

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

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Appa, they've given me an additional 1000 minutes of free talk-time... Now I've only got to find friends to talk to!

### Talk's cheap

Mobile users, persistently wooed by mobile service providers, are a happy lot today.

Phones are easily available, and with free talk times, they can chatter all night. (Right – like we, as a nation, need to be coaxed to talk more and longer.)

But what will this constant staying-in-touch do to us?

The average human was never designed to be in a state of fervent, feverish accessibility and communication 24X7. Half the fun in having kith and kin is being able to get away from them occasionally.

But now, even mundane vegetable-shopping is no longer an escape route, what with Muniamma getting herself a cell-phone, and accepting only phoned-in orders. Silence, already a mere concept in teenager-ridden homes, is forced into further retreat. As for self-congratulatory romantics, careful now – she's probably guessed that this sudden increase in calls and long conversations is more about economics than a rush of passion.

Recent reports, admittedly, kill-joy, warn of an increase in headaches, aggressive behaviour, hypertension, and other depressing urban illnesses endemic to a chronic noise environment.

Too voice-of-doom? Perhaps, but having a little gadget yammering at you all the time can't be good.

Can you avoid cell-phones? Yes, if you can handle the guilt heaped on you in this cell-phone-enabled society.

Maybe it's time to give that old tympanic membrane (okay, no showing off), your eardrum, some rest.

Give peace a chance.

Ranjitha Ashok

# Mumbai ruling food for Chennai thought?

In a landmark decision on October 17th, the Bombay High Court ruled against the sale of mill lands in Central Bombay for large-scale commercial development.

The land belonged to five National Textile Corporation Mills and had been sold to bidding developers. The Court ruled that one-third of the land should be used for low-cost housing, another third as open space and only the rest for commercial development.

In the Bombay judgment there is much that is of relevance of Chennai in what has gone on, and is NOW going on apace, in the Adyar Estuary and its surroundings. But will anyone concerned with building development in Chennai pay any attention to what we report below on the Mumbai case?

— THE EDITOR

(Compiled from reports by D. Murali)

The petition in Mumbai was filed in the larger public interest, to protect the interests of residents of Mumbai and to improve the quality of life in Mumbai, which has drastically deteriorated during the last 15 years, begins the 368-page judgment of Justice Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, along with Justice S.C. Dharmadhikari.

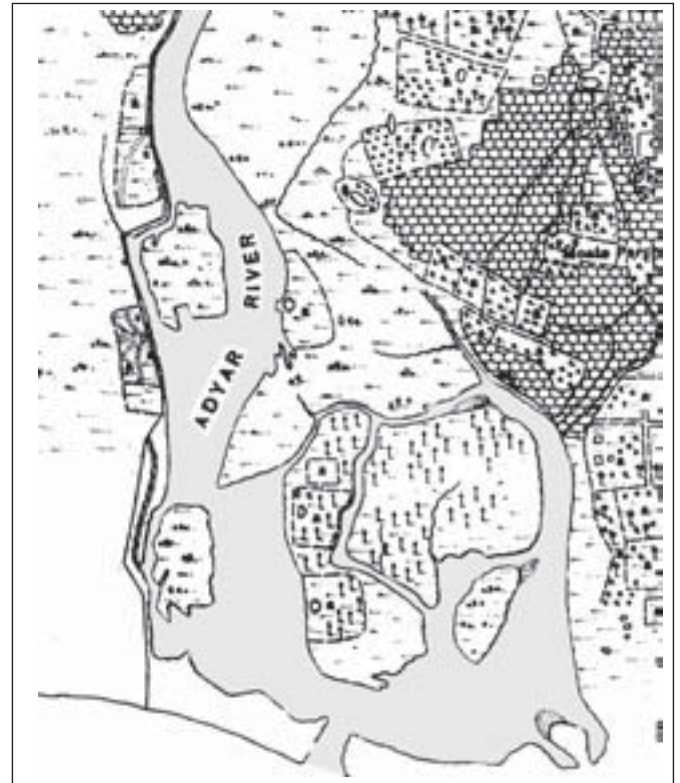
The PIL (public interest litigation) Writ Petition had the Bombay Environmental Action Group (a public charitable trust) and its secretary, Shyam H.K. Chainani, as petitioners. The 32 respondents included the State of Maharashtra, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, along with labour unions such as the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh and the Girni Kamgar Karmachari Rozgar Sanghata. Apart from the NTC (National Textile Corporation), other mills too were mentioned as real estate players.

The petition sought to prevent "further serious damage to the town planning and ecology so as to avoid an irretrievable breakdown of the city", and the text of the judgment cites the

"recent deluge during the last week of July this year" as the context. Senior advocate I.M. Chagla, representing the Environmental Action Group (EAG), said that the main thrust of the petition was to ensure 'Open Spaces' for the city and to provide space for that crying need, public housing. "While it is true that in a developing country there shall have to be development, that development shall have to be in closest possible harmony with the environment, as otherwise there would be development but no environment, which would result in total devastation," stated Justice U.C. Banerjee in the decision in *People Living in Calcutta vs. State of W.B.*, Chagla cited.

"Nature will not tolerate us after a certain degree of its destruction and it will, in any event, have its toll on the lives of the people," continues the ominous quote. "Can present-day society afford to have such a state and allow nature to take its toll in future?" Justice Banerjee had asked and replied in the negative.

"The tragic events in Mumbai in the last week of July 2005 have shown that the environmental degradation in  
(Continued on Page 2)



### ... especially in the Adyar Estuary area

The map above dates to 1798 and shows several islands in the Adyar Estuary. Note the three islands grouped together to the right in the estuary in this map. The biggest of them was later called Quibble Island. In the map of today (below) not only have the three islands been merged but they have also been merged with the mainland (shaded portion at the top of the estuary). Most of that land that's been merged has now been built over and is continuing to be built on, making what was once earmarked for a sanctuary a bit of urban development that will soon be an urban jungle. It's in this context, the Mumbai High Court ruling could well be food for thought in Chennai.

(Also see page 3.)

(Continued from page 1)

Mumbai has crossed nature's degree of tolerance," Chagla said, referring to the price that the city paid during the recent deluge.

The main legal issue in the EAG's petition was "the true meaning and correct interpretation" of Development Control Regulation (DCR) No. 58 (as amended in 2001). It is titled 'Development or redevelopment of lands of cotton textile mills' and begins with a discussion on 'lands of sick and/or closed cotton textile mills'. The regulation stipulates the percentage of 'open lands and balance FSI (floor space index)' to be earmarked for open spaces, public housing, and residential/commercial purpose.

The judgment mentions 58 as the number of textile mills in Mumbai occupying 'approximately 602 acres in the heart of the city'. "The area comprising just 8 mills, known as the 'Golden Triangle', is approximately 8.5 times the size of Nariman Point."

Chagla clarified that he was not seeking a freeze on all development in the mill land. What he prayed for was an intervention by the court "to ensure that the principles of sustainable development, balanced development, sound town planning,

# Lessons for Chennai in Mumbai ruling?

based on relevant socio-economic considerations and the improvement of the living and working conditions and environment as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India are followed with regard to all development/redevelopment on the mill lands, so as to protect the interests of the residents of Mumbai."

Article 21 is about 'Protection of life and personal liberty'. It states that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

"Enjoyment of life and its attainment, including their right to life with human dignity, encompasses within its ambit the protection and preservation of environment, ecological balance free from pollution of air and water, sanitation, without which life cannot be enjoyed," the apex court had said about a decade ago in *Virendra Gaur vs State of Haryana*.

Additional protection is given by Article 48A, titled 'Protection and improvement of environment and safeguarding of forests and wild life'. It

mandates that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country. These two Articles form the core of the country's environment law, stated Chagla.

Courts have recognised the duty of the Government with regard to the environment.

For instance, the Supreme Court had said in the *Virendra Gaur* case, "There is a Constitutional imperative on the State Government and the municipalities to ensure and safeguard proper environment and also take adequate measures to promote, protect and improve both the man-made and the natural environment."

One of the objections raised by Chagla while arguing the case was that none of the respondents who have started construction of residential/commercial premises has obtained the mandatory clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), before starting any development.

He was referring to the Ministry's Notification dated

January 27, 1994 (as amended on July 7, 2004), issued under the provisions of the Environment Protection Act, 1986 and the rules thereunder.

According to the Notification, every new project, or expansion or modernisation of any activity (if the pollution load is to exceed the existing load), listed in Schedule I of the Notification requires 'environmental clearance'.

For this, an application has to be made, along with a project report, including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report, an Environmental Management Plan, etc.

The amendments made in 2004 spoke of "New construction projects" as item No.31 in Schedule I to the original Notification.

"Under this amendment, new townships, industrial townships, settlement colonies, commercial complexes, hotel complexes, hospitals, industrial estates and office complexes for 1,000 persons or more or discharging sewage of 50 thousand litres per day or more, with an investment of Rs.50 crore or

more would be required to obtain environmental clearance from Central Government," states the Bombay High Court's judgment dated October 17.

It was also clarified that all new construction projects where work had not come up to plinth level as on July 7, 2004 required clearance under the Notification.

It became apparent during the hearing of the petition that despite the publicity given by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) to the EIA Notification, not a single application was made for clearance until after the issue was raised in the petition. Even thereafter, "only five applications for clearance were received by the MPCB in respect of development in the mill lands," the judgement states.

On June 16, 2005, the MoEF wrote to the Chief Secretary of the Maharashtra Government asking for a report of compliance with the EIA Notification in respect of the mill land.

"By that letter the MoEF stated that it is apparent that the development of such prime urban lands will have serious implications on the provision of community facilities, open spaces, transport networks and infrastructural services." — (Courtesy: *Business Line*)

## NIZHAL - to promote tree culture

(By A Special Correspondent)

NIZHAL (Shade), a Trust to promote concern for trees in the city, has recently been formed by a group of Chennai citizens.

It aims to bring about awareness on the role and utility of trees in people's lives and on the need to plant, propagate and care for trees for the benefit of all. It also plans to disseminate knowledge about trees and the laws relating to trees in the urban setting.

The Trust will urge governmental and non-governmental

agencies to raise more trees, pointing out that each site – such as schools, bus stands, parks, Government offices, avenues and beaches – calls for different treatment with respect to tree planting, with the characteristics of indigenous and exotic trees needing to be understood before saplings are chosen for planting. NIZHAL will provide such knowledge through its data bank and with the help of experts in the field.

NIZHAL sees itself being a resource centre and facilitator

for those seeking information on trees and looks forward to networking with other interested citizens who can help either as volunteers or as resource persons.

Those interested may contact NIZHAL at:

13/10, I Main Road, Kotturpuram, Chennai 600 085.

email: shobhamenon@touchtelindia.net or call Kamakshi Subramaniam at 24919390, Sekhar Raghavan at 24918415, or Shobha Menon at 52045137.

## The Law – and tree-felling

Of late, there has been a lot of unnecessary worrying by the public over 'falling' trees. A consequence has been much unnecessary cutting of beautiful old avenue trees on the grounds of ensuring safety to human life and property.

Where there is a definite need to prune, transplant or even remove a tree, it has to be done. However, members of the public need to be aware of the following facts, states NIZHAL, a resource group that speaks for Trees.

Cutting an avenue tree without official permission is a

non-bailable offence under the Municipal Corporation/local body section, 'Destruction of Public Properties'.

Official permission means and involves the following procedure:

- 1) An application to be made to the concerned Zonal Officer, Corporation of Chennai.
- 2) The Zonal Officer passes on the petition to the Commissioner, Corporation of Chennai.
- 3) The Commissioner peruses the application and checks

situation with experts in the Parks Department before conveying decision to Zonal Officer.

4) The Zonal Officer conveys decision to the applicant and takes necessary steps.

Members of the public who are concerned about wanton tree-felling in their locality, or who wish to seek advice regarding avenue trees, can contact the following numbers at the Corporation of Chennai: 25384530, 25384670. In case of emergencies, the Tree Helpline of the Corporation can be reached at 98403 50000.

## Nuggets of judicial wisdom

● In all developed and developing countries, there is emphasis on planned development of cities, sought to be achieved by zoning, planning and regulating building construction activity, said the apex court in *Friends Colony Development Committee vs State of Orissa* (2004). "Such planning, though highly complex, is a matter based on scientific research, scientific study and experience leading to rationalisation of laws by way of legislative enactments and rules and regulations framed thereunder."

● The principal objects of any town planning legislation generally are to provide for planning, the development and control of the use of land and to confer on public authorities such as City Municipalities, Municipal Boroughs, Town Municipalities and Town Panchayats powers in respect of the acquisition and development of land for planning and other purposes. Thus educates the 1986 decision of the Supreme Court in *Prakash Amichand Shah vs State of Gujarat*.

● In *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum vs Union of India* (1996), the Supreme Court observed that the 'precautionary' principle and the 'polluter pays' principle are essential features of sustainable development. The court explained the precautionary principle in the context of the municipal law thus:

One, environmental measures by the State Government and the statutory authorities must anticipate, prevent and attack the causes of environmental degradation.

Two, where there are threats of serious and irreversible damage, lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. And,

Three, the onus of proof is on the actor or the developer/industrialist to show that his action is environmentally benign. A landmark decision, that was:

● Protection of the environment, open spaces for recreation and fresh air, playgrounds for children, promenade for the residents, and other conveniences or amenities are matters of great public concern and of vital interest to be taken care of in any development scheme. Sounds like a dream, doesn't it? But that thought is from the apex court's decision in *Bangalore Medical Trust vs B.S. Muddappa* (1991).

"Its importance has multiplied with emphasis on environment and pollution. In modern planning and development it

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# OUR READERS WRITE



## Of Chennai's origins?

Regarding the article in *Madras Musings* (October 1st) on Madras and Chennai, the word Chennai is, for sure, not of Tamil language origin, although it was, and is being, used as a vernacular equivalent of 'Madras' by everyone (irrespective of being Tamil or Telugu-speakers).

As far as I can recall, with my limited Tamil language proficiency, I cannot think of *chennai* as a Tamil word. There is, in Malayalam, a word *chenna* (NOT *chennai*); it refers to the massive wooden block used for stopping a temple car, i.e., *ther* or *radham* (something equal to an externally applied brake). A person would walk along the *ther* carrying the *chenna* and as and when people call 'halt' this person would place the *chenna* (block of wood) in front of the wheel. I refer to Malayalam because several chaste and classical Tamil words exist and remain in use even today in Malayalam (e.g. *thaakkol* (*thaazh-kol*) for *chaavi*, a Persian word which came into Tamil usage with the Hindustani brought in by the Muslims. Another example will be *padignaru* (*padi-gnaayiru*) referring to west, the direction where the sun (*gnaayiru*) sets (*padithal*).

The city name Chennai very likely has Telugu roots (*chana*, *chenna* in Telugu and Kannada mean beautiful/handsome; and in the Chennakesava temple (George Town), 'Chennakesava' means 'handsome Kesava'. I am of the opinion that the early Telugu settlers (late 1500s and early 1600s) must have named their 'new' habitat (Park Town, George Town areas) as 'chenna pattana' (handsome/beautiful town), similar to naming of the suburb 'New Town' in Sydney. The present Park Town—

George Town areas were very likely unoccupied at the time and the migrant Telugus from southern Andhra must have occupied the area and created the 'new' handsome *pattana* (I recognise that Elambore (= Purasawalkam), Triplicane, Mylapore and Tiruvottiyur existed at that time as isolated villages, with their own temples and temple tanks, with Tamils inhabiting them).

It would be interesting to hear from Tamil scholars whether any Tamil words similar to 'chennai' or 'chenna' exist!

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## An engineering problem

Reader S. Madhavan's letter (MM, October 1st) highlights the deterioration in the storage of water in the Kapali tank since the 1970s. The filling of water in the tank is an engineering problem. Somebody should investigate, design and construct a system which will fill the tank with water. It is as simple or as complicated as that.

Reader Madhavan reports that the water channels laid near the Sai Baba Temple, Adam Street and Mada Street to harvest the rainwater to the tank got clogged due to mindless construction activities. Only recently, they have been laid again, as a fillip to rainwater harvesting. Meanwhile, efforts have been made to fill the tank with water from lorries, but this water only percolated into the ground and filled the pockets of lorry-owners.

In the past, concreting the floor of the tank to prevent percolation of water was suggested. Perhaps, the lobbyists were not



# 'The crush on my road'

I refer to the photographs published in MM, September 16th issue. The photographs are of the extreme end of the small road leading from Greames Road between IDBI and Canara Bank.

I am working in one of the companies in the complex. The offices working in this area are: Tata Infocom; HCL in the same building as Tata Infocom - Unit I; Lokavani Hall Mark Press P. Ltd.; Food Corporation of India; IDBI 'Home Loan' Department; New India Insurance Co. Ltd.; HCL Infotech; Unitech; Magus Customer Data Log; HCL BPO; HiTech Share Registry; Royal Xerox; Sumathi Enterprises; Hotel

Chawla; Galaxy Commercial; Canara Bank; IDBI Bank; United Insurance Company; Accel Frontline; Hutch; Beardsell; TIDCO and Omni Agate.

Altogether the number of employees will be about 2,000. From 10 a.m. upto 5.30 or 6.00 p.m. it is very difficult to get into my office and get out of this road on account of the haphazard way of parking of cars, vans, 2-wheelers, autorickshaws and other vehicles. The road is further blocked by

roadside vendors selling their wares, seven tea shops etc.

The width of the road is only 22' and length is 720'. Vehicles are parked on both sides of the road and in case of any emergency, for anyone having to go to hospital, it will be difficult to get out of the complex on account of such parking and the constant traffic.

The concerned authorities need to take immediate action to help the occupiers of the buildings on this road.

**O.K. Mohandas**  
Chennai 600 006

strong enough to implement the project. Given a chance, some people will lobby for the conversion of the tank into a commercial area!

Metrowater officials, unfortunately, did not realise that water in a tank filled with water from lorries will percolate into the ground. Afterwards, they came to the conclusion that only copious rain and prudent rainwater harvesting would do the trick. In fact, Metrowater officials should have investigated how they were to solve the problem, considered the several alternatives, arrived at the best solution, got proper financial approval, and then completed the work.

The capacity of the tank is approximately 8,00,000 cubic feet (22,000 cubic metre) or the equivalent of 2,000 lorryloads. Nothing much if you consider the rainfall in the area. A 10 cm run off from an area 500 m x 500 m around the tank or a 2.5 cm run off from an area of 1000 m x 1000 m is all that would be required to fill the tank.

The water from the catchment area of the Thirumylai railway station is flowing into the Buckingham Canal. No one is bothered about it. The elevated railway line has a catchment area exceeding 15,000 sq.m. for every kilometre of the railway line. Water collected from 2 km of the railway line on either side of the Thirumylai railway station (total 4 km, with a catchment area of 60,000 sq.m) is all that is necessary to fill the Kapali tank with a copious supply of water. The water could be easily conveyed by pipeline under the elevated track and discharged into the stormwater drain near the Sai Baba temple.

There may be other ways of achieving the same objective. Somebody should be given the responsibility to study the project in all its aspects. Then, we will have the results.

The same principle applies to the remaining 38 temple tanks.

**M. Susikaran**  
14/8, First Street  
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## Towering threat

I was appalled to recently see an advertisement about the coming up of an 18-storey building with 54 apartments on the Quibble Island. How come the CMDA thought it fit to grant a licence to such a highrise building on the banks of Adyar and very close to the coast in the face of sunamis and tremors threatening the city. Did they consult ecological and environmental experts on the feasibility of such a mammoth construction? All concerned in this ill-advised step owe an explanation to the public.

**M.R. Pillai**  
H 64/5, Central Avenue  
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## Reason for action

I beg to disagree with Reader C.G. Prasad (MM, October 16th). Even if unpalatable, the action of the Commissioner of Police in attempting to enforce some order and discipline in the bars of star hotels cannot be said to be an excess. We should not forget the present younger generation, blessed with well-paid jobs, is already falling fast as prey to the temptations of drink and other accompanying evils. Restrictions are a must when they concern liquor and other undesirable activities resorted to indiscriminately in the name of relaxation.

The recent death of a young woman on Radhakrishnan Salai, allegedly a victim of inebriated rash drivers, should have been an eye-opener. Yet young people continue to drive after liquor.

Since 1971, when prohibition was relaxed, a new generation is deteriorating fast after falling prey to drink. The wise personal appeal of

late Rajaji unfortunately fell on deaf ears at the time, triggering a chain of tragic events and deteriorating values.

**D.V. Subramanian**  
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## With head bowed ...

I do not agree with reader C.G. Prasad's contention (MM, September 16th) that it is wrong to say that one "bows one's head in shame."

While it is true that an expression that is widely used is "to hang one's head in shame", there is absolutely no solecism involved in the use of the verb "bow" in a discomfiting context.

Bow (v.) means "to bend one's neck so that you are looking at the ground, especially because you want to show respect for God, or because you are embarrassed or upset", to quote Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English, which gives this example.

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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**

## READABILITY PLEASE

### Dear Readers,

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

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

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

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

**THE EDITOR**

# Preserving heritage offers no easy solution

Though we might like to imagine that there is such a thing as heritage that we can all identify with, that will give us a national identity as Indians living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, who are bound by various noble ideas, the fact is that it's all very fluid and arbitrary. This is why it is so difficult to get a consensus on any given issue. Do we save tigers by keeping them in tiger sanctuaries, or do we save the tribals who live there? Are some people like the Nawab of Pataudi allowed to hunt wild deer because this is what he must do as a Nawab – that's a part of his identity – or do we put the Nawab into jail? Do we clean up the Coom or do we let the people who live by its side remain there, because that's part of their heritage? Do we restore a temple tank or provide more water lorries?

To give you an idea of how we now live in an era of confusing signals, let me describe to you a recent event when I had to open an art show. It was a solo show by a young girl who was a Tamil Muslim. Her family had obviously not been to such an exhibition and they stood around very silently in the margins. At the centre of the hall was a brass lamp, with flowers, *kolam* and so forth. Now just before we all came forward to light the lamp, the girl asked me whether her two aunts could say a prayer and I said, of course, how nice that would be. They came forward. They bent their heads down and the prayer that they recited was "Our Father who are in heaven" – the Lord's Prayer! This was followed by two little girls who were dressed in shiny pink nylon frocks who came forward and presented me with floral bouquets. What made it even more amusing was that they picked up their frocks and made little gestures to me, as if I were the Queen of England. Now, obviously, only I thought this was a strange ritual. For the others mixing all these different customs was part of being a 'modern' Indian, may be something they had watched on TV.

When I see an artificial palm tree made out of plastic and electrical light fittings standing outside the airport, I cannot help but feel very irritated. Because in a tropical landscape, the easiest thing to do is to have a whole line of real palm trees, but I realise that in today's world the idea of having an artificial palm tree outside our malls and airports is a way of telling people that we have arrived. It's part of the identity of the global Indian. It's part of a new art form whereby at every street corner during a temple festival or an election rally, you find these giant bamboo cutouts of politicians or gods and goddesses that have been outlined with tiny light bulbs. Now what I find fascinating about these cutouts is that the colours that are used for these images are very traditional. Wherever they cannot represent the actual images in green, blue or red, outlined in pink or gold, they have small cutouts of the party symbols, the rising sun in the case of the DMK and the two green leaves in the case of the AIADMK. Again, the use of symbols is very much a part of our artistic tradition. As you know, the Buddha has most often been symbolised by an umbrella, a Bodhi tree, or a stupa. So now I tell myself that perhaps the artificial palm trees are a part of our urban landscape. It tells us that we are now in the electronic age and are part of the whole IT revolution.

Now, turning to the architectural heritage of our City, certain things stand out. Having been involved with the attempt to 'Save Moore Market' and watched the attempts to restore the Town Hall building, certain things become clear. One is that when an old building falls into disuse, it has also something to do with the degeneration of the entire area. This is called in the West the decay of Inner Cities. Unless something is done to rejuvenate the area, just restoring the building is of little use. On the other hand, by renovating the entire area, sometimes it is possible to bring new economic life to the place and then hope for the place to have a new lease of life. This is the kind of experiment that is now taking place in the Mill Areas of Mumbai.

On the other hand, the way the *Ice House* has been restored at the Marina Beach is an example of how a building can be renovated for a useful purpose. It is now being used to showcase the life and thoughts of Swami Vivekananda. It's beautifully maintained and you come out of the place feeling elevated. However, it has to be said, even though the building has been re-done, the area itself remains neglected. It has not led to an upgrading of the area.

The Marina Beach is a good example of how heritage can be used by the powers that be, in this case the State. To begin with, there is

the War Memorial. It was first built to remind people about the two World Wars, then the wars fought in Independent India. Then came the statue culture. As we all know, one of them was of Gandhiji on his Dandi March, the other was the *Triumph of Labour*. These could be said to represent a national identity, soon after Independence, a homage to the Father of the Nation and one that glorified the struggle of the Common Man. They are now raising a large stone, but this could stand for the burden of colonial history.

The next step was the installation of statues that glorified Tamil culture that were put there during the DMK regime. Even this was not without controversy. The statue of Kannagi throwing her anklet facing the City was said to have led to a widespread drought in the area and, finally, she had to be removed from her place on the beach. Some people felt that she was too dangerous to be left standing there.

By this time, there were also the famous Mausoleums that were erected on the Beach. Whatever some of us may feel about them, these memorials actually provided a good outing for the common people. For not only do they get a dose of heritage Tamil style, they can also have a dip in the water and enjoy the food stalls. It is a mix of history and entertainment.

As against this very tangible experience, I have to admit that the nearby Museum to Vivekananda is completely dead. It's clean, it's well maintained but it has very little to say to the local Tamil person.

The latest addition to the Marina Beach beautification programme is the addition of little plaster birds and animals. You could call it a Singapore-isation of the environment. You may have noticed how the medians on the main roads now have small gardens. They could be called miniature Zen Gardens. What is funny is though they have put in rocks in the midst of the plants, the rocks have been painted in bright patterns. Anywhere else in the world, a rock would be left as a rock, but here in Tamil Nadu, we have to paint the rock. So, now, may be this will be called Tamil Zen.

The other great symbol that popular Tamil culture has provided to us is something much more humble. It's the plastic water pot. I know it's a bit cruel to talk about a feature of our daily life that means so much hardship to the thousands of women who have to wait in a line for water, but even here you can see the love of colour that is so typically Tamilian. As though to underline this, one of the hotels in the city, *The Park*, has made the plastic water pot part of its display, right at the entrance. Whenever there is a danger sign on the highway at night, what do we find but a red plastic pot that has been turned upside down and fitted with a light and a sign saying 'Danger'. And they also find uses as coloured hanging lamps in garden restaurants with the lettering of the restaurant painted on each one of the pots.

I will return to the subject of plastic a little later, but for now let's move further down the Coastal Road, all the way to Mahabalipuram. Very exciting things are happening, because now they have large granite slabs with paintings of the flora and fauna of the area. This is just to remind us about the birds and animal life that used to live there before the human encroachments scared them into oblivion. So, now you don't see the seagulls, but you can look at paintings of the seagulls.

There are also various types of entertainment arcades that have come up in the area. There's the VGP Golden Beach, there's MGM Grand and there's DakshinaChitra. Now all three are selling Tamil culture and heritage in some sort of a way. At VGP you have your Chola King live, your longest *dosai* in the world, and all the filmi type of culture. At MGM it's pure filmi entertainment to appeal to a Tamil audience with global aspirations. There were supposed to be a bird park, like the Singapore-Malaysian-Indonesian models, an oceanarium and a zoo, but I don't think these things have materialised. People just find it easier to go to Singapore. At DakshinaChitra, it's heritage with a big 'H' because it's meant to remind people what their traditional houses and lifestyles used to be, without actually having to live a traditional way of life. So, you have all the beautiful bits, without the pain of actually drawing water from a well, grinding rice between two stones and so forth. Now you can pay to see some volunteer do this for you at DakshinaChitra and, hopefully, she also enjoys doing these things, because usually she had to grind her rice

(Continued on Page 7)



The pictures on this page are of four of the heritage houses on the Namma Mylapore walking trail. (Pictures courtesy: K.J. SURIYANARAYANAN.)

## Of homes and a City's soul

An assignment that requires you to stroll in and out of other people's homes with an air of assumed nonchalance has a distinct downside. You are constantly beset with an uncomfortable sense of being where you have no real business to be, rather like a gatecrasher who has the misfortune of possessing a particularly censorious, hard-to-please conscience.

You try to make yourself as inconspicuous as possible, but don't really succeed. After all, you are exactly what you suspect you have become – an intruder.

What is so unique about these homes, anyway... that could possibly excuse your inquisitive behaviour?

In a word, they are special. They are old, they are classic – and they have not been subjected to much change for several decades.

They are a precious component of the city's collective heritage.

Located around the Kapaleeswarar Temple, these homes have been identified by *Namma*

### The heritage houses identified by 'Namma Mylapore'

17/27 East Mada Street  
23/4 Pichu Pillai Street  
11/11 Kapaleeswarar Sannadhi Street  
13/8 Kapaleeswarar Sannadhi Street  
14/6 Kapaleeswarar Sannadhi Street  
16/35 South Mada Street  
32/66 Nadu Street  
35/60 Nadu Street  
1/1 Venkatachalam Lane  
13/25 Chitrakulam South Street  
The list includes the house of S. Rajam on Nadu Street.

To get a feel of the tour – and particular the homes – I asked Suri to give me a 'preview'. As we set out, he tells me that the houses on *Namma Mylapore's* list are today owned by temples in the area. In the past, the houses belonged to the residents of the *agraharam*. When they decided to move into the city for reasons of work, they preferred to hand their homes over to temples like the Adi Keshava Perumal temple rather than rent them out personally.

We start the tour at House No.11, Kapaleeswarar Sannadhi Street, now the Kalyan Vidya Mandir Nursery School. "We have to get an early start... it gets

too uncomfortably hot otherwise," Suri has warned you... but this means that your visits clash with morning chores in homes preparing for the day. Being a home-maker yourself, you avoid

● by  
**RANJITHA ASHOK**

the eyes of the lady of the house who, in spite of being harassed, welcomes you with a smile and an offer of coffee. An embedded plaque on a wall bears the name 'Amudha Thadavalli Ammal', and a date: 1838-1843. 'Collector's certificate No.83,



New Survey No.3204', it goes on to add, and you reflect that the 'old number – new number' confusion appears to have existed even then!

N.K. Natarajan's home at No.27, East Mada Street, is next. He is a house-proud owner, having lived "in this house for 58 years". The house has been with the family since 1919 – "no change at all", he says. You climb up a narrow, but darkly gleaming staircase of Burma teak, its banisters polished smooth by generations of human hands supporting themselves while going about the daily business of living. You emerge on to a lovely balcony, protected by a grille of wrought iron and wood. "So many people, including foreign tourists, come and ask us about his balcony." The red oxide floor glows with ruby-light, and a hearth in the kitchen, decorated with a bright red *kolam* pattern running cheerfully round its semi-circle edge, smiles at you, conjuring up memories of summer visits to grand-aunts' homes. You notice that the house is filled with pretty little *kolams*. You look at the lady of the house, and tentatively ask whether she, as chief homemaker, ever thought about moving, getting herself easier-to-handle, modern surroundings, making life smoother for herself. She smiles at your question and shakes her head: "We are comfortable... we never felt the need to change anything."

It is the same answer everywhere. "My house has always been like a banyan tree," one occupant tells you. At one time, 9 or 10 children ran riot through these warren-like rooms, they tell you, with pride.



The homes are naturally cool, ideally suited to the climate and environment, with little water tanks and wells inside, in the main courtyards, many open to the sky. (What an effective method of rainwater harvesting... before the world even came up with the term.) Wooden rafters, carved doors and pillars are common to all the homes. Some entrances, strangely, sport Grecian pillars. Several rooms display carving on walls near ceilings. You peer into kitchens, and notice that chimneys are now inactive as gas stoves are used.

Sudden corners reflect treasures in the dim light. You stumble across pieces of furniture – old chests, safes with emblems and seals more than 100 years old.

Some homes have terraces, scorching as the day gets warmer, but obviously cool and breezy in the evening.

The four Mada Streets form a square round the Kapaleeswarar Temple. But new buildings now disrupt a once-clear view of the *gopuram* of the temple, some residents complain.

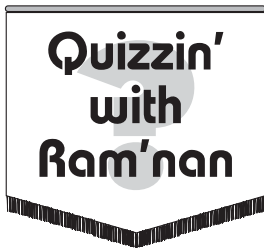
You walk a little further, and turn down tiny, narrow little streets that branch off from the main Mada Streets, with little temples at each corner. You walk into homes whose cement *thinnaish* shine a smooth grey-brown, testimony to many gatherings of friends and family on cool evenings after lamps have been lit. Plants and creepers grow inside, in the open courtyards, giving the interior a cool, green glow.

One street housed the original Karpagamal Mess, Suri tells you. In the old days, food was served directly on to the palm of your hand as you stood on the road, he informs you. You ate, washed your hands and moved on – how brisk and hygienic is that, he laughs.

You walk into yet another home. Suri exchanges banter with the occupant, obviously an old friend, who tells me, "He's doing a form of social service, taking people like you around, giving you a glimpse of heritage."

You stroll through the cool dark interior of the house, with its wooden pillars, through a puja room occupied by an awe-inspiring idol of Hanuman. You listen to the story behind the idol, one of faith, of belief in its capacity to solve problems, offer protection and success. Your eyes briefly wander to a corner occupied by computers.

And you reflect on the magical manner in which the traditional and the contemporary accept one another's presence, finding it so easy to co-exist, in a manner uniquely Indian. You note the number of people who seem to effortlessly occupy these homes. What about privacy? Personal space? "Isn't that just a state of mind?" They counter. "Everything is such a problem for everyone these days... the fuss made to get one or two children married. (Continued on Page 7)



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

1. With which American airline has Air Sahara announced a code-share agreement?
2. After which Bharat Ratna is the Nagpur International Airport renamed?
3. Who is the new men's World chess champion?
4. Name the latest and 33rd Asterix adventure launched recently.
5. Who is the Nobel Prize for Literature winner this year?
6. Why was the Irish author John Banville in the news?
7. Who shared the ICC Player of the Year Award?
8. Name the music promoter, who introduced Bob Dylan to the world and Pt. Ravi Shankar to American audiences, who passed away recently.
9. Where was the epicentre of the killer quake that rocked Pakistan and Kashmir located?
10. Name the former Union Minister and BJP MP who was shot at during a rally in Bihar on October 6th.

\* \* \*

11. Which player based in Chennai completed a rare four-title sweep at the National table tennis championships recently?
12. Name the latest offering from Vikram Seth that was first launched in the State Capital recently.
13. If Kushboo has 'Jackpot', what does Meena have on Jaya TV?
14. 'XIVA', a software/algorithm developed by two IIT Madras students, is considered an aid to diagnose which cricketing problem?
15. Who is to be Rajinikanth's heroine in his next flick *Sivaji*?
16. Where in Chennai has the Indian Institute of Medical Music Therapy been opened recently?
17. After whom is the recently inaugurated National Institute of Siddha in Tambaram Sanatorium proposed to be named?
18. The Virtual University Programme, which was inaugurated by the President, has been jointly promoted by University of Madras along with which two varsities?
19. Who is the new holder of the Irani Trophy?
20. In Chennai, what was Moore Street previously called?

(Answers on page 7)

In spite of the fact that South Indian cuisine is regarded as balanced in dietary content it is tasty, less spicy than most Indian food, and non-greasy, there has long been a patronising attitude towards it in the rest of the country. More recently, our *idlis* and *dosais* with *sambhar* and chutneys have become hot favourites, never mind if *dosai* is pronounced *dosa* and *sambaar* as *sambur*. But we appear to have now moved even beyond that, and there was a whole session devoted to the flavours of South India at the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Culinary Conference held recently in Chennai. I was delighted to chair it.

P. Soundararajan, Corporate Executive Chef, Club Mahindra, opened in the session speaking about the characteristics and the constituents of the ingredients that contributed to the flavours of South India. When hot food is served on a banana leaf, does it not provide a distinct flavour? When sesame oil is gently heated and tempering agents like with mustard seeds, *urad dhal* and curry leaves burst their flavour into the oil, does it not change the taste subtly? Coconuts are used extensively in the South, more so in coastal areas like Kerala and Mangalore, and to some extent Chennai. The use of coconut oil in dishes for tempering or for frying gives it an unmistakable Kerala stamp. Rice, the staple food of the South, can be presented in a variety of ways – from the gentle flavours of tangy lemon rice to the fiery *puliyodarai* (or tamarind rice), the rich coconut rice or *pulaos*, or the *pongal*. The range is unbeatable.

I asked Chef Praveen Anand of Welcome group Sheraton's Dakshin chain whether he used *vadagam*. Small compressed sun-dried balls of tempering ingredients like mustard seeds, cumin and fenugreek, held together with castor oil, onion and plenty of garlic, it is the backbone of some of the most delicious non-Brahmin dishes. Using *vadagams* to temper brinjal curries, fish curries and tamarind sauces imparted flavours truly South Indian.

It is only in the past decade

# The flavours of South India

that South Indian cuisine has been acknowledged even by those within India, according to Chef Natarajan, Corporate Chef, Taj Leisure Hotels. The challenge is to popularise South Indian regional cuisine through food festivals and specialised cookbooks. "The Southern States are veritable gold mines of recipes. The most basics of these are sophisticated enough to be showcased anywhere in the world, says Alfred Prasad, former Sheraton chef and now running 'Tamarind' in London.

Sabrina Hougaard, who along with her husband Jesper manages spas across South Asia, takes much interest in spa cuisine. According to her, South

and chutney; steamed *idiappam* (soft rice vermicelli) can hold its own without innovation. Nicely packaged, each could be a stand-alone dish without any frills. Many times, it is the hole-in-the-wall restaurant serving traditional food which is quite tasty, of course minus the ambience. As far as the South is concerned, restaurants like Saravana Bhavan, Sangeetha and Annapurna provide enough vegetarian variety where Woodlands and Dasaprakash once held the monopoly.

For those mired in tradition, the gentle aromas of South Indian food, be it a *sambar* or a vegetable gravy, are released

● Sabitha Radhakrishnan in two articles take a look at the highlights of the 2nd National Culinary Conference.

Indian cuisine is the best in the world, Ayurveda vouches for the fact. An expert on Mangalorean cuisine, Sabrina talked about the subtle nuances in cuisine culture even among the Mangaloreans. For instance, a Christian would interpret a fish curry very differently from a Hindu Mangalorean. Coconut is liberally used and the Mangalorean fish curry, a lip-smacking red in colour, has no tomatoes, only onion, red chillies and tamarind. The Mangalore chillies impart their own flavour and are as different to other chillies as chalk is to cheese. The traditional crops of coastal Konkan, like coconut, mangoes, rice, pulses, cashew and kokum, nurture the distinctive cuisine of the region.

Kerala too boasts of exciting rice-based dishes. The milk white *puttu*, steamed in bamboo cases, and laced with grated coconut and served with *kadalai* curry; fluffy, lacy *aapams* served with sweet coconut milk

only when the spices are individually roasted and pounded coarsely to release their essential oils, and others ground to a fine paste on a grinding stone. No one smothers the main ingredients (which might be vegetables or meat) with strong *masala*; you add just enough to gently coax out the taste. The tomatoes arrived in India only 100-200 years ago. But even after that our grandmothers cooked wonderful food with only tamarind to contribute that touch of sourness.

Shoba Narayan, international food writer, presented her views on granting Indian food global status. Being a staunch South Indian vegetarian herself, Shoba emphasised the value of packaging Indian food differently. "Indian food has an image problem, so why don't we turn tradition on its head? Why should *rasam* at the table have all those garnishes of coriander leaves, curry leaves and crushed garlic? Why cannot it be strained and served like a

clear soup? And why should *dosais* have only potato, that conventional filling, be served only with chutney?" Having lived in the US and been commissioned by international magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Gourmet* to write on food trends, Shoba stresses the need to move with the times and allow Indian food to evolve and, where necessary, be part of fusion experiments without loss of identity.

While I appreciate her viewpoint and agree that evolving is only natural and you should not resist change if it is for the better, I cannot for the life of me imagine serving a crisp *dosai* smeared with butter and layered with walnuts and cream! To me it would not be a *dosai* at all; the label would have to change and it would be safer to call it flavoured crepes! And when it is essentially a vegetarian dish, to have a fish or prawn filling does not appeal to my culinary sensitivity.

Is five-star packaging important in restaurants? If it is tourist-oriented, then, yes, packaging and bastardisation can take place, but to a hidebound Indian traditionalist might seem offensive. There are numerous visiting tourists who enjoy tradition and who want to eat the South Indian way. Why not offer them what they want, instead of packaged fusions, I wonder.

Recently, we entertained an all-American group who wanted the feel of South Indian culture based on cuisine. They wanted to eat along with the family members, and insisted on banana leaves and used their fingers! They loved the crisp *poriyals*, the rice and *sambar*, the *rasam* mixed with mashed rice and a dollop of ghee, and curd! They were delighted, and enjoyed the experience, and it would not have been the same had I brought out my best table linen, crockery and cutlery.

So the question remains. Should we or should we not translate our cuisine into "globally recognised requirements?" Food like everything has to evolve, but we would be much better off if the packaging was innovative rather than resort to fusion food and lose out traditional identity.

Can South Indian food play a role in the tourism destination image of the country or will it just hold on to its newly acquired national identity? The fact that tourism has to grow has led to tastes becoming more mobile across national boundaries and the process has led to globalisation of national cuisine. The world will undoubtedly catch up with South Indian cuisine. But, as in any kind of business, marketing is important and for it to succeed, the right balance and vision is what will ultimately count.

## Multi-level parking planned

(By A Correspondent)

Beginning with a highrise parking complex near Panagal Park, the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority is planning similar facilities in six other major shopping areas in the city.

It has already invited bids for constructing a multi-level parking complex planned for a site adjacent to Panagal Park.

The successful bidder is expected to execute the Rs. 47-crore project on a 'Build, Operate and Transfer' (BOT) basis and complete it in 24 months.

The selected architect/consultant firm will prepare a detailed project report for the parking facility based on a design provided by CMDA.

The proposed complex will have about 1.60 lakh square

feet of space in its two-level basement and ground plus four floors. Elevators, fire fighting equipment and public address systems will be provided.

There will be parking space for 450 cars and 750 two-wheelers.

Similar parking complexes are to be built in six other shopping areas in the city. — (Courtesy: *Mambalam Times*.)

# Homes & a City's soul

(Continued from Page 5)

Look how we all lived. Our homes reflect a sense of calmness... that's because of a capacity to be content with what you have. That's a learned skill, one you have to nurture, develop."

Generations were born here; they stay here till the end of their lives. All phases of their lives, with the ceremonies that announce the arrival of each new one, have been performed here.

These homes re-define the term 'extended families'. Some point out parts of these little homes that have been allotted to indigent members, not only of their own families, but of friends' families fallen on hard times. The little homes have expanded to give shelter to them all.

But it would be dishonest to paint a superficially pretty, romantic picture. All the houses have been taken on rent. The tenants are solely responsible for maintenance. Dust, broken skylights, peeling plaster, and

termite problems abound amidst the serene *tulsi madams*. Some houses do not have the central *miththum*, so the roofs are filled with skylights, many broken ones letting in not only sunlight, but also a generous amount of rainwater, complain the occupants. Sometimes, children playing in adjoining streets break them, requiring that the glass be constantly replaced. Some tenants have re-done, in certain places even reconstructed, toilets and have white-washed walls. A few have re-modified kitchens.

Attitudes vary. There runs a thread of awareness through some conversations – of the possibility of some traditional practices being considered obsolete these days, displaying a wistfulness for days gone by combined with a sturdy determination to accept change; others do not seem to see any need to do so. Tradition must be protected, as also the continuity of age-old practices and rituals, while outside, groups walk down the Mada streets, singing *bhajans* during Margali Maasam.

Soon, the walk comes to an end, and you are on your way home.

You admit to yourself that at the beginning of the walk you had the mental attitude of a tourist... someone who comes to see, express wonder, then move on. Was there also a touch of patronising "Oh-how-sweet" about your attitude?

If you are honest, yes, there was.

At the end of the walk, you have lost that attitude. You are humbled.

This is a living tradition; this is real. This isn't a piece of the past captured, forever stilled, transplanted to the artificial environ of a museum, a mere display for your benefit.

No, this is real.

These people are real.

These houses are real. They are not just carved doors and wooden pillars for you to coo over.

They symbolise a mindset, a philosophy, and a way of life.

The day has taught you many lessons.

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

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## PRESERVING HERITAGE

(Continued from Page 4)

and draw her water for free, to feed her family, but now someone pays her to do this.

Now, the question is which one of these resorts would you think as being more representative of Tamil heritage? Obviously this will depend on the social strata of the person. I don't think we can really say which one is more authentic, or which one is better. In some way or the other, each one has packaged what we call as heritage in a manner that is easily recognisable to a particular segment of society. As our lives become more and more mechanical, each one is packaging the past in a way that appeals to our idea of what we think as authentic. There's a great nostalgia for the simple way of life of our grandparents, or a return to our roots. These places provide just a flavour of that way of life.

I had said that I would touch upon the question of plastic. This is the direct result of what took place in Mumbai during the recent floods and which could well happen in Chennai also. One of the main causes of the flooding was the choking of the Mithi river. It's no different from the Cooum. The same circumstances prevail here, there are people living along its banks, there are industrial wastes being poured into the river but, more than anything else, the river is choked with plastic. You can see this wherever you stop and catch a glimpse of the river.

What we have to ask is this: Is banning of plastics the answer, or educating people to use plastic in a responsible manner? Is beautifying the banks of the Cooum more important, or do we have to take a holistic view of the situation. Is it tigers or tribals?

What I think we should realise is that there are no easy solutions. Just as there are many layers to our culture and our heritage, there have to be many layers to the solutions that we find to solve these problems. Looking at them is just the beginning.



**Till November 12:** *Tartan and the Turban*, a photo exhibition by Herman Rodrigues, presented as part of the *Seeing Frames Series*. (At the British Council).

**November 4, 11, 18, 25:** 'Catharsis', with Axel Wagener, theatre artiste and director. The workshop introduces the epochs of German and European theatre and explains the backgrounds. Video examples of exemplary theatre performances will illustrate the stage phenomenon. The workshop intends to make contemporary plays understandable by discussing their methods, techniques and backgrounds.

The workshop will also prepare the staging of a contemporary German play in Spring 2006. (For details: Max Mueller Bhavan.)

**November 17, 18, 19:** A conference on the challenges facing in Chennai, whose rapid expansion triggered by enormous economic growth attracts emigrants from rural areas and elevates the lifestyle of an emerging 'Middle Class'. Problems such as water scarcity, lack of proper sanitation and waste management, and pollution due to increasing traffic will be discussed by Indian and German/European experts. (Organised by the Max Mueller Bhavan.)

## Answers to Quiz

1. American Airlines; 2. Dr. Ambedkar International Airport; 3. Veselin Topalov; 4. 'Asterix and the Falling Sky'; 5. Harold Pinter; 6. He is the winner of the Man Booker Prize for 2005 for *The Sea*; 7. Jacques Kallis and Andrew Flintoff; 8. Harold Leventhal; 9. Near Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK; 10. Ravi Shankar Prasad.

\* \* \*

11. A. Sharath Kamal; 12. 'Two Lives'; 13. 'House Full'; 14. 'Chuckling'; 15. Shreya; 16. Apollo Hospitals; 17. Ayothee Dasar; 18. Mumbai and Calcutta; 19. Railways; 20. Second Line Beach.

## 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: .....

## • Among Tamil Nadu players...

# Only one grabbed the opportunity

When an opportunity comes, it must be grabbed with both hands. Just as Kerala's unheralded medium pacer Sreesanth did recently and received due reward. But apart from Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan, none of the other Tamil Nadu cricketers did full justice to the chances they got while playing for the various teams in the recently concluded Challenger Series in Mohali.

Of late, the State's representation in the national team has been restricted. Ever since Sadagoppan Ramesh played the last of his 19 Tests in Sri Lanka in September 2001, Tamil Nadu has struggled to have a representative in the Indian team.

The situation has been a bit better in one-day internationals, with, in the last four years, Hemang Badani, Sridharan Sriram, Dinesh Kaarthick and Lakshmipathy Balaji all being in and out of the Indian team. However, only Balaji and Kaarthick have been in the Test squad. But even here Balaji, because of injuries and intense competition, has been in an out of the squad, while Kaarthick has been under pressure to perform, with M.S. Dhoni breathing down his neck.

Twenty-nine-year-old lefthander Sriram has played in eight ODIs over a four-year period and has really not consoli-

dated his position, as his career figures will indicate. They have been 81 runs at an average of 13.50, with one half century, and nine wickets at just over 30 apiece at an economy rate of a little over five runs.

It certainly isn't easy for any player to get into the middle order of the Indian team, whether in Tests or ODIs and Sriram, for all his excellent

ures of 94 runs at an average of 15.66, with the highest score of 38.

In the Challenger Series, he batted only once, making 46 for India A against India Seniors — neither here nor there, really.

Balaji who turned 24 last month has fared slightly better in the last couple of years that he has been part of the international scene. That he has played

• by **PARTAB RAMCHAND**

record in first class cricket, where he averages over 55, has just not been able to make a mark at the international level. The Challenger did, however, present him with a chance to further his cause, but with scores of 45 not out, 44 and 8 while playing for India B, he did not exactly cement his claims.

The same can be said about Badani who turns 29 next month. Over a four-year period, he has played in 40 ODIs, has scored 867 runs with one century and four half centuries. But despite his polished stroke play in the middle order, he too has found it difficult to establish himself in the middle order against tough competition.

Badani has also played four Tests, the last being the same game that Ramesh played in Sri Lanka four years ago. Here too, he has not exactly consolidated his place as underscored by fig-

ures of 29 ODIs since he made his debut in 2002 and eight Tests since he played the first game against New Zealand two years ago is testimony to this.

But despite stout-hearted performances — most notably in Pakistan last year — he too has not exactly established himself as a regular in the national team due to the factors already mentioned. But in the opportunities he has got, he has done reasonably well, as brought home by figures — 27 wickets from eight Tests at an average of just over 37 apiece with one five-wicket haul, and 34 wickets from 29 ODIs at an average of 38.58 at a rather high economy rate of 5.55.

In the Challenger Series, playing for India A, he had the rather unimpressive return of two for 76 from ten overs and no wicket for 48 off nine overs in the two matches.

Twenty-years-old Kaarthick's place in the Test side is by no means secure. This is brought home by his figures — 245 runs from ten matches at an average of 18.84, with the highest of 93, and 29 catches and four stumpings. He has also played in a couple of ODIs before losing his place to Dhoni, who with his breezy batting has stolen a march over him.

There is very little to choose between the two when it comes to work behind the stumps. But Kaarthick did not exactly enhance his reputation in the Challenger Series when playing for India A, getting scores of 26 and 11. His keeping was adequate.

Apart from this quartet, Tamil Nadu had another representative in the Challenger Series in Vidyut, who was a member of the India Seniors team. The son of former State and South Zone opening batsman V. Sivaramakrishnan, Vidyut, who bats and bowls left-handed, has been around the first class scene since 1999-2000 and has played for junior Indian teams against foreign sides. Talented and temperamentally strong, Vidyut, who turns 24 in

December, has always struck me as a fine prospect.

Vidyut played in only one match, the final against India B, and he really grabbed the opportunity with both hands, hitting 87 off 107 balls with 15 fours. He opened the innings with Sachin Tendulkar and, even as wickets fell at regular intervals, with India Seniors making heavy weather of their modest target of 178, Vidyut stood firm, playing with the authority of a veteran. He guided the innings admirably, and when he was sixth out India Seniors were only five runs from victory.

Vidyut has always given the impression that he should be playing at a higher level and it is to be hoped that this knock will see the selectors give him his due. His impressive first class figures — 1547 runs at an average of just over 35, with three hundreds and nine fifties, and 67 wickets at 31.74 apiece with best figures of six for 24 — mark him out as an allrounder of considerable promise.

One of the few to get a hundred in first class cricket batting at No. 11, Vidyut is long overdue for a leg up. — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

## Nuggets of judicial wisdom

(Continued from Page 2)

occupies an important place in social ecology. A park is a necessity, not a mere amenity."

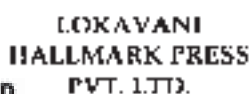
• While thinking of the present, the future should not be forgotten, said the apex court in T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpad vs Union of India (2002). We owe a duty to future generations, and for a bright today, a bleak tomorrow cannot be countenanced, the court observed.

"We must learn from our experiences of the past to make both the present and the future brighter. We learn from our experiences, mistakes from the past, so that they can be rectified for a better present and the future. It cannot be lost sight of that while today is yesterday's tomorrow, it is tomorrow's yesterday."

Tomorrow may decide what happens when the parties aggrieved by the Bombay High Court's decision go on appeal before the apex court. — (Courtesy: *Business Line.*)

D.M.

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