

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XVII No. 17

December 16-31, 2007

INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- Ammu & her daughters
- Historic autographs
- The talk of The Season
- KBH's Victorian traditions



What's my New Year resolution this year? To send only 250 sms instead of 300 sms a day!

I hereby swear...

Making resolutions? So you can forget all about them by the afternoon of January 1st? Here are some situations that could do with re-thinking. Starting with cell-phones.

Seriously, a huge no-no while driving. Using ear gizmos that give you that alien-from-The-Flintstone's look is mere quibbling.

And please, people can hear you mumbling into your phone while at the movies, even with all that noise.

No, MCs aren't obliged to look at you directly when they request the audience to switch off their phones.

Deliberately holding long, mundane cell conversations while in a group can, and will, be treated as an act of social aggression.

Also, let's clean up those contact lists. If you find a name listed as 'RSWZap', and cannot remember who, from where, or even why the code...it's time to hit that delete button.

All e-mail IDs needn't be cute. And every 'Forward' needn't be 'forward-ed'.

Some emotional distance from the TV should be considered — prevents that migraine brought about by the second daughter-in-law's third cousin's villainy.

Try misplacing that remote now and then.

A friend's losing weight, or changing his/her hair isn't always a declaration of war against you.

As for that obsession with the last word? No one has a copyright over it... and shouldn't.

Let's make those bells toll for change. Happy New Year.

Ranjitha Ashok

Flyovers are still seen as the solution...

(By A Staff Reporter)

Chennai is rapidly becoming a city of flyovers, which are seen as the cure for all traffic ills. In the past few days, there has been plenty of news regarding the work that is going on on four mini flyovers in various locations in the city, but will they solve the city's traffic ills?

The first of these flyovers was to be on Chamier's Road at its junction with Turnbull's Road. But based on the representations made by residents of the Boat Club area, it has been decided to reorient the flyover so that it will now connect Turnbull's and Cenotaph Roads. This will involve fresh land acquisitions and further delays. Strangely, residents in other parts of the city, whose lives were suddenly impacted by the arrival of flyovers, have not

reacted in the same way as the Boat Club area residents.

The second flyover is coming up at the Kodambakkam High Road-Mahalingapuram Junction. Being built at a cost of

(Continued on page 8)

Can we ease The Season's pain?

(By A Staff Reporter)

The Music Season is here. And as it annually does, it brings with it, along with music, plenty of good food, music product sales, several fringe events such as walks and talks and, of course, traffic snarls. Yet, apart from posting a few policemen, the authorities do not appear to think of anything innovative to ease the flow of traffic near the *sabha*-s.

... But pedestrians get no relief

While all the above constructions may spell good news for vehicle owners, the pedestrian appears to be getting short shrift as usual. Most flyovers in the city come up by utilising space that reduces the width of the roads at ground level. When these need to be widened, the pavements are the first things to be removed, thereby forcing pedestrians to use road space and compete with vehicles. The risk is all the more where, in the case of some flyovers, heavy vehicles and buses are not able to use them and perforce need to continue to use the roads. That leaves very little space for those who walk and pedestrians are put to grave risk.

The traffic arrangements in T. Nagar, following the beginning of flyover construction in the area, were initially praised by vehicle users but, with festival shopping at an all-time high, matters soon degenerated into chaos. The traffic arrangements have all been done keeping vehicles in mind, with total disregard for pedestrians. Parts of the road have been commandeered for parking and what is left is all dug up. Vehicles are forced to the periphery of the road, thereby squeezing out the pedestrian. Residents are also complaining about the dust and the pollution.

All this activity, it would appear, focusses only on the few who are vehicle users and not on the thousands who move on foot.



Day by day, traffic keeps growing in the city and, unless solutions are found, will soon reach gridlock.

The hotspots are just less than ten in number (see box below). And it does not really require enormous imagination to solve the problem. It just requires will-power and some forethought. True, the *sabha*-s have themselves taken some steps, the efforts of the Music Academy and Narada Gana Sabha in particular being commendable. But unless this becomes a larger exercise, involving the authorities, it is not going to be feasible.

A few suggestions are listed below:

1. Calling for a meeting with *sabha* representatives, well

ahead of The Season, and discussing with them specific location-related issues and arriving at implementation plans.

2. Getting *sabha*-s to coordinate with schools and colleges in their vicinity to arrange for parking space, so that road space is not utilised unnecessarily. For instance, the Music Academy has already got an arrangement with St. Ebba's School and this has worked well in the past couple of years. There are such possibilities in other locations (Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha - Vidya Mandir; the Mylapore *sabhas* - PS High School

(Continued on page 8)

Season's traffic hotspots

- The Music Academy junction, where the Academy, Narada Gana Sabha and the Sankara Hall events ensure that traffic is held up often.
- The Mada Streets of Mylapore, where the proximity of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the R.R. Sabha (now being rebuilt) and the R.K. Swami Auditorium (inside Sivaswami Kalalaya), ensures together that evening traffic is chaotic.
- The Musiri Subramania Iyer (Oliver) Road-Luz Church Road stretch, where Mylapore Fine Arts and Sivakami Pethachi Auditorium programmes slow down the traffic.
- The Vani Mahal roundabout, where a combination of T' Nagar traffic and the *sabha*'s events causes mayhem.
- Royapettah High Road, where the Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha holds its events.

The Swaminathan mother and daughters

Born in a family of Nairs, Ammukutty, the youngest child of P. Govinda Menon of Palghat, was married to Subbarama Swaminathan, a Brahmin of Madras, at the tender age of 13. Subbarama Swaminathan came from a family that was far from well off, but was helped by Govinda Menon, a State official, who recognised Swaminathan's exceptional intelligence. He helped him, both financially and with words of encouragement, to complete his studies. After his studies at the Edinburgh and London Universities, Swaminathan obtained his Doctorate in Law from Harvard University. He came to Madras and started practising law and became a distinguished barrister.

When Swaminathan went to Vadakkath House in Anakara village to see A. V. Lakshmikutty Amma, the wife of Govinda Menon who had passed away, he wanted very

much to repay the family in some way and decided to marry a daughter of the house. Lakshmikutty Amma was surprised, but said that all her daughters were married except the youngest, Ammu, who was just a little girl. When Swaminathan met this young girl he asked her if she would be his wife! To the surprise off all, Ammu said she would, provided her conditions were fulfilled. And what were they?

• Another in the occasional series on the early feminists of Madras by K.R.A. NARASIAH

old. Before he passed away, he had got a promise from her that she should not observe any of the usual customs followed by a widow in India. And Ammu kept the promise. He had also provided enough for the family. Ammu as a political activist never hesitated in stating her ideas to even the top leadership of the Congress. In spite of her critical approach to some of Gandhi's ideas, she was quite close to him. She was elected an MP in 1952 and was associated with many cultural and social organisations. She went to Ethiopia, China, USA and USSR as a goodwill ambassador. In the inaugural year of the International Women's Year, she was awarded the title 'Mother of the Year', 1975.

All her children had remarkable careers. Lakshmi, who was born on October 24, 1914 in Madras, decided to study medicine because she wanted to be of service to the poor, especially to poor women. Studying at Madras Medical College, she obtained her MBBS degree from Madras University in 1938. Later she received her Diploma in Gynaecology and Obstetrics. She wanted to work abroad for some time and in 1940 she left for Singapore, where she soon had a thriving practice. She joined the India Independence League and in 1942 served the prisoners-of-war after the Allied surrender to the Japanese.

Subhas Chandra Bose came to Singapore in July 1943 and

spoke at a series of public meetings of his determination to raise a National Army, including a women's regiment to be called the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Lakshmi joined it and was immediately given the rank of Colonel. She became the Minister in Charge of Women's Organisation in the provisional Government of Free India (called Arzi Hukumate Azad Hind) led by Bose. She also commanded Rani of Jhansi Regiment. In a regular army disposition, this may be called the first of its kind in Asia! She was

widely known, however, as Captain Lakshmi.

She was captured and brought to India by the British, but was set free as the mood in India was then different. Another officer released in India was Colonel Prem Kumar Sahgal, and they were married in Lahore in March 1947. Col. Sahgal was the son of another Indian legal luminary, Justice Achru Ram Sahgal.

After their marriage they settled in Kanpur, where Lakshmi served the needy refugees. In 1971 she joined the

Did I drench you? I'm sorry!

The Man from Madras Musings is unhappy and is feeling guilty as well. The roads of Madras that is Chennai have taken a beating following the not-so-torrential rains this year. MMM is not one of those who drives his car at high speed through puddles, thereby ensuring that pedestrians and two-wheeler users are drenched. He, in fact, slows down at such spots and, yet, that is precisely the reason why he is unhappy today. The other day, MMM happened to be driving along when the car went over what MMM thought was a shallow puddle. What he did not realise was that there were some spots where the depression was quite deep. The tyre went into one such rut and, the next moment, a matron who was walking by was drenched from head to foot. MMM rolled down the window to apologise and was greeted with a flood (pun intended) of invective. Whereupon MMM beat a hasty retreat. MMM now apologises through the pages of Madras Musings, but something tells him that the matron does not read this journal.

The incident reminded MMM of what an acquaintance had told him a couple of years ago. Apparently, the condition in the suburbs and the 'new acquired colonies' of the city is far worse. There, the trenches can be several feet deep. Those who walk home from railway stations virtually form a human chain for safety. Then, if anyone falls into an open manhole or a 'drainage dig', he is secure in the knowledge that others can fish him out.

Poster kutcheris

The Man from Madras Musings thought it was only film stars and politicians who indulged in poster warfare while defacing the walls of public and private buildings. But what is amazing to MMM is that Carnatic musicians, whom he always thought were a law-abiding lot, though some are also consummate politicians, have begun indulging in the poster activity. Now their faces smile down at you from all possible locations, with the walls in the vicinity of sabha-s becoming the favourite spots.

There are posters for forthcoming concerts, posters for

birthdays, posters for felicitations and also posters when interviews of theirs are published in magazines. These publicity campaigns are undertaken by fans' associations in the same way film stars have *rasikar manrams* which take up such activities. Nobody is bothered about civic cleanliness. But that being the way of life in Chennai, MMM fully expects that cutouts of artistes will be the next wave.

Saving Govt. House

To The Editor - Madras Musings Dear Chief, I have heard from a little bird that you have written a letter to the Governor of Tamil Nadu appealing to him that Government House on Government Estate should be saved keeping in mind its historicity. But are you aware that a German team of architects is al-



ready busy working on plans for constructing the new assembly complex at the very same site? I am not claiming to be clairvoyant, but something tells me we can expect a structure with a dome and lots of red granite.

Chief, do let me know if and when you do get a reply from the powers-that-be. It is always a pleasure to peruse a well written and imaginative letter.

Warm regards,

The Man from Madras Musings

Illegal-Legal-Illegal...

And so it goes on. The Man from Madras Musings is alluding to the continuing ding-dong battle on the status of the illegal buildings of the city.

After the High Court of Madras struck down the Government Ordinance that called for a one-year freeze on action against illegal structures, work began once again on demolition of additional storeys and unauthorised extensions. But within a week the Government filed a plea with the Supreme Court seeking a stay and an interim stay has been granted

pending further hearing. So it is back to square one once again.

MMM is confident that when he runs out of material for his column, this problem will always provide sufficient matter.

Senate House

The Man from Madras Musings learns from his sources that Senate House has been declared out-of-bounds for public events once again. The University authorities have locked the building and it now appears evident that by doing so they are hell-bent on reverting it to the condition in which it was prior to restoration.

What is achieved by such a hide-bound and reactionary attitude is quite a mystery to MMM. It does not require much intelligence to realise that nothing damages a building more than lack of use. What was the purpose in going through the entire restoration exercise if this was to be the end result? It also smacks of a betrayal of trust, for public funds and donations were garnered for the restoration on the promise that it will be a building that will be used for various events. Sadly, those in power do not appear to realise this.

Let there be light

The Government has passed an order that use of dark films over windows in vehicles is illegal and they must be removed at once.

The Man from Madras Musings has not stopped laughing ever since then. For, guess who uses the maximum amount of sun-control film? The Government itself.

Have you ever seen a government vehicle (those with 'G' marked prominently on the number plate and a chauffeur who has one foot on the accelerator and a hand permanently on the horn) without sun control film? So, what next? Issue of a tender for removal of sun-control film? How can our VIPs be exposed to the sun and the public gaze? Most unthinkable.

What MMM suspects is that rather like the helmet order, unofficial instructions will soon be sent to go easy on the matter.

- MMM

Communist Party of India (Marxist), ironically the bitter opponents of the Indian National Army and Subhas Chandra Bose! Later, she became a leader of the All India Democratic Women's Association. She was awarded the Padma Vibhushan by the President of India. Her daughter Subhashini Ali is also a prominent Communist.

Ammu's other daughter, Mrinalini Sarabhai, became a well-known classical dancer and married Vikram Sarabhai, the great scientist.

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Dismal scenario

I am constrained to write this letter because MMM's ken does not extend beyond the Coom and the Napier bridge on the Marina. To start with, the beautiful War Memorial is getting covered with coal dust from the coal-dumps of the Port Trust just opposite it. There is no need for a gate here and the trucks can be made to move inside the wall on a parallel road using the main gate at the end or even the gates beyond. Besides, this gate and the possibility of an ugly construction by the side have already attracted slums. Since there are army or navy quarters by the side, I invited the attention of the GOC of the area about a year ago who promised to look into the matter. But he was transferred after about a fortnight!

The greenery of the fort on the left and the old trees on the right provide a pleasant view and drive. But these trees are in danger of being chopped down because a construction is already coming up just opposite the country's tallest flag-mast – perhaps a stand for the VVIP to take the salute. Beyond this point, the parking lot or the playground upto the Port Trust is disappearing and an ugly construction is coming up. In New Delhi, at least the new constructions blend with the surroundings, which include the sandstone pink buildings, thanks to the Urban Arts Commission.

This is a dismal scenario beyond the Coom. Despite VVIPs moving up and down every day on this route, the only recent good development is that the ASI has started constructing a fence around the Fort to

protect it as they did in Vellore – pardon my being autobiographical – at my instance, a few years ago.

Dr. G. Sundaram IAS (RTD.)
'Burma House'
33/18, 9th Street
Dr. Radhakrishnan Road
Chennai 600 004

Pedestrian travails

Creating a triangular one-way system at Raj Bhavan-Halda-Little Mount without first constructing pedestrian subways is an act of cruelty inflicted upon pedestrians. Although adequately highlighted in the Press, the needs of pedestrians are hardly considered.

Those responsible (the Highways Department, PWD, Corporation) must be taken to task for this. To start with, their officials must be made to cross the road in this area during peak hours, ten times a day for ten consecutive days. Hopefully, they will then realise the travails of a pedestrian.

B. Gautham
137, Wallajah Road
Chennai 600 002

'Printer's Devil'

This is with reference to your final item, Printer's Devil, in Short 'N' Snappy in *Madras Musings*, November 16th. I have always been intrigued by many in our country using the term Printer's Devil to mean a printing error. None of the standard dictionaries gives this meaning to the term, and all define it as an assistant or an errand boy in a printer's establishment, and nothing else.

I feel that usage of this term to signify a printing error is confined to the Sub-continent

Tramway alternative

Many elderly residents of Chennai dream nostalgically of the times when trams traversed the roads of the city. They long for the days when these vehicles chugged majestically on the highways. That was an era in the past when electric tramcars were the main passenger transport means all over the cities of the world. When fast and nimble petrol driven vehicles took over, these gentle giants on rails had to give way to them and they disappeared in most cities, but some retained them as a relic to delight children and tourists.

In Chennai that was Madras, the tramcar was put into service at the turn of the 20th Century. It worked successfully, but was taken off the road in the middle of the 1950s for various reasons and its presence was obliterated leaving no trace.

The nostalgic dreamers need not despair. It is possible to revive it although it cannot be put on the roads of Chennai due to its present hectic traffic. A rail line parallel to the Beach Road in Marina can be laid with electric traction overhead wires, on the seaward side from *Senate House* to San Thomé. Cars similar to the ones that were plying on the roads earlier could be manufactured and put on this track. The

Madras Electric Tramways had two types of cars, one a long eight-wheeler and the other a shorter four-wheeler. The shorter type will be more suitable, as it is easier to manoeuvre them using less power.

The cars may be provided with period fittings. The operators too may wear period costumes. A small fee as ticket charge may be collected from users. This can be utilised for maintenance. When the system becomes popular, a second line may be laid for separate up-and-down tracks. Also more vehicles may be put on the track. Initially, the service may be only in the evenings. Later it could be extended for the full day.

In every public endeavour, the bugbear is finding money. Logically, the Chennai Corporation should bear the cost. If it cannot, some of the commercial corporations may be asked to foot it. If none comes forward, the public may be asked to donate to make it a success.

Where there is a will, there will be a way.

H. Sethuraman
S-3, Sai Prasad
9, Vel Nagar Extn.
Adambakkam
Chennai 600 088

and may, in due course, enter the English language as 'prepone' and 'bio-data' have. I wonder whether using the term for printing error should be condoned till then. *Madras Musings* generally features impeccable prose. I, therefore, feel offended that such a solecism should be committed in it.

H.J. Pavamani
80/1, Velachery Road
Gundy, Chennai 600 032

Editor's Note: Point taken; we were careless – and apologise for it.

Fortified rice

Like iodised salt preventing thyroid deficiency, rice too needs to be fortified. Now, practically all rice in India is milled, unlike in the past. This causes serious and continuous damage to the consumers, especially the poor.

Removal of just the husk

produces brown rice, containing 8% protein and a source of iron, calcium, and B vitamins. Removal of the bran layer leaves white rice, greatly diminished in nutrients. Enriched white rice has added B vitamins and minerals. This is where we in India are lagging behind, as no enrichment of milled rice is made.

As a policy, many developing countries do not permit imported milled rice for sale until the rice is upgraded to FAO standards. In India, no such system exists. There is an urgent need to consider upgrading rice, as in the case of salt.

According to Census 2001, in Tamil Nadu, there are 964,063 blind, 197,115 deaf, 127,521 mentally retarded people. The blindness, deafness, and mental disability of a great many of these people could have been prevented with treated rice. The policy 'Preven-

tion is better than cure' needs to be pursued.

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

Remember the Creek

I am very happy to learn that the Sabarmati River Front Development plan (MM, November 16th) has interested Tamil Nadu Government departments who had reportedly sent a team to Ahmadabad to gather necessary information with a view to considering such a "similar exercise" along the Adyar River.

The article 'Can Adyar Creek ecopark ignore estuary' (MM, April 16th) had rightly posed the question, "Can you ensure a successful ecopark without sustaining its feed water systems and the natural wealth about it?" That is the question that has to be answered before work can begin on the Adyar Creek ecopark. This has not been answered by the Tamil Nadu Government so far. It is in its court and the answer should come before any work in this connection comes into effect. Any plans for the Adyar River along the lines of the Sabarmati Development must ensure protection of wetlands in the Adyar Creek. Plans that are being drawn up for the Adyar will be truly beneficial to Madras that is Chennai only if the eco-system of the Creek is restored to ensure a natural haven for the forgotten flora and fauna of Adyar.

P.S. Subrahmanian
'Muruganadi'
F-4, Kannika Nivas Apartment
7, Varadachari Street
Ranga Nagar
Srirangam
Trichy 620 006

CHENNAI HERITAGE

260-A T.T.K. ROAD, ALWARPET, CHENNAI 600 018.

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.....) / I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

● I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to **CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS**, as **subscription to *Madras Musings*** for the year 2006-07.

● As token of my support for the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that *Madras Musings* espouses, I send Chennai Heritage an additional Rs..... (Rupees

Please keep / put me on your mailing list.

Name :

Address:

Note: Overseas postage Rs. 550/year extra. Cheques for overseas postage alone payable to M/s. Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd. All other cheques to 'Chennai Heritage'.

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**.

An ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of just Rs.100 covers only a part of our costs. Corporate support and YOUR support will continue to be essential for Chennai Heritage and *Madras Musings* to play a greater role in creating awareness about the city, its heritage and its environment. We therefore look forward to your sending us your contributions IN ADDITION TO your subscriptions.

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

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to *Madras Musings* for 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



At the exhibition of the late Al Lakshmanan's autograph collection.

Intriguing juxtapositions of historic autographs

Al Lakshmanan (1926-2006) was the first grandson of Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar of Chettinad. He was born to the Raja's daughter and grew up in his maternal grandfather's home, Chettinad Palace. This brought him into contact with several prominent personalities even when he was quite young.

A meeting with cricketer and Bhavnagar royal family scion Duleepsinghi when Lakshmanan was 17 led to his hobby of collecting autographs. The passion lasted from 1941 to 1950 during which time he collected over 350 signatures. Lakshmanan wrote to the big names of the period, introducing himself as the Raja's grandson and requesting them for their autographs. He also asked them to inscribe a motto. Realising that they were doing him a favour, he sent a self-addressed stamped envelope so that the respondents were not out of pocket when they sent him their replies. Several autographs were collected when personalities called on the Raja in person.

Over the years, the autographs filled several albums, some of the more important ones being encased in silver. When Lakshmanan passed away, his family, finding that the albums were crumbling, decided to restore them as a fitting tribute to him. The Tamil Nadu Archives was contacted and it did a magnificent job in saving the autographs and ensuring that they were protected from further deterioration.

• by **Sriram Venkatakrishnan**

114 autographs were then selected from the collection and exhibited recently to mark the first anniversary of Lakshmanan's death. The curators had taken pains to collect photographs of many of the personalities whose autographs were on show. Footnotes on the lives of the personalities provided a brief but fascinating glimpse of history.

A big 'Thank You' to 13 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.11.07 and 15.12.07, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *MADRAS MUSINGS*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses. — Chennai Heritage

Rs. 100: Rani, S.; Chandra Sekam, S.; Rama Krishnan, P. K.; Krishnamurthy, N.
Rs. 150: Krishnan, R.
Rs. 200: Jacob John, K.
Rs. 300: Subramanian, J. R.; Meena Rawley
Rs. 400: Nagesh, S.; Raghavendra; Ravi, K.;
Rs. 900: Ramaswamy, N.
Rs. 1900: M.V.M. Trust (Murugappan)

Boondocks for Boddam

Right from 1862, the year in which the Madras High Court came into being, there have been many instances of its Judges contributing to its glory and its achievements. Many of them, including those who practised law before the High Court, were not only famous leaders in the legal firmament who shed lustre upon the practice of the law and the administration of justice, but were also acknowledged as progenitors of succeeding generations of successful and distinguished legal professionals from Madras. Names like Justice Sir Victor Murray Coutts-Trotter, Justice Sir T. Muthusami Ayyar, Sir V. Bashyam Ayyangar and Sir S. Subramania Ayyar are mentioned in hushed whispers even now inside the campus of Madras High Court.

However, in the long history of Madras High Court, as it happens elsewhere too, there were a fair number of personalities who were not only less popular among the lawyer fraternity, but also thought to be short on judicial acumen. In spite of this, these men left a mark. Justice Huncerford Tudor Boddam is one such.

According to the centennial volume on the History of the Madras High Court, very few people had a good word to say about him with regard to his work as a Judge. Justice Boddam was appointed a Judge of the Madras High Court in succession to Justice Parket, who retired in 1896. Very soon, Justice Boddam earned notoriety for being very partial to one or two of his favourites at the Bar. It was soon alleged that he decided cases in their favour irrespective of merit.

In the memoirs left by Sir V.C. Desikachari, father of eminent lawyer V.C. Gopalathnam, *Twenty-one years at the Bar*, Justice Boddam was described as "terrible". Desikachari goes on, "...Justice Boddam presided mostly over the Original Side and he laid down openly his own standards of Justice. His head was full of prejudices in respect of parties and pre-judgment of witnesses all arranged in graded scales on the basis of race, religion, sex and so on. I have seen with my own eyes several incidents of reversal of Justice Boddam's judgments in the Appellate Court...."

Another prominent Judge of those days, Justice Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Ayyar too shared this view. "Justice Boddam was not known for soundness of judgment. He had a knack of making up his mind long

before he went through the case. He put questions which favoured his own view and was greatly impatient towards questions which did not favour his view," stated Sir Sivaswamy Ayyar.

Finding that a large percentage of his judgments were reversed in appeals, Justice Boddam found a way to prevent this. He simply refused to give copies of his notes of evidence, enunciating a new doctrine that those notes were his private property. "You may take your own notes and read them if you want to go before the Appellate Court," Boddam would thunder in his court. However, it did not seem to have had any effect on the number of appeals filed against his judgments.

That many of the Bar Council members in those days didn't like him much comes out from the fact that when Justice Boddam retired, he was not accorded any farewell by the Bar. Unmindful of that, Boddam joined many of his judicial friends during the vacation period and left Madras by train for Bombay, on his way to catch the boat. Unfortunately, he died on way and his body was sent back to Madras to be buried here.

It must, however, be acknowledged that Boddam was a brooding, foul mouthed judge. Sir Sivaswamy Ayyar recognised Boddam as a man who was very quick, witty, full of humour and pleasantry. "Unfortunately, he had this failing of making up his mind too early and took a one sided view according to his own prepossession," reminisced Sivaswamy Ayyar.



Justice Huncerford Tudor Boddam.

Justice Boddam's one-sided views in cases may have brought him ill-fame among many members of the Bar, but he had his redeeming features as well. On the advice of SPCA, he helped with the opening of the Madras Pinjrapole on Konnur High Road, Ayyanavaram, that exists even today. In fact, Justice Boddam was the first President (1906 to 1910) of the Pinjrapole, a home for abandoned cattle. There were a sizeable number of people too who apparently benefited from Boddam's kindness. So much so, they collected sufficient funds to put up a statue of him in a public place in Madras.

The statue was installed at the junction of Body Guard Lines Road (now Pallavan Salai) and Mount Road. It was unveiled by the then Governor, Sir Arthur Lawley, on 25th November, 1911. It stood there for several years. However, after Independence, it was one of the first statues removed from its prominent position.

Today, not many are aware that the statue is in an inconspicuous corner inside the May Day Park (old Napier Park), behind Simpson's, at Chintadripet.

— Brahma Raju

The talk of The Season

The mineral water bottles are piling up on me, and meal-times that grew increasingly quiet with the years are getting chatty again.

This means it's that time of year — when that special subset of your species, the NRIs, come home to roost.

Something puzzling about those words?

That's because this is the dining table talking.

That's right — those whom you humans classify as 'inanimate' can talk; we also see, hear, feel, and, above all — we record.

We're the reason why you humans sometimes do that quick neck swivel, sensing a presence you cannot actually see — yet you know something was watching, something neither human nor animal.

So, if you are a dining table owned by a fairly normal family (normal for humans, that is), your occupational hazard is family noise, apart from food-related accidents.

My owners — let's just call them Mr. and Mrs. Harassed — have been in a distinctly pouty mood over the past few days. The steel tumblers in the house are complaining of back-pain, thanks to being set down sharply on my fake-antique surface in fits of irritation triggered by inner tension.

(This season to be jolly is marked by a distinct undercurrent of uneasiness; the 'Oh-God-I-hope-everything-goes-off-all-right' touch, typical of all happy family reunions, I've noticed.)

The NRIs are coming — and everything seems to be a problem.

Why not a break for all?

Members of the Madras Naturalists' Society in early December went on a trip to Hasanur in the Sathymangalam forest range and K.V. SUDHAKAR reported:

Day 1 brought some lovely views of the Sathymangalam plains as we drove up to Hasanur via Dimbum. The bungalow at Dimbum, made famous by Kenneth Anderson, is at the edge of the escarpment overlooking the plains. We trekked through coffee plantations, orange orchard, and ragi fields to reach the tank at Hulikare (meaning tiger bund?). Spoor of leopards was seen on the path, and at the tank an unusually long snake

slough of a cobra was picked up, measured and photographed by many.

The next day members walked through Geddessal village and on to Minjikuzhi with its wonderful views of shola-like forests and grasslands. Sighting of a pair of Kestrels soaring was the highlight of the trek. A Gaur seen in the bushes on the drive up was another high point. That evening, we took a drive on the Talamalai-Thalavadi road, where we spotted Dhovles (Wild dogs), Black-naped hare, and a Civet.

Day 3 began with the sighting of a lone Gaur on the grass verge on the roadside. This was followed by a long, bone-rattling ride to Dengumarahada on the banks of the Moyar River through Sujjalkuttai forest. We sighted herds of Blackbuck and Spotted deer. The places abounded with birds, with more than 60 species of birds recorded.

Editor's Note: Sounds like an ideal break from the city. Perhaps MNS should think of organising such trips more frequently and offer to guide groups of city dwellers on these nature treks. It could be both income-earning for the Society and an opportunity for other nature-lovers with little knowledge of what Tamil Nadu offers.



The grass is too dusty; there's too much noise. People don't bother to hide their garbage, and did we have to have a pothole right outside our gate this fortnight?

Mrs. Harassed's also been going on about over-enthusiastic mosquitoes making aer... beeline for The Family the minute they land.

"Within seconds, they'll all have red dots sprinkled all over, especially those poor babies."

I wince as she drags a vessel across me in an agitated manner.

Mr. Harassed's ill-timed joke about putting a huge mosquito net over the city does not go down too well either.

• by **RANJITHA ASHOK**

To hear her talk, viruses, always more adventurous in this season, apparently conspire annually to single out her family and, specifically, ruin their holiday plans. So, what if the city is filled with interesting events? They mean crowds, most of whom never cover their mouths while coughing.

Oh, the guilt if an NRI falls ill in your house!

Then, food. My lady is worried about menus. She has, of late, succumbed to the low-calorie, low-fat, low-oil, low-salt, low-taste food everyone's on about, which I cannot help but feel will make my kind extinct...or at least very light.

But returning children now ask for ingredient breakdowns for every single dish, and their questions are getting harder to answer.

The bigger the family, the more complex the dynamics.

Right now, there's a tortuous, circular discussion going on about how the NRIs will divide their time between various sections of the family...especially the in-laws.

"So many days with Them; only so many with Us", Mrs. Harassed intones with obvious resentment.

I can tell by the way Mr. Harassed shuffles his feet, he'd like to dig a huge hole for himself and pull it down after him.

Mrs. Harassed, judging from the way in which she is drawing patterns on me in that little pool of spilt water, is also wondering about the days ahead.

They've got used to a quiet

routine now, these two, one that's hard to break.

Why, even I've got accustomed to handling not more than three vessels at a time.

Poor Mrs. Harassed usually eats her food watching the TV in the corner, weeping over her soap. She now has to pretend to censorious offspring, accompanied by critical new additions, that she only watches the news channels or National Geographic. Bit much, especially since I remember a time when the same offspring displayed the most amazing low motivation four times a week, strewing books all over me as they received their 'tuitions' from a worn-out professorial type, who would sneak biscuits from the side-board, and accept bribes from the kids to be let off early.

Great — it looks like I'll never know how it all turned out with that sister-in-law-cum-assassin-with-the-worst-intentions.

Entertaining the NRIs. Where to take/send them? And Mr. Harassed wonders how to answer webcam questions that go: "Yes, but how safe are roads/drivers/food/water?"

And those endless get-togethers. But that's where I come into my own, with my lady dressing me up differently for each occasion. The whom-to-invite-over debate involves much pen-tapping, and tossing of telephone and address books, all of which give me a headache.

It's tough... I understand.

You don't mind Bay-Area X, although she's related to those irritating East-Coast-Ms, (seriously, an accent is just so passé) who rudely refused to share their concert season tickets last year.

And what about Cousin N, who tends to behave like the uninvented Bad Fairy at the christening if left out, but is so comparison-obsessed, I am even tempted to tilt and spill something with heavy stain-potential all over her?

And yet — it isn't all bad.

There's warmth, tenderness, and nostalgia...like when a child's favourite food is cooked.

(So, what if the concerned 45-year-old 'child' has forgotten old loves?)

Or the rustle of newspapers while the whole family sits together on a quiet morning, over that second cup of coffee ("Just one mouthful, please").

If visits coincide with significant dates, they cut cakes, and sing (they sound dreadful, but enjoy the ruckus).

And I am surrounded by chatter and jabber once again.

Slowly I can sense Mrs. H's mood settling down.

Everyone's home — that's all that matters.

As for rest, it's just my people doing (if a dining table may be forgiven a little improvisation) the talk...doing the talk of life.

Our Addresses

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: Chennai Heritage, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, West Cott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014.

For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: MADRAS MUSINGS, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

On Editorial Matters: The Editor, MADRAS MUSINGS, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006. No personal visits or telephone calls, please.

Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly.

Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period November 16th to 30th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Kevin Rudd is the new Prime Minister of....?
2. Name the Indian priest elevated to the rank of Cardinal of India by the Pope recently.
3. Name the Hindi actor of yesterday who took strong exception to a sequence in *Om Shanti Om* and for which Shah Rukh Khan has offered an 'unqualified' apology.
4. Which cyber giant's recent initiative for R&D and related investments in renewable energy is dubbed 'RE < C'?
5. Which foundation gave the Rotary International a \$100 million, the largest ever grant received by the organisation, for polio eradication programmes?
6. Who recently became the first batsman to notch up 100 sixes in Test cricket?
7. Name the scheme launched by the Prime Minister recently that will provide a monthly pension to people over 65 years and living below the poverty line.
8. Who officially became India's 17th Grandmaster in chess recently?
9. Name the e-book service/reader launched by Amazon.com on November 19th.
10. Where in the U.S. was a peace conference trying to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, held recently?

* * *

11. Which comic actor has played the lead role in the French film *Paris Paris*?
12. Which Tamil Nadu district has received the top National honour for the current year from the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in recognition of the exemplary service rendered to differently-abled persons?
13. Which award-winning director's debut film was *Bharathi Kannama*?
14. What is the name of the Chennai team in the new Indian Cricket League?
15. The song *Akila Akila* from *Nerukku Naer* is a direct 'inspiration' of which Bob Marley song?
16. In ancient Tamil, what were *kural*, *tuttam*, *kaikkilai*, *uzhai*, *ilil*, *vilari* and *taaram*?
17. Name the Danish sailor whose memorial stands on Elliot's Beach.
18. Which currently popular actor has two children called Jason Sanjay and Divya Saasha?
19. Where does the Vaigai empty itself?
20. If Madurai enshrines 'Koodalazhagar', which place enshrines 'Kattazhagar'?

(Answers on page 8)

December Season, online and off

Yet another December season of classical music and dance has begun. With hundreds of concerts at over a dozen venues and allied events like lec-dems, theme fests and exhibitions, this year is possibly the biggest fest of its kind.

To take a *rasika* through the fest, *KutcheriBuzz* has, over the last nine 'Seasons', promoted it through its web site, www.kutcheribuzz.com, out of its office on C. P. Ramaswamy Road, Chennai.

The web site, devoted to Carnatic music and classical dance in South India, has devoted its home page to the 'December Season 2007'.

The section features all the major concerts at all leading *sabha*-s, has news and information on special *kutcheris*, lec-dems and workshops, previews of shows, and even lists PG accommodation and a rough guide to The Season. Uniquely, it features loads of pictures and video reports on the key events. Which means, *rasika*-s around the world can get a front seat feel of the fest (so if your friends and relatives could not make it to The Season, they still get a piece of the action).

The *KutcheriBuzz Season's Guide* is a handy reference to the season – it lists the top concerts at all *sabha*-s and has pen

portraits of leading artistes. Two guides – one on music and one on dance – are being released on December 12th and 18th.

Copies can be had at the *KutcheriBuzz* office at 77, C. P. Ramaswamy Road, Alwarpet, Chennai 600 018 (Ph. : 2499 4599). E-mail: editor@kutcheribuzz.com

And every evening at 6.00, at the *sabha*-s, the *KutcheriBuzz* daily newssheet will be circulated, for free. They'll keep the *rasika* updated on the buzz of The Season.

– Vincent D'Souza



Till December 20: *Reflection*, an exhibition of mixed media glass work by Hemi Bawa (at Apparao Galleries).

Till December 20: *Frozen Unfrozen...Silence*, an exhibition of sculpture in cast glass by Sisir Sahana (at Forum Art Gallery).

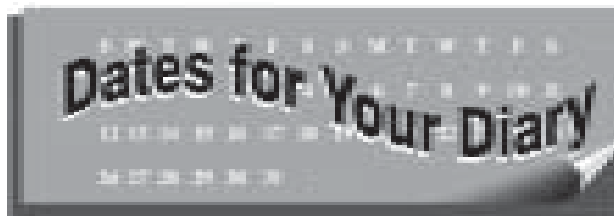
Till December 22: An exhibition of mixed media collage works with treated flora by Mahendra Singh Solanki (at Apparao Galleries).

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).

Till December 23: *Season's Greetings*, an exhibition of oil paintings by Dharshana Bajaj (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

Till December 26: *The Annual Crafts Bazaar* organised by the Crafts Council of India. 150 artisans will be participating in this mega bazaar which offers a never before range of jewellery, in silver, thread, beads, seeds, lac bangles, jute, thewa, pearls, wood and terracotta. This apart, the bazaar displays lacquerware, bronzes, rugs, handloom sarees, metalware, and a range of stone products developed by the Council in granite, marble, sandstone, Jaisalmer stone, and pink sandstone (at Valluvar Kottam).

Till December 28: *Earth Synergy*, an Indo-Korean contemporary



ceramic exhibition co-curated by Kristine Michael and Jin Kyoung Kim, focussing on aspects of contemporary ceramic art and arranged with four broad themes – Freedom with material; Metaphor of the body; Poetics of the domestic; and Beyond history, tradition and culture (at Forum Art Gallery).

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

Till December 30: *National Equestrian Championship 2007* (at Mohite Stadium, OTA, St. Thomas Mount).

Till December 31: An exhibition of paintings by 24 artists for a charitable organisation, Shivsakthi Home (at Vinnyasa Premier Art Gallery).

December 20: Saxophone by Kadri Gopinath (at Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, 6.30 p.m.), Vocal by Bombay Jayashree (at Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, 6.30 p.m.).

December 21-Jan. 4: *Early Propagation of Music*; through print and Gramophone (at Roja Muthiah Library, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.).

December 21: Violin recital by Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi (at The Music Academy, 4.15 p.m.).

December 22: Odissi by Surupa Sen and Bijayini Satpathy (at Kalakshetra Foundation, 6.30 p.m.). *Pocketful of Memories*: Retro pop concert by The Live Martini featuring music from artistes Cliff Richard, Michael Franks, Eric Clapton, Rolling Stones, etc. (at Museum Theatre, 7 p.m.).

December 22 & 23: Carnatic Music Appreciation Programme specially for music lovers and students to understand and enjoy Carnatic music better. By Dr. Radha Bhaskar (at Infosys Hall, Ramakrishna Mission School, T. Nagar, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Details: 98400 72821 or 93821 63330 or 28220453).

December 23: Vocal by K.J. Yesudas (at Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, 6.30 p.m.), Mandolin by U. Srinivas and U. Rajesh (at The Music Academy, 7 p.m.), Saxophone by Kadri Gopinath (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.), *Ragotsava – A Celebration of Love* by dancer Malavika Sarukkai (at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha).

December 24: Bharata Natyam recital by Shobana (at Narada Gana Sabha). Kathakali by Sadanam Balakrishnan (at Kalakshetra Foundation, 6.30 p.m.).

December 25: Bharata Natyam performance by Padma Subrahmanyam (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.).

December 26: Kalakshetra's Annual Art Festival – *Masquerade*, a dance theatre narrative by Kalakshetra repertory (at Kalakshetra Foundation, 6.30 p.m.).

December 27: Bharata Natyam by Padma Subrahmanyam (at Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, 6.30 p.m.). Vocal by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.).

December 28: *Mohana Krishna* – Krishna as enchanter by dancer Malavika Sarukkai (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.), Bharata Natyam performance by Anita Ratnam: *Faces* (at Krishna Gana Sabha).

December 29: Guitar by R Prasanna (at Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, 4 p.m.). Guitar by R. Prasanna (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.). Bharata Natyam performance by Shobana (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.). Violin recital by T.N. Krishnan (at Kalakshetra Foundation, 6.30 p.m.), Bharata Natyam performance by Anita Ratnam: *Neelam* (at Sivagami Pethachi Auditorium).

December 30: Vocal by K.J. Yesudas (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.), Mohiniyattam by Kalamandalam Kshemavathy (at Kalakshetra Foundation, 6.30 p.m.).

December 31: Dance ballet by Sudharani Raghupathy (at Bharat Kalachar, 6 p.m.).

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

The KBH's Victorian traditions continue

(Continued from last fortnight)

G. Kasturi, a long time staff at the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital 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!"

Remembers B. Venkatrama, an LGGs, whose mother and *paatti* were Female Nursing Assistants (FNAs) in the hospital, "The foreigners used to regularly come and give baths to children in the hospital, and a dose of cod liver oil. Tins of biscuits used to come in periodically too. The Prince of Wales Block also had a manual lift. The diet would be placed on a wooden platform and on a signal the 'lift' would be raised to each floor by the nurses!"

"Those were the days," says Venkatamma, a senior FNA, nostalgically. "What discipline there was! And how proud we were to be part of its rigour! The Neonatology Block actually came up on an old well. Earlier, the main kitchen was where the Tuberculosis ward is now," she remembers. The two old wooden gates that used to open onto Bell's Road have been sealed off now, except for a small gate to facilitate removal of bodies from the new air-conditioned mortuary. The old mortuary (about 6 ft x 8 ft) still stands, in a dilapidated state now.

Ward No 6, the Beadon Ward, was named after the first Superintendent, Dr. Mary Beadon (1921-27). And Ward 7, now the Postnatal Ward, remembers the first Indian Superintendent, Dr. H. M. Lazarus (1927-1940). By 1939 there were 172 beds. The Lady Hope Block came soon afterwards, opened on March 31, 1941. The Nurses' Hostel was built in 1953. The PG Diploma in O&G was started in 1959.

Octogenarian Dr. Sitaratna, former Superintendent (1968-1975), recalls, "We used to conduct more than 10,000 deliveries a year in the late 1960s. It was an all-women show. Only

when we didn't have female physicians or surgeons, were the male doctors called in. The *balwadi*, for children of the employees, was also opened by October 1973; the new OP Department by 1976. The hospital was affiliated to the Lady Willingdon Medical School (which gave LMP degrees) from 1929-1938 till it was amalgamated with Stanley Medical College. KGH was recognised for the MD OB & G and even KMC students used to come for internship to our Hospital, since we had better facilities."

Dr. Kanthamani joined in 1958 as an Assistant in Gosha



Dr. Vasantha Subbiah, current Director, and last Superintendent of KGH.

Hospital and continued for a few years till she joined the MD course. 'Super' from 1980-1986, and so the person who officiated at the Centenary celebrations on 9.11.85, she recalls, "Those were the times when there was very strict supervision, strict cleanliness regimes and impeccable discipline. In spite of all this, the entire hospital had a very homely atmosphere, very much like being in one large extended family."

Says K. Seshaiyah, the 'Dafedhar' in charge of overall maintenance, who has worked for 38 years in the hospital after joining as a temporary worker at Rs.2¼ a day, "Such a family atmosphere in a general hospital is a legacy of many decades. 7 in the morning and the 'Super' briskly slinging her coat across her shoulders would be enough for all of us to line up for roll call, and meet the day!"

"Earlier, the *mattukottai* (cowshed) was where the current *crèche* is. About 50-100 cows were brought in every day through 'the Milk Gate' opening onto Bell's Road at about 4 a.m. and were taken out by 7 a.m. Officers were appointed to check the quality of milk regularly, and the huge cans were delivered to the wards for patients through an informal relay service," he remembers nostal-

gically. "The current Police Station was the original Patients' Waiting Room before they went into the Delivery Room. The Waiting Shed you see now was built much later," he adds.

Current Resident Medical Officer, Dr. Isaac, son of a former Superintendent, Dr. A. Abraham (1961-1968), was born at the KGH. On a guided tour of the old and new additions to the hospital, he remembers "Mother narrating stories of Superintendents Dr. Parukuttyrayan and Dr. A.B. Mariker (who went on to become Director of Medical Service)" of how they were known to have petrified medical students by the rigorous discipline and impeccable standards they set, on all fronts. KGH was also one general hospital which was commended for its excellent maintenance, regularly received awards for 'Well Maintained Hospital' from the Mylapore Academy. "The tradition continues; we received it even last year!"

"Near the Old Labour Ward are two huge pillars that face Bell's Road; they could have been part of the original entrance to the hospital. The stately 200-year-old banyan in the central compound was an integral part of the Gosha Hospital of my childhood. It always had crowds of children



Dr. Mary Beadon, first Superintendent.



Dr. H.M. Lazarus, first Indian Superintendent.

fee) too to pep you up early in the mornings. The nurses were so very kind then." And the memory of clean white rows of nursing students filing out in rows to the hospital wards at precise timings brings a ready smile, for, "They looked so like *vellai pura* (white doves)!"

Adjoining the hospital is the quaint Victorian style housing quarters built in 1889 with a donation of Rs. 37,000 from the Maharaja of Vizianagaram - replete with high roof beams and a central grand wooden balustrade - that cries for maintenance. Initially the home of the Superintendent, with adjoining servants' quarters, it was later occupied by the Resident Medical Officers (RMOs). Staff remember how "RMOs used to stand on the balcony with the staff lining up alongside the TB Ward to take roll call."

Says Dr. Gunasagaram, "The School of Nursing was commended across the country (and still continues to be). Till 1990, the KGH was the only hospital that undertook examination of

nowhere else have I found this kind of bonding between patients, doctors and staff of the hospital. Generations of women in families come back again and again!" He too vividly remembers how the huge banyan fell, "I remember the lone man under it, the sudden half a minute shower that made him run inside, and the many kites on the tree flew away a minute before we heard a mighty crash!"

The hospital campus still continues to be a shady haven with many ancient peepul, nuna and athi trees. All the old buildings are sited around quadrangular garden areas (now shabbily maintained).

The KGH has been upgraded since October 2007 to incorporate the Institute of Social Obstetrics. And so Dr. Vasantha Subbiah has the honour of being the last Superintendent and the first Director of the newly upgraded Institute and the KGH. In her room, with neatly arranged portraits of former Superintendents (all women) in succession all around, she reminisces, "Born at the KGH in 1950, I went on to complete my house surgery and postgraduate studies here, and also worked here for 25 years!"

Of late, there has been much frenetic activity on the KGH, with the many newly recruited staff engaged in cleaning the premises and new infrastructural additions being made.

The recently renovated Operation Theatre Complex is the latest addition. Coming soon, through the Reproductive and Child Health Scheme, is a government-sanctioned Rs. 30/- crore modern Steam Laundry, and a Tower Block that comprises both Neonatology and Maternity sections. A new Visitors Waiting Shed, a remodelled Nurses Quarters and a new PG Hostel are also on the cards.

The KGH's Mission statement reads, "To provide the most comprehensive quality health care to the poor and needy women in India." That was the hoary tradition of the Royal Victoria Hospital. It still continues.

(Concluded)

• by
SHOBHA MENON

swinging on its aerial roots. An anthill that appeared under the tree in the early 1960s, and venerated by patients with offerings of eggs and milk, had grown into a small temple during my mother's tenure as Superintendent." When the tree fell in October 2005, the entire original area was marked by a *nandhavanam*.

Till about the late 1960s, fish, mutton (the preference for male goats even leading to malpractices where male goatskins were stitched onto female's carcasses!) and liver were a regular part of patient diet. Six succulent oranges too! Rukkumani Amma says, "I delivered my seven children here...I remember the row of cows that lined the wall here, to provide fresh wholesome milk to patients, the long loaf of bread we used to be given with a pat of butter and *nattu chakkarai* for taste. 'Super' it was! *Kattam Kapi* (black cof-

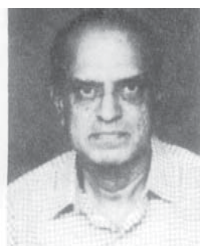
rape victims from across the State, since it had a 24-hour medico-legal cell casualty service. It is also the only general hospital for women in the city. The first microsurgical unit for doing tuboplasties (restoring a tubectomy) started here in the late 1960s, with T.K. Mahalakshmi (sister of T.K. Shanmugasundaram, the famous orthopaedician) instituting the unit. The concept of a Waiting Shed for patient attendants was initiated first in this hospital."

In 2007, there are 695 beds, with the hospital recording about 12,000 to 14,000 deliveries a year! Nearly 500,000 patients are treated a year.

Dr. Rathnakumar, currently RMO II, says, "The KGH owes a lot to the impeccable standards set by former Superintendents. In my experience of working in all the government maternity hospitals in Chennai,

Looking back on Madras cricket

Turf circumvented by matting



N. Krishnamoorthy

During World War II, the Madras Cricket Association (as it was known then) had suspended the league tournament. This was resumed in 1946-47 with 36 teams in 3 zones of 12 teams each.

I nostalgically remember the league match played on March 3, 1947 between my team, Egmore Excelsiors, and Egmore Recreation Club known as ERC 'B'. The match was to decide the promotion of ERC 'B' to the 1st Division. ERC 'B', already at the head of the table with a lead of one point, was assured of promotion even if they drew the match.

V. Pattabhiraman, who was Hony. Secretary of ERC 'B', strengthened his team for the match with the induction of six new players, four of them Maharashtra State players who came in from IAF, Avadi, and the other 2 from Madurai. As Hony. Asst. Secretary of the MCA, he also made arrangements for the match to be played on the turf wicket at the Marina Grounds, as he thought it would be advantageous to the State players in his team. As the Hony. Secretary of the Excelsiors, I appealed to the Hony. Secretary of the MLA K.S. Ranga Rao to re-post the match on any matting wicket. Ranga Rao obliged by posting the match at Pachaiyappa's College ground and also posted two Test umpires, T.A. Ramachandran (Laddu) and S.V. Kumaraswamy.

It was a match between two Egmore clubs and, naturally, most of the Egmore residents had gathered to witness the match. Excelsiors had one player in N. Krishnamoorthy (from Annamalai University) who had scored a century in each of its five previous matches and was looking forward to his sixth century.

ERC 'B', captained by G.B. Chandrashekar, won the toss and put Excelsiors in to bat first. Excelsiors scored 176 for 6 and declared at 2.45 pm. ERC 'B', batting with its new State players from Maharashtra, collapsed for 63, with an hour of play to spare.

I remember this day (Aravathu Moovar), the festival at the Mylapore Kapaleeswarar Temple in March every year with nostalgic memories of this match, relating the 63 palanquins which go around the temple to the collapsing of ERC 'B' for the paltry score of 63.

The highlights of the match for the winning team were the performances of N. Krishnamoorthy, who scored his sixth consecutive century, and the bowling performance of this writer who took 4 wickets for 11 runs, ably assisted by the left handers, JC Mohan and Basheer Zinna. — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat*)

S.R. Jagannathan

CAN WE EASE SEASON'S PAIN

(Continued from page 1)

grounds; Mylapore Fine Arts – M. Ct. M. School/Vivekananda grounds; Vani Mahal – Holy Angels). This will obviously have to be a commercial arrangement, but schools could well look forward to it. Most crowd-pulling shows are in the evenings, and so such arrangements will not put the schools/colleges to any inconvenience.

- Ensuring that those with special requirements, who need parking facilities within the *sabha* complex, are issued passes and that all others are made to park in spaces spe-

cially hired for the occasion, such as school grounds. Educating patrons that they need to walk from the parking spots to the auditoria and that the luxury of getting dropped at the door is a matter of the past.

- In the event a *sabha* allows patrons to get off vehicles at the gate, it must ensure that a valet parking service is made available to ensure that the vehicles are speedily removed.
- The authorities must make the spaces beneath flyovers available for parking. Currently these are dumping grounds and are not put to

any use, all in the name of security for VIPs who use the road.

- The Government must also consider reviving bus services especially for The Season, with specific pick-up and drop timings and places. Today, the MTC boasts of luxury buses with exits that are easy to navigate even by the aged. Perhaps it is time to press these into service. The use of cars to go to *sabha*-s can thus be discouraged.
- If only these steps are taken, life will be a lot easier and much more enjoyable during The Season.

Flyovers as solution

(Continued from page 1)

Rs. 9.72 crore, this will permit traffic on both sides. It is expected to be completed in February 2008. The third flyover is coming up at the Doraisamy Road-Usman Road corner at a cost of around Rs. 20 crore. This is to be completed by June 2008. The last flyover in this instalment is at the junction of Tirumalai Pillai Road and G.N. Chetty Road. To be built at a cost of Rs. 16 crore, this will be completed by September 2008. Gammon India is handling all the projects.

In the meanwhile, a mega flyover, at a cost of Rs. 36 crore, is being planned at the Porur Junction where it is estimated that 14,000 passenger car units cross the point. Land of about one hectare in extent is being acquired from private parties and the designs are expected to be finalised within a couple of months. Work is expected to begin in May 2008 and the

flyover, when completed, is expected to ease traffic flow on the Mount-Poonamallee Road. It is significant to point out here that the CMDA in 2005 had objected to this flyover, claiming that it would obstruct rail networks in future. That objection has, however, since been withdrawn.

With all these developments in place, it is hoped that Chennai traffic will be more streamlined. That did not happen with the last lot of flyovers. It is to be hoped that things will be better this time around.

Meanwhile, what is surpris-

ing is that, if flyovers are indeed the solution, no steps are being taken at certain well-known trouble-spots. The first is the Eldams Road-Mount Road-Thyagaraya Road intersection. The place witnesses terrible traffic build-ups each morning and evening. Yet another spot is the Perambur-Madhavaram High Road junction. Incidentally, this project was proposed as early as 1999, but has since been shelved. It is learnt that Anna University is working on a feasible solution and, once this is received, work will progress.

Answers to Quiz

1. Australia; 2. Mumbai's Archbishop Oswald Gracias; 3. Manoj Kumar; 4. Google; 5. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; 6. Adam Gilchrist; 7. 'Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme'; 8. G.N. Gopal; 9. Kindle; 10. Annapolis, Maryland.

11. Senthil; 12. Karur; 13. Cheran; 14. Chennai Superstars; 15. *Buffalo Soldier*; 16. The seven notes of the musical gamut; 17. Kaj Schmidt; 18. 'Ilaya Thalapathi' Vijay; 19. Palk Strait, Ramanathapuram dist.; 20. Srivilliputtur.

* * *

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations:



Amalgamations Group



ASHOK LEYLAND
ENGINEERING YOUR TOMORROWS



Brakes India Limited



Go Placidly



F.L. Smidth Limited

KASTURI &
SONS
LTD.



MURUGAPPA
GROUP

NIPPO
BATTERIES TORCHES



Rane Group

SAINT-GOBAIN
The future of glass. Since 1665.



SANMAR



SUNDARAM FINANCE
Enduring values. New age thinking.



Sundram Fasteners
Limited



TAJ
Hotels, Resorts
and Palaces



TATA
CONSULTANCY
SERVICES



TVS MOTOR COMPANY



UCAL AUTO
PRIVATE LIMITED

Since 1856,
patently leaders
— A WELLWISHER