

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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Yes, I'll have a full facial too!

You too?

Admit it – you did not see this one coming.

Although over the past few years there has been a distinct increase in male interest in personal grooming and looks – their own, that is.

The term 'Beauty Parlour' can no longer be assumed to refer exclusively to feminine domains. In the old days, guys had their 'saloons', which (presumably) were strictly no-fuss zones, where the strong and the silent went about their business in a brisk, business-like fashion.

With unisex parlours getting more popular, representatives of both sexes find themselves sitting side-by-side, with sweet-smelling concoctions – made of self-consciously exclusive berries from the Amazon rain forest and herbs grown specially in a secret valley right here on native soil – dripping off their respective faces, even as soft-spoken acolytes work on their nails, or 'do' their hair.

Certainly helps bring the sexes much closer, but sort of messes with that subtle element of mystery, don't you think?

(If there's any left in these free-thinking times, of course.)

I mean, it is a little difficult to get all breathless and flustered over someone you've seen getting his face exfoliated.

And now, advertisements for male face creams, promising silky, glowing skin!

While you abhor chauvinism in any form from either sex, do you think this 'anything-you-can-do-I-can-do' back and forth is taking some unexpected twists and turns?

But, hey, if that's progress – so be it.

Ranjitha Ashok

Monorail or Metrorail for Chennai?

(By D.V. Subramanian)

The Tamil Nadu Government recently announced a proposal to implement at the earliest a Monorail Mass Rapid Transport System (MMRTS) to ease traffic congestion and reduce travel time for commuters. The proposal needs an open debate among informed citizens outside policy-making circles.

The invitation for global bids for the monorail system for Chennai is available on the Internet¹. The Monorail Society (TMS), an organisation in the U.S. dedicated to promoting monorail transportation all over the world, comments in a recent news brief: "The system proposed to be made up of over 300 km of track would dwarf the length of any other existing monorail system on the planet. India has had many monorail proposals for various cities over the past ten years, yet not one has moved forward to construction... The proposal has sparked criticism as well as skepticism over its validity."

* * *

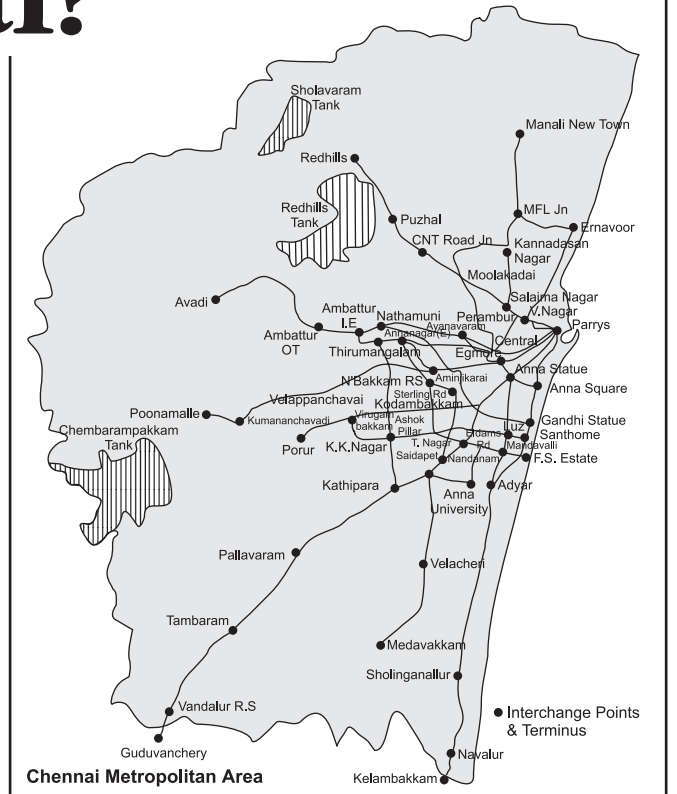
Monorail vehicles are passenger vehicles running on a single rail track (or a guide-

way) at a height of 20-30 feet above the ground. The vehicles are either suspended from, or straddle, the narrow guide-way and are wider than the guide-way that supports them. Tamil Nadu has opted for the "straddling" type.

Visitors to Singapore would have used a monorail vehicle in Sentosa Island. In fact, monorail systems were initially used for travel inside large tourism complexes, such as Disney World in Florida and Disneyland in California, or for moving air passengers between air terminals over short distances in the U.S., the U.K., Germany and Japan. Its usefulness as public transport was recognised in Las Vegas (US), Moscow, Sydney, Japan and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia). Japan derives maximum benefit from a

(Continued on Page 2)

PROPOSED CORRIDORS: Monorail for Chennai with (Zig Zag) Mass Transit Corridors



Is it necessary to insist on helmet use?

(by Shobha Menon)

"You want to become a 'vegetable'? Come with me on my rounds in the wards and I'll show you what can happen if you have not protected your head!", this was an an-

guished neurosurgeon berating a brash 20-year-old two-wheeler driver, many years ago, in the OP clinic at the Department of Neurosurgery, Voluntary Health Services, Adyar,

where I was volunteering. While a recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report declares that motorcyclists are about 18 times as likely as car occupants to die in a traffic crash and three times as likely to be injured, a study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore, has also confirmed that the severity of head injury, death due to head injury, incidence of skull fracture and occurrence of post-traumatic epilepsy were higher among those who were not using helmets as compared to those who did.

"Protective headgear certainly reduces the severity of the impact on the brain. Unfortunately..."

(Continued on Page 8)

Strengthening Chennai Heritage

Chennai Heritage is pleased to welcome aboard Sriram Venkatakrishnan (Sriram V. to readers of *Madras Musings*) who joins us as Associate Editor of *Madras Musings* from March 1, 2006.

Sriram, a Contributing Editor to *Sruti* and a regular contributor to the leading newspapers in the city on Chennai's musical heritage, has for some time now been keen to take a wider look at the city's heritage. By volunteering to assist Chennai Heritage and its flagship publication, *Madras Musings*, Sriram will strengthen your fortnightly by making it even more topical as well as help its voice to be heard louder in both print

and word. With his computer skills he will also make *Madras Musings* reach further by putting it on the Web.

With Chennai Heritage deciding to extend its activities beyond *Madras Musings* and its part in heritage and environmental awareness creation, Sriram will also play a lead role in identifying specific projects for it and help to organise Chennai Heritage-led workshops, seminars and exhibitions.

A better *Madras Musings* and a proactive Chennai Heritage are what we at Chennai Heritage hope Sriram will help to achieve.

— The Editor

Monorail or Metrorail?

(Continued from Page 1)

monorail rapid transit system (in six cities, including Tokyo and Osaka). Okinawa in Japan has the most modern monorail system (2003).

* * *

The plus and minus points of a monorail system are:

- It requires minimal space at ground level (just for support pillars). The space required at the rail level, however, is determined by the width of the vehicle.

- It is quieter, as modern monorails use rubber wheels on a concrete track.

- It is capable of climbing, descending and turning faster than most conventional rail systems.

- It is safer than other forms of surface rail transportation, since the monorail wraps around its track and so cannot derail. There is also no risk of colliding with road traffic or pedestrians.

Accidents are rare but have happened in some countries. In an emergency, passengers cannot immediately exit, because the monorail system does not provide for a ledge or railing to stand on. They must wait until a fire engine comes to the rescue. If there is a fire inside the cabin, the passengers face the unpleasant choice a jumping to the ground 6 to 8 metres below, or staying in the vehicle and risking suffocation.

The TMS says, "Monorails occupy a square metre when columns are located on the central median, are easy to construct, quick to execute, cause minimal disruption during construction". It also says that the guide-ways can be installed faster than in other transport systems. It adds that the entire system at Las Vegas took only seven months to construct.

This timeframe might hold good in cities with wide roads and / or low population density (e.g. Kuala Lumpur – population density 5320/sq.km), or cities in the Western world, Japan, or even West Asia, where surface vehicular traffic is self-disciplined, or in new towns just coming up (Putrajaya in Malaysia). Chennai, with a population density of 24,230/sq.km (2001), could be a different story.

* * *

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) has specified for the project ten main corridors extending into the metropolitan area and twenty feeder sections linking these, some of them crisscrossing the most populated part of the city. And the first 50 km is required to be operational within three years.

The successful bidder will have to fabricate the required

concrete structures in a casting yard far from the site. Typical vertical columns have a 1.2m x 1.6m cross section and are 6 to 8m tall (a small footprint, no doubt). Average guideways could be 28m (92') long and weigh 100 metric tonnes. Special guideways on curves could be 44m (144') long and weigh 190 metric tonnes. Heavy-duty hydraulic multi-axle transporters will be needed to transport the beams from the casting yard to their final location in the city and two telescopic cranes, each rated at 300 metric tonnes, will have to lift them into place, the cranes themselves occupying quite a significant road space.

During the construction, some of the business and residential areas in the congested parts of the city may have to be totally closed to traffic of any kind for months, to enable the transporting vehicles moving the pre-cast structures described above designated sites and then to install them in place. This perhaps is the "minimal disruption" mentioned by MTC in its bid document.

Let us consider the infrastructure requirements of a typical corridor specified by MTC: Parrys to Guduvancheri (39 km long) along the median above Mount Road with 36 stations – a relatively easier stretch, if you ignore existing flyovers and multilevel junctions coming up. A monorail vehicle with 4 cars is 39 m long and needs a 50-metre long covered platform, at intervals of 1.0 km on an average between stations, along the route. Passenger capacities range from 316 (normal) to 536 (crowd) in a 4-car train with walk-through facility between the cars. Will this capacity be adequate for Chennai?

Access to the platform from ground level will have to be by escalators, as otherwise nobody would patronise the service. In the absence of a subway, commuters would necessarily have to cross the perpetually busy road from both sides to reach the stations on the median. Has MTC factored in this requirement of numerous subways on this and other monorail corridors?

In addition, wherever corridor alignments require private property to be acquired, the process might become a prolonged one. Metro rail also had similar problems in Delhi during its construction and operation; they were solved by suitable legislation and the latest tunnelling technology.

* * *

The cost of the system will depend, among other things, on access of the construction equipment to the locations (for instance, on roads with high traffic density or narrow roads

in congested localities), relocation of utilities on the median (power, telephone lines, TV cables etc), the number of stations and the number of cars in a train, special structures (to cross the flyovers and rail over-bridges or existing MRTS routes). Some actual costs would be illustrative.

Considering the factors mentioned above, it is not surprising to find that the Hitachi monorail systems in three different locations in Japan cost \$15, \$27 and \$62 million/km. The Kuala Lumpur monorail cost \$36 million/km. A proposed 6.7 km monorail system in Dubailand is estimated to cost \$200 million and will take four years for completion.

In India, Phase I of the Delhi Metro Rail – 65 km comprising three routes with 59 stations – is estimated to have cost? Rs. 10,570 crore (extrapolated 2003 prices), i.e. \$35 million/km approximately.

The cost of the project will tell on cost to the user. The minimum monorail fare in the countries mentioned is not less than \$ 2. The MTC says if the fares charged by MMRTS are affordable, passengers would be willing to shift to this mode. But considering that commuters in Chennai still prefer to go strap-hanging in over-crowded buses rather than have a much quicker and comfortable journey by the MRTS just to save 2 or 3 rupees, will they pay a much higher fare to go by monorail? The fare for the longest route by Delhi metro rail is Rs. 22. Only if the monorail fare is comparable, will it be able to attract commuters.

* * *

It is reasonable to conclude that citizens have to suffer the same ordeals during the construction phase, whether it is monorail or metrorail. So why not choose the tried and tested, homegrown and much larger capacity (15 lakh passenger-trips per day) metrorail which has been acclaimed to be a success in its timely completion and operation with state-of-art facilities, including parking lots and feeder buses (*vide* DMRC website: www.delhimetrorail.com).

While we wait for the outcome of this debate, commuters would appreciate it if Southern Railway extends the present MRTS facility at least upto Velachery at the earliest, complete the half-finished station buildings and parking facilities therein for cars and two-wheelers, and provide safe/proper access to the stations. While this will increase traffic on MRTS, it will definitely run to full capacity if it provides a feeder bus

² <http://www.delhimetrorail.com/corporates/projectupdates/>

Minilab to detect spurious drugs

A minilab to detect spurious drugs has been set up by CONCERT – Centre for Consumer Education, Research, Teaching, Training and Testing – at its office in Tiruvanmiyur, Chennai. The lab is the first of its kind to be set up by an NGO and was inaugurated by K. Rajaraman, I.A.S., Additional Commissioner, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, Government of Tamil Nadu.

The lab has been donated to CONCERT by Terra Tech, a German NGO, through its parent organisation, ADH.

The spurious drug market in India accounts for a staggering Rs.4,500 crore, 20 per cent of the spurious drug business in the world. "The purpose of setting up this lab is to ensure considerable reduction in the sale of spurious drugs", says R. Desikan, a trustee of CONCERT.

Dr. Karl Weihgold, Senior Quality Manager, Ratiopharm, Germany, was present at the inauguration of this minilab. He would train the analytical chemists recruited for the lab. Dr. Weihgold said that 140 such mini labs have been set up in 34 countries, mostly in Africa and Southeast Asia.

CONCERT hopes to spread awareness about spurious drugs among consumers. Any consumer organisation or a consumer can send a medicine suspected to be spurious for testing following the procedure laid down by CONCERT. If found spurious, the drug would be sent to the State Drug Analytical Laboratory to confirm the result which would then be sent to the State Health Department, Director General of Health Services in New Delhi, and the manufacturer of the drug. Desikan states that there would be a nominal charge for testing the spurious drugs.

The following drugs can be tested at CONCERT's Mini Lab.

List of drugs accepted for analysis

Sl. No.	Chemical/Generic name of the active ingredient	Brand Name
1.	Acetyl Salicylic Acid	Aspin, Loprin, Ecosprin, Aspirin
2.	Aminophylline	Alergin, Bronchilet, Tedral, Theoasthalin
3.	Amodiaquin Hydrochloride	Comaprima, Basoquin, Camoquin
4.	Amoxicillin	Allmox, Mox, Novamox, Damoxy
5.	Ampicillin	Roscillin, Nepocil, Biocilin, Campicilin
6.	Artemether	Larither
7.	Artesunate	Arnate, Falligo
8.	Cephalexin	Cefamax, Spordex, Cephaxin, Nix
9.	Chloramphenicol	Kemicetine, Biophenicol, Paraxin, Mycin
10.	Chloroquine Phosphate	Emquin, Cloquin
11.	Ciprofloxacin	Cifran Eye, Zoxan, Alcipro, Biocip
12.	Cloxacillin	Bludrox – P, Bio Clox, Amciclo
13.	Co – Trimoxazole	Ciplin, Cosulf P, Tabrol, Otrim
14.	Didanosine	
15.	Ethambutol Hydrochloride	Mycoxol, Albutol, Concox
16.	Erythromycin	Citامycin, Etomin, Stearate, Erybest
17.	Furosemide	
18.	Glibenclamide	D-con, Glucored, Iscept
19.	Griseofulvin	Grieseopic, Idiflvin, Fluvin – 500
20.	Indinavir	Indivir
21.	Isonazid	
22.	Lamivudine	Duovir, Heptavir, Zidolam
23.	Mebendazole	Mebex, Elmin, Wormin
24.	Mefloquine	Mefax, Confal, Carimef, Mqf
25.	Metamizol	
26.	Metronidazole	Unimezol, Equagyl, Compeba
27.	Nevirapine	Nevimune, Nevivir
28.	Paracetamol	Fepanil, Pacimol, Picamol, Ifimol
29.	Prednisolone	Predone, Unidrol
30.	Phenoxy Methyl Penicillin	Pentic, Benzyl Penicillin
31.	Primaquine	Malirid, Primuline, Primaquinephosphate
32.	Pyrazinamide	Pyzina, Civizide, Koxymide
33.	Quinine Sulphate	Cinkona, Uniquinec, Quininga
34.	Rifampicin	Rifaccept, R – Cin, Gocox, Cavidin
35.	Salbutamol	Salbu, Muco Asthalin, Synabron Exp
36.	Stavudine	Stag, Stavir
37.	Sulfadoxine	
38.	Tetra Cycline	Dicicyclin, Idilint, Tetre
39.	Zidovudine	Zidovir, Zido – H, Retrovir

(Courtesy: Consumer's Digest of CAI.)

service doing round trips from each MRTS station, catering to an area, say, within 2-3 km so that commuters don't have to trek long distances to and from their homes. Infrastructure for bus termini already provided at a few MRTS stations is getting wasted. Southern Railway

should acquire and run its own buses for this purpose, if MTC pleads inability.

Acknowledgement: Most of the technical data on monorail is from the website of The Monorail Society, a comprehensive source of information on monorails around the world.



Why monorail?

Madras that is Chennai was well-served by trams for decades until its closure in the early 1950s. Then, G.D. Naidu came forward offering to take up the services and streamline them in such a way as to enable the commuters to have hassle-free travel, and without hindrance to other vehicles and pedestrians. He was an acknowledged genius who would have fulfilled his promises, but his offer was declined.

The closure of the train services was prompted by the Government in view of the growing population of people and vehicles and the resultant traffic hazards. The population of city was then nearly a million and now it is nearly five times that. Except a few main roads, most others in the city are narrow and zig-zag. As such, they do not lend themselves easily to other traffic modes, such as the monorail, to run smoothly. Government will do well to drop this project.

M.R. Pillai

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Rajaji and Hindi

I recall the colourful function to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Mylapore Sanskrit College (MM, February 16th) in January 1957 when I was a student of the nearby Vivekananda College. Rajaji recalled in that meeting how the redoubtable Hon'ble V. Krishnaswami Iyer, founder of the College, supervised the arrangements in the pandal for the All-India Congress Session scheduled in Madras in 1908 or so, by going round it majestically on the back of a galloping horse early every morning for a few days, before the session began!

Rajah Sir Muthiah Chettiar made a reference at that meeting to Rajaji's then fierce anti-Hindi campaign, praising

him for boldly 'changing' his 1937-39 views when, as Prime Minister, he 'imposed' the language in Madras schools. Rajaji appeared not having taken notice of these observations, but before getting into his car at the end of the meeting, Rajaji, addressing him as 'Muthiah', told him how he had made it clear many times in the Legislature

and at public meetings that only 'attendance' of Hindi classes and Hindi exams by students was made compulsory by his Government, and how marks scored by the students in that language were not at all taken into account for 'promotion' to the next higher class if they qualified otherwise. He wondered aloud why he continued to be misunderstood on the issue, even after so many years! 'Raja Sir' was all respectful attention till Rajaji's car left the premises.

K. Vedomuthy

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Anna at Rajaji Hall

Rajaji Hall (MM, February 1st) is associated with two historic events. It was where the late C.N. Annadurai ('Anna') took his oath of office on 6.3.1967, and became the first Chief Minister of Madras to represent a regional party replacing the leadership of an all-India party that had been in power

How do we make undergraduates employable?

I have recently read in Indian newspapers concerns expressed about the lack of employability of Indian undergraduates. This is a subject that has long been close to my heart. May I share the following concerns.

It is necessary for academic planners in Indian higher education to perceive undergraduate programmes as terminal-level programmes and not threshold level programmes leading every undergraduate to postgraduate degree programmes. The difficulty is that we are continuing to harp on an undergraduate education philosophy that was framed in the early 20th Century in Britain. Whereas Britain has changed enormously, we, in India, remain buried deep in that archaic philosophy that undergraduates are to be trained for postgraduate education.

I have no official statistics to quote, but my 20-odd years of teaching experience in an arts and science college in Madras tells me that no more than 10% of the students completing undergraduate degrees pursue postgraduate ones. I think this guesstimate is valid even today in spite of the numerous self-financing colleges which have sprung up. Assuming this guesstimate is correct, what is the point of talking about undergraduate degree programmes being solely tailored for students to pursue postgraduate degree programmes?

In this context, how should we go about ensuring employability of undergraduates?

My suggestions (= alternative pathways) assume that every undergraduate degree programme is for 3 years (= 6 semesters) of full-time study.

Such programmes will need to combine rigorous training in the theory (e.g. Mathematics, Statistics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Economics, History, Languages) with practice. Academics need to think of teaching programmes that are matched with day-to-day practical issues in terms of practice. An intelligent blend of theory and practice should be carefully and thoughtfully designed by the academics involved in the teaching-learning practice, taking into consideration the opportunities that exist in the local society. Interested persons can look into our article in *Current Science* due to be published in April 2006.

Final semester study (whatever be the major subject) should include a set of work-oriented electives from which the student can make a choice for study. Most importantly, there is no use in simply lecturing to students on such subjects without any field experience. Therefore, academics involved in teaching such programmes will need to liaise with appropriate industries and people who can impart the key skills necessary to students as part of practical learning. Of course, this practice should happen in close coordination between the academic who teaches the work-oriented subject in the college and the supervisor who supervises at the field placement (e.g. final assessment of the performance of the student in subject should be made jointly by both the college academic and the field placement supervisor). At the end of the train-

ing session, the student should be able to stop further study and pursue a job. Field placement enables the student to learn practical day-to-day problems in the chosen work experience and also to learn about working as part of a team, human resource management, and similar work-related skills. Incidentally, the student would have also established contact with a prospective industry which can employ him/her; or, at least, the field placement supervisor could be a referee for the student when he applies for a job.

The academic who teaches theory should also see that classroom teaching includes a reasonable component of understanding of personality development, human resource development, managerial skills such as financial management, day-to-day tactical management, and long-term strategic management. Let us look at the example of an academic teaching Biology in college in India, who offers a work-oriented subject, 'mushroom farming'. In a majority of instances, the academic feels happy teaching just the biological aspects, such as the varieties of edible mushrooms and some cultivation practices. The academic will hardly ever teach/talk about aspects of packaging and marketing of the produce (e.g. mushrooms), setting up a farm, raising investment finance (e.g. a bank loan), book-keeping, occupational health and safety procedures, government regulations, and several other related issues which go hand-in-hand with any effort to start a new enterprise.

This is applicable if a student plans to start his/her own business enterprise. What is the situation if the student seeks a job, say, in industry? In such contexts, the student needs to learn how to work in a team of people, how to present himself as the most skilled and equipped person, and similar HR-related issues. To what extent are Indian colleges offering training or exposure in such areas? Does the curriculum envisage such matters at all? I am afraid, the answer is likely to be 'no'. Training offered in India is far from desirable level in terms of all-round personality development.

For those enthusiastic about pursuing postgraduate programmes, Indian colleges need to have a fourth year component included in their curriculum, which can be equated to the erstwhile Honours degrees (offered in the 1950s in the University of Madras and given up by the University for unknown reasons!). Such a programme should be independent of the 3-year degree programme.

We have been talking about this issue of generating employable graduates from the 1950s. We are still talking about it. Work-oriented education is a must for modern India. Given that high-school curricula are incomprehensive (for diverse reasons), only colleges can serve that purpose. Academic planners and academics should think afresh, keeping in mind only the skilled labour requirements of India tomorrow.

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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

for two decades in the State. It was a tragic coincidence that it was in the same Rajaji Hall that Anna lay in state on 2.2.1969. More than 15 million people thronged the venue to get a last glimpse of their beloved leader, a record attendance for a funeral according to the *Guinness Book of Records*.

S. Masilamani

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A number corrected

This is with reference to my article titled "Adoption: patience needed" (MM, February 16th). The sentence "Karna Prayag has, over the years, placed more than 900 children inter-country..." is erroneous.

It ought to read: "About 90 babies have been placed abroad, constituting 10% of the total number of babies received since the start of Karna Prayag." The error is regretted.

Ranjitha Ashok

A giant of his times

He was one of the giants of his day. Within a short span of a mere 49 years he packed an incredible record of achievements in more than one arena.

He was one of the legal luminaries during the Golden Age of the Madras High Court. He sat on the Bench as a judge. He was a member of the Governor's Executive Council at a time when not many Indians could aspire to such high office. He was also a member of the Madras Legislative Council and the Senate of the Madras University.

But that was not all. Even though he served the British Indian government of the day as a judge and legislator, he was a staunch patriot at heart. He was actively involved in the political world of his day and was acknowledged as one of the heavyweights of the Indian National Congress Party at a time when the Party was divided into two groups, the extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and the moderates of which he was one. He played a leading role in the stormy session of the Indian National Congress held in Surat in 1907. Indeed, he was one of the earliest members of the Congress Party, long before Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene. He was a close friend of one of the greatest Indian minds of our times, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and was mainly instrumental in bringing another great giant, the Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, to join the Servants of India Society with which his name thereafter became synonymous.

He also helped to found the Indian Bank, one of the major Banking institutions in the country today, and the Mylapore Sanskrit College and the Venkatarama Dispensary, which are honoured institutions in Madras. Many are not aware that it was Krishnaswami Iyer who brought forth the genius of the Indian rebel poet Mahakavi Subramania Bharatiar by getting his poems published for the first time and having them distributed freely at a time when that blazing light was virtually hidden behind anonymity.

He laid the foundation for that popular institution of South Madras, the Mylapore Club. Indeed, V. Krishnaswami Iyer was one of the founders of modern Mylapore and what has come to be known as the Mylapore culture.

Venkatarama Iyer Krishnaswami Iyer was born on June 14,

• Last fortnight we celebrated the Centenary of the Madras Sanskrit College on this page. Today, on the facing page, we recall the Arbuthnot crash which stunned Madras 100 years ago. Creating the College and an even bigger institution out of the Arbuthnot ruins was the giant profiled here.

1863, in Thiruvudaimarudur, a picturesque small town near Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district. His father was a District Munsif and the family traced its origin to Mayavaram Gopu Iyer, who was a minister under the Marhatta Kings of Thanjavur. When the Nawab of Arcot con-

• by RANDOR GUY

quered the Marhatta kingdom of Thanjavur the king fled and was given asylum by Gopu Iyer for which he was later tortured by his enemies. Young Krishnaswami went to school in Thanjavur, and, later, Kumbakonam where one of his classmates became an intimate friend for life. He was another intellectual giant of India, Sir P.S. Sivaswami Iyer. For his collegiate studies he went to Madras and took his B.A. degree from Presidency College, securing the fourth rank in the Presidency.

In keeping with the tradition and customs of the time, Krishnaswami was married while at college. His wife, a frail dark girl, was no match to the handsome, strong husband! The couple lived in Palathope, Mylapore. Krishnaswami, it is related, had to shift his residence frequently, mainly because of the unwanted amorous advances of fellow tenants!

He studied law during the evenings, which was then taught at Presidency College. After taking his B.L. degree, he joined as apprentice in the chambers of one of the leaders of the Madras Bar, another famous citizen, R. Balaji Rao, who then enjoyed a fabulous practice and income.

(R. Balaji Rao, a native of Kumbakonam, came to Madras seeking a living and rose to become one of the leaders of the Bar. A member of the Corporation of Madras Council, he established that famed institution, the Mylapore Hindu Permanent Fund. The area Balaji Nagar in Royapettah is named after him. Years ago it was a grove owned by him.)

Somewhat surprisingly, Krishnaswami Iyer did not make much progress as a vakil and had to depend on the kindness of his elder brother V. Swaminatha Iyer to help him make ends meet in Madras. Swaminatha Iyer was also a judicial officer and his grand-son-in-law was that film pioneer, K. Subrahmanyam.

With hardly any worthwhile income in Madras, Krishnaswami Iyer made up his mind to shift his practice to Cuddalore where he thought the pastures would be greener. When he had almost packed his bags, a good Samaritan in the shape of a Mylapore lawyer, S. Ramaswami Iyengar, knocked on his doors.

Iyengar had a fairly good practice and he had been appointed a District Munsif. In a kind gesture, he passed on his pending cases and files to Krishnaswami Iyer. This was the turning point in his career and life. Soon help came in large measure from a prominent attorney of the city, Pennathur Subramania Iyer, who also fed him with a steady stream of cases.

(Pennathur Subramania Iyer was a prosperous attorney and was deeply involved in social and cultural causes. His lasting contribution was to education: the establishment of the high school in Mylapore that is popularly known as the P.S. High School.)

Krishnaswami Iyer also attracted the attention of another legal giant of Madras, Sir S. Subramania Iyer, popularly known as Mani Iyer. He too encouraged Krishnaswami Iyer professionally and soon Krishnaswami Iyer became one of the leading members of the Madras Bar.

When the Arbuthnot Bank went under due to over-trading, resulting in thousands of depositors losing their hard-earned money, Krishnaswami fought a historic legal battle. It was the failure of the bank which prompted Krishnaswami Iyer to promote a bank for Indians, by Indians. Thus, the Indian Bank was born on November 3, 1906. Krishnaswami Iyer, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, and RM. M. Ramaswami Chettiar (the brother of Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar) were the first directors of the bank.

Krishnaswami Iyer was also acquainted with Swami



V. Krishnaswami Iyer.

Vivekananda whom he had met during the Swamiji's historic visit to Madras in February 1897. Subsequently, he played a significant role in the establishment of the Ramakrishna Mutt in Mylapore.

Krishnaswami Iyer had seen and watched Bharatiar in Madras and more closely during the Surat Congress of 1907, where the rebel poet was in the camp of the extremists. Bharatiar created rather a negative impression on the Mylapore lawyer who thought that the moustachioed and posturing poet was a mere vagabond. One evening, another famed citizen of Madras, G.A. Natesan, brought Bharatiar to meet Krishnaswami Iyer. Their interaction was explosive. But it revealed to Krishnaswami Iyer that Bharatiar was a genius, a great poet and a staunch patriot. At once he offered financial assistance to Bharatiar and, thus, the first collection of the Bharatiar poems came to the attention of the public.

Krishnaswami Iyer was a far-sighted man. As early as 1903 he suggested that the entire country should have a common language other than English. He suggested Hindi and called it the "Ek Lipi Theory" (One language). He built a palatial mansion on Luz Church Road and called it *Ashrama*. It was a hive of legal, social, cultural, and political activity. The building does not exist today. Krishnaswami Iyer served as a member of the Governor's Executive Council in 1911. In the capacity he was invited to attend the Durbar in Delhi. Sadly he, a chronic diabetic, fell ill and developed an ulcer which prevented him from participating in the historic Durbar. He passed away on December 28, 1911.

The Governor of Madras ordered a State funeral. But Iyer's family politely refused on grounds of religious orthodoxy. In this era of stock scandals and scams, this would have been an 'also ran'. But in its time, the crash of Arbuthnot and Company was one that shook Madras. It is said that many legal careers were made in the sensational trial that followed it. This being the centenary year of the event, it is perhaps apt that a book that came out on it as the year dawned, is presented in this paper that chronicles happenings in Madras, both past and present.

Once upon a bank crash

When on October 22, 1906, The Madras Mail announced:

Failure of Messrs. Arbuthnot & Co.
OFFICES BESIEGED BY DEPOSITORS

London firm form Arbuthnot & Co., Madras, resulting in the final collapse of both. On the morning of October 21st, Macfadyen, having asked his office to suspend payments, walked into the electric train tunnel near Old Street, London, throwing himself before a speeding train. His body was discovered on the 22nd and at the inquest held on the 24th, the jury returned a verdict of "suicide due to temporary insanity".

In Madras, in the meanwhile, the offices of Arbuthnot & Co. were besieged by investors who were all turned away. Following a petition from the company on October 22nd that it be declared insolvent, the High Court of Madras admitted the petition and gave a date six weeks later for taking it up. In the meantime, a public meeting was held at the instance of the Governor of Madras, Sir Arthur Lawley, on November 8th at the *Banqueting Hall*, Government Estate, at which it was unanimously decided that a public fund would be opened to ameliorate the distress of the small investor. The fund finally totalled Rs. 1,50,000 and largely compensated those who had deposits of Rs. 100 and less with Arbuthnot's. But that was to be in the future.

On November 15th, the small investors who were greatly affected by the crash, banded together under the name of the Mahajana Sabha, met at a school in Triplicane and resolved to request the court to appoint two official assignees to speed up the assessment. The resolution was also dispatched by cable to the Secretary of State in England and the subject was discussed in the House of Commons on December 11th when a question was tabled by a backbencher.

On November 22nd, Archibald Read, official assignee of the Madras High Court, appointed to look into the affairs of Arbuthnot & Co., convened a public meeting at the Victoria Public Hall to present the full details of the state of the company as reported by Lovelock and Lewes, the noted firm of auditors from Calcutta. Assuring the audience that he would exert himself to the fullest to salvage something out of the crash for the investors, he claimed that Sir George had wanted to be present himself and spell out a plan for financial reconstruction of the firm, but had to be dissuaded from doing so. Apparently, given his status in the city, an arrest of

Sir George was not thought of. While newspapers with a strong British bias did not see anything unusual in this, *The Hindu* expressed its disapproval and hoped that the Madras Government, "who have shown... a somewhat serene indifference... will take steps to see that Sir George Arbuthnot and others responsible... are arraigned before a criminal tribunal."

On January 10, 1907, the liabilities of the company were finally estimated to be of the order of Rs. 3 crore and its assets Rs. 2.4 crore, of which only a part was recognised as being 'good'. The bankruptcy proceedings opened before Justice Sir S. Subramania Iyer on March 11, 1907, with C.F. Napier appearing for Sir George. Of the six advocates who appeared on behalf of investor groups, it was V. Krishnaswami Iyer who stood out with his merciless cross-examination. One of the side effects of the crash was the founding of the Indian Bank on March 5, 1907 with Krishnaswami Iyer gather-

• by
SRIRAM V.

ing together other notable citizens of Madras to create a local institution that would be more accountable to the public.

Proceedings went on till the end of April. The chief concern of the plaintiffs was that Sir George was still at large and his counsel was pleading that his client be allowed to travel to England to appear for the insolvency petition filed there in connection with the affairs of the London branch. The plaintiffs were of the view that given Sir George's clout, once allowed to travel, he would never return. The judge allowed Sir George leave to travel based on what was even then felt to be a ridiculously small surety and the case was adjourned to August 15th.

However, on April 29th, the Government stepped in, with E.B. Powell, Public Prosecutor, instructed by M/s. Short & Bewes, Solicitors, filing information and complaints in three cases against Sir George in the Police Court, before the Chief Magistrate W.E. Clarke. The charges concerned "false statements... made to avoid returning the proceeds of the fixed deposit of Rs. 3,50,000 to Rajah V. Kishun Bahadur when it matured, misappropriation of money that was entrusted to

Arbuthnot and Co. and to Sir George by the Madras Equitable Assurance Society, and misappropriation of monies that belonged to the Arbuthnot Industrials Ltd. for his own benefit." The accused was represented by his counsel Sir Henry King of the firm of King & Josselyn. Sir George was arrested, refused bail and hearing commenced on May 31st.

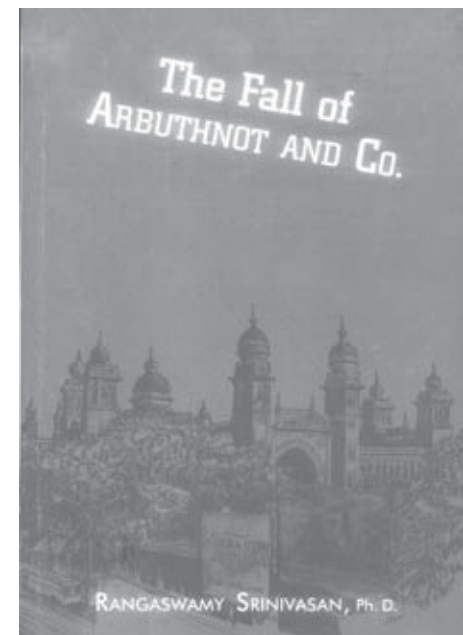
The prosecution, led by Powell, was strengthened by the addition of T. Narasimha Iyengar, High Court Vakil, an expert in commercial law. He was the only Indian to appear in the entire High Court proceedings before Chief Justice, Sir Arnold White. The counsel for defence was the redoubtable Eardley J. Norton. Almost a hundred years after the trial was conducted, Narasimha Iyengar's grandson Dr. Rangaswami Srinivasan, a well-known research scientist in the U.S., picked up the trail of the court proceedings after an extensive search in the British Library and the Oriental and India Office Collection, London. Basing the account almost entirely on the reports that appeared of the trial in the English newspapers of the time from Madras, Dr. Srinivasan gives a fascinating day-by-day picture of the proceedings that went on till September 25th in his book, *The Fall of Arbuthnot and Co.*, published by East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Ltd., to mark the centenary of the great crash.

The author focusses on the role played by his grandfather Narasimha Iyengar, who appears in only about a third of the book. If there is a hero or central character in the book, it is Eardley Norton whose arguments and cross-examinations make fascinating reading. The book is as much a tribute to him as it is to Narasimha Iyengar. Norton is all over the trial, now raising points of law to confuse the prosecution, now intimidating the jury for which they once even rise up in protest, and now and then scoring points off the judge as well. There is palpable tension between the races as evidenced by Norton's objection to an Indian vakil (Narasimha Iyengar) being asked to cross-examine witnesses. It would have been no surprise if Norton succeeded in getting his client let off, but a fairly negative summing up by the judge in his charge to the jury went against the feisty lawyer. Not cowed down, Norton then had the nerve to submit a char-

ter of 19 points on which he felt that the learned judge had erred in law and to demand a full bench to consider them. The jury, which had by then retired to consider a verdict, however, returned a verdict of guilty on one count out of the three, based on which the judge sentenced Sir George to 18 months' R.I. The full bench appeal was thereupon not pressed. The insolvency case too wound up to a close by 1912. Sir George, released from imprisonment in December 1908, retired to England and passed away there in 1929.

The book reveals that the need to firm up Indian mercantile law, or at least several aspects of it, was pointed out for the first time in this case. The concept of trial by jury will appear unusual to several of the present generation, for it has long been done away with. The observances of court decorum, the polished lan-

guage used and the sparring between the two advocates, with the Chief Justice intervening, are additional attractions. It is creditable that the author in no place expresses his own views and contents himself with factually recording all that happened a hundred years ago in this city. Overall, a must read for anyone interested in the history of Madras that is Chennai.



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I hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd. S. MUTHIAH
(Publisher)

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Why was the m.v. *al-Salam Boccaccio 98* in the news at the beginning of the month?

2. Why was Stephen Harper in the news?

3. Which two African countries signed the 'Tripoli Agreement' on February 8th to end a conflict that began in December 2005?

4. Where did the 20th Winter Olympic Games, the second hosted by an Italian city, begin on February 10th?

5. What is KV63, which is of interest to historians?

6. Who recently set a world record for the longest, non-stop, non-refuelled flight with the 'Virgin Atlantic Global Flyer'?

7. Which British tabloid released a video of prisoners abused by a British soldier in Iraq, leading to worldwide shock and condemnation?

8. Name the European Premier who created a political storm recently by comparing himself to Jesus Christ.

9. Name the computer worm, named after an ancient Indian treatise, which, it was claimed, wreaked maximum havoc on February 3rd.

10. What once-in-12-years religious event commenced at Shravanabelagola on February 8th?

* * *

11. Which important town is situated on the banks of river Vegavati?

12. What popular magazine was started in 1947 by S.A.P. Annamalai and P.V. Parthasarathy?

13. Which famous Chennai institution had its genesis in hundreds of surplus books from the libraries of Haileybury College, England?

14. Who were the last women to get the 'Sangeeta Kalanidhi' titles?

15. When did the French General capture Fort St George and occupy it for three years?

16. What is the relevance to Madras of the last piston engine warship commissioned into the German Navy?

17. Name the Chennai-born, former IAS officer and now a social activist who received the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2000.

18. Of the 30 districts in Tamil Nadu, which are the only districts whose name begins with the letter E and M?

19. Which art-form's name roughly translates to 'bamboo from the hills'?

20. In which district is Point Calimere aka Kodikkarai??

(Answers on page 8)

Make way for the Bullet

The board on the East Coast Road read: 'Rider Mania 2006'.

And for three days not so long ago, the roar of chrome machines whizzing their way to a picturesque resort off the East Coast Road startled placid weekend motorists. For two days after that, 253 gleaming Royal Enfields from different parts of India lined up for the fourth annual celebration of the Royal Enfield experience: Rider Mania 2006.

The story of Royal Enfield is today a celebrated page in world automotive history. The reason? Royal Enfield is the world's oldest running production two-wheeler. Exactly a year older than the cult-like Harley Davidson. In other words, Royal Enfield has been in continuous production since 1903. A fact that fascinates bike aficionados around the world.

Royal Enfield's journey began with the Eadie Manufacturing Company Limited, founded by Albert Eadie and Bob Walker Smith, in England in 1892. The company won a contract to manufacture precision rifle parts for the Royal Small Arms factory at Enfield in Middlesex. This association led to the formation of Enfield Manufacturing Company that diversified into the manufacture of motorised bicycles in 1898. This early corporate heritage led to three interesting developments: an artillery field gun logo, the slogan 'Made like a Gun', and, much later, the brand name, Royal Enfield Bullet!

Royal Enfield launched its first motorised bicycle in 1901 with a 1.5 HP Minerva engine. It later developed a 6HP 129-degree V-twin engine. In 1903, Royal Enfield launched its true first motor cycle. November

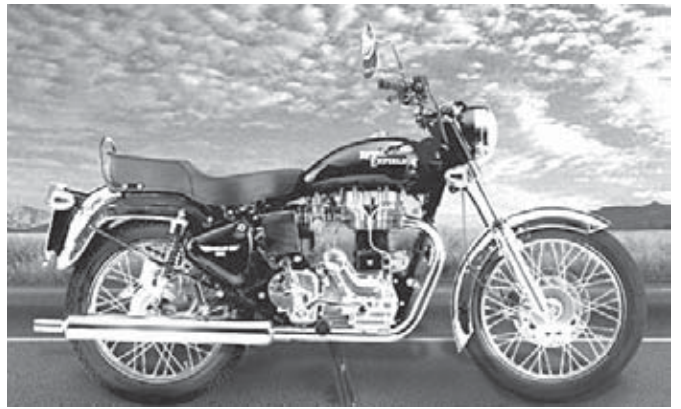
2005 marked the 50th year of the production of Royal Enfield motorbikes in India.

Royal Enfield's Indian odyssey began in 1942, when two Madras entrepreneurs, T.K.R. Sundaram Iyer and his nephew K.Eswaran, set up the Royal Cycle Company and the English Cycle Company. These companies gave birth to Royal Enfield in India. But before that, they had begun to import the classic British motorcycles of the day: the Norton, Matchless and Royal Enfield. Later, the two companies would merge to form Madras Motors. In a newly independent India, business for the Mount Road showroom of Madras Motors was brisk.

● by
JOSEPH FERNANDEZ

The major breakthrough came in 1953. The Indian Army placed an order for 800 350cc Enfield Bullets. The power, ruggedness and reliability of the motorbikes in harsh border terrain during wartime made them an instant favourite with the Indian Army, the Madras Police and a diehard legion of bikers. The demand placed a new opportunity for Madras Motors: the viable manufacture of the motorcycle in India. And so, on November 3, 1955, K.R. Sundaram established a new company called Enfield India Ltd. to manufacture Royal Enfields under licence from the Redditch Enfield Cycle Company. Redditch Enfield were stakeholders in the new enterprise and S. Sankaran, K.R. Sundaram's eldest son, was its first Managing Director. Madras Motors was appointed the countrywide dealer for the Madras-made Royal Enfield motorbikes.

In 1956, Royal Enfield



acquired 2½ acres of land at Tiruvottriyur to set up a factory and administrative office. Royal Enfield's manufacturing facilities here, much improved, continue production to this day. In England, however, Royal Enfield had to wind up operations in the mid-1970s, when it was unable to withstand the onslaught of cheaper, more fuel-efficient Japanese bikes that began to capture the world market.

Royal Enfield in India was to face that same onslaught in the 1980s. For decades after independence, Royal Enfield, Jawa and Rajdoots held sway. The inflow of Japanese bikes in the 1980s led to all three facing a crisis. This was to resolve itself in 1990 when Royal Enfield was partly taken over by the Eicher Group of Delhi in 1990. This acquisition breathed new life into Royal Enfield in India. In March 1994, the Eicher Group bought the remaining shares from the original promoters and in June renamed the company Royal Enfield Motors Ltd. (REML).

Despite the turbulent changes, Royal Enfield and its iconic mascot retained their essence – fact that has endeared them to bike aficionados the world over. "Three indisputable factors become immediately apparent to anyone who rides Royal Enfield for the first time," says R. Rajagopal, Proprietor, Southern Motors (the City's best known Royal Enfield dealers), "They offer safety, comfort and reliability like no other two wheeler in India."

R.K. Dastur, who moved to Madras in the early 1950s, was one of the city's first motorcycle racers – a veteran of many impromptu 'drag' races at the Marina Beach. A pioneer of Madras' first racing circuit, Dastur has ridden 67 different bikes. And yet the Royal Enfield Bullet remains his firm favourite. "The sheer reliability of the bike lies in the strength and ruggedness", points out Dastur, "I owned three Bullets that served me in good stead during my years as a tea planter in the Nilgiris."

By 2001, Royal Enfield had a new lease of life when Siddhartha Lal took over as its CEO. He is arguably India's only biker-CEO riding every day to work on a Royal Enfield.

His first hand experience has driven many of the changes in the Royal Enfield. Since then, the Royal Enfield bikes have taken on newer, market-friendly avatars. The Matchless, Electra and Thunderbird models opened up biking for a new generation of Indians, re-creating a cult-like phenomenon across the country. Other technical changes followed. The shift of gears from the right to the left, CDI Ignition and Disc Brakes created a new following for the Royal Enfield Experience. After years in the red, Royal Enfield has finally begun to register profits as well. Ironically, Britain has seen the unlikely return of its own Native. Royal Enfield has recently set up office in Birmingham to cope with the growing demand for Bullets in the UK. The heady spirit of Royal Enfield is best summed up in its advertising campaign: Everyone makes way for the Bullet.

Rider Mania 2006 marked the latest chapter in the ongoing saga of Royal Enfield. One of its most dynamic participants was Anand Sarangan. An aircraft maintenance professional by day, Anand Sarangan represents the new era Bullet enthusiast. Once a speed enthusiast with a flair for Japanese bikes, Anand became hooked to the comforting thump of the Royal Enfield ride six years ago. He now owns three gleaming, lovingly restored Royal Enfield Bullets. His quest for the perfect Enfield ride has made him a regular on India's 12,000 km National Highway network taking on the extremes of India's diverse terrain. "It's all in the ride", Anand says, "The Bullet offers you a ride experience that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the world!"

The last word on the Bullet phenomenon belongs to the online home of Royal Enfield – www.royalenfield.com: "Royal Enfield is the motorcycling icon of India. It delivers a unique motorcycling experience through its power, riding comfort and distinctive beat." And so, the next time that you are out there in the city traffic and hear that unique thump next to you, remember that you are listening to an icon of world automotive history that belongs uniquely to Madras that is Chennai.



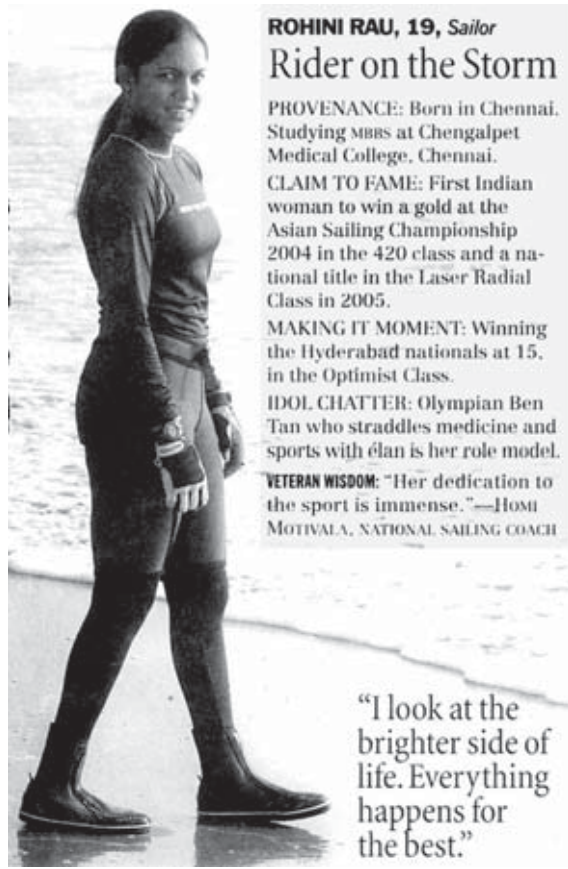
Short Film Competition: In 2007, the Goethe-Institute is going to present a congress on *The Power of Language* in Berlin. The topic of "language" has gained new meaning in the era of globalisation and the digital communication, crossing borders in many forms.

The Max Mueller Bhavan asks filmmakers and artistes to create short films of 60 seconds length and take part in a contest on *The Power of Language*. Films can be in any genre, short features, narratives, documentaries, animation, or else.

The winner receives a cash prize of Rs.10,000 and a scholarship for a

trip to Germany to pursue a German language course at the time of the congress. The second prize is Rs.10,000, the third prize is Rs.5,000. Seven more winners will get a cash prize of Rs.2,000 each. To enter a film in the contest the maker must consent to having his/her film shown during the congress in Berlin. Deadline for all entries is April 28, 2006. For entry form, call 044 2833 1314, 2343.

Upto March 11: Paintings, sculptures and mixed media works by Progressive Painters Association from Cholamandal Artists Village. (At Lakshana Art Gallery.)



ROHINI RAU, 19, Sailor
Rider on the Storm

PROVENANCE: Born in Chennai. Studying MBBS at Chengalpet Medical College, Chennai.

CLAIM TO FAME: First Indian woman to win a gold at the Asian Sailing Championship 2004 in the 420 class and a national title in the Laser Radial Class in 2005.

MAKING IT MOMENT: Winning the Hyderabad nationals at 15, in the Optimist Class.

IDOL CHATTER: Olympian Ben Tan who straddles medicine and sports with élan is her role model.

VETERAN WISDOM: "Her dedication to the sport is immense."—HOMI MOTIVALA, NATIONAL SAILING COACH

"I look at the brighter side of life. Everything happens for the best."

A Chennai 'Young Achiever'

India Today's recent 'Youth Survey' looked at 'Generation Me' and featured 50 'Young Achievers of 2006' (a few were pairs) it described as 'Brand New Dreamers'. Amongst them was one featured in these pages on a couple of earlier occasions.

We are happy to feature her again as *India Today* saw her. Others with Chennai/Tamil Nadu connections the fortnightly featured were: Formula-1 driver Narain Karthikeyan, Carnatic flautist Shashank, contemporary dancer Madhu Nataraj Heri, Vandana Gopikumar and Vaishnavi Jaikumar of The Banyan, Mercy Jesudoss, a Vellore nurse who coordinates the Christian Medical College's World Diabetes Foundation programme, and Leander Paes, the tennis player.

Supper-time in the wild



The picture above of a python swallowing a barking deer was taken by V. Manoj of Naikatty (near Sultan Battery). Manoj was driving inside the Wynad Wildlife Sanctuary in a Maruti Gypsy around 6.30 p.m. when he noticed the python and deer in a culvert. Since the python was busy, Manoj was able to go close and take pictures with a normal lens and flash.

The following is an excerpt from the interaction between a python and a barking deer from F.W. Champion's classic work *With a Camera in Tigerland* (Chatto & Windus Publishers, 1927, I Edition).

"I once had a most interesting experience with a *kakur* (barking deer) and a snake. I was wandering about on *Balmati* (this riding elephant) looking for adventures when I heard a *kakur* calling violently about half a mile away. As I was looking for a sloth bear at the time and did not want to waste

my time following up cries, which I had found many a time to my bitter experience led to nothing, I took no notice of this calling, but continued for some time unsuccessfully searching for bears. I could find no trace of them, so finally I decided to go and see what was the matter with the *kakur*, which had been calling continuously for at least half-an-hour.

"I had to pass through some very thick cover to reach the place and quite another half hour must have elapsed before I arrived on *Balmati* to find a *kakur* standing some six yards away from a large python and yelling at it for all he was worth. Neither the *kakur* nor the python took the slightest notice of our arrival, so we stood quietly watching the scene from a few yards' distance. We must have made a curious picture standing there: the *kakur* and the python facing each other at a few yards' range, with the tame elephant carrying two men standing equidistant from them

and watching the scene with deep interest.

"I had no camera with me and it was much too shady for photography in any case, so finally I brought the episode to an end by shooting the python, which proved to be 16 feet long. I have since bitterly regretted that shot, although it probably saved the *kakur*'s life, it would have

been very interesting to have seen what would have happened in the end. The *kakur* seemed to be more or less fascinated, in the way that a rabbit is said to be fascinated by a stoat, and appeared to be unable to leave the spot, although far from unable to use his voice. He never once looked in our direction, although a *kakur* will normally not let an elephant approach very close. The python was so near to him that, even though half coiled, it could easily have seized him with one sudden lunge. This is what I presume would have happened in the end, had not my foolish shot prematurely dropped the curtain on the scene."

I would suggest to all keen naturalists that they should leave their firearms at home and thus prevent their primitive hunting instincts from overcoming their better judgement in the case of such interesting and unusual incidents as this. (Courtesy: *Blackbuck*, journal of the Madras Naturalists' Society.)

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.

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 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 eritage an additional Rs..... (Rupees))

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Senate House Conservation Fund

• The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust appeals to all alumni of the University of Madras and heritage lovers everywhere to contribute to the Senate House Conservation Fund which the Trust is managing for the purpose of restoring *Senate House* to its old glory 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:

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

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Helmet use: yes or no?

(Continued from Page 1)

Unfortunately, the majority still prefer a severely injured brain to a fractured helmet. They don't realise that head injuries occurring in those wearing helmets are almost never critical," says Dr. K. Ganapathy, Neurosurgeon, President, Neurological Society of India (NSI) and Member, Executive Committee, World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies. In 1999, while he was the Secretary, the NSI impleaded itself as a co-respondent in a Public Interest Litigation filed in the High Court of Madras (Special Original Jurisdiction) in W. P. No.19587. The matter is still to come up for hearing.

How many know that the fatality rate among those who don't wear helmets is twice that of those who wear them, and the incidence of skull fracture is 1.2 times more among those without helmets as compared to those with them? Also, that the treatment for brain injury is prolonged, traumatic, and expensive, involving extensive surgeries, physiotherapy, and post-accident rehabilitation? Reversing a severe primary brain injury is not possible medically or surgically, but helmets have been found to reduce the risk of

death by 29 per cent and are 67 per cent effective in preventing brain injuries to motorcycle riders.

Indian statistics show that the two-wheeler population is growing 20 times more than the human population (over 10,000 new vehicles are registered every day)! And ironically, the reluctance to wear helmets is not because there is any serious opposition to its use. It is because of the "this cannot happen to me" syndrome! A young healthy individual will never voluntarily accept the fact that he/she is a risk for a serious head injury. In one study, 92% of non-users said that they did not use helmets "because it is not compulsory". 95% of the entire group was of the opinion that making the use of helmets compulsory was the simplest and best way to ensure constant compliance.

"Riders and pillion riders are unstable while the vehicle is moving. With the rider having to balance and manoeuvre the bike constantly, they are exposed and vulnerable. Even when the bike is at a low speed of 20 kmph, the force can be as high as 50,000 newtons with peak deceleration in the range of six to seven newtons," an ex-

pert emphasises. When the head of a rider who is thrown up in the air hits the ground, the brain experiences tremors and hits against the skull, causing concussion, contusion, haemorrhages, and other damage. A good crash helmet absorbs the impact and acts as mechanical barrier in preventing sharp objects from piercing the skull, especially in the temple region. And a full-faced helmet protects the jaw, while the strap, if firmly in place, prevents it coming off the head when the rider is thrown or falls.

An anguished Dr. Ganapathy calls head injuries "a public health hazard". And implores, "Is it unreasonable for society to expect laws already enacted in the public interest to be implemented and enforced? 80% of the 9000 head injuries which I have personally treated in Chennai during the last 30 years have been suffered by two-wheeler drivers or pillion riders. I can count on one hand the number of deaths due to brain injuries, among the group of two-wheeler riders wearing helmets. This is in stark contrast to the large number of the deaths encountered amongst two-wheeler drivers with unprotected skulls. What a proper helmet does effectively is to bear the brunt of the impact and, thus, reduce the actual mechanical shearing forces reaching the brain. The severity of brain damage is reduced. Irreversible brain damage becomes potentially reversible."

According to R. Natraj, Commissioner of Police, Greater Chennai, "In 1989-90, there was a controversy regarding helmet wearing, with it be-

ing cited that there was non-availability of good quality helmets and poor quality helmets caused more damage than safety, headaches etc. Though the Motor Vehicles Act under Section 129 stipulates that all two-wheeler users shall wear a protective headgear, the State Government issued an order at the time to defer the compulsory nature. But now, with even the World Health Organisation (which carried out a massive campaign in 2004 on 'Road Safety is No Accident') emphasising that road accidents will be the biggest killer in the years to come, we are taking up the issue of helmets with a massive awareness campaign. With 17 lakh two-wheelers in the city, it is necessary to enforce helmet use at the right time and in the right atmosphere. However, I don't understand the necessity to make helmet use 'compulsory.' Don't people care for their own lives?"

And says K.C. Mahali, Joint Commissioner, Traffic, "In 2004, of a total of 605 fatalities, 234 had no helmets, which meant 39%. In 2005, of 493 fatalities, 162 were without helmets - 33%. The 6% reduction is due to a sustained campaign throughout 2005. Our several safety programmes targeting all sections of people are to reduce road fatalities and also impress on people the need for every two-wheeler rider to wear a helmet." But why, when a fatal head injury occurs every four minutes and we have incontro-

vertible scientific evidence that protection to the head would make an irreversible brain injury reversible, do authorities feel wary of enforcing an existing law, wonder the medical experts.

Fortunately, fashion trends have begun to dictate the wearing of helmets. Convenience is assured with lightweight helmets, perforators that allow air circulation, and helmet locks or in-built boxes to keep helmets. Neck pain can also be avoided by using helmets of the right size. Inputs gathered from manufacturers and sellers of helmets too confirm positive attitudes that are even being reinforced by responsible corporate employers.

Suffice it to say that 38,000 neurosurgeons worldwide - represented by the NSI, the Asian Australasian Society of Neurological Surgery and the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies - have fully endorsed the stand that the use of protective headgear is the simplest, quickest and most effective method of reducing the number of severe head injuries. Besides, studies clearly reveal that when helmet use is voluntary, it is only used by 40-50% of two-wheeler drivers, and when compulsory, by almost 100%. The question that now remains is whether the State should be concerned whether a two-wheeler driver uses a helmet or not, or wait to let public opinion decide the issue?

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

Sport on pages 6 & 7

Answers to Quiz

1. It was an Egyptian ferry, which, while carrying 1272 passengers and 105 crew, sank in the Red Sea on February 3-4; 2. He is the latest and 22nd Prime Minister of Canada; 3. Chad and Sudan; 4. Turin; 5. It is the first Pharaonic-era tomb discovered in the Valley of Kings since 1922; 6. Steve Fossett; 7. *News of the World*; 8. Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; 9. *Kama Sutra*; 10. The Mahamastakabhisheka of Gomateshwara or Bahubali.

11. Kancheepuram; 12. *Kumudam*; 13. Connemara Public Library; 14. Vidushi Neela and Kunjumani, known as the 'Sikkil Sisters'; 15. 1746; 16. The vessel was the *Emden* and it shelled Madras in September 1914; 17. Aruna Roy; 18. Erode and Madurai; 19. Silambam; 20. Nagapattinam.

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