

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

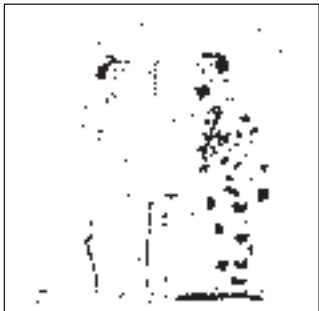
MUSINGS

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Now that the NRI season is over, why don't you drop the American accent and change into something comfortable.

Till we meet again

As Chennai's brief dalliance with 'nice weather' ends, empty spaces, shaped significantly like departed guests, punch holes in the city's atmosphere – on roads, in shops, in hotels. The quintessential NRI-male – shorts vaguely reminiscent of Empire-building eras, designer T-shirt effecting to be ordinary, and the ubiquitous mineral water bottle, *et al* – has disappeared.

Cultural *sabhas* no longer twang to the sound of *desi* voices speaking in strange cadences. Boutiques and popular clothing stores enjoy a well-earned rest, after meeting the demands of large hordes that realise that fashions back home tend to change between visits. Manitailor, that maestro of *pavadai-chokkas*, has not merely upgraded his sartorial skills, he's bought a brand new TV, latest model... this season is always so good for him.

Famous sweet shops are empty. The *podis*, *vadams*, *varuvals*, chutneys, pickles, and different varieties of chips – all readied and packed by end-November – have more than justified the zeal and foresight of their savvy creators by disappearing rapidly off the shelves and into suitcases.

Visitors, exclaiming over the variety of ready-mixes, reflect on how great it would be if they could package instant 'domestic-help'. Sprinkle water, and hey presto, you get something like Rosie from those old Jetsons' comics.

And, no one says: "Yes, the *pani-puri* is to die for, but is the *pani* made of mineral water?"

Ah, well – till winter comes around again!

Ranjitha Ashok

Where was there flood control?

Shortcomings need to be urgently addressed

(by Bharath Jairaj*)

"And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall".

– Bob Dylan

Irrespective of whether the recent monsoons were extraordinary due to changing global climate patterns or the Rain God responding to all previous entreaties at one go, there is no doubt that its impact exposed several shortcomings in city administration and governance.

The call for financial support from the State suggests that the floods, like the tsunami of December 2004, are the result of a natural disaster. But is this correct?

Certainly, the monsoons broke all previous records, and it is possible that we may still have been flooded. However, it would be foolish to ignore the actions and inactions of the State that allowed the monsoons to destroy so many lives, possessions and livelihoods. And 'State' here does not mean the political party currently in power. Indeed, irrespective of who has been in power, State-sponsored or State-ignored destruction of water bodies and lakes has been consistently going on in Tamil Nadu.

Much time has been spent on the illegal encroachments on water bodies, deflecting focus from several State-sponsored 'encroachments'. Not so long ago, the Tamil Nadu Housing Board (TNHB) constructed a series of housing colonies in what they euphemistically called "abandoned lakes and tanks". Executed with financial assistance from the World Bank and HUDCO,

The author works with CAG (Citizen consumer and civic Action Group), Chennai.

these "Eri Schemes" built houses on 1500 acres of lakebeds and flood plains of Velachery, Kakkalur, Chitlapakkam, Ambattur and Nolambur. With the Government leading the way, private builders were quick to follow, destroying precious *eri*-s.

When these were pointed out to State agencies by citizens' groups (through comments on the Draft Second Master Plan and other communications), these were summarily dismissed with arguments such as the Ambattur Eri

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Banqueting Hall (above) c. 1900. Note the narrow flights of steps in this picture from the Vintage Vignettes Collection. The picture below is of Rajaji Hall as Banqueting Hall is now known. This picture (by Reflections) taken a century after the picture above shows the broad flight of steps that was a 20th Century improvement.



Rajaji Hall – restoration in progress

(by Shobha Menon)

The rundown shelters of what was once the Governor's brilliantly-uniformed mounted bodyguard who flanked the stately silver painted gates opening on to the Government Estate have been repaired. The sweeping driveway that leads to Rajaji Hall looks spruced up, the landscape is being beautified and the fountain, embellished. And, in a few moments, you walk up the elegant flight of steps... and there's a transformation underway that promises to take you into a bygone era in a hall made magnificent once again.

Originally built in 1802 to commemorate British victories in Plassey and Mysore, this Neo-Classical building soon began to function as the Banquet-

ing Hall for State functions. It became Rajaji Hall on 9.4.48, renamed after Rajagopalachari, the first Indian Governor General of India. Since Independence, there has been no major improvement done here except for the laying of a mosaic tile flooring in the verandah in 1949-50. The earlier giant portraits of British Governors (by George Chinnery, Thomas Hickey, Robert Home, Tilly Kettle and others) have long been replaced by those of leaders who have graced Tamil history. Nor are there the spectacular banquets of a more leisurely era or the State functions beneath the ornate chandeliers of yesteryear. The Hall has since been occasionally used for

State receptions to VIPs, but more often for fairs, seminars, functions, film shooting, etc. A quadrangular open terrace pergola enclosed by 23 columns connects *Government House* (the Governor's residence till Independence) with Rajaji Hall. The Hall used to be the Governor's 'sit-out' or a venue for his tea parties.

The current restoration process is halfway through. It is expected to cost Rs.1 crore – over three phases – and is being funded by the Centre. Only the first phase has been completed at a cost of Rs.35 lakh. The walls inside the Central Hall have been restored as has been the roof. "Lime mortar has been

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Highrise parking proposed for shoppers

(by Vidya K.S.)

Seeking an answer to the city's lack of parking space, one of the factors leading to traffic congestion, the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority engaged consultants Wilbur Smith Associates Pvt. Limited, to conduct a study of the parking requirements for the Chennai Metropolitan area.

One of the solutions proposed is the construction of multilevel parking complexes in the Chennai Metropolitan area.

"We have identified six areas where the traffic congestion is the maximum – Broadway Bus Stand, MUC Ground in CBD, the strip of land east of Panagal Park, the MTC Bus Stand in T' Nagar, the Government Estate at Anna Salai and Wallajah Road junction, and the MTC workshop at Pattulo's Road," says D. Gunashekarana, Public Relations Officer, CMDA.

Once the detailed feasibility report is ready, a detailed project report will be prepared and the actual construction will begin at the Panagal Park site, which has been identified as a priority. The land-owning departments of Chennai Corporation have been requested to

But do we really need highrise parking?

During the recent festive season, special provisions to control the traffic in and around the Pondy Bazaar area were made by the traffic police authorities. And they proved a success.

The police marked certain routes for pedestrians and shoppers and ensured that people followed instructions. One-way streets were designated and traffic was rerouted to other connecting roads to prevent congestion.

"I couldn't believe that the traffic was so well controlled in Pondy Bazaar during the week of Diwali and Ramzan," recalls a resident of T' Nagar.

– VKS

EDITOR'S NOTE: If police traffic control can bring about such discipline, do we need multistorey parking lots? If it is presumed the parking lots will improve the situation even more, that will be so only if the traffic control measures remain enforced.

SAFER DRIVING

A Centenary Year resolve

Poet Byron said, "A small drop of ink makes thousands, perhaps millions, think." Francis Hachatt said, "Revolutions do not start in bomb factories. They start in inkpots." These thoughts seem no longer to be true since, in spite of all the road safety seminars and slogans, write-ups and sign boards, irresponsible behaviour on the road and the carnage on it are alarmingly increasing.

The shapes and sizes of the car are getting sleeker and more splendrous day by day, but the behaviour of the man behind the wheel seems to be worsening day by day. If enforcement is strict we argue or say it is harassment. If it is not strict, we complain that the entire malady is due to non-enforcement.

The actual state of affairs calls for urgent introspection on our part. It is not enough even to be a defensive driver, we have to be courteous and conscientious drivers, sensitive to the needs of other road-users. While the number of senior citizens is on the increase, the inconsiderateness shown to them on the road, even at pedestrian crossings, by the speeding motorists is appalling.

Courtesy, considerateness and carefulness are the three essential qualities that are required on the road. Competing with a limited space and time frame, the need for hurry may be justified. It is true that the pace of life today is hectic. But

slow pace of life but also a disciplined life. Though perfection is no trifle, it is trifles that make perfection. The way we use the horn, the way we overspeed, the way we overtake, the way we show scant regard to Pedestrian Crossings or School Zones, the way we park at junctions and even the way we start crossing the Stop Line at signal points and get ready to dart off even before the red turns into amber, all show our impatience and how little considerate we are to others. Often such behaviour is not even intentional, but has become habitual due to living at a fast pace. Perhaps it is time we learn to slow down our pace of living itself.

It would be the beginning of a great movement in this Centenary year if every member of the Automobile Association of Southern India makes up his mind to obey the rules of the road as a contribution to the welfare of Society. In this Centenary year our appeal to members is to take a pledge to abide by the rules of the road and to wear a helmet if you use a two-wheeler. (Courtesy: *Southern Motorist*, journal of the Automobile Association of South India.)

Compulsory helmet?

It has been reported that the Government of India is considering making it compulsory for two-wheeler vehicle manufacturers to sell ISI Standard helmets along with vehicles. The AASI has been suggesting such a move for long time and it is hoped this proposal will materialise and prove instrumental in preventing the numerous fatalities in two-wheeler road accidents. (Courtesy: Southern Motorist.)

great is the need for disciplined traffic and observance of speed limits and traffic rules. In fact, orderly traffic would move faster and more smoothly and safely.

We have to consciously cultivate and practise not only a

transfer land to CMDA for implementing the project at the selected sites.

The Panagal Park complex will have two basement floors, a

ground floor, four upper floors with a parking capacity of 290 two-wheelers, 360 cars and 20 commercial vehicles. The cost of construction, excluding the

land cost, will be approximately Rs. 16 crore. — (Courtesy: *The Word*, the lab journal of the students of the Asian College of Journalism.)

WHERE WAS THERE FLOOD CONTROL?

(Continued from Page 1)

"not (being) a source for recharge of groundwater since water collects only during monsoon seasons". The government also reassured citizens that "all future impacts have been taken into account". We can see what they meant when they opened the sluice gates of the remaining tanks and reservoirs today, further flooding the rivers and allowing over 18 months of water to flow to the sea!

Riverbanks play a critical role in controlling floods. These too have not been spared by State and its agencies. Three years ago, a large government housing complex was constructed after reclaiming portions of the Adyar River, west of the Thiru-Vi-Ka bridge. A similar land-filling exercise was carried out on the opposite bank. Closer to the estuary, a large open space was converted into a series of high-rise build-

ings. The Adyar creek wetland was similarly reduced in size and character. It doesn't take a wizard to tell you that the impact of narrowing the river and destroying its flood plains as it approaches the ocean will lead to flooding upstream. Yet our premier specialist agencies in Government actively promoted these activities.

The Cooum River and its banks too have been repeatedly built on, making space for large office complexes, massive shopping malls and apartment complexes. The Buckingham Canal was replaced by the MRTS, permanently changing the identity and purpose of the water body. Large portions of the Pallikaralai wetland have been parcelled and sold.

Smaller drains and channels too have been systematically destroyed. For example, a small channel that carried water from Nungambakkam to the Cooum River today has a spanking new City Corporation park with pristine lawns constructed in it, altering (permanently!) the flow of this natural waterbody.

In an interview in August

2005, the Chairman of the Chennai City Disaster Management Committee reassured residents that the city was prepared for the monsoons. "All freshly-laid roads have proper margins for water to drain," he added (*The Hindu*, August, 12, 2005). Let us take this issue of "freshly-laid roads" a little further.

Around twenty years ago, persons seeking building permission were required to indicate and fix plinth levels using the road level as the reference. Instead of maintaining these road levels, every single road in Chennai has been (merely) blacktopped several times over while relaying the roads. This causes the roads to disintegrate easily during the monsoon; it has also increased the height of these roads steadily. Even assuming that these 'freshly-laid roads' have drains, what about the levels of older houses and buildings on either side of the road? Today, several of these homes and buildings of the city are flooded because they are below the height of the road! This has caused great physical distress to occupants, especially

the elderly and the sick. Shouldn't the State compensate these persons?

Several of these scandalous actions have been actively promoted by the State and its various agencies, making them culpable and responsible for much of the damage that has been caused in and around the city. There is no doubt that many private individuals and companies have contributed to, if not committed, equally heinous violations. But even there, the State, by offering a 'Regularisation Scheme' that allowed any violation, abuse or contravention to be 'regularised' on the payment of a penalty, must take full responsibility for impacts caused by such regularisation.

The State, with its lack of planning and perverse schemes has, either directly or indirectly, caused the damage that we see around us. Unlike the tsunami, this is no 'natural disaster', but one the State is responsible for. This is not to underplay the hectic pace of relief efforts. Indeed, despite several odds, several of those who have suffered were provided interim relief.

But there are no easy-fix short-term remedies. And the State needs to move beyond seeking financial support from a citizenry that is losing faith and confidence in the capacity of State to focus on the long-term.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The future depends on what we do in the present". It is upto the Government to do something more serious than knocking down a few select constructions or further relocating the marginalised sections of our population. With elections round the corner, would whichever government comes to power be able to put aside the short-term and focus on the long-term? A government that can take action against the terrible mistakes – committed by whichever previous government it be – from providing the resources to stopping current attempts to destroy wetlands and lakebeds? A government that is willing to go back to the drawing board, involve citizens (including the marginalised) and local bodies in developing a prudent, yet sensitive, city plan?

* (Counter Affidavits of TNHB and Housing Department, GoTN in W.P. No. 17914/93 – Consumer Action Group Vs. Project Director and other.)



Save that money

Many civil disputes can be resolved by effective, sincere and honest mediation (MM, December 1st) by fair-minded well-wishers of unquestionable integrity and committed dedication. Apart from relieving the courts of avoidable litigation, matters can be resolved quickly at little cost. This money can be usefully utilised for the essential needs of society.

I know of several instances where people who could ill-afford to squander their meagre resources had been virtually ruined and condemned to penury, fighting cases in the High Court over a worthless stretch of boundary and mud wall between their dwellings. The end was bitter and resulted in permanent enmity between neighbours who had been bosom friends before the disastrous litigation.

If the concept of mutual reconciliation is effectively implemented, people can live in an atmosphere of harmony and good neighbourly relations. The fear of advocates losing practice is quite unfounded. Elsewhere an eminent judge has emphasised the need for human approach when advocates represent cases of compensation for accident victims, advising free service in such cases.

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A clarification

In my letter with reference to the 'Rains in October' (MM, November 16th), I mentioned that the bomb dropped by a Japanese aircraft in October 1943 fell on the road leading to Fort St. George gate east of the railway line between Madras Fort Station and Muthuswamy Iyer bridge, and not into Cooum as mentioned in the letter first cited. I visited that site as a young man of 19 years. I should add that what runs close to General Hospital is the Buckingham Canal and not

the Cooum which is much further west.

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Heritage lost

The late S.S. Vasan's house opposite Music Academy has already been demolished. The second one on the same Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, opposite the late Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's house, is in a dilapidated condition. The eastern wall of the property has collapsed. The compound is now no man's land. The soul of the once film emperor must be crying over the pitiable plight of his heritage. Will the government and the film world restore the wall, renovate the building and convert it into a museum with the consent of Vasan's heirs?

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Periyar's support

The biographical note on Mavoor Sarma (MM, December 16th) reminded me of an election meeting that took place on one late evening in January 1952 at Budalur, a small town 15 miles west of Thanjavur. I was then in my school-final. Periyar EVR was the main speaker. Next to him on the dais was seated a short, thickly built and dark complexioned man in a full-sleeved, light-blue shirt. I still remember them both, because Periyar, an avowed anti-Brahmin, was supporting a Brahmin against another Brahmin, R. Venkataraman, the Congress nominee. Periyar began his speech by addressing the candidate, 'Mavoor Sir R.S. Sarma avargale'. Periyar's support to Sarma had aroused a deep interest among the public and the media in those days.

Sarma spent a lot of money on the election. But he lost by a few thousand votes. It was a tremendous shock to him.

T.S. Chockalingam's *Dinakaran*, a Tamil daily now defunct, significantly captioned the election result in bold letters on

Sangita sans Sahitya

Some *rasika*-s of Carnatic music have often asked me: "Why, if *raga*-s by themselves give us aesthetic pleasure, should one give equal importance to *sahithya* (words)?" In fact, a *rasika* argues that "the greatest musical compositions of the West have no words. The purpose of art is, after all, to achieve the beautiful. Beauty can be manifested in shape, taste or sound. For example, painting is the perfection of beauty of form and colour. A *raga* is the form given to this beauty in sound. Therefore, the 'shapes of sound' that Carnatic music strives after have no need for words. It is a fallacy that beautiful words expressing various sentiments are necessary for music."

He goes on: "*Mukhari* and *Nilambari*, even without words, evoke grief and pathos. *Kalyani* has a feminine grace, *Kamas* is erotic, *Karaharapriya* is dignified. *Ananda Bhairavi* is soothing. A *rasika* gets a peculiar pleasure in listening to *Bhoopalam* and *Bilahari* early in the morning. *Todi* makes a direct appeal to our hearts. The calm dignity of *Sankarabharanam* is royal. *Harikambhoji* is suitable for love. *Atana* expresses anger. So, if *raga*-s by themselves have emotional appeals, why is so much importance given to words in Carnatic music?"

In truth, it is not possible to give a satisfactory answer to the *rasikas* who have no knowledge of the language in which songs have been composed. Therefore, this is only an attempt to answer the question.

I know that there are many *rasikas* who feel fully satisfied by the emotional and intellectual dimensions of *raga*-s. They forget or, perhaps, are not even aware of the fact that Carnatic music compositions express in words, unlike music in the West, human thoughts and feelings. The artistic materials used in Carnatic music compositions are not only *ragas*, *talas*, etc., but also language – literary or non-literary, colloquial or formal.

Through an unique blend of *sangita* and *sahithya*, master composers like Thyagaraja have built dynamic structures. Unless both the singer and the listener co-operate to appreciate the *sahithya* along with the *raga*, they are bound to miss the vision projected by the composers. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, to approach the compositions word by word, line by line, along with the *raga*, *tala*, etc.

The aim of our music is not only to evoke emotions but also to describe, in words, scenes to our mind's eye. Take, for example, Thyagaraja. He has portrayed all the important episodes in the *Ramayana* in his *kriti*-s. He is unique in his versatility as a master of *sahithya*. He employed

the mellifluous Telugu language to portray various sentiments and emotions. Philosophy, theological doctrine, social ethics and morality are all to be found in his *kriti*-s. There is no situation in life, no sphere in our daily activities, which does not find a place in Thyagaraja's compositions. He touches life at many points. He gives us solace and moral strength. If his *sahithya* is not stressed, we will miss the visions portrayed and messages conveyed by him in his *kriti*-s. It is, therefore, unfortunate that there are *rasika*-s and even some talented vocalists who appear to consider Thyagaraja's words as mere pegs to hang the music on.

How right a connoisseur of Carnatic music was when he said: "Thyagaraja created certain *raga*-s by the sheer force of his vast, musical genius; the *kriti* was born in a creative flame of genius and the implicit *raga* then comes to light."

Hence, to emphasise *raga* at the expense of *sahithya* is to put the cart before the horse!

* * *

In his article on the Thyagaraja aradhana (MM, January 1st) V. Sriram says that six days prior to Thyagaraja's death, Rama informed the composer that his days on earth were nearing their end. In the *kriti Giripai (Sahana)*, the words the composer uses are "*padi pootalapai*", i.e. 'in 10 days from now'.

The composer formally took up *sanyasa* only a day before his *samadhi*. He did not give any detailed instructions to his disciples on the manner of his burial. His only instruction to them was to intern his mortal remains next to his *guru*'s.

On the death of Thyagaraja's only grandson, his wife, Guruvamma, took the idol (*ekapeeta vigraham*) worshipped by her father-in-law to Chandrasekara Josier's house in Varahappa Iyer Lane, Thanjavur. Thyagaraja's grandson died childless and Chandrasekara Josier was Guruvamma's maternal uncle. His only son, Subramania Josier, also died childless. His sister's son, Sundaram Iyer, inherited the house in Varahappa Iyer Lane together with the idol placed there by Guruvamma.

Sundaram Iyer and I were well-acquainted with each other and he was kind enough to share with me the information given here. On Sundaram Iyer's death, his sons retain the holy idol in the same place in Thanjavur, i.e. in their residence.

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its first page, '*Periyar aadharitha Mavoor Sarma govindaa*.'

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Tamil Nadu losing

It is disconcerting to see for the second successive year Tamil Nadu teams participating in national championships faring poorly, thanks to their spiritless approach, lack of killer instinct, and poor team spirit, in spite of their reputation of being strong outfits.

Like thousands of cricket fans I too had expected our cricket team to figure in the Ranji Trophy final. While the team was unlucky to draw the first two winnable matches, rain playing spoilsport, the team suffered heavy defeats at the hands of Maharashtra and Bombay. Thereafter the team played to its potential for once against Bengal, defeating the rival comfortably. But in the last

match they again faltered to allow Delhi to draw the game and thus lost the chance to enter the knockout phase.

In the basketball championship, we reached the semifinal where, playing against the Railways, we led by 10 points even 15 minutes before the long whistle, but frittered away the lead and lost the match.

In volley ball, where we were champion for five years running some years ago, we were thrashed by three teams after two early wins.

There ended another regrettable year.

Will the coaches and respective associations chalk out a plan and carry out a more intense training schedule to toughen the teams so that they will acquit themselves creditably in the tournaments next year?

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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 postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

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THE EDITOR

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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



Ramnath Goenka as a young man.

The Marwari media man from Madras

Think Ramnath Goenka (RNG) and the first thing that comes to mind is his spirited battle against the Emergency. Next would possibly come the vehicle that made this battle possible, namely the *Indian Express* group of papers that he founded and controlled. Last, perhaps, would come Madras that is Chennai and the sprawling Express Estates at the end of Club House Road, with its Hicks Bungalow that was RNG's residence in the city and the old Madras Club building which was sadly pulled down some time back.

Post World War II, Bombay and Delhi began to increasingly occupy centre stage in RNG's wheeling and dealing. But it was to Madras that he was to return each time for, as his biographer B.G. Verghese puts it, "it was from Madras that he had advanced on to the national stage".

The biography, *Warrior of the Fourth Estate – Ramnath Goenka of the Indian Express* (Penguin-Viking), is a well written, balanced account of RNG's life, warts and all and would have probably had the old man chuckling in delight had he been around to read it. It is a remarkably objective and honest look at the man despite the fact that it was commissioned by the empire which he founded. Perhaps there is a message in this for all those who commission so called biographies which are in reality terrible hagiographies. The city of Madras figures prominently in the book and this account looks largely at RNG's associations with it.

RNG was born on April 18, 1904 at Dildarnagar, a village near Dharbhanga in Bihar. He was married at the age of 12 to the 10-year-old Moongi Bai. Educated till the seventh standard at Dharbhanga, RNG probably never matriculated, but he studied at the Kashi Vidyapeeth for some time. He came under the influence of Acharya Kripalani and Mahatma Gandhi.

In 1919/20, RNG joined his relatives in Calcutta in their yarn and piece goods business. However, he was soon found to have dealings with the Bengal 'terrorists' and the alarmed Marwari community prevailed on his uncle to have him sent off to Madras which was far enough from trouble.

According to RNG himself, he came to the city with no

more than a *lota* and a nine cubit long dhoti. He apprenticed under Sukhdevdas Ramprasad, *dubash* of Walker and Company. Taking up residence at 23 Peria Naicker Street, Sowcarpet, with a family named Chaudhri, he later moved his family successively to Damani House, 8 Chinna Naicker Street, and 1 Ramanuja Street, Sowcarpet. The last mentioned residence later became the Moongibai Girls School, named after RNG's wife who passed away in 1966.

In June 1926, RNG commenced independent business, as a partner of Murliprasad Mohanprasad and Co., *dubashes* of the Bombay Com-

By 1929, he had begun to indulge in yet another lifelong passion – real estate, when he, along with two others, purchased 844 acres of land by Elliot's Beach. He also supported local charities, co-founding an Ayurvedic dispensary and also a home for orphaned children. Extolled by Gandhi at Indore for his contribution to the spread of Hindi as a language, he acted as fundraiser for the Congress. It was during this time that C.P. Seshadri, or 'Master' as he was better known, came in to RNG's life as tutor to his son Bhagwandas. Later, 'Master' was to become an icon at the *Indian Express*.

The *Indian Express* came into existence in Madras in 1932 on 5th September when an Ayurvedic doctor, Varadarajulu Naidu, who was running a vernacular weekly, *Tamilnadu*, closed it down and decided to launch an English daily. It was published from the 'Tamil Nadu' Press at 41-42 Mooker Nallamuthu Chetty Street, George Town, with its editor being K. Santhanam. The paper soon floundered and was taken over by S. Sadanand (later of the *Free Press Journal*). In 1933, the Madurai edition was launched as was *Dinamani*, its Tamil sister pa-

per. Sadanand made the *Express* a morning paper with news on the front page contrary to the then practice of having ads on it. However, with this white knight too finding it difficult to run, the paper would have collapsed had not RNG, who had earlier bailed Sadanand out by purchasing Rs.30,000 worth of debentures in the company, taken it over through his Publicity Madras Limited on October 1, 1936. With him now holding 51 per cent of the shares, he became Managing Director of the company.

Differences arose over managerial control and Sadanand soon took RNG to court. The editor, Santhanam, a protegee of C. Rajagopala



Ramnath Goenka, with Khushwant Singh and C.R. Irani of the Statesman, demonstrating against the proposed curbs on the press through the Defamation Bill, 1988.

pany of 169 Broadway. By then, he had become prominent in the city, a man whom Rajaji and Jammalal Bajaj had deemed fit to be invited to join the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha of which he was later to become life trustee at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi. In January of the same year, at the instance of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, he was nominated to the Madras Legislative Council where, as was his wont in later life, he sat with the nationalist opposition, much to the discomfiture of the Treasury Benches. He was to make speeches in favour of revoking the ban on Subramania Bharati's poems and also favouring the boycott of the Simon Commission.



Ramnath Goenka, the Tamil Marwari.

chari, soonquit and was replaced temporarily by Khasa Subba Rao, formerly of *Swarajya*. That same year, RNG had Pothan Joseph join him as editor. Joseph had made a name for himself with his 'Over a cup of tea' column in the *Bombay Chronicle*. By 1938, RNG with help from Seth Jammalal Bajaj, bought out Sadanand and acquired complete control over the fledgling media house. The *Andhra Prabha* was launched by him that year.

Giving up his business with the Bombay Company, he concentrated on the papers and characteristically took a stance opposite to that of the then Government, then led by C. Rajagopalachari. This was to be the first of his many battles against those in power. The paper also criticised actions by the Mysore and Travancore Durbars and was banned in both States. However, RNG, on discovering that the Trivandrum Railway Station was nominally Government of India property and not that of the State, had his paper sold from there and did brisk business.

In 1939, the *Express* became the first newspaper to announce the outbreak of World War II with a copy being given to Netaji Subas Bose to read out aloud during a public meeting on 1st September at the Marina Beach.

A fire on February 9, 1940 at the Mooker Nallamuthu Street office gutted the press and it looked as though all was over with the *Express*. However, with the generous help from Kasturi Srinivasan of *The Hindu*, who arranged for the *Express* to be printed at *The Hindu's Press*, 100 Mount Road, the paper rose from the ashes. The *Express* soon moved into these premises, which had been vacated by *The Hindu* when in November 1939 it had moved to its present location, 200 Mount Road, where it had installed the latest machinery. The *Express*, interestingly, took over the rotary press left behind by *The Hindu*. This press ensured a larger turnout of copies

and also an increased number of pages. RNG, given his deeply religious sentiments, issued a special supplement on Sri Aurobindo with the first issue from the new address.

Pothan Joseph, who had led a campaign in the *Express* against Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, was soon outflanked by that brilliant lawyer turned Dewan who invited RNG to begin a Travancore edition. There was discontent over his salary as well. Joseph quit in 1941 and Khasa Subba Rao became the editor. The 'Emden' vakil, N.D. Varadachariar, played a prominent advisory role during this crisis as is revealed in his diaries. Later, Joseph and RNG were to come together once again for a short while in 1946, with the former moving once again to Madras and later to Bombay. However, by 1948, he quit and joined the newly-started *Deccan Herald*.

The *Express* continued its anti-Government stance during the War years, criticising the 'Evacuation of Madras' and also deciding to suspend publication when the Government clamped down on the press in 1942 following the Quit India Movement. It resumed publication after three months. That year, RNG also gave shelter to Jayaprakash Narayan who had escaped from the Hazaribagh prison and safely sent him on to Bombay. Several among *Express'* staff went to prison for acts of Satyagraha. All these were perhaps portents of what was to happen to the *Express* and RNG during the Emergency years.

Despite labour problems, financial tightness and frequent 'inspections' from the Government, RNG managed to keep his papers going. In 1946, he managed yet another real estate coup when he bought 23 acres of land belonging to the Madras Club on Club House Road, off Mount Road, for Rs.14.85 lakh, when the Club moved to *Branson's Bagh* on Mount Road. This property, where the *New Indian Express* is

(Continued on Page 5)

The many faces of love

When she first sets eyes on her newborn child, the mother “turns her head away in horror”, because a “pink oozing mass” protrudes from below his umbilical cord. The mother is very young, understandably frightened. But with that one single gesture of rejection, she writes herself and her husband out of the script of his life forever.

The baby’s first ‘home’ is an orphanage in Pondicherry. In time, he enters the well-ordered lives of Timeri N. Murari and his wife, Maureen, living with them for nearly a year, before being adopted by an European couple.

Murari’s book *My temporary son – an orphan’s journey*, published by Penguin India, captures the core of the experience – the happy moments, the heart-twisting ones, the mind-numbing demanding routine, and the sheer wonder of seeing your world through your child’s eyes – quintessential elements in the lives of parents, temporary or otherwise, the worldover. The story is played out in Madras.

From Pondicherry, the little one makes a “pain wracked bumpy journey” to the bustling city and an orphanage referred to as Orphanage No.1, a depressing place, filled with sad silence, like all orphanages, where babies are “kept in an inner room in iron railed cots, like tiny cells.” This baby, in order to distract himself from pain and loneliness, repeatedly bangs his head against the iron bars that surround him.

One fateful November day, a group of women members of the Overseas Women’s Club visit the orphanage. Murari’s wife Maureen, energetic, determined Australian Maureen,

who moves easily among the various cultures in which she has lived over the years, is among them. When Maureen, horrified at the baby’s condition, stretches her hand out, holding out a finger, the baby, now seven months old, catches hold of it and smiles.

That single gesture heralds the next chapter in the life of this courageous little infant. Maureen decides to help the child. The reader then experiences the trials and tribulations that beset this five-foot-five grey-green-eyed heroine, who “enjoys a challenge”, as she seeks medical help for the baby – the endless drives through

● by
RANJITHA ASHOK

chaotic traffic in the city, the setbacks, delays, the bureaucratic shenanigans, which would baulk anyone else, but Maureen.

The baby’s condition is given a name – vesical exstrophy, a medical condition in which the bladder is outside the body. And yes, it is possible to operate and correct, although the operation is both long and high risk.

The baby is now given a name – Bhima.

And he is “slowly seeping into our daily lives,” says Murari, as yet to lay eyes on him.

In time, funds are organised through the efforts of OWC members, and little Bhima is operated on successfully. Like his august namesake, this is a fighter.

After his surgery, he moves, almost like it is a foregone conclusion, into Murari’s ancestral home, *Devasolai*.

And Murari, looking at the sad-faced baby, “thin and fragile as a mosquito”, greets him a trifle awkwardly, with a “Hello Bhima, Vanakkam.” Bhima tentatively reaches out and touches Murari’s arm, and “I had become his father.”

The book then gently, but with the depth and power of quiet, intense emotion, traces the growth of a bond between father and child. Within four days, the couple decides they cannot possibly send him back to the orphanage. Overnight, this “elderly couple”, as Murari puts it, clueless about how to deal with babies, find themselves plunging into the giddy routine that takes over a home with a very small, and very ill, baby – sleepless nights, bouts of crying, constant changing, figuring out nutritional needs, and dealing with an unending stream of hired attendants. And learning about Bhima – his heart-rending night terrors, his need for constant human contact and reassurance, as he slowly learns that not all human beings are betrayers; his favourite toy is a large tortoise with buttons; he loves the dog, Apu, his bulwark against fear; and he instinctively reacts to images of Ganesha, learning to decorate them with flowers, pressing his hands in a namaste.

Murari, in the first few weeks, refers to him as their ‘house guest’, a defence mechanism which does not appear to have withstood Bhima’s advances. When Murari, unconsciously echoing proud parents the worldover, writes of Bhima’s doings, his intelligence, you are tempted to step into the book and warn him about the temporariness.

Bhima is put up for adoption, classified as a ‘special needs child’, which “condemned him to a possible life of exile”, largely because Indian parents who want to adopt prefer healthy babies. And India is still not really “a physically-handicapped-friendly country.” The Muraris, with the help of Shaila, the social worker, choose a certain European country as Bhima’s future home, and find a couple who “fell in love” with Bhima’s photograph. With the Muraris, you then helplessly wander through the bewildering labyrinth which characterises adoption processes in India.

When Bhima’s adoptive parents arrive, you, as the

reader, have to force yourself not to cast this eager couple as villains. With Murari, you cannot help but feel a tiny sense of ignoble satisfaction when Bhima doesn’t appear to take to his future parents at once. And then the gut-wrenching final good-bye, as the couple dart away into the airport, carrying Bhima, whose cries of “Uncle come, Aunty come” as he beseeches the Muraris to join him, wondering why they are not following them into the airport, get fainter and fainter. For Murari, it was as if “all the light had been sucked out of my life.”

A year and twenty days later, Murari and Maureen arrive at Bhima’s new home, for his christening. He is a little taller, and has put on weight, and now speaks French, German and Spanish, while slowly forgetting English and Tamil.

He is loved, has a large extended family, and has found a “safe harbour.”

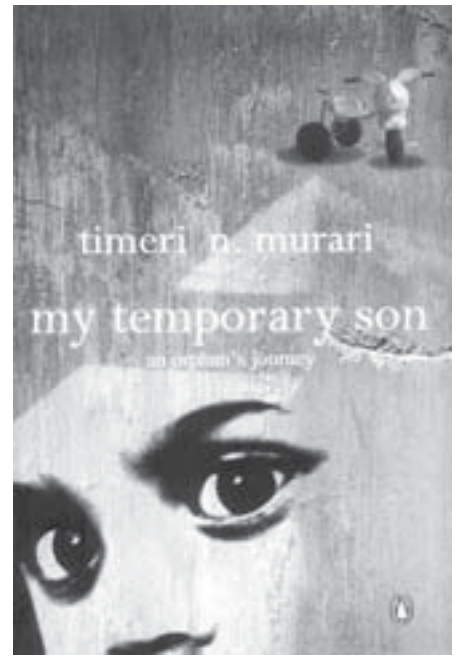
That is comfort for the Muraris, closure of sorts.

Could they, should they, have kept Bhima? Friends appear to have strongly advised them to do so. Others told them that by letting him go, they were “doing the best for him.” There are also rules about the age differences between the adopting couple and the child, laid down “in black and white” by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.

Very Madras details weave in and out of the story, a source of delight to those passionate about the city they call home – names of prominent citizens, descriptions of the Spencer Plaza, referring to the former Spencer’s as “The Harrod’s of Madras”, descriptions of the Madras Club, the Madras monsoon and its effect on city roads.

In the end, you recognise this journey of 11 months for what it is – a love story, where Bhima is the teacher, a guru to Murari.

Through Bhima, Murari acknowledges the power of *karma* and destiny. Even Bhima’s affliction proves to be an integral part of the road that his life is destined to travel. A healthy Bhima, given his background, might very well have joined the thousands of child labourers in a country that “has the most appalling figures for child labour”. Bhima forces Murari to examine his own views on family ties, filling the book with gentle, at times sad, reminiscences of childhood and days gone by.



Bhima teaches Murari that even work takes second place to a child’s needs. Murari slowly finds himself getting over his “stiff and awkward past relationship with babies and children.” Murari, by his own confession, is “exasperatingly laconic in conversation and shy”; “not used to children”, someone who “tolerated children”, and who preferred to “baby” his dogs. Destiny apparently decided to show him otherwise.

This incredibly compassionate couple, through whose home other orphaned children have passed in the process of being relocated, although none as young and ill as Bhima, have indeed earned ‘rohnin’ – getting rid of bad luck – by caring for him.

The book also provides a fact-filled appendix, with a wealth of ‘must-know’ information about adoption in India and the various processes involved. I’ll talk about them next fortnight.

(A related feature next fortnight.)

THE MARWARI MEDIA MAN FROM MADRAS

(Continued from page 4)

published from even now, became Express Estates.

With Independence, RNG moved to Bombay and Delhi, with the *Indian Express* following him. His Madras connection was, however, always strong though it must be admitted that Bombay increasingly became the nerve centre for his business. There were tough days ahead both personally and on the business front and he fought all his battles with enjoyment, spirit and courage and not always in a straightforward fashion. This is what made him a fascinating personality and a delightful subject for a biographer.

Sriram V.

A reminder to our readers

● It’s that time of the year again. With the *Madras Musings* year coming to an end, it is time to remind subscribers to renew their subscriptions (Rs. 100 a year) and readers who have not yet sent in their subscriptions to do so. The annual subscription for *Madras Musings* is Rs. 100/-.

All subscriptions acknowledged by us from January 1, 2006 and subscriptions that we receive between now and April 16th will be considered as annual subscriptions for the year April 16, 2006 to April 15, 2007, Volume XVI. As for those who have sent in their subscriptions between April 16, 2005 and December 15, 2005, please renew your subscriptions as and when they fall due. *Madras Musings*, unfortunately, does not have any staff, but only a couple of part-time volunteers to help and, hence, is in no position to send you reminders.

When sending in your subscription, please send it to **Chennai Heritage** together with the coupon that appears on page 7, duly filled in, in full. We look forward to an enthusiastic response from readers, old and new.

— THE EDITOR

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period January 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Who is the first recipient of the India Science Award 2004 instituted by the Government of India?
2. Why was an Indian, Prashant Chandra, an industrial designer, in the news at the CES in Las Vegas, recently?
3. What is M30402457 in the field of mathematics?
4. Who became the first player to score centuries in both innings of his 100th Test?
5. Nivruti Rai, an IT professional working in Intel, has achieved what distinction?
6. From which three places did the Pakistan President, Gen. Musharraf, suggest India withdrawing troops to resolve the militancy problem in J & K?
7. Which author rejected the 2005 Sahitya Akademi Award for English which was announced recently?
8. With whom has Air India signed the largest single commercial order in Indian aviation history? It is worth \$11 billion.
9. Who recently emulated Prakash Padukone with a straight ninth senior national singles crown in badminton?
10. During what ritual did over 300 pilgrims die at this year's Haj?
* * *
11. Who is the Chennai Open 2006 champion?
12. Whose house on Thirumanjana Veedhi in Thiruvaiyaru is being made into a memorial?
13. Which veteran parliamentarian received the Tamil Nadu Government's 'Periyar Award' on January 2nd?
14. Which talented musician has created the 'Melharmony concept', to show how fusion can be a rewarding exercise?
15. Which Governor was responsible for the purchase of the then *Guindy Lodge*, now the *Raj Bhavan*?
16. Trambak Rubber Team won the Ruia Gold Cup, the national symbol of supremacy in which sport, in Chennai recently?
17. Who directed such critically acclaimed films like *Mullum Malarum* and *Udhiri Pookkal*?
18. In what way is *Valaiyodi*, launched recently, a pioneering venture?
19. Name the new Chief Information Commissioner of Tamil Nadu?
20. Name the newspaper from the State that has become the first in the country to appoint a 'Readers' Editor' as an independent, full-time, internal ombudsman.

(Answers on page 8)

What ails Tamil Nadu cricket?

Tamil Nadu ended another Ranji Trophy cricket season on a disappointing note, touching a new low by failing to qualify for the semifinals after a considerable gap. At one stage in the final league fixture against Delhi at Chepauk the host team was in real danger of being relegated to the Plate group of teams. Ironically, Tamil Nadu was also tantalisingly in sight of an outside chance of forcing a victory in that game and actually making it to the last four.

"What ails Tamil Nadu cricket?" is a lament as often repeated by cricket followers as the complaint that our players are not given a fair deal by the national selectors. At least one politically-oriented outfit threatened to disrupt cricket in the country in the country if some of our players like Hemang Badani or Lakshmiipathi Balaji were continuously sidelined by the national panel. Somehow, these demonstrators rarely ever demand better performance by the State team in the national championship, so wrapped up are they in the individual fortunes of their favourite cricketers and so thoroughly convinced by the conspiracy theory that keeps out deserving Tamil Nadu candidates for national stardom. I wonder why it never strikes them that cricket is a team game and that winning the Ranji Trophy is possibly the most emphatic way of stating the case for including our players in the Indian team.

There were a number of reasons why Tamil Nadu fared so poorly this season. The first and most obvious one was that the weather played spoilsport in two crucial encounters in which the team had to be satisfied with minimum points, despite being well placed. The other major reason was the poor bowling the team throughout the season, except for some outstanding work by some of the medium pacers, with Rajamani Jesuraj leading the pack. The spinners were especially disappointing, despite the gallant efforts of veteran off spinner Aashish Kapoor, whose inclusion in the team was a sad reflection of the available bowling resources. Left arm spinner R. Ramkumar was in and out of the team and, by the end of the season, was but a shadow of the bowler he was last year. The other left arm spinner received few opportunities and, low in confidence, he too bowled below par, though he obliged the captain with wickets on the few occasions he bowled. S. Sriram and S. Badrinath were both part-time spinners who made no major impact. No bowler

cricket?



Badani



Badrinath

seemed to have any confidence, thanks to the constant chopping and changing by the selectors. In fact, some of the bowlers, Ramkumar in particular, seemed to have lost their nerve after being dropped from the State team for no obvious reason except that of failure at a higher level of cricket. Jesuraj bounce back after being similarly disciplined, that too in a crucial match versus Maharashtra, but not everyone is made of such stern stuff.

The batting was reasonably consistent but came apart in the all-important matches. He-

East Zone, has also had to bide his time.

Keen competition for the league title among mainly company-sponsored teams has also meant that the rivalry has occasionally spilt over beyond that level, and causes cooperation to become a pipedream among all those really concerned about Tamil Nadu cricket forging a winning combination. At the same time, though the increased facilities border on world class, the competitive edge seems to have deserted the playing arena, with batsmen enjoying perfect batting

● by V. RAMNARAYAN

mang Badani suffered a lean patch but recovered well after the selectors replaced him as captain with Badrinath, to relieve him from the burden of captaincy. Though the ploy seemed to work well and Badani made a big hundred against Bengal, following it with more runs in the next game, it seemed possible the new captain might lose form on being anointed, when Badri failed with the bat. He dispelled all such notions with a double hundred against Delhi, suggesting responsibility sits well on him.

Starting with the axing of Sadagopan Ramesh last season, the State's think tank has been treating its players with a heavy hand, appearing to discipline players on occasions for perceived lack of effort or attitudinal problems. They have also demonstrated a touching sense of loyalty towards some other senior players, for example, S. Sharath, who has been the State's most prolific batsman. This season too he has been among the runs and at least on one occasion saved the side the blushes by playing a courageous knock in adversity. Yet, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the selectors have erred on the sentimental side by persisting with this very fine player in the evening of his career and denying a talented youngster like Shrivasthadeva Das opportunities. R. Satish, another very promising player, who came back after a successful stint in

conditions against strong opposition and the bowlers exploiting underprepared wickets against the weaker sides. The result is that both batsmen and bowlers come to enjoy exaggerated reputations on the strength of their local exploits, only to be found wanting in the hard grind of the real world outside. This is an unfortunate paradox. I remember that the league produced many more results when we played on matting wickets and had to win a match in a single day. You had to produce something special to force a result in the limited time available. Perhaps the Association's and corporate sponsors' generous support of three-day league cricket, with inevitable increases in their cricket budgets to unprecedented levels of spending, has produced results the opposite of their intentions. The higher levels of remuneration have perhaps made the players more comfortable and complacent rather than hungry for success.

On its part, the Association should go beyond making available the best of facilities to the players, though, even here, Karnataka, with a considerable number of former cricketers involved in the administration of the game, is reported to have stolen a march over Tamil Nadu. I believe the need of the hour is a band of caring administrators – in the mould of the late V. Pattabhiraman – who encourage the players in their

efforts, appreciate honest striving, admonish them when they go astray and, more important than anything else, instil in them the realisation that cricket is essentially a team game. Even if Mumbai cricket has seen better days, these attributes are still very much evident in it, leading to performance beyond the on-paper strength of that team in recent years. Sadly, we in Tamil Nadu tend to give little importance to these traits. We neither appreciate good performance, nor chastise players when they disappoint with their attitude. We prefer to make fun of them when things go wrong or drop them when things go even worse. I make no excuse for poor performance, but the average Tamil Nadu cricketer is an insecure being. This not my personal opinion but that of those closely associated with the game and its players.

We in the media are no better. Obsessed with international cricket, most of us consider it *infra dig* to even watch domestic cricket. No talent spotting has been done by any of us for decades; only when one of our players explodes on the scene with stunning displays and convinces the national selectors do we sit up and take notice. Increasingly, there is hardly any comment on the State's performances, nor is there any serious analysis of its performances during the season. On the other hand, we lavish column-metres on international cricket stars and their tantrums.

The only way Tamil Nadu cricket can improve its record at the national level is for all the various constituents of the game to make a concerted effort to find a solution. Sporting wickets that will test the skills and technique of the players is one way of separating the quality player from the flash in the pan. Stability in team composition is another vital ingredient of success. (Can we have a 16-member squad identified for the season and try to stay with it, by and large? Can those in the eleven be assured of their tenure at least for four matches in a row? Can we have a steady opening pair, not experiments? Can we consistently pick the best bowlers we have, rather than overdo the horses for courses policy?) Maybe the media and others interested in the State's cricket can assist the Association in its talent-spotting efforts. Last but not least, it's time past cricketers played a constructive role in developing the Tamil Nadu team of the future. The tide has to turn, for not only does the State have abundant talent, it also enjoys the most passionate support for the game in India.

When Banqueting Hall was built

It was in 1799 when 'Seringsapatnam' fell to the British that Lord Edward Clive decided to raise a memorial to mark the defeat of Tippu Sultan as well as his father Robert Clive's victory at Plassey in 1757. The job of erecting the commemoration building was entrusted to John Goldingham, a Danish Astronomer/Engineer who, as a friend of Governor Clive, had been entrusted in 1800 with extensions to and the remodelling of *Government House*. His brief was to build a commemoration hall worthy of British achievements at arms in India and to integrate it harmoniously with the architectural splendour he had created in *Government House*.

Designed in the style of a Greek Temple, with a soaring flight of steps in front, breathtaking Corinthian and Ionic columns and friezes on the pediments detailing the victories, the building was completed in 1802 at a cost of 74,000 pagoda (Rs.2,22,000). Inaugurated with a grand ball, it served as the Governor's Banqueting Hall. It was this Hall that set the trend for the imperial style of construction that became a hallmark of British buildings across the world, from Jamaica to Tasmania, from New York to South Africa.

The main structure has been unaltered except for the remodelling during 1875-95. The terrace was enclosed by arcaded verandahs on all four sides in 1895. The open terraces were enclosed by arches linked by columns and low walls, all part of the later expansion, but remain harmonious architectural additions. The superb flight of steps is a consequence of the two original narrow flights being widened.

— Shobha M.

Rajaji Hall Restoration

(Continued from Page 1)

used in all reconstruction, and special care taken so as not to disturb the heritage structure. The lime has been sourced from Pollachi and is of a special kind because it has about 70% calcium oxide content. The lime mortar used is fermented for 15-30 days by adding gallnut and jaggery and grinding well. The mixture is kept for a month for it to be strengthened. A few decayed planks in the teak-wooden flooring have also been replaced it recounts a Public Works Department official.

The main hall is built on a basement of arched cellars and is surrounded by a colonnaded terrace – a later addition. The Ionic columns were once coated with 'Madras Plaster' to give them a marble-like appearance. The walls of the basement range in thickness from 80 cm to 215 cm, over which Ionic columns of 65 cm dia reach upto the second floor. The colonnaded terrace flanking the Central Hall is enclosed by arcaded verandahs covered by Madras Terrace. Eight Queen Post teak wood trusses with beams, joists, and purlins support the roof of the main hall. The entire roofing arrangement is concealed with ornamental Plaster of Paris and a gunny false ceiling.

Work has not been going on since May 2005, as funds for the second and third phases awaited. Once funds are received, the entire work is expected to take no more than another six months. As you climb onto the terrace that has already been relaid and coloured with red oxide, you notice that the parapet has been repaired and pillars replastered.

From that level you can actually look down into the ornately embellished Central Hall with its awesome grandeur, replete with 18 entry doors, and 34 fans (15 from the height of the terrace) and look up in awe at the ornate roof. The two extreme 'restored' and painted corners of the roof have, however, been affected by an ugly dark fungus "due to the unprecedented rains," an official explains.

Strangely, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the State Department of Archaeology have not been involved on a sustained basis in the whole process – except for official representation on committees, that are more "an eye-wash than anything else". Sometime in the early 1990s, a three-member committee including two foreigners was appointed to submit a report on the heritage building. This proved to be quite "ad hoc", and so the ASI was asked to give an official analysis. Then again, in 2004, the ASI was asked to submit a conservation report on the building. Meanwhile, the consultant senior conservation expert, who was supposed to have been "consulted throughout" the restoration, says that the only matter he was involved with was the Venetian door panelling. He suggested glass panes as the damaged panelling would be difficult to replicate."

Suffice it to say that though restoration of this historic building itself is a laudable effort, it would have been truer to the cause of heritage if it had been more scientifically handled, in continuous consultation with experts having knowledge of heritage architecture and its restoration.



February 4: Bharata Natyam performance by Nancy Boisset, from France, who has been studying the dance form in Paris and Madras since 1997. (At Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.)

February 10 and 11: *He Who Burns* is an exploration, by Wendy Jehlen, through dance, text and music of the figure of Iblis, Satan, as understood in some Sufi traditions.

This dance-theatre piece is directed and choreographed by award-winning American choreographer Wendy Jehlen who is currently in India as a Fulbright scholar. Jehlen, who has trained in Bharata Natyam, which she has studied since the age of seven as well as in Capoeira (Brazilian Martial Art), West African dance, American and European Modern and Contemporary dance styles, incorporates her training in all of these dance forms in her choreography.



In the performance, Jehlen is joined by Pradhuman Nayak, a recent graduate of National School of Drama and by Palani, an actor/dancer from Chennai. The music is created and performed by Rajasthani percussion virtuoso Gagan and by Delhi-based *sarangi* player and vocalist Anil Misra. (At Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.)

February 8-18: *Fault Lines*, an exhibition by S. Murali. Although he is a noted academic, specialised in theory and aesthetics, Murali has continued to be equally committed to and involved in his pursuit of art. His work is non-traditional and experimental. Abstract, no doubt, but at every point invoking nature and the natural. (At Alliance Francaise)

Till February 16: *Krishna Leela*, an exhibition of drawings and paintings by Keshav, who began his career as a freelance cartoonist for *Ananda Vikatan* in 1983, before joining *The Hindu* as a cartoonist in 1987. (At Ashvita.)

February 18 and 19: *Massala Festival* featuring a French street art group in a show comprising fixed as well as movement-filled performances for all age groups. Here is circus, acrobatics, clowns, music and lots and lots of laughter! (At Alliance Francaise.)

February: 20-25: A retrospective of art documentary film maker Pierre Coulibeuf. His first film in 1987 was a short adaptation of the artistic and literary work of Pierre Klossowski. Since then, he has been adapting various aspects of contemporary art to the screen (Michelangelo Pistoletto, Marina Abramovic, Michel Butor, Jan Fabre...) (At the College of Fine Arts.)

Subscriptions and contributions

● Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), *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.

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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 2005-06 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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● As token of my support for the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that *Madras Musings* espouses, I send Chennai heritage an additional Rs..... (Rupees))

Please keep/put me on your mailing list.

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

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 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:

Cleveland's Tyagaraja Aradhana Festival

The largest attended (over 3000 from all over the world) Carnatic music festival outside India is the Cleveland Tyagaraja Aradhana Festival. Apart from a 45-minute lunch break, it was music from 9 am to 10 pm, except for a couple of lecture demonstrations and a dance recital, at the 28th Festival.

The entire festival was dedicated to the memory of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and M.S. Subbulakshmi. The concerts of Sudha Ragunathan, Savitha Narasimhan and Neyveli Santhanagopalan featured songs popularised by MS. T.M. Krishna (who learnt many pieces from Semmangudi) presented songs associated with Semmangudi. His superb concert created the ambience, involvement and passion of a typical Semmangudi concert.

The format for the concert part of the festival is a well set one. Except for the concerts by major artistes from India (for which, from the second day onwards, a nominal fee is charged) the public is invited to attend free. Typically the first concert starts at 9 am. This and the 7 pm slot feature major artistes. It is interesting to note that most of the 1 pm and some of the 2.15 pm artistes had their start in the talent competition (which is referred to below).

Every year there is at least one *nagaswara* concert, a flute concert, a *veena* concert and a *Harikatha* or *namasankeertanam*. Every year two promis-

ing young artistes are also showcased.

Of particular note this year was Ravikiran's concert, the interesting aspect of it being the realisation that the *aradhana* sponsors might have achieved their goal. Accompanying him on the violin were young Akkarai Subhalakshmi and Vellore Ramabhadran. The other two accompanists, however, were from North America – Karthik Venkataraman, a competent *khanjira* player who grew up in Toronto, Canada (Vice-President of an IT Cor-

● by
V.K. VISWANATHAN

poration in the USA) and Ravi Balasubrahmanyam, an excellent *ghata* artiste, finishing his Ph.D. in Robotics in Pittsburgh. Can anyone ask for a better representation of the goals and achievements of this festival?

This brings me to what is probably the greatest service this festival is rendering to the Indian Diaspora here, especially the children growing up in North America. Twelve years ago the festival started a youth competition with just ten contestants. This grew to 180 in 2004. This year, 287 contestants participated. The winner, a 15-year-old from New Jersey, Saranya Sivakumar, not only won a *tambura*, she gave a good concert with professional accompanists.

The under-12 girls' category

had 60 contestants with the biggest percentage increase in the instrumental music category.

The children were very traditional while at the *aradhana*, comfortable with Indian culture (prostrating at the feet of the *vidwans* in public) while completely at home with their Western orientation elsewhere. This alone is a justification for the untiring efforts of the countless numbers of volunteers and organisers in making the *aradhana* a success.

The same six persons who started this effort are still very actively involved in organising and running the *aradhana* – Cleveland Balasubrahmanyam, Gomathi Balasubrahmanyam, Cleveland V.V. Sundaram, Gomathi Sundaram, Toronto Venkataraman and Padma Venkataraman. They are helped considerably by Flute N. Ramani and Srimushnam Rajarao with regard to the artistic as well as other needs of the festival.

This 'miracle' in Cleveland, which started with less than 30 persons in attendance in a small church with a concert by Saroja Balasubrahmanyam accompanied by two Cleveland residents, Rama Rao (violin) and Ramnad V. Raghavan (*mridanga*), has blossomed into a major festival showcasing the best from India, encouraging budding artistes in North America and in serving the Indian Diaspora in exemplary fashion. May the Cleveland Miracle long continue. (Courtesy: *Sruti*)



artist Indrapramit Roy – had to be based on the art of the period, and the production was to reflect both a contemporary as well as a special archaic feel.

Tara had to meet many unprecedented challenges in creating Sophocles' *Antigone*

Tara goes Greek

(by A Special Correspondent)

Six years ago, Tara of Chennai began its publishing relationship with the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. The collaboration has taken it into the world of museum art publishing and has resulted in several awards.

It began in 1999, when the then publisher of the Getty – Christopher Hudson – was taken with Tara's unique style of book art. He was interested in Tara's handmade 'Bookcraft' project, which produces books made entirely by hand. Each book is individually screen printed on handmade paper and then trimmed and sewn together by hand. He asked Tara to create a series of four books especially for the Getty, based on classical Greek plays, to complement the museum's collection of antiquities.

At Tara, authors Gita Wolf and Sirish Rao had to adapt the text for a general reader, while remaining faithful to the original. The illustrations – by the well-known contemporary

(2001), the first book in the series. Its production involved over 250,000 individual screen pulls of ink onto paper by hand. *Antigone* won the Independent Publishers' Award as Outstanding Book of the Year for Best Bookcraftsmanship.

The second in the series, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (2004), received two awards in 2005. It was the winner in both the Association of American University Presses' annual competition and in the book category of the American Association of Museums' Publications Design Competition. The third and most recently published book is Euripides' *The Bacchae* (2004). Plans are now being made for the final book, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, to be released this summer.

In reflecting on the project Chris Hudson says, "I hope that forward-looking international publishers will look to India... for creative book-making..."

Answers to Quiz

1. Prof. C.N.R. Rao, the chairman of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister; 2. He is the first winner of the Chairman's Award of \$ 50,000 for his innovative design of a cool backpack PC for school children; 3. It's the largest prime number announced so far, having a whopping 9.1 million digits; 4. Ricky Ponting; 5. She is the first woman recipient of the Overseas Citizen of India card; 6. Baramulla, Kupwara and Srinagar;

7. Arundhati Roy; 8. Boeing; 9. Aparna Popat; 10. The stoning of the three pillars at Mina.

* * *

11. Ivan Ljubicic of Croatia; 12. The composer Tyagaraja; 13. Era Sezhiyan; 14. The *chitraveena* exponent, N. Ravikiran; 15. Thomas Munro; 16. Bridge; 17. Mahendran; 18. It's a Tamil browser for the Internet; 19. S. Ramakrishnan; 20. *The Hindu*.

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

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