

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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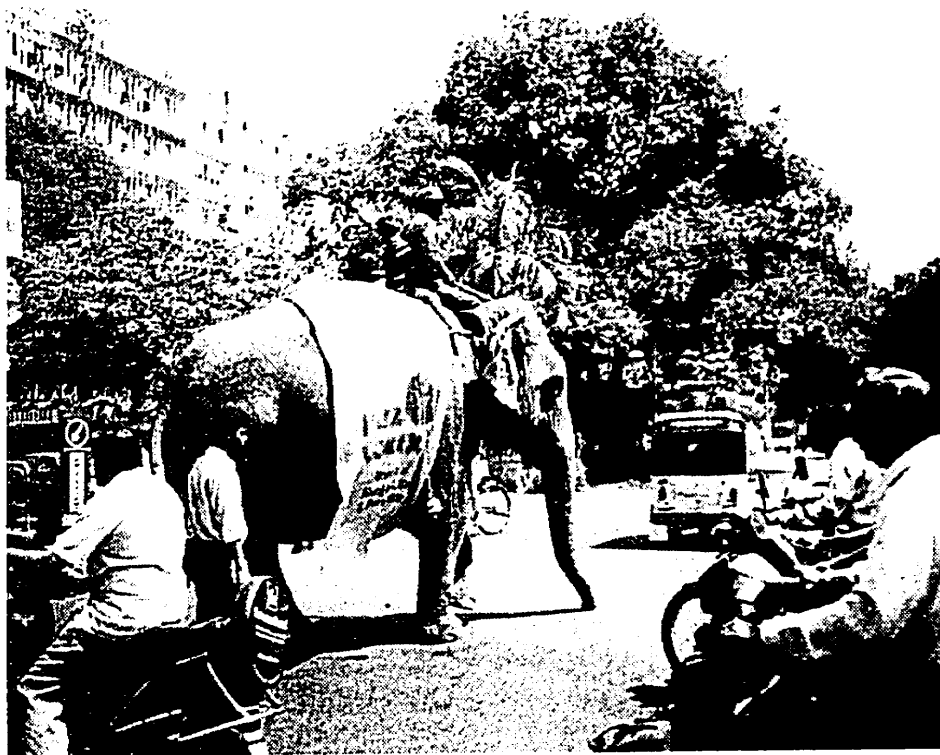
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FREE ISSUE

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On top, Stop... Give... and Proceed. And below, the medium is the problem.



## Elephant Walk!

*A worsening situation*

(By A Special Correspondent)

Elephant Walk. It was the name of a bestseller and the film they made of it many years ago. Those who remember that story set in the tea country in Ceylon will no doubt remember how elephants can turn. Closer home, but several decades earlier, Subramania Bharathiyar discovered that the Triplicane temple elephant could easily become an irritated animal. Bharathiyar did not die because of the fall he suffered when the animal brushed him aside, but that irritated push undoubtedly had an effect on his subsequent health.

Indeed, the harmless elephant can, for little understood reasons, suddenly turn aggressive. And, at such times, even its favourite mahout is of little help — often falling victim to his charge's anger. Elephants, it would therefore seem, should best be kept off the roads, especially the City's roads where causes for provocation proliferate.

This warning is sounded — and a call made to the Police to take action against mahouts walking elephants on our roads — as a result of RAJIND N CHRISTY'S photographs published on this page.

Alongside is an elephant used for advertising purposes.

Pretty harmless he looks. But his entire promotional tour in the Nungambakkam area was done while walking in the middle of the road. Traffic constantly had to take sharp turns to avoid the animal. That there was no accident that morning in the area is obviously because someone up there liked those out on the Chennai roads that morning.

Fraught with even more serious consequences is an almost daily occurrence in several parts of central Chennai for some months now. The scene is shown in the pictures at the top of this page. In this rather regular instance, the elephant is 'parked' on the side of the road and when a solitary car comes along the mahout guides his charge into the vehicle's way, to bring the car to a halt. The elephant is then ordered to thrust its trunk through an open window and does not withdraw it till money is paid. If the windows are shut, the elephant does not move out of the way till a window is opened and alms are paid. When someone is going to get injured or killed by an unruly elephant is anyone's guess.

This kind of highway robbery has been spotted on

## Mahouts wanted! For elephants in the UK

(By A Staff Reporter)

Indian and other Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in zoos in England are proving to be quite a handful for their British handlers, it is reported. This has led to the British Federation of Zoos sending an SOS to India for help, says a report.

A request for 10 mahouts has been received by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) in Delhi, it is stated. The member-secretary of the CZA, S C Sharma, has written to all States which have elephants asking them to depute mahouts to train keepers

Haddow's Road and roads off it, as well as in the Teynampet—T'Nagar areas. Whether it is the same elephant and mahout in all instances is not known. Misguided actions are a threat to the citizen that needs to be put down with a firm hand.

in British zoos on the handling of Asian elephants.

Indian zoos and State forest departments have a good record in handling elephants and the relationship between Indian mahouts and their charges is almost legendary. Tamil Nadu has a particularly good record, especially at the Mudumalai training camp of the Forest and Wild Life Departments.

The CZA member-secretary said if the mahouts are sent to British zoos, they too could benefit from learning about modern techniques, especially about hygiene and animal health. "These will be the benefits which we hope to get in return," Sharma said.

Sharma said that the States were yet to respond. *Madras Musings* looks forward to Tamil Nadu responding positively.

## The Surat Way

Surat is a good example of what voluntary action and strong political will can accomplish.

"I attribute our success to the people of Surat, the 15,000 employees of the SMC and the Press," says S.R. Rao, Commissioner, Surat Municipal Corporation.

The following steps, according to Rao, paved the way for the city's transformation:

- \* A round-the-clock cleanliness drive
- \* A central control room set up to raise false alarms and test the response of the police, fire brigade, hospitals and other civic bodies
- \* Over 70 municipal corporation employees axed for dereliction of duty
- \* Daily raids on hotels, eateries and roadside dhabas to check adherence to hygienic conditions
- \* Imposition of hefty fines on polluting units and those throwing rubbish on the streets
- \* Demolitions of encroachments to widen roads and streets
- \* Total recovery of property tax to meet the SMC's daily expenses of Rs 1 crore
- \* Redressal of all complaints within 24 hours
- \* More than 50 "pay-and-use" toilets in slums
- \* All slums supplied with free water, drainage and lighting
- \* Planting of over 400,000 saplings by NGOs and residents

Nayeem Rafat Quadri in the *Sunday Times*, June '97

**Editor's Note:** When can we expect the Chennai Municipal Corporation to start taking these steps?



# Celebrating Independence

India celebrates its 50th anniversary of Independence on August 15, 1997. But *The Man From Madras Musings* has long listened to the argument whether the year-long celebrations should begin from then or should have begun from August 15, 1996 when the 50th year of Independence began. Britain and several other countries have been paying attention to the anniversary for several months now, focussing on the 50th year of Independence, but the Government of India does not appear to have thought very much beyond the 50th birthday and the States don't appear to have thought even of that, preoccupied as they are with their internal political bickering.

But now, with just a month to go for a birthday for which no bash is planned, several individuals and institutions are waking up to the feeling that they must do something for posterity, MMM finds. They're looking at all the media's different forms to convey their messages, but the one thing they have in common is that whatever is to be done has to be done in a rush. Whereas such celebratory celebrations take months and even years in other countries, we appear to be convinced, MMM is discovering, that such exercises can be planned and executed in weeks or even days. And we'll do it too, at least to be a part of the 51st year of Independence. But how many of those efforts will leave a mark that posterity will recognise, MMM wonders.

We shouldn't, however, let such a lapse worry us, MMM is inclined to think. After all, Salman Rushdie took a couple of years to discover that the only good writing in India in the last fifty years has been English with the exception of one translated piece from the Urdu. Reading translations from all the languages, he could not find any other language to include in the tome he's offering for the celebratory year. Would any of the State governments like to prove him wrong, wonders MMM. The chances are no one would, but Rushdie does run the risk of having his contribution blackwashed in a State or two, given current practices!

**Traffic control**  
A junction that is getting worse every day, *The Man From Madras Musings* finds, is the Mandaveli junction near the Mandaveli bus terminus and St. John's School. With the buses trying to make tricky turns into and out of one of the narrowest junctions in Chennai, this junction is chaos of an evening — and the occasional policeman hasn't a chance.

The other evening, after a particularly heavy shower, the junction, partly flooded, was worse than usual. Traffic was piled up on all four roads for a couple of hundred yards and more. And there wasn't a policeman in sight.

But warming MMM's heart was the sight of half a dozen young men who materialised out of the chaos and, in a drizzle, made a valiant attempt at bringing order out of chaos. They succeeded to a degree, but marring all their efforts were those, in order of sneakiness, autos, scooters, and the occasional car, the two latter categories generally being driven by those who should know better. No, it wasn't the bus drivers who were contributing to the chaos here; they seemed far more willing to listen to the good samaritans, MMM noticed.

## Free from worry

*The Man From Madras Musings* offers his congratulations to Manjula Padmanabhan for winning the \$250,000 (nearly a crore) Alexander Onassis Public Benefit prize for plays which "deal with the problems facing Man on the threshold of the 21st Century". This illustrator, art-

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

ist, cartoonist, writer and columnist is the sister of the well-known Chennai writer and critic Geetha Doctor. Manjula, who now lives in Delhi, is due in Madras shortly — and MMM looks forward to the Madras Book Club putting her centre-stage here, something the Press hasn't done at the time of writing.

Manjula's recent collection of short stories, *Hot Death Cold Soup*, has been doing well, but she wasn't too confident about her play, *Harvest*, after four other plays written by her had not made a mark. Nevertheless she sent it in for the competition, but kept it a secret. Winning the prize, however, couldn't be kept a secret. "It frees me to continue working without worrying — I needn't go against my ideological standards and produce work just anyhow," she told an interviewer recently. She also told him how, from the age of 21, she had waged a struggle "to balance out what I want to do with what I must do".

In this instance, what she had to do, the winner in the "survival-of-the-fittest battle" she allows her ideas to wage before every creative effort, was a play about the Third World poor who sell their body organs to rich buyers from the West. It is a play, she feels, that will be difficult to produce and will prove "not instantly appealing". Give it to Mithran Devanesan and let's see what he makes of it, suggests MMM.

## Bhel Puri

And speaking of Mithran Devanesan, he, *The Man From*

*Madras Musings* knows, is constantly on the prowl for alternate theatre spaces. And his latest was the late George Deligianis's penthouse (EDITOR'S NOTE: Also see page 7).

There, against the backdrop of a huge bowl of Bhel Puri made by wife Nanda and placed on a table on the terrace, Mithran staged his own Bhel Puri. Commenting on the setting for the evening Anuradha Ananth told MMM:

"On plump, colourful cushions, which formed a veritable carpet on the floor, sprawled some, others sat decorously on chairs, while some stood, but all spoke. A vivacious, colourful group it was that decorated and enlivened George's home on that evening. A home vibrant with George's invisible presence and fond memories.

Then at the end of the three-part narration there was a bee-line to the terrace where the Nanda's Bhel Puri was dished out to the accompaniment of Pepsi and Mirinda."

And so, the Madras Theatre Club, our Western *sabha*, continues to grow, offering something new every month. May it keep the light of English theatre flickering in the City, MMM wishes.

## Bangalore murder

Timeri Murari of Chennai, who recently fictionalised his childhood and who then scored abroad with his film story *Daarya* (The Square Circle), is now working on another film, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears. And this time it will be based on a murder in Bangalore when he was a child.

Murari was a student at Bishop Cotton's School in the Fifties when the headmistress of Bishop Cotton's other school, the one for girls, was stabbed to death. Murari has changed the murder a bit for his \$2 million production, *The Silk Estate*, shooting for which is to begin in India (Bangalore or Chennai?) shortly.

In the film that Tim is planning, Max Silk, a racist British policeman, flies out to India when his mother dies after being pushed from a balcony. In India, Silk discovers that he is half-Indian and "has to come to terms with his own racism", Murari told an interviewer recently.

Murder as social comment, Tim? Perhaps Indian distributors — and audiences — will appreciate it better than social comment alone, MMM is inclined to think. Sad that *Daarya*, which has been playing in the U.K. and U.S., was not given a chance in India. It certainly deserved better.

## In brief

★ *The Man From Madras Musings* hears that among the 17 most used domestic airports in the country, customer satisfaction with Coimbatore is next only to the Calcutta and new Mumbai airports. Calcutta is rated at a 69 per cent satisfaction level and Bombay at 62 per cent. Coimbatore's is 58 per cent and Madras just trails, by less than a point. Coimbatore, without central airconditioning, retiring rooms, aerobridges etc., scores on the sheer quality of its service.

★ What a name for a fast food — or any other kind of — restaurant! And certainly it is not one *The Man From Madras Musings* has ever heard of before. But apparently we are going to hear a lot of it in the not so very distant future. Thank God It's Friday, an up-market chain of fast-food cafes, belonging to the Carlson Hospitality Group — who also own the Radisson Hotel chain — opened

in Delhi and is planning, within a few months, to open in Chennai, Bangalore and Mumbai. TGIF plans five or six outlets in Chennai and each of the other metros over the next couple of years. Its USP is waiter service teamed with casual dining. In India, MMM hopes that doesn't become dining with casual waiters on Fridays or any other day!

## Business briefs

★ McKinsey's are the new gurus of Indian business. That internationally renowned company is being taken as the last word on the Indian market, it would seem to *The Man From Madras Musings*, judging from the headlines its pronouncements make. The latest MMM has come across states that "Indian taste-buds are changing" — according to McKinsey. Pointing out that cereal consumption has dropped 13 points in urban India, while protein consumption increased by 5 points, the McKinsey report sees this trend continuing, with, by the year 2005, 3 1/2 crore homes supplementing the basic meal with "dietary enhancers

MMM

## Want to muse with MUSINGS?

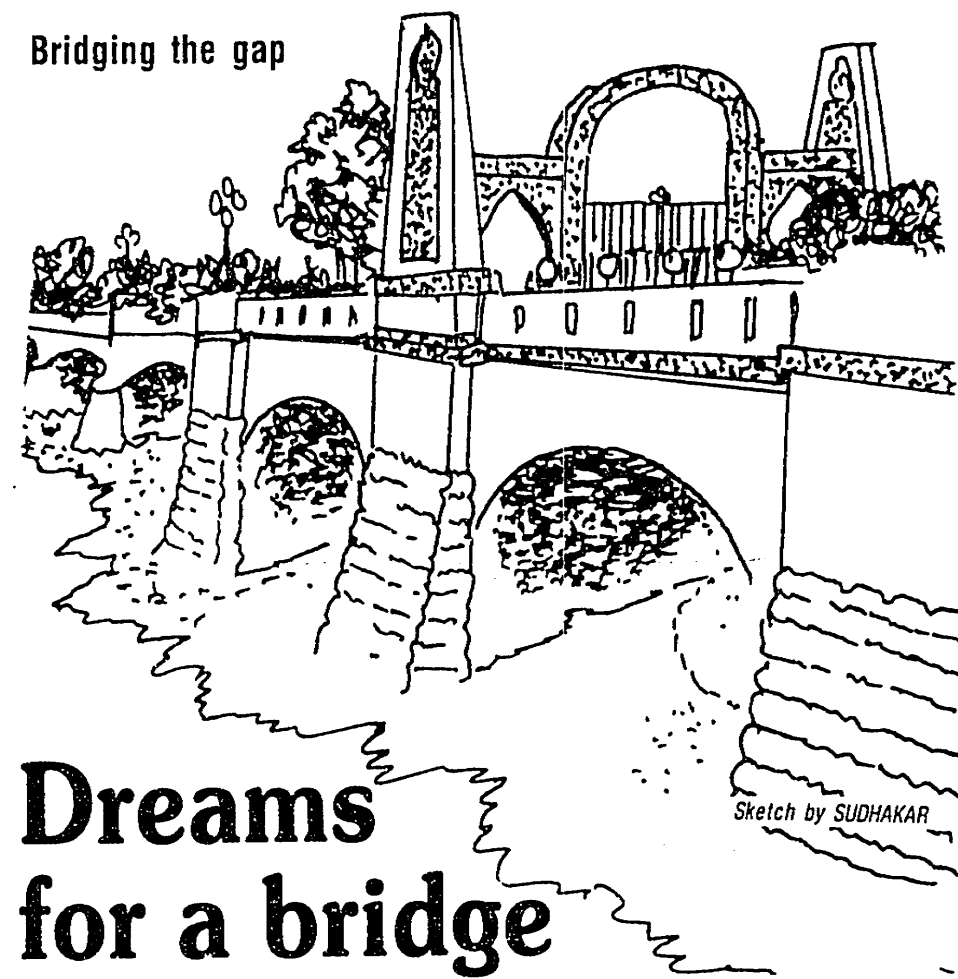
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## Bridging the gap



## Dreams for a bridge

The Rotary Club of Chennai Presidency and Exnora International will embark on a project to beautify the 520-metre stretch of the old Adyar bridge which is now being put to misuse. This bridge will be transformed into a jogging track, a walkers' pathway, a nursery and a platform to observe nature. It will match the environmental appearance of Adyar estuary, which is a unique ecosystem of Chennai city. This estuary sustains lives of all forms like birds, mammals, reptiles etc. Toilet blocks will be constructed, which will be in addition to the existing Sulabh International toilet.

This will form part of the Singara Chennai project of the Corporation of Chennai. A proposal in this connection has already been submitted to the concerned authorities.

V.N. Subramanian

President Elect, Rotary Club of Chennai Presidency, writing in the Club's newsletter, *Presidency Times*.

Editor's Note: We hope this project comes through sooner rather than later. INTACH had for years been trying to get some action going, but without luck. *Madras Musings* hopes V N Subramanian and his team have better fortune — and having once beautified the old Adyar (Elphinstone) bridge, will ensure it continues to remain beautiful.

## OUR READERS WRITE

### Parallel City

The grand idea of 'Chennai 80' suggested by the two young Danes (MM, June 1) is, to put it mildly, ridiculous. This idea is unworkable, on many counts, under Indian conditions.

\* A counter magnet of such a magnitude (10 million) can't be developed within such a short and commutable distance. It will be an insurmountable task to duplicate economic institutions and infrastructure within such a short distance. Maraimalainagar is a standing example. One of the main reasons for the failure of Maraimalainagar as a new town is said to be its proximity to Chennai.

\* Chennai is a relatively unpopulated city by Indian standards and is expanding outwards rather than upwards because of the ready availability of land. Hence, the suggestion to go for 30-40 storey blocks, with high Floor Area Ratios, is unrealistic and socially unacceptable.

\* Past experience in India has shown that it is not desirable to create new towns/cities. The National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU) also has vehemently opposed the policy of creating new urban centres, while allowing the existing towns and cities to decay, leading to the collapse of existing

infrastructure. The NCU further pointed out that even if the money so invested did lead to the creation of new towns, the gestation period would be long and, meanwhile, the other cities would be brought to the brink of disaster for want of adequate investment in maintenance.

In this context, the over-concentration of population in Chennai can be countered effectively only by providing employment opportunities and infrastructural facilities in the existing cities with high economic growth potential. According to studies, economic causes and infrastructure are the two primary causes for migration. Even though studies reveal that the Chennai Metropolitan Area attracts migrants from all the districts of Tamil Nadu, the adjoining districts of South Arcot and North Arcot mainly contribute to the migrant population. Hence, deliberate and conscious development of the following existing cities could be developed as counter magnets:

First order counter-magnets:

- Villupuram
- Cuddalore
- Tiruvannamalai
- Vellore

Second order counter-magnets:

- Coimbatore
- Madurai
- Tiruchi
- Salem
- Tirunelveli

Dr. K.P. Subramanian  
Anna University  
Chennai.

# Exams or no exams?

Harry Miller  
replies

I was surprised to find that my article on the suicides of schoolchildren has been so misinterpreted by D. Anjaneyulu (MM, June 16). To begin with, he has unfairly implied that my argument against the examination system was based on the suicide of an individual; he has ignored the fact, as I reported, that such suicides are by no means uncommon. But I am at fault, too, in not explaining my point more clearly and skipping years of thought that have nothing to do with such suicides.

My argument, stated simply, is that the examination system is an unfair method of assessing a student's academic progress since it sets all students equally an emotional ordeal, which challenge many of them may be unable to face though fully capable of dealing with or even surpassing the level of knowledge and understanding required. What chance has a highly imaginative, intelligent but highly-strung, nervous pupil got besides one poorer in those qualities but of sturdier self-confidence and superior parrot-style memory?

The alternative to the examination system would be one based on a student's progress over a certain period of time, such as a term, but this too suffers from the disadvantage as to who is to make such a judgement. The teacher? Or a board

of teachers perhaps? I don't know, but I have always been convinced that there must be a fairer way of assessing a pupil's progress than by the examination system. Am I wrong in believing that the two great English universities, Oxford and Cambridge, had a system based not on examination but on the tutorial system, whereby a tutor assigned to an undergraduate and staying with that student throughout his college life made the judgement not by an examination common to a whole group of peers but by that tutor's own judgement of the individual student? Perhaps the answer is that we don't need such judgements of any kind at all. A person's level of education and sophistication will be self-evident as he or she matures.

As for Shakespeare and Socrates, our Anjaneyulu has avoided my opinion that no children of any race or kind should be taught Shakespeare, since children are not sufficiently mature intellectually to understand such exalted levels of literature. Why not start Tamil students off in their English studies with the superb English writings of R.K. Narayan, for instance? Similarly, I am always appalled to find librarians putting Lewis

Carroll in the children's section of libraries. The Alice books may have been written for a child or children, but when I was a child they gave me horrors. A little girl falling down a bottomless shaft, growing a neck yards long, a baby turning into a pig, a queen continually demanding that people's head should be cut off, surely such are the stuff of a child's nightmares?! I know they were of mine. I did not begin to appreciate the Alice stories until I grew up. No child, for example, (and perhaps many adults for that matter) could appreciate Lewis Carroll's nonsense poems: the Walrus and the Carpenter, the utter genius of the conversation with Humpty Dumpty on words, and many others.

Socrates? Again your correspondent has avoided my point and ignored the facsimile reproduction of the examination paper I found in a corporation school, which showed that whoever set that examination paper was not even literate him (her?)self. What about Socrates' parents? What about "palace", presumably for palace? No doubt the authors of that paper were "S.S.L.C. Passed"! But perhaps this is a case of special pleading: I have never passed any examinations. I never even sat for the Matric, the British equivalent of SSLC. I ran away to sea instead and had a different kind of education.

## Sex-education at school

Perhaps those who know me and my writings will be surprised or even shocked, to hear me say that I vehemently oppose the teaching of sex in schools (MM, June 1). With my liberal reputation people might well have thought otherwise. They would be wrong.

The school is quite the worse place for young people growing up to be taught sex. The one place they should learn about sex is in their own homes from those who love them, their own parents. I well recall as a small child that "Where do babies come from?" was a perennial topic among us children, boys and girls. Every now and then one of us would pluck up the courage to ask our Mums (no one ever thought of asking Dads, which is an interesting point by itself) and the answer was always, "The doctor brings them in his little bag, dear". None of us was smart enough to ask where the doctor got them from.

Such problems arise in India, I believe, only among the middle classes, never in the villages, where the "facts of life" cannot be hidden from children from their earliest age, which is good. Even among the middle classes of the Western World, where I grew up, I believe such questions as we used to ask are no longer taboo. "Mummy, why has your tummy got so big?" would today be greeted by "Because there's a dear little baby growing inside me, darling"; not by "doctors' bags" nonsense, which leads children to mistrust their parents in this and, by transference, in other important matters as they grow older.

Such an honest, straightforward reply completely satisfies a young child. The questions as to how the baby got into Mummy's tummy in the first place, and how it gets out, come later, but are dealt with in no less a frank and happy way.

Of course, you sometimes have to be circumspect, such as with the little girl who noticed one day, quite suddenly — children do tend to notice things suddenly — that her Mummy's tummy had become conspicuously large. When asked why, Mummy said that Daddy had given her a dear little baby. The child then marched into Daddy's room and demanded to know whether he had given Mummy a dear little baby, and when her father admitted that he had, the child replied indignantly, "Well, you know what she's done, don't you, she's eaten it!"

Harry Miller

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## It still works

I would agree with Harry Miller ("One Man's Moon", MM, June 15) that our postal department still functions without being tainted by the ills which bedevil other Government organisations. Recently my friend and cricket writer, Kersi Meher-Homji, who is now settled in Australia, sent me a video cassette of Bradman 89 not out in which the great Australian batsman says that Sachin Tendulkar's batting style is like his own.

When Kersi called me in late April to inquire if I had received the

packet which he had posted on December 20, 1996, I thought it might have been 'pinched' in the post. I must say I regretted harbouring doubts about our postal service, for the packet was delivered a few days later. Kersi had sent it by second class airmail and I guess it came by sea mail. I must also say that my copies of *The Cricketer* (air mail) and *Madras Musings* are delivered without fail.

K.N. Prabhu

53 Ocean View, Dumayne Road,  
Colaba, Mumbai 400 005.

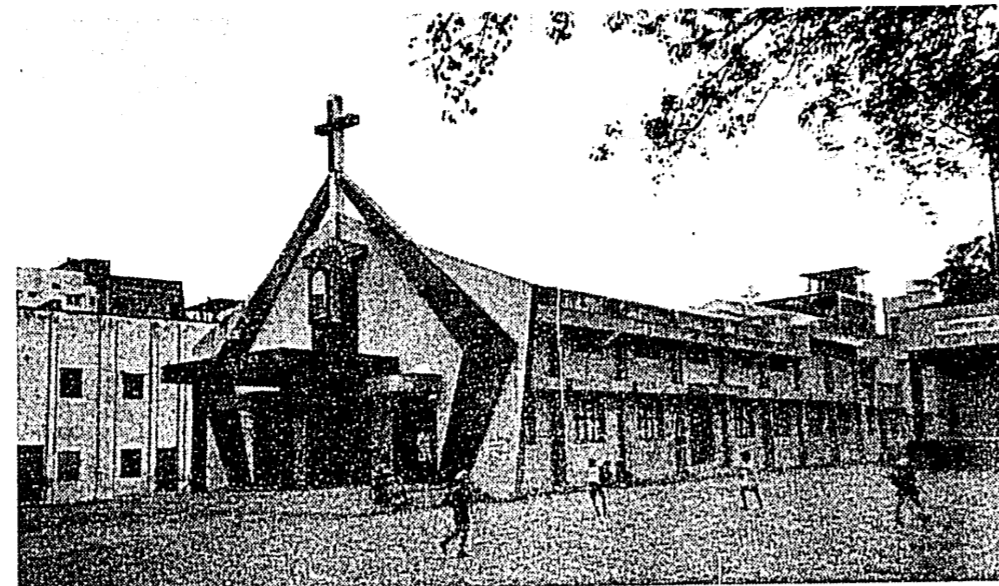
## Treating water

Treating of the 1000 ml of sewage water drained out and recycling the same for use as potable water (MM, March 1) has been on the anvil for quite some time now. While we are at the stage of planning and discussion of this project, we should not lose sight of the fact that from time to time we hear about sewerage water getting mixed with the chlorinated drinking water being supplied to us. So far, our expertise has not been able to cry halt to this phenomenon of dirty water mixing with the drinking water. As such, I have reasonable doubts about the efficiency of our engineering clans in ensuring proper treatment to the sewerage water and bringing the same to the level of drinking water before mixing the same with the good, filtered water.

K.S. Kandhaswamy

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## GM's 'Supplier of the Year'

During five decades of Independence, Tamil Nadu has seen a variety of successful businessmen. But standing tall amongst them must undoubtedly be Suresh Krishna, Chairman and Managing Director of Sundram Fasteners Ltd (SFL), recently chosen by General Motors, USA, for its 'Supplier of the Year Award, 1996'. It's been quite a climb to reach that pinnacle.

Educated in Madurai in the Tamil medium, Suresh Krishna didn't feel like a square peg in a round hole when he joined the English medium B.Sc (Chemistry) class at Madras Christian College. Having a flair for languages, he went on to learn German too.

To get him to acquire some engineering knowledge that would help the family business, his father, T S Krishna, sent him to

the US to study chemical engineering. But Suresh Krishna found that chemical engineering was not his cup of tea and changed course to study Literature. Finishing with an MA in Literature in 1949, Suresh Krishna went on to do Post-graduate work in Literature at the University of Munich in Germany.

Returning home, he apprenticed at Wheels India, under his uncle, T S Srinivasan. From the world of words to the world of wheels, nuts, bolts and figures, wasn't it a difficult change? Says Suresh Krishna, "I didn't find a literature background a handicap in learning about engineering. On the other hand, thanks to my non-technical background, I had the liberty to ask even foolish questions and no one would misunderstand me or laugh at me." Two years later, Srinivasan asked him whether he would be interested in starting a small unit to turn out bolts, or fasteners, the most basic product in the engineering field. And Suresh Krishna said 'Yes' and went on to start Karfax Engineering Ancillaries

Pvt Ltd. (now SFL), in Ambattur in 1965.

He started with an investment of Rs.8 lakh and two machines — and no one thought the unit would get anywhere. Even Suresh Krishna did not have any great visions except to run the two machines non-stop. "At the time, many didn't even know that I was in Madras. I had no friends here then. And there was no peer pressure on me to perform, as the Group's other companies were giants," he explains. When he asked the government for a small shed he was allotted a big one, as, at the time, there were no takers for industrial sheds in Ambattur. But the allotment proved a god-

**Venkatachari Jagannathan looks at THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE**

send when business steadily picked up, despite competition from GKW Ltd and Fit Tight Ltd. He had 20 machines in operation by 1971, when turnover touched Rs.50 lakh. He now decided to shift his plant and moved to Padi where most of the TVS Group units were located.

In 1975, his father passed away and, four years later, his mentor, Srinivasan, too died. Suresh Krishna had no one to turn to for advice; he was on his own to make of his company what he might.

Working dedicatedly, climbing inch by inch, Suresh Krishna built up SFL till its turnover touched Rs.10 crore. That's when there came the next expansion, in Ramanathapuram, a backward area. But labour problems stalled the unit from settling into a groove. And so he began tightening his hold on the market by expanding capacity at Padi. Fortunately for him, problems plagued GKW Ltd and Fit Tight, forcing them to bolt the fasteners' business.

From then on, there was no

stopping Suresh Krishna in his bid to control the market. From 1983, the growth of SFL was rapid. And in the last five years its business increase has been phenomenal. "In the first 26 years of our existence, we reached Rs.100 crore. It took three more years to clock the second Rs.100 crore of sales. And we now hope to touch the Rs.400 crore mark in another three years," says Suresh Krishna says confidently.

With a view to diversifying, he set up a cold extrusion and powder metal part plant in Hosur and a new fastener plant in Krishnapuram. Today, SFL has five plants, three in Tamil Nadu and one each in Hyderabad and Pondicherry.

Not content with the pre-eminent position in the domestic high tensile fastener market, quality conscious

Suresh Krishna began to eye the overseas market and went in for ISO certification. SFL became the first company in India to obtain the coveted ISO 9000 certificate. The Company was also one of the first companies in the country to complete reengineering of its plants with the help of Lucas Engineering Services, UK. This, along with a total productive maintenance programme in partnership with the Japan Institute of Plant Maintenance, reduced downtime in the plants dramatically.

Willing as he is to learn and implement modern management techniques, Suresh Krishna is steadfast against joint ventures with foreign companies. "In joint ventures, the foreign party would have an upper hand as well as a different agenda," he explains. The only exception is SFL's joint venture with Dura Automotive Systems Inc., USA, to produce parking brake systems, gear shift systems and hood latches for the Indian market. However SFL holds 51% equity in this venture.

On the other hand, he is not quite happy at having been

This was one we missed. Our OLD (top, left) is a picture of the oldest church in the Madraspanam of the 17th Century. The Church of the Assumption of Our Lady was built around 1658 (the Church itself claims 1640) by the Catholics living near, and working in and around, Fort St George. Worshipped in by the Portuguese and mestizos, it was called the Portuguese Church and the street on which it is located in north George Town is called Portuguese Church Street. The oldest SURVIVING church in what was once British India, it was reconstructed in 1692 and again in the 18th Century. Our picture of the OLD was taken in 1988 when the building looked ready to go a few hundred years

more, but, unnoticed even by Madras Musings, the old church was pulled down in the early 1990s, the foundation stone for the NEW (top, right) laid in 1993 and the consecration completed in 1994. If only the authorities had consulted some of the city's architects, we might still have an OLD, suitably restored, with us instead of the exercise in geometrical Madras flat-roof that the NEW is.

Within the NEW, 'Madura Nayagi' (the 'Sweet Queen') still reigns in the shape of a wood carving (top, centre) said to date to the mid-17th Century. There is also in the NEW a 'painting' of the OLD adorning one wall (see above). And amongst the institutions she watches over is St Anne's Middle School, soon to celebrate its centenary by pulling down its present buildings (below) and raising a highrise to accommodate a high and higher secondary school. Things must change, but if ever there was a heritage building in Madras, it was this old church. So, did it really have to change? (Text and photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

...& THE NEW



forced to divert part of the TVS holdings in SFL, in the early Eighties, when, due to MRTTP provisions, the Company had to go to the public.

Closing the last fiscal with a turnover of Rs.347 crore and a profit of Rs. 32.05 crore, SFL has been consistently increasing its export revenues since 1993 when it started supplying radiator caps to General Motors, USA. According to Suresh Krishna, the total export revenue last year was Rs.48 crore, of which supplies to GM contributed Rs.16 crore. In addition to radiator caps, the Company also started exports of powder metal parts to GM in a small way. Suresh Krishna hopes to export Rs.100 crore worth of materials to GM alone in ten years' time.

In order to boost export revenue further, SFL has entered

into a strategic alliance with Kamax-Warke Rudolf Kellermann, GmbH & Co., Germany. Under this arrangement, SFL would supply speciality fasteners to Kamax who, in turn, would sell them globally to auto majors.

An excellent communicator in English, Tamil and German, Suresh Krishna is an interviewer's delight. Warm and friendly, he is accessible for reporters even over the phone. But I too was shy once, he confesses; it was my stints as President of the Automobile Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) (1982-84) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) that enabled me to overcome this family trait.

(Continued on Page 6)

## Remembering July 14th, 1937...

# When the people tenanted the seat of power

He was 58, five-foot-five and wholly bald except at the back of his oval, bespectacled, eagle-nosed head. The eyes — if you saw them — were serious and sad-looking but were protected from scrutiny by the thick dark glasses they demanded. The face was hard and austere, except when it broke out in a grin, which it did from time to time. The baritone voice was always calm, the speech always distinct, the words always interesting. Each day this Iyengar Brahmin widower wore exactly the same dress: a kurta, dhoti and folded shawl of clean white khadi, the fabric of revolt and reform. He had joined Gandhi, tossing away an enviable legal practice, in 1919, four years after the death (at the age of 26) of his wife Manga who had given him three sons and two daughters.

Now, in July 1937, after nearly two decades of a struggle that earned him five spells in prison and a reputation for unpredictable actions and for a quick keen mind, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (C.R. or Rajaji to friends and the public) was Premier of Madras Presidency.

He was not quite king of his huge forest, which extended to Mangalore and Calicut on the Arabian Sea and Vizag on the Bay of Bengal. The law by which he became Premier, the Government of India Act on 1935, laid down that a few significant powers (e.g. selecting names for appointment to the High Court) would be the British Governor's sole preserve.

Still, chosen by the electorate (in the Assembly, Congress had 159 seats, Justice 16 and the Muslim League 10), Rajaji possessed powers that no Indian had held in Madras for a century or more. It was a new day. The sophisticated realised that C.R. and his ministers could borrow and tax, release and imprison, hire and fire; and the liveried peons of Fort St George, hitherto the Raj's southern headquarters, spread word among the unlettered that the head of the Presidency's police, Inspector-General Sir Charles Cunningham, had to wait in an ante-room for an interview with the new Premier, a man arrested several times in the past by members of his force.

The prestige of his office surrounded CR, but he and his colleagues in government and the legislature said 'no' to the emoluments set for them by the Raj. Rs. 56,000 per annum was what had been specified for the Premier; amending the rules he drew Rs.9,000 in all, inclusive of allowances for rent and transport. His government did not provide ministers with houses, but he had the use of an official car, one out of six bought by his ministry (at

Rs. 3,000 a vehicle). For their first month in office, he and his colleagues were entitled to incomes on the earlier scale; CR asked the secretariat to ensure that each minister handed in letters surrendering the difference (it amounted to Rs. 1,426 in his case) for good — he wanted to discourage ministers or their heirs from claiming the sums in the future. Frugality over public funds ('miserliness', according to Lord Erskine, the Governor) and a strict control over his colleagues (he was to be called a dictator and a schoolmaster, his ministry a one-man show) were to be two of the pronounced features of his Premiership.

CR becoming Premier, and similar developments in several other provinces, signified a compact, at least for the time being, between the two warring sides, Congress and the Raj. The compact was of an unusual and tricky kind. It required former victims of the Raj to rule a province through officials who had been their masters in the past (and were quite likely to be their masters again in the future) and in conjunction with an alien Governor who could, on certain grounds, veto their measures. Congress wished to use the compact to weaken the Raj at the centre; and the Raj hoped that the blessings and burdens of office would moderate what it saw as the extreme demands of Congress, such as complete independence.

Congress Premiers had to prove themselves impervious to the charms of office (this was part of the reasoning behind low salaries) but equal to its demands. And they needed to be moderate and bold at the same time, the former to obtain the cooperation of officialdom, the latter to keep faith with the Indian masses.

When CR announced, in his first measure, that buttermilk would be added to the diet of prisoners, the thousands of activists who remembered the inadequate rations of their prison terms were pleased, and the Raj was not specially bothered. The release of political prisoners, including some convicted for violent deeds but now disavowing violence, was a different matter. Officials tried to block the release, and the Viceroy murmured misgivings to the Governor, but CR had his way. In the first month of his government, 38 political prisoners were discharged...



Rajaji as the Prime Minister of the Madras Province, seen soon after his assumption of office. (Photograph courtesy RAGAMI.)

The Governor's right to intervene or override constituted, of course, the biggest barrier to a feeling of self-government. Linlithgow had said that the right would not be used to create conflict. Presenting his first budget, CR claimed, "From the discussions which took place in the matter of these special responsibilities from April to the middle of July we may I think confidently assume that His Excellency is not likely to seek to exercise this special power." But there was no guarantee that this would be the case; moreover, apart from the overriding powers that the Governor had in reserve, there were some fields, described in the Government of India Act, where he had discretion or could exercise his individual judgement. CR strove for a 'right' to see files regarding subjects that fell under these two heads and cited what the Secretary of State had told Parliament: "Let it not be supposed that the field of government may be divided into two parts in which the Governor or the Ministry operate separately at the risk of clashes between them."

Erskine, however, was unyielding: "Nobody," he claimed, "either a Minister or a Secretary, can advise me in regard to matters in which I exercise 'my discretion'."

CR's cabinet contained nine persons excluding him: T Prakasam, among Congress leaders of the Andhra region the most popular; V V Giri and Gopala Reddi represented the Telugu districts; P Subbaroyan, T S S Rajan, S Ramanathan, Muniswami Pillai and CR the Tamil areas. Pillai, in addition, was a Harijan. From Malabar CR took Ramana Menon (and, following Menon's death, C J

Varkey); and Yakab Hasan was the cabinet's Muslim member. It was about as good a team as CR could muster...

Subbaroyan was the only member of Rajaji's cabinet with previous ministerial experience, and Prakasam the only one among his colleagues to question, at time, CR's decisions...

The speaker of the house was Bulusu Sambamurti, a lawyer from East Godavari. Like CR and Prakasam, he had discarded his practice to join the Gandhian movement. The short, clear-voiced Sambamurti had also given up his coat, shirt and turban. He would come to the house in a dhoti, with a loose cloth, the angavastram, draped over his bare chest. Sessions took place in the University Senate House (familiar to CR from his college days); there was a strangers' gallery, and loudspeakers placed outside the chamber enabled an open-air audience, too, to listen to the debates. Wrote one who watched the opening day's proceedings: "The hall was filled with khaddar-clad ladies and gentlemen in as many types of unconventional attire as one could imagine. The few Europeans present looked almost apologetic for the clothes they were in. The people at last seemed to be tenanted the central seat of power."

Democracy had come into its own. But the simultaneous translation system had not. European and Anglo-Indian members (elected by special constituencies, which also existed for Muslims, Indian Christians and Harijans and for landed and commercial interests) spoke in English, a few Muslims wanted at times to speak in Urdu, Malayalam and Kannada were preferred by some legislators, Tamil and Telugu by more. But the business of the house was conducted mainly in English. A contribution in another language would frequently be translated by a member. Interpreters were not hired, Sambamurti ruling that outsiders had no right to utter before the house.

If CR taught his cabinet, he also coached the house, instructing MLAs in everything from the art of speaking into a mike to the culture of parliamentary politics. At the first sitting he asked the Speaker to ensure the rights of the opposition and his partymen not to

make personal reference to any opposition member. He tackled missing ministers publicly. "I am really sorry that I have not been informed as to why he is absent," he said about one minister. Partymen who spoke of Europeans in India as "parasites" and "bloodsuckers" were rebuked by him, and he complimented an Indian Christian member, Dr M J Samuel, for speaking on behalf of all communities and not just for "my community". And he resolved differences, in the opposition, when for instance, it had to choose names for its quota in select committees.

"I consider the opposition strong and important and I respect it. That is why I have accepted so many amendments." Made by CR during the debate on a debate relief bill, the statement is both a true and misleading indication of CR's general attitude to the opposition. He was ready to accept improvements on government bills, but not to yield on their core, and he disarmed the opposition with his courtesy.

The opposition leader and head of the Justice group was the young but restrained Kumararajah Sri Muthiah Chettiar. He was ably supported by Sir A T Pannirselvan, also Justice, deliverer of some of the most powerful Madras Assembly speeches in the late thirties. Also effective were T T Krishnamachari, independent, representing the chamber of commerce; Langley, leading the Europeans; and Abdul Hamid Khan, heading the Muslim League members. The upper house opposition included Sir K V Reddi, who had been acting Premier while Congress was debating office acceptance, and the highly gifted orator, the Right Honourable V S Srinivasa Sastri, Privy Councillor and head of the Servants of India Society.

Sambamurti desiring to start proceedings with *Vande Mataram*, the experiment was launched. Muslim League members objected, arguing that parts of the song conflicted with Islamic teaching. (Some Muslim scholars contested the argument.) CR proposed a solution: Let the song be sung just before 11 am, when the business of the house commenced, leaving members free to join or skip the invocation; he also suggested the inclusion of verses from different religions in the invocation. But criticism persisted, the League cited the practice as evidence that Congress rule meant Hindu rule, and CR had to persuade the Speaker to abandon the innovation. It had, in retrospect, done more harm than good.

— (Excerpted from *The Rajaji Story 1937-1972* by Rajmohan Gandhi. Published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay).



## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN'S questions are from the fortnight June 16 to 30. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Madras that is Chennai.)

1. Name the federation set up by former badminton ace Prakash Padukone to rejuvenate the game in the country.
2. What distinction has taken Pedong, a 39-year-old-mule, into the Guinness Book of World Records?
3. Name the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court appointed by the BCCI to probe into the recent allegations of match-fixing in Indian cricket.
4. What controversial ordinance was promulgated by the President on June 21st?
5. The ban of which chemical, imposed by the Union Environmental Ministry, came into effect on June 22nd?
6. Name the 'high priestess' of Odissi who passed away on June 24th?
7. What is the quantum of developmental aid pledged to India by international donors for 1996-97?
8. The Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation has recently unveiled a package tour covering a unique set of temples. What is the tour called?
9. The Tamil Nadu Government has acquired for Rs. 20 lakh the rights to all the works of a pioneer of the chaste Tamil movement. Who?
10. Simple. Why was Mike Tyson disqualified in his WBA title bout against Evander Holyfield?
11. Who has replaced Jiginder Singh as the head of the CBI?
12. On the midnight of June 30th, Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule. What is its present name?
13. Salman Rushdie recently became the 30th member of the '\$100 Club'. What is the club?
14. What was stopped all over the world for a second on the midnight of June 30?
15. WHO recently launched a massive, global campaign against the most common brain disorder. What is the disorder?

16. Where, near Chennai is a Rs.4 crore Shatadhi Mani Mandapam for the Paramacharya of Kanchi coming up?

17. Which road in the city became the second to be declared a 'litter free' zone?

18. What new MD course would the Dr. MGR Medical University offer at three hospitals in the city from 1997-98?

19. Who is the recipient of the TNCA's annual 'Cricketer of the Year' award?

20. Who was awarded the prestigious Swaralaya Puraskaram for 1997?

(Answers on Page 8)



Lodd Govindoss's Stushaldas Gardens

# The Egmore of Yore — II

(Continued from last fortnight)

The Egmore stretch of Poonamallee High Road was the Harley Street of Madras, with Dr. Koman Nair, near the tramshed and Y.W.C.A., Dr. Rama Rao, and Dr. Thambiah, the dermatologist, being the best known of its medical luminaries. It makes me wonder what they and the other residents of that time, like Justice Madhavan Nair, Justice Sankaran Nair, Justice V.P. Row, ICS and Lodd Govindoss, would have to say about the present state of this once-beautiful road. It is now denuded of its century-old trees, many stately homes have been razed to the ground, and traffic roars by unceasingly.

It is, however, heartening to note that a few old properties have been put to good use today. The V.L. Ethiraj bungalow, set in vast grounds in Commander-in-Chief Road, is now, thanks to his munificence, a part of a leading college for women and his later residence is next door. The Arni jagirdar's palace on Hall's Road is the site of the Children's Hospital.

Egmore was the site of one of the premier educational institutions for girls, Presidency Training School (PTS). It boasted a galaxy of dedicated principals starting with Miss Myers (who was later at Q.M.C.), Mrs. Parukutty Ammal, Sister Subbalakshmi Ammal and Miss Eva Lazarus,

## COOKING with Chandra

Not for nothing is it called 'time pass'. Eat peanuts any time of the day.

### CRUNCHY FRIED PEANUTS

1/2 kg raw peanuts with the skin  
1 cup Bengal gram flour (*besan*)  
1/4 cup rice flour  
2 tsp red chilly powder  
1 tsp asafoetida powder  
1 tbs ghee  
Salt to taste  
Oil for deep frying

**Method**  
Mix all the ingredients except the peanuts. Add a little water and form a thick paste. Heat the

who herself came from a family of women educationists and doctors. The students were from all walks of life and no distinction was made between daughters of judges, ICS officers and wealthy professionals and those coming from far more modest backgrounds. The fees were absurdly low, while the teaching was of a very high order.

It is impossible to enumerate the number of doctors, educationists, social workers and freedom fighters (of whom the best known was the late Miss Manjubashini) who passed out of this school. While on the subject of educational institutions, one with a difference was Prof. Parameswaran's 'Minerva Hall' which served as a tutorial college, took on 'examination fodder' and helped them to become successful citizens.

## VS Spirit of the

Addressing hundreds of meetings, most of them extempore, made Suresh Krishna the fluent speaker he is today.

It is this attitude of reaching out to people and this ability to communicate which has enabled SFL's machines to hum continuously for several years without a single stoppage due to a strike. "The public relations skills are from my father and a love for music from my mother, Ambujam Krishna, who has composed more than 600

ghee and add to the paste. Smear the paste evenly on the peanuts. Heat oil. Drop the peanuts into the oil and fry till golden brown. Serve hot. This can also be cooled and stored in an airtight jar and served whenever required.

### PEANUT LADOOS

4 cups roasted peanuts, partially broken  
2 cups jaggery, powdered  
1 cup coconut, chopped into quarter-inch pieces  
4 cardamoms, powdered  
1 cup of water

**Method**  
Melt the jaggery, adding 1 cup of water. Strain through a sieve to remove dirt. Transfer back to the heat and simmer till it reaches one string consistency. Add the coconut pieces and roasted pea-



The Ethiraj bungalow

Egmore did not lag behind in cultural activities either. The Jagannadha Bhakta Sabha was started by Sri Venkatachari, a connoisseur of Carnatic Music, on his family property on Egmore High Road. Most *widwans* of later times made their debuts there. It was a common sight to see scores of music-lovers standing on the road to hear, free of charge, the divine, mike-free music that poured out of the open hall. Five-hour concerts were not uncommon!

The Egmore Dramatic Society (E.D.S) was started by a group of young amateurs, among whom was T.M.S. Nani (later ICS). They provided wholesome family fare at the Museum Theatre, which was rented at a very nominal rate.

The green lung of Egmore was the vast expanse of the 'Lake' along the railway line, which served as a free play-

ground for cricket, hockey, football and kho-kho. The Egmore Recreation Club (ERC) had among its earliest members Nani and Sivaraman. Pattabhiraman played a major role in nurturing it and bringing it to League level.

Shoppers' needs being few in those days, Egmore High Road sufficed with its straggle of small shops and tiny vegetable and fish markets. C.P. Krishna's bookshop, run by a Malayali (as Keralites were then called), was very popular with the student community.

While they bemoan the fate that has overtaken Madras, octogenarians like me at least have our fond memories. What will the present generation look back on with nostalgia? That's a sobering thought.

An Octogenarian  
Egmoreite

## VA (Continued from Page 4)

and they have three daughters, Preeti, Arthi and Arundathi. Usha Krishna is, in her own right, a successful entrepreneur, running Upasana Engineering Ltd. and Upasana Finance, apart from leading the women's wing of FICCI.

The only unfulfilled goal Suresh Krishna has is of making SFL a truly world class company in innovation. "There's a long way to go for that ... but we'll get there," he smiles. "And at my comfort level," he adds.

cooked peanuts, grated coconut, chopped green chillies and coriander leaves. Mix well.

Remove from heat, serve immediately.

### PEANUT POWDER

2 cups peanuts, roasted  
1/2 cup sesame seeds  
12-15 red chillies  
1 small piece asafoetida  
2 tsp oil  
Salt to taste

### Method

Roast dry the sesame seeds. Fry the red chillies and the asafoetida in two teaspoons oil. Powder fine the red chillies and the asafoetida. Add the roasted sesame seeds and powder fine. Finally, add the peanuts. Powder coarse. Add salt.

Serve with hot rice and ghee.

Chandra Padmanabhan

# The man who saw no colour

George Deligianis will always be remembered by all who knew him in Chennai as a kind, warm, generous human being, whose film lectures became legend. During his stay in India, first as Deputy Director of the USIS and later in retirement as a citizen of Madras, he created a huge following that would come to USIS or to his house to hear him talk on Hollywood films. His all-time favourite was *Casablanca*, which he had seen 98 times. We had made plans that on his 100th viewing of the film, we would throw a champagne party and he would deliver his famous lecture. That was not to be.

He was born in Albany, New York State, in 1931, during the Great Depression. His parents were poor Greek immigrants who spoke no English. George, in fact, learnt English only at the age of 5, when he started to attend school, where the taunts of his schoolmates made him vow to master the language — And that he did. He earned himself a double Masters degree from Columbia and after a brief

stint as an out-of-work actor and New York taxi cab driver, he joined the Diplomatic Corps, which he served for 35 years. His accounts of his life as a diplomat could keep you spellbound for hours — like the time Jackie Kennedy paid a visit

when he was in Marrakesh and, amongst the many madcap things that happened then, Jackie asked him to procure an aphrodisiac she had heard was available there! Or the time he was posted in Dacca and civil war broke out (the Bangladesh side) and his office was under siege. George and his entire staff threatened to resign if the US Government did not change its stand.

The other great passion in his life was the theatre. He

loved being on stage and with theatre people; he threw his house open for rehearsals, cast parties, theatre evenings or just plain theatre conversation. How often have we heard him tell his dog Oscar, "Don't bite him — he is an actor"! Oscar in fact, when just a pup, was to be put down because he did not meet the requirements of a Lhasa Apso show dog. George bought him just to prevent that.

Over and over, he was asked the question "Why did you retire in India?" I think this letter written to his children in November 1993 says it all.

"Before I returned to the States recently, I was in USIS and met one of the Indian secretaries that I knew.

"Don't you miss the US?" she asked.

"No," I replied.  
"But don't you miss being among your own kind?"

# MS magic

When Swaralaya, a Delhi-based organisation, announced a Rs one lakh award to Sangita Kalanidhi M S Subbulakshmi, it also asked *rasikas* to collect invitations to a concert by the octogenarian at the Music Academy, Chennai, which would follow the award function. The invitations were taken in a record 20 minutes and the Academy's auditorium was jam-packed when MS was honoured.

For lifelong devotees of Carnatic music, MS admirers in particular, the occasion was one of keen anticipation tinged by a certain anxiety about whether the great singer would be able to cope with sitting through more than an hour of speechmaking not to mention the strain of the concert itself. It was revealing to learn from the singer's accompanists that she was nervous too. True, the complete artist that she is, she approaches every performance big or small with the same sincerity of purpose and nervous tension, but this was a special occasion. She was 81, not in the best of health and the concert was her homage to the late Paramacharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. Her award money would straightaway go to a fund for the construction of a *mani mandapam* in his memory.

Devotion, faith, *bhakti*, self-surrender or whatever we choose to call it, has been the spring from which MS's inspiring music has gushed forth for well over half a century. How many times her magnificent spirit has conquered her frail health during her concerts of recent vintage! According to one of the speakers on June

29th, her prayers to the Sage of Kanchi were miraculously answered overnight when a badly infected throat threatened to ruin her UN concert a few decades ago. The Swaralaya concert was a miracle too. Subbulakshmi overcame weakness and fatigue to astonish even her hardcore *rasikas* with the power and range of her virtuosity. We all know that MS is a household name in the South, especially among the middle class and the aristocracy. Her appeal beyond the Vindhya is nothing new either. What may not be so well known is the number of poor households, even slums, where the day starts with listening to her *Venkatesa Suprabatham* on the radio. To realise the extent of the reach of her music, we only need to stray into the crowded bylanes of Chennai of a morning to be soothed by the reverberations of her rich voice.

If I have lost my reader with that seemingly irrelevant digression, I will establish connection with the Swaralaya *cutteri* right away. A substantial majority of the audience that evening, as always, were not only devout *rasikas*, they were also, quite simply, devout. The miracle of her music is not so much its impact on believers, but that it moves to tears the sceptics and not so devout as well. Amidst the Swaralaya organisers, there were a few whose only god wore a long beard, spent a lifetime in the British Museum and tried to change a capitalistic world. Their reverence for MS and her music can only be described by one word — *bhakti*.

To parody a well-known, slightly maudlin Hollywood film

'No.' I knew what she was driving at, but wanted to see if she would actually say it.

"But here you are surrounded by all these brown faces."

And I replied, 'Brown is my favourite colour'. It isn't, green is, but I haven't seen many green faces recently.'

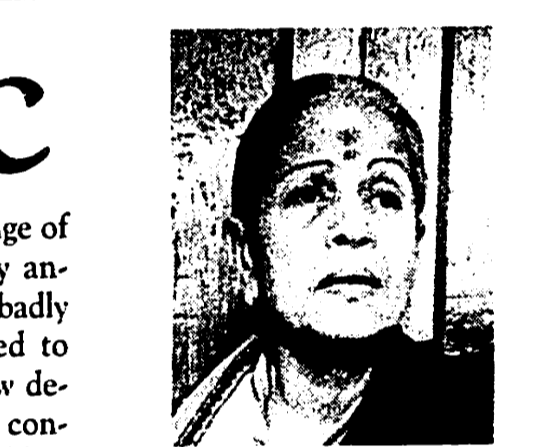
Discrimination and hatred of someone who is different is not something that you are born with. It must be taught. I would hardly describe my parents as liberal in this regard, but they did not have the time to pass on their dislike of Blacks and Jews. And so, I arrived in Baghdad filled with a sense of wonder at my new country and its people. During my 35 years as a diplomat, I never felt any sense of unease living in a country in which the people were different in terms of colour, religion and custom. I have my personal faults and shortcomings, but this is not one of them. I



George Deligianis in his last appearance on stage in Madras, as *Dogsborough* in the Madras Theatre Club's production of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. (Photograph by MOHANDAS.)

could not live or be happy if I did. And, I hope this tolerance is something I have passed on to you.'

His last year in Madras was a nightmare. After eight long months in hospitals here, I flew with him back to the United States. After a brief respite, he fell ill again. The end came swiftly and mercifully on the 15th of June. Madras had lost an adopted son who had added vibrancy to the rich tapestry of the life of this city.



song of the Sixties, I couldn't help feeling that "somewhere in their youth, or childhood, they must have done something good" as I looked with admiration at the superbly fit and agile T Sadasivam (95) and Semmangudi Srinivasan (90). Both of them not only sat through all the speeches and the concert, they made witty little speeches themselves. Semmangudi's praise of chief guest Dr. Karan Singh ("His singing is as beautiful as his looks") had a hint of mischief in it while Sadasivam had the audience roaring its approval when he spoke with affection of Swaralaya's MA Baby, Member, Rajya Sabha, and N Ram, Editor, *Frontline* ("In our old age, Subbulakshmi and I have been blessed with a Baby" and "He is not en Ram or un Ram, he is everybody's Ram").

A memorable evening was made more so by an exemplary audience. If the Gramophone Company of India manage to release a perfectly recorded cassette of the concert, they will have one person to thank. TT Vasu, President, Music Academy, put the fear of God into mobile phone owners in the audience. (Who would bring a phone to an MS *cutteri*?) The only noise the audience made was the sound of applause and that must have been music to Vasu's (and the sound recordist's) ears.

— V. Ramnarayan



Potter Narayanan instructs a participant at the 'Wheel and Light' workshop organised by Dakshinachitra. (Photograph by RAVISHANKAR.)

# Commemorating the Swadeshi way

Dakshinachitra, the heritage centre of the Madras Craft Foundation, is holding a series of 'Spirit of Freedom' workshops, called 'The Wheel and The Light', as its tribute to the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence. The workshops are being held in the ambience of this heritage centre at Muttukkadu, 28 kilometre from Chennai on the road to Mamallapuram.

The Wheel and the Light workshops are aimed at stirring a forgotten national fervour, that was very much alive in India fifty years ago, and focus on the *charkha* (the spinning wheel), as a unifying force. The workshops have activities like music and meditation, with inputs from Brahadhwani Music Research Centre, spinning on the *charkha* (with inputs from the Gandhi Peace Foundation),

working on the potter's wheel, handmade paper-making, warp-and-weft, theatre activities, conversations on the Gandhian idea of a village economy, and group singing. A stayover option is also available. Since children and adults can attend the workshops together, they can become exciting family outings. Some who have taken part have taken to the *charkha*. Maybe a day will come when each of us will once again spin and weave one piece of *khadi* for our wardrobes.

There are quite a few other workshops taking place at Dakshinachitra. For details contact: The Madras Craft Foundation, G-3 Madhuram Flats, Urur Olcott Kuppam Road, Besant Nagar, Chennai - 600 090 (Phone: 4918943).

— V R Devika



# Tamil Nadu hockey looks up — and down

Tamil Nadu is once again emerging as a force to reckon with in Indian hockey. At least, the results of the recently concluded South Zone championships and Nationals point to this. Tamil Nadu entered the final of the Rangaswamy Cup after more than two decades. A step towards this was taken when, in the previous edition at Bombay, the State qualified for the quarter finals from a tough pool, defeating Railways. It then lost in the quarter finals narrowly to giants Punjab but this year it moved on.

His dribbling skills remind you of Mohammed Shahid's stickwork on astroturf. Prabhakaran is very fast with the ball and able to beat the defender on both sides with ease. He receives with good imagination. If only he lifts his head a little more often and tries a few more shots at the goal from the top of the circle, he will make excellent material for the Indian side. Tall and lanky Paul Kirubakaran is a very experienced player who should have made it to the Indian side long ago if he had not mishandled the offers that came his way. He is the

confidence of the players and is able to get the best out of them. Even the strenuous physical training he gives them at preparatory camps is taken well by them.

The team's debacle in the National Games was perhaps because it couldn't retain its form for the third consecutive tournament. It got off to a bad start, losing its first match to a strengthened Maharashtra team. The second match went in favour of Services on a day when the TN team looked jaded and weary. A victory in the last match against Gujarat was not enough to secure the team a place in the semi-finals. Had the coach been willing to change tactics in the match against the Services, the result could have been different.

All connected with the development of the team deserve commendation — but they need to be wary of complacency.

play-maker in the team. His passes are defence-splitting, his trapping is perfect and he is a good one-man think-tank. Though he is weak in some of the latest tricks like reverse hitting, his reach and ball control keep him among the best. In Thirumal Valavan, the centre-half, we have the most promising defender. He is the best example of total hockey. When he joins the attack, he is a dangerous player and scores frequently devising his raids up-front. Jagan Senthil and Kavin are juniors (they are members of the Tamil Nadu junior squad) who show a lot of promise in the way they use the ball.

Hockey in the late Nineties has come to be identified as a coach's game, like basketball. The introduction of the rolling substitution rule has made the coach's job very demanding. He has to put on his thinking cap a day before the match and dare not remove it till the final whistle! A lot rests with the coach, who has to evolve strategies to exploit the new rules, especially the no-offside rule.

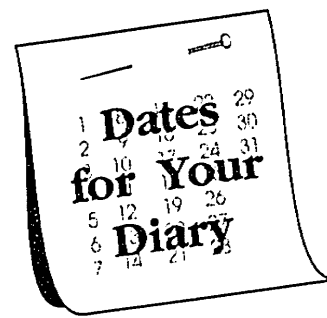
In Tamil Nadu, we have C.R. Kumar, a young, intelligent, thinking coach who is able to communicate well with the players and get good results. He works in tandem with coach Jayasekaran. Kumar can be classified along with the country's top coaches for his modern thinking. Kumar has analysed the present game and its latest rules well and has evolved excellent tactics both in the formation and the use of the four corners considered dead zones in the playing area until now. He has gained the

Various reasons can be cited for this improvement in standards. One major factor is the infrastructure, a blessing to Chennai hockey. Astroturf has taken more than 16 years to come to a prominent hockey centre like Chennai which has produced many Olympians and internationals. The same centre has taken the same 16 years to produce an Olympian in Riaz Ahmed, the first after Bhaskaran. The new Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium celebrated its inauguration with India's handsome victory over arch-rivals Pakistan in a memorable encounter in the SAF Games in 1996. Since then, the metropolis has been chosen as the venue for national coaching camps as well as exhibition ties against Poland. Chennai players, who had the opportunity to play league matches on this turf, also got to rub shoulders with Indian stars during the camps. And they benefitted much.

A bunch of young, talented players blending with a couple of fine senior players is what the Tamil Nadu hockey team is now. Riaz Ahmed, the best player at the Nationals, is the pivot about whom the team revolves. His exposure in the international area and experience stand him in good stead. His interceptions, timely and accurate passes, and his ability to penetrate a tight defence with his deft dribbles, serve the team well. His top-of-the-D free hits (pushes) are the best in the country, in the view of coach C.R. Kumar.

Prabhakaran, the wily centre-forward, is a prolific scorer.

• **by Augustine Paul**  
(former captain of the  
Indian Bank hockey team)



July 21 : 'Earthscape & Human-scape', an exhibition of paintings (at The Gallery).

July 24, 25, 26 : *Leonce and Lena* reworked after the play by George Buchner (1813-1837) and performed by Masquerade, directed by Krishna Kumar (7.30 pm at Max Muller Bhavan).

*Leonce and Lena* appears to be a romantic comedy in the Shakespearean tradition. But as it was Buchner's intention to overcome romanticism, *Leonce and Lena* is based on the poet's philosophy that "we are puppets, automatons", as demonstrated by the characters of *Leonce and Lena*, who are moved by the "fatalism of history". It is the only

comedy by George Buchner, who lived a mere 24 years.

July 25 : A retrospective show of drawings done over three decades by the well-known painter K M Adimoolam (at Value Arts Foundation, off TTK Road).

July 26 : The Madras Players present *Dance like a Man* (at the Museum Theatre).

July 26 : 'Spirit of Freedom' Summer Camp at Dakshinachitra. In India's 50th year of Independence, a workshop on street theatre, craft, community singing and theatre. Rs. 250/- per person (lunch included). 10.00 am-4 pm (Contact: Vishalam at MCF, Tel: 4918943).

July 29 : 'Destinations', an exhibition of landscapes from the collection of The Gallery (at The Gallery).

August : Kalamkari and Ikkat Weaving Workshops. Also treasure hunt for children (6-12 only) at Dakshinachitra. (Contact: Vishalam at MCF, Tel: 4918943).

## Answers to Quiz

1. Indian Badminton Confederation; 2. Belonging to the Indian Army Service Corps, it is the world's longest-serving army mule; 3. Y.V. Chandrachud; 4. Validation of all out-of-turn allotments to government servants; 5. Azo Dyes; 6. Sanjukta Panigrahi; 7. \$ 6.7 billion; 8. The Navagraha Tour; 9. Maraimalai Adigal; 10. For biting the champion's ear; 11. R.C. Sharma; 12. Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR); 13.

It is a special club where an autograph of the member costs at least \$ 100; 14. All the national atomic clocks, to accommodate a leap second; 15. Epilepsy.

\* \* \*

16. Orirukkai village on the banks of the River Palar; 17. N.S.K. Salai, from Meenakshi College to the 80 ft. road; 18. A course in transfusion medicine; 19. S. Sharath; 20. M.S. Subbulakshmi.

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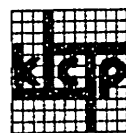
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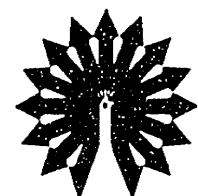
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