

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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"Go to the girl at the 2nd check-in counter and tell us what you think of her... She is the one we are 'seeing' for you!"

Spotted & noted

A serious preoccupation for some, and a full-time occupation for others, whose eyes become like permanent binoculars.

Any get-together that sees a meaningful array of humanity offers sightings and a fair harvest – weddings, *kutcheris* (especially during the Season, when the NRIs come home briefly to roost, and the 'hmm-did-you-get-a-good-look-at-that-one?' syndrome is in full cry).

Over the past few years, a new arena has been added to the list of fertile venues – the airport.

In true Indian style, large chunks of family arrive to see off young hopefuls, and the job of tracking other equally young promising souls becomes easy.

While the young ones are preoccupied with new beginnings and future dreams, the older elements are racing ahead to the next possible phase.

But since all "normal" parents are scared of their 'young adult' kids, they make sure their thoughts stay hidden, thus avoiding the indignant: "Oi, don't even think about it."

They identify and observe – the parents, the siblings, cousins of various denominations, the neighbour's dog. Some strike up conversations, which usually end with "Oh, then your brother-in-law's cousin must have been in kindergarten with me", which naturally brings a feeling of closeness.

Post-departure, the crowd thins, but connections have been forged, and filed away in the mental cupboard that specialises in possibilities.

And the Great Web of Life smiles, and prepares itself for more strands.

Ranjitha Ashok

Planning for heritage

Some welcome first steps

(By The Editor)

At long last things appear to be moving on the heritage front in Tamil Nadu, though decisive action is still a long way off. Even as the draft Second Master Plan for Chennai, which has a section devoted to heritage conservation in the city, is being debated, the State Planning Commission, which is in the process of preparing the Eleventh Five Year Plan, has discussed the protection of heritage buildings in Tamil Nadu both for historical reasons as well as as an adjunct to the promotion of tourism. The Planning Commission meeting was convened by the Member-Secretary of the Planning Commission and chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Attending it were several heritage activists. The meeting began with the co-convenor of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Tamil Nadu, giving a summary of the history of efforts taken to get a Heritage Act in the State.

The wide-ranging discussions thereafter saw these

points, among others, being made:

1. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) covers India's ancient monuments. But with only 2000 locations with around 5000 listed buildings under the ASI all over the country and the average budget for each location being a paltry Rs. 7000, its efforts need to be supplemented considerably. It is unable to keep in good shape even its blue boards that declare buildings to be protected monuments.

2. The working of the State Archaeological Department is shrouded in greater mystery and there is hardly any information on what it has done in recent years.

3. The history of excavations in the State, both by the ASI and the State, is abysmal. In the past forty years, only a couple of locations have been explored thoroughly.

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If the State ever gets a Heritage Act, it will undoubtedly have local level Heritage Committees — and then such structures, like what's left of this 19th Century British hospital in Kodayar forest, Nagercoil, might be looked at with a little more sympathy.

Heritage in the districts

(By A Special Correspondent)

Convenor of the Nagercoil Chapter of INTACH, Lal Mohan, is urging the State Government to renovate the dilapidated heritage structures built by Scottish planters in the Kodayar forest. It was in 1870 that a few enterprising Scotsmen like John Grant, the chief promoter of coffee planting in the south Travancore mountains, and another planter, George MacLennan, came to the Kodayar forests. MacLennan lies buried where he, his dogs and horse were bitten by a King Cobra.

These planters convinced the then Maharaja of Travancore, Ramavarma Ayila Thirunal, his Diwan and the British Resident that huge profits could be made from their coffee venture. Unfortunately, their dreams never materialised, blighted by the rust disease. In its place tea plantation was attempted at the Seafield, Lebonon and Karimani Estates, which also failed. At a time when there were no roads, men and material were mobilised to build huge factories. These are now reduced to tin sheds. There was even a hospital built at an altitude of 1200 metres above sea level to treat malaria-ridden workers, at a time when many succumbed to the disease for which treatment was unknown. The hospital still stands in poor condition and bears the inscription "In memory of John Grant of Glemurguhart, Inverness, Scotland" who died in 1857.

What's going to happen to Government House?

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Tamil Nadu Government has announced that it will soon be building a new State Assembly complex away from Fort St. George. The new complex will be spacious and modern unlike, it says, the present location, which is cramped. *Madras Musings* welcomes this decision to move the Assembly complex out of the Fort, for this journal has been pointing out for years that the Fort St. George complex is a

heritage precinct, even a potential World Heritage Site, and ought to be treated as such, with free access to all.

The first such plans for a new Secretariat and Assembly were discussed many years ago when the M.G. Ramachandran Ministry mulled over transferring the capital itself from Madras to between Tiruchchirappalli and Thanjavur, which was perhaps

the ideal choice, given its central location. Rumours had it that the decision had almost been inked when it was given up for reasons never fully explained. Since then, all talk has centred on shifting the Assembly to a different location in Madras that is Chennai.

In 2003, the then Government announced the building of a new Secretariat-cum

Assembly complex on the site of Queen Mary's College. This snowballed into a major controversy, with the college students spearheading the protests, resulting in the Government backtracking on its decision. An alternative site was then identified in Kotturpuram on the Anna University campus and a foundation stone was laid. But this plan was later abandoned, with a new party taking

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In-flight behaviour – Indian style

The *Man from Madras Musings* was recently on an international flight returning home and it was once more amply evident to him that the behaviour of the citizens of our country is always a little different. For starters, most of us pack much more than what we really need and invariably end up arguing with those at the check-in counters about how the weight norms are wholly inadequate.

But what really took the cake this time was the in-flight behaviour of many passengers. The serving of drinks before dinner saw many at their best demanding more and more, with one self-confessed expert on beer even refusing to accept a glass because it was frothy! The exasperated air hostess had to finally explain to him that frothiness was to be expected in beer. Not for him anyway. Then there was the other man who kept going back to the crew area and asking them for more alcohol. This gentleman had already had one too many and was turned away by them. There followed a general announcement that no more drinks would be served after that. The toper then misbehaved with a young child and had to be restrained by the staff. This resulted in a security issue and there was yet another announcement that when the aircraft landed no passenger was to leave till the security personnel had come on board.

When the aircraft began landing, many people had already begun unfastening their seat belts and, the moment it touched ground, all of them stood up and began opening the overhead lockers to remove their baggage even as the aircraft was taxiing to its bay. Despite warnings to the contrary, several had already begun using their cell phones and sending SMSs and calling up friends. By the time the ground security staff had boarded the aircraft,

they could hardly make any headway as a stampede to the exit had begun. MMM was one of the few passengers to remain seated and an exasperated air hostess, no doubt looking for a shoulder to weep on, stated that this was invariably the story on most India-bound flights. Apparently many airlines even keep the toiletries in the lavatory to a minimum as most are stolen by the passengers. MMM could only listen with a growing sadness. And this is a country that is expected to be world class. Evidently, economic prosperity and civility do not go with each other.

At the Chennai airport it was as usual chaos with luggage being piled on antediluvian carousels which took their own time to deliver. In the meantime, those in charge of the luggage kept offloading some of the pieces from the carousel without informing the passengers and, as a result, many thought their bags had not come. Finally, someone discovered a separate pile and there was a rush for the bags. In the middle of all this, after being knocked over by a huge crate moving on the carousel, MMM noticed some security staff chatting merrily with the man who had created so many problems on the flight. There was much back-slapping and bonhomie. All was forgiven and forgotten and, any way, it is a poor heart that never rejoices.

Air show, road show

The recently concluded air show was hailed as stupendous by those who watched it, but for those on the road that day, and *The Man from Madras Musings* was one of them, it was a harrowing experience and a very poor show on the part of those in charge of traffic arrangements. Announcements had been made that the Beach Road and areas sur-

rounding it ought to be avoided and those wishing to travel needed to take Mount Road. But came the day of the show and Mount Road was the first to be blocked, whether by intention or due to the colossal amount of traffic on the road, it was not clear. The result was that thousands of commuters were left stranded on the road on a sweltering day with the traffic inching forward at times and many times not at all. The mess did not clear up till late at



night and, in many ways for MMM and others of his ilk, the road show was a harrowing one. Goodness knows what happened to those who needed to reach Central Station to catch a train. Presumably they took a flight.

After the party

Putting up festoons, bunting, huge hoardings, cut-outs and taking illegal electric connections for illuminations and sound effects are all the responsibility of party functionaries in the State, each intent on putting on an unforgettable roadside meeting to felicitate and celebrate their leader and his/her leadership. But what of the aftermath? Who is responsible for clearing the road of plantain stalks, polythene-covered festoons that dangle dangerously waiting to send two-wheeler users to a quick grave, and casuarina poles used to construct a stage? None, apparently. These are left on the road and it is upto nature to slowly get rid of them all. As for the hoardings that block entire pedestrian pathways, the less said the better. It is a crying shame that authorities turn a blind eye

to such blatant inconveniences created for road-users. A recent example, a cutout erected on TTK Road covered the entire traffic signal and, so, most road-users had no idea on when to move ahead. And not one policeman objected when the cut-out was put up. It was taken away a good 15 days later.

Whose pavement?

A recent article in a leading city daily focussed on the woes of the pedestrian and lamented that pavements were being encroached upon by electric junction boxes, transformers, hedges put up by residents, hawkers and wayside shops. The article remained silent on the usurping of pavements by hooligans with political affiliations who put up party flagposts and also erect statues of leaders with no permission whatsoever.

The Moolakadai junction in Vyasarpadi has at least three flagposts and several statues in each corner. Very often, one of these statues is subjected to some vandalism by another party's followers and the police are called in to protect the statue! The latest seemingly altruistic act, with political hues to it, is the erecting of *tanneer pandals*. Each street corner now sports one. The modus operandi is simple. You put up a shelter, cover it with party flags, place a portrait of a leader in it and also have two pots filled with water. *The Man from Madras Musings* wonders as to why the simple act of giving water to the thirsty on a hot day has to be politicised.

A hollow Crown

Walking down Mint Street the other day, *The Man from Madras Musings* was saddened to see that the old Crown Cinema had been pulled down, leaving behind

only the façade. This too, according to the locals, does not have long to live, though nobody had a clear answer as to what is coming up in its place. The Crown was one of the earliest theatres in the city and had been witness to all that went on in the name of film-making that eventually saw Madras emerge as a film centre. In the 75th year of the talking cinema in India, it was sad to see this landmark vanish without a trace.

Grading cities

The *Man from Madras Musings* learns from a business daily that the Central Urban Development Ministry is looking towards setting a grading system for cities to help guide investment in infrastructure. Cities would be judged on how they have worked towards improving amenities, on how they have rationalised property tax structures, on whether they have removed the urban land ceiling act and also implemented public-private initiatives in development such as mass rapid transit systems.

All cities have been asked to submit details on utilisation of city development funds to assess them.

MMM, however, has a question here. Should the utilisation of funds be the sole criterion? After all, funds WILL, whichever way, get utilised. It is more of a question of how they were utilised and whom they benefited. Presumably, this aspect too would be gone into.

It will be interesting to see how Madras that is Chennai fares on the list. The classification will finally be done on the basis of three colours – red, black and blue. If it is red or black, our political parties should be happy; if it is black and blue, it anyway reflects the status of the average citizen.

– MMM

What's going to happen to Government House?

(Continued from page 1)

charge after the Assembly elections.

The latest plan has the Government mulling over two choices – Government Estate (the Omandur Ramaswami Reddiar Estate) on Mount Road and the Raj Bhavan complex in Guindy. The latter is a protected reserve forest and, therefore, was ruled out and the final choice of location is likely to be Government Estate. The Government has also specifically mentioned that Kalaiwanar Arangam, *Rajaji Hall* and the MLAs' Hostel will not be affected by the new construction, if it indeed chooses Government Estate. **The statement is silent on the fate of Govern-**

ment House, the oldest building on the site, and a heritage building if ever there is one.

Looking at historical records, it is clear that the Fort was considered congested even in the 1750s. Of course, it was a bustling city by itself then. In 1752, Governor Thomas Saunders, feeling that his station demanded more elbow room, rented a garden house belonging to Mrs. Antonia de Madeiros, a member of the Madeiros family after whom, according to the most likely theory, the city got its name. In 1753, the house was battered by a storm and, not long thereafter, Saunders acquired it for Rs.12,000 and began repairing and embellishing it. In 1756, land was added to the property,

though the largest chunk was added in 1855 when the Nawab of Carnatic's estate was taken over by the Company, giving the property its present dimensions. The building, by then called *Government House*, was the official residence of the Governors of Madras Presidency and continued as such till Independence. Additions were made to it by Governors Thomas Rumbold and the second Lord Clive in the late 18th, early 19th Century, so that *Government House* could rival *Chepauk Palace*. The present *Raj Bhavan* in Guindy was only a weekend retreat.

Post-independence, *Government House*, nowadays often erroneously called *Admiralty House*, became the MLAs' Hos-

tel. When a new structure was built for the MLAs on the same campus, this building was abandoned. There was considerable debate over its fate when it became, after some renovation, temporary Police Headquarters in 1993/94 while the permanent headquarters on the Marina was undergoing restoration. When the police moved back to the Marina, they not only did not feel like parting with *Government House*, but have been drawing up plans for restoring it, indicative of how happy they were there.

There is every reason why such a building, which has been witness to much of the city's history, ought to be preserved. The compound is also home to several trees of a venerable vintage.

It is to be hoped that this historic building will not be pulled down in the process of constructing the new Assembly.

While on the subject, the Government would also do well to think over whether it would really be advisable to have a new Assembly within the city and that too on crowded Mount Road. Security will demand the road being cordoned off each time senior ministers of the State come to the Assembly while it is in session. There will also be necessity for public parking spaces, given the number of visitors the Assembly will draw. Will the new plan address all this? Given our record in modern constructions for the Government, we are not too sanguine.

OUR READERS WRITE



Why not here?

I wonder why, while the Tamils have co-operated with the leadership in Malaysia and Singapore in making them first-world countries, they are not co-operative here. Perhaps the leadership is also interested in poverty and squalor as vote-banks. These thoughts crossed my mind when I was recently in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, particularly when a friendly Singapore-Chinese taxi-driver told me that thousands of Tamils descend on "Little India" every Sunday evening and dirty the place, although they were harmless. I saw this myself, but the whole place was clean the next morning, since it was cleaned during the night itself.

Whereas in Myanmar, where my wife and I were on a sentimental journey, time has stood still with the advent of the military leadership. Phones do not function if it rains heavily for fifteen minutes and power-cuts are common. It is difficult to send an e-mail even from the hotel and there is no question of international roaming on your mobile. Mobile phones are a costly proposition. Doing away with English did a lot of damage to the local population. But the essential difference between Madras and Yangon (formerly Rangoon) is that while filth and street-food and en-

croachments are spreading all over Madras city – whether it is Mylapore, Nungambakkam, Ayanavaram, Adyar or Washermanpet – these are confined to down-town Yangon. The other roads are broad with good pavements, beautiful with trees and free from swanky multistorey buildings (if you call this development).

Madras Musings is keen on a new capital for Tamil Nadu. Malaysia's Putrajaya is beautiful without people. As I have always pointed out, many, particularly the foreign embassies, are reluctant to move out of Kuala Lumpur. Of course, Malaysia will make Putrajaya very attractive. We will not do it with our habit of cutting corners, as is evident in the case of Gandhinagar and, to a large extent, in respect of Chandigarh too.

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"Burma House"
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Not the Veeranam

I refer to my letter 'Water policy needed' (MM, April 16th). In it I had erroneously stated that the Veeranam lake was created by King Rajendra Chola. The lake created by him to serve his newly formed capital city, Gangaikondacholapuram, was called 'Cholagangam' and this was later called 'Ponneri', a name gone into disuse in course of time.

In his scholarly work *Middle Chola Temples*, S.R. Balasubrahmanyam states that 'The conquered rulers were made to bring water from the Ganga in pots to the capital, which were emptied into a new lake built there by Rajendra and described by the Tiruvalangadu plates as the Chola Gangam and as a "pillar of victory in the form of water". The Cholagangam has a bund of considerable height and a length of more than 5 km. At full water level, it has a water spread of nearly 130 sq. km. It once had a surplus weir and input channels from the Kollidam river and other sources and must have been connected to the palace moat. It has been allowed to go to seed, and a road now cuts through the bund in the middle, dividing the lake into two parts. This water body was fed by the Vellaru and Kollidam, and South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli areas immensely benefited by it.

It would appear from Kalki's *Ponniyin Selvan* that the Veeranam lake was created by the forefather of king Rajendra, Rajaathithaya, son of Madurai-konda Parantakan, perhaps much before the 'Cholagangam' lake.

The point to be noted is that the rulers of yore bestowed great care in providing abundant water facilities for their subjects, before embarking on creation of new capital cities.

T.M. Sundararaman
19, Nallappan Street
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Time for action

The other day, I happened to visit the old M.U.C. grounds. The condition of the beautiful grounds, where many football matches of importance were played, is now in a deplorable state. The good old SIAA ground, famous for many boxing and wrestling bouts, has vanished. Beautiful water fountains maintained by the Corporation are defunct. The free Corporation reading rooms which benefited many are non-functional. The free swimming pool behind the People's Park has turned into an unusable site. I can go on and on.

But will that galvanise the Corporation of Chennai?

It is time it began paying greater attention to the city.

D.V. Subramanian
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Tamil writers among lawyers

Generally, professionals like lawyers, doctors and engineers, though possessing talent for writing, rarely go in for this diversion due to pre-occupation in their jobs. However, there have been notable exceptions among the lawyers, whether practising law or in other avocations.

The credit for the first Tamil novel goes to Mayuram S. Vedhanayagan Pillai, a District Munsiff, who wrote *Prathapa Mudaliar Charitram* in the middle of 19th Century. Closely following him was Rao Bahadur P. Sambandha Mudaliar, advocate and later judge, who wrote a record 100 dramas in Tamil. Rajaji, who in his time was an eminent advocate, wrote short didactic stories like *Dhikkatra Parvathi*, which appealed to young children. Apart from writing political articles in English and Tamil, he wrote simple abridged and interesting versions in Tamil of the two great epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*, under the titles *Chakravarthi Thirumagan* and *Vyaasar Virundhu*. Their English translations went into several editions.

T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, a former Commissioner of Hindu Religion Endowments, wrote articles on art and literature. His version of *Kambar Ramayana*, serialised in a Tamil weekly, was very popular. V.C. Gopalaratnam wrote dramas, including the hilarious comedy *Sattampillai, sub-assistant magistrate*. Delectable humorous articles and stories came from the pen of S.V. Vijayaraghavachariar, popularly known as SVV. K.S. Venkataramani's novels, *Murugan oru uzhavan* and *Desabhaktan Kandhan*, were widely read. Justice ASP Iyer's Tamil stories were published in *Swadesamitran* weekly in the 1930s.

P.N. Appuswamy Iyer's Tamil articles on science and mathematics were interesting. In later years, S.A.P. Annamalai, a lawyer who turned editor of *Kumudham*, wrote profusely. The scholarly judge Md. Ismail raised eyebrows by giving his own version in *Kambar Ramayana*. Justice Mohan, who has a penchant for writing English poems, has also written articles on legal matters and on his own famous judgements.

M.R. Pillai
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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

Planning for heritage

(Continued from page 1)

4. There has been little effort to get the stone inscriptions in the State, which exist in plenty, deciphered and documented.

5. INTACH, while it has had some success in its activities, regretted that the courts had to be repeatedly approached to prevent the demolition or desecration of heritage buildings and precincts in the State. Even then, there being no law against the bringing down of monuments NOT listed by the Archaeological Department, there is no guarantee that buildings can be saved.

6. The heritage regulations mentioned in the draft Second Master Plan omit several of the points made in earlier drafts accepted by both the Town and Country Planning Department and the CMDA. They need to be discussed in greater detail with all those who first drafted the Regulations/Act. Transfer of Development Rights also

needs to be looked into in greater detail.

7. It is necessary to sensitise the common man and school-children on their local heritage. At least at middle school levels, some field courses should be taken up on local areas of heritage importance.

8. Even if a Heritage Act for the State was not possible immediately, regulations for Chennai city were needed urgently. These could be an integral part of the city's Master Plan and could serve as a blueprint for other towns/cities in the State which draw up master plans of their own.

9. Any Heritage Act should look beyond buildings and natural features; it should also look at cultural activities, traditional crafts, etc.

10. West Bengal and Kerala have Heritage Acts that have in every panchayat created a heritage committee that decides on

local buildings and precincts. A similar exercise is needed in Tamil Nadu.

11. The plight of heritage mansions of Chettinad needed looking into. Government ought to take immediate steps to prevent cannibalisation of the houses for the woodwork which is being sold at astronomical prices.

12. In Pondicherry, despite many difficulties, more progress had been made than in Chennai because of the support the heritage movement gets from the Government. A similar effort, sans State support, but with foreign funding, has begun in Tranquebar in Tamil Nadu.

It is clear – and a welcome sign – that some Government organisations have begun to think more about protecting the State's heritage. The sooner their sympathetic interest is translated into some action, the better for the living heritage of Tamil Nadu.

Can we taste tourism success?

• Tamil Nadu is the No. 2 destination in India for foreign tourists (12 lakh tourists visited the State last year), and the No. 3 destination for domestic visitors (three lakh are expected this year).

"The State Tourism Department is working towards promoting various tourism initiatives: setting up a tourism police force, putting in place a team of tourist guides, extending support to those who wish to promote lesser-known places by waiving tax for the first five years, providing easy finance and clearances, promoting employment, and producing publicity material in English and Hindi."

N. SURESH RAJAN
Minister for Tourism
Government of
Tamil Nadu

• Travel and tourism is the single largest industry in the world. Whilst the software industry earns 900 billion dollars a year, the travel and tourism industry earns 4.63 trillion dollars, equal to the earnings of the automobile, chemical and software industries put together. The industry employs one out of every 12 employable persons in the world.

In spite of putting very little effort, travel and tourism fetched India revenue worth 6 billion dollars. If we attain one-tenth of China's earnings, we will earn 30 billion dollars. If the software industry offered jobs to 120,000 software professionals every year, the travel and tourism industry had the potential to generate 5-10 million new jobs every year, during the next three years. By 2010, there will be one billion travellers; one out of six people will be travelling. Seven trillion dollars will be spent every single year. India receives only five million visitors a year whereas Paris welcomes 75 million tourists.

The kind of tourism potential India offers is the 3000-km long and 300-km wide Himalayan range, the 8,000-km long coastline, the desert in Rajasthan, the Deccan Plateau, Chilika, the largest freshwater lake, and Cherrapunji, which receives the highest rainfall.

Singapore spent 9 per cent of its GDP on travel and tourism. The result was that 15 per cent of its GDP came from that industry. India spent only 0.5 per cent

of its GDP on the sector. While the total number of hotel rooms available in India is about 105,000, Manhattan in the USA has more than that number! With new investments being made, about 120,000 new hotel rooms would be added in India.

So, what has happened as a result of our apathy? Our own centres have lost the hub status, which the smaller countries (Singapore and Dubai) have taken over. Emirates Airlines takes Indians from Indian cities to Dubai and makes them change planes there for other destinations. Namaste, yoga and ayurveda have all been usurped by others!

ASWINI KAKKAR
Executive Vice-Chairman
Mercury Travels, and
former chairman of the World
Travel and
Tourism Council

• **The Public Relations Society of India, Chennai Chapter, a few weeks ago held a seminar on travel, tourism and hospitality which it stated could become India's No. 1 industry. Published here are excerpts from speeches made on the occasion that might help to answer the question our headline asks.**

• With the kind of investment happening in infrastructure development, there will be an 8-9 per cent growth in tourism in the coming years. The international investor and traveller are awestruck by the sheer pace of development in India. In Chennai, the ECR-Puducherry Road and the IT Corridor are examples. Hotels, especially budget hotels, are mushrooming everywhere. The Taj Group itself has two or three hotels in each metro. The smaller cities are likely to take the pressure off the metros soon. Today's destinations extend beyond the popular Agra-Jaipur, Goa and Kerala legs.

Indians are rediscovering India themselves, thanks to an increased pay package, global exposure, increased awareness and wanting to travel for relaxation and adventure. The need for a break from the usual routine is helping India. A new set of airlines is allowing Indians who had never entered an aircraft before to enter one.

PRABHAT VERMA
General Manager
Taj Coromandel

• We should showcase the more happening modern India. If Malaysia and Singapore can cooperate, why can't the four southern states get together to sell the southern peninsula and compete with the north?

The Japanese are looking for new places to get married. We can market our country as an excellent marriage venue. There is nostalgia tourism, old colonels and doctors who want to go on a holiday. And medical tourism. Hospitals here must be accredited to international chains and work in tandem with government tourism to make their facilities well known.

But we pay little attention to building a good environment, such as clean toilets at airports, for instance. Convention centres should have better facilities – food courts, beauty parlours and boutiques. There is a Bollywoodisation of our culture, which we

must stop. Our smile, our willingness to help, these are the attributes that must be packaged and sold.

SUJAYA MENON
Consultant, Cox & Kings

• India is replete with dirty hotels, poor infrastructure, bad roads and lousy food. Tourism is everybody's business. They must aim at attracting tourists. We must know what we are selling. We can't sell beaches to Miami or wildlife to Africa. If Malaysia can sell *Thai Poosam*, why can't we in Tamil Nadu sell our own product? If Spain is known for the Matador, why can't Tamil Nadu be known for its Jallikattu? If you want to sell India, you have to be practical.

R. RANGACHARI
Secretary General
South India Hotels and
Restaurants Association

• We don't often focus on public transport that is often used by tourists. Auto drivers can be taught to be friendly.

DR. AJIT PATHAK
President, PRSI
National Chapter

Tourism and Heritage

Walking through Pondicherry

• Environment is getting more and more popular and there is increasing awareness of keeping streets clean, of conserving forests, and of the eco-hotel (a certification that a hotel receives based on adherence to certain norms) concept.

There are five basic parameters that are considered for eco-hotel accreditation: energy conservation, water conservation, solid waste management, employee education and training, and environmental commitment (including education in schools and colleges). Orchid in Mumbai was India's first eco-hotel, The Raintree in Chennai the third; there are now 34 eco-hotels in the world.

An application for certification could be made even while building the hotel, in which case attention has to be paid to the use of eco-friendly material such as bricks, Portland cement, rubber, wood and recycled paper, and installing devices for rainwater harvesting. Once an eco-hotel, the property has a better image and employee morale.

Hotels need to keep the environment clean and protect heritage. The Raintree Hotel carries the message of avoiding wastage of material to schools, colleges, petrol bunks and auto drivers; it has had a number of discussions with Chennai Corporation to educate Corporation workers.

GEOFF MAGEE
Chief Executive Officer
The Accord Metropolitan

• Hospitality and tourism are two different components. It is not about providing shelter but more of giving an experience even during the short time that the guests are in their rooms. At a Sterling Group hotel in Thanjavur, foreign visitors are taught how to drink tender coconut water without a straw. You can charge for such services. It can be fascinating for the tourist. We have found a way to get responsible people in the village to work for us. That's the advantage of being in India. Everything can be sold. I wouldn't leave it for all the gold in the world.

A person in Kochi walks visitors around, from teashop to dumpyard, to toddy shop, to a restaurant offering fish-curry. At another Sterling Group property in Swamimalai, a unique heritage hotel, 70 per cent of the workforce employed reside within a two-kilometre

(Continued on page 7)



A street in the French quarter.

To experience the spirit of Pondicherry it is essential to walk through the old town and observe the nature of its architectural traditions.

There are very few monumental buildings in Pondicherry. Its architectural character is a result of hundreds of French and Tamil houses that create the 'milieu' or 'ensemble'. This quality of the streetscapes is today threatened by the widespread destruction of traditional houses, especially in the Tamil part. If this heritage is to be protected, then it is important to preserve all these houses.

Pondicherry has two distinct parts, the French and the Tamil. The French quarter has structures in the European classical style, whereas the buildings in the Tamil quarter are in the vernacular style of Tamil Nadu. The two styles have influenced each other with the result that many buildings in both parts of the town are a harmonious blend of European and Tamil architectural patterns.

The French quarter

The French quarter developed along the beach and around the present Bharati Park, which is surrounded by stately government buildings. Residential villas extend on either side interspersed by institutional

structures. In general the buildings fall into two main categories: residential, which form the majority and are simple and varied, and public which are set amidst large plots with fenced enclosures. French building models were adapted to suit local climatic conditions.

The street facades are usually characterised by continuous wall-to-wall construction with high garden walls and elaborate gateways. The facades are divided into smaller panels by the use of vertical pilasters and horizontal cornices, and feature flat or segmental arched windows with bands and louvred wooden shutters. Wooden balconies over iron brackets and continuous parapets with simple ornamental features are common.

Most French houses were built on similar ground plans with full or partial street frontage. The main facades have colonnaded porticoes to provide better protection from sun and rain, and also act as a transition space to the garden court. A major change from the original French model is the use of flat terraced roofs, instead of the pitched roofs of the Parisian villas.

The walled gardens form private interior courts onto which the rest of the building spaces



The Muslim homes in the Tamil quarter.

Their exterior facades mainly feature a *thalvaram* (street veranda with a lean-to-roof over wooden posts) – a social extension of the house providing shelter for the pedestrians – and a *thinnai* (semi-public veranada space) with masonry benches for visitors and pilgrims.

These "talking streets", so



Blending the European and the Tamil.



In the Tamil quarter.

called because of their intimate scale and interactive nature, are typical of vernacular Tamil architecture, and the entire street stretch is homogeneous because of connecting elements like lean-to-roofs, cornices (horizontals), and pilasters and engaged columns (verticals) with ornamental parapets, which define the skyline. All houses are similar, but no two houses are exactly the same.

The *thinnai* marks the sensitive transition space after which the house is entered through a finely carved wooden door. Once inside, the *mutram* (colonnaded courtyard) becomes the central family space around which the various other spaces are functionally arranged. Some houses have several courtyards.

Within the intimate fabric of the Tamil town, built-form ranges from the simple country tiled single storied houses of the old Hindu quarters, to the two-storied houses with considerable

colonial influence of the later Hindu and Christian quarters, to the more elaborately ornamented and colourful houses of the Muslim quarters.

On the whole, a synthesis of two varying styles is evident in many buildings. Especially in the case of some two-storied Tamil buildings, the ground floor is usually Tamil type with *thinnai*, *thalvaram*, pillared courtyard and carved wooden doors, while the first floor displays French influence through fluted pilasters, columns with capitals, arched windows, plaster decorations and end-ornament elements.

City as tourist asset

Generally, in India, tourism potential is mostly perceived to be in developing monuments, temples, archaeological and pilgrimage sites, nature reserves, etc.

Potential tourism assets, totally missed out today, are our numerous "heritage cities" – cities that have traditional architecture and could become big attractions. Hundreds of houses built in vernacular style create pretty streets, whether they be in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan or Tamil Nadu. The beautiful European city centres should be our inspiration – from them we can learn how to make our cities attractive.

Almost all such cities in India are in a state of decay and neglect – and it appears that this condition is accepted as inevitable! Unless steps are taken to bring out the hidden beauty of our streetscapes and to make them pleasurable spaces to experience beauty and hustle and bustle of life, they cannot become tourism

assets. Today, the buildings are in a state of disrepair, facades are covered with billboards without any consideration to architecture, roads are full of loud and stinky traffic, pavements are potholed and obstructed by hawkers, unauthorised kiosks, electrical and telephone junction boxes and so on, the drains are non-existent or clogged, with filth and garbage everywhere, urination and defecation in public spaces is not uncommon. In short, it is no pleasure to stay in the streets longer than absolutely necessary.

In contrast, the city centres of heritage towns in the West are mostly pedestrian, clean, green and neat places that invite you to linger and participate in the activities going on all around – watch surrounding pretty buildings, sit in a street-side café, shop around or watch street performers, etc. One important feature of such precincts is that they are oases for pedestrians – where you can spend hours and days without being pushed around by motorised traffic. There is no traffic noise and pollution and pedestrians enjoy priority. Here you can rediscover the simple pleasures of life: walk around unharassed!

Is this an alien idea unsuitable to our tradition? I for one do not think so. Just about two decades ago our cities were mostly for pedestrians and cyclists. The traffic aberration is quite recent, but getting worse by the day. In fact, in our country, the majority don't own motorcars – most are on foot or bicycles and motorised two wheelers. In tropical weather, well-shaded pedestrian precincts could be attractive and useful for both locals and visitors. Shops in such areas will experience increased turnover as people tend to spend more time there.

All tourists or local citizens, no matter what mode of transport they use, are pedestrians in the last mile. One of the prerequisites to enjoy beautiful heritage streetscapes is the availability of clean and green streets with decent pedestrian space. This, together with well-kept and cared for traditional buildings, is an urban experience waiting to be rediscovered and enjoyed. A city is not just its monuments and sites.

But all this could change – at least some parts of cities can be transformed for the benefit of citizens as well as tourists. Pondicherry, I hope, will become a pioneer and a model to other cities to emulate. Its size and architecture, French and Tamil, are ideal ingredients to make the city beautiful and livable for its citizens first – and then for tourists.

Pondicherry, I feel, has the opportunity to set a whole new trend in India – bring cities back to their people.

• by
AJIT KOULAGI

The features on left and above are courtesy INTACH, Pondicherry.



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

1. Name the church that features prominently in *The Da Vinci Code*, where a 600-year-old music in cipher has been decoded recently.

2. Which Commonwealth country's mint recently unveiled the world's largest gold coin, approximately 50 cm in diameter, about 3 cm thick and weighing 100 kg, with a purity of 99.999%?

3. Who was recently elected the 23rd President of the French Republic with 53% of the vote?

4. In the 15 years of the English Premier League, how many times have the new champions, Manchester United, emerged the winners?

5. Name the new telescope unveiled by NASA that will replace the Hubble Space Telescope.

6. Which former World No. 1-ranked tennis player from Belgium has decided to quit competitive tennis to concentrate on family life?

7. Israeli archaeologist Ehud Netzer has claimed he has discovered the tomb of which legendary builder of ancient Jerusalem and the Holy Land?

8. Which Asian city will be a new venue for the 2008 F1 season and may host the races at night?

9. Who has bought Reuters for £8.7 billion to create the world's biggest financial news and data group?

10. Why was Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute of the U.S. Army in the news recently?

* * *

11. Which constituency does V. Radhika Selvi, the new Union Minister of State, from DMK represent?

12. The Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu is...

13. Who has been chosen to preside over the 81st annual conference of the Music Academy at the end of the year?

14. According to M. Karunanidhi, of the five people whom he would like to listen to in the Assembly, three are K. Anbazhagan, K.T.K. Thangamani and Papa Umanath. Name the other two.

15. Which popular film-maker is to enter Kollywood with *Leelai*?

16. How did M. Vinod Kumar, G. Gopinath and K. Muthuramalingam make news on May 9th?

17. What recently released film the Chief Minister said has been seen by him at least five times?

18. Which film star is to launch a party aimed at bringing back the glorious days of Kamaraj rule in the State?

19. Where is a Rs. 6 crore memorial for Kamaraj coming up?

20. Which was supposedly the last released film of Sivaji Ganesan to celebrate a silver jubilee?

(Answers on page 7)

From cricket info to publishing

New Horizon Media Private Limited is a Chennai-based publishing firm that has launched its English publishing programme with the simultaneous release today (June 1st) of four books, all English translations of Tamil novels by eminent authors. Two of its directors, Badri Seshadri and K. Satyanarayan, are not exactly strangers to the publishing industry, having been in the business for the last three years with their Tamil imprint, **Kizhakku Pathippagam**, which has over 300 titles to its credit.

Badri was a co-founder of the cricket website **Cricinfo**, an impressive presence in cyberspace since the late 1990s, with its comprehensive cricket database and eminently readable articles. Now owned by *Wisden*, it was launched in 1993 by a few cricket-crazy, Tamil-speaking NRIs using the services of volunteers. Students and faculty of numerous educational institutions contributed cricket content, which the core team put together in the form of a database. By 1996, it had grown big enough for Simon King and Badri, an alumnus of IIT Madras and a Ph.D. in Mechanical

— in Tamil first, and now in English



Badri Seshadri K. Satyanarayan

Engineering from Cornell University, to set up Cricinfo Ltd., UK.

When a series of fundings fuelled the explosive growth of the company with offices in many countries, King became its global CEO and Badri the global COO. This was in 2000,

● by
V. RAMNARAYAN

when Sify held a 25 per cent stake in the company, and Badri was looking after the Indian operations. When Cricinfo estab-

lished their Chennai office, Badri and Satya, also an IIT Madras and Cornell University alumnus and founder-director of **Cricinfo India**, built around them an eager bunch of cricket fanatics turned journalists.

The passion of these young enthusiasts drove the rapid growth of the website before it was hit by global trends and eventually taken over by *Wisden*. Cricinfo went through straitened financial circumstances in 2000-2001 but, by the end of 2002, had made enough smart moves to reach operating break-even. The merger with *Wisden* took place in February 2003.

Essentially entrepreneurial in spirit, Badri and Satya then began to look for a new project. Having turned bloggers and created Tamil user groups, newsgroups and blogs, they got in touch with Tamil authors and began to understand the Tamil publishing landscape around this time. They

attended the February 2004 Chennai Book Fair by way of reconnaissance, and, by April 2004, launched New Horizon Media with the Tamil imprint Kizhakku, though both of them continued to be involved in Cricinfo.

Badri was the first to quit Cricinfo to plunge fully into the new venture in April 2005. Satya joined him about a year later. Chief Editor Pa Raghavan and his team joined them and, within a year, 50 titles were brought out and Kizhakku was an important presence in the 2005 Chennai Book Fair. The customer response was impressive. Many appreciated the quality of the books and the range of topics covered.

Kizhakku has positioned itself somewhere between the current mainstream (for instance, Vanathi, Kannadasan, Narmada) and highbrow publishers like Kalachuvadu or Uyirmai. "We are not particular that the writing should be literary," Badri had told me in a conversation soon after Kizhakku hit the big time. "We may bring out biographies of Chaplin and Khushwant Singh, Virender Sehwag and Narayana Murthy or books on art. We treat all our efforts as knowledge-driven. The result should be more titles and more copies of each title selling."

Soon, other Tamil imprints followed. *Nalam* is a series of health books and *Varam* covers religion and spirituality, while

(Continued on page 7)



June: The theatre workshop conducted by Koumarane Valavane will continue in June from 8 am to 12 noon. Limited number of seats only (20)! For further information, contact 9942809992 (Alliance Francaise).

Till June 7: *Selfspy*, an exhibition of paintings by K. Jayakumar (at the Lalit Kala Akademi).

June 4-9: Indian film classics with English Subtitles.

June 4: *Pather Panchali*, Satyajit Ray (1955)

June 6: *Charulata*, the lonely wife, Satyajit Ray (1964)

June 7: *Chokher Bali*, Rituparno Ghosh (2003)

June 8: *Shwaas*, Sandeep Sawant (2004)

June 9: *Chameli*, Sudhir Mishra (2005) (Alliance Francaise at 3.30 pm)

June 6-27: An exhibition of photographs by Nandini Valli. A chance apprenticeship with a leading Chennai commercial photographer taught her the technicalities of photography. This led her to pursue a degree in photography in the UK. And it was here that she encountered the world of contemporary art photography.



The underlying tone of her work is that of identity and of the "self gaze", her own as well as those whom she has photographed. Colour is central to Nandini Valli's work (at Alliance Francaise).

June 17: Folk and Contemporary Performing Arts by Theatre Lab, a two-year old theatre group from Chennai, headed by Jaya Rao.

A one-day congregation of folk and contemporary performing arts, dedicated to Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar, mentor and doyen of early Tamil stage.

The events are:

9 am: Introduction to the relevance of folk art forms followed

by performances of *Thudumbattam*, *Thappattam*, *Devarattam* and *aana* songs.

2 pm: A discussion on Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar, coordinated by Veli Rangarajan.

4 pm: *Nadhi Ariyadha*, a monologue in Tamil by Rohini, directed by Jaya Rao, written by S. Ramakrishnan, followed by screening of documentary films.

7 pm: *Sangeetha Paithiyam*, a play written by Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar in the early 20th Century. Directed by Jaya Rao and performed by Unarvugal, an experimental socio-cultural activist group. (All at Alliance Francaise.)

June 21: *Fete de la musique*. The programme for the day is as follows:

3.30 pm-5 pm: Open house for young musicians.

5.30 pm: Show by *Yodhaka*, led by percussionist "Debruka" Siva. This is an experimental



outfit that collates and absorbs musical traditions from all over the world and fuses it with indigenous rhythms.

7 pm: *Oikyotaan*, fronted by Bonnie Chakraborty, has developed a sound rooted in the rhythm and melody of folk music. The evening's performance will be a presentation of contemporary folk and an experiment with Indian classical form *Thumri*. (All at Alliance Francaise Auditorium.)

June 24: *No Idea & Mademoiselle K*: A celebration of music!

Hip-hop beats, or rock guitars, with Mademoiselle K who offers the sound of throaty, rocking vocals that know how to turn sensual. No Idea is a band that started in 2000 as a heavy metal/alternative rock outfit. No Idea won the Great Indian Rock Competition in 2005. (At Buck's Theatre, YMCA, 7.00 p.m.)

June 24: *Aquatika*, a one-day meeting, to mark the 4th anniversary of www.indianaquariumhobbyist.com – the web portal dedicated to popularising the aquarium hobby in India.

Those interested in registering for *Aquatika* can do so through the website. There will be a nominal charge for attending the all-day programme which will feature speakers on 'Fish Breeding', 'Native Indian Fishes', 'Planted Aquaria' and 'Marine Aquariums'. (From 9.00 am onwards at Hotel Checkers.)

CAN WE TASTE TOURISM SUCCESS?

(Continued from page 4)

radius. Even getting tourists to sit in the homes neighbouring the Kapaleeswarar Temple in Mylapore to watch the activities around the temple can be an experience!

STEVE BORGIA
Chairman & Managing Director
Indeco Leisure Hotels

* * *

● We may not have the best presentation, but our cuisine has been tested for more than 10,000 years; even the French cuisine is only 2,000 years old. Twentyfive years ago, I thought that French or Western cuisine was the best, but today I know that Indian cuisine is. Cuisine changes every 100 km in India. We have not packaged and marketed cuisine as part of the hospitality industry.

But India has a lot to improve on the hygiene front. We have somewhere along lost our natural hygienic systems.

P. SOUNDARARAJAN
Executive Chef
Club Mahindra, and General Secretary, Indian Federation of Culinary Association

* * *

● The First Planning Commission had placed tourism at the 269th spot (for allocation of resources). Today, the tourism industry has recorded 9.7 per cent growth and 375 million Indians are rediscovering Indian destinations. Rs. 95,000 crore is expected to be the domestic tourism spend during the coming year. About 7-10 million jobs a year are likely to be generated. The aviation sector has registered a 25-30 per cent

growth; the passenger base is now 10.4 million and at any given time there are 7.15 million passengers at the terminal.

V.S. RAMANA
Chairman
PRSI, Chennai Chapter

* * *

● India's domestic carriers offer 150,000 seats today every day; in 1992-93, only 20-30,000 seats were available. The occupancy rate is season-driven though. Earlier there were only holiday packages; now airlines offer weekend, seasonal, family and honeymoon packages. In the coming five years, the aviation sector is indeed poised for further growth. However, unless infrastructure grows, unless airports are made more passenger-friendly and airline-friendly, the costs of operation will go beyond control.

HARISH SHENOY
General Manager
Southern India, Jet Airways

* * *

● There are several areas that need close monitoring: transport of delegates, airport pick-up and drop, booking halls for various sessions, providing interpretation facilities, establishing a conference secretariat, printing and distribution of information brochures, engaging an emcee, appointing well-trained staff and volunteers, setting up audio-visual equipment and backdrops, mikes, signage and podium, readying photocopy material for delegates, arranging a press room, forming a registration area, organising exhibition stalls, setting up reception counters at airports, credit card swipe machines, and also looking after social functions,

safety aspects, spouse programmes, external sourcing, food stalls and games.

DR. M.K. AJIT KUMAR
Vice-President
Hi-Tours

* * *

● About 11,000 trains run every day in India, through as many stations. Eleven million passengers (equal to the population of Belgium) travel daily by rail in India, covering a distance that is two-and-a-half times the distance to the moon. Fifty million domestic tourists use the railways every year. Goods trains carry 700 million tons of freight every day. However, proper deliverance of services had not matched expectations and that was one of the reasons that led to the formation of IRCTC.

IRCTC oversees catering on trains and has 70 food plazas in India, 25 in the south. Passengers have welcomed Rail Neer, the mineral water supplied by the Railways on trains.

Now it is focussing on tourism. One hundred Rail Ratna Hotels would be set up soon, 25 of them in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Milk bars would be another addition. Catering services in mail and express trains are likely to be upgraded. Bharat Darshan trains would be introduced – you could travel about 7,000 km within India, with the cost averaging Re. 1 a km. Hill trains (in Darjeeling) as well as luxury trains (Palace on Wheels) might become a major market for the railways.

V. SRIRAM
Regional Director, IRCTC
Marketing arm of
Indian Railways

From cricket info to publishing

(Continued from page 6)

Prodigy is the fledgling children's literature imprint. The general focus has been on non-fiction. Biographies, popular history, stock market primers, books on current world affairs, humour and self-improvement books have been among the most popular offerings in these imprints. Staff writers like Pa Raghavan, a big success with his books on the Hizbollah, Hamas and a short history of the USA, Chokkan and Maruthan have become household names among the Tamil reading public. One of the main targets of New Horizon Media is the educated Tamil who wants to widen his horizon through reading but finds English books daunting. Another segment of Tamils – those who cannot read Tamil – is targeted with audio books.

My relationship with New Horizon Media began while I was writing a column for Cricinfo. Being bilingual – in Tamil and English – and interested in catching up with contemporary Tamil literature after a longish hiatus, I became a keen follower of Badri's and Satya's forays into blogging and publishing. Though I was eager to associate myself with their ventures, there was no place for

me in their scheme of things until they decided around May-June last year to enter the English language publishing space. That was the time it was decided I would take care of the new imprint **Indian Writing**.

Indian Writing has the ambitious agenda of offering the world the best of Indian writing, primarily through works translated into English from Indian languages. It will eventually publish original Indian writing in English as well. Meanwhile, it has entered the market with its first four novels. Their original Tamil titles are *Unmai Pol Oruvan* by Jayakanthan, *Krishna Krishna* by Indira Parthasarathy, *En Peyar Ramaseshan* by Aadhavan and *Karainda Nizhalgal* by Ashokamitran. The English translations are respectively titled *Love and Loss*, *Krishna Krishna, I, Ramaseshan* and *Star-Crossed*. Four more novels will be launched this month, and these will be by Jayakanthan, Indira Parthasarathy, Sivasankari and Vaasanthi. The translation of many more novels is in progress. These include some by authors listed here, as well as others by well-known writers like Sa Kandaswami, Ira Murugan, Yuma Vasuki, Sumathi, and Jayamohan. The target is to achieve 50 titles in the first year.

Answers to Quiz

1. The Rosslyn Chapel; 2. Canada; 3. Nicolas Sarkozy; 4. Nine; 5. James Webb Space Telescope; 6. Kim Clijsters; 7. Herod; 8. Singapore; 9. Canadian publisher, The Thomson Corporation; 10. He is to be President Bush's 'war czar', a new post to oversee the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

* * *

11. Tiruchendur; 12. L.K. Tripathy; 13. Vidvan Palghat Sri R. Raghu; 14. Kumari Anandan and Abdul Latheef; 15. Ram Gopal Verma; 16. They were the three killed in the attack on the *Dinakaran* office in Madurai; 17. *Periyar*; 18. Sarath Kumar; 19. Virudhunagar; 20. The Rajinikanth starrer *Padaiyappa*.

Subscriptions and contributions

● Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), *Madras Musings* has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to CHENNAI HERITAGE and send it, together with the COUPON BELOW, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 260-A, TTK ROAD, CHENNAI 600 018 or C/O LOKAVANI SOUTHERN PRINTERS PVT. LTD., 122, GREAMS ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

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If in the coming year Chennai Heritage receives repeated support from those of you who have already made contributions, and if many more supporters join the bandwagon, we will not only be able to keep *Madras Musings* going, but also be able to continue awareness-building exercises on on-going projects as well as undertake one or two more such exercises.

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to *Madras Musings* for 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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Henry Parkes had not slept all night. The founder-editor of *The Empire*, the Sydney newspaper that he had established in 1849, was exhausted by his own ambition and drive. After a day at Council, he arrived at the offices of his newspaper to prepare the next morning's edition. It was mid-January, the height of the Australian summer, and the heat and humidity in an ill-ventilated printery was overpowering. Yet Parkes was about to do more than provide news; he was going to make it.

Having fled misery and squalor in England in 1839, and despite being "disappointed in all my expectations of Australia, especially as to its wickedness", Parkes seized every chance to advance himself in the colony of New South Wales. As a trained maker of toys and turner of ivory, he set up a toy shop at 20 Hunter Street, Sydney. The founding of *The Empire* gave him considerable influence in the local community, and his editorials began to take on bolder and increasingly imperial overtones, despite the indignities and beatings he had suffered as a poverty-stricken labourer in Warwickshire. His political ambitions saw him elected to the Sydney Legislative Council in 1854. Anxious to seize every opportunity for advancement, Parkes attended every session from beginning to end, then went to this press to select news items from the UK, the USA and Europe, edit them, write his own editorial and perhaps go home for a couple of hours' rest.

In January 1854 things were a bit different. Public revelation in 1849 that gold had been discovered in various parts of Australia was draining cities of manpower, resulting in a severe shortage of labour and skills. Compositors were earning between 10 and 12 pounds a

The Madras printers

— who kept Henry Parkes (the Father of the Australian Federation) in business

week, compared to a governess's annual salary, with board, of 30 to 40 pounds. Immigration of gold-seekers from all parts of the world, including China, raised the ugly spectre of racism that had hitherto been comparatively mild. The announcement that the goldfields of Ballarat and Bendigo held vast gold reserves led to another exodus from the cities and a huge increase in shipping.

In 1853, Parkes bought a new steam-powered printing press to rival his competitor, *The Herald*. In the spirit of supply and demand, his printers soon demanded higher wages. Parkes offered to call a general meeting of all the printers in Sydney for a mutual talk about wages, but 17 printers walked off the job that very hot January afternoon. The champion of the British workman was left angry and disillusioned. He went to court and won, the 17 strikers being imprisoned, more because the judge wanted to make an example of them. Parkes had to send urgently to India for reinforcements. Or so the story goes, according to one of his biographers.

NSW maritime records show that HMS *Strathfieldsaye*, 657 tons burthen, from the port of Madras, docked in Sydney Harbour on January 24, 1854. On board were 20 crew, 8 of them apprentices. Were these apprentices the boys from the Civil Orphan Asylum on Poonamallee High Road? Did the canny Parkes anticipate a strike and send for them earlier, especially as they could be bound to low wages by a covenant for at least a reasonable period? All the apprentices

were aged between 13 and 16, and all had British names, supporting the theory that they were Protestant (Parkes was rabidly anti-Catholic) and therefore products of the very Anglican COA, now St George's HS School. The only other ship to originate from Madras, and bound for Sydney, the *Dawstone*, arrived in Sydney in September 1854, far too late for printers to be of any use. Moreover, the voyage from Madras to Sydney did not take 9 months, even allowing for putting into ports en route. The fastest clipper ever built, the American-built *Lightning*, made the voyage from Melbourne to Liverpool in 1854-55 in a record 65 days, averaging a speed of 18½ knots.

● by
SIMEON MASCARENHAS

For half that distance, it is safe to assume a similar time, given that the *Strathfieldsaye* was slow and most boats averaged about 8 knots. If Parkes had sent for apprentices in an emergency and waited, he would have been without a paper until March.

The most plausible explanation is that the opportunistic Henry Parkes, champion of the workman, knew he had to back down and import cheaper labour, preferably men who were ignorant of local wages and conditions. If he was not paying his men too little, then they simply placed a premium on their work. Almost all had come out from England. When they were released from jail, he took a few of them back, probably out of necessity.

This raises the question of what happened to the Anglo-Indian apprentices. They were extremely well trained, Madras having the best training schemes in the British Empire, the Masters being local Anglo-Indians who had been trained in the first place by the Portuguese, the Jesuits, the Danes or the British. My feeling is that, once in Sydney, the Anglo-Indians found that their skills were far superior to those found in Australia (skills in early Australia were rather poor and work generally shoddy) and soon found better work. Some may have branched out into other occupations, or headed for the goldfields, in true adventuring Anglo-Indian style. Moving to another colony such as Victoria, Western Australia or South Australia (now state) put one out of reach of the law as each colony was a law unto itself. Few would have wanted to return to an orphanage. Many an old Australian family can trace an ancestor back to India, and many are the streets with Indian names.

The outspoken editor, whose loud and forceful slogan was "No convicts, No Chinese, No Coolies", had gained wealth and respectability and deserted his own class. His newspapers issued its last edition on August 28, 1858. A few days later *The Herald* announced that Henry Parkes had sequestered his estate, with liabilities of 53,800 pounds. As a comparison, the gold revenues for the first quarter of 1859 brought in 14,042 pounds, the postal revenue 14,736 pounds!

Why was Henry Parkes, oppressed as he had been by class

and society in England, been so anti-Asian? The answer is simple. The immigrants from Europe, China and India brought with them highly honed skills that completely overshadowed those of the locals. As an ivory-turner himself, producing mainly billiard balls, he would have been terrified of the awesome skill of the Chinese in this area. He simply did not want competition. Hence his very protectionist stance. The person who had fled oppression now practised it, as often happens with human nature.

Parkes tried to justify his importation of Anglo-Indian printers to his readers by explaining that they were "the sons of Englishmen by Indian mothers... thoroughly amalgamated to English society".

Note that he says 'English' not 'British'. How many came? Were there more arrivals? Records for Perth, Port Adelaide and Warrnambool (in Victoria) could reveal much. Melbourne had imposed a landing tax, especially for gold prospectors, so most landed elsewhere and walked to Ballarat and Bendigo, sometimes a distance of 200 miles. In what other areas were services of the very capable Anglo-Indians needed? They were excellent teachers, doctors, nurses and carpenters. Madras Medical College was turning our female doctors before most medical institutions in the world. Three of the first four female doctors were Anglo-Indian.

Parkes is called the Father of Federation for his prodigious efforts to get the separate colonies on the continent to form the federation that became Australia in 1901. He did not live to see the day. The Anglo-Indian printers stayed to assist in the growth of a new nation with skills and fortitude they had acquired in Madras.

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