

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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I have spent a lot of money for this holiday... So, not a word about school, studies, exam results or school admission for the next two days!

The numbers game

It is virtually impossible to survive in a world where numbers, for some reason, have taken a dislike for you.

Your school report cards invariably carried those pretty red lines under your Maths marks – a hint of things to come.

Telephones prove unfriendly, tricking you into creating unintended number combinations, leading to unpleasant name-calling on part of the irate 'calles'.

Then there's Housie.

Your usual POA is to avoid it completely, but if you are forced to participate, all you can do is make small squiggles on your particular squares, and wish the person calling out the numbers would drop that whole 'Two fat ladies 8 and 8' bit.

Talk about being hideously politically incorrect.

As for those table-number or ticket number draws.

You know, you have to question this habit of inviting people over to events and pressing numbers on them, thus forcing them into fierce competition with lifelong friends, when all they wanted was a pleasant evening out.

Instead, you spend the evening hoping fervently that your number never comes up.

If it does, you can be sure it's not the tickets for two for a Nile cruise; or that glossy Home theatre system.

Oh no, you'll be the one who wins a year's supply of bathroom-cleaning fluid – very useful, but a little difficult to bear aloft in triumph.

Stay away from numbers, if possible.

It's a mug's game.

Ranjitha Ashok

Panagal Park to become parking lot?

(By A Staff Reporter)

The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) has done it again. After a decade of silence during which no doubt it watched the traffic situation unravel, it has come up with a pronouncement. Namely that the problem of parking can be solved through multilevel parking at three significant traffic 'hot spots' of the city. These have been identified as Government Estate, Panagal Park and the Broadway bus terminus. The CMDA has taken the trouble to assure environmentalists that it proposes to take away only "half an acre" of Panagal Park and leave the rest, while it has not said much on the other two areas. In any other country, the very thought of creating a monstrous multilevel parking lot in a heritage precinct such as the Government Estate would have had conservationists and the heritage-conscious up in arms.

Coming back to Panagal Park, as readers of *MADRAS Musings* will no doubt remember, the park was threatened a few years ago with similar plans

and a spirited fight put up by local groups ensured that such ideas were abandoned. But now we are not so sanguine. Considering that it is the last remaining green lung in that part of T'Nagar, which regularly makes it to the headlines for topping the list of most polluted areas in the city, any move to reduce the size of the park is fraught with grave environmental and health risks.

In 2003, a survey showed that vehicle ownership in the city had grown from 4 for every 100 people in 1981 to 30 for every 100 in the interim. Peak hour parking requirements were then estimated at the equivalent of 13,000 passenger cars (factoring in two wheelers) and it was found that the city had space only for around 5100. The situation has undoubtedly worsened since then – a recent newspaper report stating that 516 vehicles are added each day in Chennai – and that can only mean an even greater demand for parking space than envisaged in 2003. The number of vehicles that the new park-

ing lots are estimated to take care of is, however, nowhere near commensurate with the growing demand. 300 two wheelers and 350 cars at Broadway, an identical number at Panagal Park and 400 vehicles at Government Estate are what are being mentioned. A miniscule number compared to the rate at which vehicles are proliferating in the city. In fact, just in four days, the city would have as many new vehicles as the space the proposed parking lots will offer!

Looking specifically at Panagal Park, the CMDA ought to be considering ways and means of reducing the traffic in the area rather than building parking lots at its very centre, thereby inviting more traffic to this major shopping area. In 2002, a report in *The Hindu* had this to say about vehicular pollution in the area: "The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) has come out with weekly statistics, as part of its Chennai Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme, on high levels of Suspended Par-

ticulate Matter (SPM) and Respirable Dust Particles (RDP) several times beyond the permissible levels in T'Nagar, creating concern among the residents, road-users and the Government." How does the reduction in the tree cover, which will be inevitable if even only a part of Panagal Park is used for a multilevel parking lot, help in reducing this pollution?

It is particularly sad to note that this is the fate proposed for one of the city's earliest planned areas. It is a classic case of a plan gone awry, thanks to arbitrary regularisation, absence of zoning laws and failure to protect open spaces on the part of the very authorities entrusted with providing citizens a better city. It appears that T'Nagar is all set to go the way of George Town, becoming first a victim of its own success and then gradually getting choked and dying a terrible death.

Yet another aspect is the complete opaqueness with which a body like the CMDA works. The 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India clearly states that local welfare groups and representative bodies ought to be consulted and their views taken into account in matters pertaining to "Urban planning including town

(Continued on page 4)

E-waste problem – ominous and alarming

April -September 2004 – Toxics Link, an NGO, submits its pioneering report *E-waste in Chennai – Time is running out* to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB).

May 2005 – The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board constitutes a committee on e-waste with members from the Centre for Environmental Studies, Anna University, Toxics Link, and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB).

May 23, 2005: Software major Wipro, pulled up by the

Karnataka State Pollution Control Board for generating, storing and transporting e-waste without proper approval, says most of the waste had been

transported to an authorised scrap dealer in Chennai (who'd been illegally handling e-waste for three years before getting approval from the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board).

November 2005: A German e-waste management expert, Jurgen Porst, adviser to the

Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, underlines the need to conduct immediately a Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE) assessment

in Chennai. Also that "there was no policy either at the State or at national level to address the challenges posed by e-waste".

September-December 2005: The TNPCB issues notices to all IT companies in and around Chennai to disclose the

quantity of e-waste generated every year and their mode of disposal. Less than 5% of the IT companies got back. NONE of the major companies replied.

And guidelines on this 'great environmental and health threat' (according to the experts) are still 'in the process of being formulated' (according to sources in the TNPCB).

Toxics Link, which provided the first e-waste inventory in the city, points out that even as the domestic generation of e-waste is likely to increase soon

(Continued on Page 2)

● by SHOBHA MENON

AVM and Saraswathi Stores

AV Meyyappa Chettiar, or AVM, was born on July 28, 1907 at Karaikkudi to Lakshmi Achi and Avichi Chettiar, a pioneer in establishing what would today be referred to as a departmental store. His AV and Sons shop in Karaikkudi was a very popular one and his son began helping him in the business from childhood. When he was studying in the third form (today's 8th Std.), his father's declining eyesight led to AVM taking on full responsibility for the business, which he expanded with great foresight and acumen.

AV and Sons had taken on the distribution rights of 78 rpm records of such labels as HMV and Columbia for the areas of Madurai, Tirunelveli, Tiruchi and Ramanathapuram from very early on. In 1930, AVM decided to enter the business of making 78 rpm records himself. Joining two other music lovers and businessmen, K.S. Narayana Iyengar of Salem and Sivam Chettiar of Karaikkudi, AVM set up Saraswathi Stores in Madras city and the business formally came into existence on 9th September 1932. AVM acquired the Mount Road property to set up a showroom and office for Saraswathi Stores and immediately entered into a contract with the German label

Odeon. AVM would record the music in Madras and send the masters to Germany where Odeon would process them into discs and send them back. Saraswathi Stores was to be the sole distributor for Odeon.

AVM initially released discs of classical music. Then realising the considerable demand for comic and folk songs, he had artistes like P.S. Sivabhagam render songs like "Vannan vandane" and "Kazhugumalai kuruvikulam" all of which sold well, making Saraswathi Stores a household name. AVM employed a full fledged orchestra on the premises, working on new songs and tunes. In addition, AVM also hit upon the idea of drama dialogues being released as 78 rpm records. The time restriction on the records necessitated the play being recorded over several discs, which were then released as "Drama Sets", neatly packed in steel cases. The first such, *Kovalan*, came out in May 1934, to be hailed by *The Hindu* as a "new stage of growth" in South Indian gramophone records. When AVM made his first film *Alli Arjuna* he was to use the Saraswathi Stores Drama Troupe as the cast. Another AVM exclusive was the release of standard Carnatic composi-

tions performed by the Saraswathi Stores orchestra under the baton of Prof. P Sambamoorthy. These orchestras comprised Indian instruments and over 25 members.

The 78 rpm boom witnessed artistes entering into exclusive contracts with recording companies. In 1937, AVM, through Saraswathi Stores, became one of the pioneers to record songs from Tamil films and market them as gramophone plates.

● by
SRIRAM V.

With the film industry also going through a boom, AVM found it difficult to get certain artistes to record their film songs for 78 rpm discs. It must be remembered that the technology to transfer the songs recorded for film directly on to 78 rpms did not exist then. These, therefore, had to be re recorded for the gramophone discs. AVM got his own studio artistes to record the songs and released them as plates with messages stating that the songs in the plates were "as per the songs" in some well known film or the other. Thus Turaiyur Rajagopala Sarma recorded for



Picture courtesy: Appacchi, Biography of AVM.

AVM most of M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavata's film hits.

With the coming of AVM's film banner, Saraswathi Stores also became the outlet for all the films' song discs. Encouraged by the success of his drama sets, AVM also began releasing the audio tracks of his films such as *Alli Arjuna* (1935) and *Ratnavali* (1936) as 78 rpm plates. The Saraswathi Stores Orchestra which began specialising in film music was later absorbed into the burgeoning AVM Studios.

Shopping at the outlet on Mount Road was a pleasure, according to old timers, with plenty of parking space and the

shop itself providing an ambience conducive to listening to music and then selecting the discs. With 78 rpm discs becoming history in 1974, the stores began selling cassettes.

The outlet was finally closed in 1983, Meyyappa's 75th year, though Saraswathi Stores still continues as a business entity, selling cassettes and CDs from the AVM Sound Zone outlet on TTK Road. The classical white building which led the gramophone boom in Madras has now gone. So has the old HMV studio which was demolished a few years ago. *Tabularasa* for the history of the recording industry in Madras!

E-WASTE PROBLEM – OMINOUS AND ALARMING

(Continued from Page 1)

with the high rate of obsolescence of technology, the 'illegal' import of e-waste from developed countries like the US, Singapore, Malaysia, Belgium and Middle East continues unabated. Discarded electronic waste, the fastest growing stream of waste in industrialised countries, is unethically exported to developing countries, or to communities ill-equipped to deal with such waste.

With Chennai identified as the southern capital of India's IT revolution and a major port of South India, the prime 'hotspots' identified in the report as handling computer waste in and around Chennai are the electronics market in Richie Street, recycling units at Royapuram and Tiruvotriyur, the seconds-goods markets at New Moore Market, Chintadripet and Pudupet, the plastic-recycling belt of Mannadi, Kosapet and Otteri, the Madras Export Processing Zone, Purasawalkam, Periamedu and Vepery, Urapakkam and Puzhal. Chennai port was found to be deluged with e-waste import. "The import of e-waste needs special clearance under the Hazardous Waste

Rules 2003 and a prior informed consent under the procedures of the Basel Convention. In no case has this been found to take place," points out a member of Toxics Link.

To circumvent Customs authorities, computer waste is imported as 'Mixed Electronic Computer Scrap' through the Chennai Port. According to data provided by Toxics Link, while it is the United States that exports most of the e-waste, Singapore and Middle East could, in all probability, be acting as turntable ports for computer scrap coming in originally from the European countries. "Recycling in India is primarily unorganised – many women and children are also engaged – and is mainly a backyard operation. Open burning of PVC wires, and de-soldering of circuit boards and glass exposes the workers to lead, mercury and other toxic chemicals."

If handled unscientifically – with informal recyclers attracted because of the small quantity of gold and high value metal deposits found in the electronic components – during disbanding and breaking down, e-waste has the potential to pollute natural resources such as water, apart from en-

dangering the health of the workers. "Some of the toxic trash also finds its way into municipal garbage dumps. If burned, the e-waste has the potential to explode disastrously," says K.R. Sudhakar who did the Toxics Link study.

What needs to be done

- Assessment of the management of electronic waste in the broad framework of Extended Producer Responsibility and the Precautionary Principle for viable interventions.
- State Governments need to incorporate manufacturer and user responsibility in their IT policies with strict norms in waste disposal. The manufacturer should be responsible for the entire lifecycle of the product. This involves clean production (replacing the existing toxic substances with suitable non-toxic alternatives) and taking back waste equipment and reuse of certain components and recycling of others (these are already being practised in developed countries by the same companies that have a significant market in India).
- Imposition of a total ban on hazardous/e-waste imports, and monitoring of waste coming in as donations.
- Designing electronic de-

vices with a clear, safe and efficient mechanism for recovering raw materials.

- Devising ways to introduce scientific e-waste and hazardous waste management systems, including creation of a scientific landfill using compacted clay layer, HDPE sheets and geo-textile sheets.

- To educate all consumers; an efficient collection of household electronic devices can start with household batteries.

- Training and upgradation of informal recycling units to remove crude recycling practices that pose health and environment hazards.

It won't be long before toxic e-waste overwhelms an already beleaguered city if the government and the IT industry take their own time. Over what is now an emergency.

What exactly is E-waste?

Electronic waste or e-waste is a collective term for electronic goods such as computers, mobile phones, refrigerators, audio-visual equipment and other accessories, which become waste post-consumer use. E-waste is classified as hazardous under the Basel Convention which prohibits its transboundary movement. It has the potential to pollute natural re-

sources. E-waste contains over 1,000 different substances and chemicals, many of which are toxic and are likely to create serious problems for the environment and human health if not handled properly.

The critical factor that differentiates computer waste from other e-waste is the exponential growth in which it is generated. According to the International Association of Electronics Recyclers, about 40 million components are being scrapped each year and the figure is expected to climb to 100 million by 2010. Driven by planned obsolescence policies practised by the hardware sector, such as the poor design of computers, they do not facilitate upgradability. Computers, being storehouses of toxic substances like mercury, lead, cadmium, and hundreds of other deadly chemicals, are extremely complicated to recycle and dispose off safely.

Discarded electronic waste, also the fastest growing stream of waste in industrialised countries, is unethically exported to developing countries, or to communities that are ill-equipped to deal with such wastes. Much of the toxic trash finds its way into municipal garbage dumps.

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Saving water

A better headline than "Failure to save city from water" (MM, January 1st) would have been 'Failure to save precious fresh water for the perpetually water-starved Chennai city.'

It may not be out of place to recall the three essential steps to save water I had outlined in *Madras Musings* of December 1, 2004: Deepen tanks. Harvest rain. Stop polluting waterways. It is high time the government and the public learned from this colossal failure to save and conserve water and take necessary steps to harvest and save water and protect the water bodies.

In this connection, the experience gained by the State of Gujarat in proper harnessing of water resources is worth emulating. Gujarat, having a coastline of around 1600 km on the west coast, has constructed a number of dams before the rivers join the sea, creating huge sweet water lakes along the coast. Also the lakes are interlinked by canals, wherever it is technically feasible. Besides making available water for irrigation purposes in the coastal tract, they provide a home in winter to thousands of migratory birds, including some from Europe. This presents an opportunity for eco-tourism based on sea and seawater. All these rivers on which coastal dams are built are non-perennial and generally go dry after the monsoon. Now, these have lakes at their mouths, thus providing ample sweet water to farmers.

As Tamil Nadu also has a fairly long coastline, it is worth examining the possibility of constructing dams at the mouths of rivers. This will help in reducing the flow of flood waters into the sea, build storage of freshwater for irrigation and drinking purposes, and arrest seawater intrusion and deterioration in the quality of groundwater along the coast. Government should seek the opinion

of hydrologists, engineers and administrators on the feasibility of such a project, its long-term benefits and the problems likely to be encountered during implementation. If there is a will on the part of the Government solutions can always be found.

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Honouring Tamil greats

Triplicane has the proud privilege of being the place where some very eminent Tamils lived in the last century.

Mahakavi Bharatiar, the renaissance poet, Dr. U. Ve. Sa, the 'Tamil Thathaa', and the brilliant mathematical genius, Srinivasa Ramanujan, adorned the locality - almost simultaneously at a time when they made outstanding contributions in their chosen fields.

Mahakavi Bharatiar's memory is cherished by the memorial in the house where he lived and by a prominent road, Pycrofts Road, which was renamed after him. Srinivasa Ramanujan has a museum in distant Royapuram. But, there is nothing in Triplicane, where he lived in the early part of the last century, to commemorate his memory. So is the case with Dr. U. Ve. Sa.

I suggest that the State Government acquire the houses where they lived and convert them into suitable memorials by renovating them and making them into small museums.

The Ramanujan museum in far away Royapuram can be relocated in Triplicane High Road where an auditorium can also be built to hold periodical lectures. It will be very appropriate to rename Triplicane High Road 'Medhai Ramanujan Road'. Similarly, the name of the road in Tiruvatteswaranpet (in the Triplicane area) where Dr. U.Ve.Sa's house is located can be named Dr. U.Ve. Sa Road.

This is perhaps the easiest way to do something quickly to keep these outstanding personalities not only in our memory,

Parents to many

We refer to Ranjitha Ashok's articles in MM, February 16th and March 1st, and would like to introduce ourselves as the adopted children of Rajasekharan and Sumukhi who made a substantial contribution in the fields of charity, education and culture in the second half of the 20th Century. Old-timers of Mylapore still recall the generosity of the couple in raising children they knew nothing about.

Rajasekharan (1915- 1979) was a double M.A., a freedom fighter under Rajaji, private secretary to Alagappa Chettiar and owner of Vindhya Publications. His wife, Sumukhi (1916-1992), was a triple graduate, an accomplished teacher and Asst. Headmistress of Lady Sivaswami Iyer Girls Higher Secondary School. She was also involved with Kalakshetra during the time of Rukmini Devi Arundale. Childless, they adopted quite a few 'families' and gave the children a good education and set them on the road to prosperity without thinking of getting anything in return. Mylaporeans still remember their devotion to strangers and the shelter they provided them in their house. They were not flushed with funds but their hearts were big enough to share whatever they earned with their sweat and blood.

They helped the three of us to qualify well. Amarnath, who has a Doctorate in History, is a Senior Lecturer in Presidency College. Surendranath, a post-graduate in Visual Communication Design, is a freelance creative direc-

tor in the ad field. And Aparna, a Chartered Accountant, is now a Regional Manager with an MNC Bank Chennai. As alumni of Kalakshetra, we learnt Dance, Music and Art.

We three feel that we owe our education, values and very lives to the Father and Mother who brought us up, and want to carry on their mission in life. Thus was born the Sri Sumukhi Rajasekharan Memorial Foundation to organise various programmes for children and elders throughout the year, one of which is the Marghazhi Bala Utsavam in December and the Balar Chithirai Kalai Vizha in April where 800 children exhibit their talents in the fields of Bharata Natyam, Carnatic music, Instrumental music, Bhajans, Slokas, Kolam, Painting, Junk Art, Fancy Dress, Oratorical, Poetry, Choir, Dance Dramas. The Foundation also conducts Bala Vidwan Bhavani on January 1st every year, in which 100 children and parents go round the Mada Streets of Mylapore early in the morning, singing bhajans, and Bala Gurukulam, a culture and tradition-centric summer camp for children. We now cherish a dream of running a fine arts school. We also hope to start a home for the aged and needy. For more details contact us.

S. Amarnath,
S. Surendranath, S. Aparna
New No.5, Old No.3
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Chennai 600 028

but also to enthuse future generations to draw inspiration from these great men.

K.S. Krishnaswamy
B-1, 'Ashok Suparna'
No.27, III Main Road
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Adyar
Chennai 600 020

Remembering Bosen

February 16th marks the first death anniversary of that renowned and respected coach, Ken Bosen. His passing away in 2005 stirred a sympathy wave with proposals to institute trophies in his name at a couple of schools, and a commemorative track meet, prayer meetings, a niche at the NSNIS museum and offers to subscribe to a memorial headstone.

I recently received a call from a journalist in Coimbatore who wanted to publish a note on Bosen, his links with the city of his birth and his school days at Stanes. He asked me what Ken had "done for Stanes." His was an innocent question, but my reaction was sharp: "Did Stanes School invite him to do anything for the institution?"

While all the kind proposals to perpetuate his memory have faded fast in a year, the great pity is that Tamil Nadu, his home State, hardly acknowledged his excellence even during his lifetime. While Bengal, Karnataka and Maharashtra felicitated him on receiving the Dronacharya award, belatedly in 2000, Tamil Nadu was strangely indifferent. He was in Chennai shortly after receiving the award and I was able to con-

gratulate him at a small function attended by a score of his athletics contemporaries and admirers. Thankfully, the print media recognised this small tribute in the State from which he hailed.

Despite its ambition to raise athletics standards, Tamil Nadu did not deign to invite him to conduct workshops, training clinics or draw objective plans to realise these ambitions. The SDAT did 'summon' him to conduct a course a few years ago, but on such shoddy terms that, fortunately, his national coaching commitments gave him a polite reason to decline.

I hope some effort will even now be made to keep his memory fresh as a model, as a coach, as a technical expert and as an unforgettable personality.

A.J. de Souza
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Yesteryear's Mandaveli

Mandaveli Street, off R.K. Mutt Road, of yesteryear derived its name (Mandai - herds; Veli - pasture) for the street had only a few houses. Starting from Mandaveli sub-post office, there was an old market building complex now demolished to house a kalyanamandapam. While the side of the street abutting Mylapore had houses, the other side consisted of pasture for cattle.

Admiralty House was there. It was leased to AVM who produced good pictures like *Sabhapathi* and *Valli* there. Later the area came under the City Improvement Trust to

form Mandavelipakkam with its numerous houses.

Vedachala Garden is there, of course, as a heritage precinct full of old and new houses. The garden is only an 'apology', for most of the trees have been felled by builders.

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Mandavelli, Chennai 600 028

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **hand written** 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

OUR ADDRESSES

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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

Nungambakkam in the 1930s and 1940s

Nungambakkam in the 1930s was demarcated into three zones — East, Central and West. The Central Zone had village-type street houses which extended from one street in the front to another at the rear. The backyard of every house had a well with perennial water supply and a garden with trees (plantain, coconut, mango, neem, etc.) and flowering plants (jasmine, *tulasi*, *pavalamalli*, etc). Houses of orthodox families had a cubicle-shaped room in the front *thinmai* in which women were segregated during their menstrual periods. Dry latrines were the norm and needed human labour to clean them.

There were as many as five temples dedicated to different deities. The temple tank before the Lord Siva temple always had plenty of water. On many occasions, the tank, full to the brim, was the venue for the *theppam* festivals. Fire-walking was a popular ritual during the annual religious festival at the Dharmaraja temple.

There were extensive vacant lands in and around the Eastern and Western zones. The Eastern zone was a neatly developed area with well-laid roads (Nungambakkam High Road, College Road, Haddows Road and Anderson Road). Its spacious bungalows with ex-

tensive gardens were mainly occupied by the British employed in the civil, police and judicial services. Officers of the Madras and South Mahratta Railway had their residential quarters on Sterling Road. The entire area was quiet, with no buses plying and no commercial establishments.

The western part of Nungambakkam was then developing around the lake area, which was full of thorny trees, into a colony for middle-class families. Independent houses were built, each complete with a well and garden. The flat system was unheard of then.

In those days, Nungambakkam extended up to the Mylapore Lake area, which had boating facilities. You could purchase a plot of land (2400 sq.ft.) for less than Rs. 300. Nagars and Purams (Thirumoorthi Nagar, Mahalingapuram and Jayalakshmiapuram) emerged only in the mid 1940s.

As far back as 1930, Nungambakkam had excellent educational facilities — Corporation schools, Vidyodaya Girls' School, Good Shepherd Convent, Loyola College and Women's Christian College (Vidyodaya School was shifted to T. Nagar later). The Corporation High School was a boon to students from poor families and backward communities.

When S. Satyamurti, the Mayor of Madras, mooted a proposal to close down the school due to poor results in the SSLC examination, headmaster T.E. Srinivasachari (grandfather of the cricketer T.E. Srinivasan) strongly protested and residents of Nungambakkam forced Satyamurti to drop the proposal.

A part of the lake area, cleared of thorny trees, was used for sporting activity. Cricket, even then, was popular. League matches were played regularly from July to

● by
M.S. JAYARAMAN

March. The Nungambakkam Sports Club, the local team, had N.J. Venkatesan, a googly bowler, and other State players in its side. Many other State players — M.J. Gopalan (Triplicane Cricket Club's double international player), G. Parthasarathy (from the Mylapore Recreation Club who later served as an Indian Ambassador), A.G. Ram Singh (Minerva Cricket Club), K.S. Kannan (Eccentrics) and Karthikeyan (M & SM Railway) — had played on this ground. The shady area beneath the trees was the pavilion for visiting local teams.

Until World War II broke out in September 1939, the prices of essential commodities ruled steady. An average middle-class family could lead a comfortable life with an income of Rs. 100 a month; one measure of rice and *dhal* and one *veesai* of sugar (1¼ kg) could be purchased for 3 annas (20 paise). You could have a square meal in a 'hotel' for 20-25 paise. The milkman would bring his cow and calf to your doorstep to supply milk. The people of the area were generally not used to luxurious living.

One Corporation dispensary and two private medical practitioners served the people in the locality. However, there was no banking facility and for that you had to go to T. Nagar. Only one *nidhi*, with 3 or 4 wholetime staff, functioned effectively. The Saraswathi Gana Sabha (now defunct) was a popular venue for musical concerts and drama. M.S. Subbulakshmi, Musiri Subramani Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, D.K. Pattammal, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and G. N. Balasubramanian used to perform at the Sabha. Plays were staged in the Museum Theatre. Only in the late 1930s did radio arrive.

As for transport, only a few taxis, privately owned, were available. Bus services operated on one route, from T. Nagar to Parry's Corner through Nungambakkam. The City Motor Bus Service was owned by Prof. N. Sundaram Iyer, principal of Vivekananda College. It cost one anna (6 paise) to go to T. Nagar and two annas

(12 paise) to reach Parry's Corner. Jhutkas and hand-pulled rickshaws were the other means of transport. Office-goers travelling to places of work such as Chepauk, which were not connected by the bus route, would travel in groups in jhutkas and share the expense. A significant number of persons, keen on maintaining a shoe-string budget, would walk to Chetpet Station and travel by electric train to Beach Station, the monthly season ticket costing just Rs.2.

After the War broke out, life began to change. Prices of commodities (rice, maida, sugar and kerosene) began to rise. Essential items were hoarded and blackmarketing and corruption raised their ugly heads. Things worsened after Japan entered the war.

The exodus of people from Madras began in March 1942 after Singapore fell to the Japanese and by May-June the city was almost empty. Educational institutions were closed earlier, by end-February. When air-raid sirens sounded at night, there would be a complete blackout. Trenches were dug in the backyards of homes for protection during air-raids. Government offices were shifted to different parts of the State. By the middle of 1943, however, the threat of the Japanese invasion receded. A solitary air-raid by a Japanese aircraft caused little damage. People started coming back to the city by the beginning of 1944, by when the War began to change in favour of the Allies. Life in Nungambakkam too began to change.

Turn garbage into compost at home — Exnora

The Chennai Corporation and urban municipalities have shown a serious "lack of concern" and have failed in the

implementation of the municipal solid waste management rules of 2000, alleged members of Civic Exnora and heads of

federations of residents' welfare associations, at a recent citizens' meeting. M.B. Nirmal, founder-Chairman of Exnora Inter-

national, stated that "residents therefore will have to decide not to dispose of garbage in the public bins but to compost it and recycle it at home."

dumping garbage, but the civic authority has used 250 acres for the purpose. Only 593.58 hectares of the marshland is now left.

PANAGAL PARK TO BECOME PARKING LOT?

(Continued from Page 1)

planning, Regulation of land-use and construction of buildings, Planning for economic and social development, Roads and bridges, Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes, Public health, sanitation conservancy and solid waste management, Fire services, Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects". These are precisely the rights that the CMDA is now violating by making unilateral announcements.

The only solution to the parking problem and the general traffic chaos in T'Nagar is pedestrianisation. The CMDA

will have to go through the grind of acquiring land in peripheral roads such as Venkatanarayana Road, Thyagaraya Road and Usman Road and make arrangements for parking there and not in the heart of the area, namely Panagal Park. It might be worth its while to recall that, back in 2002, this was thought of and following the National Conference on 'Pedestrian—The Vulnerable Road User', held in New Delhi in September that year, the Transport Department said that it was considering a move to make the Panagal Park shopping complex area a pedestrian mall. It announced that it was drawing up a detailed proposal

on the measures to decongest the area and convert it for pedestrian use only. However, like much else in the city, this proposal too has not been implemented.

A day after the CMDA announced its decision to build the parking lot in Panagal Park, an NGO registered its protest. The fact that the construction will not begin till the elections are over, will also give local groups of citizens in T'Nagar time to band together and demand the withdrawal of this unnecessary proposal. As always, *Madras Musings* hopes the citizenry and the CMDA can come TOGETHER and agree on what's best for the city.

Reacting to serious complaints by residents of Pallikaranai, Perungudi, Kodungaiyur and Velachery about the failure in this regard by the Chennai Corporation and Alandur municipality, Nirmal proposed the concept of 'Home Beautifiers' who will go to every household in the area and assist in converting organic waste into compost and collect and dispose of inorganic waste in line with norms.

Pallikaranai, a marshland considered a drainage system for rainwater in south Chennai, has been destroyed by government bodies and much of the 5000 acres extending from Taramani to Siruseri has been either converted into dumping yards or turned into commercial areas.

Initially, only 75 acres were allotted to the Corporation for

The municipality and the civic body together dump 2,000 tonnes of garbage in the marshland and burn the garbage to provide more space for dumping garbage, residents said. Exnora members said the Corporation and Onyx collected garbage, but did not segregate waste. They said the Corporation had built new garbage dumping yards where no segregation is done.

Rajesh Rangarajan of Toxics Link, an NGO, said incinerators the worldover had been discarded as an unviable option to burn garbage because of the costs involved. It is unfortunate that local bodies continue to unofficially engage themselves in burning garbage at dumps and also actively campaign for 'Waste to Energy' mega projects which involve incinerating the waste, he said.

Mylapore and the movies

Mylapore has traditionally been the home of many a legal luminary, but it has its share of medical experts, sportsmen and musicians too, amongst others. It has also been connected with motion pictures since the 1930s, with film studios, movie houses, screenwriters, actors and film technicians dotting it, often lending it colour and drama.

Besides its traditional bounds, Mylapore includes San Thomé, Raja Annamalaipuram and its satellite extensions, and the outskirts of Adyar on the north bank of the river. It once had three active movie studios and two cinema houses. Today the studios have either vanished or ceased to work. One of the two movie houses still functions against all odds.

In the 1920s Mylapore had 'tent cinemas' in which silent films were regularly screened. The "floor" or 'tharai ticket' was only 'kaalana' (quarter anna) or 3 *dambidisi* (pies)! For two kaalanas you sat on a rickety, bug-rich bench with no backrest. Two annas entitled you to sit on a wrought-iron chair which creaked whenever you breathed hard.

The noted musician, musicologist, painter and movie star of the early 1930s, S. Rajam, recalls that as a boy he had seen silent films in a tent cinema located in an open space behind the P.S. High School compound. He remembers *Nal Damayanti*, which he saw decades ago. He is emphatic that it was produced in north India. It was the second version of the familiar tale made in 1927 by the founding father of Indian cinema, Dadasaheb Phalke, at Nasik.

The first permanent movie house in Mylai, **Kapali Talkies** which survived till recently,

came up in the late 1930s. The first superstar of South India, M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, inaugurated the cinema for which he was given a silver hammer as a memento! Sadly, this cinema house is no more.

The second cinema house in Mylapore was **Kamadhenu** in Luz. It was owned by Raja D.V. Appa Rao, Zamindar of Jagampeta.

In the late 1940s Raja D.V. Appa Rao decided to build a cinema house in the open space of Lakshmi Vilas in Luz which he had bought from that great jurist, Bhashyam Ayyangar. The residents of the area, however, objected to a cinema coming up and disturbing their peace and tranquillity! The matter went to court and V.C. Gopalaratnam appeared for the plaintiff-objectors while Raja Appa Rao conducted his own case without the help of a lawyer – and won, going on to put up the cinema.

The cinema was named 'Kamadhenu' but it was no money-spinner. In view of its location in a residential area, the owners found it difficult to obtain new releases and sadly it soon became a second-run theatre. Eventually, Raja Appa Rao sold the cinema to a Nagarathar, Chidambaram Chettiar.

The first movie studio came up on Greenway's Road. C.V. Raman, a lawyer, was the brother of that sadly forgotten film pioneer, A. Narayanan. Both entered films during the silent film period and trained under that film pioneer Raghupathy Prakash. Soon, Raman became a producer-director and promoted many film companies.

Raman floated **Lalitha Cinetone** as a limited company with one Kasi Chettiar as his

main money-backer. He acquired a large tract of land of some 25-odd acres, with some superstructures on Greenway's Road, next to *Brodie Castle*. The property belonged to the Prince of Arcot and the monthly rental was Rs.150!

Lalitha Cinetone became National Theatres Limited in the 1930s. NTL became Meenakshi Cinetone and in 1934 produced that hit *Pavalakodi*, which marked the debut of M. K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar. It was also the debut for another film-maker K. Subrahmaniam, and star-actress, S.D. Subbulakshmi.

One of the famed films made at Sundaram Sound Studio was *Sairandhri* (1939). The noted Bharata Natyam critic and impresario E. Krishna Iyer, who fought successfully against heavy odds to get social acceptance for the dance in the 1920s, acted in this film playing 'Brihannala' (Arjuna in dis-

Ramachandran. MGR changed the name to 'Satya Studio' in memory of his mother. During his reign the studio buzzed with hectic activity. After his death the studio waned, film-making came to a halt and in the 1990s a women's college was established there. Another movie studio on Greenway's Road in the late 1930s-early 1940s did not survive long. During its short life, it changed hands and names too. It was located near the Jiddu Krishnamurthy estate and the canal.

Muthuswamy Iyer (journalist-turned-film-maker), A.K. Sekhar, a brilliant art director and jack-of-all-crafts, and K. Ramnoth, the forgotten genius of South Indian cinema, with the help of a rich Nagarathar, bought land for their studio on Greenway's Road and named it **Kartikeya Studio**. They had plenty of dreams, ideas and more but not enough money even to buy a movie camera! B.N. Reddi, then new to films, and his experienced and worldly-wise partner, H.M. Reddi, had promoted Rohini Pictures and were planning to produce their maiden venture in Telugu. They met Ramnoth to hire the studio and were sur-



S Rajam in *Seetha Kalyanam*

lease the sprawling 'Club House' off Mount Road. It had been the premises of the Madras Club and became the property of the *Indian Express*. Here AVM produced films on actual locations without studio floors or erecting huge sets, anticipating a trend by at least thirty years! Soon he shifted his film unit to what is now Mandavelipakkam, to *Admiralty House*. A palatial mansion with an impressive flight of majestic steps, tall pillars and high ceilings, it belonged to the Maharajah of Vizianagaram. Meyyappan took it at a rent of Rs.250 per month.

Admiralty House became 'Pragathi Studio' for some time and Meyyappan produced many movies here with much success, such as *Sabhapati*, *En Manaiivi* and *Harishchandra* (Kannada and Tamil).

In the mid-1940s Meyyappan relocated in his home town of Karaikudi and built his own studio on the outskirts of Devakottai in Chettinad. *Admiralty House* was taken over by Palliagraharam Kandaswamy Pillai, a Justice Party supporter who was interested in cinema. He engaged the noted American Tamil film-maker Ellis R. Dungan to direct a movie. The project did not take off and Dungan went to court for damages for breach of contract and obtained a decree against Pillai.

Many film world personalities, big and small, lived in Mylapore in those days. The most prominent were movie moghuls S.S. Vasan and A.V. Meyyappan, film-makers A.T. Krishnaswamy and K.J. Mahadevan (his family house is now the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan), Kannada film-maker R. Ramamurthy, writer, Tamil scholar and film-maker Kothamangalam Subbu, actors M.K. Radha, T.R. Mahalingam, Ranjan, B.R. Pantulu, G. Pattu Iyer, Gemini Ganesh (he lived there in the early years of his career), singing star S. Rajam, his brother S. Balachandar, Papanasam Sivan, Lalitha, Padmini and Ragini. M.S. Sundari Bai, V. Gopalakrishnan, M.L. Vasanthakumari, and many others.

In years past, Mylapore had many links with the movies, but with changing times, it is a different tale today.

● by RANDOR GUY

guise as a eunuch in King Virata's court). He danced a classical number and created history.

In the 1940s the studio changed hands again. The new owners were a group headed by a Nellore-based cinema house owner, Ahmed Khan. As Neptune Studio, the studio was active for some years, then it changed hands again and became the property of Jupiter Pictures, promoted by two businessmen of Tirupur, M. Somasundaram and S.K. Mohideen.

Jupiter, when it first moved to Madras in the early 1940s, took on lease a historic building in Mylapore, known as *Mangala Vilas*. It was owned by G.A. Natesan, a famed publisher, public figure and close associate of Mahatma Gandhi in his early years, and a friend of Swami Vivekananda. It was in this building that Lata Mangeshkar recorded a Hindi song for a Jupiter movie, making her professional debut in Madras. The company also took over the Neptune Studio and during 1950s and 1960s Jupiter produced many successful films here, like *Manohara* in 1954.

The fortunes of Jupiter began to change for many reasons. And the studio on the Adyar changed hands again. The new owner was M.G.

prised to know that there was not even a camera! BN took a liking to Ramnoth at first sight, on site, and advanced the entire estimated cost of the studio, Rs. 12,000! The studio went on stream in 1938 making Reddi's hit *Griha Lakshmi*.

By then, Kartikeya had a 'VVIP' neighbour, the legendary barrister of Madras, Nugent Grant. He and his wife Kay lived in a palatial bungalow with a pack of dogs, "as ferocious as Grant himself." In those days they did much shooting at nights to avoid extraneous noises. Disturbed by the noises of the shooting one night, Grant walked in to the studio in a menacing mood and threatened one and all that he would set all his dogs on them if the infernal noise did not stop at once! "The dogs and Nugent Grant appeared equally ferocious, and scared, we made less noise afterwards!" Ramnoth laughingly recalled some twenty years later.

By then, Kartikeya Studio had closed down and a Maharashtrian had taken it over. Under the name 'Pragiyoti Studio' he ran it for some years with some success.

The third studio of Mylapore which created film history was Pragathi, promoted by India's movie mogul A.V. Meyyappan. Ever the daring innovator, he had earlier taken on

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 March 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. An Italian parliamentary commission recently accused which European 'nation' of orchestrating the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II?

2. Name the maker of the popular BlackBerry wireless-communication devices who has agreed to pay \$612.5 million to settle a patent-infringement suit.

3. Who won an Oscar for playing Truman Capote?

4. On March 8th, the EU announced lift of ban on the export of which 'foodstuff' after nearly 10 years since it was enforced?

5. Why was the astronomical body Enceladus in the news on March 9th?

6. Name the individual at the centre of Britain's most famous political scandal of the 20th century, who passed away on March 9th.

7. According to WHO, the number of people killed by which common disease has declined by a whopping 48% between 1999 and 2004?

8. Name the former Yugoslav President, under trial for crimes against humanity, found dead in his cell at The Hague on March 11th.

9. Name the new body that is to replace the UNCHR.

10. Which American nation has a new national flag with eight, instead of seven, stars and the coat of arms in the upper left corner?

* * *

11. How many Assembly constituencies are there in Chennai District?

12. Name the legendary Chola king, believed to have killed his own son to provide justice to a cow, whose statue is in the Madras High Court complex.

13. Name the Governor of Madras in the early 19th Century said to have initiated English education in Chennai.

14. Name the first church built by the British in Asia that was consecrated in October 1680 with the Rev. Richard Portman officiating.

15. Name the fort, 34 km from Kanyakumari, built by King Marthanda Varma, that has a foundry for casting guns.

16. Also known as 'Thiru Edu', what is the main religious book of 'Ayyavazhi'?

17. Of which memorial landmark, dedicated to the nation in 1970, was S.K. Achari the chief engineer and architect?

18. Which nationally prestigious educational institution of Chennai had its first classes at the A.C. Tech in August 1960?

19. Which factory in the State was started in technical collaboration with Swiss Car & Elevator Manufacturing Corporation Ltd., Switzerland, in early 1950s?

20. Name the actress who played the actress-neighbour in the ever-green comedy film *Bhama Vijayam*.

(Answers on page 8)

Giving shape to the Dream

• The first British Council-commissioned Indo-UK theatre production will be staged from April 19th to 21st in Chennai. Tim Supple, who had earlier travelled to India with the RSC production of *Comedy of Errors* and now directs this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a cast and crew from across India, describes the process through which he arrived at his company of actors and the rehearsal point.

Early in 2004, I got an email from Carole Mcfadden at the London office of the British Council. Would I like to create a production in India and Sri Lanka? There was only one possible answer. I had first visited India in 1997 with the RSC and it had had a deep effect on me. I had always wanted to return and work.

Later in 2004, I met Alice Cicolini, head of arts at the British Council in Delhi, in Marylebone, London. The exciting scope and ambition of the project was immediately clear. It would unite the Council offices in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Colombo in producing a new piece to tour. Like all good producers, Alice had a clear idea of what she wanted in broad terms – a large-scale work with popular potential that embraces artistes from different regions – but wanted me to shape the specifics around my own instincts and needs.

In preparation I read Indian folk tales, modern Indian poets and novelists, stories from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and other classic texts and po-

ems. I thought about Gilgamesh and *The Arabian Nights* – and Shakespeare. We had resolved to take the project to the UK if possible and the RSC had made it clear that if we were to choose a Shakespeare play they would be interested in inviting it to Stratford as part of the epic Complete Works Festival.

In January I travelled to Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai to meet, listen to and see the work of artistes. I saw how little financial support there is ("How do you manage?", I asked one venue manager in Kolkata, "We don't", was the inevitable reply) and how multi-skilled Indian performers have to be. I saw the drive to preserve the wealth of traditional and folk performance and to adapt it to forge a modern theatre. I saw the fine line between the desire to imitate Western theatre and the attempt to re-fashion it on Indian terms. I opened my mind to the particular greatness of Indian theatre – less tangible, less modern, less structured than British and often fashioned with basic design and rough execution. But in soulless urban theatres, underneath the warm night sky in a street in Chennai, in a hot dusty courtyard in Delhi and in the jungle outside Kolkata, I was moved again and again by the essential art of theatre.

What struck me most was the potent balance between highly refined form and raw necessity and the exhilarating co-existence of ancient and modern. We began our search for designers, producers, advisors. We received plenty of warnings: too big, too top-down, too many different languages and cultures of performance, too little technical and professional expertise. One senior di-



rector in Kolkata predicted it would be 'a disaster'.

We took all this to heart – along with all the encouragement and excitement that came our way. And it fed into the decision to choose *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I had been planning to direct the play for years and was inspired by the prospect of doing it in India. I knew that Indian performers, with their great variety of approaches to performance, would bring special qualities to the play – and that the play would welcome the variety. And I sensed that *The Dream*, Shakespeare's most perfectly composed play, would provide a strong architecture to house and nurture the disparate elements of our collaboration. By the end of the trip I knew that I wanted to work with a completely Indian team. We would recruit the creative and production team as part of the next trip. On my last day, I sat with Alice in the British Council office in Delhi and planned a workshop/audition trip that would take place in Delhi, Kolkata, Manipur, Chennai, Bangalore, Kerala, Sri Lanka, Mumbai and Ahmedabad. If the scale of this trip was not daunting enough, the budget for the project was frightening and clearly needed sponsorship.

In April I returned for four weeks. Alice had appointed a production manager who became my close companion – a young man called Shankar Arora. Together we criss-crossed the sub-continent flying many thousands of kilometres

and working with hundreds of performers, musicians and choreographers. We had sessions where realistic actors worked with dancers and folk artistes worked with experimental physical performers. We had musicians, singers and children. And most interesting of all, people acted in whatever language was most natural to them.

Dialogues sprung up between English and Bengali, Hindi and Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil and Sinhalese. It was clear that our production had to be multi-lingual: to restrict ourselves to performers who worked in English would be to miss out on a wealth of different ways of making theatre and telling stories – of seeing life and our trials of love, terror and social conflict that make up the canvas of the play. It would also be a lie. India is multi-lingual, Indian theatre is multi-lingual and whatever else Shakespeare production might do, it should seek to reflect the time and place in which it is made with vivid honesty.

As well as people, we were searching for places. We were looking for the best possible venue in each city and this led us to interesting and rarely used outdoor venues – in the case of all but one it would mean building our own auditorium. Finding the right place to rehearse was equally important. We wanted a location that would help us work well for seven weeks away from our homes. We looked outside the big cit-

(Continued on Page 7)

A Beatle in Madras

A decade ago, in April 1996, Madras had a recorded moment with musical posterity, as it played host to an ex-Beatle – George Harrison. The reason for that moment was that another musical icon, Pandit Ravi Shankar. India's best known musician and the Beatle had met exactly thirty years earlier, in 1966, at the heights of the Beatles fame. At a moment when East famously met West, Pandit Ravi Shankar introduced the Beatles to India and its culture.

Thirty years later in 1996, it was George Harrison's turn to produce and play on Pandit Ravi Shankar's eponymous al-

bum 'Chants of India'. Recorded in January, April and July 1996, 'Chants of India' featured 16 compositions of Ravi Shankar's music melding both Western and Eastern styles to evoke the beauty of the collective human experience. It showcased Indian western choruses of singers working in synergy. Stringed Western instruments like violins and cellos mixed in with Indian instruments.

George Harrison played the guitar and some percussion as well and produced the album. Its line-up was: Ravi Shankar (vocals, sitar); George Harrison (vocals, acoustic guitar, auto-harp, glockenspiel, vibra-

phone); Chandrashekhar (vocals, violin); Kalyan (violin); Terry Emery (percussion). Hailed as one of Pandit Ravi Shankar's most experimental and daring projects, 'Chants of India' was recorded at Chennai, Friar Park and London.

The most candid memories of George Harrison's visit to Madras were shared by R.K. Sharma, a friend of Pandit Ravi Shankar, an IAS officer of who spent ten days with the ex-Beatle. He shared those moments in a tribute in *The Hindu* December 6, 2001, writing:

" 'Chants of India'... was conceived as a collection of mantras, set to music by

Panditji and to be produced by George. But why come to Chennai for that? Panditji said that a lot of chorus was required and that he could get people who could chant correctly only in Chennai. I was exhilarated at the prospect of meeting George, the Beatle! During the recording, he would often be seen consulting Panditji and Anoushka, who even at that tender age was deeply involved in organising and conducting music. Even though the collection had difficult Vedic pieces like *Poornamadah*, *Maha Mrityunjaya*, *Svara Mantra*, George, to

(Continued on page 7)

Ode to the Kapali temple

An illustrated book in English on Madras' famous Sri Kapaleeswarar temple had to be written. Lakshmi Viswanathan, the Chennai-based Bharata Natyam dancer, has done just that.

Called 'Kapaliswara Temple - the sacred site of Mylapore', it was released on the day of Maha Sivratri at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

The book has detailed chapters on the various aspects of the temple - ranging from its history to its current day activities. The temple's history dates back to the 9th Century, though there are very few stone inscriptions within the temple, says Lakshmi. The history of Mylapore, which goes even further back, is traced with references to the temple contained in literary and religious works and songs. A whole chapter is devoted to Tirugnanasambandar, and the 'resurrection' of the maiden Poompavai in Mylapore, who was restored from the ashes, when he sang to her. The story of his imbibing the divine milk from Parvati, and various miracles he performed, are detailed in another chapter.

Each of the *sannidhis* here is described, and the relevant legend mentioned.

The *pradosham*, which oc-



curs twice a month, and is ideal for taking the darshan of the Lord, is described with details of the relevant myths. Each of the festivals associated with the

● by
RAJI MUTHUKRISHNAN

temple is gone into in great detail. Examples are the float festival of Thai Pooam, the Tiruvadurai and, the biggest of them all, the Brahmotsavam Panguni festival. Every day of the festival is described.

The 63 nayanmars, celebrated as aruvathumooar and who have a day to themselves during the festival, are described in another chapter with pictures and brief histories of the chief saints.

The book is a collector's item, printed on glossy art paper. Beautiful photographs in colour dominate the book, enhancing the reading experience. There are also vintage photographs, allowing the reader a view of the temple in the past. What is palpable is the deep love the writer has for Mylapore and Sri Kapali Temple.

"I do remember attending the *pradosham* when merely fifty people used to go around the temple *praharam*," Lakshmi writes. "The idea of a book in English inspired me to cull some interesting historic details and also share some of my life-long experiences of the temple and its famous festivals," she says.

Lakshmi grew up in Santhome and it is evident that the life around the temple and the series of poojas and festivals throughout the year have left a deep impression on her. It shows in this work.

The book is priced at Rs.490 and distributed by East West Publishers and is available at all leading bookstores. Lakshmi has already published a book on Carnatic music maestro M.S. Subbulakshmi, titled 'Ode to a Nightingale', a personalised biography with lots of rare and beautiful pictures.

A BEATLE IN MADRAS

(Continued from Page 6)

my utter surprise, knew them all and spent most of his time reciting the *Gaayatri mantra*.

"The 10 days that I spent with George are not only the ones that I cherish, but revealed the real George behind the

myth. His relationship with Panditji was most remarkable. He treated the maestro as his guru in the very real sense of the word... On the last day after dinner, we drove down to the city from a sea-side resort. It took us longer than the usual time because he wanted the car

to be driven slow. That was my first tete-a-tete with him, a full one hour with George Harrison. I reminded him of his extraordinary popularity, in fact a royalty status still unsurpassed, in an age when hype was not such a buzz word, and asked him what it was like to be the Beatles. As we were, about to reach the hotel, I told him "I salute you on behalf of my generation" for all the joy the Beatles had given us. He responded with a mock salute and said, 'Thank you all for loving us.'

"Paying tribute to his sishya and friend, Pandit Ravi Shankar said: 'The last wonderful musical experience I had with him was when we made the CD 'Chants of India'. We did some songs in Madras and the major part at his own studio in his mansion at Henley. His nearness and attention in producing the record always inspired me so. Even the complex compositions came out of me so spontaneously."

George Harrison's work within and without the Beatles is today considered to be among the most influential work produced in the 20th Century. And, to think that Madras that is Chennai played a small but significant role in that piece of musical history!

Joseph Fernandez

GIVING SHAPE TO THE DREAM

(Continued from Page 6)

ies and when Shankar took me to Veenapani Chawla's Centre for Theatre Art Research in Pondicherry - Adishakti - I knew it was the place.

Choosing the cast was harder.

We capped the number at 60 and invited the creative team I was most keen to work with. This would be the beginning of a shared sense of direction and purpose. In July I was back in Mumbai. In the room we had at least 8 different first languages and a staggering variety of artistes from every region I had visited.

The job in hand was to bring Shakespeare to life through the particular combination of skills in the room and to sense which combination might do this most vividly. This was achieved and choosing the final 22 was diffi-

cult and would take me another month. By the end of August the cast and creative team were confirmed. In November the designers came to London for two weeks of intensive discussions and left with an outline design. I sent a list of rehearsal needs to Shankar and his team and we were ready to begin. On December 30th I left my family at 4 a.m. in a cottage in Scotland and drove through the eerie stillness of snow-covered hills. I landed in Chennai just on New Year's Eve. The cast arrived through the day and rather shyly we celebrated the New Year. We found ourselves under a bright, warm night sky - just us, *The Dream* and seven weeks to bring it to life. — (Courtesy: *Connecting*, the journal of the British Council of India.)

Subscriptions and contributions

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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.

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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

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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.

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

Date: Signature:

A baseballer takes to cricket

The first time I took an American friend to a cricket match, the guest was extremely bored. Almost dozing off even as the two teams unfurled an array of priceless cricket skills, my friend Peter could hardly suppress a yawn. Then, half way into the match, Peter suddenly came to life. "Looks like we're going to have some action at long last," he woke up and declared, as he sighted a helmeted batsman walk in at the fall of a wicket. Protective headgear was still a novelty those days, certainly in club cricket. Peter excitedly waited for some blood and gore, but the tall, well-built bowler with the long run-up was no more than military medium pace, and our knight in armour lasted precisely three deliveries before playing all over a yorker length ball. Peter duly went back to sleep.

My unsuccessful attempts to interest my American friend in the nuances of cricket left me wondering if a fellow countryman of his would ever be able to master the abstruse technicalities of this very British game, until I reminded myself that cricket had been alive and kicking in the USA and Canada before baseball swept it away. John Barton King of Philadelphia had been the fastest bowler of the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, making a hugely successful tour of England and generally earning the respect of batsmen everywhere. The Philadelphia cricket ground is still an ornament of what is left of US cricket. Now

cricket is only a distant speck in the American racial memory, and the few eccentrics in the continent still indulging in the idiosyncrasy are mostly homesick Indians, Pakistanis and West Indians.

While doing the research for a history of the Madras Cricket Club, assisting Mr. S Muthiah on his book, *The Spirit of Chempauk*, I learnt that the Madras team in the Ranji Trophy once included an American, Frederick Fales Richardson, a left-handed batsman who cut his cricketing teeth in England and, later, came to work in India, where he played both rugby and cricket. We also know that cricket writer Mike Marquess too is a true-blood Yank, who was one fine morning dropped on his head and became a passionate lover of the strange English game. But my friend Peter was the last of a long line of Americans I tried in vain to convert into cricket lovers.

That is the reason why I did not take my brother Sivaramakrishnan seriously when he announced a year ago that he was initiating a young American student from Colgate University, USA, into the mysteries of the willow game.

But Siva does not easily take no for an answer and eventually persuaded me to meet Chris Burns, the young baseballer-turned-cricketer, who was picking up the glorious uncertainties of cricket so rapidly. Meeting Chris at Siva's home last year, I was pleasantly surprised at how well-informed about cricket the young scholar from Prof Bill Skelton's group of stu-

dents visiting Sudharani Raghupathy's Shree Bharatalaya, Chennai, on an Indian studies programme, was.

Keen to explore the local scene going beyond the classroom, Burns was fascinated by cricket, the game every Indian seemed to be playing. His enquiries led him via Skelton and Raghupathy to my brother, who was at the time supervising the cricket coaching programme at Vidya Mandir, Mylapore. Siva and coach 'Bond' Venkatasubramaniam, an explosive

● by V. RAMNARAYAN

wicketkeeper-batsman of yesteryear, soon took the young American under their wing.

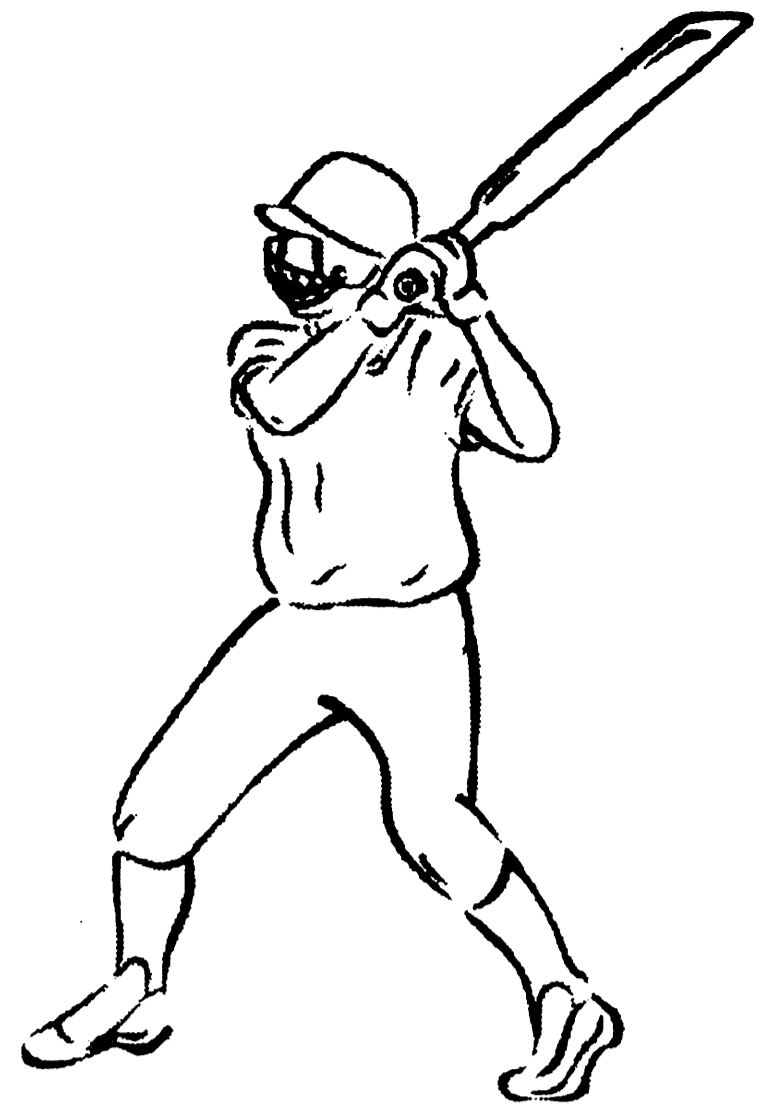
Within a matter of months, Chris Burns became a useful medium pace bowler, with boundless energy and enthusiasm. When he went back to Colgate University, he started Colgate Cricket Club after hardselling the game to his American peers and earning the support of the President's office. A matting pitch in the middle of the school is his proud achievement and the school now boasts some 20 cricket enthusiasts battling for a place in the eleven that takes part in a local league.

Until recently, Chris, now 22, was the only Anglo-Saxon American cricketer he knew, but two more from Will Skelton's group visiting India have joined him. Simon Bresler, 20, from Mamaroneck, New York, a theatre student, who spent months in Chennai learning

Batik, Thamizh, therukoothu, kalaripayattu and yoga, has taken enthusiastically to wicket keeping.

Another young man, Paul Yannopoulos, 20, from Long Island, New York, a student of religion and philosophy, who learnt kalari, Hindu tradition and Vedanta at Chennai, is the other convert to cricket. For someone who first played cricket a few months ago, Paul has made decent progress as a medium pace bowler. He actually lands a few deliveries within the playing area every over! Anyone who thinks that's a joke has never played a game in his life, certainly not cricket.

Chris Burns has now moved to Mumbai, where he has spent some time under the care of renowned coach Vasu Paranjpe.



Picture courtesy: S.P. Venkateswaran.

tional bowlers, Chris put his heart and soul into the few sessions he enjoyed with Lillee, and has gone back carrying invaluable cricket lessons and precious memories.

Chris, Simon and Paul came to India on a mission to absorb Indian culture. They could very well have confined their efforts to studying the arts and philosophy within the confines of the classroom and the rarified atmosphere of the classical music and dance concert circuit. Instead, they chose to go out and mix with the common people and embrace India's greatest unifying force – cricket. They go back the richer for it, and who knows, they may one day lead a cricket revolution in their homeland.

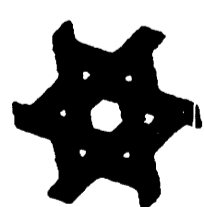
Answers to Quiz

1. The Soviet Union; 2. Research In Motion; 3. Philip Seymour Hoffman; 4. On the export of British beef; 5. It was announced that the Cassini probe had reportedly detected geysers of water on the moon of Saturn; 6. John Profumo; 7. Measles; 8. Slobodan Milosevic; 9. United Nations Human Rights Council; 10. Venezuela

* * *

11. Fourteen; 12. Manunedhi Cholan; 13. Thomas Monroe; 14. St. Mary's in the Fort; 15. Udayagiri fort; 16. Akilattirattu Ammanai; 17. Vivekananda Memorial; 18. The IIT; 19. The Integral Coach Factory; 20. Rajshri.

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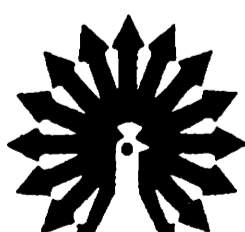
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