

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XVII No. 02

May 1-15, 2007

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"The latest in Wholistic healing, sir... ayurvedic oil massage, yoga, reflexology and acupuncture, all rolled into one, to save time!"

A Leaf by any other name 'Alternative' – now there's a word that gives certain professionals, notably the people in white coats, the shudders, especially when used in reference to the art of healing. Understandable.

You spend years in study and hard work, set up practice, frame and display your certificates – then watch the herds heading towards roots, seeds, leaves, oils, perfumes, potions...the list is endless.

And, as if this isn't enough, you have people swearing that moving the sofa into a north-east position instead of the original south-west cured them of persistent headaches, when all the pills in the world had tried, failed, and retired, baffled.

It is particularly hard on those People-in-White who suddenly discover that their clients of years' standing have been quietly indulging in 'alternatives' on the side.

Most of our Whitecoats put on a brave face, and speak generously of 'blending different streams'.

But the marked manner in which they ignore the crystal around your neck during an examination indicates some amount of pique.

Imagine finding yourself being ousted from your spot in the sun by a flower, or forced into a professional face-off with a leaf.

Of course, people have the freedom to choose their 'alternatives'.

But, maybe, we need to be a little more – well, subtle or sensitive.

Like – the next time you get those persistent snuffles, and choose to visit your 'regular' doctor, just take the trouble to hide the tulsis.

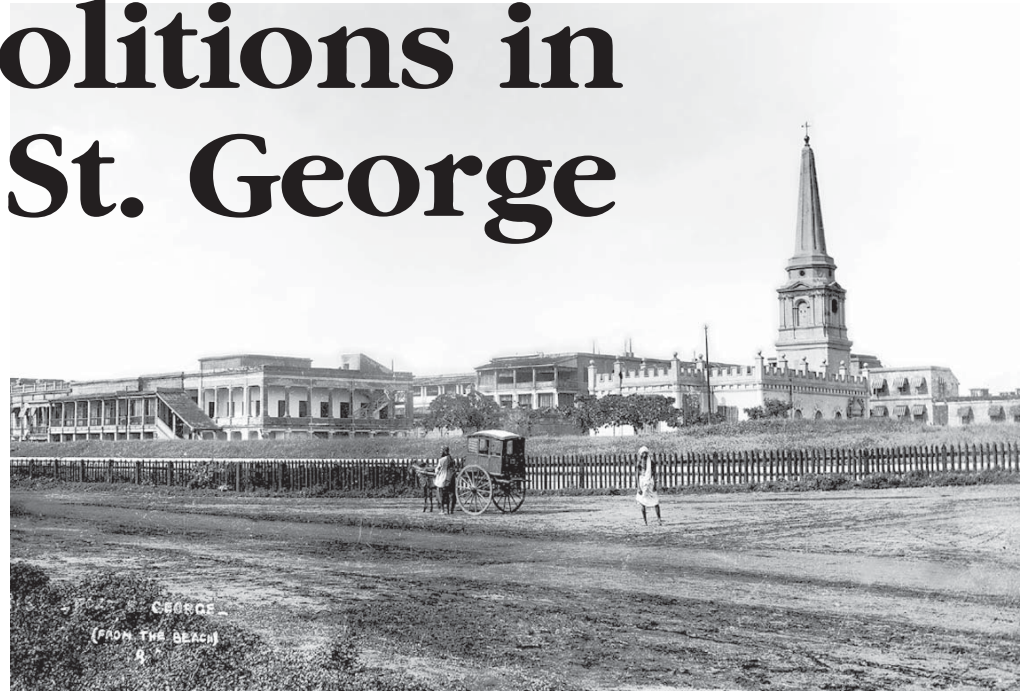
Ranjitha Ashok

Demolitions in Fort St. George

(By a Staff Reporter)

For years now, *Madras Musings* has been pointing out that Fort St George suffers from a multitude of agencies and organisations all of whom claim suzerainty over the areas they operate from within the premises. There is the Army, the Legislature, the Government of Tamil Nadu and also the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). As a consequence, none appears to agree on what is best for this heritage precinct.

The latest development has been the demolition of No. XIV, a building which functioned as barracks in the pre-independence years. The structure falls under the control of the Army which began the dismantling of parts of it early this month. The ASI has lodged a protest stating that the demolition does not augur well for the protection of heritage buildings and that this was in contravention of the Ancient Monuments Act. It has also expressed concern that the demolition being done with drilling equipment would endanger the King's Barracks (Building No. XXV)



which, being a protected monument, is to be safeguarded from any construction activity within a 100-metre radius.

The Army has in its rejoinder given the reasons for proceeding with the demolition. It has stated that it was only dismantling parts of the structure from which chunks were falling down thereby endangering the lives of people around it. It has also stated that the remaining parts of the structure would be suitably maintained. This, however, is open to question for if the original building had been maintained well this situation

would not have come to pass. As in most other heritage buildings in the city, here too the tendency is to neglect a building till it begins to collapse and then declare it unsafe and do away with it altogether. Also, is not the tearing down of even a part of a heritage structure an irreversible process and the destruction of a historical building? Ironically, the demolition was begun on the basis of an approval from a committee which also has an ASI representative in it.

The Army has also taken the stance that the demolition

would not endanger King's Barracks as the structure has survived the demolition of its immediate neighbour (Building No. XXVI) on which site the Government chose to build its ten-storeyed secretariat. The ASI, however, states that the construction of the secretariat was prior to 1992 when strict rules were not in place regarding alterations within heritage properties. It feels that the Army therefore ought not to cite the building of the secretariat as a precedent. The Army

(Continued on page 2)

An agenda for Chennai's development – FICCI's suggestions

Close on the heels of the release of the draft Master Plan by the CMDA which is to be discussed across various locations in the city with concerned citizens, the Tamil Nadu State Council of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has on April 18th sent in a 16 point agenda to the State Government for the "co-ordinated development of Chennai urban agglomeration area". The various points listed are as follows:

1. Roads – The document highlights a fact that *Madras Musings* has been repeatedly emphasising, namely that we al-

● by
SRIRAM V.

ready have sufficient rules and laws and it is the enforcement that is weak. It has called for strict enforcement of lane discipline, speed limits, making usage of seat belts and helmets mandatory, stiff penalties for

those ignoring traffic signals and the introduction of centre right turn lanes where vehicles can wait before making turns so that regular traffic is unimpeded. In addition, the document asks for the clearing of footpaths of all hawkers so that pedestrians can use the space without difficulty. It also calls for enforcement of pedestrian discipline so that they use only the footpaths for walking.

2. Mass Rapid Transport – New routes, namely Parrys Corner to West Anna Nagar, ex-

tension of the present Beach-Velachery line to Mahabali-puram and connecting of Velachery with Tambaram, a new line from Velachery covering St. Thomas Mount, Airport, West KK Nagar, Valasaravakkam, West Anna Nagar, Padi and Villivakkam and a line from Villivakkam to Kancheepuram, have been suggested. The document calls for a coordinated development of transport with facilities such as high speed moving walkways

(Continued on page 7)

Mount Road, Mahabalipuram & Moat Club Road ...

The *Man from Madras Musings* has just returned from a seminar where the Commissioner, Chennai Corporation, was present. He reeled off some statistics about the city of Madras that is Chennai which may be of interest to MM readers. Did you know:

- That Chennai has the second highest green cover, coming as it does after New Delhi, with 17%?
- That Chennai has the distinction of being record holder when it comes to per capita garbage clearance at 750 gm per every resident? This does not apparently mean that we generate the highest garbage, but we do clear the highest value.
- That 98% of Chennai's sewage gets treated?
- That a survey ranks Chennai as the second cleanest city in the country after Chandigarh which, therefore, means we are the cleanest among the mega metros?

MMM is quite delighted with these figures. But, then, are we not aiming to be an international city? If so, should we not be pegging our standards higher? And how do we rank in comparison with, say, London or New York?

On one aspect, however, we would be on par with those cities. And that is property prices. MMM is quite convinced that it must be cheaper to buy property in London than anywhere in Chennai. Recently, MMM had an opportunity to attend a property briefing session and came away too embarrassed to ask if figures such as 10 and 12.5 being airily bandied about were in thousands, lakhs or crores.

Gold rush

It was a fairly innocuous festival (if you could call it that) in the not too distant past. *The Man from Madras Musings*

remembers it to be a day that escaped most people's notice, except for a devout few who would ladle out curd rice to the poor and also gift the deserving with umbrellas and hand fans. All very sensible, considering that the festival coincided with the onset of summer. Then, some bright spark decided that because the name of the festival, *Akshaya Trithya* also stood for prosperity and plenty, gold ought to be bought on that day. In a city that is gold-crazy it did not take long for the fad to catch on. Now, come summer, all the gold shops in the city put out fancy bunting and plenty of colourful lights and laugh all the way to the bank. A few retailers dealing in white goods have also joined the fray this year. MMM was advised by a young thing calling up from some company or the other that it was auspicious to buy

wind erosion. Surely, a clump of trees with typical South Indian specimens would be a much better setting for the temple?

At the entrance is a huge stone slab in which the history of the shore temple has been inscribed in Tamil and English. This has some wonderful printer's (inscriber's?) devils, some of which are reproduced below:

- Reion of Narasimha Verma (reign of Narasimha Varman)
- All the for (four) structural temples
- Monumental remains are informed by (whatever that means)
- Grovnd plan (some Roman style of writing Ground, no doubt)
- Omate (instead of ornate)

There is an entry tax of sorts for which a small pink slip is handed out. The problem is that there is no slip or tariff for those who stay in Mahabalipuram and make day trips to surrounding areas. As a result of which, the entry tax is paid many times over if a visitor makes many day trips as MMM did during his stay.

During his stay MMM also visited the famed crocodile bank and was amazed at the wonderful way in which it is maintained. All except the man at the ticket counter who possibly, taking a leaf from the crocodiles, prefers not to answer any questions and not take cognisance of anyone beyond the cursory handing out of tickets. He could step straight into one of the enclosures and lie down among the reptiles.

noticed two more gems from the hands of those who paint road names. Sylvan Lodge Colony in the Kilpauk area has been rechristened as Jilvan Lodge Colony in Tamil. And Gerald Street in the same area is spelt correctly in Tamil but in English it is spelt as Jarret Street. Then there is East Coach Road, if a signpost at the junction of Greenways Road and Brodies Castle Road is to be believed.

Moat Club Road?

For weeks now the entrance to Boat Club Road from Chamiers Road has been cordoned off and a huge tunnel has been dug most probably for laying a drain. The area being an enclave with the river on one side and now the drain on the other, has more or less become cut off from the rest of the city. The only entry and exit is from Archbishop Mathias Avenue from where, on coming out on to Chamiers Road, a surly policeman allows you to only turn left. Turning right on to Chamiers Road or going straight down TTK Road is out of question. *The Man from Madras Musings* who has heard of gated communities is wondering if the exclusive neighbourhood is planning to isolate itself by this river and drain combination and call itself a 'moated' community? In which case the name too can become Moat Club Road. On a more serious note, MMM wonders how the residents of the area, most of them captains of South Indian industry, are managing with such impediments to free entry and exit. The work on the drain is not progressing fast either. Once in a while a worker stands picturesquely among the ruins, vaguely waving a trowel and then vanishes without a trace. If this is the fate of such a posh locality, imagine what happens in other areas of the city. No wonder Mandaveli always resembles a bombed out area.

— MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

something (anything?) on *Akshaya Trithiya* day, and so why not a microwave? Why not, indeed?

Meandering through Mahabalipuram

The *Man from Madras Musings* recently spent a couple of nights at a resort in what the young call Mahabs and what the Government refers to as Mamallai. MMM had plenty of time to wander around the place and generally observe and ponder. Among the great positives has been the cleaning up of the approach to the shore temple. The site is now fenced in and is approached by means of a longish walking path. What MMM does not approve of is a very manicured and English type of lawn fronting the temple. Many years ago, a casuarina tree belt used to line the place which also protected the temple from

and similarly Southern for Southern

- Unioie for Unique
- Scatleped (scattered).

Besides all this, the entire passage has no full-stops anywhere.

MMM may be mistaken, but he also could not detect any toilets near the Shore Temple complex. Now, if someone is called by nature when he is close to the temple what happens? The imagination boggles.

MMM also followed a few guides leading groups around the place. Now it is one thing to tell a tale in an interesting way but if everything in the area is classified as being over 2000-years-old, then it does become fairly monotonous. And if it is about a wayside temple which is clearly of recent origin, then it becomes ridiculous.

Harassing motorists with all kinds of vague official bits of paper appears to be a major problem at Mahabalipuram.

Mount Road mess

The arterial road of our city has undergone yet another metamorphosis as far as traffic rules are concerned. The part of Sardar Patel Road which connects to Mount Road has been declared one way and, as usual, there are no sign boards anywhere announcing it. There is continuous chaos at the junction with many among those behind the wheels not realising that they have driven on to a one way stretch with no way to turn back. A U turn in Mount Road at the Race Club junction has also been made one way and this only adds to the confusion. However, police vehicles appear to be exempt from all this and merrily drive down the wrong way.

Road names

Taking off from where he left off last fortnight, *The Man from Madras Musings* has

DEMOLITIONS IN FORT ST. GEORGE

(Continued from page 1)

has, however, assured the ASI that it would ensure that the demolition took place with minimum collateral damage to any surrounding building. Unfortunately, this demolition will now be quoted as an instance each time any further changes are planned or mooted.

Which brings us to the question whether any alteration or modification ought to be allowed AT ALL inside Fort St. George. Should not the place be considered an important part of

the country's history and be preserved, with all the agencies operating within it moving out and handing it over to the ASI? Should not a museum be running in the place which people can visit without any problems of entry and exit? Should the place not be home to a Sound and Light show? It would be of interest to note that the Red Fort, Delhi, which more or less suffered the same fate has now begun to see a gradual phasing out of Army occupation resulting in large-scale restoration. Should not

the Government and the Army be thinking along the same lines here also?

On the brighter side, a technical committee of the Army is already working on the restructuring, reconstruction and restoration of the buildings inside Fort St. George undertaken by the Military Engineering Services in consultation with the ASI and INTACH. The State Government has also been roped in to help. Hopefully, such a participative process will mean better days for the Fort.

A big 'Thank You' to 33 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.3.07 and 15.4.07, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *Madras Musings*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

— Chennai Heritage

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**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



ANANDA VIKATAN 6-7-58-25 கனடா Adatoda vasica

Among all the plants mentioned by Felix Ryan in his article 'Fight mosquitoes thus' (MM, April 1st), *Adatoda vasica* is the most effective one.

In Tamil it is called *Adu Thoda Palai*. Sheep and cattle abhor the plant, and so small farmers raise this shrub as a hedge plant. Though it is harmful to sheep and cattle, an extract collected from this plant is used in the manufacture of cough

Informing those at home

Since *Madras Musings'* Volume XVI came to a close with its issue of April 1st, I started arranging all the issues serially to get them bound. During a cursory glance, I came across in the Short 'N' Snappy column (MM, July 1, 2006) the piece 'Intriguing expression, Informing those at home' used by the bus drivers. In his rejoinder, 'The cartoon idiom' (MM, August 1, 2006), reader Manohar Devadoss had attributed this 'intriguing expression' to a cartoon in *Ananda Vikatan*.

I suddenly recalled and dug out of my collection the *Ananda Vikatan* issue of 7.1.1958 carrying the cartoon portraying a cyclist being admonished by a government bus driver if he was interested in his (cyclist's) name appearing in newspapers. The relevant wrapper page sent herewith may be of interest to you and other readers can also enjoy the 'joke'. But it is evident this cartoon could not be connected to the usage 'whether you have informed people at home' which, I believe, would have been in vogue ever since hand-pulled rickshaws were in use in the city.

T.M. Sundararaman
19 Nallappan Street
Mylapore
Chennai 600 004

syrops.

This plant can be raised along bunds and waterways. The leaves which fall from this plant have lethal effect on larvae of all types of mosquitoes and prevent their breeding to a considerable extent. It can be raised easily by cuttings and can be removed easily when not wanted.

A.P.K. Roy
16, 10th Street
Nandanam Extension
Chennai 600 035

Not a role-model

This has reference to the item 'Alandur leads the way' (MM, November 1st). This is far from the truth taking into account certain teething problems.

The underground drainage system of Alandur municipality was commissioned in August 2004 along with the sewage pumping station located at Nilamangai Nagar, Adambakkam. Initially about 3000 domestic service connections were given. From day one of commissioning of the system, problems of the residents of Nilamangai Nagar, Vel Nagar, Balaji Nagar, Bharath Nagar, Laxmi Nagar – areas surrounding pumping station and falling within 1 km radial distance – began. Even after a brief spell of

Murder of the trees

The recent decision of the Government and Chennai Corporation authorities to chop avenue trees on Sardar Patel Road and resort to "beautification" of the Elliot's beach is causing concern to those who understand the importance of preserving nature.

Quite a few avenue trees on Sardar Patel Road (which are almost one hundred year old) have been felled for the sake of widening the road for vehicular traffic. As if this is not enough, steps have now been initiated to "beautify" the Elliot's Beach in Besant Nagar. Both the steps have been initiated, as though these are mere technical subjects to be decided by a few officials and engineers. The officials should realise that they have no authority to tamper with nature.

The chopping of trees amounts to their murder, as trees are also the creation of God as much as the human beings. These lovely trees have been doing great service to Chennai and its residents and many of them have been there for as long as 100 years. Several generations of men and women have benefited from them. They would have served decades more if only allowed to do so.

Obviously, these great and giant trees have lived longer than human beings, but some people seem think that they have the power to cut any tree. Possibly, the officials and the Government machinery are resorting to such steps since the trees are a silent species and cannot protest and can only helplessly fall down when hit and cut mercilessly.

There are many buildings, roadside shops and encroachments that can be demolished to widen the roads but the authorities would not do this since they possibly think that such structures are more important than the trees. There could be so many other methods of widening the roads or facilitating better traffic flow but the helpless tree is the easy prey and therefore an option. It is sad that those in the government do not realise that cutting and removing such magnificent trees can be viewed as an uncivilised act, reflecting their mindset and priorities.

Several scientific reasons can be cited against removal of trees, but the authorities seem to be obsessed with cutting them to widen the road. What can one do if the "all powerful authorities" do not have the patience or desire to listen to such scientific explanations?

Even as the chopping of the trees continues, it is surprising that Chennai Corporation has initiated steps to "beautify" the Elliot's beach that would cost several lakhs. The immediate

question coming to mind is how can anyone beautify nature. How can anybody make a beach more beautiful than what it is naturally?

The problem with Elliot's beach in Besant Nagar is not due to the beach itself or the waves that are tirelessly visiting the beach, but the humans who have made it dirty by their lack of discipline and civic sense. The authorities have permitted or kept their eyes closed to the large number of vendors who have set up shops permanently on the beach and sell their wares, making the whole area an eyesore strewn with wastes and empty containers. One can even see visitors and hawkers easing themselves on the beach without compunction. The beach can be restored to its original glory, if the authorities would only ensure that it is kept clean and neat. Instead, they want to "beautify" the beach.

Now, what do they want to do? Perhaps, they would put more lights, cement the area with more pathways, build some concrete structures and try to plant some trees. They may also try to add entertainment elements by creating facilities for some sort of exhibition. The schemes that have been announced would only add to disturbing the natural beach with unnatural impediments. Further, the capability of the authorities to sustain the so-called beautification of the beach in the long run is extremely doubtful.

Already, the Elliot's beach is crowded with unwanted things such as a building for a police outpost, a parallel pavement walking facility and a lawn, which are all anachronistic to the beach and its beauty.

There are a large number of two-wheelers and four-wheelers parked on the beach every evening, which prevent easy movement of people, apart from causing air and noise pollution. Why don't the authorities impose a ban on the movement of two-wheelers and four-wheelers on the beach and encourage visitors to come on foot? Perhaps, the authorities can organise mass transportation luxury buses for the benefit of the owners of two-wheelers and four-wheelers who can be dropped at the Besant Nagar bus terminus and they can walk the small distance to the beach enjoying the free air.

The best thing that the authorities can do to benefit Chennai is to refrain from trying their ideas on nature's gift.

N.S. Venkataraman
M-60/1, IV Cross Street
Besant Nagar
Chennai 600 090

rain, the open sump at the pumping station gets filled and sewage starts flowing in the reverse direction. Toilets on the ground floor of houses start overflowing with 'black water' flooding the compound and the insides of the houses. This creates an unhygienic condition and the ground floor toilets cannot be used. Residents of this area have been facing this problem for the last three years and have been suffering silently.

Even though the matter was brought to the notice of all authorities concerned, no action has been taken so far. In the last two years, several authorities – Chairman, Commissioner, Municipal Engineer, Alandur municipality, Collector, Kancheepuram, chief engineers of Metrowater, TWAD Board and Ministers – visited the site. Now, Alandur municipality claims that they have paid Rs. 46 lakh to Metrowater authorities for remedial action.

Not aware of remedial action planned by Metrowater, it is ap-

prehended, the residents may have to suffer during the next rains.

G. Parthasarathy
16/24, Income Tax Colony
1st Street, Adambakkam
Chennai 600 088

A Madurai connection

I quite enjoyed your piece on Manohar Devadass and his observations about Madurai.

The thought occurred to me that I should bring to your notice one of the icons of the period missed out.

George Joseph, the older brother of veteran journalist of yesteryears Pothan Joseph (my father), was an institution in Madurai. In fact there is a "George Joseph Park" in Madurai. I last saw it in 1952.

George Joseph, my uncle, was a well-known freedom fighter of the time and among those who frequented his home were Subramania Bharathi, Kamaraj Nadar who was his *chela* in early years, and many other celebrities of the time. George Joseph who was a Bar-

rist, practised in Madras but for the best part of his life was in Madurai.

It was in the George Joseph home that Mahatma Gandhi decided to become a "half-naked fakir".

Jaiboy Joseph
2B PGP Manor, 29 Barnaby Road
Kilpauk, Chennai 600 010

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

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: Chennai Heritage, 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.

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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

The great Madras famine

– a Viceroy's view

● 1877 witnessed the Great Madras Famine when many thousands perished. That was when the famed Buckingham Canal, named after the then Governor, the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, was begun as a food for work project. Prior to this great idea, however, the Madras Government dithered and set up relief camps in which the aid rarely reached those who were starving. The Viceroy, Lord Lytton, made a tour of famine-stricken Madras and wrote his impressions of the place, the Government House, Government Estate where he stayed (the present Admiralty House), the relief measures and much else in a series of letters to his wife who was then in Simla. The letters form part of a book *Personal and Literary Letters of Robert, First Earl of Lytton*, compiled and edited by his daughter Lady Betty Balfour and which was published in 1906. We offer excerpts from the Madras sections which show that not much has changed by way of governance in our part of the world. The account ends with a brief description of Ooty and Coonoor. We have added explanatory notes in italics wherever needed.

– The Editor

To Lady Lytton, Madras, August 27, 1877

I am thankful to say that in all the objects of my visit to Madras I have succeeded far beyond my expectation. The Duke has behaved uncommonly well and very much like a gentleman. The arrangements I have now concluded with him are fully described in the long telegram I despatched to-day en clair to the President in Council. I am certainly in very good spirits myself. The more I think over what must have happened if I had failed to settle matters amicably with the Duke on their present footing, or if, in accordance with the advice given me either by Arbuthnot (*Mr. Arbuthnot, an old Madras hand and whose kinsmen ran the business house of Arbuthnots, was famine secretary to the Viceroy*) or Temple (*Sir Richard Temple, Member, Viceroy's Executive Council*), I had adopted a different course, the more I am convinced that we have very narrowly escaped a very dangerous, discreditable situation. This house is rather an ugly one, in the centre of a park not very well kept up. But from the veranda of my room here there is a fine view of the sea, and an occasional whiff of the sea breeze. Detached from the house is a fine large building called the banqueting-hall, which is very convenient for receptions. I held a levee in it last night, and hope to be let off many centuries of purgatory for having undergone a public breakfast at 9.30 a.m. attended by 400 persons, in the same building last Friday. At some little distance from Government House there is a villa called "The Marine Villa." It was given to the Governors of

Madras by the Nabobs of the Carnatic. This villa immediately faces the sea, and here it is, I believe, the custom for the Duke and his young ladies to have afternoon tea twice a week. The regimental band (a very fine one) of the 67th plays on the public promenade in front of the villa. Here we had tea yesterday afternoon, and the band played very well a selection from the "Fliegende Holländer" of Wagner. I have now been over most of the relief camps round Madras, and you never saw such "popular picnics" as they are! The people on them, who do no work of any kind, are bursting with fat, and naturally enjoy themselves thoroughly. The people get meat, fish, vegetables and spices. The Duke visits these camps as a Buckinghamshire squire would visit his model farm, showing a deep interest in the growing fatness of its prize oxen and pigs. He points out to me with pride that such and such a camp only extended, so many months ago, as far as such and such a tree, whereas the camp now covers an area thrice as great, with proportional augmentation in the number of its inmates. He paternally asks these fat, idle coolies if they find there is more flavour (owing to the recent rains) in the vegetables given them "to season their food" than there was last month, and purrs with pleasure over affirmative replies. The officers in charge all say with pride: "Ah! our people here, who were never so well off before, and will never be so well off again, will bitterly regret the termination of the present famine, which has been a Godsend to them." But the terrible question is, how the Madras Gov-

ernment is ever to get these demoralised masses on to really useful work. I should not be surprised if it has some mutinies. Colonel Herne, the police commissioner, a very intelligent man, seems to expect something of the kind. Noticing that the mothers of all the thin babies were extremely fat, I asked



Lady Lytton.

the reason. Robinson immediately replied: "Ah! This is one of the saddest things we have to deal with. Though the mothers look in such good condition, their milk has failed, and we are now buying milk for all the babies." Afterwards I privately said to the supervising officer: "Do you believe that these fat women to be mothers of those thin babies?" He replied: "Of course not. All the babies here are probably hired. Famine infants have long been at a premium." Dear Owen (*Sir Owen Burne, Private Secretary to Viceroy*) has been more than ever sympathising and helpful. My plan of campaign with the Duke, which has been so successful, was laid out by Colley (*Colonel Colley, Military Secretary to Viceroy*), and owes its success to his military genius.

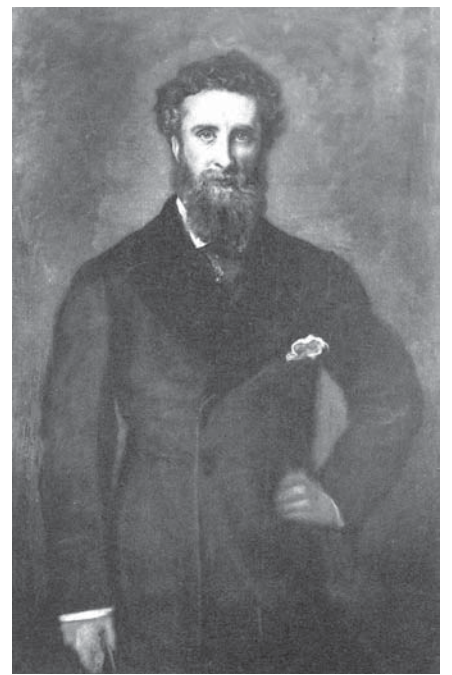
The climate here is moist and muggy, but much less oppressively hot than I expected.

* * *

To Lady Lytton, Coonoor, September 11, 1877

We reached this place yesterday just at nightfall, after a rather fatiguing journey, and the inspection of several relief camps on the way. I was conveyed up the ghat in a thing very much like the buck-basket in which Falstaff was concealed by Dame Quickly. It corresponds to the Simla jonpon, and is here called a tonjon. The rest of our party were mounted on animals which the Commissioner was pleased to call ponies, but they look more like what the beasts in the Apocalypse might have been after several months of famine diet. Colley's animals – under the pangs of starvation, I suppose – insist on devouring the hinder parts of the animal immediately in front of him; and poor little Thornton, who happens to be mounted on it, being much alarmed for the safety of the same part of his own person, which was certainly the plumpest of the two, descended in panic to the ground from "that bad eminence." It was so cold here last night that fires were lighted when we reached the little inn where we are now lodging, and very welcome they were. I slept well, and had a pleasant stroll this morning before breakfast with Burne and Villiers. All I have yet seen of Coonoor (which, of course, is but little) pleases me greatly. No grand scenery, but amiable, lazy undulations, pretty gardens, hedges of rose and 'verbena', a soft, sweet, cloudy air, and excellent roads.

I don't know what are the feelings with which I am regarded by the male inhabitants of Madras; but the ladies of that place, or some of them, seem to be much interested on my behalf. For I have received from Madras two anonymous letters, each obviously written by a woman – the one expressing a lively interest in the state of my soul, the other a tender regard for my body. The first writer informs me that she could not sleep all night for thinking whether I am prepared to meet my Maker; whether I am aware of the heinousness of sin, and the possibility of pardon by washing in the blood of the Covenant, &c. She concludes by sending me a copy of "Doddrige on the Rise of Religion in the Soul." The other writer declares that she couldn't sleep all night for thinking of my



Robert, First Earl of Lytton, Viceroy of India.

eyes, that the least tone of my voice, the least touch of my hand lives in her memory, and thrills her yet; and she concludes with "Thine for ever, even though in vain." Neither of the letters signed, and I have not the slightest notion who can be the writers of them, for the only ladies I met at Madras were all of them ugly, and most of them old. I should not have thought they had so much "chaff" in them.

It is really a mercy you did not come. The amusing incidents of our journey have been few and far between, the anxiety and fatigue of it incessant. But all's well that ends well.

* * *

To Lady Lytton, Ootacamund

Duke drove me in his pony carriage this morning to the first stage. The morning was fine, and for the first time I have seen Ootacamund. Having seen it, I affirm it to be a paradise, and declare without hesitation that in every particular it far surpasses all that its enthusiastic admirers and devoted lovers have about it. The afternoon was rainy and the road muddy, but such beautiful English rain, such English mud. Imagine a combination of Hertfordshire lanes, Devonshire downs, Westmoreland lakes, Scotch trout-streams, Lusitanian views.



May 5-12: Calligraphy classes.

May 15: Art of Living classes begin.

Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday: yoga classes.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday: Korean language classes.

(The above mentioned events are at Indo-Korean Cultural and Information Centre, 51, 6th Main Road, Raja Annamalaipuram, Chennai 600028. Ph: 2436 1224.)

Travellers' tales

(Continued from last fortnight)

We had read about Venice as a city built on water but nothing we had read prepared us for the real thing. The ride in a vaporetto (water bus) from the central station down the Grand Canal was a marvelous introduction to this beautiful city where canals, numerous winding alleyways and mixture of Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance architecture hide many secrets; the best way to unravel these secrets is to walk, get lost and keep walking. Venetians claim that their city is in one important way the same as it was a thousand years ago when people from the mainland

walking tour we saw the house where Marco Polo had lived.

In Venice you go everywhere by water and where you cannot go by boat you have no option but to walk through narrow winding streets a little more than a metre wide. If you are lost, you cannot hail a taxi and tell the driver to take you to a particular address.

* * *

Main St. Venice is the Grand Canal; side-streets are the many narrower waterways. Though traffic jams are not a problem, the noise of vaporetti (water buses), private taxi-

● by **ABEY & SRIYANI**

defied the sea, to build a settlement on forests of tree trunks driven into the mud flats of the lagoon. Though the intervening centuries saw the development of some inspired architecture, water remains the city's defining feature.

Some twenty million tourists visit Venice every year. The downside of this is that accommodation and meals cost a great deal more than in big cities; the upside is that without tourism Venice would probably not exist. Venice has a link with Asia through the famous 13th century traveller Marco Polo. During a

boats, ambulances, fire department vessels, delivery boats and gondolas churning their way up and down make the Grand Canal hectic enough.

During our 2½ days in Venice we walked many kilometres exploring the many alleyways and monuments. A ride on a gondola was enjoyable though we were disappointed that the gondola men no longer sing the soulful songs of their ancestors.

* * *

A six-hour journey by Eurail from Venica took us to Vienna,



The Buckingham Palace, London.

a handsome city with many fine buildings, broad thoroughfares, many lined with trees. Early next morning, we made the 2½-hour trip by train to the Czech capital Prague.

A chap at the station approached us, introduced himself as George, and enquired whether we wanted hotel accommodation. Rather wary, I turned back to see a chap in a cubicle holding up large photos of a hotel and informing us he could offer a good deal. While I studied the pictures, he whispered to me: 'Don't go with that man, I have the best deals in hotels.' Not sure what to make of the offers made by these two men, I asked George whether he was a crook. He said: 'I am not a crook. I am honest. I will drive you to the hotel. If you do not like it, do not take it.' We went with him and found the hotel room clean and spacious. The tariff (breakfast thrown in) was also the cheapest we had been quoted in the various European cities visited. Breakfast next morning was a huge spread with food, hot and cold, placed on many tables for self-service. Clearly, overseas tourists have not yet discovered Prague.

One guidebook informed us that Prague rivalled Paris. This sobriquet is well-deserved. The city is beautiful – broad, tree-lined thoroughfares, iconic buildings, impressive cathedrals, beautiful bridges spanning the Danube, and a Metro far superior to Paris's – this is be-

cause the Prague Metro is new, so the planners have learned from the experience of London and Paris.

One thing that appealed to us in Europe's railway stations was the arrival and departure times announced on boards hanging from ceilings. There is the escapist in most of us. So, when, for instance, in the Vienna railway station we saw the boards constantly changing to announce departures to cities such as Milan, Zurich, Geneva (in the west), to Prague, Budapest, Frankfurt, Berlin, Warsaw, Moscow (in the east), we envied the ease with which a European could go to a railway station and board a train to take him/her to Italy, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Germany, Russia as the mood dictated and the purse permitted.

* * *

We flew from Vienna to London, arriving at Heathrow by 1.30 p.m. We stood in a long queue to get through Immigration and Customs. The Englishman at the Immigration desk looked briefly at our passports and said: 'You are spending only one night in London?' I told him I was sorry that our stay in 'God's own land' was so short. He said with a laugh: 'This is the land that God has forgotten.' I was delighted that the Englishman's sense of humour was alive and well even in difficult times.

Our homeward flight was via Hong Kong. We arrived in Hong Kong (meaning fragrant harbour) at 6.30 the following morning and checking our tickets, we were scheduled to depart for Australia at 8.30 p.m. A young woman at the airport's tourist office advised us on how we could spend the time: "Leave your luggage in the storage room, take a train to the city and go to the Peak. Later you will have time to do some shopping."

We arrived in Sydney at 7.00 a.m. and went through baggage collection, Immigration, Customs in about forty minutes, giving us enough time to catch a Greyhound coach for Canberra.

During our entire trip, which took in nine great cities, in two of which we stayed with friends and had some help with transport, we had travelled by taxi only five times.

We were fortunate that all through our trip we had fine weather, our luggage was not lost or carried to the wrong destination, no sickness, which is usual when we are always on the move and eating out most of the time. We were not robbed and no one attempted to assault us. The day after we got home I came down with a bad cold and cough. Sriyani was similarly afflicted a few days later. I found I had lost six kg, and felt better for it.

(Concluded)



A Venetian waterway.



The Houses of Parliament, London.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. On April 4th, which country freed 15 British sailors, held captive, as a gesture or 'gift'?
2. Why was the 'V150', a French train, in the news on April 3rd?
3. What medical breakthrough, as regards blood transfusion, has been achieved by a team of scientists commissioned by ZymeQuest?
4. The Hungarian-American software developer Charles Simonyi became the fifth human to do what on April 7th?
5. Of which major sporting event is Zach Johnson the new champion?
6. Which company is Google buying for \$3.1 billion?
7. Which Indian company bought Canadian steelmaker Algoma for \$ 1.63 billion?
8. Name India's surface-to-surface missile, capable of hitting targets 3,500 km away with accuracy and precision, test-fired successfully on April 12th.
9. Name the legendary architect and pioneer of low-cost, eco-friendly housing technology, who passed away in Thiruvananthapuram on April 1st.
10. Name the former CJI who has taken over as the new Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

* * *

11. Which Secunderabad-based hospital has won the bid for Kanchi Trust Hospital, Perumbakkam, at Rs. 257 crore?
12. The nod for Chennai Second Master Plan was given recently. When was the first master plan for Chennai prepared?
13. Of which university is K. Meer Mustafa Hussain the Vice-Chancellor?
14. *Suvarilla Chitirangal* was the first full-time directorial venture of which popular Tamil actor-director?
15. Where is the first low-cost wastewater recycling plant to prevent pollution of Sembakkam Lake, nearing completion?
16. Where did a major explosion in a lorry laden with explosives take place on April 7th leaving 16 people dead?
17. Which veteran actor did 10 roles in the film *Ganam Courtar Avargale*?
18. Which party has a lone sitting Rajya Sabha MP from the State?
19. Which is the second book of *Ettuthokai*, the Sangam literature anthology?
20. How is Thirunaalaippovaar Nayanar popularly known?

(Answers on page 8)

• ARTLESS INNOCENTS AND IVORY-TOWER SOPHISTICATES – The concluding part of the five-part series*.

A pioneer at the TIFR

K. Chandrasekharan was born in 1920 and was initiated into mathematics by – who else – Ananda Rau in Madras. He went to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton to do post-doctoral work. His mathematical achievements were of the first rank, but his even greater contribution to Indian mathematics, I think, was elsewhere. He was an extraordinarily gifted organiser and administrator of science – in the Bradman class, if we use Hardy's terminology. Homi Bhabha visited Princeton in 1949 when Chandrasekharan was there and offered him a position at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. There is a story about this which I have not attempted to authenticate, but it rings true. Chandrasekharan was taking a walk with the great von Neumann when they saw Bhabha walking with Einstein at a distance. von Neumann asked Chandrasekharan if it was true that he was planning to move to Bombay to work at Bhabha's institute. When Chandrasekharan responded in the affirmative, von Neumann said, 'That man is as good a physicist as any, but do not let him intimidate you – stand up to him', or words to that effect. It would

*Excerpts from a public lecture delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Indian Academy of Sciences, held at Chandigarh in 2002.

appear that KC, as Chandrasekharan was known, followed that advice – differences of opinion with Bhabha seem to have been among the causes that led to his leaving TIFR in 1965 and moving to Zurich.

In the decade and a half that he spent at TIFR, Chandrasekharan transformed the fledgling School of Mathematics there into a centre of excellence, respected the world-over. Chandrasekharan initiated a

• by M.S. RAGHUNATHAN

very successful programme of recruitment and training of Research Scholars at TIFR; the programme continues to this day, along the same lines that he set down. He was uncompromising in insisting on high standards. In his Princeton days, he became acquainted with many of the leading mathematicians of the world and put these contacts to excellent use. With his unusual abilities, he was able to persuade many leading mathematical figures in the world to visit the Tata Institute and deliver courses of lectures over a period of two months and more, to his carefully selected Research Scholars.

Chandrasekharan was an excellent judge of mathematics even in areas outside his own specialisation, and responded quickly to the achievements of

his wards. Equally, non-performance at the high level he had set had no place at TIFR. Chandrasekharan managed to instill in the students at TIFR a strong commitment to hard work without their losing their romantic attachment to mathematics. One important reason for his success was the freedom he gave the students to work on what they pleased. The visitors gave them exposure to different mathematical areas, many of them far removed from KC's own interests, and students were encouraged to pursue whatever caught their fancy. Rev. Father Racine from Madras whom Chandrasekharan knew from his Madras days and whom he held in great respect, provided him with a steady stream of talent.

Chandrasekharan was ably assisted in his endeavours by K.G. Ramanathan. A student of Racine's, Ramanathan too was in Princeton for post-doctoral work. Ramanathan was responsible (during the 1970s and 1980s) for building a small but highly competent group in Partial Differential Equations – an area of great importance in applications. The group was located in the campus of the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, with a view to fostering interaction with that institution. Ramanathan passed away in 1992.

Chandrasekharan's influence went well beyond Indian mathematics. For some 24 years from the mid-1950s, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the International Mathematical Union (IMU).



K. Chandrasekharan.

He also served as the Secretary for two terms and as President for one term. His initiatives on this committee were numerous and valued greatly. He was responsible for the IMU sponsoring the International Mathematical Colloquium held once every four years at the Tata Institute starting 1956.

I should like to mention a personal experience in this connection. In 1964, Tata Institute held a colloquium on 'Differential Analysis' and the organising committee headed by Chandrasekharan extended an invitation to me to give a talk. A few weeks before the colloquium, I was told that I should rehearse my lecture before KC in his office. My teacher Narasimhan was also present at the rehearsal. Chandrasekharan's own mathematical interests had little to do with the subject of my talk; nevertheless, he listened to me patiently for more than an hour, interjecting now and then to tell me how I should present something and generally giving me tips on lecturing. I had in those days the reputation of being a poor speaker (which I hope does not hold now) but as it turned out, thanks to Chandrasekharan, I gave a lecture that was received very well indeed.

We at the Tata Institute certainly owe a great deal to Chandrasekharan and are grateful for the great start he gave us. — (Courtesy: The author who is with the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, and *Current Science*, 2003.)

(Concluded)

Harry Miller's family and other animals

A long time ago, there was a wonderful house called 'The Frogs'. It was wonderful because it had a lot of animals let free in it, and a pond, a tree house and lots of lovely trees and shrubs. Among the animals were two large pythons which were kept in snakepits. My father, Harry Miller, photographer, journalist, herpetologist and zoologist, lived there with my mother Revati Parthasarathy and my brother Robin and myself. One fine day, Daddy left to move to the city to be nearer his workplace.

When Daddy moved, his new house was too small for the pythons; so he got a smaller one which was kept in a box behind

his bedroom. One day, overestimating the size of his new python, he bought it a piglet to eat. The python, however, was too small to eat the piglet, so it refused to take any interest in

• Remembering
a friend of
Madras Musings.

it. Mummy and I were living in 'The Frogs', so he sent the piglet to me.

I christened it 'Napoleon Bonaparte II' as I had just learnt about Napoleon in school. 'Napoleon Bonaparte II,' was a most entertaining creature. If

anyone picked him up, he disliked it so intensely that he would immediately start squealing with rage, and he would go all stiff. When you realised that he disliked being picked up and put him down, he would be so stiff that he would fall over. And when you picked him up from where he had fallen over, he would at once start squealing again and go stiff once more – with the result that when you put him down he would fall over again!

The only course left was to leave him alone, till he somehow managed to pick himself up. Unlike other animals which, when grown up, would return to the wild where they were always

free, Napoleon Bonaparte II died an untimely death when he was run over on the main road on which our house was situated.

I buried him, weeping as I did so, at the bottom of the garden. Now I live in Chennai and all that was 15-20 years ago. But I hope that one day I will return to the country and then I will have another piglet, which I hope will never be run over, for this time, I won't have a house on the roadside.

Till then, I can only console myself with happy memories of Napoleon Bonaparte II's fun-filled days.

Nisha Miller

AN AGENDA FOR CHENNAI'S DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from page 1)

between bus depots and railway stations and also for getting some express trains to be connected with the MRTS lines.

3. Airport – FICCI has said that the present expansion plan of the airport which envisages only eight gates is inadequate and that the airport needs at least 20 gates to cater to the projected load.

4. Power – The document has asked for supply of "quality power" without fluctuations and has requested that solar power be harnessed for use in public locations by means of solar power.

5. Water – The document highlights the fact that most of the city's middle class now purchase canned water for cooking and drinking purposes, an extra cost not incurred before. It has urged that model water treatment plants be set up and that canals, waterways and pipes bringing in water be cleaned regularly. It has asked for the connecting of the Buckingham Canal and the Cooum and restoring them to the condition in which they were in the early 20th century.

6. Pollution – While commending the authorities on the success in reducing Bogi related pollution, the document calls for looking at the Delhi model of using CNG for buses, auto rickshaws and taxis. It also highlights the hazards of uncontrolled garbage burning in Perungudi and other locations.

7. Automated multi-level parking – Parking facilities of this nature have been asked for in Panagal Park, Parys Corner, Adyar, Mylapore, Kellys, Nandanam, Anna Salai,

Egmore and Nungambakkam. The document highlights that such experiments in Delhi and Mumbai have proven successful.

8. MSB approvals outside city limits – According to the document this will ensure dispersal of population to tier 2 and 3 cities, thereby ensuring non depletion of resources in any one location.

9. IT corridors – The document asks for setting up of IT corridors in a phased manner across many locations and in other cities to prevent escalation of land costs in any one place.

10. Development of Hi Tech cities – FICCI has pointed out what is a recurring problem. Whenever the government allocates an area for industrial development it makes no effort to plan residential in-

frastructure in the surrounding areas, thereby resulting in urban chaos. It has asked for "Hi Tech cities" to be set up in certain vantage locations like the Poonamallee-Sriperumbudur stretch, Pallikaranai-Selaiyur stretch, Vandalur-Wallajah stretch and the Tiruvindanthai-Mahabalipuram stretch.

11. Sanitation and solid waste removal – Calling the Buckingham Canal the dirtiest waterway in the whole world, the document laments that no efforts have been taken to stop the pollution of this water body. It also highlights the fact that most sewage and water pipes in the city were laid so long ago that most of them leak and the contents get mixed. It asks for segregation of various types of solid wastes at source so that they can be disposed off effectively.

12. Safety – The document highlights the rise in crimes in the peripheral areas of the city. It asks for effective steps to curb this trend.

13. Latrines and urinals – While accepting that such facilities do exist, the document highlights the fact that most of them lack sanitation and so people use open spaces for defecation.

14. Ports – A new and refreshing idea in the document is the suggestion that boat jettys be built along the coast line and small passenger boats be operated between the Iron Bridge (Anna Samadhi) and Besant Nagar, Tiruvanmiyur, Palavakkam, Neelankarai, Uthandi, Kovalam and Mahabalipuram.

15. Recreation areas – The document appreciates the steps the government has taken in maintaining the city's parks and

has assured it of all support in this area.

16. Planning and designing retail hyper markets – Recognising that the retail boom is well underway, the document calls for earmarking at least 40 to 50 locations with adequate space for entry, parking and exit of vehicles in the suburbs and peripheral areas of the city. Such a plan will reduce unnecessary travel time for most people and will therefore free the roads from congestions.

Overall, it is an exhaustive document and appears to convey what the citizens want. Whether any action will result is anybody's guess. In the meanwhile, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has also begun work on a Vision Document for the State with focus on Chennai. That document is expected to be ready in six months.

Women, as tourist guides

In a pioneering initiative, the Southern Regional Office of Indian Tourism has launched a comprehensive programme to train women as tourist guides to cater to the spiralling foreign tourist arrivals into the city.

As part of the country-wide initiative called 'Priyadarshini' by the Ministry of Tourism, 22 graduate women were selected after a round of written tests and interviews for the training, which was launched at the institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology at Taramani.

Though women guides were licensed by the India Tourism Office in the State, the new programme had been designed with a dual intention – to meet

the increasing demand for tourist guides and to provide a good livelihood for women graduates. Besides, women are considered more suitable for the hospitality industry.

The Assistant Director, Southern Regional Office, India Tourism, said: "The focus is to facilitate unemployed women to get the high paying job of a tourist guide. As guides, they can earn good money every time they help a group of foreign tourists. Though the rates are fixed, perks come their way as appreciation from the tourists."

The one-and-half-month extensive course consists of 80 classes. The syllabus includes: Indian History, Heritage, Psychology, Hinduism, Jainism, Is-

lam, Buddhism, Philosophy, Monuments, Places of Interest, and others. Experts in the respective fields teach the topic.

"The intention is to make the women capable of explaining the history and importance of all monuments and places of interest in Southern India to visitors. The syllabus covers Southern India, because the guides may have to travel with groups of tourists across the region from Chennai," according to the Assistant Director.

During the last leg of the training, the students, who range from fresh graduates to housewives, will be provided hands-on-training in the field, where they will be required to work along with experienced

guides at famous tourist spots.

The students will be taken by India Tourism coaches across Southern India, covering most of the tourist destinations. This is essential in understanding the psyche of the foreign tourists.

On completion of the course, the women will be issued licences and identity cards and their names would be recommended to all recognised travel agencies, which could requisition their services whenever the need arises.

Around 117 tourist guides licensed by India Tourism are working in the field, but there is a growing demand for women guides said the Regional Director, (South) India Tourism. (Courtesy: HRD Times)

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.

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 2006-07 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

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Nostalgia

To BTS with love

The Theosophical Society (TS) was first established in India in Bombay in 1878 when Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott arrived in that city. Later, the Society shifted to Madras where on 1st January 1886 Col. Olcott laid the foundation stone for the setting up of the Sanskrit Library and Museum which is now the Adyar Library and Research Centre. In May 1894 he "inspected a piece of ground in the village of Urur, quite near (the) headquarters" and was determined to open a school for untouchables on the property. The school, within a short while, became successful and on 13th November 1895 was graced by a visit of Lord Wenlock, the Governor of Madras Presidency. In December that year the Viceroy too sent a letter of congratulations on the success of the school. By 1896, such was its progress that further admissions had to be stopped for want of space. Thus the close connection between education and TS had begun even in the 19th century.

The next development took place in 1933 when Annie Besant passed away. Mrs. Besant, who had made Madras her home, had in 1898 founded the Central Hindu College in Benares which later became the core of the Benares Hindu University. In 1903 Dr. G.S. Arundale joined her in India and became the principal of that college. His aunt, Francesca, began a girls' school on the same campus which later became the women's college. Shortly before her death Dr. Besant had expressed a desire "that an educational institution at or near Adyar, in which boys and girls might receive the kind of education for which she herself worked during many long

years", be set up. In 1934, some of her pupils, led by Dr. G.S. Arundale, decided to make her wish come true. Land was leased from the TS and there was just enough money to make a satisfactory beginning and to carry on on a small scale for a period of two years. The prospectus of the school was published in the March 1934 issue of *The Theosophist* and followed what Dr. Besant had once propounded in a pamphlet titled *Principles of Education*. The first care of the school was to ensure a healthy body with emphasis on games and exercises. Second was the development of the emotional nature and the third was to help the student gain useful knowledge and also control and direct the powers of the mind. Religious education was an integral part of the curriculum with special stress on the importance of mutual respect among the adherents of the various religions. The school was planned to be co-educational and largely residential with only vegetarian food served on the premises.

The Besant Memorial School came up within a short while with a managing committee comprising Dr. G.S. Arundale, his wife Rukmini Devi, Dr. G. Srinivasamurthy, the eminent physician and Principal of the Government School of Indian Medicine, N. Sriram (Rukmini Devi's brother and an avid Theosophist), Mrs. Krishnabai Shah, Prof. D.D. Kanga, Smt. Bhagirathi Ammal and K. Sankara Menon. The last named gave up all dreams of becoming a scientist and sacrificed a larger salary just be-

cause his mentor, Dr Arundale, identified him to be a suitable headmaster of the school. It was a decision that was to prove immensely fortunate for not only the school but also the great arts institution, Kalakshetra.

By October 1935, the school had to quote JL Davidge writing in *The Theosophist*, begun to "embody the ideals and perpetuate in a practical manner the lifelong services of Dr. Besant to the cause of education". The daily routine began at 7.15 am with prayers. Lessons went on till 10.50 am. From 12.30 to 1.45 pm there were

● by
SRIRAM V.

optional lessons in the arts, with Papanasam Sivan teaching music and Biswa Mohan Sen teaching painting. Evenings were dedicated to sports with all kinds of games being played for an hour. This was compulsory and coaching was provided for all students. On Sundays there were excursions and field visits.

Classes were to begin within two cottages covered with thatch and with clay-covered brick flooring that was plastered with cow dung every Saturday afternoon. The TS carpenter made the desks, and the students sat cross legged. The hostel was in the Besant Bungalow. While food was not always to the liking of an ever-hungry set of children who once even went on strike to protest against the conditions, parents were wholeheartedly in favour of such an institution. Children from the

Telugu speaking districts, Bombay and, closer home, Mandaveli and Tiruvanmiyur began coming in. Among the outsiders were children of the CA Buch family and all the nine of them were admitted here over the years leading to the parents becoming residents themselves! Yet another large brood came from Vellore, when eldest sister Perundevi became a student of the arts institution begun by Rukmini Devi. Perundevi herself became Mani Krishnaswami, the well known Carnatic exponent.

Teachers too came, in fact, from all kinds of backgrounds. If Papanasam Sivan taught music and Sanskrit, Maria Montessori, founder of the well known eponymous system of education, taught here for some time and set up the basis on which education continued here for long. Dr. James Cousins was there for some time as was the Trilokekar couple. Chintamani Trilokekar was well known as an educationist and after retirement came to live in the TS. Beginning with Sankara Menon, there was a series of inspired headmasters, the list including M.G. Kanitkar, Felix Layton, S. Krishnaratnam and R.Venkateswaralu. In 1939, the school was renamed as the Besant Theosophical School (BTS) and in 1951 it shifted



along with all of Rukmini Devi's institutions to Tiruvanmiyur, with the symbolic planting of a sapling from Adyar's great banyan at the new site on 1st January. 60 acres were acquired, later expanding to a hundred, all bought at Rs.1500 an acre.

2007 happens to be the death centenary of Col. Olcott, and several of the school's alumni, led by K.V.S. Krishna and K.R.N. Menon, have got together to publish their memories of school years. The end-result, *South of The Adyar River* (of Kalakshetra Publications), is an eminently readable book. It may not be perfect, there are many printer's devils and the presentation fairly disjointed, but it is all from the heart and, perhaps, that is what makes all the difference.

Answers to Quiz

1. Iran; 2. A modified TGV train, it broke the land speed record for railed vehicles with a speed of 574.8 km/h; 3. It has found a way to convert Types A, B, and AB blood into Type O, the universal donor blood group; 4. Be a space tourist; 5. The U.S. Masters golf; 6. DoubleClick; 7. Essar; 8. Agni III; 9. Laurie Baker; 10. Rajendra Babu.

* * *

11. Global Hospitals; 12. 1975; 13. Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University; 14. K. Bhagyaraj; 15. Chitlapakkam Town Panchayat; 16. Sendur village on the Villupuram-Chennai National Highway; 17. Sathyaraj; 18. The PMK (R. Anbumani); 19. *Kurumtokai*; 20. Nandhanaar.

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