal
Chennai 600 014

Preventing dirt & dust

Ranjitha Ashok seems to be under the erroneous impression that she has to put up with construction noise throughout the night (MM, July 1st). In fact, construction companies should cease activity at 10 p.m., till the next morning. They cannot disturb the peace in the area, nor occupy almost the whole road with construction material. According to the CMDA regulations, they should cover building sites all around with 'thatch' or metallic sheets so that dust does not descend upon the neighbours or building material does not fall on passers-by. The neighbours could approach the CMDA or the Corporation or the Police in case the builder does not co-operate. The last threat could be a PIL seeking an interim stay so that construction itself will be stopped for two or three years.

A Heritage Commission is a good idea provided it is not go-

ing to be a refuge for 'heritage' bureaucrats. I am giving this copy of MM to the present Commissioner of Archaeology, T.S. Sridhar, who is enthusiastic and has told me that he would look into the Heritage Act problem in Chennai.

Dr. G. Sundaram
IAS (RTD.)

'Burma House', New No.33
Old No. 18, 9th Street
Dr. Radhakrishnan Road
Chennai 600 004

Not late

I wish K.R.A. Narasiah's article on the Sethu project (MM, June 16th) had been shared with all concerned much earlier. Of course, it is not too late if those concerned with the policy-framing of the Project are prepared to listen to such well meaning advice.

I wonder why TNPCB was employed much later. Why was there no partnership role right from the beginning? Why is the CPCB, New Delhi, so silent, as if the issues are covered by some secrecy act?

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

Missing name

One of the illustrious sons of Sarukkai (MM, May 1st) who has not been mentioned is Justice S. Varadachari of the Federal Court of India in pre-Independence days. He was the Chairman of the first Pay Commission for Central Government employees.

* * *

The Corporation park in Indira Nagar (MM, May 1st) is in a sorry state. Further to what has been published, an aesthetically designed masonry wall came up and when the work was half way through someone interfered and put a hold on the job. The construction was left incomplete with a portion of the park having a compound wall and the other portion having rusted wirenet fencing with withering creepers all over. An appeal by the residents of the area, to the Corporation of Chennai has evoked no response.

M.R. Ananthanarayanan
69, 5th Lane
Indira Nagar, Chennai 20

OUR ADDRESSES...

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: Chennai Heritage, 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

THE EDITOR

• Smile awhile

English as she might be

The European Union Commissioners have announced that agreement has been reached to adopt English as the preferred language for European communications, rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, the British Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a five-year phased plan for what will be known as EuroEnglish (Euro for short).

In the first year, "s" will be used instead of the soft "c". Certainly, sivil servants will reseive this news with joy. Also, the hard "c" will be replaced with "k". Not only will this clear up konfusion, but typewriters can have one letter less.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year, when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced by "P". This will make words like "fotograf" 20 per sent shorter.

In the third year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkorage the removal of double letters, which have always been a deterrent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horrible mes of silent "e"s in the languag is disgrasful, and they would go.

By the fourth year, peopl wil b reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" by "z" and "w" by "v".

During ze fifz year, ze unesesary "o" can be dropd from words kontaining "ou", and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters. After zis fifz yer, ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor truble or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech ozer.

Ze drem vil finali kum tru.

Arvind Nanda
A-901, Twin Towers, D.P. Road
Near Wireless Colony
Aundh, Pune 411 007

The other side

We hear many things in our daily life and just follow them blindly. Have you ever tried to justify any of these? All the best!

- Why does the sun lighten our hair, but darken our skin?
- Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?
- Why don't you ever see the headline "Psychic Wins Lottery"?
- Why is a boxing ring square?
- Why is it called lipstick if you can still move your lips?
- Why is it considered necessary to nail down the lid of a coffin?
- Why is it that doctors call what they do "practice"?
- Why is it that rain drops but snow falls?
- Why is it called a building after it is built?
- Why is it that to stop Windows, you have to click on "Start"?
- Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavour, and dish-washing liquid made with real lemons?
- Why is the third hand on the watch called a second hand?
- Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do... write to these men? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the mailmen could look for them while they deliver the mail?
- Why is the word abbreviation such a long word?

(Caught in the 'net?')

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

A heritage home to the fine arts

In any other country, an entire area such as Mylapore, especially the quarter surrounding the tank, would have long been classified a heritage district. But not so in Madras that is Chennai. Tiled town houses are vanishing every day and indiscriminate modernisation has led to traffic chaos of a high order. One of the most significant roads, still with an old world charm all its own, is the street opposite the 16-pillared *mandapam* of the Kapaleswarar Temple. This is Nadu Street, so named because it bifurcates old Mylapore.

At one time, it was home to several legal luminaries, such as S. Ramachandra Ayyar, who later became Chief Justice of the Madras High Court. In addition, Nadu Street was also home to musicians such as Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar and G.N. Balasubramaniam. It also played host to the first organised sabha in Mylapore, the Mylai Sangeetha Sabha, that met at the Vanniyar Sangam School which once functioned at the junction of Nadu Street and Salai Street. Today, this location is a block of flats.

It was Nadu Street that Sundaram Iyer moved into in 1924, having purchased, for Rs. 3000, the property that today bears the (old) number 41. Sundaram Iyer, known as Sundu to friends, was a lawyer by profession, but it was music that was his passion, earning him the respect of musicians and music-lovers. Visiting musicians found his house a welcome haven in which they could stay whenever they came to the city to perform. Sundaram Iyer's wife Parvathi, who was a competent violinist, was the perfect hostess, cooking meals to suit the particular likes of the various *vidvans* who called in.

Sundaram Iyer and Parvathi had three children when they moved in to No. 41. Eldest son Rajam (born 1919) and daughters Jayalakshmi (born 1920) and Saraswathi (1922-1984) were thus exposed to this musical atmosphere from their early years. For the later children, namely S. Balachander (1927-1990) and the twins Gopalaswamy (1929-1993) and Kalpakam, it was music, music and more music from the time they came into this world.

The house initially comprised a single storey and the terrace

was used by Sundaram Iyer to get his eldest son to do physical exercises. One day, two visiting musicians, violin maestro Malaikottai Govindasami Pillai and percussionist Pudukottai Dakshinamurthy Pillai, suggested to Sundaram Iyer that a hall be built on the first floor and predicted that it would remain filled with music. Sundaram Iyer acted on their wishes and a hall with a sloping roof was built. This was immediately taken over by the visiting musicians. It was here that the young Madurai Mani came in 1927 when he gave his maiden performance during the Music Academy's inaugural conference. Ariyakkudi was a frequent guest (this was long before he made Madras his base) and would willingly teach Rajam the songs he knew. Some of Ariyakkudi's handwritten notations are cherished possessions with Rajam today. Other tutors

• by SRIRAM V.

for Rajam included the *veena* maestro Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer and the violin exponent Tiruvalangadu Sundaresa Iyer.

In 1931, Sundaram Iyer made the acquaintance of Ambi Dikshitar, the sole surviving descendant of the Muttuswami Dikshitar tradition who, at the instance of the lawyer (later Justice) T.L. Venkatarama Iyer, had made Madras his home for a brief period, living in nearby Ponnambala Vadyar Street. Ambi Dikshitar was requested to teach Rajam some of the songs of Muttuswami Dikshitar. "He began the lessons with a song of Tyagaraja and not of his own ancestor!" recalls Rajam today with a chuckle. Such was Ambi Dikshitar's orthodoxy that he would not accept even a glass of water in Sundaram Iyer's house, preferring to go back home for each of his meals.

The flamboyant Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavatar, first cousin and co-tenant of T.L. Venkatarama Iyer at nearby Sannidhi Street, was yet another frequent visitor, filling No.41 with not only music but also the fragrant *javvadu* and other perfumes that he loved to wear. On Friday evenings, Sundaram Iyer would take his elder children with him all the way to George

Town to attend the evening concerts of Veena Dhanamma. The last tram would have long departed before the old lady put down her *veena* and Rajam remembers walking back all the way to Mylapore on many occasions.

With so much of music filling his existence, it was no wonder that Sundaram Iyer rarely practised his actual profession – law! Writing in his diary, many years later, son Balachander was to reminisce, "Though father was an advocate, he hated going to court. Hence his legal practice was nil!" Fortunately for the family, Sundaram Iyer's father, Rao Saheb Vaidyanatha Iyer, had written what was then considered a seminal book on audit and accounts and this brought in a tidy income as royalty. On the few days when Sundaram Iyer did go to court, son Rajam was left at the house of Madras Lalithangi at 108 Annappillai Street, George Town, so that he could learn Purandaradasa songs from her. Rajam remembers seeing Lalithangi's daughter M.L.

Vasanthakumari, then all of four years. She was to remain a lifelong friend.

While elder son Rajam was thus exposed to so many styles and traditions in music, younger son S. Balachander was a silent observer the genius in whom soon became manifest. He was, even at the age of five, able to perform on any instrument that took his fancy. There was no doubt that the boy was a prodigy, mastering the *kanjeera* by the age of five and later acquiring mastery over the harmonium, the *bulbul tarang*, the *tar shehnai*, the *dilruba* and the *mridangam*, all this without a full-time guru. In between, conventional education too continued, with the boys going to the nearby PS High School and the girls to the National (later the Lady Sivaswami Iyer) School for Girls.

In 1932, yet another musician made his appearance at 41 Nadu Street. Thin and emaciated, he had already acquired a formidable name for himself as a *bhajan* performer despite having a very weak voice. This was Polagam Ramaiah aka Papanasam Sivan who took up residence in nearby Mattala Narayanan Street. Sundaram Iyer took him under his wings and supported Sivan's family.



41 Nadu Street, the home of V. Sundaram Iyer. (Picture courtesy: MYLAPORE TIMES.)

Sivan began teaching the children music and spending all his waking hours at No. 41.

In 1933, G.K. Seshagiri, a talent scout, wrote to Sundaram Iyer asking if he knew of a troupe of artistes who would come to the Prabhat Studios, Kolhapur, and act for a film with a mythological theme. Sundaram Iyer decided that his own family would fulfil the role and soon they had all boarded the train for Kolhapur. Accompanying them was Papanasam Sivan who was to be the music director. The film *Seetha Kalyanam* had Rajam playing Rama, his sister Jayalakshmi portrayed Seetha and Seshagiri acted as Ravana. Young Balachander too demanded a role and he was made a *kanjeera* player in Ravana's court. No one felt that a *kanjeera* was out of place despite it being an instrument that was invented in the 19th Century! The film was a success and placed Papanasam Sivan firmly on the ladder of cinematic success. Rajam, extremely handsome, began a career as a film hero. But orthodox Mylapore was not amused. The thought of a brother and sister getting "married" on screen was anathema to them and it took quite a while before the dust settled. Rajam went on to act in *Radha Kalyanam* with Muthiah Bhagavatar setting the music and later he acted in *Rukmini Kalyanam* (1935) as well.

The popularity of Rajam and that of the young prodigy Balachander led to several concert invitations and the brothers embarked on a series of performances from 1938 onwards. Labeled as the 'Prabhat Prodigy Stars', they travelled all over India and the then Ceylon. In Karachi, a lady was so taken up with ten-year-old Balachander playing the *tabla* that she gifted him with a *sitar*. Balachander now mastered the *sitar* and true to his maverick nature he played Carnatic and not Hindustani music on it! In addition, he was

NOSTALGIA

building up a formidable reputation as a prodigy in chess as well, competing with experts in exhibition matches. He also acted in films as a child artist.

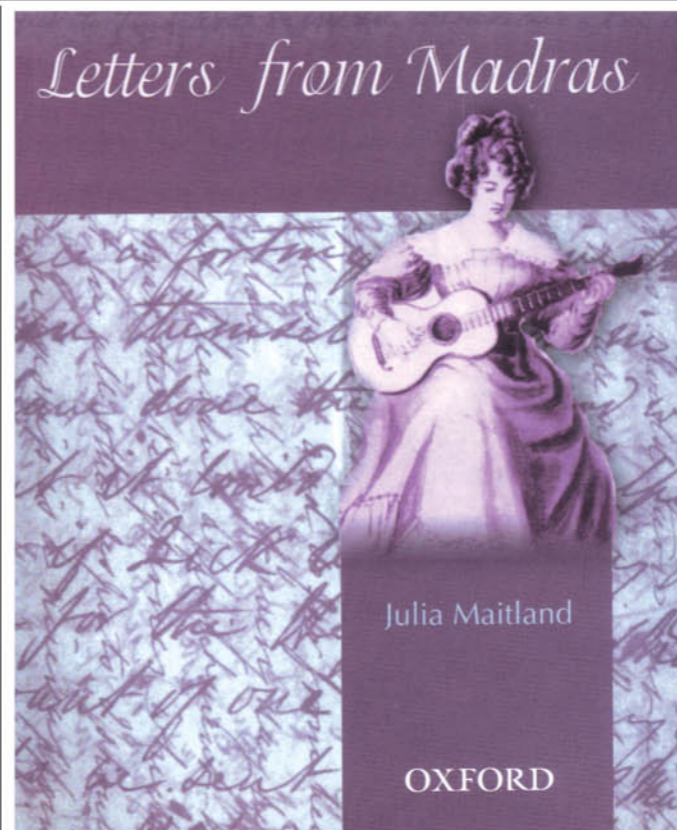
In the early 1930s, Rajam was to embark on yet another lifelong passion-cum-profession – painting. Neighbour Lingayya was studying at the Government Arts College ("called 'Bomma College' in my time", reminisces Rajam) and he introduced Rajam, then studying in the III form, to the wonders of art. The *pyol* of No. 41 was soon covered with Rajam's drawings. His maternal uncle Raghavan who worked in a bookshop in Moore Market would bring home books on the Old Masters and Rajam would reproduce the plates they contained. Yet another neighbour, Gopalakrishna Iyer, who worked in the Army as an Engineer, brought Rajam his first paints box and he was on his way to becoming an artist. Giving up school in 1935, he decided to enrol in the Government Arts college. But Principal Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhury was sceptical about a film hero coping with the rigours of learning the arts. Sadly for Rajam, his mentor Lingayya, who was a year senior at the college, contracted leprosy and died. Rajam did very well at the college, winning a scholarship of eight rupees a month for his last three years there. He learnt clay modelling, oil painting and water colours and jewellery design. In 1942 he passed out of the college.

At around this time, yet another regular at No. 41, Louis Thompson, a devotee of Ramana Maharshi, introduced Rajam to the wonders of Indian art, namely the paintings at Ajanta and Bagh and the sculptures at Mahabalipuram and Ellora. Rajam decided to take to painting in the Indian style and became a fine artist in that genre. His portraits of the Carnatic Trinity and several other composers, the Arupattu Moovar and several Gods and Goddesses adorn several pooja rooms and also embellish special issues of several magazines.

No.41 was briefly given up in 1942 when Madras was evacuated owing to the war scare. The family moved to Coimbatore and there Jayalakshmi acted in the film *Sivakavi* opposite M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavatar. They returned to the house the same year.

Before long with All India Radio throwing its doors open, a new employment opportunity awaited the members of the household.

(To be concluded)



Quite a nice person to know

By 1800, the East India Company had been trading in India for two hundred years, and the initial relationship between John Company and the Indians, that of merchant or trader with customer, was beginning to change.

Now, we've read the history books, biographies, and learned essays of that period in time, some of which, while adhering faithfully to facts, tempt you to ask: "Yes, but what was it really like? What was it like for everyday-people? Especially for the Mems and "Dooresanys" who were shipped here, either as part of the rather sarcastically named 'fishing fleet' (fishing for husbands, apparently) or simply because their spouses were posted here, very like Civil Service helpmates in the generations to follow?"

The book *Letters from Madras-during the years 1836-1839*, based on the correspondence of one Julia Maitland, with an introduction by Alyson Price and published by the Oxford University Press, gives you an idea of that era, taking you, not into the world of sovereigns and politicians, but into one more mundane, but very real, beset with concerns over adequate supplies of bread, meat, vegetables and clean linen, over staying healthy, one where problems regarding domestic staff are paramount, and where the efforts to survive in an

unfamiliar land never really end.

In a letter dated 1826, the young Julia Maitland is described as "a most lovely companion ... well-informed...simple, unaffected..."

The object of this glowing tribute was born in October 1808. In 1835, she met James Thomas, home on leave from India, a widower with three small daughters. They married the following year, leaving almost at once for Madras. Her grandmother, Charlotte, who had an extra special soft corner for Julia, writes: "The distance of Madras seems like going from this world to the next."

Julia's series of letters begin with descriptions of the sea-voyage across – practical, down-to-earth in tone – yet indicative of an intelligent mind, capable of picking up on details.

By the time Julia arrived in India, the boundaries between the races had become rigid, reflected in the political topography in towns – 'Black Town' in Madras, for instance. There were distinct signs of increasing missionary fervour which, according to Alyson Price's 'Introduction', was "at odds with the traditional Company attitude of regard for Indian religion and customs."

The couple arrived in Madras in December 1836, and stayed till August 1837. A daughter was born to them. James Thomas then took up a post as Judge and Criminal Judge in 'Rajahmundry', where they remained for a while, with Julia beating the summer heat by moving to 'Samulda-vee'. Their son was born in Rajahmundry. In 1839, they moved back to Madras, then to Bangalore briefly. On 6th January 1840, James Thomas died suddenly. Julia then returned to England with her children.

Letters from Madras was first published in 1843 anonymously, signed 'by A Lady', largely because Julia's mother didn't want her daughter published under her own name. Julia is said to have read and corrected the proofs herself. Three years later came a second edition, published in Murray's Colonial Library, the copyright of which fetched Julia the princely sum of forty guineas.

During the process of editing the book, Julia removed all personal references relating to her family along with details of the remaining content reflects her highly individual views on the is-

In her letter dated 27th December 1836, she writes that "I think I shall like Madras very much, and I am greatly amused with all I see and hear." But as time went by, she soon began to merely tolerate Madras, finding the social circles she moved in largely infested with "apathy and listlessness", filled with creatures "eaten up with laziness". Dinner parties she went to were "grand, dull and silent", with people mostly preoccupied with scratching their mosquito-bites. Her remarks on her compatriots, especially the "thorough Madras lady" are devastating. Apparently this creature does nothing but go "a good deal to shops and her daughter published under her own name. Julia is said to have read and corrected the proofs herself. Three years later came a second edition, published in Murray's Colonial Library, the copyright of which fetched Julia the princely sum of forty guineas.

During the process of editing the book, Julia removed all personal references relating to her family along with details of the remaining content reflects her highly individual views on the is-

She speaks of her army of servants, and adds that her complaint of their slowness and dawdling draws the amusement of other seasoned fellow-countrywomen, who laugh and call her a "Griffin", which meant "a freshman or freshwoman in India." She observes that what would be luxuries in England are necessities here. She describes one journey, "with 52 men to carry us, our provisions, clothes, plates, knives", going on to speak of the sad lack of comfort in travellers' bungalows, overseen as they are

• by RANJITHA ASHOK

political correctness. But even as hackles rise, you read on, and find that she is scathing about her own countrymen, when she pronounces "...the rudeness and contempt with which the English treat them (the Indians) are quite painful to witness."

In a letter written in 1838, she says of her people: "The civilians behave better than the military, though all are bad enough." She observes of the local population: "A little politeness pleases them very much, and they have a good right to it. Many of them are descendants of native princes and ought not to be treated like dirt."

Her remarks and views are perhaps best judged against the context of her particular time and background.

ing it, local terminology was obviously creeping up on her. When she speaks of the eagerness with which mail from home is awaited, she says "peons are dispatched from every *compound* to wait at the post office". When she speaks of household emergencies and situations, like how to deal with snakes and scorpions, you get an image of a housewife, no different from any the worldover in any age, coping with strange situations she had no point of reference for, no handed-down wisdom or experienced knowledge from a mother or grandmother, totally dependent on her own ingenuity.

Julia's own interests in India were concerned with education.

She appears to have enjoyed herself in Rajahmundry, putting her ideas into action, setting up, along with her husband, a "school for caste boys". She was sensitive to methods of teaching, writing that some straight translations from English books "are altogether out of the comprehension of the natives – not so much above them as different from them". She appears to have been quite shrewd in her assessment of people around her, and in understanding what was the best way to 'get to what', in a manner of speaking. When she writes of the qualities required of a missionary or teacher, she says; "They (the Indians) are themselves most excellent judges of manners and standing in society, and invariably know a gentleman and respect him accordingly", adding elsewhere that it is amazing the "pain and trouble they will take for a little learning." She therefore feels that it is of paramount importance that missionaries and teachers ought to come from the "class" of people who would prove most impressive in local standing.

Julia was a keen entomologist. She was a voracious reader and also enjoyed sketching water colours. She loved music, and even attempted to learn how to appreciate "South Indian music". She learnt Tamil and employed a "Moonshee" to learn "Gentoo" or "Teloogoo", and generally took an interest in all things Indian. In that she differs from a lady who, when Julia asked her eagerly what she had seen of the country so far, replied; "Oh, nothing, I know nothing at all about them, nor I wish to ..." It was upon Julia's insistence that the couple visited the "Rajah Puntooloo", where their dinner was served "native-fashion, brass trays lined with leaves, a different little conundrum on each leaf; pillaws, quantities of pickles, ten or a dozen varieties of chutnies, different vegetables, and cakes made of grease, pepper and sugar". The Rajah was given a lecture on the advantages of girls' education by Thomas,

(Continued on page 6)



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

1. American architect David Childs has come up with the latest design of which building in New York?
 2. Name the Nobel Prize-winning inventor of the IC, a vital ingredient in any computer today, who passed away recently.
 3. Which popular bank from South India entered its centenary year at the end of June?
 4. Whom did football world champion Brazil beat to win the Confederation's Cup?
 5. The scion of the family that owns the world's largest retail chain, was killed in an air accident recently. Who was he?
 6. Name the Indian cricketer, known for his brilliant close-in fielding, who died recently.
 7. The 20th anniversary of which airline disaster was observed on June 23rd?
 8. Hour did Japan's Akiko Morigami contribute to Indian tennis history on June 20th?
 9. What incident led to a mass withdrawal from the U.S. Formula One GP on June 19th?
 10. The 60th birthday of which charismatic Nobel laureate from a SAARC country was celebrated on June 19th?
- * * *
11. Of the 1000' Women for Nobel Peace Prize 2005' nominations, three are from Tamil Nadu. Name them.
 12. Sheela Rani Chunkath is Secretary of which important State Govt. department?
 13. Where in Chennai is 'Zebronic's' game zone, Asia's first gaming zone arcade, dedicated to VIDIA to technology?
 14. Who composed *Thiruvasagam* in *Symphony*?
 15. Which Chennai-based sportswoman has been nominated as the Union Health & Welfare Ministry's 'Goodwill Ambassador' for 2005-06?
 16. Who is the new Vice-Chancellor of Anna University?
 17. To which SAARC country did the Madras Crocodile Bank send 40 marsh crocodiles recently?
 18. In the early days of Indian cricket in Madras, the matches between which two clubs fought the 'Wars of the Roses'?
 19. One more on cricket. How did Madras become part of the national cricketing history on November 4, 1934?
 20. Name the airlines, headquartered in Coimbatore, that is going to offer premium, low-cost services from August.

(Answers on page 7)

It's time TN won another Ranji title

The former Indian and Tamil Nadu opener Sadagopan Ramesh is determined to stage a comeback. That's the heartening news I've heard in recent times.

Now that he has revealed his mind, this strokemaker has only to score tons and tons of runs in the ensuing league season – which should not be a difficult task for a batsman of his calibre – and make his way back into the Tamil Nadu team. This should eventually pave his entry into the Indian team, since Greg Chappell has already said that he's going to observe the form of 'fringe' players carefully.

The next important member of the Tamil Nadu squad is captain Hemang Badani. He is one of the most talented players in the country. I would rate him much higher than Yuvraj Singh, especially if you com-

pare the performances of the two left-handers in the VB Tri-Series in Australia in 2004. The way Badani handled the Bret Lee blast on those bouncy tracks was far superior to that of many a leading batsman's effort in the side and a treat to watch.

Ramesh and Badani should be the mainstay of the Tamil Nadu batting in the year ahead. Then come Sridharan Sriram and Sridharan Sharath. Both have done yeoman service for the State. Sriram is a most improved batsman and could stand a chance of replacing the likes of V.V.S. Laxman and Ganguly. With Sachin Tendulkar nearing the end of his career, the Tamil Nadu players should have greater opportunities and should develop gear a stronger mental attitude to put themselves in the running for those possible vacancies.

● As the Tamil Nadu cricket season gets underway, BHASKERAN THOMAS looks at how that is going to reflect in Tamil Nadu's Ranji Trophy performance this year.

Pace bowler Jesuraj was undoubtedly the find of last season. If he maintains that consistency, he should contribute much to the State team and open the way to partnering his Statemate Lakshmiopathy Balaji in the Indian side.

C. Hemant Kumar, Ram Kumar and Badrinath are others who should be automatic choices for the State. It was unfortunate that the promising paceman C. Ganapathy was kept out of most games last

year. He is a good prospect and the TNCA selectors should give him more opportunities if they intend to make another international fast bowler out of him. Badrinath should be developed as an all-rounder; he certainly has the potential.

It is good to hear that wicketkeeper Dinesh Kaarthick and left-arm allrounder Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan are to travel to the Australian Cricket Academy. Armchair critics have been trying to belittle the wicketkeeper, but Kaarthick is a good keeper and batsman. The only problem with him is the presence of senior players at the other end while batting which overawes him. This was evident in the Bangalore Test against Pakistan. He should believe in himself and play his natural game, not bothering about the non-striker. He has loads of talent

and should ignore all talk of Mahender Singh Dhoni being his challenger. We hope that Kaarthick will gain this confidence after his trip to Australia. The same applies to Vidyut. He should seek out former Aussie spinners like Richie Benaud, Terry Jenner, Lindsay Kline and Ashley Mallet and learn some to the finer points in

bowling. I am sure he won't feel confused when experts give varied advices. He should pick up those ideas which he can adapt and become more penetrative. There's no problem about his batting. It would have been worthwhile to have sent his spinning partner Ramkumar too on this trip. He's a bowler who would have gained much from such an opportunity.

A good leg-spinner is what the Tamil Nadu side needs badly. It's surprising that a State that produced Vaman Kumar is struggling to find another such bowler in this category. But there could be someone in the lower league divisions with the potential. It's time to scout for him. It does not matter if he is only 15 or 16 years old; after all wasn't L. Sivaramakrishnan in that age group when he was discovered.

Practice should be the keyword for the team and with a good coach in Bharat Arun and physios to back him, Tamil Nadu should not be found wanting in any area except, perhaps, fielding. The coach and former fielding experts should be asked to improve the catching and stump-hitting aspects. Catches win matches and there should be no repetition of what happened against Baroda. That was a warning. A new season is dawning and the team should be got ready to accept the challenge and win the Ranji Trophy. It has the potential and the talent to do so. (Courtesy: *Straight Bat*)



N. Kanniah.

Leading a team from Div. IV to Div. I

N. Kanniah is a cricketer and a trade union leader. He heads the largest railway union in India and is captain of the Southern Railway Institute Perambur (SRI/PER). And he does not let one affect the other.

Kanniah took over the reins of SRI/PER in 1988-1989 and from the next season onwards SRI/PER has been looking up. That year, it won the IV Division championship. In 1991-1992, it won the III Division championship. In 1992-1993, it won the II Division championship and was promoted to the I Division league in 1993-1994 for the first time in the history of SRI/PER. During 1995-1996, the team remained in I Division. From 1996-1997 to 2004-2005, it was one of the top sides in the II Division, last year, winning the II Division title. Now, Kanniah finds himself captaining the team in the tough I Division.

Kanniah, in spite of his trade union activities, makes it a point not to miss "evening cricket practice" for even a single day. He encourages good young college cricketers. He also runs the Kanniah Cricket Academy in Perambur and Tambaram. He lavishes attention on the Perambur Railway Ground which is a turf wicket. (Courtesy: *Straight Bat*)

S.R.J.

Quite a nice person to know

(Continued from page 5)

which he, the Rajah, appears to have quietly ignored, but in the most diplomatic way.

She took a great interest in her husband's work and the trouble to stay abreast of events around her. She speaks of the 'Cooly trade' describing it "as neither more nor less than an East Indian slave trade, just as wicked as its predecessor, the African slave trade." She is shocked over the practice of 'sati', and is thoroughly upset when, upon its occurrence, there was no word of remonstrance from the British Government.

She describes, with appreciation, some sound native advice, with one gentleman telling her that she ought to tell her husband to certainly keep his own mind, but "say all same what others say", because that would "give him fine appoint-

ment, and plenty much rupees." The same person also makes the point that there were "plenty many Englishmen who told many lies" keeping career advancement in mind. When Julia points out that that was just not Thomas's way, the concerned gentleman appears to have nodded in understanding, but thinking it "plenty great pity".

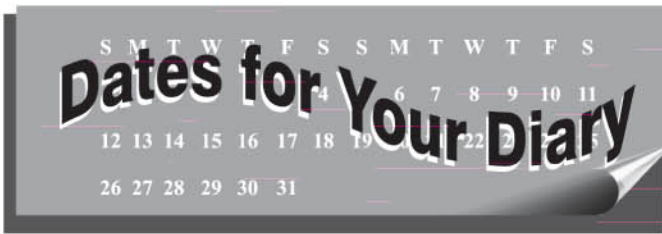
After her husband's death, Julia returned to England and settled in Richmond. She married Charles Maitland in 1842. She went on to write, mainly for children, but never under own name.

She died, probably of tuberculosis, in 1864.

The letters are mostly written to her mother, with a few extracts from letters written to her grandmother, brothers, cousins and friends. Like all close families, they loved to

talk, share experiences. There was obviously no detail in one another's lives that was too mundane or too ordinary, incapable of providing an opportunity for a smile, a laugh, thought or exclamation.

Her letters cast light on the rather contradictory world she lived in for a brief while. In a sense, these letters build a universal bridge defeating Time. Several facets in daily living that concerned Julia are still relevant today. You are left with the impression of someone who might have been a rather nice person to know, someone with whom (if the pre-conceived prejudices could be expunged, and if the rules of the Cosmos permitted), you could, even today, share a laugh with over a cup of coffee, discussing household vicissitudes and the quaint foibles and eccentricities of humankind in general.



Till July 20: An exhibition of paintings on Kashmir by Yashwant Shirwadkar. (At Vinyasa Art Gallery.)

Till July 20: *Palette Palate Passion Show:* A group exhibition of paintings inspired by food. (At Taj Coromandel.)

Till August 13: A Children's Mela: The mela offers a wide variety of enthralling activities such as bullockcart rides, magic shows, folk performances, exhibitions, street plays, puppet shows and many more. (At Dakshina-Chitra.)

Till July 26: *Chennai Painting* – an exhibition of the works of Joju Dominic. (At Lalit Kala Akademi.)

From July 16: Sivabalan's figurative works using water colours, oils and acrylics, representing a traditional view of South India. (At Ashvita Art Gallery.)

July 18-19: *Sthreeratra* presented by the International Dance Alliance. A unique concept celebrat-

ing women through various classical dance styles. Twelve groups from different parts of India will present different styles. (At Narada Gnana Sabha, 6.00 p.m.)

July 20-August 13: *Women@rt.* A group of 15 Chennai-based women artists, painters and sculptors come together to exhibit for the first time in a curated show. (At Forum Art Gallery.)

From July 21: *The Regal of Regals.* A group exhibition of paintings on the theme of the lion. (At the Connemara.)

July 21-30: Exhibitions of paintings by V.K. Sathyaendran. (At Vinyasa Art Gallery.)

July 22-31: *Adiperukku-Ayyanar Festival.* The festival of *Adiperukku* or *Pathinettaam Perukku* (18th day of the Tamil month *Aadi*) marks the onset of the rainy season. The festival focusses on the importance of water in everyday life. There will be folk performances, a children's mela, and exhibitions by children on water and envi-

ronment. (At DakshinaChitra.)

July 23: *Evening of Musicals* presented by the Madras Musical Association. (At Museum Theatre, 6.30 p.m.)

July 25-August 6: *Distance-Nearness*, an exhibition by Austrian artist Christine Mayr. (At the Alliance Francaise.)

July 28-30: Shibouri Workshop. Shibouri is a form of fabric dyeing which originated in Japan. Fabric, usually silk or cotton, is folded, wrapped, twisted, stitched or pleated in special ways and then secured with string. The fabric is then dyed, and when unwrapped, unique patterns emerge. The 3-day workshop is organised by Colors of Nature, Pondicherry. (At DakshinaChitra. For details contact Madras Craft Foundation.)

July 28-30: Organic Festival with Krac-a-Dawna – Sustain Life. A variety of organic foods will be on display along with presentations and promotional talks. The Farmers' Market is on July 30. Special attraction is their range of organic cotton casual wear. (At Ahumcaara.)

July 29-August 1: Exhibition of works of Raju M Durshettwar. (At Prakrit Art Gallery.)

July 29-30: *Oikyotaan Baul Festival:* To celebrate the free spirit of Baul Music, Oikyotaan will present a two-day festival and also release their debut album and documentary film, *Notun Projonmer Baul* (The new generation Baul). The event will feature a traditional Baul performance by three renowned artistes from West Bengal followed by a performance by Oikyotaan in collaboration with some of the Bauls on the second day. The Baul artistes will also exhibit indigenous folk instruments and artifacts besides their personal album. (At Top Storey, 7 p.m.)

July 30: *Camatic Duo Violin Arange-tram* of Sean King (13 years) and Anish King (11 years), dis-



Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Paris: Mysteries, Mythologies and Memories*.

August 8-20: *Paris: Mysteries, Mythologies and Memories*, an exhibition by Vishwajyoti Ghosh, a young graphic artist living and working in Delhi.

This exhibition is an individual artist's perspective of contemporary Paris, a city that walks together with its splendid past and its present. These are drawings and perspectives of a very modern and splendid Paris. Ghosh takes the past and references of the present in a single drawing in an endeavour to portray the essential spirit of this city (at the Alliance Francaise).

principles of Karaikal S Venkatasubramanian. The two boys are American citizens who have lived in Chennai for five years and are now in Bangkok. (At Vani Mahal, 6.30 p.m.)

July 31: The Ayyanar festival – Ayyanar, a folk deity of Tamil Nadu, has his shrine on the outskirts of every village – will come alive with music and the traditional folk dances of Tamil Nadu. (At DakshinaChitra.)

August 4-7: *Five elements* – films by V.Viswanadhan from Kerala, who lived and worked in Paris since 1968. The painter's first film, *Sable* (Earth) (1976-1982) starts the cycle he devotes to the five elements. (At Top Storey, 6.30 p.m.)



Still from Viswanadhan film.

Issues that need resolution

(Continued from page 2)

recreation and other public activities is a matter of serious concern. The settlements on the banks of the waterways limit the possibility of waterfront development.

Sea erosion

The expansion of port development and port-based activities has seriously eroded the northern coastline and washed away the main link to the industrial area at Manali. It has also serious repercussions on the Pulicat eco-system north of the metropolis, which is included in the Ramsar convention for protection.

(Concluded)

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.

● I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS, as *subscription* to *Madras Musings* for the year 2004-05.

● As token of my support for the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that *Madras Musings* espouses, I send Chennai Heritage an additional Rs (Rupees)

Please keep/put me on your mailing list.

Name :

Address:

Note: Overseas postage Rs. 550/year extra. Cheques for overseas postage alone payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd.. All other cheques to 'Chennai Heritage'.

Answers to Quiz

1. The 1776 feet tall Freedom Tower at the site of the WTC; 2. Jack Kilby; 3. Canara Bank; 4. Argentina; 5. John Walton; 6. Eknath Solkar; 7. The bombing of Air India carrier Kanishka; 8. She lost to Sania Mirza to make the Indian the first woman to win a singles match at Wimbledon; 9. Poor quality of tyres from Michelin; 10. Myanmar's Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

* * *

11. Prof. Saraswathy, Shyamala Natraj and Krishnammal Jaganathan; 12. Health and Family Welfare; 13. Spencer Plaza; 14. Ilayaraja; 15. Squash champion Joshna Chinnappa; 16. D. Viswanathan; 17. Bangladesh; 18. Mylapore Cricket Club and Triplicane Cricket Club; 19. It played and won the first ever Ranji Trophy match; 20. Paramount Airways.

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:

(Continued from page 1)

and several other creatures, big and small, from which the fisherfolk make a living.

The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, established with UNESCO's support, is 10,500 sq.km in extent, with a core area of 560 sq. km. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) considers this an area of particular concern due to the massive destruction of the corals and the degradation of the area due to excessive fishing and increasing human interventions. Once shipping activity increases due to the project, oil slicks, fertilisers, pesticide, garbage and accidental damage of oil cargo can and will play havoc with the biosphere, the livelihood of the fisherfolk being the first casualty.



Adam's Bridge, looking like a pearl necklace strung between Rameswaram and Talaimannar. Some of the islands/islets are above the water, some submerged, but at low tide, 22 of them becoming visible. It is stated that there are about 120 islands/islets in the necklace. The seas around Adam's Bridge are shallow – only 2 to 3 metres deep.

Can an independent look be taken?

The Gulf of Mannar is considered the world's richest marine biological resource. It has an ancient maritime history and was famous for the production of pearls, an important item of trade with the Roman Empire as early as the first century. Fishing has been the primary livelihood source. The region continues to be famous for its production of chank (Indian conch). The Gulf is also a live scientific laboratory of international value. It has 3600 species of plants, 117 species of corals. Apart from the corals, other aquatic life forms are sea grasses which grow in shallow coastal waters. The sea grasses are some of the largest remaining feeding grounds for endangered marine mammals like the Dugong, which is now rarely sighted in the reserve. Similarly all the five species of marine turtle have been recorded as nesting in the islands and islets.

Many species of crustaceans, molluscs, gastropods, sponges and fish inhabit the world of coral and sea grasses. More than ten species of whales, including the Blue Whale, as well as two species of dolphins, inhabit the Gulf of Mannar and are often caught in fishing nets.

The ecological impact of the project on the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Resource is not the only matter of concern. The entire sea south of Tuticorin upto and beyond Kanniyakumari and Sri Lanka as well as Adam's Bridge is an important zone needing a high degree of protection and co-ordination between India and Sri Lanka, too. The region abounds in pearl banks and chank, notably the sacred chank. The region has significant amounts of monazite, zircon and ilmenite. Further, India has access to metal-rich nodules in some 53,000 sq.km of the sea bed

south of the Gulf of Mannar. With future availability of shipping facilities through the Sethusamudram canal, all commercial activity and mining activity will increase, causing further pressure to ruin the entire fragile eco-system.

DOD and SAC (1997) have calculated the extent of coral reefs to be 94.3 sq.km, including all associated forms of coral reef and algal productive area of 17 hectares.

Between Dhanushkodi and Talaimannar (Sri Lanka) the small gap of 30 kilometres has a chain of 22 islands/islets visible from satellite imagery. NASA is of the opinion this is a man-made structure combined with nature. Other opinions suggest there are some 120 islands/islets. In low tide, water goes down by 1.3 m. So far, no archaeological work seems to have been done by India. How will this historic 'bridge', part of the *Ramayana*

tradition, be affected by the Sethu project?

Other problems that need to be looked at are:

- Will heavy dredging and increased maritime traffic disrupt sea currents, step up sea erosion and threaten the fragile coastline of the Gulf of Mannar?
- Will the canal help or hinder smuggling, terrorist and antinational activities? Can the damaged coral reef be restored? Corals are developed over a period of 100-200 years. What is damaged is gone for good. Will that be the case here too?
- Can a tsunami-effect affect the Sethu project? Though the December 2004 tsunami had no effect on the region as Sri Lanka blocked it reaching the Palk Strait/Gulf of Mannar region, some 40 years ago a tsu-

nami-like wave, 20/30 feet high, washed away a train along with 6 bogies, engine and the Pamban Bridge. More than 200 passengers perished. The entire townships at Mandapam and Dhanushkodi were affected and there was death toll. Such waves, due to local seismic action, can easily fill up sediment and sand into the 14-m deep artificial channel, as most of the sea around is not deep (2 to 4 m). Even cyclones can cause damage, making redredging and maintenance cost much higher than normal.

(To be concluded next fortnight)

Sport on page 6

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations:


Amalgamations Group


Ashok Leyland


Brakes India Limited


Go Placidly


F.L. Smidth Limited

KASTURI &
SONS
LTD.


LARSEN & TOUBRO LIMITED
Engineering Construction & Contracts Division

LOKAVANI
HALLMARK PRESS
PVT. LTD.


MURUGAPPA
GROUP

NIPPO
BATTERIES
TORCHES


Rane Group


SAINT-GOBAIN
The future of glass. Since 1665.


SANMAR


SUNDARAM FINANCE
Enduring values. New age thinking.


Sundram Fasteners
Limited


TAJ
Hotels, Resorts
and Palaces


TATA
TATA CONSULTANCY
SERVICES


TVS
TVS MOTOR COMPANY


UCAL
UCAL AUTO
PRIVATE LIMITED

Since 1856,
patently leaders
— A WELLWISHER