

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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"Let me make it very clear right in the beginning... if you use any abusive word that is not there in this 'Abuse Manual', you will be penalised!"

Mind your language

The Vehicle-Users' Association In Support of Free, Frank Speech' (their theme song is a slightly re-worked version of Words) is up in arms.

Their press statement declares, "It's hard enough to handle traffic, without having to mentally run through a long list of 'accepted' abuse in the event of traffic provocation."

Meanwhile, our animal co-existors are fed up, and want us humans to just leave them out of our silly (unsavoury?) brawls.

"Why can't you use your own kind for comparisons?" they grumble.

We're a people "rich in languages".

And we can be rude in all of them, including local dialects, variations in accents, and even in pitch.

We embrace the power of language with fervour, and confrontation is seen as an exciting opportunity for imaginative expression.

But, now, confusion abounds. Who decides what you can say, and when, and to whom?

Apparently, geography plays a huge role in this process.

Responsible social sensitivity is a must, certainly.

But is political correctness slithering towards paranoia? Besides, how many "What not to" manuals can you study in a day?

Even playgrounds are witnessing tension. Youngsters say that they are expected to remember too much already in the name of education... and now this!

Life in the 21st Century seems to be all about learn, unlearn and re-learn...

That's a head(ache)y stuff.

Ranjitha Ashok

Do we really need to develop a new city?

(By The Editor)

It's just possible that we don't really understand such technical matters like urban development and town planning. We would, therefore, welcome it if some kind soul in officialdom will explain to us why there is a desperate need to develop an entirely new city beyond the Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) and reaching as far as Chengalpattu. Especially when the CMA has more than double the area of 500 sq.km. proposed for New Chennai, an over 1000 sq.km. area that's been crying for development for years.

Just as it is possible that we really don't understand such technical matters as urban planning, it's quite possible that we don't understand numbers. Perhaps that same kind soul from officialdom will explain the following numbers we present and tell us why the inferences we make from them might be wrong.

Chennai City (the area within Corporation limits) has an area of 172 sq.km. Beyond this is an urban agglomeration, the Chennai Metropolitan Area of 1177 sq.km. In the event the City is also considered part of the CMA, then the area beyond

the city in the CMA is 1005 sq.km. in extent.

The 2001 Census stated that the City's population was 4.3 million, up 0.5 million from the 1991 Census.

The CMA – the area beyond the city – had a population

(Continued on page 4)



This is what new multistoreyed construction does to Mount Road with its gracious old buildings.

From Mount Road to Mall Road?

The central business district of Madras that is Chennai is fast changing shape and profile. Despite the continuing pressure caused by traffic and the demand for parking space, the road continues to be a major draw with more and more corporate houses, hotels and retail outlets buying up property in the area.

A recent report in a city-based financial daily claims that "due to traffic congestion, parking constraints and the consequent shift in focus to new corridors, Mount Road lost its attractiveness as a premier shopping hub." That status, the report says, "is all set to be regained with scores of mega shopping malls, office complexes and star hotels dotting the skyline." How these developments are going to offset the traffic congestion and parking constraints is anybody's guess. But if the paper is to be believed, just about anybody and everybody is pitching camp on Mount Road.

Beginning from the Guindy end, the old Vel Studio property, later belonging to Campa Cola, has been acquired by ITC Limited and it is reported that the largest five star hotel in the city is coming up on the site. Close by is TPL House of Tamil Nadu Petro Products which is

other Rain Tree Hotel. An office complex by the same builder is coming up at a neighbouring site. Saundarya Nursery, which was across the road, has made way for a retail and office complex being put up by the Prestige Group of Bangalore. This is one of the last stretches, just ahead of the junction at Sir Theyagaraya Road, where Mount Road is still bottleneck-free. That feature will obviously not last long.

The Abbotsbury property which morphed into a half-built hotel developed by the Balaji Distillery group and which was supposed to be managed by The Oberois as the Magunta Oberoi had remained that way for over a decade now. It has recently been taken over by the Hyatt Group and will be revived under the name of Grand Hyatt. Just opposite is the Courtyard Marriot which was once Srileka International.

up for sale. At the old Halda premises, long lying vacant, Ashok Leyland is putting up its corporate office. A part of this parcel of land, which belonged to TVS, has changed hands and a star hotel is coming up there. Another hotel is said to be coming up where the old Concorde Motors showroom used to be, just off Mount Road, where Raj Bhavan Road intersects with the turning to Velachery.

A little further down Mount Road, close to Nandanam, Ceebros is constructing yet an-

• by A Special Correspondent

(Continued on page 6)



A library romance led to social activism

Attending the 10th International Women's Suffrage Alliance Conference in Paris in 1926 from Madras was Rukmini Lakshmipathi. She was to go on to make a name as a freedom fighter and a social activist.

Rukmini was born on December 6, 1892 to an orthodox Vaishnav Brahmin couple, Srinivasarao and Chudamani. They were of Andhra origin, but lived in Madras. The great Veena Dhanammal taught Rukmini music, and her father arranged for her to learn Latin under a tutor known as Thambi.

Lakshmipathi was born in Madhavaram to an orthodox Andhra Smartha couple Achanta Sriramayya and Janakamma on March 3, 1880. While studying in Rajamundhry, he married Seethamma in 1895 and shifted to Madras to join Madras Christian College. In 1900, he got a



Rukmini Lakshmipathi.

George Town (5:00 pm to 7:00 pm).

He used to cycle from clinic to clinic and to visit patients.

Right opposite his dispensary in Triplicane there was a library, 'Vignyana Chandrika Mandal', where he chanced to meet Rukmini who was at the time studying in Egmore for her ma-

triculation. The meeting blossomed into love and ended in marriage on December 3, 1911, despite much opposition because he belonged to a Saiva sect and she was a Vaishnava.

Encouraged by the husband, Rukmini joined Presidency College where the greats like Srinivasa Sastri, Radhakrishnan and Kandukuri Veerasalingam were teaching. After completing her B.A., she joined Medical College, but when she became pregnant she stopped her studies. Her first child, a son, was born on the same day the *Emden* shelled Madras and, therefore, she named him Emden Srinivasa Rao! But the poor child passed away before he was two years old. In his memory she wrote a book *Chanti Bidda*.

Her second child was born in 1917. Her third, Indira, was born in 1920 and in time became the wife of Dr. B. Ramamurthy, the great neurosurgeon. Her other two children were born in 1924 and 1927.

Dr. Lakshmipathi encouraged his wife and children to wear *khadi* clothes and soon the entire family became interested in the Gandhian movement. Rukmini joined the Bharath Stri Mahamandal and became active in social work. She joined with other feminists of the day and fought for Devadasi system abolition and Prohibition. At home, she demonstrated her

(Continued on page 7)

'Showing' foreigners our City

The Man from Madras Musings was requested by a friend to take two Englishmen and their wives around the city. MMM drew up an ambitious plan of taking them all the way from San Thomé to Fort St. George. But the guests were late and, so, a part of the tour had to be scrapped. When MMM and friends set off from Mount Road and made their way to the Fort, it was, consequently, well past sunset. It was then that MMM realised the uphill task in front of him. For, standing in the parking lot in front of the Fort, MMM could only gesticulate at a clump of trees beyond which all was darkness.

The Fort, not being floodlit, could have been any building. The only structure that was clearly visible was Namakkal Kavingnar Maligai, the new office block, which is not a building worth talking about. Of course, the visitors noticed it standing out like a sore thumb and wanted to know how such a building was built in the Fort precincts. MMM then took them past the War Memorial, which was once again shrouded in darkness. *Chepauk Palace* is anyway hidden and so it could not be pointed out. Next came *Senate House*, about which MMM gave quite a build-up. On coming to the site, MMM found that this building too was in complete darkness. Presumably the University was not keen on showing off what an earlier regime had achieved. So there was nothing to be seen there either.

Fortunately for MMM, the *Ice House* and the DGP Complex were floodlit and so it was possible to narrate their story. But *Queen Mary's College* was a disappointment. With that the tour came to an end.

MMM does not know what the visitors thought, but he was left wondering as to why the best structures in the city are hidden from public view or are kept under darkness after dusk. This is in contrast to what is happening in Bombay and Delhi where, thanks to a Government-corporate joint initiative, most of the historic structures and the better buildings are floodlit at night.

Walkabout

While the two visitors were busy throughout the day in conferences, their wives decided to go walkabout in Nungambakkam, where they were staying in a five-star hotel. Why is it that the city has no pavements was the question on their lips when *The Man from Madras Musings* met them in the evening. They had walked but a few steps when they decided that it was better to return to their homeland in one piece and abandoned their attempts.

They also pointed out quite irritably that where there

were pavements, their heights were such that no elderly person could possibly climb on to them. MMM had no comments to offer by way of explanation.

Murphy's Law

The Man from Madras Musings heartily dislikes Mondays, for it is usually on that day when things go wrong. So on coming in to office, MMM was not surprised to find that all the telephones in the building had gone dead. The reasons for the breakdown were quite intriguing.

The phone cables are laid below the ground and the road above them was not long ago re-laid. During the recent monsoon, the newly laid road had naturally come apart, exposing the soft soil below. Even as this deepened into a chasm and remained that way through most of December, the telephones miraculously worked.

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

Then, in January, road works were initiated. These continued in desultory fashion for over a month. Last week, a huge road roller was brought which was driven over the chasm and promptly sank in, thereby crushing all the cables below. The telephone lines went on the blink till the road roller was pulled out and the repair work was done.

MMM thinks that it is *Murphy's Law* which has it that whatever can go wrong will inevitably do so. This was a classic example.

Thai Madam

No, no! Sorry, this has nothing to do with a woman from Thailand. *The Man from Madras Musings* is just confused about the recent announcement that the first day of the Tamil month of *Thai* is to be celebrated as Tamil New Year's Day. MMM wonders as to what will happen to good old April 13th/14th, which has always been celebrated that way.

To add to MMM's confusion, there came an announcement that the 1st of *Thai* must be celebrated like Deepavali. Now, where does that leave our old Deepavali of October/November?

Will corporate houses give a Deepavali bonus twice each year? And will we soon have a January Deepavali and an October Deepavali?

A commemoration

The Man from Madras Musings is quite used to politicians having commemorative stones placed for just about anything, but a recent one on Luz Corner takes the cake.



The ceremonious stone announces that the lamp-post was inaugurated by a leader of a party (see picture). When footpath space is anyway at a premium, why should this useless piece of everyday information be allowed to remain?

MMM does not know whether to laugh or to cry.

Welcome banners

The vinyl banners that have come to replace the old hoardings apparently cost only Rs. 7 a sq. ft. So it has become the trend to have anyone and everyone coming into the city welcomed with a vinyl hoarding or banner put up near the airport. This includes all kinds of minor politicians from up north. They are hailed as Aristotles of their age and Socrates of their society.

Most of these banners being in Tamil, the visitor, MMM is sure, has no clue as to what is written and is merely gratified by seeing his own face.

MMM who, as readers of this column are only too aware, goes around quite a bit, is seriously contemplating having a banner for himself at the airport which will read something like - "Hail, MMM! Messenger from Madras! Chronicler of Chennai! Reporting on the city is safe in your hands!"

From there to having a fan club is but a step and, then, who knows? An election, a cabinet post and then a Heritage Act? Food for thought. It could even lead on to a National Award or two. But something tells MMM that the Chief will not accept such a proposal.

- MMM

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

job in Madras Census office, but he wished to continue his studies. Before long, he resigned his job and returned to Rajamundhry to join B.A. class. When his mother took ill, the family shifted to Madras for medical assistance. When she died, Lakshmipathi returned to Rajamundhry to finish his B.A. Meanwhile, he had applied for a medical seat and got a call as soon as he finished his degree.

To Lakshmipathi and Seethamma were born four children between 1900 and 1908. Seethamma died soon after the birth of her fourth child.

Broken-hearted Lakshmipathi might have been, still he was determined to complete his medical education. A friend, Mohamed Hussein, offered him a room in his house in Madras to help him fulfil his ambition. In 1909, Lakshmipathi graduated and set up practice in Triplicane.

A board in his residence showed:

Dr. Achanta Lakshmipathi, B.A., M.B. & C.M.,
58, Swaminathan Street, Chintadripet, (Residence & Hospital for Residential Patient)

Consulting Rooms: 146-47, Veeraraghava Mudali Street, Triplicane (7:00 am to 9:00 am); 4, Malayaperumal Street, George Town for Eye Cases: 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm; and 309, Lingachetty Street,

OUR READERS WRITE



We're on e-mail

Madras Musings now has its own mail ID. Letters to the editor can be sent via email to editor@madrasmusings.com. Those who wish to intimate change of address can also do so provided the subscription number is quoted.

Tranquil again

Chennai is fast losing all resemblance to Madras. Now, certain politicians are demanding bifurcation of Tamil Nadu ostensibly for better governance. Their demand is just, but if the State were to be split into two, both sides would claim Chennai and all hell will break loose.

Hence, instead of bifurcation, there should be trifurcation and Chennai should become a Union Territory, get back its old name, and regain a little of its quondam tranquillity much to the delight of die-hard Madrasis.

C.G. Prasad

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Cheap car dream

Ranjitha Ashok's column (MM, February 1st) made me sit up – jump up, rather. The solution to unleashing incompetent hordes on our roads is to restrict the number of cars per household to ONE. This will drastically reduce the number of cars on our pathetically inadequate roads.

As for the 'cheap car' squeezing in 8 to 10 people, how many of us have the luxury of travelling one person per car – and what a national waste that is! (The poor man, whom the car is meant for, cannot afford a Great Dane!)

As for her point that people need lessons, not increased access to vehicles, how many rich people have had "lessons" before ordering their drivers to bring their cars to their doorsteps?

For the man who has had to commute to work and back in an overcrowded public transport, the cheap car is a dream.

India is a democracy. The poor man, who will be owning a cheap car, has as much right to the road as a rich man being driven in a Benz.

Girija Subramaniam

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By the Adyar

In his article on the studios by the Adyar (MM, February 1st) chronicler Randor Guy has described in great detail how Lalitha Cinetone was the first movie studio in Adyar and how it became MGR's Sathya Studios.

I distinctly recollect as a young boy of 14 the name 'Sundaram Studios' in the same premises. It later changed hands in the 1940s and became 'Neptune Studios'. Jupiter Somu and S.K. Mohideen, I think, owned it and produced some of their hits there in the 1950s.

I would also request Randor Guy to dwell upon the city's old cinema houses like Minerva, Select, Westend, Wellington, Paragon and Gaiety, through your columns highlighting their locations, changes of name and ownerships. There is hardly anyone else who can do this.

K.S. Krishnaswamy

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

In the article on Madras Advertising (MM, February 1st), there is an omission that needs to be corrected for the record.

The first agency to set up a full-fledged office in the city was D.J. Keymer, which subsequently became S.H. Benson in the 1960s. Keymer's opened its doors in Madras on April 1,

Tramways in Chennai

My letter on a tramway service in Chennai (MM, December 16, 2007) has had several readers writing to me expressing the fond hope that this service will be revived in Chennai. Though the scheme appears rosy, it would not be feasible to reintroduce it in Chennai both from the economic as well as from traffic points of view.

When electricity was first introduced in Madras there were very few takers. The company had to cajole the citizens to make use of it. For one thing, they thought it was dangerous. Also they thought that in the long run it would be deleterious to health. Some would not even walk under overhead wires on the road for fear that it might emasculate them, apart from it sometime snapping and falling on the head of a passer-by subjecting him to electrocution. Although the company gave concessional rates for electric fans, people were reluctant to use them as they believed that artificial air current was bad for health. Also, they thought that the tiny sparks observed in the commutator-brush gap of fan motors could cause fire. (Initially, the Direct Current (DC) system was used and, hence, a commutator-brush combination was a necessity.)

Since the power generating company had a lot of unused power, it was willing to sell it to a subsidiary company, the Madras Electric Tramways (MET). By the turn of the 20th Century, MET had laid tramway lines on Madras roads. For travel, the minimum charge was one pie (half of today's paisa) per stage – say, from Parry's to Central. This was gradually raised to half anna (3 paisa). From 1930 till World War II it remained at that rate. Even this enhanced rate was abnormally low when compared to those charged by the rickshaws and jutkas of those days. Tramways also introduced season tickets and "Go as you please" holiday tickets, which made the service popular.

The tramcars had no separate cabin for the driver or motorman. He stood in the middle of the entrance aisle and operated the levers. He had to bang the gong with his foot to warn pedestrians to move from the track. It was a laboured dance for him, forced to use all his limbs. Also there was no seat for him to sit and rest even for a few minutes. Jostling passengers often hampered the driver's movements. Because the tram moved slowly, most agile passengers did not buy tickets. When a conductor approached them asking for their tickets, they would jump out and hitch a free ride in the next car. Only the old, infirm and women purchased tickets. Though the trams were capable of good speed, they could not be operated at optimum speeds as the track was fixed and the cars could not be swerved to avoid other vehicles. The milling crowd on the road also had no respect for this slow juggernaut. They moved from its path only at the last moment. Any brush

with a pedestrian, even if it was not the fault of the driver, was sure to attract mob fury!

There were some pockets where pedestrians hogged the entire road, transacting business with petty hawkers with impunity. In such places, the conductor of the tram had to get down and push the jay walkers to make way for the tram to move. The Flower Bazar police station area, the narrow China Bazar road leading to Purasawalkam, Royapettah High Road near Luz Corner, the length between Roxy Talkies and Gangadeeswarar tank in Purasawalkam were some of these chronic bottlenecks.

The trams had to negotiate two railway level-crossings. One was the entry into Chintadripet from Poonamalle High Road, in front of Ripon Building in Park Town. This route was given up when electrification of the metre gauge rail track was initiated. As the traction voltage of train service was at variance from the tramway's, it was not possible to isolate them from each other.

Another crossing was in Royapuram near Clive Battery where the rail track entered the Harbour from the Royapuram railway station. This crossing was a real irritant to road traffic. Since the rail traffic here was mostly goods trains to and from the Harbour, the gate was kept shut for 30 to 45 minutes at a time to accommodate the long goods train moving at a leisurely pace. During this time, two or three trams stacked up on either side of the gates. Other road traffic was also held up. By the time the gates opened and congestion cleared, it was time for the next closing of the gate!

The road flyovers crossing the rail tracks were veritable speedbreakers for the trams. There were two flyovers with tram tracks. One was in front of Central Station leading to Body Guard Lines Road on Island ground. Another was near Salt Cotours in Choolai area. In the case of a railway train, the driver could speed up the train on the level ground before ascending the ramp. The increased momentum would take the train beyond the hump with ease. Such a thing could not be done with a tram as it had to pass through thick traffic and the driver had always to keep his hand on the brake lever for any eventuality. Hence, the car literally crawled in these areas, making it all the more easy for ticketless travellers to switch cars!

Though slow, the tram service came to be respected as safe and reliable transport, liked by one and all. It is a pity that it was edged out of the roads of Chennai. But it must be agreed that in these days of hurry and reckless speed, it could not have survived. At best, it could be utilised now as a relic of an earlier era to be enjoyed as a leisurely pastime. As I suggested, it may be revived on the Marina or in Vandalur Zoo area.

M. Sethuraman

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1939. It was the biggest agency in Madras till JWT started its operations in the mid-50s.

S.H. Benson became a part of Ogilvy & Mather in the 1970s.

right, does not belong on that list, on the basis of background.

The error is deeply regretted.

With apologies to my readers and to author V Sriram

Ranjitha Ashok

* * *

In my letter under the heading 'Tips for the affluent, not the common man' (MM, February 1st), the item on 'Change of bulbs' should read "Incandescent bulbs are cheap and switching over to compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) costs 20 times as much."

I regret the error.

T.M. Sundararaman

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No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

In the *Madras Musings* issue dated February 1, 2008, the article titled *The Dasi who stood tall* included a list of devadasis as examples of inner strength, character and commitment.

C. Saraswati Bai, the first lady Bhagavatar, equally strong and iconic in her own

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

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

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

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

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

– THE EDITOR

NOSTALGIA

Arriving in Madras – from the reminiscences of ‘Avvai’ T.K.S.

• ‘Avvai’ T.K. Shanmugam (1912-1973) was a legend in theatre. He and his three brothers, Sankaran, Muthuswami and Bhagavati, were born to Seethai and T.S. Kannuswami Pillai, the father being a well-known stage actor who specialised in women’s roles. At an early age, the brothers were apprenticed under Sankaradas Swamigal, the founding father of the concept of Boys’ Companies in which roles were essayed, as the name suggests, entirely by boys and young men. Having worked in his Madurai Tattuva Minalochani Bala Vidwat Sabha, they also trained under Krishnaswami Pavalar (Bala Manohara Sabha) and Kandasami Mudaliar. In later years, they formed their own company, the Devi Bala Shanmukhananda Sabha.

The brothers, all fine actors, though Sankaran involved himself more with administration, were multifaceted. While Shanmugam and Bhagavati were better known for their acting and singing skills, Muthuswami also tried his hand at music direction when all four of them acted in one of the early talks – *Menaka* (1935). The quartet was also known for its close associations with reformists such as Periyar, Anna and Jeevanandam. Inspired by this, they also added several reformist plays such as *Kumastavin Penn*, *Kadarin Vetri* and *Desa Bhakti* to their repertoire. The motto of their company, significantly, was ‘Workers of the World, Unite!’

Shanmugam, best known for his portrayal of Avvaiyar, the legendary Tamil poetess, was also the founder of perhaps the only Tamil tabloid exclusively dedicated to the theatre fraternity. Beginning as a handwritten paper in December 1934, *Arivuchudar* had stories, articles, politics, snippets, explanatory notes on the *Tirukkural* and also letters to the editor.

Circulated in Athur, Vriddhachalam and Panruti, ten issues were brought out before it was stopped when Sankaran complained about it causing tensions among the theatre fraternity. It was revived in 1938 when Shanmugam, distressed at the high levels of ignorance in his fraternity, founded Arivu Abhivritti Sangam, a club based in Madurai where artistes could read magazines, be taught languages, and also listen to speeches by several leaders.

Shanmugam became the head of the Actors’ Guild in 1950 and his services were utilised by organisations such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan and state level associations as well. Acting in films, he received the best actor award in 1953. He also received the Padmashree in 1971.

Though they performed in the city in their early years, Shanmugam and his brothers permanently settled in Madras only in 1948, where they were first tenants of the Harikatha exponent C. Saraswathi Bai in Big Street, Triplicane. Later, Shanmugam moved to Gopalapuram. In April 1972, he brought out the first part of his biography, titled *Enadu Nadaga Vazhakai* (Vanati Padippagam). This part ends with the shift to Madras in 1948. He clearly intended to finish the work soon, but death intervened. Lloyd’s Road in Royapettah was renamed Avvai Shanmugam Road in his memory.

We today publish a translation of an extract from his memoirs which deals with the brothers’ first coming to Madras city in 1921. The Madurai Tattuva Minalochani Bala Vidwat Sabha had been contracted to perform in the city. Shanmugam’s impressions of the city and its theatre culture make for a good read.

Sriram V.

Learning to ‘play’ in a big city

We arrived in Madras from Madurai in September 1921. When we arrived at the Egmore Railway Station, we were totally bewildered. The station, the crowds and the surroundings were totally alien to us. To us, used to the smaller stations of Madurai and Tirchinapoly, Egmore appeared enormous. The contractors had arranged cars to take us to our place of stay. On the way, we saw trams and were taken aback. We thought that the railway trains were running on the road. When our father explained that these trams ran on electricity, we nodded as though we understood. When we did not even know what electricity meant, how were we to comprehend electric tramcars?

Till then I had never seen a man ferrying other men. I had only seen bullocks and horses doing this. Even at that young age, I found it saddening that in this modern metropolis there were such degrading means of transport as the hand-pulled rickshaw. Watching all these novel things, we reached Grant Theatre.

Present-day Murugan Talkies used to be known as the Grant Theatre then. As soon as we arrived we were served breakfast which consisted of *poori-masala*. This was a new food item for us, as we were used to *idli, dosai,*

puttu, idiappam and similar dishes. *Poori-masala* tasted alien to us. We were told that this is a popular dish in North India. I disliked it immensely. My father arranged for *idlis* to be brought. After breakfast, we went to the house that had been rented for us.

The plays duly began at the Grant Theatre. This was the first time we were performing with electric lighting, all our previous staging having taken place with gaslights. The response was poor and we were dispirited. We were surprised to know that on Sundays there would be a performance at 6.30 p.m., whereas in other towns Sunday was the day we took a break. Also in other centres, performances began late at night, while here we were asked to perform in the evening. We also performed on four evenings in a week in Madras – Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday – unlike the usual three evenings in other centres. We noticed that gate collections

were higher on Saturdays and Sundays in Madras and were told that this was the way of the metro.

While in Madras, my brothers and I came down with a strange illness. We were told that this generally affected all newcomers to the city. The symptoms included shivering that lasted an hour after we had had our mid-day meal. Once this had subsided, we would have high fever during the rest of the day and this would subside only by the next morning. We also noticed that the fever was even higher on the days we performed. Neighbours informed us that the fever was called malaria. We were given many medicines but to no avail. The performances continued despite all this and we tried to overcome the weakness that came with this fever and gave our best. Father finally resorted to the medicine he knew best. Just before we left for the play, he gave us all some brandy to drink. As soon as we had this, we would

experience a sensation of well-being and warmth. During the days of our performances, brandy became our medicine. By the time the play wound to a close, we would be more or less unconscious and would be loaded into vehicles and taken home.

While in Madras, Father arranged for regular classical music lessons for us from a *nagaswaram* artiste. My elder brother, T.K. Muthuswami, was the only one who studied with diligence, overcoming the weakness caused by the fever. Soon, he developed into a fine singer and was given the role of the heroine in many of our plays.

In Madras it was the practice to have an intermission in the middle of the play for a few minutes. During this break, a small eatery inside the theatre would make *uppuma* and *masala vadai*. The latter in particular would be delicious and father would buy them for us. I can still recollect the taste of that *masala vadai*.

While in Madras we acted in a few of Sankaradas Swamigal’s early plays, such as *Valli Tirumanam*, *Alli Arjuna* and *Gule-bagavli*. Our contract for performing in the city expired in a month and Father decided that we would stage plays on our own in the metro for one more month. We moved to the Em-



‘Avvai’ T.K. Shanmugam.

friends. On August 3, 1922, we joined Pavalar’s company and moved to Chintadripet.

The patriotic play *Kadarin Vetri* was scheduled for the second day after we joined Pavalar. Permission to stage it was withheld by the Police. Pavalar moved heaven and earth throughout the morning to get the approval and, finally, using his status as a leader of the Boy Scout movement, managed to get an appointment with the Governor, Lord Willingdon. The Governor gave special permission to stage the play and by noon posters announcing the staging were put up. The play was a huge success and resulted in phenomenal gate collections. Pavalar came in for much praise from everyone.

A silent film titled *Brathari* was being screened in the city. Pavalar wanted to stage it as a play and completed the script within four or five days. He took us all to see the film and instructed us that we should act exactly as the film actors did. We rehearsed just for a day and were ready. It was a strange situation, for the play and the film ran simultaneously. The stage version was far better received than the film.

Mother was not happy with the company accommodation in Chintadripet. We, therefore, moved to the Elephant Gate area. Pavalar, fearing that we would join some other troupe, also moved house and came to live closeby. Around this time, Pavalar, gave us the script for Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar’s

Returning from a performance tour that took us to Vellore, Kancheepuram and Pondicherry, we came to Saidapet. The rains intervened and we had to cancel our performances. The best theatre in the city at that time was The Royal. This stood to the north of Elephant Gate, near the Salt Cotours. It was a huge theatre. The Bala Manohara Sabha of T.P. Krishnaswami Pavalar was staging its plays there. We went there to witness the plays of that troupe. Pavalar was very keen that we join his company. He was a topper and so was our father. It was, therefore, no surprise that they became the closest of

A tribute

‘You said it’

The most famous ‘silent witness’ to life in India, the beloved cartoon character, ‘Common Man’, created by the one and only R.K. Laxman, celebrates a landmark birthday this year.

Should we quibble and say it ought to be ‘common person’?

Let’s not.

Let’s stick to ‘Common Man’ – that’s the ‘signature name’, after all.

The Common Man has ‘watched’ India for a long time now, those large, permanently bemused eyes bearing the gaze of the men and women of real India.

Checked coat, bald head with those tufts of hair that just won’t stay tidy, glasses that seem too big for his face, and a surprisingly luxuriant moustache.

Above all – that bewildered expression – a constant “Can this really be happening?” look.

He sees it all.

The contradictions and gaps that lie between what we think, say and do, all those thoughts behind the thoughts, and further beyond.

He watches both the world of politics, and that of ‘regular’ everyday life... the ridiculousness, sometimes lunacy, of it all.

He may be mute, but his presence, his ‘witnessing’, gives shape and form to those fleeting, lightning flashes of understanding, of realisations, that zoom through our minds, making us exclaim: “I recognise that moment – I’ve felt the same way.”

His silence has a voice, it seems.

He is not the collective conscience... No, but he watches as conscience in those who probably started off good, gets stifled, crumbles, bit by bit.

He’s everywhere.

You see him peering through doors; catch a glimpse of him through a window, or in a corner of an official-looking room, clearing away papers. Or walking past,



files under his arms. He attends speeches and listens in on conversations simply by dint of ‘happening-to-be-there’. He hears words that are a marvel of double-speak and senselessness, and selfish intent. He gazes into empty conference-rooms... empty because everyone who was corrupt was asked to leave.

He watches as we teach our children intolerance; that the only reaction to anything ‘other-than-ours’ is condemnation and attack.

And, as he watches, he finds clarity and common-sense in the words of the background-people, like the caparisoned staff that stand guard outside those ominous swing-doors in the corridors of power, or a passerby gazing at a morcha.

But who wants their opinions?

His posture reflects our own vulnerability to the games of the powerful – of life itself.

He knows seminars cannot solve problems. Sometimes, when he shares space on a speechifying platform, those tufts of hair seem to shoot up in innocent shock... at hearing the same promises, cleverly disguised, being offered as brand new... promises that have never been kept, with no hope of ever being fulfilled.

How good we human beings are at using the best possible colours to cover up our questionable choices.

It is all in the presentation, ultimately... the packaging.

He watches essential services

And he watches, as do the photographs of the nation’s leaders that are put up without fail everywhere.

He’s ever-present – in the crowded street, in film shootings, or in glittering banquets with world leaders. You see him resting at home, or watching TV. He silently observes a ‘violent protest’. (He knows about mobs-for-hire.)

He gazes at a wall filled with vote-catching posters, looking for a true leader to emerge from behind that jumble of slogans.

DO WE REALLY NEED A NEW CITY?

(Continued from page 1)

Officialdom likes to say that more people are now settling in the CMA suburbs rather than in the city. But the fact is that the density of population in the city between 1991 and 2001 has grown from 22000 to 25000 per sq.km., whereas in the CMA, taking the reduced area as correct, it has grown from 1600 to 2200 persons per sq.km.

If our understanding of these figures is correct, surely there is

enough space in the CMA to develop facilities and settle a ‘new city’ population in an area which already has a modicum of infrastructural development, rather than spend crores more on an entirely new city. If that kind soul will tell us why the latter option is a better one than the former, we will be most grateful.

For the record, the proposed site of the new city is south of the Vandalur-Kelambakkam Road

and upto the road connecting Chengalpattu-Tiruppurur.

In March 2007, the Tamil Nadu Government set up a high-level planning committee to explore the possibility of developing this area between Vandalur-Kelambakkam Road and Mamallapuram as a world-class city. The master plan has now been proposed for a new city that meets international standards.

The plan identifies the road

networks that connect GST Road with OMR and ECR. It also conceptually earmarks the interconnections and makes provision for the outer ring road to pass through.

The committee has looked at the possibility of zoning the entire area into blocks of 500 to 1,000 acres for development.

But, is all this necessary when 1000 sq.km. in the CMA needs development?

go on strike; travels on roads filled with potholes, breathes polluted air, patiently works out new one-ways. He’s stood in the slush of overflowing drains.

He is puzzled by assembly-line beauties who become the benchmark of a generation. He watches his city drowning in garbage, and gazes, confused, at bright announcements of fun-filled galas... to raise money for calamities.

He sees opulence that was not earned through hard work and commitment – but his expression is not one of envy. He is befuddled by the fact that people want more, more, even more.

While, right beside them, there are those who are getting less and less.

He knows that given time, (and practice) a sense of shame wears down in sheer exhaustion, while a need to be ‘good’ gets less and less crucial.

He cannot find any collective integrity, a collective sense of doing the right thing.

But this Common Man does not preach or advise.

He never stands in judgment.

Do you sense a certain affection, a sort of wry empathy?

Yes... this isn’t a virulent, angry Common Man.

Mute despite being the majority, he’s willing to give everyone a chance, again and again.

He’s a small person, this Common Man. The only time he becomes large, significant, is when his vote is sought after... he knows that.

The quiet people, the ‘small people’, men and women both, seem to have no control over anything that happens. Yet, humdrum and everyday as they seem, they are tough, and have endurance, resilience.

The Common Man’s staying power, tenacity, even his non-reactive nature, is in itself awesome, even a little frightening, at times.

The Common Man – those large, innocent eyes, with that “What’s happening?” look, every person who has ever tried to cross our roads at busy intersections will recognise.

He’s survived it all... lack of water, food, clean air, shelter, and escalating intolerance.

And he does a great job in helping us survive, helps maintain perspective, punctures pomposity.

In the rueful sharing of insane experiences lies the protection of our own sanity. In knowing we are not alone.

He is, and will always be, the quintessential “you-and-me”.

Thank you, Mr. R.K. Laxman.

And Happy Birthday, old friend – we need you to make us smile.

The alternative is – at the least – terrifying.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period January 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Name the New Zealand official who was the Appeals Commissioner in the Harbhajan Singh racism inquiry recently.

2. Who had, for a long time, kept the urn containing the Mahatma's ashes that were finally immersed on January 30th in Mumbai?

3. Name the three heritage trains from India that have been included in a list of the 'World's Top 25 Trains' by the Society of International Railway Travellers.

4. Who are the new Australian Open singles champions?

5. Name the Malayalam thespian and National Award winner who passed away on January 29th.

6. Who was the Guest of Honour at this year's Republic Day parade?

7. Name the two sportspersons honoured with the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian award, this year.

8. Name the world's first commercial spacecraft, being built for Virgin Galactic, that was unveiled on January 23rd.

9. Of the five films nominated for Best Picture Oscar, three are: *Atonement*, *No Country for Old Men* and *There Will Be Blood*. Name the other two.

10. Why was Jerome Kerviel, a French trader, in the news for the wrong reasons recently?

11. Name the movie based on *White Nights*, the debut venture of S.P. Jananathan, that won the National Award for Best Feature Film in Tamil for 2003.

12. Name the State Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR & CE).

13. What edifice stands on 23 grounds on TTK Road that were acquired from the family of Mudaliandan Chetty?

14. After whom is the bridge on Mount Road, by the hostel opposite the Veterinary Hospital, named?

15. What distinction does Vaidyanadha Iyer of Tanjore have as regards the spoken sound in Tamil Nadu's capital?

16. Which leader started *Nava-sakthi* in October 1920, a publication that ran for 20 years?

17. Which civil contracting firm has built such landmarks in Chennai as the RBI building, the A.C. College of Technology building and *Dhun Building*?

18. What famous sporting association was founded by Col. Sir George Moore in 1901?

19. Which place in Chennai at one time had three attractions: the Ashoka Pillar lawn, the tea-party lawn and the Royal Bath?

20. Which district was split from Dharmapuri District in 2004?

(Answers on page 8)

Recalling Madurai in pen & print



Manohar and Mahema on their wedding day.

Manohar Devadoss is well-known to the citizens of Madras as the artist who has done so many black and white drawings of the striking architecture of the city despite the *retinitis pigmentosa*, a degenerative ailment of the eye, which he is afflicted with. It has made him near blind, but his fight to overcome the handicap and do these magnificent drawings is a splendid example of human courage. So too is the will to live and the love of life of Mahema, his wife, who has been a quadriplegic for over three decades now. The couple have drawn sustenance from each other and have been shining examples of the triumph of spirit over the mere ills of the body.

Manohar and Mahema have worked over many years on their pet project, where each year a set of drawings of his is brought out as greeting cards, the proceeds from the sale of which go to charity. In addition, Manohar is the author of two books. The first, *Green Well Years*, is a memoir of his young days in Madurai. Structured as a multi-dimensional autobiographical novel, it is sprinkled with his detailed drawings. The second is *A Poem to Courage*, a 'factional' account of a couple's life together, depicting the early days of happiness, the shattering blow of the accident which

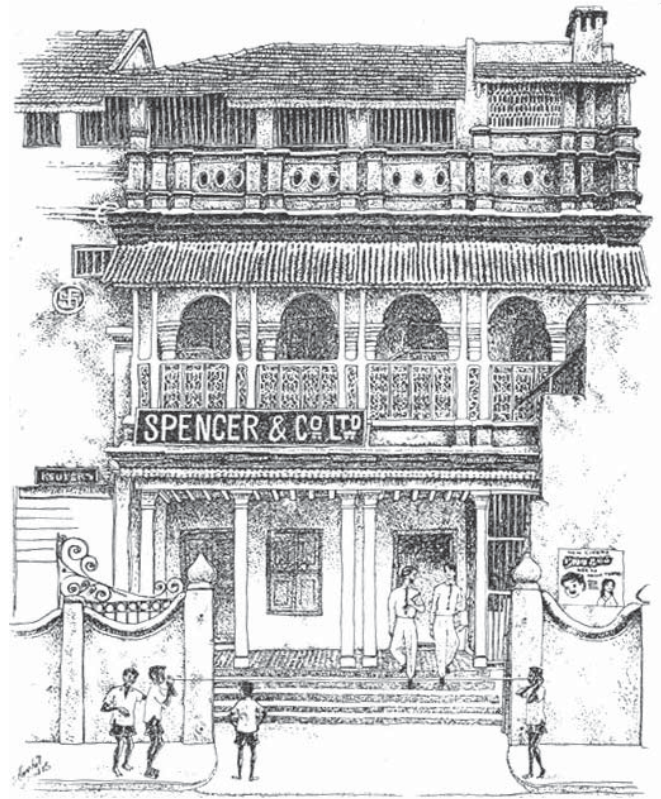
causes the wife to become a quadriplegic, the realisation that the husband is going blind and, finally, the triumph of hope and courage, making them live their lives to the fullest despite the impediments.

Multiple Facets of My Madurai is Manohar's third book and it is a book with a difference. The former President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, said it all when he commented that "this unique book gives an insight into the historical, cultural and architectural wealth of the city." Structured in the form of a coffee-table book, minus the exorbitant prices that you usually associate with such productions, it is a folio of 66 ink drawings on Madurai, with each page bearing one illustration. The facing page has de-

● by
SRIRAM V.

tailed notes by Manohar giving personal anecdotes about the scene, the buildings and the landscape, in addition to illuminating details on how he managed to complete the illustrations despite his failing vision. The drawings were done between December 1983 and June 2006. The emphasis is on factual precision and the visuals only serve to highlight the effort that Manohar has put in.

To persons familiar with Madurai, this book will bring back happy memories. There are sketches of all the famed hills – Pasumalai, Nagamalai, Yaanaimalai and Tiruparamkunram. The great Meenakshi



One of Manohar's meticulous drawings in the book.

Sundaeswarar shrine dominates the book as it does the town, and Manohar has included various parts of the buildings, pavilions, towers and sculptures from the shrine. There are scenes of day-to-day life in the city and pastoral settings as well. To those who do not know Madurai, this book is perhaps the best beginner's guide, for in Manohar's inimitable style it takes the reader gently by the hand and leads him through the narrow and busy thoroughfares of Madurai.

There is plenty of humour too. Here are some nuggets:

- "The cowsheds were too narrow to allow cows to mate and this exercise was therefore conducted with hired stud bulls right on the busy streets. Bashful women would turn their heads away, pretending not to notice anything while the children of the inner city would get an informal, free, visual sex education."
- "Some women followed them (the cows) for the reward of cow dung. The

streets were cleared of cow dung in a matter of seconds. Sometimes, the dung would be caught during the free fall even before it could hit the road."

- "Cow dung was snapped up with zeal and smeared on to floors. Elephant dung was jumped upon by jostling boys and stood upon by men. But no one would touch horse dung. 'Horse dung', my father would say, 'is an untouchable among dungs'."

It is difficult to judge as to which is better in this book – the drawings or the accompanying copy. They actually form a perfect combination, rather like Manohar and Mahema, each complementing and strengthening the other.

Priced at Rs. 395, the book, brought out by East West Books (Madras) Pvt Limited, is a valuable addition to the printed works on Madurai. As in the other projects in which Manohar and Mahema are involved, a good part of the earnings from the book will go to charity.

From Mount Road to Mall Road?

(Continued from page 1)

Coming down the Gemini flyover, past the Safire property which is still vacant (for how long?), you cross the space where Anand and Little Anand once stood. Now a retail-cum-office construction is on its way there.

The old *Express Estate*, as is well known, is making way for the city's largest office-cum-shopping mall, a 125-room hotel and a 1.5 million sq.ft. office complex. Next door, the Taj

Group is busy constructing the 220-room Taj Mount Road. Meanwhile, Addison's, which moved its manufacturing facility to Sriperumbudur, is toying with the idea of a speciality hospital for children on its land. If all this is not enough, the Government itself is turning a developer, with a plan to "renovate" Kalaivanar Arangam. This, as can easily be understood, is a euphemism. The auditorium will perhaps become part of a larger office complex. Then we come to Government

Estate which will be home to the new Assembly and Secretariat in a couple of years.

It is not clear how the powers that be propose to handle the increased congestion in these areas with all the new developments that are coming up. Perhaps, in keeping with past trends, no steps will be taken and the people of the city will continue to find their own way.

It is amazing that authorities in charge of town planning permit such constructions

without any qualms about the infrastructure.

Yet another worry is the lack of heritage laws. With current rentals hovering around Rs. 100 per sq.ft. in the area, owners of heritage properties in these areas will obviously soon be tempted to sell what they have. The result? The Kardyll Building (Bharat Insurance) is already an example of what the LIC, a government corporation, wishes to do. Will other building owners soon follow suit?

The Roman gold coins of Nandyal

During the house construction of a Dr. John Bunyan in the S.P.G. Compound, Nandyal, two workmen were involved in widening a saw pit. On June 30, 1933, one of them had gone out and the other, when he struck an earthen pot with his crowbar at a depth of three feet, saw to his utter amazement gold coins rolling out. Hurriedly he collected as many of them as possible and, wrapping them in his towel, ran to the Mission compound and sold the gold coins for one or two rupees each. When the other person returned to the site, he found there were still some gold coins. He collected all of them and sold them in the same manner. The local people melted a large number of them to prevent detection.

When the Government got wind of this they tried to recover as many coins as possible. Through public tom-tomming, the local people were informed that it was illegal to possess ancient coins and those who had them were liable for punishment. They were asked to throw the coins they had on a bedsheet spread on the verandah of the Revenue Inspector's office and told that the Government would turn a blind eye on those who threw the coins. In the end, only 52 coins could be recovered this way.

My father, G.G. James, who was the Revenue Inspector of Nandyal, personally handed over these coins to the District Collector at Kurnool, who, in turn, forwarded them to the Chief Secretary, Madras Presi-

dency. This is how the gold coins from Nandyal reached the Madras Museum.

The body of a man was found in the same pit the next morning! It appears that he had purchased the maximum number of coins and, wanting more, had gone to the pit in the dark, stumbled over something and fallen in the pit and died. The locals believed that some evil spirit had smitten him.

My father told me that the Romans had come to Nandyal in search of the Indigo plant to extract purple dye for the royal robes, as well as for the peacocks from the nearby Nallamalla forest.

● **A recent article on the Roman trail in South India by the Editor of this journal has elicited this recollection by Dr. D.B. JAMES.**

The Madras Government Museum publication *A Catalogue of the Roman and Byzantine coins* (1942, revised & reprinted 2002) states, "In the case of the Nandyal find... The defaced specimens range from 8 B.C. to 64 A.D. and out of the 24 types falling within the period, there are only five types, the specimens of which have not been defaced. The undefaced specimens run from 16 to 161 A.D.; no coin between 64 and 161 A.D. bears a cut. It may well be that the coins down to 64 A.D., cut and uncut, came together beyond India where they kept circulating till they were joined by the later coins and that till

then they had not crossed over to India." In the same catalogue it is also stated, "In the Nandyal find of aurei, which comprises coins covering a range of about 170 years, the latest coin is somewhat fresh while the earliest is worn exceedingly. Allowing a period of twenty years for a coin fresh from the mint to lose its freshness and become liable to be classed as 'but somewhat fresh', the Nandyal find may be said to be composed of coins the earliest of which had been 190 years in circulation before finding immurement in the soil."

During the period 8 B.C. to 161 A.D., Caius Julius Octavianus, Augustus, Tiberius Julius Caesar, Gaius Julius Caesar, Tiberius Claudius Nero Drusus Germanicus, Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, Servius Sulpicius Galba, Marcus Salvius Otho and Aulus Vitellius were the Roman and Byzantine Emperors.

Some years ago, I personally examined in the Madras Museum the gold coins my father had collected in Nandyal. This was through the courtesy of Dr. S. Thomas Satyamurti, the then Director of the Madras Museum. A few of the coins were put in my palm. They glittered and looked as if they had come fresh from the mint. On one side I saw an image of a person sitting on a horse.

Mr. N. Sundararajan, Curator, Numismatics, Madras Government Museum, brought to my attention the references mentioned above.



February 18-24: *Life and Nothing Else*, an exhibition of the works of six Afghan photographers. In conjunction with the exhibition is a capacity building workshop for artistic photography conducted by the German photographer Wolfgang Bellwinkel (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

Till February 25: *Regards Croisés, Indo-French Glances* at the Le Corbusier buildings in Chandigarh, an exhibition of photo-



graphs by Michel Dieudonné-Chandigarh and Diwan Manna-Firminy (at the Apparao Galleries).

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

March 1-8: First Women's Film Festival in Chennai. The festival will focus on a strong Korean and Indian section of feature films as well as a section on World Cinema.

German film director Helke Sander is presented with four films and newcomer Angela Schanelec two recent films. The festival will initiate discussions with film practitioners and viewers to enhance understanding of what constitutes a "woman's film", a question often debated (at Sathyam).

RUKMINI THE SOCIAL ACTIVIST

(Continued from page 2)

commitment to reform by engaging a Harijan woman as cook.

After the Paris conference, Rukmini visited Japan and became obsessed with the work culture there.

Back home, she joined the Congress Party and started taking part even in the secret meetings of its members. She opened a *khadi* shop in Pycroft's Road and became a member of the Hindu Mahajana Sabha, through which she could propagate the *khadi* culture.

It was at this time that the Youth Wing of the Congress

(Vanara Sena) was formed in Madras and she became its president. In 1927, she was elected the Secretary of the Women's wing of the Indian National Congress. In February 1929, when the Simon Commission came to Madras, she was among the group that denounced the Commission. She also took part in the salt satyagraha at Vedaranyam. On May 14, 1930 she was arrested and sentenced to a one-year jail term.

When Gandhiji announced January 26th as Freedom Day, Rukmini hoisted the flag in Triplicane and in March she led the movement against foreign textiles. She was arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs.100.

In 1934 she was elected the Vice-President of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and in 1936 she presided over the Madras Congress Committee meeting. She was again arrested in November 1940 when she took part in the Satyagraha movement.

When T. Prakasam formed his Government in Madras, she became the Health Minister. Earlier, when C. Rajagopalachari was the Premier in 1937, she was the Deputy Speaker.

Rukmini Lakshmipathi passed away in August 1951.

Her birth centenary was celebrated on December 6, 1993 at the initiative of her son-in-law Dr. Ramamurthy. C. Subramaniam chaired the celebration committee. Marshall's Road was re-named Rukmini Lakshmipathi Salai in her memory.

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

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to *Madras Musings* for 2006-07 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

We look forward to all readers of *Madras Musings*, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions. We are indeed sorry we can no longer remain a free mailer.

— The Editor

NOSTALGIA

That's being the Ideal Team Man

In the 1971-72 season, the Kamyuth Cricket Club won the Fourth Division championship of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association.

One of the League matches Kamyuth played was vital, for if Kamyuth had lost that match they would have lost the championship too.

Unfortunately for Kamyuth, C.S. Narasimhan, a good all-rounder, expressed his inability to play in this vital match as his father was critically ill.

Narasimhan was persuaded by his team-mates to bat and then go home and attend on his father. Knowing well the importance of the game, this ideal team man agreed to the suggestion. But the opposing side won the toss and elected to bat first at the Vivekananda College grounds. This made it necessary for Narasimhan to stay till his batting turn came. Arrangements had been made to update him of his father's condition and by lunchtime he was as stable as he was in the morning.

When his side's turn to bat came, Narasimhan batted brilliantly to score over 50 runs and hit the winning shot. His teammates applauded him as he returned to the pavilion. Just then a messenger brought the shocking news of his father's death. Narasimhan, who might have

forgotten his father's health while batting, was shattered.

Narasimhan, who worked with the Indian Oil Corporation and who had also played for Egmore Recreation Club (V. Pattabhiraman's club), was a University player, much appreciated by the crowd.

Recalling this incident, I also remember the Fourth Test against England played at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in January 1977. Sunil Gavaskar was battling hard against the menacing England attack, after India had lost three wickets, when someone ran out from the pavilion in between overs and handed him a chit. From the next day's newspapers, we came to learn that his father had suffered a heart attack. But the Little Master continued his innings after reading the note and batted on, displaying no emotion, to remain unbeaten at close of play on Day Two. It was later reported that he flew overnight to Bombay and returned early in the morning to continue his fight at the crease. What focus, concentration — and team spirit! — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

S.R. Jagannathan

Answers to Quiz

1. Justice John Hansen; 2. Shriman Narayan, former Governor of Gujarat; 3. Palace on Wheels, the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, and the Deccan Odyssey; 4. Novak Djokovic (men) and Maria Sharapova (women); 5. Bharath Gopi; 6. The French President, Nicolas Sarkozy; 7. Viswanathan Anand and Sachin Tendulkar; 8. *SpaceShipTwo*; 9. *Juno* and *Michael Clayton*; 10. He committed the world's largest ever fraud, with monumental losses of £3.6 billion to France's second largest bank, Societe Generale.

11. *Iyarkai*; 12. K.R. Periakaruppan; 13. Narada Gana Sabha; 14. Adrian Fourbeck; 15. He made the first recording in Madras; 16. Tiruvarur Vi Kalyanasundaram; 17. Tarapore & Co., Engineers and Contractors; 18. South Indian Athletic Association; 19. People's Park; 20. Krishnagiri.

A big 'Thank You' to 24 of you

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Disappointing the fans

(By A Special Correspondent)

After slowly climbing up the cricketing ladder in the 2007-08 Ranji season, Tamil Nadu finished with a humiliating defeat at Chepauk against Delhi in its last match of the Super League. Despite managing to avoid relegation to the Plate Division, Tamil Nadu disappointed its fans.

Despite a magnificent start provided by Abhinav Mukund (51) and M. Vijay (77), Tamil Nadu folded up for just 268. Blaming the wicket is absurd. Despite the delayed monsoon preceding the game, credit should be given to the Delhi bowlers, leg spinner Chetanya Nanda (3 for 65) and medium

rubbed salt into the wounds of the home team bowlers, stretching their side's lead to 70.

Tamil Nadu had a horrendous start in the second innings, losing six wickets for a paltry 61 runs before Ramkumar (57) and wicket-keeper H. Gopinath (37) put on a partnership of 82 for the seventh wicket and helped the side total 174. Except for these two, it was a poor show all the way down. Guided by Gambhir (40) and Mithun Manhas (32 n.o.), the visitors reached their target in a facile manner.

The TNCA should feel disappointed by the performances of its players despite providing them the best of support. While

● The third and final part of our review of the Tamil Nadu team's Ranji Trophy performance during the 2007-08 season

pacers Rajat Bhatia (3 for 16), for restricting the home team. Bhatia, who played in Chennai a few years ago, was one of Delhi's outstanding bowlers in the Ranji Super League.

The home team was lucky that Virender Sehwag and Ishant Sharma were on national duty in Australia. The continued absence of the injured pacer Lakshmipathy Balaji (and off-spinner R. Ashwin) crippled Tamil Nadu's attack, as its new ball bowlers did not perform as expected.

Captain Gautam Gambhir (84) and discarded India opener Akash Chopra (55) gave a flying start to Delhi. The tailenders and Shikhar Dhawan

watching the rebel players turn up for an unrecognised Twenty/20 tournament and helping their side perform well, ardent Tamil Nadu supporters must have felt terribly frustrated. It is a pity that the Association let slip some of the experienced players.

Despite having the home advantage in all its games, Tamil Nadu never played aggressive cricket and failed to win a couple of more matches it should have triumphed in easily. It is to be hoped that the young players would have learnt from their experience and will do better in the Ranji one-dayers. — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

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