

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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"Now that Valentine's is over, let's get back to our real love... Ballantines!"

## Love in the Time of Moral Indignation

It's been two weeks now. The Day dedicated to the emotion that both art-forms and commerce have nurtured and sustained through the centuries arrived...and departed. The red balloons are now deflated, and cardboard hearts and flavour-of-the-moment gifts put away.

Like all left-overs, the remaining evidence of engineered social brouhaha looks a little ragged around the edges.

Especially when the festivities are as forced, and as cleverly manipulated, as this particular one.

And yet, why blame sound business instincts when there are those who are so ready, willing, even eager, to dive into the hoopla?

All those moral-indignators who faithfully surface at this time of year appear to have gone back to being the good citizens they all surely are, until the next express-anger-for-a-cause situation crops up.

(There seems to be a lot of this going around... some protests even triggering a bemused "Huh, What?!" in those on the receiving end of the stringent "J accuse!")

You cannot help noticing that these annual attacks have done little to curb The Day, which skips merrily on, in full, rosy-cheeked form, coming up with varied (and more expensive) ways to define itself.

As for those who simply let The Day go by ...

Is the sheer act of ignoring something sometimes (repeat... some times) the best way to reduce it to a mere nothing?

Ranjitha Ashok

## Gubernatorial bungalow by the beach

(By A Staff Reporter)

Elliot's Beach is in the news again. The Rs. 2.5 crore beautification plan of the city Corporation, which was initially opposed by local citizen groups and later accepted with modifications, appears to have gone awry. At the heart of the latest controversy is the sudden reconstruction of a tumbledown shack which used to go by the grandiose name of Governor's Bungalow. It may have fulfilled that function in the years past, but nobody recollects its ever being put to that use within living memory. And yet in the last few weeks the Public Works Department (PWD) has been busy rebuilding the structure into a spacious bungalow ostensibly meant for use by the Governor. In the process, the authorities and the Environment Ministry in particular appear to have overlooked the fact that the Elliot's Beach falls within the Coastal Regulation Zone notifications of 1991 and that no permanent structure can come up within that space.

The Citizens Action Group (CAG) has issued notice to the Tamil Nadu Government to stop the construction immediately. It has said, "It is not known what permission has been obtained for this construction, coming at a time when the State government has been leading a campaign against demolition of illegal constructions." The CAG, while noting that the environment and the livelihood of fisherfolk are already at threat owing to several illegal constructions coming up on the seafront, has questioned as to why the Governor needs yet another bungalow given that he already has the Raj Bhavans in Guindy and Udhagamandalam (Ooty).

The Chennai seafront has seen a series of assaults on it by

way of beautification and development in the recent years. Such developments as Governor's Bungalow should be seen in the light of this and a pattern will emerge. The first threat to the seafront emerged when a plan to 'beautify' the Marina and also develop housing for multinationals along the beachfront on the lines of Shanghai in collaboration with a Malaysian firm, was mooted. Rehabilitation of the displaced fisherfolk was not to be anywhere near the place where they needed to be - namely the sea. A volley of protests followed and then, following the tsunami of 2004, these plans were quietly dropped. The mammoth development of land along the Quibble Island area by private developers has been a major blow to the fragile ecosystem of the place.

(Continued on page 7)



• Our OLD this time features the Governor's Bungalow on Elliot's Beach as it stood till very recently. It was a picture of neglect and uncared for. Our NEW is that of the new construction now going on the same plinth, in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone norms. The argument being made out by the Corporation and the PWD is that this is a construction on an existing plinth and hence does not violate any law. Photo courtesy: Old: CIVIL SOCIETY GROUP; New: SRIRAM V.



## State tops in road accidents

Tamil Nadu has the reputation of being first or close to that position on several fronts. This includes several positive aspects such as good governance, health care and industrial growth. Now there appears to be a downside to its rapid growth - the rapid rise of road accidents. The latest statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau, which pertain to the year 2006, have been released and they reveal that out of 3,94,432 road mishaps across the country, Tamil Nadu reported a whopping 55,145 cases (14 per cent). The State is closely followed by Maharashtra

and, together, the two account for one-fourth of the total accidents reported in the country.

While state-wise statistical breakdown is not available in respect of the types of vehicles, the national figures speak for themselves. Truck-related

the forcing of pedestrians off footpaths have contributed to the present state of affairs.

The road accident figures for Chennai have been released for 2007. These figures, compiled by the Traffic Laboratory Highway Research Station, the research wing of the Highways Department, show that there were 1,110 fatal accidents on the city's roads in 2007. According to the study, about one-third of all reported road accidents is fatal and that gives an indication of the total number of road accidents in the city.

• by A Special Correspondent

accidents account for 22% of the total while two-wheelers come second at 18%, passenger buses at 12% and pedestrians at 8%. All these reveal that continued congestion on roads and

(Continued on page 6)



## The founder of a musical landmark

T.S. Krishnamurthy, founder of the Karnatic Music Book Centre – a unique establishment in Chennai – passed away recently. He ran the business with a greater interest in the propagation of music awareness than on the bottom line.

In the world of Carnatic music books, the name of A.S. Panchapakesa Iyer is well known. The younger brother of Sangeeta Kalanidhi Alathur Srinivasa Iyer and a *vidwan* and *guru* in his own right, he pioneered the concept of publishing books ranging from beginners' lessons to *varnam*-s. These, which came out initially in Tamil and later in English, became very popular. Krishnamurthy had a role to play in popularising them. He was the brother-in-law of Panchapakesa Iyer, his sister having married the musician. Later, he also became the *vidwan's* son-in-law.

Krishnamurthy worked in the corporate world as did his elder brother Balu. The two, visiting the Tyagaraja *aradhana* in Tiruvaiyaru in the 1960s, felt that it was a good spot to market the books of Panchapakesa Iyer. They set up a stall at the venue in 1968 and found business to be brisk. Encouraged, they returned year after year. Then, in 1978, Krishnamurthy decided to set himself up in the book trade with Carnatic music books as his sole line. The Karnatic Music Book Centre (KMBC) was born and, within a few years, the tiny shop, tucked into a by-lane off Sripuram 1st Street in Royapettah, became a treasure trove for any researcher into Carnatic music.

The company grew in name, though not in the physical area of its outlet, and acquired several titles. These included those of the Indian Music Publishing House which had been run by Professor P. Sambamoorthy. This was acquired in 1982. In 1991, Adi and Company, which published K.V. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Adi Tyagaraja Hridayam*, was taken over. KMBC could boast now of housing about 2500 titles in many Indian languages.

Balu took voluntary retirement and came to help his younger brother. The duo became icons in the music world. Balu was the more tactful of the two. Krishnamurthy was a passionate soul, who had the habit of expressing his opinions on any subject without beating around the bush. The slow and bureaucratic methods of publishing houses and the tendency of musicians to debate endlessly on copyright issues were his pet irritations. He vented his spleen periodically on these topics to



T.S. Krishnamurthy

anyone who cared to listen. People who owned copyrights and did not bring out-of-print books into circulation were yet another pet peeve. I have often been privy to telephone conversations in which Krishnamurthy abruptly signed off with a "Go to hell"! If it was a pleasant conversation, it would end with a "Nalladu". But such was his genuine love for music and its propagation that this acerbity was taken in the right spirit by most who did business with him.

The brothers' knowledge was a bonus to any researcher and a conversation with them on matters musical was always a pleasure. Never mind if the shop was dingy and books were stocked higgledy-piggledy and it needed a Krishnamurthy or Balu to tell you where exactly the various titles were located. The shop had a treasure trove of old titles, including manuscripts dating back to the 19th Century. Some would be made available for viewing to a select group of friends. But if Krishnamurthy was fond of you, he would not hesitate to part with one of these for a very reasonable price. I was lucky to purchase an original edition of Abraham Pandithar's *Karunamrita Sagaram* from him.

The brothers, however, found running the bookshop too much of a strain in recent years. Krishnamurthy's health was failing and Balu was happier collecting funds for various temple causes. So they decided to put the shop on the market. That is when I interacted very closely with them, for it was Krishnamurthy's dearest wish that I should acquire the business! But, working in hydraulics and software, besides trying to run [www.sangeetham.com](http://www.sangeetham.com), writing on music and history, I decided to stay away. After many "Go to hells!" between us, Krishnamurthy gave up the idea, though he never stopped lamenting about it.

The business was acquired by another firm which was into publishing and the shop moved a few buildings away into a larger, more modern showroom where it continues to survive and thrive. Krishnamurthy went into retirement and Balu went back to his fund collection drives. – (Courtesy: *Srutu.*)

Sriram V.

## A requiem of sorts

*The Man from Madras Musings* was driving happily along Peter's Road, or at least as happily as one can be while driving along that busy thoroughfare. He then espied what he thought was a funeral procession coming down the flyover near Thousand Lights mosque. Driving closer, MMM could see that police bandobust had been provided with a posse of the law-enforcers in attendance. An important personage had passed away, no doubt, thought MMM. The usual paraphernalia was in attendance. There were some drums beating to a tattoo that sounded very much like the funereal drum called *Savu Molam* in Madras lingo, while some youngsters were enthusiastically dancing to it. Others were strewing flowers. Only the cortege was different, MMM noticed. It was a Metropolitan Transport Corporation bus. The vehicle was driven at a snail's pace and following it at the rear was a lone jeep being driven by a bored-looking policewoman.

MMM, used to seeing unique protests in Calcutta where he, in the 1980s, had participated in a funeral procession for perennially dead telephones, thought that this was a protest against poor transport services. And then the truth dawned on MMM. It was not a funeral, but celebration of "Bus Day", a uniquely Chennai phenomenon and celebrating it were a bunch of students from a once prestigious college of the city which was later made autonomous and which very recently was given the status of a university. The students were having the time of their lives, but the same joy was not reflected on the faces of the policemen (and women) and the bus driver. As for the scores who had been put to great difficulty by this ritual, conducted at a busy intersection at rush hour, their expression had to be seen to be believed. MMM still maintains that the event was a funeral of sorts. If these students are the citizens of tomorrow, God help us all.

### The new rash

It has broken out all over the city like an eczema. You see it everywhere in various shapes and sizes. *The Man from Madras Musings* is referring to the latest in street and road decoration in this Singara Chennai – the digital banner. For weeks MMM had been referring to them as vinyl banners, but now he realises that those who coined the term digital banner had hit upon the *mot-juste*. The very inclusion of the word "digital" gives it a modern, hi-tech feel, most suited to this city which, if the town planners, politicians and real estate barons are to be believed, is a global, up-to-date metropolis.

To come back to the digital



banner, MMM was amused to read that the powers that be have decided that this new and wholly unauthorised method of advertising has a legal life of five days, two days prior to and two days after the event it celebrates. How a temporary structure, which is causing enormous difficulty to pedestrians and road-users, can be allowed a tenure of any kind is amazing. As for those who are in charge of getting these re-

they were standing in the group of onlookers watching the fun. The train came and left and the would-have-been commuter walked away muttering under his breath. A couple of local toughs informed MMM that this was a frequent occurrence and many people missed their train at this rather deserted station this way.

Talking about MRTS, here is a quick quiz for MM regulars. If the station in Mylapore is called Tirumayilai (as it should be) and that at Triplicane is called Tiruvallikeni (as it ought to be), guess what is Greenways Road station. Pasumai Vazhi Salai, no less. Thereby old Greenways, whoever he was, who once owned considerable property in the area and therefore got the road named after him, is now a horticulturist's delight. Wonder why the railways do not refer to the place as PS Kumaraswamy Raja station after the early Premier of Madras after whom the road is now named? After all, he lived at nearby Brodie Castle and hence the road was renamed. Obviously the railways have not caught up with this. But we must thank heavens for small mercies. Imagine if it had been Turnbolls Road!

### Going...going...gone!

The recent auction of cricketers reminded *The Man from Madras Musings* of cattle-shows that he had seen in his rural youth. Even there, the prices would be negotiated discreetly, with a towel covering the hands of the buyer and the seller. But here, in this big bucks auction, no thought was given to such niceties and soon in a scene, rather remarkably similar to slave markets of Mughal times, cricketers were traded and sold. What distressed MMM the most were the headlines that appeared in the electronic media – Dhoni sold for Rs. xyz million, said one. Another said, "Tendulkar knocked down for Rs. abc million". And so it went on. There was only one difference from the times of Anarkali. Here those being auctioned were as delighted as those bidding. Wonder how all this sits in with the reality that ours is a country with 30% living below the poverty line. But then we are a super power, are we not? MMM quite forgot that.

– MMM

**SHORT  
'N'  
SNAPPY**

moved, when they themselves are promoting the usage of these banners, there is very little that can be done. The five-day rule is laughable, for nobody monitors the removal of these banners and so there they remain. Even if the banner goes, the casuarina scaffolding is allowed to stay, thereby causing the same nuisance as before.

MMM remembers that most of the illegal hoardings in the city came up the same way. And by virtue of their being allowed to stay, they became permanent and today the Government is spending money fighting the issue in court. Why can these digital banners not be summarily disallowed is what MMM would like to know.

### Accessing the MRTS

*The Man from Madras Musings* awakes early and then goes for a walk. There are days when he ambles along and there are days when he runs, the latter being the time when the next issue of MM is near and the Chief is breathing down MMM's neck. Last week was amble time and MMM's rambles took him to the vicinity of an MRTS station. It was still dark and MMM could hear a train approaching overhead. Then there was a sound of running feet as someone rushed past MMM in order to reach the station before the train left. The man was obviously pressed for time. But then, there is a higher power that dictates what we do and in this case it was the glass door to the station which had jammed and would not budge. The man pushed and pulled and after some time cursed and yelled, all to no avail. As for any railway staff in the vicinity, MMM could detect none unless



## 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](mailto:editor@madrasmusings.com). Those who wish to intimate change of address can also do so provided the subscription number is quoted.

### Honouring the great

Reader M.R. Pillai has, in *MM*, February 1st, quite rightly pointed out the lack of sensitivity on the part of the authorities concerned in honouring Nobel Laureates C.V. Raman and S. Chandrasekhar who were the pride of Tamil Nadu in the field of science. Similar is the case with the mathematical genius S. Ramanujan.

At least in the case of C.V. Raman an insignificant road in Alwarpet has been named after him. Ramanujan has a small museum named after him in Tondiarpet. But Chandrasekhar ...?

It will be in the fitness of things if the Madras University starts a Department for Astrophysics naming it after S. Chandrasekhar and also erect his statue in the lawns of the Presidency College where he studied. Similarly, a statue of C.V. Raman should also be erected there.

In the case of Ramanujan, I have been pleading with the authorities for years to have the Triplicane High Road named after him, since he lived for some time in *Summer House*, close to Triplicane High Road. A suitable memorial for this genius on the lines of *Bharathiar Illam* should also be constructed.

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### She too was great

It is strange that an article on feminists should dismiss Dr.

Indira Ramamurthy as "...in time became the wife of Dr. B. Ramamurthy, the great neurosurgeon." Dr. Ramamurthy was undoubtedly that. He was the doyen of the neurosurgeons of India, a pioneer who was one of the best in the world. But Dr. Indira Ramamurthy was much more than just his wife. She was one of the great gynaecologist-obstetricians of Madras, a star teacher, a Professor at the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, the premier institution of the country. She has trained countless other doctors, and was a role model for her students and colleagues.

**M. K. Mani**  
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### Where's the water?

The suggestion of reader C.S. Ananth, 'Use waterways' (*MM*, January 1st), is commendable. With minimum expenses, minimum disturbance to the members of the public, these waterways could be put to use as an alternative and addition to the present transport system. This will also ensure that the waterways are free from pollution and murkiness. The only difficulty might be to get enough water to float the steam launches or any other boats.

It may be of interest to know that even in the 1950s, the citizens of Kakinada, Masulipatnam, etc., places where the Buckingham Canal runs, were using motor boats. In fact, to reach the Kakinada Port you had to take a steam launch. In Kolkata, steam launches are a regular mode of transport in the Hoogly river.

**T.M. Sundararaman**  
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### I wept!

I am 86. Queen Mary's College is my alma mater and that of many others. It is due to

# Fortify rice to prevent blindness

Here's some further information about fortified rice that I had referred to in *MM*, December 16th. I have just found out an important development in 'Golden Rice' which, if successfully adopted on a commercial scale, as is being done in the Philippines, could help the authorities reduce the cost of fortification with added vitamins and minerals.

According to Dr. Mangala Rai of the Indian Council of Agriculture Research, unlike the original 'Golden Rice', a genetically-engineered strain which was unveiled in 2000, the current version has 23 mgs of Provitamin A which is converted in the human body into Vitamin A. The new version of Golden Rice contains 20 times more beta carotene than the original version. Vitamin A is crucial for the prevention of blindness which affects millions of children in India.

Three agriculture institutes, Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi, Directorate of Rice Research, Hyderabad, and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, started research on Golden Rice, but further development leading to the present findings has taken place at the International Rice Research Institute, Philippines.

### White Rice

"Stripped during milling, a grain of rice loses its tough hull, layers of oily bran and the tiny embryo. What is left? Starchy endosperm – the Kernal ready for cooking..."

"Milling scrapes off the rice seed's hull and then successive layers of bran – which coats the Kernal – and also the embryo, until what is left is only the white Kernal itself. That is about 80% starch. The rest is mostly water, plus protein and minute amount of phosphorous, potassium, Calcium, and B Vitamins. If some bran is left on, you have brown rice, which contains additional minerals and vitamins in the bran."

– *National Geographic*, May 1994

"Refining White rice removes nearly all the germ and bran, leaving the nutrient-poor endosperm. By law, some nutrients, such as iron and certain B Vitamins, must be added back, making it "enriched". Still, White rice has less Vitamin E than brown rice."

– *Reader's Digest*

The unhusked grain, as well as the growing crop, is known as paddy. The husks are removed by pounding with a pestle in a mortar, or in a stone mill, followed by winnowing, or in small or large mechanised mills. Unlike wheat, where the object of milling is to produce a fine powder, the aim with rice is to keep the grains as whole as possible. The husked or hulled rice is usually called brown rice, which is then milled

to remove the outer layers, including the aleurone layer and the germ, after which it is polished to produce white rice. Inevitably some of the grains are broken during husking and milling to produce some broken rice. During the milling much of the protein, fat, minerals and vitamins are removed so that flavour and health are sacrificed for the white appearance. Much of Vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, Thiamine, may be lost, and this may cause beriberi. White rice may be enriched by treating a portion of the grain with vitamins and minerals which, after drying, is sprayed with colloid or other substances; this protects it against deterioration and depletion during washing preparatory to cooking. For certain markets, notably European and American, a rice with a fine glossy translucent appearance is desired and is produced by glazing, often with some talc and a little dilute glucose solution. Paddy, on milling, gives approximately: husk 20 per cent; whole rice 50 per cent; broken rice 16 per cent; bran and meal 14 per cent.

The paddy may be parboiled before milling, and it is estimated that more than half of India's rice crop is treated in this way. The paddy is steeped in cold or heated water for varying periods of up to three days, followed by steaming at low pressure before drying and milling in the ordinary way. In some rice mills, such as in Guyana, the paddy is soaked for four hours at 41°C in moving water and then steamed for 10 minutes. Parboiling results in less breakage during milling, the retention of more nutrients and vitamins, and better storage qualities. Unless done carefully, it can lead to an inferior colour and an unpleasant smell.

Ninety per cent of the visually impaired people in Tamil Nadu belong to lower income group. Of the 17 lakh disabled people, 9.75 lakh are visually impaired. The problem could be alleviated considerably by introducing suitable rice strains in the long run, but immediate action needs to be taken to fortify rice with Vitamin B as well as A with nutrients.

In Tamil Nadu, the population below the poverty line is 14.73 million (23.71% of the State's population). If 90% of the visually impaired are below the poverty line, there are 8.78 lakhs out of 14.73 million BPL or 5.96% such people. Poverty leads to malnutrition, ill-health, inability to seek education and eventually deprivation, causing blindness, deafness, permanent ailments, etc.

These unfortunate people need to be protected and given full security by legal sanctions.

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celebrate its centenary soon. When I recently took my son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren to show them the prestigious institution I had studied in once upon a time, I wept!

We entered the portals and I was appalled at the condition of the buildings. Pentland, Jeypore and Stone Houses plus the Principal's domain had seen no broom for some time. It was an appalling sight – the condition of buildings that had not seen paint for years. The front garden was covered with shrubs and was wild and unkempt. As for the swimming pool (imagine a college in early 1900s with a swimming pool!), I had been warned it was a garbage dump!

Sadly, we left to look at Presidency College, where my husband and I had studied.

The dear old Fyson clock had patches of moss. The red brick outer structure was dull. Windows and doors were painted in different colours – some white, some blue, some

green. They were really grotesque.

My children were taking photographs. Two watchmen came running – they had gone out for tea. "Madam, are you from the media – please don't report us!"

I told him I had once upon a time studied there.

His reply was "Andha kalam ellam poche ... We had more than fifty or hundred for maintenance – now we are just ten."

Lady Willingdon Teachers' Training College is hardly visible.

These institutions were a remarkable sight on the Marina. Now they are eyesores!

In contrast to QMC, look at how Women's Christian College, started almost the same time, is maintained, though they have to raise money for it.

The other day headlines said Queen Mary's and Presidency Colleges were to be declared

deemed universities soon! In the state they are in, do they warrant such status?

**Anna Varki**  
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### READABILITY PLEASE

#### Dear Readers,

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

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i's' and crossing the 't's'. Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

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

– THE EDITOR

## Our Addresses

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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



## Pioneering physician and women's rights champion

Dr. K.N. Kesari (1875-1953) was a renowned physician of Madras city, whose Kesari Kuteeram Ayurveda Oushadasala was a landmark on Royapettah's Westcott Road. Born in Inamavamelloor in Ongole District of Andhra Pradesh, Kota Narasimham, as he was originally known, lost his father when he was just five. The mother had to face severe hardships and when 11, unable to bear the distress of his mother, he ran away from home and arrived in Madras. After several initial setbacks, he succeeded in getting a scholarship at the Hindu Theological School (Mint Street) and studied there. In order to differentiate him from another student of the same name, he was called Narakesari by his teacher which he shortened in later years to K.N. Kesari. His mother joined him in the city in 1889 only to pass away a few months later.

Kesari learnt Ayurvedic medicine and assisted Pandit D. Gopalacharyulu who practised at the Kanyaka Parameswari Temple Dharma Ayurveda Vaidyasala. This, run by the Sri Kanyaka Parameswari Devasthanam, was in Godown Street, George Town. In 1900, Dr. Kesari set up his own practice in the same street, under the name Kesari Kuteeram, along with some partners. Differences of opinion among them soon led to one of the early trade mark disputes in Madras, the High Court's judgement of 1929 finally settling it in favour of Kesari. Meanwhile the business expanded, with a new office in Bandar Street and a branch in Secunderabad. The medicines such as Lodhra, Amrita and Arka became household names. Kesari designed his own advertisements for these products, which were published regularly in Telugu magazines such as *Andhra Prakasika*. Further expansion led to the office and residence shifting to Egmore.

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Kesari commissioned the Lodhra Printing Press at Poonamallee High Road from where he began publishing *Grihalakshmi*, a Telugu magazine aimed at women. It later became known for its intellectual content and for championing the rights of women. Following the death of his first wife after a prolonged illness, Kesari selected Madhavi, from Kerala, who was well-versed in Ayurveda, and married her. She was a qualified specialist in curing the illnesses of women and children and set up practice along with her husband. The marriage was blessed and the couple had a daughter in 1919 – Sarada Devi. In later years, they adopted a girl, Vasantha. A branch of Kesari Kuteeram was set up in Kerala as well. In 1937 the Kesari Kuteeram business shifted to Westcott Road, Royapettah. This became a huge establishment, with a handsome bungalow in the middle, surrounded by workshops of the business where the medicines were prepared.

Kesari became an ardent champion of women's causes. His magazine launched for women an annual award comprising a gold bracelet. The *Grihalakshmi* Swarnakankanam, as the bracelet became known,

was considered a great honour. Kesari contributed liberally to social organisations for women's uplift, such as the Andhra Mahila Sabha of Durgabai Deshmukh, the Seva Sadan of Lady Andal Venkata Subba Rao, the Avvai Home of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy and the Hindu Yuvathi Saranala of Yamini Poorna Tilakamma. He also personally sheltered several women, all of whom were given education and helped them become independent.

Never forgetting the struggles he faced to get a good education, he assisted in the management of a school that was set up to give education to the people of Andhra origin who lived in Madras. In 1943, Dr. K. N. Kesari offered to take over the management of the institution and raised it to middle school and, later, to high school level. The first batch of pupils appeared for the SSLC Public examinations in March 1948. This later became Kesari High School.

Kesari endowed the school with a spacious building at 163, Royapettah High Road (formerly *Palm Grove*, the palatial residence of S. Doraiswami Iyer, a famed lawyer), valued at that time at Rs. 70,000. In addition, he donated Rs. 50,000 to the school. He also constituted a committee of trustees to manage the affairs of the institution and administer the properties.

In April 1947, Kesari donated a further Rs. 1 lakh to the trust for education of girls. To ensure expansion of the activities of the institutions and starting similar institutions in the future, it was decided to form a society under the Societies Registration Act 1860. Accordingly the 'Kesari Education Society' was formed and registered in February 1951. Subsequently, an elementary school was started with Telugu as the medium of instruction.

Towards the end of his life, Kesari became distressed to know that people were speaking of him as though he hailed from a wealthy family background. To set the record straight he wrote his memoirs in Telugu, titled *Chimnanati Mutchathu*. This, many years after his demise, was translated into English by his daughter Vasantha Menon and edited by his grandson K. Balakesari.

The Kesari heritage lives on. The school was upgraded to a high school in 1981. Today, the Kesari Education Society manages the following schools: Kesari High School, Mylapore (English and Telugu medium), Kesari High School, T. Nagar, Kesari Primary School, T. Nagar (Telugu medium). The Kesari Kuteeram business too thrives, now in its 108<sup>th</sup> year. The old bungalow has, however, given way to a multistoreyed building that houses many of Kesari's descendants including his great grandson – the famous musician P. Unnikrishnan.

We publish extracts from Dr. Kesari's reminiscences on his observations about Madras.

Sriram V.



Dr. K.N. Kesari

they were not allowed to see the dead bodies. In the morning the police gave permission to identify the bodies. It was impossible to identify one from another. The dead bodies were all in such a wretched state. Only a few could point out their own people. It was presumed that those who did not return home that night had met with death. Some, who went to neighbouring villages on some errands were also considered dead and we can imagine how their people were thrilled and astonished to see them returning home.

Kolla Kannayya Chetty was one among the few who escaped miraculously from the accident. He managed to jump over the wooden fence and came outside unhurt. He lost his chain but the person who recovered it handed it over to him the next day and he was rewarded for it. His chain was a famous one and everyone knew about it in those days. He was an important man belonging to the Komatti caste. Vaisyas never used to conduct any good ceremonies in their houses without approaching him. He was a functionary in the Kanyaka Parameswari temple. He used to visit the temple with *bhasmam* and *kumkam* on his forehead and travel in a horse carriage. He was given great honour and was held in great esteem. Not even the Viceroy would get such high respect and treatment. People used to ring the temple bells whenever they knew that he was coming over and they received him with great honour. As for his wealth, he owned all the surrounding buildings of the present High Court.

I waited for a long time to see my friend returning but in vain. I started returning home and as I neared the Central Station I could see my mother, in great distress, shouting my name and running towards the park. I recognised her voice and ran at once to her. She hugged me and gave a long sigh of relief. She was sweating all over and we sat on the footpath adjacent to the wall of the General Hospital for some time. Even now, whenever I pass that side, I recollect that bitter experience. After sometime, we returned home in a bullock cart. My friend's mother who saw me enquired about her son. I was speechless for some time and afterwards told her everything that had happened.

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News spread everywhere about the fire. Before long, thousands of people thronged the scene to know about their near and dear ones. They had to remain there the whole night, for

## Spinning into the future

### – The Season 2020

Year end in Chennai is celebration time. With pleasant weather for a change, there is plenty of life. Book fairs and bull fights, Muttukadu and Mylapore, *Sabha*-s and Saravana's et al fight for a piece of the action. Nearly everyone ranging from NRIs to Narikuravas has a rum time in this happening place.

The Government was missing out on all this hoopla and is making up for lost time. It can be a

host and partner in this party to enhance its success. For instance, it can drum up campaigns, sponsor events, provide infrastructure and participate in a myriad ways. The major thrust can be in tourism development through an integrated approach to music, entertainment and travel. With a bit of globalisation, liberalisation and some marketing techniques thrown in, the idea could be to make the

December season a gigantic amalgam of everything ranging from the Bavarian Oktoberfest to the Edinburgh music festival and bring Chennai prominently on to the international cultural map.

If, on the other hand, through some adventurism, this festival unplugged spins a bit out of con-

• by  
**S. SRINIVASAN**

## Likes and dislikes

This is how a couple of visitors from abroad saw the last Music Season:

A serious student of Carnatic music, Emmanuelle Martin belongs to a family of musicians in Nantes, France. T.M. Krishna has been teaching her for the past eight years.

This was her fourth music season in Chennai. She is an avid music *rasika*, with very little exposure to dance. Likes the season because it is a time to enjoy as well as a time to learn.

Disliked: (1) The air-conditioning. "Next year I will have to bring my winter coat, woollen cap and gloves!" (2) People talking, walking up and down, cell phones ringing and people answering phone calls while the concert is in progress. (3) The sound system when it spoils the music.

Liked: Innovations in music and dance, jugalbandis and fusion

as long as they respect the beauty of the art forms.

Dirt Muysers

A software developer who lives in Rome, he is a German who has been coming to the Madras music season for the past 25 years. He is a regular at Narada Gana Sabha, loves the atmosphere there. But there are dislikes too:

"I find that many musicians do not keep track of their programmes to avoid repetition. A couple of them sang the same main raga for two consecutive seasons in their Narada Gana Sabha concerts."

"I may not come back next year. The traffic is getting steadily worse and autorickshaws more and more expensive. I usually stay at Hotel Maris, which too is getting more costly. The appreciation in the value of the rupee doesn't help." (Courtesy: *Srutti*)

trol, what would this transformation look like? This mutated season on steroids could have little resemblance to the character and spirit of Margazhi and Thai. Sample this.

It is 2020 and the season is in full swing. Chartered flights are landing and Chennai is on the world map. 300 *sabha*-s, 2000 eateries and assorted events, all co-sponsors of this mammoth project, vie for attention. There are colourful hop-on, hop-off trolley buses with open upper decks, plying between the various *sabha*-s, hotels, eateries and temples. For the convenience of *sabha*-s and tourists, there are tour packages available for every whim and fancy. At the information counter, we are given a menu card listing out the various combinations.

Tour number 3, for instance, takes us to four *sabha*-s, two eat-



eries, some boating and a book fair. Tour 6 is for the musically less inclined and would take us to just one *sabha*, plus a multiplex. There is a JJ tour that starts with a jugalbandi and ends at a jallikattu, and a KK tour that starts at Kalakshetra and ends at Kovalam. There is also an all-in-one mother of all tours that gives one of each – a *sabha*, an eatery, a temple, and a book fair. In short, everything of your choice from cathedrals to crocodiles. A common element of all the tours is a halt at a drive-in textile showroom where the bus actually drives through the showroom to enable purchases literally off the shelf.

What about *sabha*-s? Tickets to concerts can be purchased in six different currencies in 46 countries. Drab canteens and stalls have given way to food courts and forex counters to cater to international clientele. And the music? With globalisation, *ghazal*-s and *qawwali*-s fight with *bhajan*-s and *abhang*-s *rasika*-s and tourists, there are tour packages available for every whim and fancy. At the information counter, we are given a menu card listing out the various combinations.

Tour number 3, for instance, takes us to four *sabha*-s, two eat-

formed guides are available in most *sabha*-s who will explain the nuances of the *tani* and the *tala* in six languages, including Mandarin. Thanks to a simple marketing technique, attendance in the *tani* session has soared. A bumper lottery is conducted for members who are present during the *tani*. Some super performers perform only at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in view of the size of the audience. Patriotic competition awards have gone. It starts with tickets to Tahiti for two. Innovation stands unplugged. An artiste has rendered a brilliant Bagesree on the bagpipe. There is an absorbing analysis by a musician of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart and their remarkable resemblance to the musical Trinity. And Harikali, a modern art form, promises to deliver Harikatha through Kathakali.

Is there anything offbeat? One *sabha* in a Chennai suburb has a novelty. Here, performances start with an invocation to Lord Ganesha, which is followed by songs and ends with a *mangalam*. In between there are ingredients such as *ragam-tanam-pallavi* and a *tani*. Most songs are in praise of the Almighty. Their spartan canteen has only coffee. (Courtesy: *Srutti*)

Near Pachaiyappa's College in George Town, there was a street called Bandar Street. One master by name Ramanujachari ran a small street school there. Though he took fees from others, I was somehow exempted from paying any fees. I often went to his house to help him in his household chores. I learnt from him 'Rukmini Kalyanam' and 'Gajendra Moksham' with meaning. But I realised that in the long run, this kind of study would be of no use. So I decided to study English.

In 1889, Sri Sachidananda Yogi Ramanatha Sivasankara Pandya Garu founded the Hindu Theological High School and worked as the headmaster. In 1888, an English professor in Christian College had insulted Hindu religion and caused anxiety amongst the Hindus. It was feared that the students, after studying English, would change their religion. The outcome (of this apprehension) was the founding of the Hindu Theological School. Pandya had obtained his B.A. degree from the Presidency College. He was proficient in English, Telugu and Sanskrit.

## The Great 'Park Fair' fire

I managed to get a scholarship without fees in his school.

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Since the last sixty years or so, every year in December, they used to have an exhibition in the People's Park. People called it the 'Park Fair' exhibition. There was lot of rush for the exhibition. So many things were on sale in the exhibition and the organisers made a lot of money out of it.

This exhibition was conducted in the same place where the band orchestra now plays. There were two circles – inner circle and outer circle. In the first (inner) circle, costly things were displayed. In the second circle, cool drink shops and teashops were built. There were four entrances for each circle, each safely guarded by policemen and volunteers. To get inside the outer circle one had to pay half an anna and to go to the inner circle four annas were needed. There were no electric bulbs in those days, only kerosene lamps. They were lit by five o' clock and burnt till midnight.

It was 1889. I was studying in Madras and (at that time) my mother was staying with me. We took a room for twelve annas rent per month in Acharappan Street near Kothwal Bazar. The exhibition started as usual. One evening, I went to see it along with another boy. We reached the park at 6.00 PM. We had a ride on the merry-go-round; we saw Benares and Rameswaram in a film. My friend wanted to go inside the exhibition. As I did not have half an anna coin with me I stayed back. Being a rich boy, he could get inside the show while I was merely wandering outside.

Within a short time, thick smoke began to spread all over due to a fire inside. People inside were unable to get out and escape, as they could not see anything due to the smoke. There was a stampede. Some lost their way, some were crushed to death and some were badly hurt. Many rich people fell victims to this calamity and utter confusion prevailed everywhere. All the fun

and joy disappeared and within half an hour, the whole place was filled with tragic scenes. Many people lost their sight, besides suffering injuries. Some were burnt to death. Others jumped into the Cooum River to escape from the flames. Men and women in those days wore ornaments. All this was either damaged or stolen.

It took the whole night for the policemen to put down the fire, as there were only a few fire engines. The timely help rendered by the then Principal of Madras Christian College, Mr. Miller, is worth mentioning. He was a generous man. He gave assistance to women and children who were injured and took pains to enquire about each and every student of his college and gave information to their parents residing in and outside Madras.

News spread everywhere about the fire. Before long, thousands of people thronged the scene to know about their near and dear ones. They had to remain there the whole night, for

## Attracting tourists to Chennai

• by A Staff Reporter

ever it happens, it is to be hoped that it is not on the same lines as the one at Tirumalai Nayak Mahal in Madurai, which is comprehensible to none

- Audio guides or trained guides at tourist spots.
- A tourist-friendly transport system (do we hear locals wanting a friendly transport system first?)
- Clear road signages and designated pick up points for accredited autos and taxis
- A sculptor's park at Mamallapuram
- A subsidy scheme for converting heritage buildings into

heritage hotels (Great! What about starting off with Bharat Insurance Building?)

• Rural tourism with villages in the vicinity playing host to tourists.

All these plans are welcome. But what remains to be seen is how much of this initiative will involve sensitising citizens of Chennai towards tourists. Will there be no more hoardings blocking heritage buildings? Will road signage no longer be covered with political party posters? A lot of tourism potential lies in encouraging people to walk about and browse at their leisure. Will our roads, now being designed to cater only for vehicles, ever allow that? What about the behaviour of autorickshaw and taxi operators? When will they

learn not to surround tourists and try and force them into one vehicle or the other? When will there be functional and genuine metered vehicles so that the tourist as well as the general commuter knows that he or she is not being fleeced? What about public toilets and drinking water supply at tourist locations? What about buses that will stop at designated points and not at any place which takes their fancy? What about a Heritage Act to ensure that what is left of the city's heritage (built/natural) is preserved for tourists and future generations to see and admire? Surely all this is not asking for too much. But if these basic steps are not taken, the average tourist may be scared to set foot in this city.



Quizzin'  
with  
Ram'nan

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

1. Name the singer and former supermodel whom the French President Nicolas Sarkozy married recently.
2. Name the Nobel Laureate and President of East Timor who was shot and wounded in an attack in his home recently.
3. In which Asian city did the largest observation wheel in the world (30m higher than London Eye) start to turn recently?
4. In which Pacific island nation has the world's largest protected marine reserve, covering 410,500 sq. km, been created?
5. Name the famed explorer and world record holder who has been declared dead after he disappeared in early September 2007.
6. Name the kingpin of India's largest kidney racket who was arrested in Nepal recently.
7. Which date was dubbed 'Super-Duper Tuesday' in the context of the U.S. Presidential election race, when 24 States held nominating contests?
8. Name the Indian spiritual guru and founder of the Transcendental Meditation technique who passed away on February 5th.
9. Which country's Prime Minister recently apologised for the treatment of its indigenous people, especially its 'stolen generations'?
10. Which endangered marine animal was recently tracked to have swum from Indonesia to Oregon and back to Hawaii in an epic 13,000-mile search for food?  
\* \* \*
11. Who retained the title in the Velammal National 'A' chess championship in Chennai on February 15th?
12. Which Tamil film was officially exhibited at the prestigious Berlin International Film Festival recently?
13. Who played the lead role in Ellis R. Dungan's *Kalamegham*?
14. Which famous statue came up, thanks to donations from students from all over the State?
15. Which famous Chennai 'institution' was inaugurated on August 18, 1928 at the YMCA Hall on Esplanade?
16. Name the edifice built in 1797 which is the first garden house on the south bank of the Adyar.
17. Which party has only two seats in the present Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly?
18. Who was the Chief Minister of Madras when Mahatma Gandhi undertook the Dandi March?
19. Which temple town gets its name from the legend of an elephant worshipping Shiva with flowers and water brought in its trunk?
20. What was founded in 1917 by Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinarajadasa and Margaret Cousins at Adyar?

(Answers on page 7)

# A trio who helped to make fourth

Very few today are aware that there was another movie studio in Adyar. It was known as Karthikeya Studios and was on Greenway's Road in the late 1930s-early 1940s but, sadly, did not survive long. During its short life it changed hands and names too. It was located near Vasanth Vihar, in what is now known as *Bishop's Gardens*. Tamil cinema owes much to the trio of enterprising men, Muthuswami Iyer, A.K. Shekar, a brilliant art director, and K. Ramnoth, the forgotten genius of South Indian cinema, who promoted it. A wealthy Nagarathar Kasi Chettiar bankrolled the unit.

Muthuswami Iyer was a journalist, magazine editor, publisher, adman, studio-owner and film-maker. He directed many movies in Madras, Bombay and elsewhere. He, along with Ramnoth and Sekhar, made a brilliant creative team in the early decades of Tamil cinema.

Iyer, with limited finances, promoted an English movie and fine arts monthly magazine, *Sound and Shadow*. His art designer and layout man was none other than Appakonam Kula Sekhar. Not long after the magazine was in circulation, a diminutive, self-effacing, bespectacled young man, a B.A. degree-holder from Poojapura, Trivandrum, who was employed in Madras as an apprentice with the Kodak Company, knocked at the doors of Iyer's office with an article on photography. It was so brilliant that Iyer not only accepted it but also offered the surprised young man a job with *Sound and Shadow*, which he accepted at once! His name was K. Ramnoth.

The Muthuswami Iyer-Ramnoth-Sekhar trio worked round-the-clock to make the magazine interesting and viable, not an easy task in the early 1930s. A rich impresario, lover of fine arts, talent scout and lawyer of Mylapore. G.K. Seshagiri, backed the magazine. One morning in 1933, a letter from distant Kolhapur, a Princely State then, arrived in the magazine's office. The letter, which was to change the lives of the trio, and that of many others, was signed, 'V. Shantaram', Partner, Prabhat Films. Shantaram, one of the greatest film-makers of the country, sought the help of *Sound and Shadow* to make a

Tamil film using the sets and props of his Hindi film, *Sairandhri* (1933, India's first colour film). The film had not done well and the company was trying to cut its losses by launching *Seetha Kalayanam* (1933) in Tamil.

Seshagiri roped in Mylapore lawyer V. Sundaram Iyer, his children – S. Rajam, Jayalakshmi and seven-year-old prodigy, S. Balachandar – and members of an amateur drama troupe for the film. This was also Papanasam Sivan's first film as Music Director.

Some years later, the trio worked untiringly to promote Karthikeya Studios. It was a modest enterprise, lacking even the barest of technical equipment, such as a 35-mm movie camera. It was indeed a lucky break when the well-to-do auditor-turned-filmmaker, Bommireddi Narasimha Reddi, soon to create Telugu cinema history as B.N. Reddi, drove into the studio to meet the enterprising threesome. He had just incorporated his film production company Rohini Pictures in association with a pioneer in Indian films, H.M. Reddi. The two had planned their maiden movie and were looking for a studio. Even at the first meeting BN (as he was familiarly known) was more than impressed with Ramnoth and Sekhar. The meeting had far-reaching consequences not only in the lives of BN, Ramnoth and Sekhar but also in the history of South Indian cinema. BN hired the studio for Rs.16,000. With disarming honesty and transparency, Ramnoth told BN that he needed the money in advance! BN's admiration and regard for that creative genius rose and he at once paid the full amount.

Ramnoth took the next train to Bombay and, a week later, returned to Madras with a used Mitchell 35-mm movie camera, some lights, and a few other small items for the studio! And there was still enough money left to run the studio!

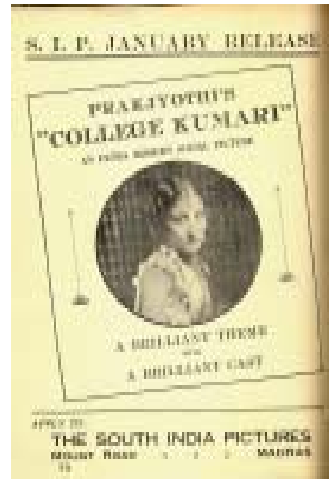
The Telugu film that was produced at Karthikeya Studios by Rohini Pictures was a classic of the 1930s – *Grihalakshmi* (1938). The film had the brilliant actress Pasupuleti Kannamba in the title role. The multi-faceted film personality, Chittoor V. Nagaiah, made his cinematic bow with a minor role in this movie.

In *Sundaramurthy Nayanar* (1938), also shot at the studio, Ramnoth created film history with a scene that stunned and thrilled moviegoers. In what was truly a miracle, a torrent of paddy fell over the parched, famine-stricken land! Audiences cheered wildly in movie houses and many burnt cam-

● by  
**RANDOR GUY**

phor as an offering to the gods! Ramnoth shot the scene with miniatures. It was the first time miniature photography was used in South Indian cinema.

Regretfully, Karthikeya Studios' success did not last long; the trio were essentially creative persons, not businessmen. They were also idealists – and idealism had no place in business management! Besides, with the success of *Grihalakshmi*, BN was eager to go it on his own and promoted

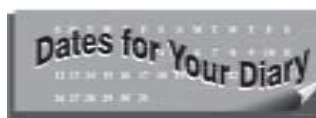


Poster from a film made at Prakjyothi Studio

Vauhini Pictures. He made a generous offer to Ramnoth and Sekhar to join him, which they could not refuse. Besides, they found that BN was also an idealist and in him they saw a kindred soul. Soon, the threesome, Reddi-Ramnoth-Sekhar, would create Telugu film history.

Muthuswami Iyer became a freelancer and directed a few films, like *Venuganam* (1941), with Carnatic musicians, N.C. Vasanthakokilam and V.V. Satagopan, in lead roles.

Later, another studio came up on the same site in Bishop's Gardens, named Pragjyothi Studio. Promoted by a Marathi film technician in Madras, it was active for some years and films like *Devakanya* (1943) were produced there. With the Japanese threat to Madras city in 1942-43 and the consequent evacuation of the city, film production virtually ground to a halt. Pragjyothi Studio also closed forever.



**March 7-9:** Urban Street Art: 4 Elements of Hip Hop produced by five hip hop artists from Germany who have united for this project to fight against racism and for peace with art forms such as rap and graffiti which are commonly known more as critical and aggressive. Yet these art forms are favoured by many

youngsters and so Phax Mulder, Flomega, Timm-OH, LastMove and Jo Henning have turned them into means to gather children and young people and show them common concerns and friendship (at the Max Muller Bhavan).

**Till March 10:** The Sheetal Gattani (at Gallery Sumukha).

**Till March 15:** The Definitive Reincarnate – photographs by Nandini Valli Muthiah (at Sakshi Gallery).

## STATE TOPS IN ROAD ACCIDENTS

(Continued from page 1)

The study attributes these figures to a combination of rash driving and negligence, combined with bad road conditions.

And yet, these figures are hardly surprising. A study in 2005 which was submitted to the Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project stated that road accidents cost the State exchequer Rs. 700 crore each year. In addition, it stated that the situation was only likely to worsen if the number of vehicles on the

roads was not controlled, in the event that road space cannot be increased. That study had pointed out that there were 7.7 road accidents for every 1,000 vehicles. There were six road accidents every hour in the State; one person died every hour. As for two-wheeler users, 2.2 persons died for every 10,000 motorised two-wheelers. The study also predicted that the number of road accidents would go up to 2.54 lakh by 2025 if the present trend was not reversed. It squarely blamed

the poor design of roads and intersections in particular.

What is worrying is that, despite such signals from the figures coming in loud and clear, there appear to be no steps taken to improve road safety. The number of vehicles on the road is said to be increasing at an annual rate of 15%. How can the roads handle this kind of load? And with the announcement of a slew of small and big car projects, it is anybody's guess as to what the future holds for us.

# Cops with a view

“The E4 Police Station is holding a meeting at Maharashtra Nivas at ‘about 7 pm’ on Saturday, 23rd February, 2008 to discuss security problems of apartment dwellers.”

The invitation arrived at each block. I wondered how many people would honour it. I reached the venue at ‘about 7 pm’ (loved the honesty!) warily. My driver had instructions to park around the corner and wait for a few minutes until I gave him the ‘all clear’ to go home. Not knowing what to expect, I swung in my imagination between an overcrowded jamboree at which nothing substantial would be achieved and a deserted hall with disinterested personnel going through the motions of a forced PR exercise.

Was I pleasantly surprised! Police personnel in crisp uni-

forms topped with friendly smiles greeted me at the gate and came forward to find a parking spot for my car. This set the mood for what was to follow.

At 7.10 pm, an officer rose to the microphone, and with-

● by  
**SUSHILA NATRAJ**

out any fanfare, apologised briefly for the delay in starting the meeting (!) due to his superior being held up at Anna Arivalayam. Then he began speaking to us about the purpose of the meeting. Security lapses have occurred in alarming numbers of late, he said. There have been a number of burglaries, some in broad daylight.

A leaflet listing points to be borne in mind to maintain

effective security was distributed. Each item was discussed briefly. The officer fielded questions patiently, and impressed us with his awareness of any problem discussed (he knew there was an instance of overnight parked vehicles at Vidyodaya colony, causing a nuisance to early morning walkers in the area!).

While this was going on, we were treated to a snack and coffee! You could see a significant loosening of the facial muscles of the audience as the evening wore on.

A register was passed around for us to put down our addresses. I look forward to some follow-up. I must say the ‘about 100’ residents who left the hall were a converted lot. How can you fault the policemen who go to such lengths!

(See box alongside.)

## Gubernatorial bungalow by the beach

(Continued from page 1)

Later there was talk of an elevated road from Beach Station to Adyar and beyond. Then came the Adyar Creek development program-

me where a ding-dong battle is in progress between environmentalists on one side and the Government, on the other. The former want the wetlands preserved in their entirety while

the latter wants only a part to be saved as a sample of what was once a unique estuarine area. The environmentalists feel that if only a part is to be saved it cannot be sustained and soon the area will be destroyed and later developed for real estate. In the midst of all this, the continued indifference of the Government to coast regulations is puzzling. How can a Government building come up in an area that is clearly out of bounds for permanent constructions? What kind of signal is the Government sending to the people? That it is perfectly all right to bend laws? Will it wake up only when it is too late?

## Answers to Quiz

1. Carla Bruni; 2. José Ramos-Horta; 3. Singapore; 4. Kiribati. It is called ‘The Phoenix Islands Protected Area’; 5. Steve Fossett; 6. Dr. Amit Kumar; 7. February 5th; 8. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; 9. Australia; 10. Leatherback turtle.

\* \* \*

11. G.M. Surya Shekhar Ganguly; 12. Paruthiveeran; 13. Nadaswaram maestro T.N. Rajaratnam Pillai; 14. Kannagi statue; 15. Music Academy; 16. Brodie’s Castle; 17. Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi; 18. Dr. P. Subbarayan; 19. Tiruvanaikkaval near Tiruchi; 20. The Women’s Indian Association.

## Domestic security – some tips from the Police

1. Inform your local police station before travelling out of station, giving them your address, the name of the head of the family and the days you plan to be away. The Police will ensure that your house is checked regularly.
2. While going out, please do not leave behind expensive jewellery or large amounts of cash. It is advisable that burglar alarms are installed at your residence.
3. There are many reports these days of the Airconditioning unit being removed and the intruder stepping in through the opening. Please ensure that grilles are provided so that the AC unit cannot be removed.
4. If you keep your windows open at night for ventilation, please ensure that ladies do not sleep near them. The jewellery they wear can be an easy target.
5. While answering the door-bell, please make sure you recognise the visitor before opening the door.
6. Please check the identity of personnel who call to attend to your gadgets. The same applies to courier delivery boys, employees of telephones and water supply departments.
7. If you have a dog, do not lock the animal in at night. Allow it to roam free within your compound.
8. Womenfolk who are alone at home must avoid entertaining those who come offering to polish gold jewellery. It is also advisable not to strike a conversation with unknown women callers.
9. Do not wear expensive jewellery while drawing *kolam*-s at your doorstep in the early hours of the morning or during evening hours.
10. In case you are in the habit of going for walks in the morning or in the evening, do not wear expensive jewellery; also, do not converse with strangers.
11. Two-wheelers ought to be secured with chains.
12. If possible, employ a watchman and ensure he remains awake.
13. Be wary of smartly dressed strangers who come claiming to be from the police department.
14. Be watchful of strangers following you when you return from outings.
15. When women venture out, it is best that they do not prominently display their jewellery.
16. Before employing any domestic help, verify the person’s antecedents.
17. While going shopping during festivals, protect your wallet and jewellery from pickpockets.
18. A common ploy used by rogues is to point to cash lying on the street, thereby diverting your attention. Beware of this trick.
19. Those who wish to help the police by assisting in the night watch can register their names with the local Police Station.
20. In case you see any suspicious persons or activity in your neighbourhood, alert the Police.
21. In case a crime occurs in your neighbourhood, inform the Police as soon as you come to know of it.
22. Do not alter, or tamper with, the scene of any crime until the arrival of the Police.

— Courtesy: E3 Police Station, Teynampet

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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 2007-08 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



# Maria Montessori in Madras

**M**aria Montessori (August 31, 1870 – May 6, 1952) was an Italian physician, educator, philosopher and humanitarian. She is best known for the world-famous Montessori method of education of children. It stresses the importance of adapting the child's learning environment to his or her developmental level, and of the role of physical activity in absorbing academic concepts and practical skills. Dr. Montessori opened her first school based on this method in 1907 in Rome.

Maria Montessori came to India in 1939, invited by Rukmini Devi and Dr. G.S. Arundale. On the death of Annie Besant in 1933, they launched the Besant Cultural Centre in Adyar. They invited Dr. Montessori to conduct a three-month training course for students from all over the country.

Dr. Montessori came to Madras, accompanied by son Mario. The Bombay-Madras journey by the Tata Mail plane, took six hours with stops en route. At the airport she was received by prominent citizens of Madras and students of the Besant Memorial School who formed a Guard of Honour. A reception was held at the Headquarters Hall of the Theosophical Society. A special thatched hut was built for her classes with a stone dais for her to speak from. The inauguration was attended by C. Rajagopalachari and S. Sathyamurthy.

Students from all over India and Ceylon enrolled. The course was residential, thereby



Dr. Maria Montessori with Mario, Dr. G.S. Arundale and Rukmini Devi.

allowing plenty of interaction with Dr. Montessori. She delivered lectures in Italian and her son served as translator.

The Second World War saw the internment of Dr. Montessori and her son in Kodaikanal as enemy aliens. Their movements were restricted to five mile radius from 'Rose Bank', the bungalow they were kept in. During this time, Dr. Montessori interacted with students and teachers and adapted her course to suit the Indian environment.

In 1945, the All India Montessori Congress was held. The Indian wing of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) was set up, manned by several prominent Indians. The method of education was hailed by stalwarts such as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Zakir Hussain. 'Kalki' Krishnamurthy wrote in praise of her and several industrial houses supported her work. Post release, Dr. Montessori travelled

in India extensively, training people at Ahmedabad, Srinagar and Poona. Schools opened all over the country as a consequence.

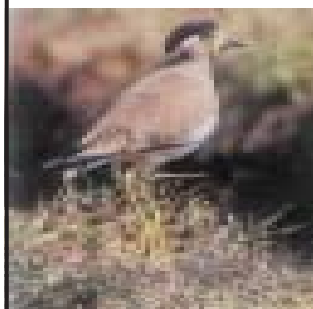
In 1946, *Education for a New World*, the second Indian book on the Montessori movement and the first to be published from Madras, was edited by Helen Wheel, the Principal of the Lady Sivaswami Iyer Girls School. This was dedicated to Dr. G.S. Arundale. It was the first publication of Kalakshetra Publications, run by C. Nachippan (now referred to as Koviloor Swami), a close associate of Rukmini Devi and an ardent supporter of the Montessori method.

Dr. Montessori returned to Europe in 1946, only to come back to Madras in 1947 to try and begin a Montessori University here. It did not materialise. She, however, visited Sri Lanka and Pakistan that year and trained people there. She said her final farewell to Madras and India in 1949. Several of her students carried on her work in India. The Kalakshetra Publications kept the books on the system in circulation, playing an important role in popularising the movement.

Commemorating the centenary of Montessori movement, Kalakshetra Publications has brought out a book, *Centenary of the Montessori Movement*, which has articles by Dr. Montessori and also writings on her work in India. It has some excellent photographs taken during her visits. It has also details of materials used in educating children.

Sriram V

## Bird Race experience



Terns gathered there on the electricity lines. Periodically, they would rise in a cloud and then come back to their original perch. Were they getting ready for migration? There were Waders and also plenty of pipits and Larks in the grasslands.

Nanmangalam yielded two fat baby Owls in the usual place in the quarry, Pied Crested Cuckoos and other birds.

In the Pallikaranai marshes, apart from the usual waterbirds like Egrets, Herons and Moorhens, we also saw a group of three Grey-headed Lapwings, Snipe, Rosy Pastors and also our namesake, the Marsh Harrier.

Altogether, it was a great experience! May the tribe of birders increase! — (Courtesy: Madras Naturalists' Society)

– Geetha Jaikumar

**O**ur sighting of the Peregrine Falcon on the SHAR road was an exhilarating experience. He sat quietly on the electricity pylon and allowed us a good glimpse of him. The sighting of the Blackcapped Kingfisher near the Information Centre at Pulicat was also very exciting.

Siruthavur is an excellent birding area. Apart from the Indian Coursers which are present in considerable numbers, we also found a huge flock of 100-plus Whiskered

## The Bird Race winners

**F**orty teams registered for the Bird Race and 35 teams completed it and submitted their log books at the end of the day. More than 170 species of birds were spotted in a wide variety of habitats that included wetlands, open scrubs, marshy areas, residential areas, estuary, and water bodies.

The team that spotted the highest number of species (120) was *Emerald Dove* led by Sudhakar Muthyala and including Praveen Govind Raj, Sandeep Appa Rao, and Sathya. *Cormorant* led by Dr. Badrinarayanan and with Dhurga S, Ekshika, and Usha Palat was second with a count of 97 species. The third highest count (90) was received from

*Lesser Kestrel* led by Dr. Rajaram, and including Jennifer, Vasumathy T, and Gopinath. The all-women's team led by Mrinalini Mani and including Gayathree Krishna, Divya Ramesh and Aparna Narayanan had a creditable tally of 85 species.

The 'Bird of the Day' was the Indian Courser spotted at Siruthavur, by the *Marsh Harrier* team led by Dr. Geetha Jaikumar and including Dr. Alaganandam, Vikram Kuruvilla and Dr. Arun Kumar.

There was also a team of special students from Vidya Sagar led by Dr. R. Bhanumathi. — (Courtesy: Madras Naturalists' Society.)

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