

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

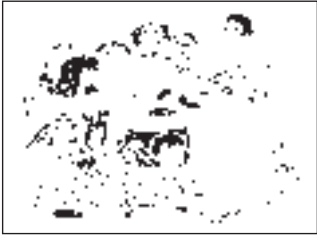
MUSINGS

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Vol. XV No. 12

October 1-15, 2005

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

Sir, I strongly suggest you order something while you wait for your car...!

Pick a car, any car

You know those melancholic hordes crowding hotel entrances, gazing ineffectually in the direction where their loved ones last disappeared?

All part of the I-didn't-park-my-car syndrome

Like any form of self-indulgence, valet parking also extracts a price.

The good valet does his best, yes, but well-meaning intentions cannot mitigate the agony of waiting for conspicuously absent vehicles.

Talked-out at the end of a social evening, all capacity for pleasantness running dangerously on 'Empty', you hang around, ageing perceptibly, waiting... waiting.

A car appears, causing a stir of hope. But, alas, it isn't yours. You watch Fortune's favourite leap triumphantly into his vehicle, and meantly hope he gives himself an injury while fastening his seat belt.

The other day, making our way gingerly across a hotel lobby (those over-polished floors are murder), and (this being Chennai) finding it generously sprinkled with auld acquaintances, we, all benign and affable, greeted the one closest to our flight path.

"TN-blah-blah-5511." Was her terse, baffling response.

"Eh?"

"5511, 5511."

"New Age small-talk?" we ventured.

"No, I've lost my valet parking tab," she confessed, taut as an overstretched rubber band. "I'd better not forget my car number."

Murmuring sympathetically, we then, by tacit consent, proceeded to avoid this particular auld acquaintance for the rest of the evening.

Maybe photographs of cars, number plates prominently displayed, should join those of the spouse and kiddies in wallets/handbags.

Ranjitha Ashok

Madras AND Chennai

They've both existed from the City's beginnings

(By S. Muthiah)

Before the British there was no Madras. There was no Chennai either. What there were, were small villages like Tiruvottriyur and Tiruvanmiyur and a fading town, Mylapore, with its suburb Triplicane and, in between, scrub jungle, paddy fields and stretches of beach. I would be delighted to be shown any parchment or palm leaf manuscript or rock inscription that features either name within the present Greater Madras limits before July/August 1639. I am almost certain that no such documentation can be produced.

It is against this certainty that I wonder why there was so much time taken up recently to debate whether Madras or Chennai should be the name of city's university, given that both names belong to the year 1639/1640 when the East India Company was granted three square miles of no man's sand and it settled its chief traders of the Coromandel Coast within a walled enclosure they called Fort St. George and Madraspatnam and weavers and dyers from Nellore and Machilipatnam within an area the Indian settlers called Chennapatnam.

Both names first figure at the same time in the Madras records, with the 'White Town' called Madraspatnam and the 'Black Town' Chennapatnam. And ever since, both names have been in use, Madras in English, Chennai in Tamil and Telugu. And it is against that background that it has been the University of Madras in English and Chennai Palkalaikazhagam in Tamil. Which makes me wonder what the debate was all about.

The unanswered question, however, is where did both names derive from? The grant of land to John Company in

1639 was by the Damarla brothers, the local Nayaks (governors) of the Rajah of Chandragiri (representing the last vestiges of the Vijayanagar Kingdom of Kannada lineage but Telugu in speech).

With the grant came a request to name the new settlement Chennapatnam, after their father, Chennappa, a noble of the Chandragiri Court. The British, however, chose to call the walled settlement they raised Madraspatnam (spelt in a variety of ways). Why they did this has no explanation in any of the Company's records – despite its employees being meticulous record-keepers – leading to numerous theories.

It is narrated that there were two tiny fishing settlements close to the 'fort' and their *thalaivar* was a Roman Catholic named Madarasan (*Madham* = faith or *Maatha* = (Holy) Mother together with Raja). The British stockade, the story continues, was raised on his

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Restoration of South India's first railway station, historic Royapuram Station, was completed shortly after these pictures were taken and the restored building was inaugurated a few days ago. Certainly a part of it will remain a railway station, but what awaits the rest of it? Our pictures by V. RAJESH show front and rear views of the station, the former reflecting the cement surfacing being done instead of the traditional lime work. Conservation purists might not like this approach, but that the building has not been pulled down should make us thankful for small mercies.

Hope for heritage conservation ahead

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Babu Rajiv, recently announced that a Heritage Sites Commission would be set up by the Centre to ensure conservation of historical monuments in the country:

He stated that the Commission would have statutory powers. Hence, its directions would

be binding on the Government, private groups and individuals. At present, agencies such as the ASI have no statutory powers and this is a major handicap in the effective implementation of decisions.

He said the proposed Commission would concentrate on unprotected monuments. It would advise the Centre on

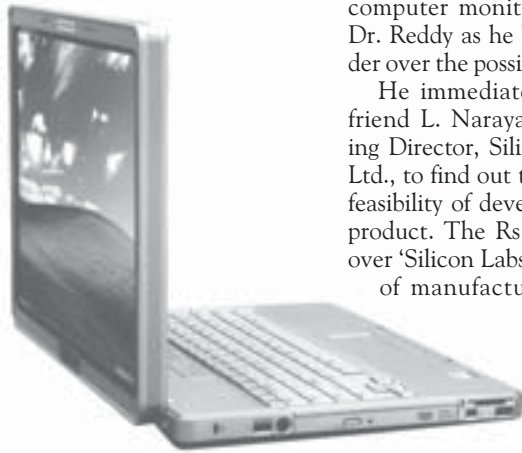
measures to be taken for identification, protection and management of the monuments. It would also review the legal framework for the conservation of monuments and suggest appropriate amendments. The statute for the proposed Commission was being prepared and

(Continued on Page 6)

Doctor-engineer duo invent 2-way screen

The software engineer sitting before Dr. D. Janardhana Reddy, head of the cardiothoracic surgical unit in a leading Chennai hospital, was speechless. Sitting opposite the cardiac surgeon, he was watching Dr. Reddy's laptop in bewilderment.

Not because he had heard something very serious about his father's heart being treated by the surgeon. Nor was it some-



thing that the surgeon showed him on his laptop. But it was the way in which he was seeing the image on the laptop that made his heart *lub-dub-lub-dub* faster.

For him it was like seeing the world's 'eighth wonder' – a back-to-back dual screen laptop without a major brand tag. "He couldn't believe what he was seeing. He didn't hear me for nearly ten minutes," recalls Dr. Reddy. The doctor then explained to the software professional that the dual screen laptop had been patented by him but was yet to be commercialised.

The surgeon recalls, "One day, at about 8.30 p.m., a sales representative tried to show me his company's product on his laptop. He was not able to convey what he wanted. I was able to see only the back of the screen."

Driving back home

Dr. Reddy wondered whether it might not be possible to have a dual screen/back-to-back screen laptop. As a cardiac surgeon, he began to visualise how that would ease his work explaining a heart valve block to patients and their families. "They wouldn't have to cluster around my computer. I also imagined how my grandchildren would be learning the alphabet with the dual screen computer monitors," thought Dr. Reddy as he began to ponder over the possibilities.

He immediately called his friend L. Narayanan, Managing Director, Silicon Labs Pvt. Ltd., to find out the possibility/feasibility of developing such a product. The Rs.2 crore turnover 'Silicon Labs is in the field

of manufacturing medical devices like electro cardiographs (ECG), pulse oxymetry, defibrillator, pacemaker, central monitoring stations for intensive care units, nerve locators and monitors for operation theatres.

Narayanan, a Masters degree-holder in Engineering Instrumentation from the Madras Institute of Technology, was hooked by the idea. This was not surprising, for Silicon Labs has several firsts in India to its credit. It is the first Indian company to design and manufacture pulse oxymetry, ECG monitors and other such equipment. The company has also been the first to come out with a health station – a set of small gadgets that measure a person's blood pressure, height, weight, pulse rate, blood glucose and cholesterol.

Recalls Narayanan, "I immediately understood Dr. Reddy's idea and thought it was feasible." The next day, Narayanan dismantled one of

Securing a ration card — a citizen's nightmare

(By A Special Correspondent)

The acquisition of a ration card has become an all important, but next to impossible, mission for the simpleton citizen in recent times.

The hugely complicated formalities and the number of roadblocks to be crossed start with the seemingly innocuous submission of an application at the specific centre.

The first step over, the citizen feels greatly relieved. The sense of accomplishment is perhaps justified as the citizen has had to wage a bit of a struggle even before being able to submit the application. He has had to draw upon his own ingenuity to attain some clarity on where to submit the application and by whom it is to be submitted and who would be deemed to qualify to represent a family. At first, it was said that only the head of the family should personally go and hand over the application. This caused difficulties and, after several protests, Government amended the orders that any member of the family whose name is mentioned in the ration card could submit the application. The mission of the citizen was not made any easier as, in most places, there were only one or two staff handling the long queue and there was inordinate delay as the details of each applicant were verified at the counter before the application was accepted.

Adding further to the complications, the administration in its wisdom initially insisted that a colour photograph of the head of the family should be submitted along with the application. This resulted in additional cost for the applicant. Later, it was said that a black and white photograph would also be acceptable.

Thereafter the practice followed by the Election Commission in distributing the photo identity cards could have been followed by the Government in the case of distribution of ration cards as well. Little do citizens realise the administrative difficulties of the Government and its staff if they were to resort to such a course. Then there are Government's financial constraints in following such a procedure; the poor citizen presumably has no such constraints!

The next stage of this ordeal is the announcement that cardholders should collect the new ration cards at their stipulated ration shops on particular weekends. Note the conditionalities followed in the breach not by the citizen but by those who imposed such conditionalities. When people went on the stipulated date to their ration shops, stood in the queue for around two hours

and at last their turn arrived, and then asked for their cards, the staff after a search said that they could not be found!

Those whose ration cards were not found were told to collect the new ration cards on a later date, which was given. When they reported on that date, once again they had to wait in the queue for a long time and finally when their turn came, in several cases, the cards could again not be located by the staff and they were asked to go to the Zonal Office to collect the card after August 1st.

In the ration shops, a notice indicated the serial numbers of the cardholders whose ration cards were not available. Ironically, in several cases, not only were their names absent on the board but their cards were missing too. The exasperated citizens were then told that the cards were not available since they had not been printed as yet. Yet, neighbours living in the same area have been given their new ration cards which, supposedly, had not been printed as yet!

The citizen then heads for the Zonal Office and once again is confronted by a long queue moving at a snail's pace. After standing for more than a couple of hours, he is told that his ration card is still not available and therefore he should come back after ten or fifteen days (no date being given this time).

Well, to make a long story short, the fact is that in a number of cases, mistakes have been made in the entries in the ration card. Again, the affected people have to go and wait in a queue for a long time in the Zonal Office to give the details of the corrections to be made. In the Zonal Office, there is no separate counter for looking into the correction requirements. Nor is there any indication as to when the corrected cards will be provided.

Going by what's seen in the Zonal Office, it is quite possible that a substantial number of citizens, particularly from the lower strata of society, have not got their ration cards. Government is yet to make an assessment of the numbers.

It is really tragic that citizens are made to run from pillar to post in pursuit of a ration card. In a more dispassionate sense, you begin to feel that the Government managers are simply not upto the task of managing even a seemingly uncomplicated task like distribution of ration cards. — (Courtesy: *Nandini Voice for the Deprived*.)

the laptops in his office to understand the circuits and the signals that run the equipment. That happened six months ago.

On August 31, 2005, the duo officially unveiled two prototypes – a back-to-back dual screen thin film transistor (TFT) technology laptop and a desktop monitor with multi-functional utilities. Before that, they had secured an international patent for their invention.

Says Narayanan, "The laptop/monitor allows users seated on either side to simultaneously view, share and digitally interact with content." The monitor also enables simultaneous Internet browsing.

Actually the use to which the dual screen monitor could be put is limited only by human imagination. With the help of software, you can even partially mask the content and display information selectively on any

one side (useful in commercial applications), provide interactive tools and features on any one side. "It also helps in parent-child computer interaction, trainer-trainee, student-teacher interactive learning,

● by
**VENKATACHARI
JAGANNATHAN**

corporate and professional presentations and discussions, presentation of dynamic interactive content in sales and marketing, retail billing and many other services."

Gaming is another huge area where these monitors have an application. The monitors have the facility of switching off of any one side for single use.

The cost of dual screen

monitors would be Rs.15,000 more than the conventional laptop/LCD monitors.

The doctor-engineer duo has roped in management consultant K. Sadagopan, Director, KriativPlanet Pvt. Ltd., to help them to commercialise their dual screen monitors. "Talks are on with a few international players – original equipment manufacturers (OEM) and computer companies – to license the technology."

Narayanan has also developed a new motherboard for which a patent is awaited. The motherboard would enable writing new software programmes specially for dual screen monitors. "The new monitors would revolutionise the motherboard design and, in turn, change the hardware industry," remarks Narayanan.

(Courtesy: www.domain-b.com)

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



Water for Kapali

Recent heavy showers in Mylapore made me think of the Kapaleeswarar temple tank, my memories of it, its present condition, and ways and means of bringing the tank to its past glory.

In the early 1980s, my friends and I used to while away time in the evenings by sitting on the steps of the tank, chatting while watching the reflection of light in the water and enjoying the chill breeze from the south. There was enough water in the tank then and the whole atmosphere around the temple tank used to become breezy with the onset of sea breeze and southerlies, a much-needed relief during summer.

"Mayilai Kapaleeswarar Temple tank had water upto the road level at one point of time in the 1970s," T.M. Sundararaman, a senior citizen of Mylapore, told me during a chat regarding temple tanks. The history of the tank has it that prior to the 1920s water used to overflow monsoon after monsoon, as there were no compound walls around the tank to prevent the overflow. But now the tank is just around 40,000 square feet of barren ground.

Once, there was a water channel from Mambalam Lake to the tank and excess water flowed from there into the tank. Due to the development of the metropolis, that channel is blocked. Water channels that were laid near the Saibaba Temple, Adam Street and Mada Streets, to make the rainwater reach the tank, got clogged due to unmindful construction activities. Only recently have they been laid again as a fillip to rainwater harvesting.

According to a Metrowater official, one of the reasons for the drying up of the tank is the huge difference between the

existing water level in Mylapore, which is around 40 feet, and the base level of the temple tank, which is about 20 feet. "When we tried to fill the tank with lorries of water last year, we found that water level steadily depleted due to lower water levels in the surroundings. Further, it reduced the salt content in the adjacent areas. After hours of filling, we came to the conclusion that copious rain and prudent rainwater harvesting methods are the only solutions to make the tank sustain its water in a natural way," he said. He also suggested that the rainwater that flows to the sea in the St. John's School (Mandaveli) area should be diverted to the Chitrakulam and Kapaleeswarar tanks.

A stormwater channel from Adyar River to the tank can also be created since rainwater goes to the sea only during the rainy season. Further, it will check the marooning of the Kotturpuram area during the monsoon. Acelol, a chemical that is used to minimise the water evaporation in big lakes, can be used here also.

S. Madhavan

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Succour for the sucker

Many thanks to *Madras Musings* (September 1st) for the material on medicare and the cleverly camouflaged pitfalls therein which qualify under *Caveat Emptor* (Buyer Beware). Indeed, medicare has become a swindle in some leading private hospitals.

I once suffered severe pain in the upper abdomen/lower chest area at the dead of night and thought it a summons from the Maker. I, therefore, rushed to a posh private hospital with a wad of money. The first thing they did at 'Emergency' was to take the money as 'Advance'. Next, they snatched my shirt and trouser (sealing my escape routes) and gave me a sort of gown to wear.

Speedily I was subjected to various tests, although the pain had long disappeared on gulping a tablespoonful of antacid. I was released only after an acrimonious argument with a battleaxe of a woman doctor and poorer by Rs.14,000! Sometimes the treatment is deadlier than the disease.

C.G. Prasad

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The Sethu tragedy

Last year, my family and I went to Mandapam and Dhanushkodi which is roughly where the Sethu Canal Project's dredging is scheduled to take place.

In the area where we stayed last year at Mandapam, a coral reef ran along the beach about

Predators to lessen mosquito menace

After a few rain showers in the city, the mosquitoes have returned in full force, to breed in the large puddles in residential colonies, thanks to the builders' callousness in blocking the drain passages on the roadsides with their material.

At the very mention of mosquito menace, the blame is squarely laid by/through the print medium only on the overhead water tanks of residential buildings, recommending heavy penalties. Mosquitoes are choosy on the quality of water they breed in. Certainly, the groundwater used by Chennaiites, with a high TDS or iron content, is not one of them. The Buckingham Canal, the largest mosquito breeding site, runs (rather, stagnates in short lengths) right along the MRTS, ensuring a fair distribution of the menace among the citizens and a choice of blood types to the mosquitoes. According to a recent news report, the mosquitoes are even after the blood of the councillors, having encroached the drains in the Ripon Building! Who is to be penalised with heavy fines now?

Chennai Corporation is unable to do anything about the mosquito menace in spite of reportedly spending considerable amounts of the taxpayers' money year after year in spraying a few areas with kerosene vapour. Therefore, some lateral thinking is called for.

Why not set predators on the mosquito larvae and practise "Prevention is better than cure", as has been attempted by the Corporation of Madurai. In support of this method, I give a summary of a well-researched article, *Larvivorous fish to curb malaria*, by a Dr. Anand Kumar. According to the author, 3 exotic and 22 indigenous genera are the natural enemy of mosquito larvae. After a full description of their characteristics, he concludes that the predators have to be:

- Small, so that they can move about freely in shallow waters among weeds.
- Hardy, so that they flourish in deep or shallow waters.

- Able to breed in confined water areas and prove difficult to catch.
- Worthless and insignificant as food - obviously to discourage human predators on the canal banks.
- Voracious carnivorous feeders.
- Able to withstand transport and handling - for distribution over a wide area.

The predator-candidates conforming to one or more of the above requirements, as listed by the author and guaranteed to significantly bring down the mosquito population, are:

- Esomus (Swainson) (family: *Cyprinidae*);
- Puntius (Hamilton) (family: *Cyprinidae*);
- Punchax (Cuvier) (family: *Cyprinodontidae*);
- Mugil (Linn.) (family: *Mugilidae*);
- Ambassis (Cuvier) (family: *Ambassidae*);
- Therapon (Cuvier) (family: *Theraponidae*);
- Badis (Bleeker) (family: *Ristolepidae*).

Unfortunately, the local names of these types were not given.

In view of the dismal track record of the Corporation of Chennai in controlling the mosquito population through conventional methods, I suggest that enthusiastic NGOs, not only in Chennai but in all the mosquito-affected districts of Tamil Nadu, start pisciculture straightaway in available water bodies, however small, so that the predator army is ready for deployment as early as possible before the impending rainy season. I am sure that the Marine Research Centres at Porto Novo or elsewhere in Tamil Nadu would extend their assistance for a good cause by providing the fish families required to start 'predator farms.'

D.V. Subramanian

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just 30-50 metres from the shoreline. Our 9-year-old daughter and her friends would swim (alongside the paddle boat that we rowed) to the reef to snorkel there. To think that this whole place and its natural beauty hangs on a thread is most upsetting, to say the least.

In the last few months, my family and I have been closely following the reports about the project and wonder why something that will destroy the natural beauty here is being contemplated.

After all, economically this project may never be viable (apparently the cost of taking ships through the channel on tow with a tug boat on either side will far exceed the cost of ships going round the island. Apparently, in Chennai and Tuticorin the rate for ships being towed is between Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 50,000 per kilometre. This channel is apparently in excess of 50 kilometres. Does it mean towing charges of Rs. 750,000? If yes, why would any shipping company be willing to spend more than three times what it would cost it in terms of fuel and

lease fee to go round the island? Is there any way that a commercially unsound project can actually run/survive?

Also, this project can never benefit the local community, which is in excess of 40,000 fishermen. Yes, it might benefit some people involved with the building of the canal and its upkeep - but the benefits of big business are most unlikely to go to the local fishermen.

Further, the area is beautiful because of the fishing hamlets, the pace of life and the ambience. Must all these go? The thought that crystal clear waters here, which are now between 6 and 9 feet deep, are going to be made murky by dredging 30 to 40 feet, makes me sick. Imagine, no more coral reefs that can be viewed from a boat, no lagoons, no swimming beaches. Will the greed for "progress" ever justify this?

Finally, if this project does not succeed commercially (and many like me will be surprised if it does) who is to make good the irreversible loss of one of the more beautiful places on earth, not to forget the taxpayer's money that would be wasted?

To remain a silent spectator to this proposed tragedy is really bothering me and my family. How can we help to stop this madness?

Navaz N.C.

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If only they'd tried...

I refer to the instalment on the Nilgiris Mountain Railway which appeared in the September 16th issue of MM.

In it, it is stated that the Railway Board wanted to replace the 50-year-old locomotives by importing new locos from SLM in Winterthur, Switzerland. It says further that cost considerations forced the tender to be dropped.

As a former Ambassador of India to Switzerland, I can state with some confidence that had the Railway Board persevered, a loan could have been arranged on soft terms from the Government of Switzerland for the purchase of these locomotives. I suppose everything is a matter of priorities.

Thomas Abraham

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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 post-card 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 house that Dhanam lorded over

(Continued from last fortnight)

From *Manali House*, I made my way in the same rickshaw to Ramakrishna Chetty Street. Dhanammal too is said to have used a rickshaw for commuting to and from her house which stands at No. 6, on that street. There were, however, days when she would also travel by car. A Rolls Royce would come from *Ramalaya* in Adyar to pick her up, in case the Junior Maharani of Travancore, Setu Parvati Bayi, was in residence and was feeling like learning a song or two. It was said that she had been introduced to Dhanammal by Sir K. Ramunni Menon. Vice-Chancellor, Madras University, and a great admirer of Dhanammal's music. Yet another fan who would regularly send a car was Dr. Seethapati Iyer, the Director of the King Institute. Dhanammal would then go over to *Gokulam*, Dr. Iyer's residence in Kalvi Varu Street, Mylapore, to teach his daughter, Savitri Rajan, music.

The house was however never Dhanam's own. It was more of a grace and favour that the residence was given to her at a nominal rent (Rs.25 pm) by Chettiyappa Chettiyar whose family had owned much of the property on the street since 1850. Chettiyar had been persuaded to rent it out to Dhanammal by another of her admirers, Jalatarangam Ramaniah Chetty, a chit fund owner of George Town whose main job appeared to have been to arrange concert opportunities for Dhanammal and her daughters Rajalakshmi, Lakshmiratnam, Jayammal and Kamakshi. When the daughters began having children, Ramaniah took them all under his

wing as well. It was with the help of his wheeling and dealing that the grandchildren, T. Brinda, T. Muktha (both singers), T. Abhiramasundari (violin), T. Balasaraswathi (dance), T. Ranganathan (mridangam) and T. Vishwanathan (flute), made their concert debuts.

Dhanam lorded over this residence from 1911 till September 1938. During her years in residence it was a destination for several upcoming young musicians, such as Kanchipuram Naina Pillai, Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subramanya Iyer, Parur Sundaram Iyer, Chittoor Subramania Pillai and Papa K.S. Venkataramiah, who visited to learn songs. Dhanam was never one to part with her music easily and sometimes laid a condition that the students would have to teach her two songs for every one of hers. She at times charged Re.1 for each song and poor Musiri and Parur, not having that kind of money, would share the expense. It was said that Chittoor Subramania

• by **SRIRAM V.**

Pillai was the most harassed. She insisted on his perfecting the song *merusamana* for so long that he came to be called 'Merusamana Subramaniam' by the whole family. It was to this house that Madurai Shanmukhavadi brought Subbulakshmi, her daughter, in 1933, seeking an introduction to prominent music patrons of the city. Dhanammal heard the young girl out and predicted a bright future for her.

If it was Friday, it would be Dhanam's for many. She would perform on the *veena* for music



The pictures we published last fortnight were wrongly captioned. This is Veena Dhanammal's house and NOT Manali House as mentioned.

lovers such as T.T. Krishnamachari, Sir R.K. Shanmukham Chetty, Kasturi Srinivasan, N.D. Varadachariar and S.Y. Krishnaswami, who would rub shoulders with musical giants such as 'Keertanacharya' C.R. Srinivasa Iyengar as they climbed the narrow staircase to the tiny room on the first floor where Dhanam would begin her performance. Pin drop silence would reign till she finished her concert at 8.00 p.m. sharp. Blind as she was by then, a daughter in attendance would tell her the names of those in the exclusive audience and she would have a word of welcome for each one.

Late at night, Dhanammal would often have an urge to sit-

bacco (all costing a princely Rs.5 a day) she asked for nothing else from life.

This star of George Town lived at this address till a few days before her death when she shifted to the *Aravamudan Gardens* residence of T. Balasaraswathi where she breathed her last on October 15, 1938.

I had rediscovered this house during my reconnoitring trip in 2001. Ever since then, it was the highpoint of the heritage walk with the old lady who owned the premises taking pride in showing all on the walk Dhanam's room. She had assured me that she had no intention of selling the house.

When my rickshaw reached the house on that sad day last month, I was surprised to find it locked. The landlady lived next door and I knocked at her door. A man came down and asked me what I wanted. I explained to him about the heritage tour and that we would call at Dhanam's house. He said his mother had told him about it and that we were most welcome. I thanked him and was about to leave when he dropped a bombshell. "Come early next week," he said. "After that the house is to be demolished".

Apparently, the daughters of the old lady were demanding a share in the ancestral property and, to settle their claims, the family had sold Dhanammal's

ten to music. If Abdul Karim Khan was in town, he would come and regale her with Hindustani music or T.N. Rajarathinam Pillai would come with his *nadhaswaram*. Dhanam herself would keep the drone for him on a *tambura*. At other times, Abbayi would perform on the clarinet for her. Invariably, Dhanam would give away whatever she had received for her performance to those whose music pleased her. Her own wants were few. Beyond the daily quota of betel leaf, scented *supari* and to-

house to a Jain businessman who was going to build a block of flats. The landlady had moved to Bangalore. Perhaps she did not want to be present when the demolition happened. I left Town with a heavy heart.

The next week the Town Walk was held and I told the story of Dhanammal for the last time at her doorstep. I will continue to conduct George Town walks in future, but its stellar attraction will be missing. Over the next few days, I pondered over what had happened and what could have prevented it. As an individual, I could never have afforded the price of the property. A group wanting to preserve it would have run into issues of what to do with it. It was, after all, a small town house. Only a Heritage Act could have prevented such a demolition. Had there been proper guidelines on what could be done with a heritage property, none of this would have occurred. The buyer would have had to adhere to those norms as well. Even if Dhanammal had not lived in it, a house dating back to 1850 is a heritage house.

What is sad is that not even a commemorative plaque can be put up. Several property owners are apprehensive that such a plaque would be the first step in the process of forcible acquisition of the property by the Government in order to declare it a national asset. Once again, only a Heritage Act can remove such irrational fears. Till then, it is going to be more demolitions, more erasures of history and a few articles lamenting their passing.

An aquarian display again

But a city like ours needs a bigger show

Located on a sandy beach opposite the Presidency College and midway between Fort St. George and San Thomé was Madras's first aquarian display, the Madras Marina Aquarium which was opened to public on October 21, 1909. Ten years after being in the charge of the Superintendent of Museums, it was transferred in 1919 to the Department of Fisheries for two reasons. The Department had particular need for possession of aquarium facilities for its investigations into the life histories of

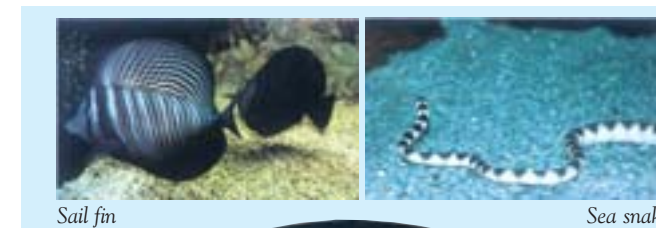
local food fish as well as being in need of greater facilities for renewal of stocks of fish and other sea animals. All fish in the Aquarium were captured less than 10 miles from the shore and "were not even a tenth of the species available."

The Aquarium was open daily throughout the year, with entry charges in the early years (on all days except Fridays, when it was 4 annas) being 1 anna between 7 and 5.30 p.m. and 4 annas between 5.30 and 7 p.m. (when it was illuminated). Gosha day for women (when no males were admitted) was the last Monday of the month.

However, the *Guide to the Madras Marina Aquarium* by James Hornell, then the Director of Fisheries, whose fifth edition was published in July 1923, says wistfully, "In spite of the fact that the Madras Aquarium was opened so long ago as 1909, and that it has proved a wonderful success judging by public interest aroused or by the cold verdict of finance, it has had no imitators on the Asiatic mainland. Until the last few years its reputation had not travelled beyond the confines of Madras, for till that time no strong effort had been made to advertise it and make its attractions widely known."

Indeed, the display of fish has always drawn visitors in Madras. The 1954-55 Administration Report of Madras City records how the Madras Aquarist Society put up a stall during the Flower Show Week to explain the objects of the Society (at the 32nd Corporation Flower Show at *My Lady's Garden* (in People's Park)). Rare varieties of tropical fish were specially flown in from Ceylon and Singapore for the occasion. The 'Underwater World' highlighted two new specimens, the Colour Loach (native of Borneo) and Monkhouisia Talra (native of Brazil and Guiana) as well as such marine specimens like sea horse, octopus, anemones and urchins. It was open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. to public daily for a week, the last day being reserved for women and children. Over 2 lakh people visited the show that year.

But, sadly, this display of interest was not encouraged. On 30.10.2003, Madras's first aquarium was officially closed down



Sail fin

Sea snake



Eel



Damselfish

to make way for 'the beautification of the Marina'. As a consequence of this 'policy decision taken at the government level', the animals in the aquarium were shifted to the Vandalur Zoo. With the Department of Fisheries' focus in the past year being the tsunami and its after-effects, the question of setting up another aquarium in the City has

not been a priority, though, worldwide, aquaria are major attractions in large coast cities.

Thankfully, however, on August 18, 2005 – nearly 18 months after it was completed – a renovated (at a cost of Rs.1 crore) marine aquarium was thrown open to public at the Marine Biological Station on the Zoological Survey of India premises. The

animals for the aquarium that have been collected off the Chennai coast and the Gulf of Mannar include deadly poisonous sea snakes, Wimple, Cowfish, Box fish, Lion fish, Seahorse, Clown fish, Moray eel, Star fish, Grouper, Bat fish, Porcupine fish, Sailfin Tang, Damsel fish, Morish idol, Trigger fish, Emperor Angels and Pakistan Butterfly Fish. They are housed in 18 glass-fronted tanks, each with a simulated marine environment and modern filter systems. Fascinating glimpses of the web of interconnectivity among marine organisms – the sea anemones and the clownfish, and the abundance of marine life a single coral can house – are provided in this compact but aesthetically maintained aquarium with state-of-the-art strategic lighting.

In 1991, a small aquarium was

• by **SHOBHA MENON**

opened by the ZSI at its premises (about 1/4 of the space now). In 1997, officials from the Ministry suggested a bigger aquarium dedicated to the nation, and renovation began. Now the aquarium is open, but it needs to entertain the public on holidays as it does not have the staff for this.

For students and researchers, this 'unique aquarium' simulates "the rich marine biodiversity of India's marine environment". "The marine environment is harder to maintain, since its species are more easily traumatised. Though the ocean is outwardly calm, there is current upwelling, mixing of nutrients etc. In this aquarium, through circulation,

aeration and filtration, sediments are removed and water clarity ensured. But maintenance is important. The difficulty to collect seawater – fishermen object, coastal waters near the city are very polluted, etc. – has been circumvented by an arrangement with NIOT at Neelankarai. Tankers bring the seawater that is used for culture medium. This is pumped into overhead tanks, then filtered for the aquarium, providing the closest marine environment. "The filtration plant here is a pioneering exercise and many other stations have begun to approach us for support," says J.T. Jothinayagam, Officer-in-Charge. A separate working area has been provided for maintenance personnel.

India's best-known aquaria are the Tarapore Aquarium in Mumbai and the one in Vizhinjam in Kerala.

Inside the strategically-lit aquarium enclosures I see cow fish that look like live spaceships, brightly coloured *Kizhimeen* or Parrot Fish, beautiful purple and maroon coloured star fish, and monkey sharks clustered in a corner. While large predatory Groupers with their translucent blue eyes look balefully at me, in and out of the tentacles of the green, yellow and blue anemones, the clown fish (the only fish species which can share this relationship) weave in and out excitedly. A truly fascinating experience that left me wondering why a metro like Chennai cannot have the privilege of a bigger aquarium within the city for both young and old to marvel at the underwater world.

Madras AND Chennai

(Continued from page 1)

garden patch after a promise was made to name the new settlement after him. It's also a story the family of Beri Thimmappa, the dubash who negotiated the grant, likes to relate. Then there's the theory that there existed a *madarasa* and a *Marakayar-kuppam* on this spit of land the British were granted and 'Madras' derived either from the term for the Muslim school or from corruption of the ethnic description of the Muslim seafarers. But while Muslim settlement in Pulicat had continued uninterrupted from the Dutch, pre-British times, Muslim settlements in the limits of Madras are recorded only after the Golconda conquest of Portuguese San Thomé in 1663!

Yet another theory linked with San Thomé is that Madras took its name from the *Madre de Deus* (Mother of God) Church in San Thomé which had been consecrated in 1576. Imagine Anglican Fort St. George taking its name from a Roman Catholic church! But that it took its name from the Portuguese family that built this church seems more plausible, given the documentation available.

There is evidence of the Madeiros family – more often locally referred to as the Madra family – having lived in San Thomé from the middle of the 16th Century. Considering the number of churches they built, they must have been San Thomé's richest family. And a rich seafaring family doing international business could well have

been financing many a fishing *kuppam*. These *kuppams* – like those near Fort St. George – could well have been known as *Madra kuppams*. And from that a leap to Madras seems more plausible than most other theories, particularly in the light that till well into the 18th Century the Madeiros family remained friends of the Council of Fort St. George, often lending it money.

Well, there are your options, take your pick. But what is certain is that there was no Madras or Chennai before the British – what existed was sandy beach and scrub jungle and no local population except for what was found in a small fishing *kuppam* or two, necessitating John Company having to – as it did for almost a century afterwards – bring in textile workers from what is

now Andhra Pradesh. The migrant workers called their settlement Chennapatnam, maintaining the links they were familiar with, namely the Chandragiri connection of the local Nayaks.

From the very founding of Madras, the city, then, has been known as Madras in English and Chennai in Tamil and Telugu.

With a 350-year plus usage of BOTH Madras AND Chennai, why can't we continue an ancient tradition instead of wasting time debating which is correct, which is linguistically proper? The decision to maintain the status quo in the case of the name of the University of this city against this background is welcome. Perhaps we can now spend more time on debating how to improve that university and finding jobs for its students.



On left, is Manali House (and NOT the car park the house has become), seen through the entrance of the facing building. The car park is the picture on right. (All photographs by the AUTHOR.)



Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's current affairs questions are from the period September 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Name the third of Deepa Mehta's trilogy, starring John Abraham and Lisa Ray, which opened the recently-held Toronto Film Festival.

2. Who was Mahesh Bhupathi's partner when he won the U.S. Open mixed doubles title recently?

3. Who was awarded the inaugural Compton-Miller Medal in the Ashes series recently won by England?

4. Who was sworn in the President of Singapore for the second time recently?

5. Where in Asia was the latest Disneyland opened on September 12th?

6. Name the Indian whose death sentence in Pakistan has been front page news all over the country recently.

7. Who is the latest recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award?

8. To which rock star did seven-time Tour de France winner, Lance Armstrong, get engaged recently?

9. Which museum in Mumbai, once called the 'Victoria & Albert Museum', has been honoured with an Award of Excellence by UNESCO?

10. Name the four-time Academy Award winner and director of the evergreen favourite *The Sound of Music*, who passed away recently.

* * *

11. Who is the new U.S. Consul General for South India based in Chennai?

12. Which place in the State is responsible for nearly 75% of India's total egg exports?

13. Where in Chennai is the stately Freemasons Hall?

14. Name the political party launched by 'Captain' Vijayakanth on September 14th.

15. Name the five-time MLA from Srivilliputhur, and an active member of both the DMK and AIADMK at various points of time, who passed away recently.

16. Which day is now celebrated as 'Founding of Madras Day'?

17. In which Chennai shop can you see India's first 3D saree?

18. Where is the 'Satabdhi Manimattapam' for the Kanchi Paramacharya coming up?

19. Where is the newly inaugurated National Institute of Siddha located?

20. Which political leader is the author of *From the portals of a prison* which was released by the Prime Minister recently?

(Answers on page 8)

A Harikatha expert's pen portraits



Soolamangalam Vaidyanatha Bhagavata.

"Soolamangalam who?" had been my first reaction when I was asked by *Sruti* magazine last year to do a life profile of Bhagavata. I had heard of the Soolamangalam Sisters but never of a Vaidyanatha Bhagavata. Then, when I went about reading accounts of him and interviewing several people who knew him, I realised what a fascinating and towering personality in the field of Harikatha had been consigned to the shadows. Sixty years after his death (he passed away in 1943) he had been completely forgotten.

Briefly put, Bhagavata was born in 1866 and came from a family that had musical interests. He, however, did not plan to become a musician. After having studied in Pudukottai, he came to Madras that is Chennai and enrolled at the Teachers College in Saidapet where he qualified for the FA examination. His fellow students were (later the Right Hon.) V.S. Srinivasa Sastry and (later Kirtanacharya) C.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, who was to become a respected scholar and writer on Carnatic music.

Bhagavata, however, soon came under the spell of the Harikatha performances of Tanjore Krishna Bhagavata, who is considered the originator of the South Indian style of Harikatha rendition. Bhagavata gave up his career and took to Harikatha and was soon one of its front-ranking performers. Though his base was at his native Soolamangalam village, he travelled all over the country giving performances. He was the moving spirit behind two important festivals in South India. The first was the Bhagavata Mela in Soolaman-

galam, which in the years following his death ceased to be conducted. The other was the Tyagaraja Aradhana at Tiruvaiyaru, where he was the powerful secretary of the Brahmin-dominated Chinna Katchi, one of the two rival factions that observed the Aradhana for many years till the union in 1940. Bhagavata was not entirely happy with the unification and stayed away from the aradhana for the remaining years of his life.

In 1942, he moved to Madras for a brief while and stayed with his son Atmanatha Iyer in the *agraharam* surrounding the

• SRIRAM V. takes a look at *Cameos**: A collection of writings on Carnatic Musicians of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries by Soolamangalam Vaidyanatha Bhagavata.

Nungambakkam Siva temple. The fledgling *Kalki* magazine then approached him to write a series of pen portraits of the various musicians he had known in his long life. Bhagavata's first article appeared in August of that year and continued till he died in October 1943. Three days prior to his death, Bhagavata became a *sanyasi* and his mortal remains were therefore buried near his native village over which a *samadhi* was built.

A part of the reminiscences of Bhagavata were translated into English by Prof. P. Sambamoorthy and R. Rangaramanuja Iyengar and these appeared in *The Hindu* in the 1960s.

Later, a partial compilation was made in 1994 by Bhagavata's grandson M. Rammohan



Harikatha by Soolamangalam Vaidyanatha Bhagavata. Accompanists: mridangam: Palayur Ramakrishnan, vocalists: Panchapakesa Bhagavata and V. Radhakrishnan.

and released in Tamil under the auspices of Kalakshetra under the title *Karnataka Sangeetha Vidwagal*. This year, the entire set of reminiscences,

had gathered outside, some who went about challenging all and sundry to musical duels and Sarabha Sastrigal, the blind flautist, who could reproduce any song he had heard just once. There are moving accounts of temple processions with plenty of music and of Harikatha performances. An entire era comes alive in these accounts.

A historically important chapter is on the Jagan Mohana Chit Vilasa Sabha, a "men's drama company" and perhaps the first of its kind. Bhagavata traces its origins and subsequent developments in great detail. Bhagavata never thrusts himself into the forefront in these accounts and the impression you get is of a highly observant man. Bhagavata, however, like many Indian biographers, suffers from the weakness of mentioning no dates.

The reminiscences are valuable, as musicians who followed in the immediate wake of the Trinity and who passed away before the advent of the Music Academy, Madras, do not have many detailed accounts of their lives. The English translation has been well produced and is a must for all lovers of Carnatic music heritage.

HOPE FOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION

(Continued from page 1)

would be ready by December. It would then be placed before Parliament and, subsequently, it might have to go through the Standing Committee. But, "We hope to set up the Commission by early next year," the Director-General said.

Many monuments have been facing threats because of haphazard growth, unplanned urbanisation, demolition, renovation, negative impact of pilgrim tourism and

other forms of tourism, poor maintenance, and development projects such as irrigation schemes. "Many of the protected historical monuments which are in religious places have suffered damage due to alterations and renovations by the managements of the monasteries and churches or the waqf board and various other religious endowments. These properties are owned by those managements and little can be done

for their preservation without their consent and involvement."

He suggested that the Central and the State Governments as well as the local bodies act in unison for the effective implementation of the conservation schemes with people's participation and involvement. There is also a need to accelerate the efforts for capacity-building in archaeology, which had evolved into a new science, he added.

* Published by Sunadham, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. Tel: 24661644.



P. Orr & Sons in its heyday.

Catching up with an old timekeeper in Harvard

The trusty, three-faced clock tower at the store on Mount Road is a familiar sight to anyone from Madras. Quite appropriately, the building houses the establishment of P.Orr and Sons which has sold watches for over a century now. Growing up in the 1980s, I heard their ad on the radio which went something like –
*Kaalam, kaalamaga
 gadigaram vaangum edam,
 p.r and son,
 p.r and son.*

Perhaps if I had stayed on as an adult I would have bought my clocks and watches there, but I now live in Boston, another culturally rich city. Out of the corner of my eye, I can see a digital display of the current time on my monitor, all day. Outside work, if I need to tell the time I merely pull my cell phone out. Now, the challenge seems to be making time for all that my city has to offer by way of art events and stimulating talks and discussions. The ‘embarrassment’ of riches comes from taking all the good stuff for granted – particularly the museums – and not going there except to accompany some sophisticated out-of-town guest.

One recent weekend, I finally made it to Harvard’s Sackler Museum. My specific interest was the permanent collection of Mughal miniatures, but I tamely joined a guided tour of a new exhibit – and found myself looking at a display of *Shawls and Silver*. Starting with an elegant traditional Kashmiri shawl, the curator moved on to ones turned out by the Jacquard looms in the colonial period. Strangely, the shawls grew progressively more embroidered with mechanisation with the border design creeping right up to the heart of the piece.

“I was suddenly awakened from my mental musings when I heard the curator say that, even as early as 1720, jewellers and gold- and silver-smiths from Britain applied for permits to work in the Madras Presidency. Shortly afterwards, they branched out to the rest of the country. In the 19th Century, many of these British-owned jewellery shops employed local craftsmen. From the mid- to the late-1800s, the smiths began to embellish European objects with Indian motifs. Apparently, this hybrid style became hugely popular after it was displayed in the Great Exhibition of London in 1851.

One workshop represented at the Harvard exhibition was that of Peter Orr & Sons, founded in Madras in 1851 by Peter Nicholas Orr, a watchmaker from London. This was

● by
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 VENKATARAMAN**
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not surprising because he was one of the biggest silver manufacturers in India. The Orr workshop produced European tableware, bearing in mind local styles of cooking and serving. There were utensils for curry and rice and a general feature of all the containers seemed to be the lids which kept the dust and flies out. I particularly liked a pair of toasting forks which were, in reality, finished blackbuck antlers. And there was a pair of salt & pepper shakers with Swami designs as part of the tableware range.

There were other examples of this workshop’s high craft-

manship. These included an engraved trophy from 1884, a replica of the one presented to the Prince of Wales on his visit to India in 1875, and an oval tray with serpent border created in 1904 as a farewell gift for a captain in the Oregum Gold Mining Company of India.

In the 18th Century, the unearthing of the ruins of Pompeii led to a line of ‘archaeological jewelry’. The famous Castellani House in Italy put Roman gods on wearable items of jewellery. Duly inspired, Peter Orr created their Indian equivalent for the European market. The gold necklace and earrings bequeathed to the Fogg Art Museum in 1895 by its founder, Mrs. William Hayes Fogg, stand out prominently with their pantheon of Hindu deities. But it’s difficult to say who’s who without a closer, lens-aided examination.

This line, called the ‘swami jewelry’, was a product of the cross-cultural conversation of the 18th and 19th Centuries. Did Hindus wear golden images of gods on their person before this? Considering the many taboos associated with ritual purity, it is hard to believe that they did. Gold and silver ‘coins’ with wrought images of gods in velvet-lined boxes also seem to have been gifted and re-gifted forever in our social circles, but I wonder when they first made their appearance at the jewellers.

The exhibit from the house of Peter Orr & Sons brought all these questions to mind apart from an irresistible urge to hum that old jingle again!

Earlier than P. Orr’s in Madras were Gordon and Lovell and George Gordon & Company. Fakes were often manufactured bearing the marks of all three companies.

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

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Senate House Conservation Fund

● The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust appeals to all alumni of the University of Madras and heritage lovers everywhere to contribute to the Senate House Conservation Fund which the Trust is managing for the purpose of restoring *Senate House* to its old glory by December 2005 and maintaining it thereafter in the same condition. Cheques should be made out to the Senate House Conservation Account and sent to the Registrar, University of Madras, Chennai 600 005. Contributions are eligible for benefits under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

Dear Registrar,

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

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

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

Date: Signature:

A metamorphosis in batting

Sridharan Sarath, now considering playing for Kerala, has been Tamil Nadu's most consistent and reliable run-getter, getting his 21st and 22nd centuries in Ranji Trophy competitions last year. Thinking about his achievements, I could not but help recall a period in the late 1960s and early '70s when a Tamil Nadu batsman getting a hundred in the national competition was NEWS. They did not need to; so often did S Venkataraghavan and V. V. Kumar, with no score to back them up, bowl out opponents and shape a victory for the State which, at the time, survived or progressed almost entirely on the strength of its bowling.

The change in the State's batting fortunes came about only in the last two decades. In the late 1950s and upto about 1968, the State had basked in the batsmanship of C.D. Gopinath and the brothers A.G. Kripal Singh and Milkha Singh. The retirements of Gopinath and Kripal Singh and the exit of Milkha Singh towards the end of the 1960s saw the batting fortunes take a nosedive and no praise can be too high for Venkat and Kumar as they bowled gallantly to keep the State's fortunes flying despite repeated batting failures. During this period, a hundred against Hyderabad or Mysore (Karnataka) was a rarity and a hundred at the knockout stage was unheard of. So well did the spin twins do their job that in the semifinal against Maha-

rashtra on the heart-breaking Nehru Stadium surface at Pune in April 1973, they restricted the formidable Maharashtra batting to 227 and then shot them out for 96 when Tamil Nadu could only muster totals of 160 and 187 giving the State an astonishing 24-run victory.

There was very little change in the batting scenario through the 1970s, though Abdul Jabbar made people sit up and take notice when he hit an unbeaten 201 against Karnataka in 1975-76. The turning point came

● by
PARTAB RAMCHAND

about in 1982-83. The obdurate right-handed opening batsman C. S. Suresh Kumar got three hundreds that season, including one against Delhi in the quarterfinal. From then on there has been an upsurge in the batting fortunes and, with the batsmen sharing the glory with the bowlers, Tamil Nadu has gone from strength to strength. During their triumphant season of 1987-88, Tamil Nadu notched up in quick succession record totals - 578 against Uttar Pradesh in the quarterfinal, 601 against Punjab in the semifinal - and then they topped it all by amassing 709 against Railways in the final.

That momentous season saw a Tamil Nadu batsman break a

mini-barrier, with the tall, dependable left-hander V. Sivaramakrishnan notching up a tenth hundred in the national competition. That figure seemed at the time that it would take long to replicate. Since then there has been upsurge in Tamil Nadu batting fortunes continuously. The following season saw Tamil Nadu amassing 912 for six declared against Goa (albeit with the help of 60 penalty runs), V.V. Raman getting 313 and Arjan Kripal Singh 302 not out - the only time in the history of first class cricket that two batsmen have registered triple hundreds in the same innings. Raman broke a famous 44-year-old Ranji record by scoring 1018 runs in a season, surpassing Rusi Modi's aggregate of 1008 runs. A triple century and two double centuries in successive matches by Raman epitomised the improvement in the State's batting fortunes.

In the last 15 years, this encouraging trend has been maintained first by Robin Singh and then by Sarath. Robin retired a few years ago with 16 centuries to his credit. Another left-hander in Sarath then took over from where Robin left off and went far ahead. Younger players like Hemang Badani and Sridharan Sriram - also a member of the 1000 runs a season club - now have the opportunity to aim for 25 and beyond. Unless, of course - Sarath himself reaches the mark this season - in case he decides to stay with Tamil Nadu. — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

Dates for Your Diary

September 30-October 21: *Harshavardhana*, a play in French, written and directed by Jawaharlal. Translation by Leela Nagaraj. Turning back the pages of Indian history to 606 AD is this play about treachery, bravery and revenge. (At Alliance Francaise, 7 p.m.)

October 7-16: *Jambulingam*, Tamil adaptation of the Kannada play, *Samba Siva* by the renowned playwright Chandrasekhar Kambar.

It deals with the journey of the father-son duo Jambu and Lingam through the corrupt corridors of power in a mythical kingdom where marriage to a donkey is nothing strange! The play is a riotous farce on one level and a completely satirical take on those who hold and wield power, but the play also holds forth hope. (At Alliance Francaise, 7.30 p.m.)

October 14-16: *Live en Fete*. Like every year, this year too the Alliance Francaise, will celebrate its book festival. During the three



days, it will celebrate books and organise a series of activities to encourage reading. This year's theme is Gastronomy in Literature. (At Alliance Francaise.)

October 17-29: *Existence*, an exhibition by N. Ramachandran who chooses nature and all its creations as his medium of expression. (At Alliance Francaise.)

October 21: *Navarasa Nayagan* by K. Shanmuga Sundaram, a leading young male dancer and a senior disciple of K.J. Sarasa, the first woman *nattuvanaar*. The main piece will be a composition by the Raja of Travancore, SwathiThirunnaal. The Sanskrit song *Bhaavayaami Raghu Raman* has as its high points scenes from the *Ramayana*. The challenging part about this item is that the artiste will single handedly represent the various characters involved, like Rama, Sita, Ravana and Hanuman. (At Alliance Francaise, 7p.m.)

October 22: *Youdhaka*, a unique sound, 'Youdhaka' led by percussionist 'Derbouka' Shiva and singer Tanvi is an experimental outfit that absorbs musical traditions from all over the world and fuses it with indigenous rhythms layered with authentic instruments and interesting arrangements. The band draws extensive influence from the Nigerian street drumming to the Algerian *rai*, Cuban *son* to the Bahian *samba-cancsao*, Indian classical music to Senegal's *wolof*. (At Alliance Francaise, 7 p.m.)

October 23: *Birthday Party*, a play in Tamil based on Harold Pinter's *Birthday Party* by SLATE (Stage for Literature, Art, Theatre Expressions) - an idea that remained dormant for a decade but which sprouted and bloomed with the staging of *Amiyan*, a play in Tamil inspired by Albert Camus' *Outsider* a year ago. (At Alliance Francaise, 3.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.)

Answers to Quiz

1. Water; 2. Daniela Hantuchova; 3. Aoply Flintoff; 4. S.R. Nathan; 5. Hong Kong; 6. Sarabjit Singh; 7. Adoor Gopalakrishnan; 8. Sheryl Crow; 9. Bhau Daji Lad Museum; 10. Robert Wise.

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11. David T. Hopper; 12. Namakkal; 13. Commander-in-Chief Road; 14. Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam; 15. R. Tamarakani; 16. August 22nd; 17. Sri Kumaran Stores; 18. Orirukkai; 19. In the Tambaram Sanatorium campus; 20. Vaiko.

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