

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XVII No. 20

February 1-15, 2008

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Now that I have booked the 1 lakh car, I have to lose weight before I can fit into it!

Hush, Little Baby

It's here up. The small car – the world's cheapest, the 'people's car'. Sorry to be a party-pooper, but has anyone taken a good look at 'the people' lately? At the indiscipline, immature oneupmanship, road-rage, the merry flouting of rules and abysmal lack of even basic road-sense? Imagine having even more of these delightfully incompetent hordes unleashed upon our pathetically inadequate roads. The very thought... 'Adhirudille?'... like the one and only Boss said! And so it should. This car takes '5 at a squeeze'. Given our unique, convenient interpretations, this means '8 to 10', including extended family, and the neighbour's pet Great Dane. Apparently, it's easy to park. Well, having something pocket-sized enough to leave on the hoods of larger vehicles, or casually propped against the bumper of the car in front, has its advantages. The point is, 'the people' need lessons, not increased easy access to vehicles. Perhaps, a nice, thick textbook could be part of each purchase? And you can pick up your vehicle only if you answer all the questions right? (Actually, this applies to all vehicle-users, irrespective of size.) The little one is being described as a dream come true. That's nice – but dreams need careful handling, for they have a way of suddenly turning around and biting you in the ...er... fundament, usually when you least expect it.

Ranjitha Ashok

Do we have a Heritage Act?

– And if so, does it look at conservation or tourism?

(By The Editor)

During the last couple of months we have heard a few civil servants refer to a Heritage Conservation Act of 1999. At least one of them stated it was introduced by the heritage-conscious Chief Minister of the time, M. Karunanidhi. Curiously, no one connected with the heritage movement in Chennai has heard of the Act. Nor have they been able to lay their hands on it. In fact, requests to the Civilians who mentioned the Act to send it to us have brought no response. We hope this report, which we consider a public appeal, will bring this Act out of hiding and to our doorstep.

We are indeed further surprised that if such an Act is in place, and if it has the basic sections such Acts worldwide have, besides a list of protected constructions, etc., how a heritage-conscious Chief Minister could think of wanting to pull down *Government House*, in Government Estate, a historic building that should be on any Heritage List. One of the Civilians who mentioned the Act recently said that some amendments to it were planned. We hope the amendments will be additions that will strengthen the Act and the cause of conservation, and NOT amendments that will weaken it by giving Government extraordinary powers to pull down any heritage building it feels it would like removed.

(Continued on page 8)



GROWING... GROWING... GROWN?

Our picture today is a clear indicator of how a growing city displays its growth.

In this picture of the wall of one of the old Government bungalows on Greenway's Road, the oldest gateposts (X) indicate the original height of the compound wall. Considering that such gateposts were usually at least 5 ft in height, their height today indicates how much indiscriminate road-laying has caused the ground-level to rise. The second gateposts (A) appear to have been made sometime later. Finally, the second gateway too has been sealed and a much higher compound wall constructed. Can you get a clearer indicator of the march of time – and how it affects road levels? – (Photograph: SRIRAM V.)

Campaign to save Bharat Insurance Building

Kardyll's Building, now called the *Bharat Insurance Building*, continues to stand without a roof for a third year. A unique piece of architecture in the city, its fate remains undecided even as the demolition of the building, decided on by its present owners, the Life Insurance Corporation of India, has been challenged in court by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage. The case went up to the Supreme Court and has since been sent back to the High Court of Madras for decision and disposal.

Conservationists and heri-

tage lovers are concerned over the fate of the building. LIC has in its own wisdom decided that the building is unsafe and has to be pulled down. This despite the fact that a committee of ex-

● by
A Staff Reporter

perts appointed by the High Court has certified that it is not so and that the building can be restored to its original glory. In fact, the LIC has even put up notices all around the building stating that it is structurally unsafe, which is far from the truth. When LIC began the demolition, prior to INTACH's plea to the court, the roof of the build-

ing was dismantled, resulting in its now being exposed to the vagaries of the weather. The city has since witnessed three good monsoons and the building being kept this way is a matter for worry. The absence of a Heritage Act in the city, it is feared, will allow the LIC to have its way. It is in this context that a signature campaign has been started to save the building. The text of the letter is available in this issue.

Why does *Kardyll's Building* need to be saved? Built between 1894 and 1897, it was designed by JH Stephen and has been described by a contemporary

(Continued on page 2)

See page 7

Vexed with Vadapalani

Last week, *The Man from Madras Musings* had to attend a wedding at a hotel that is fast gaining the reputation of being one of the best in the city. Its only drawback as far as MMM, who being a South Chennai Snob rarely travels beyond Cathedral Road, is concerned, is that it is located in Vadapalani. Anyway, it was more out of curiosity to see the hotel than to attend the wedding that MMM went. And the journey did nothing to change MMM's long-held view that areas such as Vadapalani are urban nightmares which have emerged from the city planners' and civic body's negligence.

On reaching the stretch near Valluvar Kottam, the vehicles slowed down and began inching forward. What with a bad back and having to drive himself, MMM was soon pretty much of a wreck. To add to his woes, the airconditioning in the car failed soon after and it became more of a travelling inferno. After numerous one-ways, none of which would qualify for anything more than the status of a lane in any other country, MMM found himself in a kind of archaeological dig. A concrete slope in the distance made him realise that he was in the vicinity of a fly-over construction. Buses, trucks, cars, autos, two-wheelers and pedestrians squeezed past this construction, almost rubbing the walls of the unfortunate buildings that stood witness to the great dig.

There was not a single sign-

board in sight indicating as to where MMM was headed. But his not to reason why (and as his good lady has said often, MMM does not ask for directions), he plodded on. But soon his confidence in himself had worn out. There was not one signboard anywhere explaining the way forward. Besides it had been a good hour and a half since he had set out and he was apprehensive that the wedding would be over and the newly-weds would have gone off for more pleasant activities. A policeman who, given the calm detachment with which he was watching the chaos, was perhaps modelling for a statue in his honour, soon came into the line of sight. MMM had no choice but to slow down, thereby causing the traffic behind to halt, and ask for directions. The policeman, having paused to glare sufficiently at a bus that was honking away behind, came to MMM's rescue and gave him detailed instructions as to how to reach the hotel. The long and short of it was that MMM would have to take a series of lanes, and by-lanes, for the hotel had long been left behind, having been camouflaged by the dig. MMM obeyed and having lost his way three or four times more, and then having almost given up, finally landed up at the venue.

He need not have worried. Practically everyone there looked as though he/she had been through a harrowing experience and the conversa-

tion centred only on the road conditions outside. One guest remarked that any more weddings in the area would elicit only greetings telegrams from him. Almost everyone was in a hurry to have his food and leave, as the thought of the journey back home was filling each of them with dread. MMM, the thought of having obtained enough material for a lead story sustaining him, was rather relaxed. And not only a lead story, but a series. For who can deny that there is enough and more for "Mad with Mylapore", "Tired with T'Nagar", "Aghast at Adayar",

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

"Ranting at RA Puram", "Exasperated with Egmore", "Muddling through Mambalam" etc? He began, if you recollect, with Puzzled at Padi a few weeks ago.

Renaming the city

We once lived in Madras and now it is Chennai. But a visitor to the city has thought "Mad Rash" more suitable. This friend of *The Man from Madras Musings* went into self-imposed exile in the mofussil and was recently in the city for a couple of days' work. On arrival, he, however, cut all social engagements at once and concentrated on fin-

ishing his work within a day, so that he could get back to the open spaces he loved. On returning, he sent MMM a one line message by email: "Glad to be out of Mad Rash."

The great mall

As far as *The Man from Madras Musings* is concerned, worth avoiding while driving about, for they are the nerve centres of most traffic jams, the praiseworthy role of private security guards belonging to these establishments in regulating traffic notwithstanding. Being a policeman on duty outside malls must be a punishment posting, or so MMM thought. But dragged last week to a mall by the good lady, MMM was privy to a police constable's telephone conversation with his superior. Or, rather, going by the servile attitude of the constable, the other end of the line had someone who was several times superior.

Apparently, one of the duties of this policeman is to stand in queue (or perhaps just barge in) and reserve tickets for film shows in the theatres at the mall, for the benefit of the seniors in the force and their families. So this policeman tells his boss (or super boss or super-duper boss or whoever it was) that he has booked four tickets in the balcony class for him and his family for a Tamil film's evening show. Then, in case the boss (or super boss etc) has doubts about the film,

he also adds that it is an excellent movie which has received rave reviews. He also asks the boss to send someone to his home in the evening to collect the tickets.

There were a couple of gratified quacks at the other end of the wire and then the policeman returned the cell phone that he had borrowed from a hapless cyclist and bade him farewell.

MMM now realises how good our policemen are in multi-tasking, which any good management consultant will tell you is the need of the hour. Now they regulate traffic, now they book tickets in theatres, and so on.

A song & dance

The sidekicks of politicians are experts at this activity. They exaggerate the importance of what their leaders do beyond any proportion. Usually any visit of a leader to a follower's home is enough reason for putting up hoardings, banners and cutouts. But MMM was recently amused to see a hoarding where the sidekick had made a huge to-do about his leader having come to garland the statue of a great leader of the past. What next, MMM wonders. A cutout for the leader celebrating his getting up every morning? Or sleeping well at night? Or just breathing the same air as we do? Ah, how blessed are we!

— MMM

(Continued from page 1) writer as an example of the "architect's imagination running riot". The headquarters of WE Smith and Co, leading wholesale and manufacturing druggists, it was described in its time as a "palatial structure... one of the sights of the city... a far greater show than any other commercial building on Mount Road. With Ottoman domes and towers, with Gothic arches and spires and with Indian sculptures and embellishments, it is Indo-Saracenic at its most fanciful" (taken from *Madras That is Chennai, Gateway to The South*, by S. Muthiah). The building in later years became Spencers' property and later the headquarters of Bharat Insurance who built a modern office fronting the old structure and rented the latter to various shops and establishments. The LIC took over Bharat Insurance in 1957 and *Kardyll's Building* became their possession.

The interior of the building, according to *Madras - The Architectural Heritage* by K. Kalpana and Frank Schiffer, "is a surprising contrast to the exterior. The first floor is fitted with a truncated, vaulted, highly ornamental false ceiling

Let's save *Bharat Insurance Building*

with stained glass panels and other embellishments, most of which remain. There is also a large wooden staircase and ornate cast-iron work. A staircase that leads up to the tower offers breathtaking views of the city."

In short, it is a striking piece of architecture, one which the city ought to be proud of. In any other city, more conscious of its heritage, this would have been a listed building with strict rules on its maintenance and upkeep.

However, that not being the case here, it is upto the citizens to bring to the notice of the powers that be, that they care for their heritage and would like it to be maintained. Hence this campaign.

Do you feel strongly that *Kardyll's Building* needs to be saved? If so, please sign the letter (see page 7) and send it to us at our postal address. Every signature counts and *Kardyll's Building* and the city's heritage need you. It is up to you to make a difference.

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 & 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

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Chandrasekhar again

Dr. Chandrasekhar (MM, January 1st) had a sense of humour. Breaking the news of his getting the Rumford medal in one of his letters home, he narrated a joke. A General whose uniform had a row of glittering medals was asked by an admiring woman how he came to win them all. The General replied (after pointing to an insignificant medal in the row) that it was given to him by mistake and others followed.

Whenever he visited Madras, Dr. Chandrasekhar invariably stepped into Presidency College, his alma mater, and unobtrusively visited the lecture hall where he had sat in his early years. Usually he walked around the grounds in a reminiscent mood. He was very much attached to the college.

His first paper was published in 1929, when he was just 19 years old. It was a surprise to his uncle, Sir C.V. Raman.

Dr. Chandrasekhar used to drive long distance from Yerke's Observatory, William bay, to Chicago to teach a class of just two students. His friends questioned the wisdom of the act. Later it happened that both the students got the Nobel Prize. Dr. Chandrasekhar said, "My whole class has got the Nobel Prize."

Classical music and literature were his absorbing passions. While convalescing after a bypass surgery, he finished rereading almost all Shakespeare's works.

Dr. Chandrasekhar possessed remarkable culinary skills. He used to help his wife Lalitha in the kitchen and it was said he could make *dosais* in a perfect circle.

When a relative wanted to buy a present for Dr. Chandrasekhar, he said, "Buy me a pencil. That is the only thing I use."

Regarding the craze for going abroad (that exists even now) Dr. Chandrasekhar differed

from his uncle Dr. C.V. Raman. C.V. Raman deprecated this tendency and felt that those who went abroad would have done infinitely better by staying in India. But Dr. Chandrasekhar viewed it in the opposite way. He cited the example of Ramanujan, the mathematician, who went to London and worked with Hardy. If he had not gone to London, according to Dr. Chandrasekhar, Ramanujan would have died unknown and unwept. Dr. Chandrasekhar himself felt he would not have done better if he had stayed in India.

Dr. Chandrasekhar wanted Indian universities and centres of education to improve their infrastructure and encourage, in greater measure, research. I feel this is true even now.

If India is to produce eminent scientists like Raman and Chandrasekhar we have to revamp our education, changing it to the creative and the innovative from rote memorisation and by not giving undue importance to marks but to creative abilities.

R. Rajagopalan

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22, Muthu Mohammed Street
Puzhuthivakkam, Chennai 91

Honouring the great

It is a pity that illustrious personalities like Raman and Chandrasekhar (MM, January 1st) have not been honoured in Tamil Nadu. Is there a single college, let alone university, named after them? It will also be in the fitness of things if statues of both are erected in the premises of the Presidency College, their alma mater.

M.R. Pillai

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No change

My own experience at the Kannammappet crematorium (MM, January 1st) was no

Tips for the affluent, not the common man

'25 tips to make a difference' (MM, January 1st) no doubt contains useful tips to follow in the interest of environmental protection. But how far they are being followed by the affluent, for whom I believe these tips are intended – as ordinary folks have neither the means to go for a car, nor the chance to take a flight – I do not know. May I point out the following:

1. **Change the bulbs:** CFLs are cheap and switching over to incandescent lamps costs 20 times as much.

2. **Use solar device:** To install a solar heater for hot water, the initial cost would be between Rs. 15,000 and 20,000. How many can afford this, unless the Government comes forward to subsidise the product?

3. **Construct green buildings:** Common people cannot afford even an EWS quarters! In this issue, MMM had mentioned about new buildings using 'Glass & steel'. Why don't these buildings use solar panels instead of glass so that enough electricity can be generated for their own use?

4. **Turning off of computers:** Those who have computers would be already doing this.

Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23, etc. are obviously for very well-to-do persons.

9, 21, 22, 23 and 24 are obviously meant for the Government, since no one in Government takes notice of the feeble protests of the voiceless common people.

16. **Recycle:** It is already stated that we are adept in recycling.

17. **Wind power:** Would it be possible in a city like Chennai? Suggestions should be practical to be easily followed.

18. **Plastic bags:** In Mumbai, the law against using plastic bags is very strictly followed. In Chennai, any law is only on paper. There is no serious attempt at enforcement. That is the bane of the city.

19. **Public transport:** Ah! That is a million dollar question. Given the choice, who would not use the public transport? But, is the Government able to run it efficiently? When it cannot run the service in any particular sector, it does not even permit private operators. What is the remedy?

20. **Save paper:** The computer era has ushered in more wastage of stationery. Schools prescribe more and more notebooks. These problems should be addressed first.

When fossil fuels are a diminishing commodity, they are wasted as if they are everlasting. See the motorcades of VIPs. What is the necessity to have air displays during National Day celebrations? What is the necessity for car races? Of course, I may be thought of as a spoilsport. I do love to see such displays, but when fossil fuels are fast diminishing, we can hardly afford to use them for sport. Besides, the atmosphere also gets polluted.

Though everyone is talking about conservation of fuel, energy, etc., no one seems serious about following any useful suggestions but those who suggest such measures are looked down upon. Just as the saying goes 'Charity begins at home', the Government should follow this advice first and set an example. Will it do it?

T.M. Sundararaman

19, Nallappan Street
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

different. I had to pay, aside from the actual charges of Rs.250 towards the cremation of an adult body, Rs. 1200 (which we arrived at after hard bargaining) to the *vettian*. This was about nine years ago.

Upset at this, I wrote in *The New Indian Express* which published my letter. The letter really made the officials sit up and take note, as it was at that time that M.K. Stalin became the Mayor of the Chennai Corporation. The Corporation officials visited me and gathered details. They finally suspended the caretaker of the crematorium and laid off the *vettians*. The caretaker and *vettians* met me subsequently and pleaded for help. Since my motive was to make them understand the seriousness of the issue and not to hit them below the belt, I requested the Commissioner to consider their case sympathetically. The surprise action from the Corporation would definitely have made the caretaker and the *vettians* to lie low only for some time.

It must be mentioned that though the caretaker is an employee of the Corporation, the *vettians* are not. The latter are merely licenceholders. Quite recently, the Corporation made an epoch-making decision to take *vettians* onto its rolls. At a function put up to distribute appointment letters to *vettians*, the Local Administration Min-

ister M.K. Stalin made it very clear that they should treat the bereaved honourably and should not demand money, now that they had become the employees of the Corporation. But even after becoming full-fledged employees of the Corporation, *vettians* have not changed a wee bit and they continue to terrorise the bereaved with extortion.

V.S. Jayaraman
31 Motilal Street
Chennai 600 017

Tree authority

It is true that felling of trees has become a regular activity everywhere, particularly at construction sites in the city, and it goes unchecked by authorities. I wish to recall the two months' and more notice served on Tamil Nadu government by the Madras High Court's first bench headed by Chief Justice A.P. Shah ordering the formation of a tree authority to safeguarding avenue trees, as is done in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Besides this, the Chennai Corporation should also take initiative in numbering the avenue trees in all the ten zones for accountability purpose.

K. Ramadoss
4/1, PE Koil West Mada Street
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It's Thirukolur

In K.R.A. Narasiah's article (MM, January 16th), it should be noted that Vaithamanidhi is the name of the presiding deity of **Thirukolur**, a village near Tirunelveli – NOT Thirukoilur, which is somewhere near Chidambaram.

Pradeep Chakravarthy

'Deepthi',
27, Gopalkrishna Road
Chennai 600 017

**READABILITY
PLEASE**

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **hand written** letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i's' and crossing the 't's'.

Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

- THE EDITOR

Our Addresses

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: Chennai Heritage, 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

The story of Madras Advertising

Advertising in Madras is probably as old as the city itself. *The Hindu's* centenary volume records that in the early years of the paper (1893 to be precise), the pages carrying advertisements were on par with news pages. Some of the early and consistent advertisers according to the paper were P Orr and Sons (Watches and Jewels), Spencer and Co., Lawrence and Mayo (Spectacles), Madras Railway and Co., and Varadachari and Sons (Booksellers). Most of these companies had artists on their payroll who prepared the advertisements which were released in the media.

Some of the brands that were advertised regularly in the city's media, but which were controlled from other locations in the country, included Vitex, Eno's, Andrew's Liver Salt, Cow & Gate, Murphy Radio, Kolynos, Ostermilk and Ovaltine. Most followed the advertisements that were released in England and the US and repeated them in the local media, with often the same visuals and models.

The vernacular press thrived on advertisements for films, plays, gramophone records, various local remedies and cosmetics.

The popular media were press (both magazines and dailies) and the hoardings. Ads in the press were only black-and-white and relied largely on illustrations and a few half-tone photographs. The printer's block was the most relied on tool for the visuals. Classifieds became big business from very early.

Over the years, Bombay and Calcutta emerged as the advertising capitals, with several agencies setting up base in those cities. But Madras appears to have been an important location. *The Hindu* regularly reported on speeches/letters on advertising and a report dated September 18, 1926 refers to Professor Joseph France of the Presidency College speaking on 'Advertising' at the *Senate House*. The Advertising Agencies Association of India met in 1935 in the city, with C.R. Srinivasan of the *Swadesamitran* chairing the meeting. Multinational brands, almost all of them aimed at the home, dominated the newspapers and it was no wonder that *The Mail* chided *The Hindu* in the 1930s for taking a nationalist stance when it depended on "foreign goods" and their advertisements for its survival!

By then, "talkies" had come to the metropolis and advertised regularly in the dailies. Among the earliest advertisements to use celebrity endorsements was Lux, which featured several South Indian heroines such as Anjali Devi and T.R. Rajakumari. The *Ananda Vikatan* of S.S. Vasan was a pioneer in innovative, if indirect, advertising. One instance was its publicity for the 1939 film *Thyaga Bhoomi* which was serialised in the magazine and was simultaneously being shot. The serial used stills from the film for visuals, a first of its kind. Movie mogul S.S. Vasan, who owned Gemini Studios and the *Vikatan*, was known for innovative advertising to publicise his films. The hoarding industry honed the talents of signboard painters who could do the likeliness of film stars, a uniquely Madras phenomenon. These larger-than-life portraits

industrial development was based on light engineering goods, automobile ancillaries and textiles." Other agencies that played a lead role in the city were F.D. Stewart, Grant, Madras Advertising (mainly Simpson's business) and a few local agencies.

The admen of the city had long felt the need for a club of their own and this was the genesis of the Advertising Club, Madras. On February 18, 1956, twenty individuals met with the idea of forming a Club for Advertising Professionals. This was inspired by the Calcutta Advertising Club, which had been followed by a similar one in Bombay. The Advertising Club, Madras, was formally inaugurated on April 7, 1956 by C.R. Srinivasan. The first committee had G. Venkatachari (Easterns Advertising) as President, KRS Varadhan (Shilpi Ltd) as Secre-

● by
SRIRAM V.

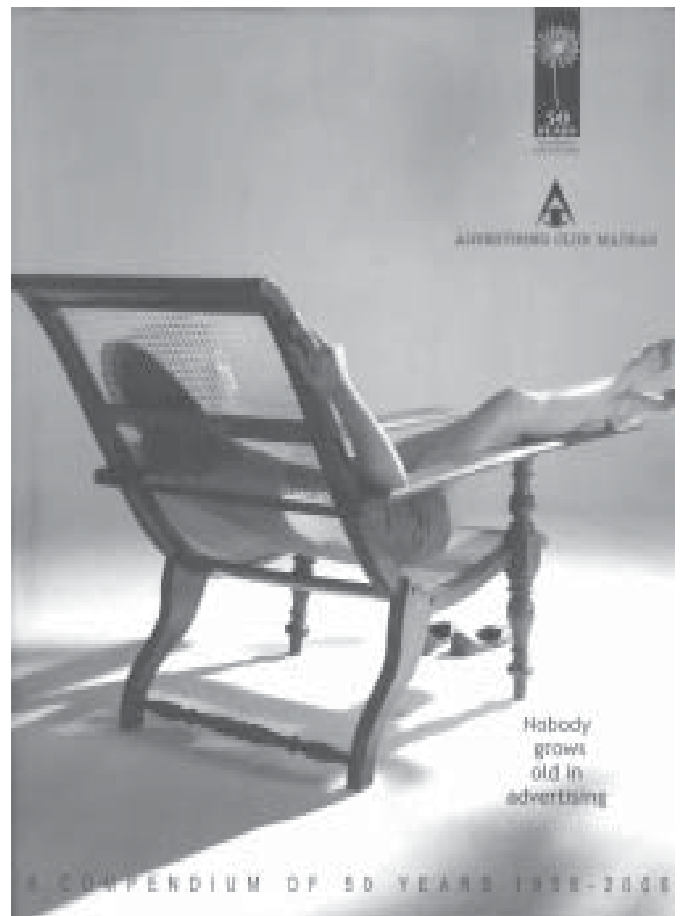
dominated the city's skylines on hoardings. The film industry appears to have been a major source of ad revenue for the press, given that block colour advertising was ushered in with films. *Ali Babavum 40 Tirudargalum* was the first to take advantage of this innovation.

However, at this time, most agencies operated with a skeletal office in Madras and it was customary for those in Bombay to refer to Madras as "The Outpost". The first agency to set up a full office in the city was J Walter Thompson (JWT) which came here in 1955. R.K. Swamy, then working in JWT's Bombay office, was asked to handle the Madras branch. The South was the smallest advertising market in the country at the time, but that did not deter Swamy. He proved his mettle by roping in the accounts of Ashok Leyland, Parry's and TI Cycles. The Hercules ads for the TI Group were landmark creations. The Binny account was already a part of the JWT portfolio. In 1960 came S.H. Benson (later becoming a part of Ogilvy and Mather, now O&M). This was headed in Madras by yet another advertising legend to be – S.R. Ayer. In his words, "the advertising business in Madras in the early 1960s was limited. There were no large FMCG manufacturers, nor many OTC products. Its in-

tary and S. Parthasarathy (*The Hindu*) as Treasurer. Other members included P.S. Mani Aiyer (P.S. Mani and Co) and S.S. Mani (Little's Oriental Balm). The Club had a formal constitution which had as its objective "Promotion and Furtherance of the Science and Art of Advertising." The membership fee was Rs.24 p.a. payable in two instalments. The first year recorded a membership of 65, which grew to 105 by 1958.

To commemorate the end of its first year, an exhibition of the work of the Commercial Artists Guild, brought in from Bombay, was held on March 31, 1957. Lectures by prominent citizens of Madras were held to publicise the exhibition and a souvenir titled *New Horizons*, with 19 articles and 65 advertisements, was brought out.

The 1960s and 70s witnessed the arrival of several powerful brands. Bata, an old player, became strongly entrenched in the South. Some of the products that appealed strongly to the Madras psyche included Binaca, Rin, Liril, Cinthol, Cuticura, Margo and Hamam. ITC's Scissors brand became the largest seller in South India, with Wills Filter following close behind, thanks to the success of the "Made for Each Other" campaign running in colour in *The Hindu*. During these years,



Ponds was one of the big clients in the city. Later it merged with the Hindustan Lever Group.

On June 13 and 14, 1964, the first ever 'Seminar on Advertising' to be held in Madras was conducted. This was addressed by R. Venkataraman, then Minister for Industries, Government of Madras. From then on till the mid 1970s, several such seminars were held, the notable one being the 1966 event, with 'Challenges of Self Reliance in the Industry' as its theme.

The early 1980s saw more magazines switching to colour, and improved paper quality and printing technology saw some excellent visuals, both photography and artwork, coming into advertising. This was also the period when the Engineering Industry and the Public Sector Undertakings began advertising, thanks largely to the initiatives of R.K. Swamy.

With more and more agencies setting up shop in the city, Madras boomed as an advertising centre in the 1990s. This was, of course, because of the city becoming a commercial hub. By then it had the pride of being the headquarters of an All India agency – R.K. Swamy's, which opened shop in 1973. Advertising had "arrived" in Madras by 1977 when the Convention of the Ad Club had 'Advertising Today and Tomorrow' as its theme. Awards became a regular feature of the Club in the same year when the 'Advertising Art Exhibition and the South India Awards Nite' was held. *The Hindu* instituted a rolling trophy to be given to the agency that excelled in cre-

ativity. The tradition of awards has continued till date. By then, MRF had emerged as one of the biggest spenders on advertising nationally. A big client in terms of press advertising was Brilliant Tutorials.

1982 was an important year for the Club, for it witnessed the Advertising Convention, with 'Indian Advertising, the Emerging Challenges' as its theme. It also had the opportunity to host David Ogilvy, the ad legend, who addressed a joint meeting of the Ad Club, the Madras Chamber of Commerce, the Madras Management Association (MMA) and the Public Relations Society of India. In 1988, the Club hosted its first ever International Convention – Advertising Future Shock (AFS), with its theme 'Competing for the Future'. The AFS was held again in 2001 ('Reinventing Advertising in the ICE Age') and 2007 ('Integrated Communication and Disintegrated Agencies'). In addition, seminars and workshops have been integral features of the Club's activities. 'Deadline' is the name given to an annual programme where creative groups are given 36 hours to complete a campaign, from brief to execution. The lighter side has included events such as the annual quiz, the Adotsav (a fun programme) and sports events.

The radio was a one-house wonder, with the AIR being the sole service provider. Its commercial operation, *Vividh Bharati*, began in 1967 and soon some evergreen ad jingles such

(Continued on page 6)

The Dasi who stood tall

This was a Madras Book Club experience with a difference.

The Word shared space with Theatre, Music and Dance, in keeping with the book being launched: *The Devadasi and the Saint* – the biography of Bangalore Nagarathamma, an icon in the world of Devadasis – by Sriram V, social historian, writer, heritage and environmental enthusiast.

When you leave, your mind is a kaleidoscopic riot of images and sounds...the brilliant, poignant voices of Swarna Rethas, Rahul Krishna and Sandeep Narayan (all disciples of Sanjay Subrahmanyam); the real-life characters brought alive by the Madras Players under the aegis of theatre personality Prasanna Ramaswamy, with the author himself playing a cameo role. But the personality that emerged to tower over it all – Bangalore Nagarathamma.

Who was this woman?

Nagarathamma was born on November 3, 1878 to a Devadasi, Putta Lakshmi-ammal, under a birth star that predicted that she would one day be rich and famous. Growing up in near-poverty, she scaled unimaginable heights in her music and dance career, and was a “doughty feminist” in an era as yet unfamiliar with the term.

Sriram V. first read about her in 1984, in *Sruti* magazine, while still a freshman in college. “Since then, she had a habit of popping up often in my thoughts.”

In 2002, Sriram decided to ‘pen a biography’ of Nagarathamma. Prasanna Ramaswamy was equally fascinated by Nagarathamma ever since she had read about the woman’s attempts to publish the controversial *Radhika Santwanamu* in 1911.

* * *

The concept of dedicating women to temples, a common feature of most ancient civilisations, was well-known in South India. Devadasis, the ‘the handmaidens of God’, were dedicated to the arts outside temple precincts too, attached to kings and rich patrons, and entertaining masses with music and dance. Many of them were literate, learned, and enjoyed absolute right over all properties bequeathed to them by the temple, protected by a matriarchal system which ensured property went from mother to

daughter. Girls were the preferred progeny here. ‘Chastity’ was re-defined by these women, and they were never seen as common prostitutes.

The histories of both the Devadasis and the development of music and dance in South India are inter-linked.

Their world captures your imagination; you have to fight an overwhelming tendency to romanticise their lives, heeding the author’s warning.

With declining standards and outside influences, the Indian concept of *sringara* began to take on slightly dubious shades. The women were vulnerable to exploitation. Being abandoned in old age was common. Many endured harsh poverty. Addiction to alcohol and tobacco was rampant. Some men born into this social group were, at times, reduced to nothing more than ‘procuring agents’. The naturally less-tal-

rathamma was invited to perform at the Amba Vilasa Palace, Mysore. Unfortunately, Putta Lakshmi had succumbed to tuberculosis by then ... but her oath had been fulfilled.

* * *

Nagarathamma lived for a while in Bangalore, before moving to Madras in 1903.

Madras was a city teeming with artistes, dancers, musicians, scholars, with the Devadasi community being one of its most colourful components, especially in George Town, where lived the queen bee of them all – Veena Dhanammal.

A warm friendship was destined to spring up between these two stalwarts.

By 1905, Nagarathamma, to her credit, managed to carve a brilliant career for herself, even amongst such a glittering array of stars.

● by
RANJITHA ASHOK

ented faced immense hardships. Scrambling for rich patrons, either for themselves or for their daughters, was common, furthering negative images of Devadasis in general.

There was always an element of contrast, of irony. They lived for the arts, yet some lives sometimes carried shades of darkness.

This then was Nagarathamma’s mixed legacy.

Nagarathamma knew intense hardship as a child. Her mother fell out with her patron and moved to Mysore, then ‘a veritable crucible of arts’, finding a new patron in Giribhatta Thimayya, scholar, musician and instructor, who undertook Nagarathamma’s tutelage. But she proved to be a student of that variety some teachers dread – the one who outshines her guru. Predictably, Giribhatta turned on her, threw mother and daughter out, prophesying that the 9-year-old was destined to do nothing but “collect cow-dung in the streets of Mysore.”

Putta Lakshmi swore that they would return – at the behest of the Maharaja himself – and her daughter’s hands would be decked with bangles given in appreciation of her talents. In 1893, as prophesied, Naga-

She certainly was one of a kind. She considered the “learned and erudite courtesans of yore” her ideal. She was among the first women professionals to pay income tax. She was financially savvy, made wise investments, and spent lavishly on jewellery. She had finely honed survival instincts, and could adapt quickly to change. Given the growing popularity of the Anti-Nautch Movement, she saw the wisdom in entering the ‘new’ field of entertainment – recorded music. ‘Miss Nagarathnam of Bangalore’ soon featured on gramophone discs.

Treated like royalty at the peak of her career, she designed a portable *tambura*, especially convenient for travel. Generous, charitable to a fault, she was also a skilled orator with a great sense of humour.

With age and growing bulk, music ultimately took centre-stage in her life.

* * *

She had a tremendous passion for Telugu literature, especially the work of Muddu Palani, scholar, littérateur and concubine of the 18th Century King Pratapasimha, and the author of the erotic *Radhika Santwanamu*. Muddu Palani



Bangalore Nagarathammal

considered herself “an equal to any male scholar of her times,” more significantly, she reached across the years to touch Nagarathamma’s life.

Nagarathamma, enthralled by *Radhika Santwanamu*, published a new edition. The storm this created, displaying the same confused thinking and moral policing so rampant today, is described by Sriram in detail.

A woman had dared to write an erotic classic, and another had dared to edit and publish it – and had taken on the establishment at that. “It required enormous courage....” said Dr. K.N. Kesari, years later, “and only Nagarathamma could have done it.”

Saint Tyagaraja (1767-1847 AD) was Nagarathamma’s favourite composer.

One October night in 1921, she had a life-changing vision – Tyagaraja raising his hands and blessing her. Next morning, she received a letter from her guru Bidaram Krishnappa, bemoaning the fate of Tyagaraja’s *samadhi* in Tiruvayyaru, speaking of the neglect, the infighting and rivalry between two groups, Periya Katchi and Chinna Katchi, holding rival *aradhanas* in the little town in the name of the ‘greatest composer of all time in Carnatic music’. He begged her to take charge and restore and renovate the *samadhi*. If anyone could, he emphasised, it was her.

And so she did.

She also ensured the participation of women in the *aradhana* – a hitherto forbidden practice – by the simple method of conducting an all-woman *aradhana* herself, taking the crowds by storm.

The *mandapam* around the *samadhi* of the great composer

Tyagaraja was built and, in time, the rival factions brought together.

* * *

The account of the Devadasi battle to survive is moving. It is a little frightening to reflect, with the clarity of hindsight, how close the cultural world came to losing its greatest treasures.

Through that difficult time, Nagarathamma, Secretary of the Devadasi Association, proudly continued to declare herself a Devadasi, affixing her signatures boldly to memorandums presented to the

Government. “I am a *devar adiyal*”, she announced, and this was “the war cry of the last Devadasi”.

* * *

Nagarathamma’s relevance today?

You cannot help but be struck by the very strong women featured in the book – all Devadasis. Putta Lakshmi; C. Saraswathi Bai, the first lady Bhagavatar; Veena Dhanammal, an icon in her own right, with almost-impossible-to-meet high standards; Dhanakotimammal of Kancheepuram; freedom fighters like Madras Lalithangi and Padmasini Bai; Muddu Palani...and many others.

There were so many ‘cool’ women, long, long before Gen X (or is it ‘Y’... these alphabetical labels are confusing?) came up with that word.

Nagarathamma’s story, told in loving detail, as if the author is speaking of an old, very dear friend, is ultimately a timeless story of the triumph of the human spirit – of hard work, determination, belief in oneself, tempered with humility and compassion.

In her sassy, in-your-face attitude, you see contemporary overtones.

* * *

In May 1952, chanting the names of Rama and Anjaneya, Nagarathamma passed away. Till the end, achievements by women always held a special place for her. But she was never a rabid male-basher. “Good and bad exist among both the *jatis* (male and female).” she’d state.

“To my heart’s content you have made my glory shine...” Tyagaraja’s own words are perhaps the most fitting epitaph to this, his most devoted, Dasi.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Which two countries adopted the Euro as the currency on January 1st?
2. Name the most famous New Zealander, a pioneer in mountaineering, who passed away on January 11th.
3. The tough and world-famous Dakar Rally was cancelled owing to safety concerns in which country?
4. Why would January 9th be an important date in Indian motor-ing history?
5. Which disgraced Olympic champion was sentenced to six months in prison for lying about performance-enhancing drug usage and a role in a check fraud scheme?
6. Name the NASA spacecraft that on January 14th became the second, and the first in 36 years, to fly past Mercury.
7. Who on January 14th became the first Indian American Governor in U.S. history when he was sworn in as the 56th Governor of Louisiana?
8. Which country launched the 'Bolivar Fuerte' or 'Strong Bolivar' currency on January 1st?
9. Name the creator of the rascally Harry Flashman who passed away on January 2nd.
10. Name the British Culture Secretary who has promised his country a new 'Renaissance'.

* * *

11. What 'first' did the PDS shops on Lakshmiapuram Road and Singarachari Road in Chepauk area of Chennai achieve recently?
12. With which prestigious award of the Music Academy were B. Krishnamurthy and V. Subrahmaniam honoured on January 1st?
13. Who won the Chennai Open on January 6th?
14. How many new routes were introduced by the MTC in Chennai on January 14th: 36, 42, or 56?
15. Vikram's new movie *Bheema*, is directed by?
16. Which educational institution was formed on September 4, 1978, as a unitary type of university?
17. The Vellore Fort houses which centre of learning?
18. Which sport is Alanganallur in Madurai District famous for?
19. Which district's name literally translates to 'black hill'?
20. In 1996, if Madras became Chennai, what did Periyar become?

(Answers on page 7)

Down by the Adyar

— *The studio that kept changing its name*

The first movie studio in Adyar came up on Greenway's Road on the northern side of the Adyar River. C.V. Raman, a lawyer by profession, was the brother of that sadly forgotten pioneer, A. Narayanan. Both were from the zamindary town of Sivaganga and entered films during the silent film period. They underwent training under Raghupathy Prakash (see MM, January 1st) and then Raman set out on his own to become a producer-director.

He promoted many movie companies. Obviously he was a firm believer in the dictum "Enterprise with caution!", for he made good use of his legal knowledge to promote joint stock companies with limited liability. Indeed, his close friends wisecracked that this was the only instance where his knowledge of law was put to use! Besides promoting film companies, he wanted to own a studio, which was the practice among producers in those days.

Raman floated 'Lalitha Cinetone' as a limited company with Kasi Chettiar as his main backer. Friends like Prakash also contributed to the kitty and Raman leased a 25-acre property with some superstructures in Adyar. It had Greenway's Road on its north, the River on the south and *Brodie Castle* as one of its boundaries. The property belonged to the Nawab of Arcot and the monthly rental was Rs. 150! Thus there came into existence a studio that, after a chequered history and many changes of ownership over half-a-century, finally became Satya Studio and became the property of the MGR family.

Many memorable movies were made here. C.V. Raman, however, did not produce any films here. And, soon, Lalitha Cinetone sank without a trace. Never at a loss over losses, Raman at once promoted another movie company, 'National Theatres Limited' and transferred the studio to his new venture. With much difficulty he produced a silent film, *Vishnu Leela* (1932), here, which was directed by Prakash. This was done even after movies began to talk in Tamil from 1931.

NTL too plunged into problems, but, unfazed, Raman created another company — 'Meenakshi Cinetone'. Some of his Nagarathar friends in Chettinad helped him with funds. One of them was Al. Rm.



Alagappa Chettiar who had a deep interest in the business side of cinema and experience as a distributor.

Al. Rm. AL. had a partner, Sm. Letchumanan Chettiar from Managiri, who was popularly known as 'Lena' in the Madras movie world. He was a powerful person in the South Indian film arena during a particular period. He was a drama

**Round the
City's
old studios
with
RANDOR GUY**

contractor in Chettinad and also dealt in second-hand cars. He was the first man to print and distribute handbills in Tamil about the cars he had for sale. It was an innovation for the day and pleased his rich customers who could not read English. He became a successful producer and made many hits in the 1940s and 1950s in Tamil and Telugu, like *Krishna Bhakthi* (1948). However, he faded away and his later years were spent in distress and oblivion.

It was at Meenakshi Cinetone that Al. Ar. and his partners produced the hit of 1934, *Pavalakodi*. This film marked the debut of M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, the first super star of South India. It was also the debut as director of a sadly neglected Indian film pioneer, that lawyer-turned-

film-maker K. Subramanyam, and the star actress, S.D. Subbulakshmi.

The making of this successful movie has some interesting sidelights.

One of the partners felt disappointed by the treatment meted out to him by the seniors and thought of a novel way to register his protest. The studio did not have a compound wall and he would park his car on the adjoining road. As soon as shooting began and K. Subramanyam shouted "Action!" he would start honking the car bulb-horn gleefully! The harsh sounds spoiled the 'take' and the shot had to be taken again. This went on, over and over again, for some days. Soon, the other partners realised that the only way he could be silenced was to buy his share in the partnership on his terms and get rid of him with his car, bulb-horn and all! That's exactly what Al. Rm. and his colleagues did!

The studio floor had no ceiling and shooting had to be done courtesy the Sun God! That was the period when electric lights were not used in the few film studios of Madras. As shooting was done with sunlight, there were no fixed time slots for breakfast, lunch or tea. Whenever clouds hid the sun, all would rush to eat and when the sun reappeared, all would rush back, leaving the half-eaten food behind! Stars, small fry, the crew, the bosses and the guests all ate the same food. There was no special food for a chosen few, as is the fashion today.

Then there was 'the crow-shooter', an important member of the studio technical crew. Adyar was then a much-wooded country and the studio had many tall trees where the crows gathered. The leftover food carelessly thrown by the actors and crew attracted the crows and their happy cawing disturbed the shooting. The crow-shooter armed with an air gun would shoot in the air two or three times, scaring the crows off the trees, and as soon as the birds flew away, the cameras would roll! His name appeared in the credit titles 'Crow Shooter... XYZ (he was an Anglo-Indian, for Hindus in those days did not wish to shoot crows, which were believed to be the *vahana* of Saneeswara, or Saturn!).

This was how 'shooting' was done before the era of Satya Studio dawned.

The story of Madras Advertising

(Continued from page 4)

as those for Det Soap, Tinopal, Rasna and Woodward's Gripe Water were created for this medium. Doordarshan, again a one-channel wonder till the early 1990s, made a small beginning in 1975. Madras, always a film centre, became a location for making ad films as well. Sun TV is a Madras phenomenon which has gone on to become national and international as well. With others in the city realising the potential of television advertising and several cable channels being established, television today nationally accounts for 50% of the Rs.13,000 crore advertising industry.

With liberalisation came boom time in advertising and, perhaps, reflecting that in 1994, the Ad Club became the proud owner of permanent premises of its own at Carex Centre, off Mount Road. Named the 'Centre for Advertising', it was a first for any Ad Club in India. Later, the Club moved to larger premises on Bazullah Road, T'Nagar.

The Club pioneered the concept of courses on advertising. It held them initially in collaboration with the MMA. But, in 1994, it launched its Postgraduate Programme in Advertising Management, once again a first in India. The PGDA has been a great success over the years. Perhaps the only activity of the Club which did not meet with success was its effort to bring out a journal. This has had a chequered history and has been coming out in fits and starts.

With such a successful history, it was no surprise that the Golden Jubilee of the Ad Club was a gala event which also marked the bringing out of a consolidated volume on the history of the Club and also of advertising in Madras. Titled *A Compendium of 50 years, 1956-2006*, it was put together by S. Krishna with the support of R.V. Rajan (Anugrah Madison) who was Chairman of the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

In addition to tracing the history, it has thought-provoking articles by well-known names such as S.R. Ayer, N. Murali, V. Kalidas, Dr. S. Krishnaswamy and Ramanujam Sridhar.

This volume is a must read for any serious student of the mercantile history of Madras. The book, priced at Rs.500, is available from the Ad Club at Bazullah Road.

A festival for the people

Chennai Sangamam, a city-wide festival celebrating the folk arts, was held for the first time in 2007. That year, logistic reasons resulted in the festival being held in February. This year, it was held when it ought to be – around Pongal. It was a week-long celebration between January 10th and 17th, presented by Tamil Maiyam and the Department of Tourism and Culture, Government of Tamil Nadu.

At 20 venues, such as parks, beaches and campuses of educational institutions, the organisers showcased traditional folk arts which, under the onslaught of television and cinema, are facing a steady decline in patronage. The classical arts were also included, with the emphasis being on making them available to the public at large through the choice of open-air venues.

Sub-titled ‘Tiruvizha, namma teruvizha’ (The festival, the festival of our street), it originally aimed to showcase what Chennai was all about and

in a way it has succeeded in doing that, for Chennai is really a representative or a microcosm of the entire State of Tamil Nadu, with people from all districts living here. This audience was offered a host of folk art performances, such as *Paraiattam*, *Nayandi Melam*, *Karagam*, *Kavadi Attam*, *Thevar Attam*, *Mannin Padalgal*, *Tharai Thapattai*, *Oppari*, *Madu Attam* and *Karagam*. There were also

● by
A STAFF REPORTER

Sufi music concerts and Hindustani performances.

A welcome and much-appreciated new feature this year was the South Indian Food Festival. Chefs from leading hotels in the city got together to offer southern specialities at very reasonable prices. Each venue where the Food Festival was held featured the cuisine of a different part of Tamil Nadu.

The Sangamam had its own mascot this year, a white bull

named Marimuthu. At the inaugural held at IIT-Madras, the theme was the significance of the Pongal festival. Marimuthu chided the people of the city for dumping their trash, comprising papers and plastic bags, on the roads, making it difficult for his ilk to navigate. He also lamented the passing of the old bungalow houses where on Pongal day he would be fed hay and other goodies by the woman of each house. In a speech that could have taken a leaf from *Madras Musings*, Marimuthu asked the public as to why they visited only the beach on Kaanum Pongal day when there were so many historic buildings in the city to be viewed. The Sangamam also had its own anthem and theme songs – which were later played at all the venues. The inaugural set the tone for the festivities that followed – for it was tightly packed, with no slackening of the pace. The emphasis was on providing good, clean entertainment with the right mix of education and awareness pro-



‘Best Book for Children 2007’
– *Sunday Times*, London

Tara Publishing’s *That’s How I see Things* by Sirish Rao and Gond artist Bhajju Shyam has been declared the ‘Best Book for Children 2007’ by the *Sunday Times*, UK.

It has been described as “an absolutely marvellous book ... for anyone from the age of six to ... whatever, octogenarian and beyond” on the BBC.

motion. Speeches were kept to a bare minimum.

The events of the week came to a close with a grand finale on 17th January at Elliot’s Beach. It witnessed colourful floats, performances by 1200 folk artistes, and a breathtaking firework display. It has since been decided that the Sangamam will be taken to all the suburbs and important towns of the State from next year.

The festival has provided an outdoor celebration opportunity for the city, most of whose residents prefer to celebrate in the privacy of their homes. Let’s face it, Chennai has never had a communal festival like Ganesh Chaturthi in Mumbai, Durga Puja in Kolkata or Ram Lila in Delhi.

Sangamam appears to provide the ideal outlet and, by dovetailing it with Pongal, the brains behind the idea appear to have hit upon a winning formula. Judging by the crowds that attended, the festival made families come out together, away from the claustrophobia of modern day flats and the tyranny of the TV serials.

If there was one cause for complaint, it was this: North Chennai once again appeared to be given the go-by. This must be rectified in the coming years.



Join INTACH-TN in this appeal

The Chairman
Life Insurance Corporation of India
Mumbai

Dear Sir,

We the citizens of Chennai are concerned about the future of the *Bharat Insurance Building*, formerly known as *Kardyl Building*, situated on Anna Salai. The building was slated for demolition some years ago, which decision INTACH (the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage)- Tamil Nadu has on several occasions requested you to reconsider and instead, restore the building. We, as citizens interested in the heritage of the city, join in this request to you to please not demolish the building but restore it.

Designed initially for a renowned firm of chemists, this palatial structure was planned to accommodate a showroom and several offices. Truly unique in detailing, it features numerous towers, domes, gables, bas-reliefs, arched openings and a Mangalore tiled roof. In its interior it possesses highly ornamental ceilings and stained glass panels, all of which form a wealth of architectural heritage. It is a rare example of eclectic architecture, reflective of the late 19th Century. The building is an important link in the architectural history of our city and has been identified as a Grade I building by INTACH and finds place in CMDA’s list of Heritage Buildings.

The Government of India is a signatory to the ICOMOS Charter of The International Council on Monuments and Sites adopted by UNESCO for the protection of World Heritage, and

we trust LIC, as a leading public institution with stated social objectives, would be committed to preserve the country’s heritage. You have recently restored your own property, *Metropolitan Building*, in Kolkata and we are sure you will take efforts to extend this sensitivity to restore *Bharat Insurance Building* in Chennai.

We, the citizens of Chennai, look forward to LIC playing a stellar role in not only preserving this wonderful building but also in restoring it to its original glory.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully

(Name)

A) Appeal may be emailed with your name and address to intachchennai@gmail.com

or

B) Scanned copy of the appeal letter duly signed may be emailed to intachchennai@gmail.com

INTACH
No.1, Second Street, Wallace Garden,
Near Apollo Hospital, Chennai 600 006.
Ph. 28334878. 42107932.

Forward to as many people as possible to save your City’s Heritage.
You can make a difference!

Answers to Quiz

1. Cyprus and Malta; 2. Sir Edmund Hillary; 3. Mauritania; 4. Tata launched the world’s cheapest car, the ‘Nano’; 5. Marion Jones; 6. Messenger; 7. Bobby Jindal; 8. Venezuela; 9. George MacDonald Fraser; 10. James Mark Dakin Purnell.

* * *

11. These outlets of the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) and TUCS went online, as part of the Government’s e-governance initiative; 12. ‘Sangita Kala Acharya’; 13. Russia’s Mikhail Youzhny; 14. 36; 15. Lingu-samy; 16. Anna University; 17. Thiruvalluvar University; 18. Jallikkattu; 19. Krishnagiri; 20. Erode (during the renaming of districts).

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24x7 booking counters are open at:

- Anna Road HPO
- SPCC Chennai (St. Thomas Mount HPO)
- Chennai Airport PO and
- Chennai Sorting Office (near Central Station)

For more details call 2852 0202; 2859 3079; 2854 8837

Speed Post rates

Weight	Local	Upto	201-	1001-	Above
		200	1000	2000	2000
		km	km	km	km
Upto 50 g	Rs. 12	25	25	25	25
51-200 g	Rs. 20	25	30	50	60
201-500 g	Rs. 20	40	45	70	80
Additional					
500 g or part	Rs. 5	7.50	15	30	40

India Post also offers a customised mailing solution called 'Business Post'. This service, offered at 53 Business Post Centres in Tamil Nadu, provides total mailing solutions; pre-mailing activities including collection of mail, insertion, gumming, addressing, franking, and despatch; and special transmission by direct bagging.

For more details call: 2859 2321; 2855 0286; 2854 8837.

DO WE HAVE A HERITATE ACT?

(Continued from page 1)

Whenever I have heard this Act mentioned during recent weeks, it has made me wonder whether this was the Act that had little to do with general heritage and conservation of historic buildings, precincts and artefacts but everything to do with listing 32 villages and towns as Heritage Villages/Towns and spelling out development plans for them. All this listing happened nearly a decade ago, if we remember right, when INTACH-Tamil Nadu was sitting with Town and Country Planning officials and expressing their horror at the plans drawn up for the listed villages/towns – fountains and parks and coloured lights, if you

please! – and persuading them to draw up a proper Heritage Act that would, among other things, prevent such cinematic gestures. And the Department, working with INTACH-TN, did draft such an Act that is still lying somewhere.

Those 32 designated Heritage Villages/Towns increased to 38 a couple of years later and, according to what one of the Civilians who mentioned the Act, are now 48 in number. Madras that is Chennai, to the best of our knowledge, is not among them. Be that as it may, this Civilian did not seem too taken up with the idea of conservation in the case of these listed villages/towns; he was more focussed on developing them as tourist destinations. Imagine hundreds of tourists being taken to small villages and let loose in heritage buildings and a lifestyle out of the past! Surely what is needed is proper conservation of the past and then allowing the tourist to discover it in a controlled manner. The emphasis should be on conservation of a precious past, not the creation of a tourist facility alien to the heritage.

If you want tourists to enjoy your heritage and ancient culture and traditional skills, offering them parks, fountains, swimming pools and glitzy lighting, and multicuisine restaurants – all of which they have seen done much better elsewhere – is not the way to go.

If ever we get to see that invisible Act, perhaps it will have something to say on this. Till then, we hope heritage towns/villages are not going to be developed like the IT Corridor.

Dates for Your Diary

Till February 5: *Sutra*, triadic expressions in canvas, stone and textile by Lakshmi Srinath (at Forum Art Gallery).

Till February 5: Drawings & Paintings of K.G. Subramanyam (at Gallery Sumukha).

Till February 10: Group Show – An exhibition of paintings and sculptures by nine artists (at Vinnyasa Art Gallery).

Till February 29: *Vasantha Vizha and Children's Mela* (at DakshinaChitra).

February 5: *The Absent Lover*, presented by Thresh-Preeti Vasudevan. A major new production from Thresh, re-working the passion and mystery of a 5th Century drama by Sanskrit master-poet Kalidasa (at Chinmaya

Heritage Centre, 3.00 p.m. for schools, 7.00 p.m. for public).

February 9: Open Studio. Indianostrum Théâtre will offer an experience with dancers and actors and also a discussion on *Sophocles' Antigone* (at Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.).

February 12 & 13: Meeting with Serge Bromberg who has been involved in the preservation, restoration and distribution of classic cinema in all its forms since 1985.

At DakshinaChitra:

Workshop for adults

February 10: Screen Printing Workshop

For further details on workshops and to register please contact MCF: 24462435 / 24918943 or Ms. Lakshmi @ 98417 77779.

Laughs on the links

- Some golfers can shoot their age. So far I've managed to shoot my weight "195".
- If you can keep your left arm straight for 18 holes, you're entitled to bend it on the 19th.
- It is easy for me to keep my head down, I don't want to face anyone with my scores.
- In life nothing's perfect, if you think you've got your golf game together your marriage falls apart.
- Don't worry if you blow 18 holes; the 19th will make up for it.
- Golf is a very dangerous game, you can easily get hurt if the stakes are too high.
- Golf is an electrifying word; just hearing it makes my wife blow a fuse.
- There are two types of golfers: handicappers and sandicappers.
- Golfers and fishermen have something in common; they are both outdoorsmen, nature lovers and liars. – (Courtesy: *Compass*, the house journal of India Cements)

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