

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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"We want to dedicate this song to Johnson...no, that's not our son, but our dog!"

Making waves

"What's your name?" coos the RJ.

"Maharangeswari," the caller answers.

"And you're from?"

"Majorly-Small-Town-Way-South."

"And you want to dedicate this song to?" the relentless cooing continues.

"My boyfriend," is the equally coy reply.

You choke, and your fellow companions in the car promptly react. "What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing," you self-defend. "It's just that ...I mean..."

"You know what? You are a Name-ist."

"Nonsense, there's no such thing."

"There is now, and you're it. You think only a mall-hopping, city-type name would be appropriate. Don't lie."

Meanwhile, distinctly over-ripe lyrics assault your ears, and you figure that what young Maha-R-wari needs is not so much defending, as a strongly-worded lecture by a parent or two.

Your co-passenger intones: "If you tickle her, will she not laugh? If you...er...hurt her, will she not...er...hurt...?"

Reflecting that there is no ham like the one school-play wonder, you tune out all voices, retreating with dignity.

Now, you applaud the "we-are-like-this-only" attitude, and appreciate that this, naturally, leads to the "Hey-us-too" phenomenon. But actual evidence of change invariably causes a few mental back-flips, demanding a certain cleaning up of that inevitable baggage of stereotypes. The waves of change are apparently capable of finding even the remotest, tiniest little patches of fertile soil.

Ranjitha Ashok

Setback for heritage

— As one of yesteryear's buildings goes down...

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Traffic Commissioner's Office Building on Poonamallee High Road has been razed to the ground. A fine example of the old garden house that was so typical of Madras, and Egmore in particular, it was part of a leafy area which once housed several properties of condiments king P. Venkatachellum. This building, however, does not appear to have been one of his possessions and the land is said to have once been part of the Madras Tramways Corporation.

The company went into liquidation in 1953 and its Poonamallee land was divided into four plots and sold, each for Rs. 1,00,000. The buyers were respectively Periyar, C.P. Adithanar, G.D. Naidu and Sambasiva Iyer. The Traffic Commissioner's Office is believed to be standing on the erstwhile Sambasiva Iyer property. At one time, all drivers' licences were issued from here and the spacious grounds were ideal for driving tests. A park in front was developed with road

signs so that children could develop road sense, but this later went to seed.

Ironically, the very same grounds which made this property a visual delight appear to have caused the building's

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Beautiful... that's what the Police Headquarters (above) was made when it was saved from the wreckers' hammers by the then Chief Minister, Mu Karunanidhi. Well maintained too by the Police is Government House that the same Chief Minister now wants to pull down. Meanwhile, the Police, who have tended two of their prize heritage buildings so well, have gone and pulled down a third heritage building of theirs. How inconsistent people can be with heritage!

Illegal construction illegal

— But government differs with the courts

The Madras High Court on November 13th quashed Ordinance 1 of 2007 that sought to provide a one-year amnesty for illegal constructions in Chennai. The Consumer Action Group (CAG) had won a landmark case in August 2006 when the High Court set up a Monitoring Committee to oversee the implementation of their orders which focussed on illegal constructions in multistoried commercial buildings in Chennai. The State Government had challenged this order before the Supreme Court in 2006, but did not succeed.

In July 2007, the State Government promulgated an Ordinance to stop any enforcement action for one year, arguing that it was planning to make changes to the law and that many of the

illegal constructions may no longer be illegal once such changes were made to the law. CAG had challenged this Ordinance immediately.

On November 13th, the Madras High Court passed orders on CAG's writ petition agreeing with it that the State Government was trying to overcome the judgement and, therefore, encroach on judicial powers. The Court held that the Ordinance was unconstitutional, but granted the State Government two weeks' time to appeal to the Supreme Court.

In a bizarre turn of events, the Tamil Nadu Government notified an Act (passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly) one day after this judgement — which was a verbatim reproduction of

(Continued on page 8)

... BUT ANOTHER GETS A BREATH

(By A Special Correspondent)

There is some development on the case concerning the demolition of *Bharat Insurance (Kardyl's) Building*. The landmark heritage structure, which stands threatened with demolition by the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), its present owner, has won a temporary reprieve.

Regular readers of *Madras Musings* will recollect that the demolition of this building was challenged by INTACH -Tamil

Nadu and the Madras High Court appointed a committee to look into whether the building was really beyond renovation, as the LIC contended.

The Committee in its report stated that the building was quite strong and could be restored to its original condition. The LIC took the matter to the Supreme Court on the grounds that this was not a heritage building. This was a new argument and the original grounds of "structural weakness" were

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Musings loses a founder

Madras Musings deeply regrets to record the sudden passing away on November 23rd of one of its founders, C.O. Varghese, Director of Lokavani Southern Printers (P) Ltd. He was 77 years old.

It was late in 1990 that he persuaded his partners in what was then Lokavani Hall Mark Press to launch *Madras Musings*, as much to give their printing unit a new and helpful addition to its range of activities as to contribute something towards the development of a better Madras. Later, when *Madras Musings* could not find the kind of support needed to make it self-sufficient, it was he who persuaded his partners to keep it going year after losing year as a public service till it found in Chennai Heritage the support necessary to revive it and make it a vibrant voice seeking a better city, while remembering a splendid past.

Madras Musings may have passed into the hands of Chennai Heritage, but it was Varghese who ensured that every issue of the journal came out on time, that it maintained a high quality of production values and, above all, that the day-to-day problems connected with the journal reaching its readers were handled tactfully. All of us at *Madras Musings* will miss that signal contribution that he made till the end.

Varghese, a past President of the Madras Printers' & Lithographers' Association, was closely connected with the Madras Medical Mission and several church activities that helped the less privileged.

May he rest in peace.

● Travelling with
FRANCOIS MARTIN

The long road to Madras

Anyone who wants to make a trip from Pondicherry to Chennai has to simply board a bus or a car and he will reach his destination in three hours. Some nowadays even commute on a daily basis from Pondicherry to Chennai.

But, three-and-a-quarter centuries ago, it was indeed a long route between the two towns. In May 1681, Francois Martin, the founder and first Chief of Pondicherry, undertook a journey to Surat, which was then the headquarters of all French settlements in India. A lesser man would have resigned himself to the hardships and uncertainties of a journey from a southern corner to the western tip of India. Not so Martin. For him, every day was an opportunity to observe his surroundings minutely. This is how he saw the first part of his jour-

thinking of his French readers and that prompted him to describe what toddy was.

While crossing the river Chingour on May 28th, Martin was "amazed" to see that it was completely dry. The river-bed, completely silted over, was also very flat. During the monsoon, the surrounding countryside would, however, get flooded.

As they moved on, they passed through a large village called Mukayur. This area was full of sugar-yielding palm trees (palmyra) and other fruit-bearing trees. A little further on, Martin's soldiers halted at a temple in Aletoor. After a good rest, they resumed their journey at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and two hours later they reached Vaclour.

On May 29th they came to Patenour. At this village, a lashkar captain who had served

● The second of RITA NATH KESHARI's occasional looks at the Madras-Pondy connection.

ney (i.e. from Pondicherry to Madras), which took from the morning of May 26th till the evening of May 30th.

On May 26th, he left Pondicherry accompanied by five Frenchmen (including Sieur Germain, the physician) and 20 lashkars or native soldiers. The Chief of Pondicherry could not travel with a less impressive entourage. The Second Councillor, Sieur Deltor, and some of the others who were to take charge of affairs at Pondicherry in Martin's absence, travelled with him upto Kunimedu. After spending the night there, Sieur Deltor and his companions returned to Pondicherry.

The following morning, Martin and his men crossed the Kunimedu River. Since they had to wait for the pack animals carrying their luggage, they took that opportunity to relax in the shade of the trees. It was obvious that every stage of the journey had to be planned.

From Kunimedu they resumed travelling at 3 in the afternoon so that they could reach a small town he calls Alamparwa for their night halt. As he mentions fruit trees on the way, we wonder what these could be. Martin indicates only briefly that the most common trees were coconut and a species of palm from which toddy is extracted. He was probably

under him at San Thomé, called on him. As they continued travelling, they reached Tirupaloor. He mentions a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. Their next halt was at a small village called Valachery which offered them shelter for the night and they camped out in the open.

As he approached the suburbs of Madras on May 30th he sent Sieur Germain to the Capuchin priests in Madras to convey to them his travel plans.

Since the Governor of Madras was ill, Martin sent him a message that much as he wished to meet him he did not intend to disturb him. Within two hours, Martin's caravan was moving on. As he approached San Thomé, he anticipated a large gathering of people interested in speaking to him. Wishing to avoid them in order to prevent any delay, Martin decided to change his route. He turned to the west, bypassing ruins of San Thomé and reached the foot of the 'Great Mount', whose sacred nature he emphasises.

Martin continued travelling in a westerly direction and at 8 in the evening he left Madras behind on his right and reached Thiruvallur (a town about a league to the north of Madras).

What we gather from the description of this journey is that Martin and his party of men

Is Mumbai going the Chennai way?

The Man from Madras Musings is musing on matters in Mumbai for a change. MMM has always considered Mumbai the ideal city in heritage conservation. The city had heritage laws long before other cities woke up and as for heritage activism there has always been a healthy public awareness. But MMM is sorry to report that Mumbai appears to have taken a leaf from the book of Madras that is Chennai when it comes to doing away with heritage buildings in a cloak-and-dagger manner.

In a sudden move, the city's Corporation took away the clause that insisted that a nod from the Heritage Committee was needed before Grade III heritage buildings could be redeveloped. These will now only need approval of the Municipal Commissioner, thereby making matters easier for the builders. The city's builder lobby is delighted, but heritage activists are understandably miffed. In fact, the standing Heritage Committee was not even aware of such a notification.

MMM wonders why Mumbaiites have to make life so complicated for themselves. Why can't they simply follow Chennaiites? No Heritage Laws, no Committee! No approvals! Simply demolish and build. Raze instead of restore! In the words of Mumbaiikars - "Kaiko tension leta hai re?" (Why take on tensions?) And if the buildings flout some approvals so what? The Government will protect such violations (see page 1).

Makeshift hoardings

They are back! Entirely as predicted by *The Man from Madras Musings*. Now that the season of cyclones is over, the political parties are back, erecting their hoardings at all junctions, road corners, and pavements. Casuarina poles are being installed and hoardings are being unfurled. There are leaders beaming, walking, waving, seriously contemplating, writing, speaking and striking a variety of other poses.

This also being the season of pilgrimage to certain holy spots, the followers of such practices have also added their bit to the hoarding fever and many yatras and tours are being announced through the mechanism of hoardings.

MMM wonders as to what

happened to the announcement of the City's Police Commissioner that those putting up such hoardings would be severely dealt with.

The other day, MMM was chastised by a policeman for not noticing a signal change. MMM would have liked to point out to him that the traffic light was hidden completely by a beaming political figure and so there was no question of noticing a signal change. But MMM being meek has not inherited the earth and so silently chose to slink away.

Phoenix-like

The Man from Madras Musings is happy to note that work is proceeding apace at the historic RR Sabha premises in Mylapore. While nothing could mitigate the sorrow that MMM felt when the old heritage structure was pulled

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

down about two years ago, what worried him even more was that the land was allowed to remain vacant with the Sabha moving to rented premises to conduct its events. Now, funding has apparently come through and work on building a new auditorium has begun. Presumably it will be of the airconditioned variety.

The old hall had high quality acoustics because the doors and windows were kept open. Hopefully the acoustics will be taken care of in the new structure.

Simians of Chennai

The Man from Madras Musings was in Delhi recently when the whole city was abuzz with the monkey menace. The fall from the roof and subsequent death of that metro's Deputy Mayor while in the act of shooing away a monkey had raised everybody's hackles. MMM kept his counsel to himself for it is his view that continued deforestation is the reason for monkeys turning marauders.

"I am sure you have no such problems in your city," gushed a bejewelled matron. "Chennai

is such a law-abiding place." While MMM was quite certain that the Chennai monkey cannot be more aware of the law than the Delhi one, the comment set him thinking whether there were any monkeys at all in Chennai. By that MMM does not mean the variety that is chained and made to do tricks, but the free-wheeling one which moves from tree to tree and house to house just as ... er... MMM leaps from subject to subject. And (surprise, surprise), there are monkeys here too.

At least one family lives in the now shut down Transformer Division of Andrew Yule in Adyar. Apparently monkeys live happily in the shrubbery and trees that flourish in the property. Every day the band comes out at particular times and raids the neighbourhood. The residents then scurry nimbly to secure doors and windows and to pull clothes away from the places where they are hung up to dry. MMM is informed that physical fitness is very high in the area.

Forgotten Caldwell

A colleague of MMM's informs that the condition of Caldwell's statue on the Marina has to be seen to be believed. Apparently for various reasons and circumstances no doubt beyond its control, the statue now finds itself inside the swimming pool complex on the Marina and is, therefore, out of sight. Now, *The Man from Madras Musings* is worried about this good Samaritan from overseas who did so much for Tamil and who was therefore commemorated with a statue.

The present generation cannot expect to know much about Caldwell and it will only be a question of time before someone assumes he is a foreigner who needs to be dumped in the Museum's vaults. And Caldwell is no Kannagi that battles will be fought on his behalf. He is, in fact, like Swami Sivananda, whose statue, all hale and hearty, simply vanished one evening in the silent watches of the night leaving not a sign behind and has not been heard of ever since. Why can't the Corporation move Caldwell out and place him in a more prominent location on the Marina?

— MMM

never lodged at wayside inns or in the houses of the local rich. Are we to presume that these facilities did not exist? The references to the temple at Aletoor, the open camp at Valachery at night and the deliberate break journey in Alamparwa indicate that they neither had wealthy hosts nor were the villages important enough to have caravan serais.

Many of these places are no longer visible in the detailed maps of today. This could signify that either their names have been changed or they have been swallowed by larger localities that came up later.

How about sailing from Madras to Pondicherry and vice versa? Martin has an anecdote from this too.

On October 3, 1674, Martin

received letters from the Director-General Baron who was in charge of all the French settlements in India and Siam (Thailand), most powerful Frenchman in 17th Century India.

Baron, who wanted to sail to Pondicherry from Madras, was waiting for the ship *Diligente* to take him to his destination. Martin was instructed to write

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OUR READERS WRITE



Heritage houses

In Coimbatore, a by-century-old house with spacious garden belonging to the late G. Venkataswamy Naidu's family recently won the award for the best maintained heritage house in the cotton city from INTACH, Coimbatore. The scions of Naidu family have maintained the house intact, keeping the greenery around in a spic and span condition without falling prey to temptations of apartment builders. The owners of such heritage houses in Chennai and other towns would do well to emulate this example.

M.R. Pillai
110, Muthu Nilayam
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Coimbatore 641 045

Flyovers aplenty

While the subway near Meenambakkam Railway Station – which is vital for students and others to come to the other side – is crying for attention, the authorities have sited as many as four flyovers from Pallavaram station to Sanatorium, a distance of 5 km! The work on the Pallavaram flyover, near the Railway station, has been stopped and, suddenly, an underground subway has been opened unannounced. The next at Thorapakkam-Pallavaram Radial 200 Feet Road, which joins at G.S.T. Road at Tiruneermalai junction, is at a standstill after hectic activity during the last five months. The third one is the M.I.T. flyover, which is too narrow, full of traffic. The fourth one adjacent to Sanatorium station is half-finished. At enormous cost to tax-payers, why

should we have so many flyovers?

The one at 200 feet radial road is a necessity as it will reduce the travel time to the ECR Road, and also ease congestion at Kathipara junction. The Pallavaram flyover is a waste, as the subway can serve the other side of Pallavaram right upto Keelkattalai and also upto Radha Nagar in Chromepet. The M.I.T. flyover, which took 9 years to complete, is a waste as it is too narrow. If only some imagination had gone into its construction, we would have had a good, broad flyover that could cater to the needs of the other side and also Chitlapakkam area. In any case a new flyover is coming up in East Tambaram (there is an underground subway there), which would have served the public.

M. Fazal
11, Mosque Street
Hastinapuram, Chennai 600 064

Vanishing sparrows

Ever since I settled in Chennai in 1997, I had been wondering as to what happened to those chirpy house sparrows, which used to wake me in the morning. They were always flying in and out of the house, especially during the nesting seasons. Very annoyingly they were wont to build their nests inside the conical canopy above the blades of ceiling fans. Very often the parent bird would be hit by the swirling blades and equally often the little fellows used to fall from the nest on to the blade top. As the article (MM, November 1st) points out, these sparrows were monogamous and ran their household chores harmoniously and cheerfully.

The failure with education

Regarding the State of the States (MM, October 1st), I feel, Tamil Nadu, has done well to hold its fourth rank for the last four years, though its score of 2.36 out of 10 on its overall performance is not flattering. Smaller states like Puducherry and Goa and Sikkim have got a score of 4.02, 3.67 and 2.73, respectively.

When we analyse data of achievers with that of Tamil Nadu, there is prospect of much improvement. Consider these.

	Area Sq. km.	Population (million)	Pop. density Sq.km.	Literacy %
Punjab	50,362	24.8	482	77.13
Kerala	38,863	31.8	819	90.92
Himachal Pradesh	55,673	6.0	109	77.13
Tamil Nadu	130,058	62.1	478	73.47

It will be seen that the real performer is Kerala with a population density of 819. There is no doubt it is the main beneficiary of a good climate and a high literacy percentage, coupled with primary health care. Punjab scores over Tamil Nadu due to agriculture development, thanks to the huge irrigated area. Its rating in agriculture at 5.62 is being matched by Puducherry with 5.46. Tamil Nadu is certainly low at 3. There can be a lot of scope if irrigation schemes are made successful. Himachal Pradesh has a density of 109 people and a small population of 6 million. In fact it cannot be considered a big state. Can you consider Alaska a big state?

On the health front, Kerala has done extremely well, standing at the top, though its score of 2.44 is lower than Goa, Sikkim, Delhi or Puducherry. Tamil Nadu's burden to cater to 62.1 million people with a population density of 478 is much higher, but it has managed to hold its third place.

It is in the field of education that Tamil Nadu is lagging behind at sixth position. We find nine small states and four union territories scoring better than Tamil Nadu. This is a field that Tamil Nadu needs to improve. Some Rs. 60 crore allotted for municipal schools has not even been utilised! This is a human rights violation.

301 million people, more than a fourth of the country's population, 27%, are classified below the poverty line. This is how the top rankers performed.

	Population (million)	BPL (million)	Percentage
Punjab	24.8	2.09	8.42
Kerala	31.8	4.88	15.34
Himachal Pradesh	6.0	0.63	10.50
Tamil Nadu	62.1	14.73	23.71

Punjab has really conquered poverty compared to the other top rankers. Anyone having a higher poverty index like Tamil Nadu with respect to the top four states, obviously, cannot ever expect to go to number one position.

To come to the level of Punjab's BPL, Tamil Nadu has to pull up 9.3 million people from the below poverty line. This can only happen by giving increased subsidised foodgrains, improved healthcare and improved education which in turn gives at least a three-fold increase in earning power.

Tamil Nadu has all the basic infrastructure with 48,359 schools, 693 colleges and 28 universities. With these, surely, the Government can improve matters. It just needs a will to do so.

K.V.S. Krishna
2A, Parkland Apartments
Kamala Bai Street
T.Nagar, Chennai 600 017

I knew that Chennai had changed in the four decades I was globe-trotting and many familiar sights had vanished, giving place to concrete jungles. But I never imagined that these changes had taken such a heavy toll of exterminating those beautiful, friendly creatures.

I used to live in T. Nagar area before the 1950s and now live in Nungambakkam. I see no sparrows at either place now. Has anyone been seeing them elsewhere in Chennai?

T.G. Ramamurthi
10, Virabadrán Street
Chennai 600 034

Inspiration

I read with great pleasure about the first woman M.B. & Ch. M., Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy (MM, November 1st). Though I had heard of her name I was unaware of her full history.

By reading such articles, at least a few people will get inspi-

ration to aim at certain goals and many good Samaritans may come forward to extend their moral and financial support to needy people.

Congratulations to *Madras Musings* for publishing such articles.

A.N. Rizza
10, IV Street, Seva Nagar
Velachery, Chennai 600 042

Synes of the Tymes

'The Synes of our Rodes' (MM, November 1st) reminds me of the occasional boobs all over the world.

To begin with, we have a board 'Danse Nagar' on a tailoring shop in Velachery, referring to TANSI Nagar. But such curious signs are to be found all over the world.

A sign in a Miami hospital maternity ward says, "No children allowed". A similar sign in a cemetery warns, "Persons are prohibited from picking flowers from any but their own graves."

A note of caution on a jar of sleeping pills reads, "May cause drowsiness."

A chain saw manual advises, "Do not attempt to stop chain with your hands."

A notice on a hotel hair dryer says, "Do not use while sleeping."

A Hong Kong supermarket had a sign that said, "For your convenience we recommend courteous, efficient self-service."

How about this sign at Osaka airport: "Shoes sunshine"?

This was a real gem in a Yugoslavian hotel that read, "The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of the chambermaid."

In a Zurich hotel was a sign, "Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests by the opposite gender in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose."

This one is classic, "Nothing can be more embracing than bad odour. And the problem only gets worse summers."

Thus we find that the basics of plain English, the nuts and bolts, have got their knickers in a twist, metaphorically speaking. At the U.S. jail in Guantánamo, Cuba, suicides are classified as "manipulative self-injurious behaviours", or so we are told. How about this "English smoken".

M. Chidambaram
23/10 (Old No. 6/10)
Arulambal Street
T. Nagar
Chennai 600 017

Breather for a heritage building

(Continued from page 1)

abandoned. (If Bharat Insurance/Kardyl's Building is not a heritage structure, then what would be?)

The LIC then put up banners all around the building warning the public that it was a weak structure that could collapse anytime. The building, which is now largely roofless, has been exposed to the elements for over two years.

The Supreme Court has now stated that the matter can be dealt with by the Madras High Court and has asked the latter to dispose of the matter based on its merits.

This, however, is only a temporary breather and a lot will depend on what the final outcome of the case will be. Meanwhile, *Madras Musings* hopes for the best.

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

NOSTALGIA

Recalling the days in Dwaraka Colony

We (a family of six) moved into Dwaraka Colony during the summer of 1943. It was a cosy colony with a main street (there were a few side-streets as well) whose entrance on the north was from Edward Elliot Road and on the west from Brindavan Street, which was off Royapettah High Road. The first house from the Edward Elliot Road entrance was a spacious one, where the famous ophthalmologist, Dr. E.V. Srinivasan, lived in those days. You spotted him in the evenings on the beach road, being driven homewards (he used to change his car every year!) while reclining comfortably in the back seat of his car. He sported a characteristic red turban on his head! The doctor and his brother, E.R. Srinivasan (PWD engineer), had built this colony comprising about 20 houses on their ancestral property of about 2-3 acres during the early decade, mostly in plots of 1.5 grounds each, with a few on 3-ground plots.

The place, fully enclosed by compound-walls, was lined with coconut trees (the land formerly was a coconut grove). On its eastern side was a huge free area with lots of mango and neem trees and a big building that housed the Kalyani Nursing Home set up by Dr. Kalyani, the eye-doctor's daughter. It was a

fully equipped maternity hospital with rooms for patients to stay. Kalyani was one of the first few women students of the Madras Medical College to specialise in Gynaecology and Obstetrics.

Next to our house lived A.V. Meyyappa Chettiar's family. His little boys would often be playing the gramophone and it was a continuous treat of songs from all the AVM movies as they were released ... *Sri Valli, Nam Irular, Vedhala Ulagam, Vazhkai*, we heard all their songs so many times. Of course, Pattammal's Bharati songs and M.S.'s Meera

• by
Cdr. R. Ganapathi
(RET'D.)

hits were also played repeatedly. Ramiah Chettiar, next door, used to manufacture Neo Gripe Water (a la Woodward's Gripe Water) in his backyard. I often used to visit his house not to buy the gripewater but to make phone calls as we had no phone at home!

The Andhra Mahila Sabha was founded by Srimathi Durgabai at her residence in Dwaraka Colony. I still remember the evening when we were

invited to her residence for a programme of Rabindra Sangeet rendered by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya who was visiting her. It was an enthralling experience. Mrs. Chennakantamma Krishna Rao, the founder of the Sthree Seva Mandir was also a resident.

Another first for the Colony was the setting up of the Kindergarten school (actually in the house next to mine) by Prof. Sharma and his wife, a German, Ellen Sharma. This school later blossomed as the very popular Children's Garden School in Radhakrishnan Salai.

Saraswathi Balaraman, a Carnatic musician of repute, also lived in our midst and we could hear her singing whenever we passed by her house early in the morning. E.R. Srinivasan's wife Padma was a prolific composer of Carnatic music. B.N. Rao, a director at Gemini Studios, also lived in the colony and, once, he took a fortunate few of us to see the shooting of the famous *Chandralekha!*

To lend a truly integrated Indian character to the place, there was a Bengali family, the Gosains, and an Assamese businessman, Bez Barua, who used to traverse the colony road on his heavy Daba-Daba motorcycle! In the neighbouring Brindavan and Balakrishna Streets lived the famous director B.R. Pantulu and cine actors M.K. Radha, T.R. Mahalingam and comedian K. Sarangapani with whom we used to mix to the envy of my school-mates!

Amongst us, there were at least 10 to 15 boys of school/college-going age. We would meet in the evenings, play in the colony ground or go to the beach or just sit on the house railings and chat. We used to play cricket in the big colony ground. We had a regular cricket team with friends from outside also as its members. There would be regular practices on holidays and on some days matches as well. Some of our famous players were K.S. Ramachandran, the opening batsman, and Margabandu, the wicket-keeper. Ranganathan (Jinni was his pet name) and Srinivasan (Cheema) were our fast bowlers. V. Krishna Mohan Rao (Bobby) was our all-rounder

(I think he later played for Tamil Nadu). Then there was Ananthapadmanabhan (Bun) who passed for a slow bowler. He used to compare himself with G. Kishenchand, who hit the headlines in Test circles as a wily flighter of the ball!

We witnessed all the four days of the 'Test' match that India played against the Australian Services team in December 1945 at Chepauk. One party would leave at 5 a.m. with mats and bedsheets to go and squat on the ground in front of the gate in order to gain first entry when the gates would be opened and run and take vantage seats in the galleries. The remaining members would then arrive around 9 a.m. carrying breakfast for the early morning team and full lunch for all the members in tall tiffin-boxes! Of course, the party would also bring trumpets and cymbals to make a noise during the match to greet every batsman as he entered to bat, to herald the fall of every wicket or cheer every cracking four or hefty sixer!

During *Navaratri* and *Margazhi*, free music concerts used to be held in Kapali Koil, Ramakrishna Home and Saibaba Koil. They will start around 7 p.m. and go on for 3 to 4 hours. We would finish dinner at home and leave in a group and invariably attend all the kutcheries till *Mangalam* was sung!

Nor will old residents forget the heavy rains we had in December 1943 when the whole colony was flooded. The Adyar and Cooum rivers overflowed and flooded the adjoining areas. I used to sleep downstairs to facilitate collecting the morning milk when it was delivered. It was raining cats and dogs the whole day and the night. Suddenly, very early in the morning, I was woken up by a metallic sound. The mud waterpot that was placed in a corner of the room was floating in foot-deep water in the room. The metal lid and the tumbler placed on top of it were making the clanging noise as the whole system was oscillating to and fro in the water! We had a swell time throughout that morning, wading in the chest-deep water, visiting various houses, and trying to render any help that was needed. By afternoon, the floods receded and then for the next few days, we had to clean the whole place.

P.S. Quite recently, I met my old school friend T.K. Srinivasan (the grandson of engineer E.R. Srinivasan) who still lives in the Colony. He says the ambience is still the same, the residents are warm and friendly, but the only thing he misses is old faces like mine!

A facility that has served women for generations...

...It launched Paediatrics as a speciality

A usual Monday morning at the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Hospital for Women and Children. Patient attendants busily go up and down with food packets for their wards; on the stone benches and in the open quadrangles midst the parked cycles and what-nots outside the hospital, others sit or sleep; and the road outside ('Urine Road', according to a long-time Triplicane resident) stinks as usual. Kamakshi, who has successfully braved the rains for the last ten days from an unused car porch, proffers an *idli* from a banana leaf to her daughter Rani, whose premature baby is currently in an incubator.

Outside the wards, passages are littered with plastic, food remnants, and biscuit packets while, inside, undernourished young mothers and their wailing babies are being ministered to by the attendants. A smiling Kamala, slated for a hysterectomy that afternoon, says, "Treatment here is very good!" Just as generations of women have confirmed over the last 12 decades!

Introduced "to provide quality medical care for the native women who were unwilling to access a hospital owing to religious scruples and social customs," the hospital began as an idea back in January 1885. After a few informal meetings, and then a public meeting held at the Pachaiyappa's Hall on March 6, 1885 - presided over by Lady Grant Duff and attended by T. Madhava Rao, Diwan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao and Kasturi Bashyam Iyengar, the Rajas of Vizianagaram and Venkatagiri,

and Raja Sri Savalai Ramaswamy Mudaliar and others - it was "resolved to establish the Caste and Gosha Hospital in Madras, named after her Majesty Queen Victoria." (*Gosha* referred to the practice of veiling among Muslim women.)

Dr. Mary Scharlieb, one of India's first women doctors, was instrumental in the founding of



Dr. E. Madhuram, first Chief of the Surgical Unit.

the hospital. It was she who met Queen Victoria and influenced her to support the initiative by providing information about the pathetic medical conditions and appalling maternity rates among the native women of India. With Rs. 70,000 collected at the public meeting, and further donations soon raised, the Royal Victoria Hospital for Caste and Gosha Women was declared open on December 7, 1885 by Her Excellency Lady Grant Duff, wife of the Governor.

The hospital's first patients were admitted to premises offered free of rent in Moore's Garden, Nungambakkam, by Humayun Jah Bahadur. Dr. Scharlieb was in charge, and her records refer to her daily routine thus: "5.30 a.m., visits to patients in their houses. 7 a.m., about seventy patients at Hospital and a round of thirty beds; breakfast. 12 to 1 p.m., lecture to women students at the Medical College 1 p.m., consultations at home. 4 p.m., tea and change of clothes, visits to European patients in their houses, and perhaps a little relaxation before dinner at 8 p.m., and then to bed, often only to be disturbed for two or three successive cases before dawn." After a while, she persuaded the Hospital Committee that a resident medical officer was needed, and Mary Pailthorpe arrived.

The hospital was removed to the 'Rookery' (where exactly this is, is not clear) in September 1887. Government offered Rs. 10,000 and supply of medicines and, later, granted a free site at Chepauk for a permanent building. With the Raja of Venkatagiri's lakh of rupees towards the building, the foundation stone was laid (the marble plaque that records this is now almost hidden in gravel and rubble)... "of this hospital erected by the Rajah of Venkatagiri and laid in the 50th year of the happy reign of Queen Victoria, Empress of India, by Anne Julia, Lady Grant Duff CI on 18th day of September 1886." The new hospital building was ready for occupation only by June 1890. Scharlieb had returned to England in 1887.

By 1901, the first Nurses'



The Prince of Wales Hospital for Children in the 1960s.

Quarters had been built with a donation of Rs. 4000 by Lodd Krishnadoss and Bala Mukundhadoss, and opened by Lady Amphil. In 1902, Queen Alexandra succeeded Queen Victoria as patron of the hospital.

A 1904 Report of the Hospital notes, "We are also pleased to state that several of the better class comes into the hospital for their confinement. We have had no less than 37 Brahmin and respectable Hindu cases. There is no doubt that the new delivery ward, the gift of Lady Bashyam Iyengar, will prove a special attraction as the accommodation and sanitary conditions are far superior to the old delivery ward." The 'Bashyam Ward' is now the ward attached to the Old Delivery Room (ODR) and teems with patients!

In the early years, attendants manually carried soiled clothes in barrels to the washing areas where others washed them. Later came the pushcarts. By 1907, a huge washroom was in place with four large boilers (still operational), each with a capacity of 862 sq ft, sourced from Engineers, Marshall Sons Pvt Ltd., England. A central quadrangle with neatly lined posts and clotheslines adjoins this area. There is also provision for a steam operated drier used during rainy seasons (rarely operated now). A modern Steam Laundry Unit at a cost of Rs. 4 lakh was added in 1955, one of the earliest in Madras.

A vegetarian kitchen started operations in 1908. By the following year, the Lady Lawley Ward, built by the Zamindar of Ettaiyapuram to house septic cases, was opened by Her Excellency The Countess of Minto, on December 10th. Currently, it is the Urogynaecology Ward of the hospital, and has the distinction of being the first of its kind in the country!

Electrical installation for lighting followed in 1911. In 1913, towards efforts to make the hospital self-supporting, the Committee appointed Miss Hendrie the Lady Superintendent. Three fully qualified staff nurses and six student nurses for training were appointed. So began the hospital's School of Nursing.

The new Nurses Quarters (now dilapidated) was opened by Her Excellency Lady Pentland on January 19, 1915, its execution funded by the Government of Madras and the Zamorin of Calicut. In 1921, the hospital was taken over by the Government of Madras.

• by
SHOBHA MENON

"Interestingly, it was on the premises of this hospital that, way before the speciality of Paediatrics was even thought of in this part of the world, a hospital for sick children was founded!" confirms surgical oncologist and history buff Dr. Gunasagam. And it was Dr. T Muthulakshmi Reddy, the first Indian woman medical graduate, who, as Vice-President of the Madras Legislative Council, piloted the motion for the establishment of a hospital for sick children in Madras on the lines of the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London. So there came up the Prince of Wales Children's Block, "to commemorate the visit of HRH Prince of Wales to Madras in 1922 ... met out of public subscriptions which amounted to about 3.9 lakhs" for the cost of building and initial equipment. The foundation stone was laid by Governor Sir George Frederick Stanley on August 20, 1934 and it was opened by Lady Marjorie Erskine on March 16, 1936 with 52 beds.

The Surgical Unit was started in 1937 with Dr. E. Madhuram, its first Chief. However, the Department acquired a full-time surgeon only in 1970 with Dr. V.V. Chelvakumar to head it. The bed strength had increased to 367 (including the Special Wards) by 1946. And in May 1948, the hospital was renamed the Government Kasturba Gandhi Hospital for Women and Children.

The Family Planning Department was started in 1953 (just a year after the National Family Planning Policy was formulated) and it was one of the earliest hospitals to do so. Frayed 1958 Delivery Records reveal the following: "Chandramma, w/o Krishnaya, from Kisanampet, Weaver Rs 30/; Pichamma, c/o KV Subramaniam, Clerk Rs 90/; Kannamma, c/o Srinivasan, Salt Seller Rs. 60/..."

The quarters for Lower Grade Government Servants (LGGS) were constructed in 1963 to accommodate 102 families, and it is the KGH alone of the government hospitals with such exclusive quarters (with Stanley Hospital converting its own into a Social Obstetrics Unit some time ago). G. Kasturi, a long-time staff in the kitchen, remembers, "That was a time when carts with wooden logs moved around carrying fuel to fire the kitchen. Oats cooked on coal fires used to be supplied to patients in the Special Ward, where 4 patients would be attended to by one exclusive ayah. Circular spiral staircases in all the blocks still remind old-timers of the Matron's surprise checks to the upper floors! Earlier, we used to live in tiled mud houses (on the site of the new OP) that leaked badly when it rained. Our quarters were declared open by Kamaraj himself!"

(To be Concluded)



A Centenary year picture. The team, led by Dr. Kanthamani, Superintendent (with trophy), that in 1985 won the 'well maintained hospital award'.

A Miller's Road film pioneer

Residential Purasawalkam is not an area you would associate with a movie studio today. Yet during the second decade of the 20th Century, two studios functioned there! The first was on Miller's Road, where the first South Indian feature film, silent, of course, *Keechaka Vadham* (1918) was produced. The pioneer who created it against all odds was R. Nataraja Mudaliar, sadly forgotten and ignored, even by most scholars.

(Interestingly the book, *Light of Asia – Indian Silent Cinema 1912-1934* (published in 1994), lists for the first time a film, *Gopal Krishna*, made by Nataraja Mudaliar in 1915. There is no mention of this film in any of the other chronicles of the history of silent films produced in Madras and no evidence can be traced about its release.)

Nataraja Mudaliar was a fairly prosperous automobile spare parts merchant with a lively interest in photography and the new art form, Cinema. Lord Curzon was then the Viceroy of India and his durbars and social activities in Delhi were being filmed for news reel coverage by British cinematographers. Mudaliar established contact with one of them, Stewart Smith, based in Poona, and persuaded him to teach him the basics of cinematography. Armed with this limited knowledge and unlimited enthusiasm, Mudaliar plunged into film production, promoting The Indian Film Company. He brought in some of his business associates and friends as investors, and built a studio on Miller's Road.

As he was no writer, and had little or no experience in the fine arts, he roped in more friends, like the popular stage actor of the day, extra-long-haired Rangavadevelu, to take care of the acting side of the film. Of course, Mudaliar was

the cameraman, editor, director, producer, et al!

As the film was silent, like most pioneer Indian film-makers, he chose a story that could be easily understood by one and all, one that moviegoers were already familiar with. The choice fell on a minor episode from the immortal Indian epic, *Mahabharatam*, entitled *Keechaka Vadham*.

The story was suggested by one of the founding fathers of the Renaissance of Tamil Theatre, Pammal Sambandham Mudaliar. Why this story? It had violence, sentiment, and sex appeal! Ingredients which are still found in every movie made in India and even elsewhere!

Like the other pioneer Raghupathy Prakash, Mudaliar too had to seek his performers from the Anglo-Indian community in Madras. Purasawalkam was then a stronghold of that community and Mudaliar found several of his cast near his studio. Unlike today, actors and

leased his brainchild in 1918, and the results and public response were encouraging enough for him to think of his next production. A print of *Keechaka Vadham* is believed to be preserved in the film archives of the Eastman Kodak Foundation, Rochester, in New York State. (But no confirmation is available.)

Inspired by the success of *Keechaka Vadham*, Mudaliar produced more films of the mythological genre. One of them was *Draupadhi Vastrapaharanam* (1918). It had Violet Berry, an English woman, playing the lead role, with Duraiswami Pillai as Dussasena, the evil-minded brother of the Kaurava King Duryodhana. In the famous scene in which Dussasena tries unsuccessfully to disrobe Draupadhi in the King's court, Berry and Pillai chatted amiably in English, which had absolutely no reference to the scene or story line! (Some smart lipreaders wrote nasty letters to Mudaliar, who

Round the City's old studios with RANDOR GUY

actresses of those happier years travelled to work at their own cost and brought their own food. The extravagant, wasteful five-star culture of providing and pampering of artistes with food and luxuries was mercifully still in the womb of time.

Mudaliar shot his feature film over five weeks and, as there was no film laboratory in the city, he went to Bangalore where he established a laboratory of his own. He believed that the cooler climate would be kind to his exposed film stock! There, he worked during weekends with his exposed footage and returned on Monday mornings to resume shooting. He re-

read them all with understandable amusement!

Mudaliar continued to make films for a couple of more years. The list includes *Lava Kush* (1919), *Mahe Ravan* (1919), *Shiv Leela* (1919), and *Rukmini Satyabhama* (1920).

In *Rukmini Satyabhama*, one of the lead actresses was Janaki, a Brahmin lady. That was a period when Brahmin women led cloistered lives and rarely moved out of their homes and certainly never went out alone. In such a situation, for a Brahmin woman to act in movie, shock in the community was inevitable. There was much criticism not only about the woman, but even about Mudaliar who was criticised by members of his own community for polluting the society of the period and planting wrong and immoral ideas in the minds of women!

In silent films, title cards were used to explain some points in the story and also the dialogue. Such cards were known as 'inter-titles' and written in more than one language (such as English, Tamil, Telugu and Hindi). During that period films made in Madras were screened all over India and also in neighbouring countries like Burma, the Federated Malay States, and Ceylon. Mudaliar had the English cards written by his uncle, that well-known Ma-

chored) to prepare his ship for its eminent passenger.

It was January 15, 1675 before the *Diligente* was made ready to sail to Madras to pick up Baron. On February 22nd, Director-General Baron, along with his entourage, reached Pondicherry aboard the *Diligente*.

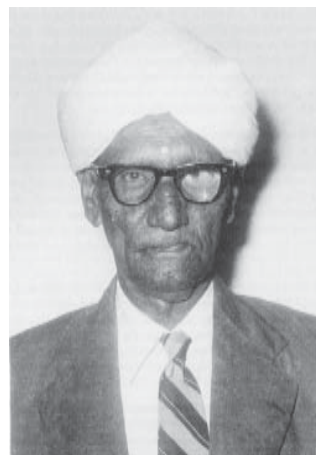
Source: *India in the 17th Century (Social, Economic and Political) Memoirs of Francois Martin (1670-1694) volume I, part II*. Translated and annotated by Lotika Varadarajan; New Delhi; Manohar 1983.

The long road to Madras

(Continued from page 2)

to the Captain of the ship to get the vessel ready as soon as possible and load it with sufficient water for the voyage. Baron's entourage comprised several of the Company's merchants, writers, 20 soldiers and 30 sailors. To accommodate so many people, a great amount of food was also stored in the ship.

Veron, the Captain of the ship *Diligente*, was in Pondicherry at the time. As soon as he received instructions from Martin, he left for Porto Novo (where his ship was an-



R. Nataraja Mudaliar

dras medical genius, Dr. M.R. Guruswami Mudaliar. The Hindi cards were written by Devdas Gandhi, Mahatma Ganhi's son, then an up-and-coming journalist, who was to make a mark in the world of Indian journalism as the editor of the Delhi-based daily, *Hindustan Times*.

Such title cards were artistically designed which added to the artistic values of the film. It was also the practice at that time to have a card at the end of a film with the words 'Good Night!' and 'Namaskar' in Hindi.

Even though the films were silent, they were accompanied by background music provided in the cinema house by the exhibitor and usually Indian instrument players using harmonium and *tabla* and sometimes a flute. They sat in the pit of the theatre and played the appropriate background music. Interestingly, the background score varied from theatre to theatre, from show to show, depending on the moods of the instrument players who produced the score at a moment's notice! Not an easy job that!

There were also men standing in the cinema at a doorway in the middle of the theatre hall and they narrated in the local language the events on-screen and also spoke the dialogue in their own fashion. Such men, known as "barkers", enjoyed a certain degree of popularity and some of them were treated as "stars" with fan followings of their own! This practice was in vogue in Japan and also in small towns and villages in India.

These films were less than 6000 feet and were screened at the silent film speed of 16 frames per second. (35-mm sound films run at 24 frames per second.)

Sadly, bickering and misunderstandings surfaced among the investors and a thoroughly disgusted Nataraja Mudaliar walked out shutting shop, and moved to his native Vellore. The sudden death of his only son in an accident filled his cup of woe. By 1923, he left movies and went back to his old business. For many long years he lived in Madras in oblivion and passed away in 1972, unwept, unsung and, of course, unhon-

Setback for heritage

(Continued from page 1)

downfall. Like all Government departments, the police too has been burgeoning, requiring more and more space. On August 30th last year, the State Government announced plans to construct a new multi-storied office for the Commissioner of Police, the present HQ on the eponymous road being found insufficient. The Tamil Nadu Housing Corporation (TNHC) inspected the Traffic Commissioner's Office and deemed that the 5.5 acres of land in it would be ideal for the multi-storied building to come up. The present Traffic Commissioner's Office was declared "not up to the desired level from the user perspective", whatever that meant. Had there been a Heritage Act in place with guidelines, such a demolition would not have happened. In fact, had the TNHC been more sensitive, it would have left the old building as it was and built the new HQ in the adjoining vacant space.

The new building is expected to house all the police offices and is being built at a cost of Rs. 15 crore in two phases, the first one costing Rs. 10 crore.

The Police Department seems unable to make up its mind as far as heritage is concerned. The DGP building on the Marina was saved thanks to activists, the courts and the then Chief Minister, who is now in office again. Once the Police were asked to preserve it, they did an excellent job, thereby making the building a landmark in the city. *Government House*, on Government Estate, has been preserved and maintained fairly well, thanks to it being occupied by the Police in recent years. But now the Government has decided to knock the building down, for the land is to be used for the new Assembly. The Police have been asked to vacate the premises. Elsewhere in the city, several old Police stations were pulled down, but others such as the Mylapore one on Kutcheri Road and the one on Greame's Road are being maintained very well.

It is clear that the Department looks to the Government for direction on preserving its heritage, but unfortunately there is nothing forthcoming from that direction.

ored. A few years before he passed away, he made an appeal to the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce for financial assistance to make a movie. He was shocked when he realised that most of the members had not even heard of him. A sad end, indeed, for a pioneer.

Musings on The Season ahead



Sita Doraiswamy... honoured with the TTK Award.

It's time to take out your silk scarves, woollen mufflers, shawls and warm pattu sarees to sail in style through the Madras Music-Dance Season. Once you are drawn into it, you just can't get out of it. The day starts early with the *Margazhi bhajanai* in the Mada Streets around the temple, the music heritage walks, and the devotional sessions in the various *sabhas* where singer-narrators like Kalyanapuram Aravamudan and Udayalur Kalyanaraman and musical groups draw a good following. Then you have the morning lecture demonstrations which provide some food for thought – many of them nourishing, a few indigestible. The routine fare is four *kutcheris* (music and dance) a day, with music dominating.

More than fifty musical organisations, big and small, are getting ready for the Madras Margazhi (December-January) season. But some have already launched their festivals in November, while others will continue to celebrate an extended season into February.

One of the first to flag off the season in December is the Park's New Festival (2nd-6th December) curated by the Prakriti Foundation, featuring "emerging and new work" at one of the most beautiful venues of Chennai – the Museum Theatre in Egmore.

Two major thematic dance theatre productions this season promise to be colourful, informative and interesting. One is *Subhaashitam* (Eternal Words of Wisdom) based on the *Panchatantra*, *Jataka* tales, *Tirukkural* and folklore choreographed by dance-gurus Vasanthalakshmi-Narasimhachari. The other is *Mammudha* – a dance-opera-theatre production on the God of Love, presented by Sudharani

Raghupathy's Shree Bharatalaya. For the first time in her life, Sudharani, who is in her early sixties, will be taking on a male role – that of the hero Manmatha.

This year, the Music Academy is not confining its morning lec-dems to a specific theme, but will be analysing music treatises, compositions of some composers, *ragas* and aspects of rhythm. With veteran percussionist Palghat R. Raghu presiding over the Music Conference, we can look forward to the sessions on rhythm being special this time. A heartwarming gesture this season is that octogenarian Sita Doraiswamy

● by S. JANAKI

will be honoured with the TTK Award. She becomes only the second *jalatarangam* artiste to be honoured, fifty years after her guru Jalatarangam Ramanaiah Chetty was honoured by the Academy. You can enjoy the programmes at the Music Academy better this time as the seating arrangements on the ground floor have got a facelift which are not merely cosmetic.

The Narada Gana Sabha is stepping into its Golden Jubilee Year (1958-2008) with the celebrations culminating in a grand finale in February. As usual, the *sabha* offers a pre-festival series, the main 'Isai Natya Nataka Vizha' (15th December to 1st January) with some weeks devoted to Harinama Sankeertanam and to morning lec-dems on music and dance. Vidwan P.S. Narayanaswamy will be honoured with the title 'Nadhabrahmam'. And, of course, with the presence in its premises of the ever hospitable Gnanambika Caterers with their lip-smacking delicacies, the season

at the Sathguru Gnanananda Hall is sure to be a big draw this time too.

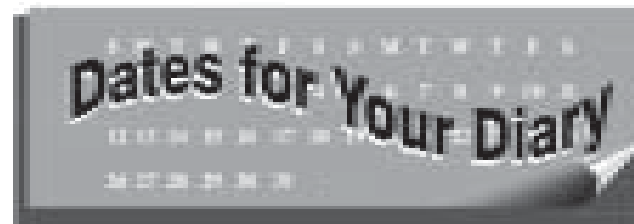
Another big player of the season is Sri Krishna Gana Sabha. It has got a programme-packed season this time with music and dance alternating even in the morning slots. This *sabha* must be congratulated for encouraging *nagaswara vidwans* for almost two decades – it will be hosting its 20th Pongal Nagaswara Isai Vizha from 14th to 17th January, 2008. The theme for this *sabha's* famous Natya Kala Conference (convenor: Bharati Shivaji) is 'Sangeetam in Dance' (14th to 20th December). Kartik Fine Arts too is conducting its annual dance seminar (convenor Priyadarsini Govind) from 22nd to 24th December. 'Sensuality in Indian Dance' is sure to attract a good crowd.

Kalakshetra Foundation is offering a nice mix of music *kutcheris* as well as solo and group dances during its 55th Art Festival starting 22nd December.

The culmination of two years' work is the release of Sriram V's biography of Bangalore Nagarathnamma, titled rather intriguingly *The Devadasi and The Saint*. The book is slated to be released at 5 p.m. on 9th December at the Taj Connemara under the auspices of the Madras Book Club. What will be different on the occasion will be the rehearsed reading of the book with plenty of (live) music and dance, directed as *Sruti, Smriti-Kriti* by Prasanna Ramaswamy and presented by The Madras Players. This will also be on at Kalakshetra on 8th December and at the Alliance Francaise on the 10th December. In addition, it will be staged for invitees at the Tag Centre on 16th December.

The Roja Muthiah Research Library is putting together an exhibition with music as its theme. This will comprise books on music published in the 19th Century, 78 rpm records, song books and other memorabilia of the early 20th Century. Curated by eminent singer Sanjay Subrahmanyam and writer Sriram V in association with the RMRL, this will be open to the public from December 15th at the RMRL premises in Taramani.

The Season is the time to watch the up-and-coming artistes competing with each other, it's the time to listen to your favourite musicians and watch your favourite dancers, it's the time to observe, renew musical acquaintances, exchange comments, madly rush from one venue to the other, and to sit back and savour all that is offered to you in the glorious name of a rich culture and heritage. Enjoy it all as much as you can!



Till December 7: Prakriti Foundation presents The Park's New Festival, a six-day festival showcasing new and emerging work in the field of dance, music and theatre (at Museum Theatre).

Till December 9: AIDS: *Hope springs from the sharing of knowledge*, the exhibition seeks to shed light on understanding the disease, the statistics and also the details about the latest developments in research (at Alliance Francaise).



Till December 23: An exhibition by Pichaya Manet. His paintings are singular for his exceptional use of colour and movements in depicting the human form and for using the canvas much like a stage to visualise and set scenes. Both these strengths follow his many years of being a Bharata Natyam dancer and choreographer. (At Alliance Francaise.)

December 10: *Sruti, Smriti, Kriti*. A rehearsed reading in English, based on V. Sriram's book, *The Devadasi and the Saint – the life and times of Bangalore Nagarathnamma*, featuring actors, musicians and dancers. (At the Alliance Francaise at 7.00 p.m.)

December 12: Comics Workshop with Francois Dermaut, an illustrator of French comic books.

He will organise a professional creative workshop on comic book illustrations to help you get a insight into the fascinating art of comic book illustrations. (Details: Alliance Francaise.)

December 15: The poetry of Amadou Lamine Sall, one of the most important contemporary African Francophone poets. (At Alliance Francaise.)

December 15-30: Poetry Festival organised by the Prakriti Foundation. 'Poetry with Prakriti' is a new festival being presented in Chennai, where poets from varied backgrounds in multiple languages will read and share their poetry at many different locations across the city.

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THE EDITOR

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Tamil Nadu Ranji notes

With the availability of Dinesh Kaarthick, Anirudha Srikanth, Subramaniam Badrinath and Vijay Yo Mahesh – all national level players – I thought Tamil Nadu would have a ‘cakewalk’ over Maharashtra which had seven uncapped players in the final eleven. Plus, the home advantage made Tamil Nadu the favourites to grab the maximum number of points. But superb batting by the Maharashtra top order set the foundation for a massive first innings score. In the end, Tamil Nadu was hoping to salvage at least a single point and struggled to avoid being all out.

The Tamil Nadu attack, barring off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, was disappointing. Particularly galling was the wayward line of Yo Mahesh. He’s yet to make strides in the higher grade despite repeated opportunities in the Challenger Series and India ‘A’ games. While the other paceman C. Ganapathy, who is far better than Mahesh, bowled with considerable pace and accuracy. I recall Ganapathy’s tremendous pace in the 2004 Ranji semi-final against Railways when he had most of the batsmen, including Test discard Sanjay Bangar, weaving and hopping at the crease. His final tally of one for 61 barely did justice to his talent in the Maharashtra game.

Ashwin bowled a marathon 50 overs and captured six wickets for 133 runs. Here’s a cricketer who should soon be considered for an India ‘A’ slot because of his perseverance and willingness to bowl long spells and purchase wickets. Harbhajan Singh’s presence should not be a factor in stalling Ashwin’s advance to the higher levels of the game.

Badrinath showed his international class despite severe stomach problems and dehydration. He was put on drips in the dressing room, enabling him to resume his innings and make the top score.

At the end of the game, I wondered why several senior players, like paceman M.R. Srinivas, Sunil Viswanathan (who’s playing for Haryana as a result) and left-handed all-rounder Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan, were left out of the side. Equally distressing is the treatment meted out to former Test opener Sadagopan Ramesh, who’s been banished and is trotting from State to State. I still back Ramesh as the best bet to open the Indian innings instead of Wasim Jaffer.

Bhaskeran Thomas

Other sources report:

Tamil Nadu also let itself be outplayed in Chennai by an ordinary team from the western metropolis, Mumbai. If a side is dismissed on the opening day itself in a longer duration game, it’s the first sign of losing the match.

Paceman Avishkar Salvi, who was a last-minute withdrawal due to injury from the Indian team that toured Australia in 2003-04 and was replaced by Lakshmipathy Balaji, struck vital blows — the clean bowling of skipper Subramaniam Badrinath for zero proving to be the most crucial.

After a good start Mumbai appeared to be in the doldrums when there came a sledge-hammer century (105) by one of Mumbai’s promising all-rounders Abhishek Nayar. Taunted by the Indian Test captain-designate Anil Kumble while Karnataka were at the receiving

The State flops in first two games

end before Wankhede Stadium spectators a week earlier – “So you think you’re Lance Klusener (a former South African belligerent all-rounder)” – Nayar went about bludgeoning the Karnataka attack, including taking three successive fours off Kumble and making 24 off just 18 balls.

Kerala-born, Mumbai-bred Nayar, who bats left-handed and bowls right-handed, went several steps ahead clobbering the Tamil Nadu spinners, especially R. Ashwin.

Cast more in the Manoj Prabhakar mould while bowling, and batting like Karsan Ghavri, the Indian selectors, particularly Dilip Vengsarkar, need to watch Nayar as he will certainly fill the bill as a possible Indian all-rounder. A stint with a good fast bowling coach like Venkatesh Prasad will improve his bowling.

In this game, veteran left-

arm spinner R. Ramkumar fought a lone battle claiming four wickets in the first innings and two in the second, pushing Mumbai into trouble. But he lacked support at the other end. Vijay Yo Mahesh was a big let down again. Why doesn’t the TNCA send this confused bowler to the Pace Foundation to correct his faults, as he is said to be full of promise? Also, he lacks the build of a paceman like Rajasthan’s Pankaj Singh who, incidentally, has been reaping a huge haul of wickets despite playing for one of the weakest sides in the tournament.

What caused Tamil Nadu to fold for 206 and 214? One observation was that the batsmen at times failed to cover the line of the ball quickly enough, not knowing when the ball would suddenly shoot low. When sound technique was needed, Mumbai’s batsmen rose to the

task on more occasions, covering the line and defending off the meat of the bat, the sound of leather hitting willow reverberating across the ground. Even defensive strokes were met with cheers and claps from the players’ tent, and it clearly wasn’t meant for fun.

Mumbai’s chief wrecker in both innings was Ramesh Powar and it was clear that many of the home side players would not have watched the Australians hammering Powar out of the Indian attack. They should have followed the example of Ashwin, whose willingness to get a good stride forward helped counter Powar’s spin.

Perhaps it’s hard to expect too much out of a young side, with a few pushed into the big league earlier than expected. As the coach W.V. Raman put it, with a young side, the only way is up. – (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION ILLEGAL

(Continued from page 1)

the Ordinance – thus overturning the judgement and replacing it with a fresh one-year amnesty for illegal buildings in Chennai. This Act was passed by the Assembly on October 22, 2007, but was kept under wraps pending the end of the Court case. The Governor’s signature was affixed and notification in the Gazette was done one day after the Court ruling.

On November 20, 2007, CAG filed a fresh writ petition challenging the Act, arguing that, since the Act was a word-to-word reproduction of the Ordinance that had been quashed, this Act too must be struck down.

The writ petition came up before the High Court on November 22nd and the High Court agreed with CAG on the unconstitutionality

of this Act. They asked the Government Pleader (who was present in Court) if there was any difference between what was stated in the Ordinance and what was stated in the Act, and the GP confirmed that there was none. The Chief Justice said that in that case the Act would be struck down since it suffered from the same illegalities as its predecessor. An order is expected to this effect.

Given the sustained interest in protecting the illegal constructions, it is expected that an appeal will be filed by the Government before the Supreme Court. The State Government’s consistent and open support of the builders’ lobby has been a matter of concern to all interested in a better city and does not augur well for a Singaara Chennai.

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