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Surat's example

Can we follow it in Chennai?

(By The Editor)

It was called 'the filthiest city in India'. It was so filthy that it was hit by plague in 1994! Today, an INTACH team which visited 80 cities, considers it "the cleanest city in the country!" No other city, the team's report says, "can boast of such spotless dirt-free areas at all hours".

Chennai is nowhere near as dirty as Surat used to be. Nevertheless, all who remember the Madras of the 30s and 40s and before, remember it as a city which was clean — even though, even then, it could have been cleaner. To clean it up today won't take half the effort it has taken to bring about a 'Clean Surat'. But it needs the commitment of the people, citizens who can say, like one housemaid in Surat, "I will not eat for three days, but I'll pay my municipal taxes. We don't want to go through again what happened two years ago."

What Surat has done has been achieved by City Commissioner S.R. Rao and his team. This is what they have done, according to one of many reports that have appeared in the Press in other parts of the country. This report, from *The Times of India*, records:

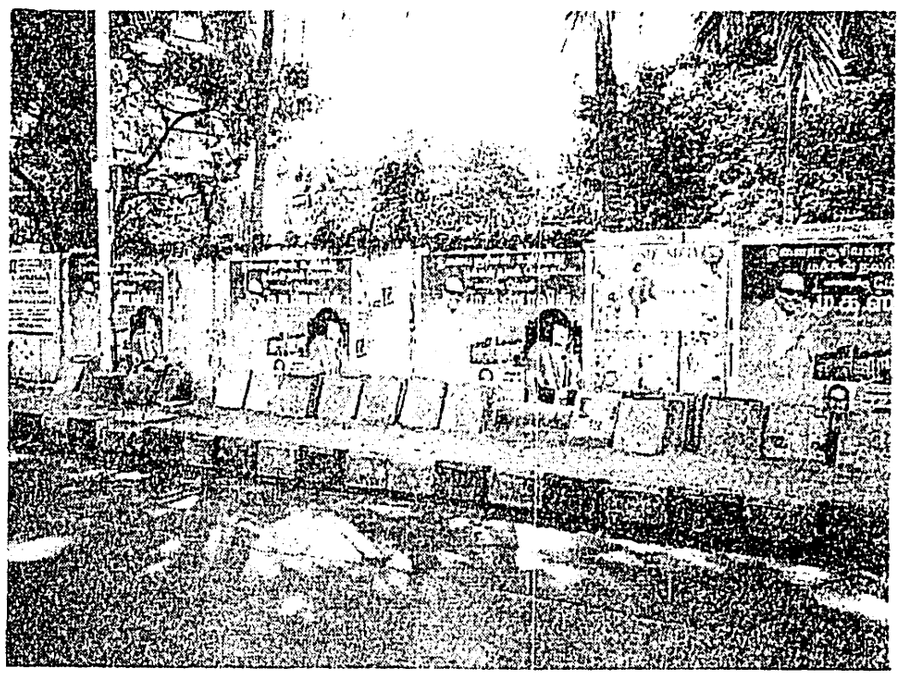
'Surat's transformation is amazing. Its obsession with cleanliness is to be seen to be believed. Streets and roads are swarming with sweepers cleaning every nook and corner round the clock. Vendors rush to remove any trace of dirt in front of their stalls, for penalties are swift and heavy.

"Usually, it is never less than Rs.50, but sometimes we charge up to Rs.500," says Commissioner Rao.

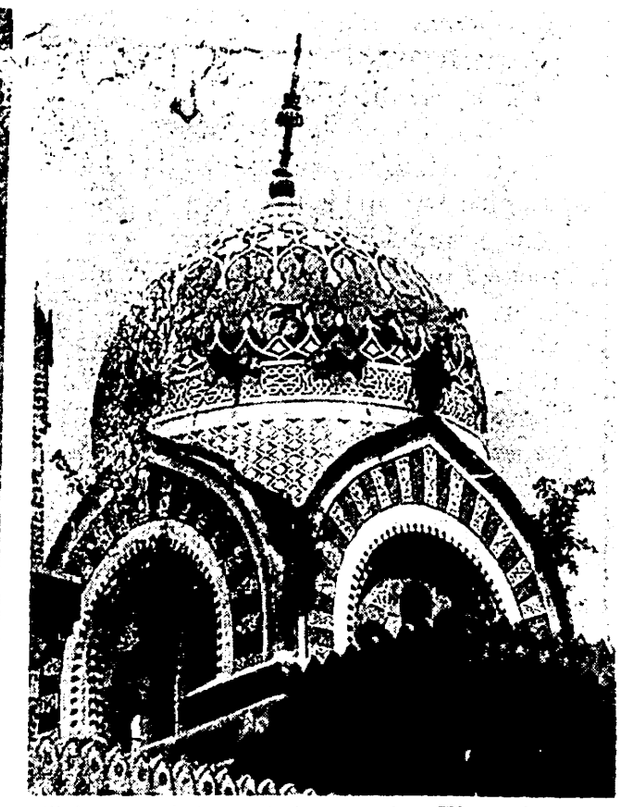
Industrial units have to shell out thousands and lakhs of rupees for pollution. "I fined a unit Rs.1.25 lakh recently for throwing dirty water on the main road. You have to either pay on the spot or shut shop," says Rao as he chalks out the day's plan for raids on eating joints. "We pick up about 40 samples a day from restaurants," he tells us.

Not surprisingly, Rao is the most feared and revered figure in the city. Rose petals and coins were showered on him by people the other day when he demolished illegal constructions on the city's main Raj Marg.

(Continued on Page 6)



A city in need of cleaning up. See pages 3 and 6.
(Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



Plants sprout again from the heights of Senate House, *a building still desperately in need of restoration. These pictures were taken during the fortnight November 1-15 by* V S RAGHAVAN *and* RAJIND N CHRISTY. (Also see page 4.)

Who will save *Senate House?*

Just look at the accompanying pictures of *Senate House* taken during the last fortnight! A building that was due to be saved from nature and restored to its once and former glory, by mid-1996 according to a Vice Chancellor whose predecessors had once sat in splendour here, is back to where it was when he drew up restoration plans for it in 1993. The brickwork has deteriorated further and the trees have begun to luxuriantly sprout again, a year or so after they were uprooted and the building readied for renovation.

Is this a sign of things to come? Or is there still hope for *Senate House*, Chisholm's masterpiece, which has been described as the finest example of Indo-Saracenic architecture in the country and a work of genius?

Let me jog memories a bit, in the hope that the answer ahead is not doom. It was in its August 16, 1993 issue that *Madras Musings* announced the formation of a Senate House Conservation Committee, chaired by Dr Malcolm Adiseshiah and with its technical advisor being Dr S Sivalingam, the first Vice-Chancellor of Anna University. Money was to be collected, from the colleges of Madras University, from its student body, from its alumni, from industrial houses, and from Government, to restore *Senate House* to its original handsomeness. The target was Rs.1-1.25 crore, of which Rs.80-100 lakh would be spent on restoration and what was left would be put into a maintenance fund. The University Grants Commission set the ball rolling with a grant of Rs.10 lakh.

Nearly two years later, in the *Madras Musings* issue of June 16, 1995, it was reported that over Rs 40 lakh had been collected and the rest of the money had been planned for. It was also stated that the building had been examined by the Structural Engineering Research Centre of the CSIR and that "restoration will begin thereafter (after the report is in), followed by chemical treatment of the building". The report added, "The work in its entirety, supervised by a team of the City's leading engineers and architects, is expected to be completed in a year, provided the funds become available".

A few months later, *The Man From Madras Musings* said that he had heard the structural report was in and it was favourable, that funds had reached Rs.60 lakh and that the rest was no problem.

What then is the problem? Why has the work not got underway? Worse, why has a building to be saved been allowed to deteriorate again? The University of Madras owes all those who have contributed to its 'Save *Senate House*' fund an explanation for the delay and an earnest of its intent to go ahead with its plans.

If, for any reason, the University is unable to work on saving *Senate House*, will it then let an industrial group, for instance the group which saved *Madras Musings* — and most of whose members are University of Madras alumni and alumnae — save *Senate House*? *Madras Musings* understands that several in this group, thinking in the long term of a Madras First initiative, might be willing to undertake such a project.

It has even been suggested by one member of this group that he'll raise the shortfall in the kitty and get the work implemented if the group is allowed a free hand to go ahead with the work and then monitor, together with the University, the maintenance and future use of the building. *Madras Musings* feels this is an offer the University should grab. *Madras Musings* will be glad to help with the negotiations in any way.

The ball is in your court, Mr Vice Chancellor.

The Editor

The Australian-Indian difference

When, as part of the recent Australian-Indian initiative seeking new horizons, three Australian authors indulged in a bit of chat around a round table in Madras recently, the most significant question asked them, *The Man From Madras Musings* thought, was Maria Couto's. She wondered why the Australians seemed happier, and more addicted to, 'pommy-bashing' than Indians, though Couto's gentility would never have permitted her to express the question in quite that way.

That was one question the otherwise splendidly articulate David Malouf seemed to stumble over and both Gillian Mears and Libby Hathorn seemed even more hesitant. They talked of the great change in Australian attitudes that came after the fall of Singapore and the Vietnam experience, the former leaving them feeling let down by the British and the latter bringing them closer to America and acquiring, in the process, some of their attitudes. But 'pommy bashing', surely, long precedes this era. And looking back, *MMM* thought it curious that no mention was made of Gallipoli, that sad World War I page in Australia's military history when the let-down in the Dardanelles was as great as the gallantry exhibited under fire and commemorated in ANZAC Day.

More pertinently, Malouf suggested that the unhappiness with the British lay in the fact that amongst the early convict settlers were large numbers of political prisoners sent out after rebellions in Ireland and Scotland. Of Scottish political prisoners, MMM has not been able to find any record, but certainly the Irish, both convicts and political prisoners, were not only British-hating but their strong ties with Catholicism only exacerbated their anti-Anglican-British feelings. When after the potato famine and other hard times, other Irish immigrants began to arrive, they brought with them the same values of the Irish convicts, according to Australian historian Manning Clark. And the Scottish Presbyterians were not too different, having forgotten neither the several rebellions of the 18th Century nor the differing views on religious matters.

Convict hate

What, however, strikes MMM as significant is that ALL the convict settlers, English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish, hated their early 'jailors', many of them upper-crust English and the lot of them to become the first elite of Australia and the beneficiaries of the labours of the convict-exiles. "By 1800," says Manning, "the officers were beginning to develop some of the features of an exclusive caste; they were haughty and arrogant to all outside their class, from whom they expected a doffing of the cap and other visible proofs of obsequiousness...". And in time, as the descendants of the oppressed began to grow, there grew a feeling among many of them that "since Australia was a convict colony whose wealth and civilisation had been created by convict labour, it therefore belonged to the convicts and their descendants..."

Add to this the strong Catholic and Presbyterian antagonism to the Anglicans, in the case of the former leading to at least one violent revolt, and it is seen why the Anglo-Saxon Protestant, the English Establishment, was little loved by the religious majority, "both bonded and free, who tended to remain on the bottom rungs of the social ladder." A world of isolation and self-development only hardened anti-English attitudes. And in later years, with many migrants being colonials, or those fleeing oppression, here was a mythic figure of oppression to continue to bash.

In Australia, free men fettered for the first time knew whom to hate. In India, with its long history of conquest by both internal and external forces, whom do you hate? Indeed, with such a history, making accommodations becomes a way of life. And by doing so, your own ways of life, centuries old, survive all incursions, absorb much from each of them, but continue in the age-old way, the disturbances along the way ignored or forgotten, it would seem to *MMM*. Indian tolerance does not appear to nurse the holding of grudges. Therein would seem to lie the Australian-Indian difference; maybe it explains why we take losing even in sport more lightly.

Boom & slump

Enjoying a hotel-building boom is Coimbatore. The Taj, Sterling Resorts, the Residency of the Appaswamy Group — determined to continue its Chennai reputation as the best business class hotel in the country — Jenny's Residency with its Tiruchi roots, and Poppy's Valley with Tiruppur links are all in various stages of development. With Coimbatore no tourist destination and its hinterland not developed for tourism, these hotels will all have to depend on the business traveller, *The Man From Madras Musings* would think. But is business growing in Coimbatore to warrant such development?

With the textile industry in recession, Coimbatore's sobriquet, 'The Manchester of the South', does not mean much any longer. Much of its other industries — textile machinery, motors, pumps etc — are not doing very much better. And it is not getting any major new investment comparable to Chennai. In these circumstances, will the hotel boom be able to sustain itself, *MMM* wonders.

As this infrastructure develops, perhaps it is time for Coimbatore to make a pitch to all the foreign industry majors setting up shop in Chennai to look at Coimbatore for their ancillaries. Perhaps it's time to point out to Government and these investors that some of the ancillary parks might be better sited in Coimbatore, with its advantages of climate, space (many a textile mill is up for grabs as real estate), skilled labour and engineering facilities. Locating these in Coimbatore, only a night away from Chennai, will not only decongest Chennai and relieve the pressure on it, but it will also help revive a city that is slowing down.

Book space

When Orient Longman's recently celebrated its publication of *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*, retold by Lakshmi Holmstorm and illustrated by A.V. Elango (his line illustrations are splendid in their boldness with a minimum of strokes), what struck *The Man From Madras Musings* most was the venue. Longman's old showroom on Mount Road and what it had rented out to the Indian Bank were now being readied for its newest 'Bookpoint'. And the renovation and decor promise to make this perhaps the most striking bookshop in the City when it opens around Pongal.

Meanwhile, 'Landmark' has not only spread itself more expansively, but in doubling its space has opened what might well be the biggest and best-equipped record shop in the country. With thousands of CDs and superb listening facilities in a splendid ambience, Landmark, which few thought would succeed, has set the pace for book superstores in the country. It has also shown that Chennai is, perhaps, the country's best book-buying centre.

Following Landmark's lead, smaller book 'superstores' are opening up in other parts of the City. 'Odyssey' has been well-established in Adyar this past year or so. And now 'Discover' has opened in T'Nagar, with the Jainson Group planning similar 'Discover' stores in other parts of Chennai if this succeeds. A nice well-lit store with a wide-range of popular titles, 'Discover' seems to be the answer to the need for a neighbourhood bookstore.

If these stores get around to piped music, soda-fountains and small fast-food cafes as adjuncts — as is happening in America — business might be even better, MMM feels. But what *MMM* regrets is that Chennai does not have a similar bookshop in a central location specialising in the complete range of books published by the Tamil publishers. There's no major bookstore in Chennai which has the whole range, though there's a small one in Mylapore run by a Gujarati who is a Tamil expert.

With discounts on Tamil books low, those in the book trade feel that setting up such a 'luxury', buyer-friendly facility might not be possible. But why don't the publishers themselves look at a cooperative approach, wonders MMM. Maybe Minister Thamizhkudimagan will help them in this more meaningful way of promoting Tamil than changing names.

In brief

★ When the VVIP flight of Sri Lankan Defence Minister General A. Ratwatte was held up in Chennai for over an hour while on his way to Tirupati, the newspapers said the delay was due to Customs, Immigration and Air Traffic Control formalities. The Customs promptly responded saying 'not us'. The Customs clarification stated the flight had landed at 8.40 a.m. and "the documents handed over to the commander of the aircraft at 9.45 a.m." Apparently the ATC then wanted the documents. Whatever be the ATC's role, *The Man From Madras Musings* wonders whether 65 minutes is considered a reasonable time to process the documents of a VVIP flight. If the Customs think so, they're living in a world of their own, a world where VIPs don't exist, leave alone VVIPs!

★ Bringing to an end speculation on his film future, after his foray into politics, Rajnikant, the megastar of the Tamil film world, has begun shooting again, *The Man From Madras Musings* learns. *Arunachalam*, his first film in nearly two years, is expected to be released on Tamil New Year's Day. Playing a role in it will be veteran comedienne Manorama, who had not exactly been kind to Rajnikant when she campaigned for his *bete noire*, the then Chief Minister, Jayalalitha. Rajnikant's gesture to her will only heighten his standing in the eyes of the public.

★ *The Man From Madras Musings* is pleased to note that K S Ramakrishnan, a former IAS officer and now founder-editor of several neighbourhood community newspapers, starting with *Anna Nagar Times*, has been appointed a member of eight committees appointed by Government to draw up master plans for the new district headquarters towns of Namakkal, Tiruvarur, Theni, Tiruvallur, Karur, Perambalur, Nagappatinam and Tiruvannamalai. Ramakrishnan has long held the view that district headquarter towns should be developed as modern cities capable of sustaining a population of up to 500,000 persons. Such urban centres, he has stated, would go a long way towards abolition of poverty through the planned resettlement of the rural poor in them. *MMM* hopes that, courtesy Ramakrishnan, they will all also have *Local Times*, following in the footsteps of *Pondicherry Times*.

★ Is Mani Ratnam's next film, *Aanandam*, to be based on the MGR story? And is Aiswarya Rai to play Jayalalitha in it? That's the word *The Man From Madras Musings* hears on the grapevine. But no one is quite sure whether it is to be a biography or a bit of fiction or a factionalisation.

★ The Rajiv Gandhi Memorial in Sriperumbudur will have a huge mural that will feature the former Prime Minister. And *The Man From Musings* hears it will reflect Sonia Gandhi's memory of her husband: "He was so handsome, he had such a beautiful face." The artist, *MMM* hears, will be instructed to make sure that he captures Rajiv Gandhi's good looks in granite. Mt. Rushmore, here we come.

Business briefs

★ *Asia Inc*, a business journal publishing from Hong Kong, has listed 36 Indian companies among the 88 fastest growing companies in Asia in 1995. *The Man From Madras Musings* was pleased to hear that NEPC-Micon (10th place) and Tamil Nadu Telecommunications were on the list. But the magazine also warns all the companies listed that they'll find it hard to sustain the pace: "Some are poorly managed. Others are too small to attract much-needed foreign capital and have tapped the capital markets more often than their sales growth will support. Moreover, as tariff walls fall, foreign competition will bite into their bottom lines." That's certainly advice to heed for small companies growing fast, *MMM* would agree.

★ Recent rumours had it that Futura Polymers, the Madras joint venture between Pepsi and Indian Organic Chemicals, was threatened by a proposed Pepsi pull-out. *The Man From Madras Musings* now hears that Pepsi's are staying put with the export-oriented plastic packaging manufacturing unit. After all, the Chennai plant helps Pepsi India meet the bulk of its export commitment, *MMM* is told; you can hardly afford to threaten that, whatever the fall in plastic packaging prices worldwide.

★ Several readers have been asking *Madras Musings* what has happened to one of its most popular columns, 'Bull's Eye'. The column, always received on time without ever a reminder in over five years, suddenly stopped coming one day, *The Man From Madras Musings* is told. And there's been no word since from the author or his stockbroking and investment offices — which all remain closed, to judge by the returned mail. *MMM* hears that business difficulties have led to the closure of the offices and the disappearance of their proprietor.

MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Our museum, our disgrace!

There was a time when visiting a museum, wherever you were, was a part of your education. Even now, in Western countries, emphasis is laid on it and children are taken around. The museums they are taken around are kept spruce clean and free of dust. That was the state of Madras Museum a long, long time ago.

I remember visiting the Madras Museum in the Thirties and Forties. Its wealth of art and sculpture — Buddhist, Hindu, Amaravati and Jain — and its gallery of paintings were splendidly preserved treasures.

Recently, I had to go to the Connemara Library and, after that, I wandered round the Museum precincts and the Museum Theatre where I had once upon a time seen a couple of plays. I must say I was appalled.

The utter neglect, unpolished teak doors, broken window panes, poor lighting, leaking roofs, cracked walls, broken tiles, termite attacks, water seeping on to the paintings, graffiti not only on walls but on precious paintings, unkempt surroundings....

The sculpture garden used to be such a delightful place to wander round. Now it is so overgrown with grass that I would not venture anywhere near it for fear of snakes.

The cannons of Tranquebar are no longer on their pedestals.

The Museum Theatre, one of the best in the country, is so badly maintained that every time it rains there is a pool of water inside the theatre.

I wondered how we could have ever allowed this to happen. I guess in the last fifty years our priorities have gone haywire.

Anyway, there is no point in dwelling on what might have been. Let's live in the present. Something must be done. Crores go into five-star hotels to promote tourism. Foreigners, responding to the promotion, come to see our ancient art and culture. Is this a museum to offer them a glimpse into our past glory?

The Madras Museum, the Museum Theatre, the Connemara Library... the whole complex needs to be renovated, preserving its architecture.

The world over, every effort is being made to preserve antiques and old masters. But we are talking about getting fibre-glass models of extinct animals made famous by *Jurassic Park*!

Announcement has been made in the Assembly by the Minister for Culture about allotment of funds for overhauling the Museum. Now that funds have been sanctioned, prompt action must be taken to release the funds and to execute the various plans, keeping in mind the proper priorities. First, let's attend to the paintings and exhibits which are in bad shape and only then get to installing gigantic models of extinct animals. Fibre-glass does not rot, it can wait. So can the multistoried building for the Commissioner of Museums **The Museum can't.**

In most countries, apart from the Government, philanthropists come forward to fund preservation of the past. I hope there will be some in our country who will come forward to lend a hand. We have centuries of priceless art and culture as our heritage which we should be proud of. Let's look after it.

Anna Varki
Kilpauk

Mayoral Musin's

Loudspeakers blared, auto processions hared,
Garish posters the city walls plastered,
All screamed with hierarchic anticipation,
"Come Stalin to power, in you we trust".

So ends two decades of anarchic chaos
In a metropolis deprived of choosing its own.
We've now at last an elected municipality
To bring to life a deteriorating city.

***Ripon Building*, scrubbed and cleaned,**
Ceremonial trappings, resurrected, gleamed.
Colonial trappings and black and red robes
Brought out to swear a Mayor with pomp and show.

The people's choice, lawfully elected,
Party and city exuberantly celebrated,
While drains stayed clogged, garbage piled up,
And the city stank after rains non-stop.

Mayor of Chennai, sit up and notice,
How much there's to be done
To transform this metropolitan town.
Put trappings aside, but not our trust.

Padmini Natarajan

Editor's Note: We have heard it said that FICCI has set up a Committee to look into Museum restoration and preservation and that Mallika Sarabhai has been deputed to study the Madras Museum. We hope this will be sooner than later.

A dream of chestnut curls...

A small pointed beard grows upon my chin, of the sort that is often described as a goatee or van Dyke. It is pure white, and were I to allow it unrestrained growth I would have no need of disguise to play Santa Claus come Christmas. Yet apart from a modest apology of a surrounding fringe, the top of my head is bald, and while I am not unduly sensitive about it (in fact, I rather enjoy the joke, to say nothing of the breeze), I consider this rather unfair, as most bald men do. Mind you, I make no attempt to conceal the condition, unlike those smug gentlemen who pathetically grow one side of the fringe as long as they can and then paste it down over the shiny top, a stratagem that deceives no one.

But where is the justice, I ask you, of my being bald while my two brothers, who are older than me, have fine heads of hair? When baldness is confined to the male gender, and ladies invariably excused? Why only on the top of the head where it is most needed and not on the face, where it is not? Why should every morning find even the modest fringe that much thinner than it was the day before, while the same desired organism sprouts vigorous ebony bristles out of and on top of the ears and even the nose, as if that wasn't conspicuous enough already?

Some months ago, I stood before the window of a hairdresser's shop in New York's Fifth Avenue and stared in envious wonder at the most gorgeous wig I ever saw. In New York, of course, gentleman's wigs are not called wigs: they are either toupées or, more recently and fashionably, hairpieces. Well, call them what you will, I wanted that hairpiece madly.

Whoever made it was a genius, inspired perhaps by Michelangelo's *David*, for there was that same mass of silky, chestnut curls, cascading wantonly over the noble, youthful brow, at the same time cunningly concealing any signs of artificial union with the living but unproductive scalp beneath. Yes, I thought, this was quite the most beautiful head of hair I had ever beheld, and for a mere few hundred dollars it would be mine. Gone would be that shiny white pate, gone would be that lighthouse effect that makes me stand out like a plucked barnyard fowl amidst a pride of peacocks in their prime. All that stood between me and the world's most devastating Michelangelo crest of tumbling, chestnut curls was a mere few hundred dollars.

All? What did I mean, all? On my meagre allowance, how was I to find a few hundred dollars just to appease vulgar vanity? And would I look good in a tumbling shock of chestnut curls anyway? I paused to consider. Tumbling curls, chestnut or otherwise, would suit a teenager, but then I was nearer to 70 than 17! A vision of returning home to Madras thus transformed stood vividly before me. At the airport, my friends would search for me in vain. The bearers at my Club, where I have been a member for nearly half a century, would question my identity. At only thirteen degrees above the Equator, the thing might prove damnably hot. And would it suit the little white goatee? The ebony sprouting ears?

In the reflection of the tall glass window, I studied my figure. Not what you'd call portly, mind, but hardly the tightly-muscled, broad-shouldered youthful frame that might acceptably be crowned with a shock of chestnut curls. More of the low-slung type, unkindly folk might think. To be perfectly honest, somewhat of a bottle-shape, familiar to my friends today.

Sadly, sobered, I turned away from that elegant Fifth Avenue arcade, leaving the tumbled chestnut curls still ownerless behind me. Since then, I've given the matter a lot of serious thought. I'm still not sure I made the right decision. After all, I could have worn it at home when there was no one about. In bed even. No need to have gone out with it on at all. In public.

Harry Miller

OUR READERS WRITE

Vanishing beach

The new government has rekindled the hopes of citizens of this state that their voice will once again be heard by the elected representatives of the people. May we hope for action on the beach south of the Ashtalakshmi Temple, which is being virtually destroyed by all kinds of illegal constructions, many of them, no doubt, approved in the past, in the manner of that Kodaikanal hotel. It is urgently necessary for the present government to take immediate action to stop these constructions, and give back to the residents of the area, and to the people of Chennai, their beautiful beach.

A multi-storeyed apartment complex is being built close to the Ashtalakshmi Temple in violation of The Environment Protection Act, 1986, which declares that "no new construction shall be permitted within 500 metres of the High Tide Zone." Residential buildings of the rich and privileged are taking over every inch of the beach south of the temple. The poor people who lived in unobtrusive huts on this beach have been driven out. Huge walls have been constructed completely blocking the view of the sea. There is no playground in the area; land set apart for this purpose is in the process of being swallowed up, just as land earmarked for a market has vanished. While developing Elliot's Beach, the entire beach south of the Ashtalakshmi Temple is being destroyed in violation of law and in total disregard of the sentiments of the residents of the area.

If the present government is serious about a better Chennai, it should act immediately to protect this beach from the encroachments of greed and private profit.

T. Sabbapathy
T.12/1 Coastal Road
Kalakshetra Colony,
Besant Nagar,
Chennai 600 090.

The fan menace

The present environment pollution in the city and suburbs due to the age-old 'Couvam' problem and other factors is well-known. But the ill-effects due to the continuous use of electric fans, especially in homes, in bedrooms in the night (even during cold and rainy seasons), is not known to the public, even the so-called educated

The use of fans is more during the night throughout the year, on the excuse of the mosquito nuisance, even when using mosquito coils.

This creates increased electricity consumption and problems for the Electricity Board while at the same time posing a health hazard to the public. Apart from blowing around the fumes of the coils, the breeze from the revolving fans affect persons, causing allergic reactions, particularly among small children, the sick and the elderly.

There is also an unconfirmed belief that the fan breeze, which seems refreshing and cooling, is actually not so. Perhaps it's time we all took a second look at fans.

S.P. Segaram
4/136 II Cross Street,
Rajeshwary Nagar, Porur,
Chennai 600 116.

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If you would like to be put on *Madras Musings'* mailing list, just fill in the form below (use block letters/type) and post it to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, MADRAS-600 006.

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Falling flat?

Or just stabilising?

Commercial property developers in Chennai are an unhappy lot these days. The hitherto lucrative field has turned out to be a minefield, with several projects stalled for want of takers.

According to Mohammed Riaz, heading the rental division of Connection Point, real estate agents, "there is around 1.5-1.75 lakh square feet of unsold built-up commercial space in Chennai alone"! Since 1992, estate prices in the city have risen severalfold. At an average construction cost of Rs.800/sq.ft the amount of money blocked is substantial.

Land prices which ruled at around Rs.20 lakh/ground (2400 sq.ft) in commercial areas like Parry's Corner, Mount Road and Gemini Circle went beyond Rs. 1 crore in early '96. In tune with this increase, land prices in residential areas too rose up to Rs.40 lakh/ground in prime areas like T'Nagar and Mylapore. Skyrocketing real estate prices in Bangalore and Mumbai, with the liberalisation of the economy, and the crash of the stock market had brought the speculators into play in Chennai too. With foreign majors eyeing Chennai as a favoured investment destination and stock market investors looking at new playing fields, speculation in real estate was inevitable.

The high cost of land has had its cascading effect on the cost of built-up area. Prices of Rs.4000-7000/sq.ft, however, have started driving away prospective buyers and tenants, who now see alternatives such as independent houses.

With property prices in Mumbai and Bangalore crashing, Chennai couldn't be far behind. Property developers, however, feel that unlike in Bangalore and Mumbai, the prices in Chennai are on a path of correction and, so, they are not greatly disturbed by the current trend. Says V Kalyanaraman, Vice President, Mangal Tirth Estate Ltd, promoters of Spencer's Plaza, "In Chennai, the demand has always been from the end-users, whereas, in the other two cities, it was from speculators. With business for end-users slow, the market is bound to be sluggish. When their business picks up, prices in Chennai will rise again." Meanwhile, some builders are quoting lower rates than what they had quoted some months ago in order to complete projects they had started.

Kalyanaraman, however, feels that several new entrants in the property development business will have to close down their operations either after completing their on-going project — probably their first and last one — or will have to dispose of it midway

Another reason for falling prices in Chennai is the crash of the finance companies. Many had invested in land and, facing a severe liquidity crunch, have made their land holdings available at low prices.

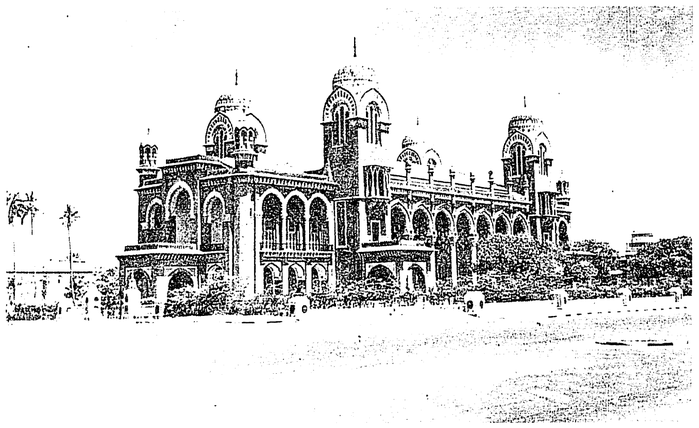
According to Kalyanaraman, "The days of a seller's market are over, as the incremental demand is just 1 lakh sq.ft./year, whereas the supply is about 5 lakh sq.ft. In future, the aesthetics of a building and other aspects, like centralised airconditioning, adequate parking space, communication facilities and other amenities will influence the buyer's decision."

World over, the return from property development ranges between 20 and 25 per cent. Anything above that is not sustainable in the long run. And our builders are beginning to discover that.

Another aspect of the business in Chennai causing concern is the failure of the shopping mall concept to catch on in a big way. Though there are malls like Alsa Mall, Prince's Plaza and Spencer's Plaza Phase I, where shopowners are doing well, this is not the case in many other malls and shopowners are beginning to question the concept.

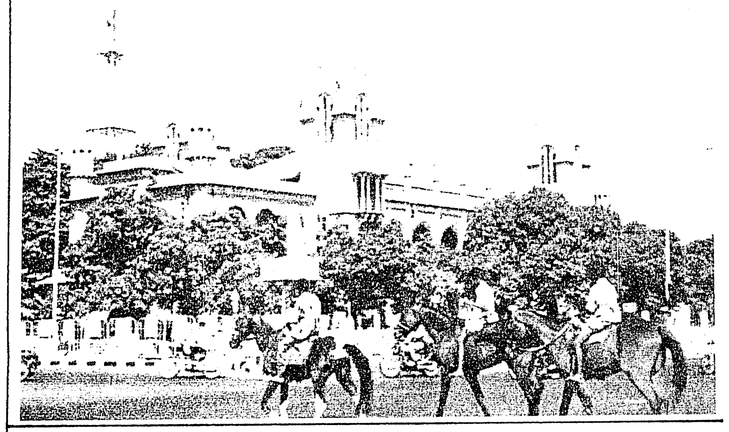
Developers of residential property, however, have not been affected too much by the price slide. While boom time for luxury apartments has ended, the demand for flats in the middle and lower segments is good. "The NRI market for high-end residential apartments — the Rs.2000-4000/sq.ft range — has saturated," says Kalyanaraman. But cheaper priced apartments are still in demand.

Venkatachari Jagannathan looks at THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE



THE OLD... ...& THE NEW

Our OLD and NEW show the University of Madras's Senate House *as it was in the late Thirties and as it is today. Once, it was kept spruce and well-maintained, even if the greenery was rather limited. Today, not only is the building in a dilapidated state but it is also well hidden from anyone who wants to view it in its entirety from Beach Road. The only good view is from Wallajah Road or from within the campus, from where all the damage to it is clearly seen and rather diminishes its beauty. Of note in the OLD is the absence of the Queen Victoria statue in front of the building, by Wallajah Road. Was that 1887 statue of the Queen located elsewhere and moved here or is it the angle of the photograph?* (The OLD is a picture we received from an anonymous source; the NEW is by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



For a pukka English, turn to India

by Simon Sebag Montefiore

The struggle between British English and American English to become the 'international language' was one of the most vicious cultural feuds of this century. We the British expected to lose. But an American newspaper, the *Washington Times*, has 'discovered' that British English, helped by our government-supported British Council, has probably won — thanks to Australian influence in the Far East. At last, a victory! Sound the church bells!

Actually our victory is worthless because nobody in Britain speaks King's English any more. 'British' English is itself one symptom: our language is called English, not British, not a medley of Scottish, Irish, Welsh. Nowadays even the BBC doyens are forced by PC management to speak an ugly bastard language, Estuary English, created neither by scholarship nor argot but by imbecilic radio DJs and PC book-burning teachers. Luckily, there is still one place left in the world where they speak real English: India.

This was the joy of the Imran Khan-Ian Botham court case: Imran speaks King's English with a Pakistani accent. Botham, through no fault of his own but because he was raised in post-War Britain, speaks bastard English. This isn't a question of class: dons and Etonians these days speak it, too. The last Cockneys, rhyming slang 'n' all, speak, incorporating London argot, better English than most Etonians.

In India, though maharajahs learn their English in boarding schools, tourists soon notice that the humblest locals speak a beautiful, noble English. The language of kings and Shakespeare is now proudly spoken only by millions of ordinary subcontinentals: that is just, since many English words, such as "mogul", "cup o' cha", "Blighty", are Indian.

When I penetrated closed, benighted Burma, beggars and workmen spoke elegant English. My favourite was the young man who bicycled me around Rangoon, singing Merrie England. He wished me goodbye thus: "You are from Golden Britain, sir. I tell my children about your merrie kingdom: my heart grieves for Golden Britain." Mine, too.

Even the perverted procurer offering girls up-country asked me: "Guv'nor, would it be impertinent if I were to take the liberty of offering you some virgins?"

"How do you know they are virgins?"

"I know, guv'nor. I've had them myself!"

In Chechnya, in the ruins of the Soviet empire, I was delighted when a rebel government official in Grozny said: "We await the voyage of an English king to rescue our beleaguered land: this is a legend, from Queen Victoria to today, like the burnished saga of King Arthur and his Round Table, handed down from father to son."

(Continued on Page 5).

Falling in love

by R.K. Narayan

Sighing over a pretty face and form seen on a balcony, or from across the street, or in a crowd, longing for love... I had to pass through a phase of impossible love-sickness. Perhaps the great quantity of fiction I read prepared my mind to fall in love with all and sundry — all one-sided, of course. Any girl who lifted her eyes and seemed to notice me became at once my sweetheart, till someone else took her place. Thus I had become devoted to a girl in a green sari with a pale oval face, passing down our street when we were living at Bojjanna Lines. She lived in the next street, the sister-in-law of an engineer... Sometimes I followed her quietly, like a slave, until she reached her gate and disappeared into her house without bestowing a single glance in my direction. I longed for some engineering business that might warrant a visit to her brother-in-law and then a gradual development of an aquaintance, the relationship maturing until I could freely propose to her...

I lost sight of this girl suddenly — but found another, a little farther off, standing on the terrace of her home drying her hair... a squat, lumpy girl, but I loved her none the less... I lost interest in her soon and bestowed it on another girl going to Maharani's College, who used to give me a smile and pass on. All this love for someone was necessarily one-sided and unspoken. But it made no difference. It gave me a feeling of enrichment and purpose. Among an inner circle of friends we always discussed girls and indulged in lewd jokes and enjoyed it all immensely.

The blind urge to love went to fantastic lengths — I even fell in love with a lady doctor who had come to attend on my mother because she spoke a few words to me whenever I greeted her; she was a British lady well past middle age, stout and married. But I saw great possibilities in her...

Love, especially one-sided, can know no bounds, physical, racial, of age, or distance. My most impossible infatuation was for a penfriend I had in England; we exchanged letters every week. She sent me her photograph and I sent her mine. I kept her photo in my breast pocket and hoped she did likewise with mine — five thousand miles away, even if I wished to reach her, it would mean a P&O voyage of four weeks...

Although she protested against the tone of my letters, she never stopped writing, and that seemed to me a hopeful sign. I continued to send her my unmitigated love in every letter, and treasured her cold, impersonal replies and the scent of her stationery for years — until I was married, when I threw them over the wall.

● In October 1996, India's best-known man of letters, R.K. NARAYAN, was 90. And he's still going strong. We continue the celebrations with a feature today and one more next fortnight.

After the false starts, the real thing occurred. In July 1993, I had gone to Coimbatore escorting my elder sister, and then stayed on in her house... One day, I saw a girl drawing water from the street-tap and immediately fell in love with her. Of course, I could not talk to her, I learned later that she had not even noticed me passing and repassing in front of her while she waited to fill the brass vessels. I craved to get a clear, fixed, mental impression on her features, but I was handicapped by the time factor, as she would be available for staring at only until her vessels filled, when she would carry them off, and not come out again until the next water-filling time. I could not really stand and stare; whatever impression I had of her would be through a sideglance while passing the tap. I suffered from a continually melting vision. The only thing I was certain of was that I loved her and I suffered the agonies of restraint imposed by the social conditions in which I lived...

The tall headmaster, her father, was a friend of the family and often dropped in for a chat with the elders at home. He was a book-lover and interested in literary matters, and we found many common subjects for talk. We got into the habit of meeting at his school after the school-hours and discussing the world, seated comfortably on a cool granite *pyol* in front of a little shrine of Ganesha in the school compound. One memorable evening, when the stars had come out, I interrupted some talk we were having on political matters to make a bold blunt announcement of my affection for his daughter. He was taken aback, but did not show it. In answer to my proposal, he just turned to the god in the shrine and shut his eyes in a prayer... What I had done was unheard of. But the headmaster was sporting enough not to shut me up immediately. Our families were known to each other, and the class, community, and caste requirements, were all right. He just said, "If God wills it," and left it at that. He also said, "Marriages are made in Heaven, and who are we to say, 'Yes' or 'No'." After this he explained the difficulties.

His wife and womenfolk at home were to be consulted, and my parents had to approve, and so on and so forth, and then the matching of horoscopes... He came down to a practical level one day, by asking me what I proposed to do for a living. Luckily for me, at about that time a small piece that I had written ('How to Write an Indian Novel', lampooning Western writers who visited India to gather material) had unexpectedly been accepted by *Punch* and brought me six guineas... I could draw a picture of my freelance writing for London papers and magazines and explain to him that when my novel was finished it would bring in income all my life and fifty years after. He listened to me with apparent interest, without contradicting me, but off and on suggested, "I'm sure, if your father used his influence, he could fix you in a government job at Bangalore"... I immediately explained my economic philosophy; how I spurned the idea of earning more than was needed, which would be twenty rupees a month or, with a wife, forty rupees...

This picture of the young Narayan, his wife Rajam and their daughter Hema is from the Penguin book R K Narayan: The Early Years, 1906-1945 *by Susan and N Ram. It is reproduced from the reproduction that appeared in a recent issue of the Sunday* Hindu.

What really mattered (however) was not my economic outlook, but my stars. My father-in-law, himself an adept at the study of horoscopes, had consultations with one or two other experts and came to the conclusion that my horoscope and the girl's were incompatible. My horoscope had the Seventh House occupied by Mars, the Seventh House being the one that indicated matrimonial aspects. The astrological texts plainly stated that Mars in the Seventh House indicated nothing but disaster unless the partner's horoscope also contained the same flaw, a case in which two wrongs make one right.

The next few weeks were a trying period for me. The headmaster would have none of me... I lost the taste for food and company, and lay sulking in a corner of my sister's house on a gloomy easy chair. My mood was noticed by others with sympathy...

The evil of my stars soon became a matter of discussion among the headmaster's astrological group. He sought me out and sent me here and there to meet his colleagues and talk it over with them and bring him their opinion and conclusions; finally he sent me along to meet an old man, living not far from us in the back of a coconut garden... He was said to be an expert. I went to his house and explained my mission. He snapped at me, "What do you, want me to do? Am I Brahma to change your stars?" He looked angry for some inexplicable reason. "Go and tell that headmaster one thing. I don't care whether his daughter gets married or not; I'll hold on to my views... If he listens to reason, he should go ahead and fix a date for the wedding, that's all. I see no harm in it. He hasn't noticed the Moon's position in his daughter's horoscope, which neutralises the Mars. But that man expects me to give him a guarantee that Mars will not harm his daughter's life. I can give no such guarantee..."

In spite of all these fluctuations and hurdles, my marriage came off in a few months...

(From 'My Days' in *Malgudi Landscapes*, Penguin India, 1992. Reproduced courtesy of the publisher.)

(To be concluded)

FOR PUKKA ENGLISH, TRY INDIA

(Continued from Page 4)

So the American-English feud is irrelevant. Snobbish pedants, grumbling at the ugliness of Americanisms such as 'elevator' instead of 'lift', miss the point: 'apartment' is no more ugly than 'flat'. American traditional vernacular is more colourful, poetical, vivid than our contemporary curse of television-bred Estuary English. What politician equals LBJ's lively imagery? "Better to have him inside the tent pissing out than outside pissing in." Or take an impeccably English phrase such as 'stiff upper lip': it is American in origin. The disaster with American lies not in how they spell 'honor', but in their use of words: its pompous, sententious sanctimony has created a new turgid and tumescent language that is Management or Business School American, peddled by baby-boomers such as Bill Clinton. To paraphrase Disraeli on Gladstone, this is verbosity without exuberance. Remember the hilarious interview given by Walter Annenberg, the American ambassador, in a programme about the Queen, when the charming but grandiose nabob (another Indianism) said he had moved house because of "elements of refurbishment" — at which the Queen was seen to giggle?

So if tainted English is now the international language, what's to celebrate? English will simply be spoken by more people with no feel for it.

The true solution is to send British schoolchildren to Rajasthan* every summer. To learn English. **(Courtesy:** *Sunday Times*, London)

***Editor's Note:** Or to Bellarmine and the British Council in Madras?

Quizzin' with Ramnan

[Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN's questions are from the period October 16 to 31. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Madras (that is Chennai).]

1. In which prominent case were a former State minister, S.D. Somasundaram, and 13 others acquitted on the grounds that the charges were not proved by the prosecution?

2. Which book has bagged the famed Booker Prize this year?

3. Which Indian corporate house's offices were raided and its top executives arrested for FERA violations of upto $100 million?

4. Which party's supremo attracted flak for his assault on journalists on October 25th?

5. What is the Indian entry for next year's Oscars?

6. What world record did Hassan Raza of Pakistan set on October 24th?

7. The seven sisters of Northeast India finally got a 'brother'. Which is the new State in the family?

8. Name the disease that threatened Delhi and its suburbs recently.

9. Who recently achieved the unique distinction of taking 300 wickets both in Tests and One-Day Internationals?

10. Which district (known for another first) was recently declared the first baby-friendly district in the country?

11. Who was honoured with 'The *Sportstar* Indian Sportsperson of the Year' award for 1995 at Chennai on October 20th?

12. Due to security reasons, which public building in New Delhi has been designated as the trial courts for cases involving the former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao?

13. Which Indian won the 'Best Actress' prize at the famed Chicago Film Festival recently and for which film?

14. Where in Tamil Nadu is a mega hydel power-generating project to be set up across the Kaveri?

15. Which country beat India to a seat in the UN Security Council recently?

* * *

16. In a pioneering effort, what major scourge are 20 colleges of Madras University planning to fight?

17. Name the high-profile former CMD of a leading nationalised bank who was arrested recently for irregularities in disbursement of loans.

18. According to a G.O., how is the Mayor of the Corporation of Madras to be addressed?

19. V. Kalyanam of Chennai has stirred up a controversy by his decision to auction some papers for an anticipated £1.25 million. What papers?

20. Ms. Jayachandra Vadhana is the new ...?

(Answers on p.8)

An Indian in Hollywood

by Randor Guy

Several Indians have made their mark — and wealth — in the United States as engineers, scientists, doctors, professors, dentists etc. But only a few have succeeded in the world of entertainment and the arts. Particular in the movies.

It is almost a near impossibility for an Indian to break into Hollywood and create a niche for himself in this exclusive arena. Many have tried, but few have succeeded. Perhaps the only Indian who has made a name as a successful filmmaker and has a following for his steady output is Jag Mundhra. When I visited the U.S. recently, it was to work with him.

Burly and bearded Jag Mohan Mundhra, of Rajasthani descent, was born in Nagpur and had his early education in Calcutta, where his father was a company executive. When his father moved to Bombay, Jag continued his education there and qualified for an IIT seat. He then made his way to the United States, where he obtained a Master's and a Doctorate. While at Michigan University, he worked in the office of a pork-manufacturing unit. A strict vegetarian since birth (he does not touch even eggs) he was shocked by the goings-on in the pork factory. He remembers how the factory workmen played throwball with the pigs' heads, with the blood still oozing from them. All this only made him more committed to vegetarianism.

After his Doctorate, Jag taught in colleges, but was becoming drawn more and more to the medium of cinema. He enrolled for a course in cinema at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He also read voraciously on movies and film theory. And he was on his way.

He took a Los Angeles cinema theatre on lease and exhibited Hindi movies. It proved a success and gave him close contacts in the Bombay filmworld.

Encouraged by these contacts, he entered Hindi cinema as a director and make three films, one of which was *Kamala*. This film, based on a true-life newspaper story about a woman sold as a commodity, created a sensation and was successfully screened at several film festivals. Shabana Azmi played Kamala.

Jag Mundhra, as his name appears in film credits, now turned to English films. He got a break in America making movies for television, including a series for Ashok Amritraj. Some of those films, like *Night Eyes* and *Tropical Heat*, proved to be money-spinners around the world. Released in theatres in India, they did well here too. *Tropical Heat*, a crime thriller, was written and directed by Jag with American artistes in the main roles. The film was shot in and around Mysore. A lengthy chase sequence, shot in the thick of a *jatra* festival procession, using a single camera, is breathtaking, a fine example of Jag's directorial talents and skills. The role of the tribal girl was played by an attractive stunner, Asha Shivkumar, a West Indian of South Indian origin. Asha is a successful model in LA and also acts in television films.

Jag is currently working on two projects, *Monsoon*, his own production, which he is right now shooting in Goa, and *Perfumed Garden*, a folktale written by me and produced by K.Ramesh.

SURAT'S EXAMPLE

(Continued from Page 1)

Surat has evolved a novel stick-and-spy method to promote cleanliness. People are fined if garbage is found in their neighbourhood. For fear of penalty, everybody in Surat seems to be spying on his neighbours these days to see that nobody throws dirt in the street. Scores of complaints pour into the office every day from these 'spies'

Then there is the card system to tackle the larger problems of electricity failure, water shortage, sewerage leakage and traffic bottlenecks. "People are given free cards. If they have any problem, they fill it up and drop it at our ward office. We sort out the problem within 24 hours. The card goes back to them only after the job is done," says Rao. Residents vouch for it.

Surat has no sore spots today. "There once lay heaps of dirt," says a woman pointing to a plush toilet in the Ved Road slum area. "All the 28 slums boast beautiful toilets. No one defecates in the open here now," beams Ashwin Mehta, the city's Deputy Commissioner. The long queues, for turn to use the toilet in the Chimney Tekra slum area, bear Mehta out.

With people becoming health-conscious, city doctors are reporting a big fall in their earnings. "Hospital occupancy is down by 60 per cent. Many doctors and nurses have simply gone out of business," says Dr.V.Ratan, director of Ashaktashram Hospital where the first 21 'plague' victims were admitted in 1994. "My revenue is down by 50 per cent as there are only few cases of water-borne diseases," adds Dr. Nirmal Choraria.

But Surat is paying through the nose for cleaniness. "**We are spending Rs. 1 crore daily on keeping the city clean,**" says Mehta. And Surat's new image is bringing problems too — an influx into the city. "We are growing at a rate of 14 per cent and that's going to be a big burden on us," says Mehta, "But we prepare with 'war games'!"

"Yes, we often declare an area crisis-hit. Without revealing the nature of the crisis, we flash an SOS to the police, fire-brigade, ambulances, publicity vans and major medical stores, and our epidemic control room monitors their response. Those found lax pay the price. Till now, 80 senior and junior officials have been axed," adds Mehta.'

If Surat can do it in less than two years, why can't we do it in a year, Mr. Mayor? Can we get started on a 'Clean Madras' campaign immediately, Your Worship? And as an intent of your earnestness, could you kindly have all those responsible clean the City's walls in the first place, then paint them to make the city look spick and span?

We are sure you will agree that 'Clean Madras' will do more for your stature and image than all the posters on our walls, Mr. Mayor. And after that, let's get down to outdoing Surat, shall we?

COOKING with Chandra

If you didn't know you could make crisp *pakodas* or spicy *thuvayal* with them, you haven't put these very edible leaves to good use. Try also the nutritious soup and the mouth-watering sidedish using cabbage.

CABBAGE SOUP

1½ cups chopped cabbage
1 onion, chopped fine
1 carrot, chopped fine
2 tbs butter
2 tbs cornflour
3 cups milk
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups water

Method

Heat butter and sauté onions. Add the chopped cabbage and carrot and stir gently for a few minutes.

Add the water and simmer for half an hour. Cool, liquidise and strain through soup-strainer.

Add the cornflour in one cup of cold milk and bring to a boil, slowly adding the remaining milk. Add the cabbage purée, pepper and salt and simmer for a couple of minutes.

Serve hot.

CABBAGE PAKODA

1 cup chopped cabbage
1 cup Bengal gram flour
1/4 cup rice flour
1/2 tsp sodabicarb
1 tbs ghee
3 or 4 green chillies, chopped fine
A small bunch coriander leaves, chopped fine
Salt to taste
Oil for deep frying

Method

Rub ghee and sodabicarb until frothy. Add gram flour, rice flour, salt, chopped cabbage, coriander leaves and green chillies. Add sufficient water to form a thick batter.

Heat oil, drop spoonful of the batter into the hot oil, fry till golden and crisp. Serve hot.

CABBAGE THUVAYAL

1 cup chopped cabbage
2 tbs grated coconut
1 tbs blackgram dhal
4 tbs Bengal gram dhal
2 red chillies
2 or 3 green chillies
1 small piece asafoetida
1 small bunch coriander leaves
Marble-sized tamarind
3 tbs oil
Salt to taste

Method

Heat 1½ tablespoons oil and fry the chopped cabbage for 4-5 minutes. Set aside.

Heat the remaining 1½ tablespoons oil and fry the blackgram dhal, Bengal gram dhal, red chillies, green chillies and asafoetida till the dhals turn golden.

Mix everything, adding grated coconut, coriander leaves, tamarind and salt.

Grind to a fine paste adding sufficient water.

Serve hot with rice and ghee.

CABBAGE SAGU

1/2 kg cabbage, chopped fine
1/2 cup shelled peas
100 g carrot, chopped fine
1 potato, peeled and chopped fine
3 onions, chopped fine
3 or 4 tbs fried cashewnuts for garnishing
2 tbs coriander leaves for garnishing
1/2 tsp turmeric powder
Salt to taste

Ground masala
2 tbs fried gram dhal
3 or 4 green chillies
1 tsp coriander seeds
1/2 cup grated coconut

For tempering
1 tbs ghee
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 red chilli, halved
1/2 tsp asafoetida powder
A few curry leaves

Method

Grind all the ingredients for the *masala* to a fine paste, adding a little water. Set aside.

Heat ghee and add all the ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds splutter, add the chopped onions and fry till golden. Add the chopped cabbage, peas, carrot, potato, turmeric powder, salt and two cups of water. Simmer till the vegetables are done.

Add the ground paste and simmer till well blended. Remove from heat.

Garnish with fried cashewnuts and coriander leaves. Serve hot with *pooris* and *parathas*.

Chandra Padmanabhan

An exasperated Gandhian

● by V.R. Devika

"I am a very violent man," says V. Kalyanam, who was secretary to the Apostle of Ahimsa, Mahatma Gandhi. Kalyanam, who is now in the news for having given for auction some private writings of Gandhi — to raise money for a temple in Hawaii — adds, "If I had a pistol, I would shoot the whole Government of India!" I laugh. But the man is serious. He also means everything he says to all those calling on him in his flat in Sriramnagar Colony, Alwarpet.

While I was waiting to talk to him, the phone kept ringing. He answered every call, but the line got cut in midconversation several times. I heard him loudly declare during one or two conversations, "My phone is being tapped, this conversation is being heard..." And the line would go dead.

In between calls, he would sit down to talk to me. At 75, he is full of life, enjoying talking about what's happening around him. He talks about the visit of the police to his house. "I am not a Sukhram. They cannot find anything in my home, but they'll always find me here."

Kalyanam's two daughters have been visiting him and enjoying the fun. Malini, the elder, is a bubbly young woman who resembles her father. She lives in Singapore. Nalini, the younger, looks remarkably like the woman in a garlanded photograph that has pride of place in the house. Kalyanam's wife passed away in 1988. She had a kidney problem and daughter Malini, at 14, became the youngest donor of a kidney in India.

While an official from Delhi. Hardev Sharma, who was there to negotiate with Kalyanam, shooed away journalists and stayed by Kalyanam's side from 11 a.m. to 9.30 p.m., Malini, who introduced me as a friend, spoke to me about her father, "He is a very difficult man to live with," Malini smiled. "He irritates the entire neighbourhood by getting up at 3.30 a.m. and watering the garden. A stickler for discipline and cleanliness, he tries to impose it on others and, failing miserably, gets very angry!"

The angry young(-looking) man joins us. "I refuse to pay for the maintenance of this building, as I am doing most of the maintenance. I clean the entire area, keep the garden, give them clean air. Still they demand Rs.700 a month for maintenance. They have to pay me actually. They pick flowers for their pujas, yet complain about my garden..." Malini ignores him and continues, "Father was born in 1992 in Simla. His father was in government service and was quite well off." Kalyanam was educated in Simla, then in Delhi in the 'Madrasi School' founded by his father.

After school, Kalyanam joined government service. He also studied law in the evenings. And with keen interest in social service at the time, he found time to go to a *basti* every day to teach children there. In 1941, he met Devadas Gandhi, then the editor of *The Hindustan Times*, who suggested he visit Sevagram. Kalyanam took leave from work to go there — and stayed on. He found he loved the life at Sevagram, despite the insipid, saltless diet, with gourd as the main vegetable and papaya the all-time fruit!

In 1942, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and kept in custody in the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. At Sevagram, Kalyanam was given the duty of sifting through the innumerable letters addressed to Gandhi and to send on the important ones to him.

Two years later, Kalyanam met Gandhi for the first time in the house of Shanthi Kumar Morarjee, the shipping tycoon, in Bombay. When Kalyanam mentioned that he was in Sevagram while Gandhi was in custody, Gandhi asked him if he would work for him. Kalyanam was earning a salary of Rs.275 a month at the time. Gandhi said he could not afford that much, but could pay around Rs.60. Kalyanam said he did not want even that. At that time, there was no hope that Independence would be granted soon. But Kalyanam was prepared to spend all his life with Gandhi, knowing that his family were not dependent on his earnings.

Then began a round of travel with Gandhi... Simla, Kashmir, Patna, Calcutta, Naokhali. Kalyanam's job was to fix interviews, take notes of everything Gandhi said in his conversation and in his prayer meetings, type the letters Gandhi wrote to others, and sift the letters received. Gandhi did not wear dentures and "had a funny way of talking, almost with a lisp," remembers Kalyanam. "I had to really strain my ears to understand him."

"I used to be amazed that Gandhi could get up at 3.30a.m. every day, without the help of an alarm clock. Now I know all old men do that," laughs Kalyanam, as he remembers those years. Everyone had to participate in those prayers. At 5 p.m. there was another prayer meeting. After the prayer, Gandhi would tell the gathering all that happened during the day. He would talk about the talks he had about freedom, the conversations with the British and the developments that were taking place.

V Kalyanam with his 'tapped' telephone, the garlanded portrait of his wife and a picture of the American swami in Hawaii whom he wants to help. (Picture by the author.)

"He was very transparent. He hid nothing," recalls Kalyanam.

If there was no development worth discussing, Gandhi would dwell on various topics like cleanliness. "He used to say that true independence would come only when cleaning toilets is delinked from caste. One way of removing untouchability is for everyone to become a *bhangi*. Citizens should personally clean their houses, streets and their town." And Kalyanam has never forgotten that message.

His neighbours do not like his fetish for cleaning the apartment block and the street. They are also upset with the number of visitors to the building after the story of the auction of the Gandhi papers broke.

Kalyanam had walked just a step behind Gandhi on his final walk to the prayer meeting at Birla Mandir on January 30, 1948. Gandhi turned back and asked him about the arrangements for the next day's travel to Sevagram. Kalyanam answered that all arrangements had been made, looked down at his notebook... and heard the shots.

In the grief-stricken days that followed, Lady Mountbatten asked him to work with her. He travelled with her on her work as the Chairman of the United Council for Relief and Welfare of Refugees. They helped stranded Hindu girls in Pakistan to cross to India and Muslim girls to Pakistan. They also negotiated with both governments on refugee relief. After the Mountbattens left India, he worked for just seven days with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. ("I left because I could not get along with M.O. Mathai, Nehru's secretary.") He then worked for Rajagopalachari until Rajaji's death and then with Jayaprakash Narayan.

He came to Madras in 1956 as the Regional Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. He gave up his job soon after and travelled all over Europe with Rajaji and others and wrote the occasional article for journals. "I am not a writer nor an intellectual like Pyarelal or Mahadev Desai and, hence, have not written a book like them. I am a doer and believer in living in the true Gandhian spirit." Kalyanam never took a salary for his work with anyone. "I found by experience that working for no salary was more profitable." When his wife was seriously ill, his friends in Europe sent him $10,000 for the medical expenses. Other friends met his other expenses. "Gandhi had no money. We were given boarding and lodging and travelled in our hosts' vehicles. We had no need for money. I laugh when people proclaim I should be a rich man when I tell them I was Gandhi's secretary."

After his wife died, he gave the housing site she owned to the Child's Trust Hospital. He has never kept a servant. He does his own washing and cooking and is quite fond of experimenting with recipes. His wife, he says, was an intellectual, unlike him, so he did most of the housework. She had worked for government and now he gets her pension. "I don't need more than Rs.500 a month."

He has been a magpie most of his life. A collection of old newspapers, dating from 1932, is neatly arranged in the living room for the benefit of the press now trooping into his house. There are also collections of stamps and coins, photographs and recipes. He meticulously maintains a diary. He notes down in it the prices of essentials wherever he goes. For instance, "In Mauritius ... *Jeera* price per 100 gm: in the duty free shops ..., outside ...". He is also fond of writing down quotations in it. His favourite quote is from Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan, whom he admires: "All committees are like a visit to the toilet. There is a long sitting and then the whole thing is dropped." Kalyanam feels someone like Seshan should become the Chief Executive of India, with the judiciary also under him. He has suffered with the courts taking twenty years to annul an auction sale he had done for a trust in T.Nagar. He had lived in that house and was told twenty years later that it was not a proper sale and so had to forego even his furniture and other goods worth Rs.5 lakh which were in the house.

"All this has made me very disillusioned, which is why I felt like giving away the Gandhi papers to people who know their value. I wanted no money from the sale. I only wanted it to go to a temple that will be clean unlike our temples in Tamil Nadu," he says.

Editor's Note: Since this interview, several unofficial and official activities, including court action, have led to the papers being withdrawn from the London auction. The indications are that the papers will now go to the Navajeevan Trust.

The 25th *Galleon*

(By A Staff Reporter)

The cover of the first issue of Galleon, *November 1994*

Galleon, an English short story magazine published monthly from Madras, releases its 25th issue this month. The magazine is the only one in India devoted to short stories in English. It owes its name to a famous literary magazine published in England, Argosy. Argosy, says Editor W.S. Raj Kumar, was a famous Spanish treasure-galleon — and, so, we came to Galleon.

Over 300 short stories have been published so far in the magazine. *Galleon* has introduced more than 100 new writers, ranging from a 12-year-old schoolgirl to retired senior officials in their 80s. Its stories, between 1000 and 5000 words each, are set against Indian backgrounds and deal with typically Indian characters facing situations which are uniquely Indian. A large number of women writers have explored the problems faced by women in India.

Apart from an average of 12 stories every month, *Galleon* has a 'fun section', which includes a quick quiz, riddles, jokes, 'Fun with a Calculator' and 'Get Your English Right'. We wish to provide clean entertainment for the entire family, says Raj Kumar, and get families "away from the T.V. invasion of homes and back to the pleasure of reading and improving their knowledge of English".

A *Galleon* (Rs.10 a copy) annual subscription is Rs.100, by Money Order or Demand Draft in favour of 'Galleon' and sent to 97 Seventh Street, Secretariat Colony, Kilpauk, Madras 600 010.

Corrigendum

● Re. my article in last fortnight's *Musings*, Tim Murari's family donated land to Loyola College. But it was not for a library. The library in question was in the Murari family home.

V.R.D.

Whither our stadia?

Many months have passed since the SAARC Games concluded. Numerous stadia were built to accommodate the games. But are these facilities being used?

Let us say a city college has completed 50 or 75 years of existence. As part of the Jubilee celebrations, the college wants to organise an inter-collegiate tournament in some sport or the other. A representative from the college approaches the concerned authority for permission to use a stadium. He will likely get the following response. 'These facilites are only for major international tournaments. We cannot allow them to be used for an inter-collegiate tournament.'

How many times has the Nehru Stadium been used since it was upgraded into a football and athletics stadium? Hardly a few times. And the Nehru Stadium was upgraded a few years ago. We can be certain the same fate will await all the other stadia, many of which were built to cater to a specific sport — hockey, tennis, swimming, etc. Are we to understand that the various stadia built at great expense, using our money, are meant only for international and national games? Are these facilities out of bounds for the City's sportsmen and sportswomen? Is there any reason why the stadia should not be used for local and intra-state tournaments?

Paradoxically, if a stadium is used, it becomes easier to maintain. On the contrary, if a stadium is kept under lock and key, it will soon fall into a state of neglect and disrepair.

The interest of sports can be served best by handing over the various stadia to the respective sports associations — giving the tennis stadium at Lake Area, Nungambakkam, to the Tennis Association, etc. And there is only one way this can be achieved. The State Government must sell the various stadia to the respective sports associations for a nominal sum of one rupee. The general-purpose or multi-use stadium may be handed over to an apex association (discussed below). This will then truly be the government's magnificent, magnanimous and munificent contribution towards sport.

But a few preliminaries are in order. First, the various sports associations in the city must combine and form an apex organisation. This will be an association of associations. (The cricket association should not don the mantle of big brother!) The apex association must draw up a constitution, define its objects, frame rules and regulations.

To avoid politics and politicking, the various positions — president, secretary, treasurer, etc. — should go by rotation to the various sports associations. This apex organisation must then make a strong representation to the Government.

Secondly, side by side, the leading sportspersons of the city, past and present, must get together and seek a meeting with the Chief Minister. This will be a good opportunity for them to explain to the State Government the various problems they face and how best sport can be developed in the State. Perhaps it is just a case of having to convince the Government. Hopefully, the new government, which has shown signs of being responsive, will respond favourably.

Finally, if all else fails, a group of concerned citizens (since the sports associations may not wish to antagonise the Government) may file a public interest litigation in court, to generate publicity if nothing else.

(Signature not legible)
122 Wallajah Road
Madras 600 002.

The Krishnan way to stardom

(By A Staff Reporter)

The Krishnan Tennis Centre, started in February 1995, recently held the Under-14 National Championships. And everyone was struck by the splendid facilities available at Kandanchavadi, on the Old Mahabalipuram Road, 3 km from MGR Film City in Chennai.

As a training centre, the KTC attracts tennis enthusiasts from not only Madras and the South but also overseas. Of the Centre's 35 trainees, about three-quarters are from Madras, the rest being from the other southern states and West Asia. Spread over nearly 2 acres, the Centre has floodlights for five of its courts. It has eight courts of clay and two synthetic ones, the latter being looked after by the company which laid the synthetic covers for the Atlanta Olympics.

The Centre has evolved fast because every court is sponsored by a company — big names like Coca Cola, Adidas, Indian Oil, Complan and SAIL, among others. Institutions are also sponsoring trainees. The Indian Bank has sponsored seven trainees till now.

A hi-tech gymnasium, a fifty-bed dorm, with facilities like a canteen, and a press room, will soon be a part of the premises. Training hours are 6.30a.m.-9a.m. and 8p.m.-6.30p.m., with Monday a holiday. Fees are Rs.5000 a month.

Will it produce any Krishnans, Amrithrajs and Paeses? Only time — and dedication — will tell.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. The assault on lawyer Vijayan; 2. Graham Swift's *Last Orders*; 3. ITC Limited; 4. Kanshi Ram of the BSP; 5. Shankar's *Indian*; 6. The youngest debutant in Test cricket (subsequently under question); 7. Sikkim; 8. Dengue Fever; 9. Wasim Akram; 10. Ernakulam; 11. Viswanathan Anand; 12. *Vigyan Bhavan* annexe; 13. Shabana Azmi for her role in *Fire*; 14. Hogennakal; 15. Japan.

* * *

16. The AIDS threat, a project unique among the 180 universities in the subcontinent; 17. M. Gopalakrishnan of Indian Bank; 18. *Vannakkathirkuriya* (Worshipful); 19. Drafts of letters written by Mahatma Gandhi; 20. Deputy Mayor of Madras.

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