

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Cleaner waterways
- 100 years of Sanskrit teaching
- Adoption: Patience needed
- An online universe

Vol. XV No. 21

February 16-28, 2006

Rs. 5 per copy
(Annual Subscription: Rs. 100/-)

With this one, you won't have to worry about any junk SMS!

DELETE –

Preferably unread

For years, exasperated citizens have flung piles of unwanted junk-mail into protesting wastepaper baskets, cursing freely over this misuse of paper and their own time.

While that unfortunate situation continues unabated, another nuisance, more in tune with the techno-age, has been making its presence felt for a while now... the dreaded unwanted SMS.

Picture this. The cell-phone pings.

Great, you have a message.

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Ooo, guess what?! You can download the latest misguided creation of the flavour-of-the-month music maestro... FREE!!

You receive unsolicited advice on movies to see... or avoid, and on deals claiming to brighten your life.

In gathering wrath, you tell your unmoved phone that you didn't ask for this, being supremely disinterested in the movie and the deals.

As for the song ...for a brief second, you are tempted to send back a message imbued with the old Aurangzeb-spirit.

Cell-phones going off at inappropriate times are bad enough. How do you combat this deluge of unwanted messages cluttering up inboxes? Can the techno-savvy please advise?

You can only be thankful that those who invented these little pests had the foresight to include that very useful feature – the delete option.

Ranjitha Ashok

Community fests can do without hindrance

(By Vincent D' Souza)

The 2006 edition of the annual Sundaram Finance Mylapore Festival is slowly achieving what it has set out to do – bring communities to heritage zones for a celebration of art, culture and tradition. However, this year, the fest was challenged by some local business houses who just did not want such an event on the Mada Streets of Mylapore.

Two leading local shops, Radha Silks and NAC Jewellers, took the organisers, *Mylapore Times*, the city police and the sponsor, Sundaram

Finance, to court. That too, on the eve of the festival. And though the judge encouraged the fest to go on, – with restrictions – the hurdles upset the preparations for the fest.

The main events on Day One were delayed by 100 minutes, stalls put up to present the food fest and the handicrafts sale presented by self-help groups, had to be closed down midway because the court did not permit one main street to be used as the 'open venue'. Yet, Mylaporeans and their guests, young and old, enjoyed this festival held over four days in spaces around Sri Kapali Temple.

The fest is growing. Street décor has improved with simple street lamps in designer lampshades. The Art Street overflows as Fine Arts students from Stella Maris College set up street stalls – creating bags, jewellery, greeting cards, designing *mehndhi*, painting on canvas. The response excited the students so much that they are making plans for 2007!

The *kolam* contests on two weekends continued to be big hits – about 150-plus participating each evening. Visitors suggested that the carpet of *kolams* be preserved for two whole hours and traffic diverted, so that the *kolam* displays are turned into an exhibition.

The heritage tours on cycle-rickshaws received a bigger response – foreign tourists jumped into the queue this time. The big hit on the tour was the breakfast (of *pongal*, *vadai* and coffee) at the heritage house of Manjula and Natarajan on East Mada Street.

(Continued on Page 7)

A reminder to our readers

• It's that time of the year again. With the *Madras Musings* year coming to an end, it is time to remind subscribers to renew their subscriptions (Rs. 100 a year) and readers who have not yet sent in their subscriptions to do so. The annual subscription for *Madras Musings* is Rs. 100/-.

All subscriptions acknowledged by us from January 1, 2006 and subscriptions that we receive between now and April 16th will be considered as annual subscriptions for the year April 16, 2006 to April 15, 2007, Volume XVI. As for those who have sent in their subscriptions between April 16, 2005 and December 15, 2005, please renew your subscriptions as and when they fall due. *Madras Musings*, unfortunately, does not have any staff, but only a couple of part-time volunteers to help and, hence, is in no position to send you reminders.

When sending in your subscription, please send it to **Chennai Heritage** together with the coupon that appears on page 7, duly filled in, in full. We look forward to an enthusiastic response from readers, old and new.

— THE EDITOR

A more enlightened attitude to public space needed

(By Sriram V.)

A few days after the Mylapore Festival had, despite the odds, proved successful, the Editor of this journal wrote in his column in *The Hindu*, 'Madras Miscellany', "I'm delighted the Mylapore Festival has this year inspired Triplicane to make a small but successful beginning. Like the Mylapore Festival, I'm sure the Triplicane Festival will grow with the enthusiastic participation of the citizenry. The example of these two festivals, I'm also sure, will inspire other localised festivals in the city. I can see Royapuram following before long and perhaps Vadapalani and T'Nagar.

"A couple of years after the Mylapore Festival began, a corporate federation planned a Chennai Festival which, it hoped, it could slowly turn into a major tourist attraction, like the Dubai Festival. But with the corporate membership not prepared to devote time to organisation, the festival flopped during the two years it was attempted. Perhaps the way to go is for major corporates in the city to each adopt the festival in one area of the city – like Sundaram Finance has done the Mylapore Festival – then link them through the federation, and slowly develop a Chennai Festival.

"A Chennai Festival offering all the entertainment of these local festivals, together with the Music Festival and substantial discounts on food, clothing, jewellery and travel and entertainment tickets in the festival areas of the city, could be turned into a substantial attraction during the Christmas-New Year-Pongal season."

Apparently, some business houses do not think along these lines. They don't seem to see the business potential of such Festivals. Yet such festivals in many parts of the world drive business and urban economies.

The attitude of a couple of business houses in the Mylapore area that attempted to dampen the enthusiasm the festival had generated was truly surprising.

The festival was being held in a public space and not within their premises. The festival was attracting a large crowd rather than preventing it from coming in. This would only have a positive impact on business.

The area known as Mangollai, which is at the intersection of North and East Mada Streets, often has political meetings causing complete chaos in traffic (on February 14th evening, for instance) and putting local residents to great sufferings owing to loudspeakers. These business houses do not appear to see those meetings as causing business losses.

What about the general fall in business volumes owing to more and more people seeing Mylapore as a chaotic spot and therefore taking their custom elsewhere? Also, going by the same logic, will these business houses also ask for stoppage of the 'Arupattu Moovar' festival as that attracts far greater crowds and stops all traffic for far longer than any neighbourhood festival? Finally one more issue emerges. How can a few business establishments try and look at their own narrow interests at the expense of those of the entire neighbourhood? Have the festivals not created a positive atmosphere among the residents of the area? Should their views also not be taken into consideration?

It is to be hoped that a better sense of cooperation will prevail in the coming years and these establishments, rather than obstruct, will become active participants and encourage the festival. But that needs a complete change of attitude towards public spaces.

Cleaner waterways — for how long?

In 2001, the National River Conservation Authority (NRCA) issued the statement that "All the projects of River Action Plans in future will be formulated in an integrated and holistic manner by addressing not only the issue of river pollution but that of other components like internal sewage, low cost sanitation, solid waste disposal etc." According to Dr. Dirk Walther, Centre for Environmental Studies (CES), Anna University, the Chennai City River Conservation Plan (CCRCP) can be considered "as the most recent and probably advanced example under the National River Conservation Project (NRCP)."

The reason is that the CCRCP is very focussed.

"Though the size of the waterways in Chennai is minor

compared to rivers like the Ganga or the Yamuna, from the point of pollution, they are very, very polluted. The monitoring of the waterways actually began in April 2005, at a very crucial phase of the CCRCP. The Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) were being commissioned in August and the major outfalls had been closed. It was also in the absolutely dry season, when the water we found was actually highly concentrated sewage. With the major rains that we received bringing about an extreme dilution effect, the point now is to ascertain how far it has been improved due to the cleaning measures or the rains," he says. But with the Ministry of Environment and Forests recently dropping the necessity for the parameter of flow measurement, an important component that can provide much accurate scientific data, may not be considered.

The acceptable value for Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) in India is 20 mg/lit, and for Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) around 250 mg/lit (in Germany it is 100 mg/lit). "In April 2005, the COD of the Cooum was very high, similar to the COD of water in a raw sewage plant. The ecosystem of the river was in a state of total collapse. By December, the COD and BOD had met with requirements given by Government regulations. While point sources are easily identified and addressed, it is the non-point sources, the many small diffused inputs of pollution – housing on the banks, dirt thrown in the river, and using the waterway as a public convenience – that are numerous and difficult to handle", confirms a source at the CES.

The CCRCP was formulated in 1999 – and comprised components such as desilting and removal of sand bars in the Cooum and Adyar, rehabilitation and resettlement of untreated sewage flow reaching waterways, and micro drainage/storm water drainage works. It was to cost Rs. 1700 crore (subsequently, this cost has been reduced to Rs. 1200 crore). Sixteen packages make up the Detailed Project Report of the CCRCP. Packages 1-12 comprise movements to interceptors, pumping mains and pumping stations. Packages 13-16 comprise construction of additional sewage treatments plants with a total capacity of 264 mld, viz Perungdi 54 mld, Koyambedu 60 mld, Nesappakkam 40 mld, and Kodungaiyur 110 mld. The Chennai

Metrowater Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) was the implementing agency. Work commenced in May 2001 and was to be completed by March 2005.

With the project nearing completion, a study on the actual number of sewage outfalls reaching the waterways was initiated so as to ensure that all these outfalls were plugged by the time the CCRCP reached completion. This involved 12 senior engineers from the PWD, TNPCB, TNSCB, Corporation of Chennai, CMWSSB, and the Environment Management Agency of Tamil Nadu, one PG student from the CES, Anna University, and one Superintendent from Environmental Monitoring Agency of Tamil Nadu. Each team was assigned a river/canal and the study was conducted three days a week between 20.12.2004 and 2.02.2005.

The results recorded by the CES mention 396 sewage outfalls, 47 with heavy sewage flow, 277 with mild flow, 28 with trace flow, 14 wet and 30 in a stagnant condition. Out of the 96 new outfalls identified, 8 recorded heavy sewage flow, 54 mild sewage flow, 7 trace, 2

● by
SHOBHA MENON

wet, 6 stagnant and 19 were dry. Meanwhile sewage outfalls had also increased from 356 in 1995 to 396 in 2005. Heavy flow of sewage increased from 32 to 47, mild sewage flow had reduced from 290 to 277, while no flow conditions increased from 117 in 1995 to 186 in 2005.

By late 2005, the status record at the CMWSSB on the progress of the work showed that 59,167 m of interceptors, 46,144 m of gravity and pumping mains, and 31 pumping stations had been completed. Of the four STPs, only the one at Kodungaiyur remains to be, and will be, commissioned before 31.3.06 – it awaits only the last stretch of work, to the sewage point 1.2 km away. The one at Koyambedu is a Zero Energy project, which means the STP produces gas that is reused to run the plant. Nesappakkam is stabilising, and was due to be commissioned. In January 2006, an official at the CMWSSB said, "Of the 40 outlets that continue to pollute, 7 are from Metrowater sources and are being addressed. They would have been completed by October, but got delayed due to the heavy rains. The other 33 are from private residences and the

Action taken under CCRCP

- Interceptors – 59.167 km completed
- Pumping Station – 31 Pumping Stations completed
- Pumping mains / Gravity mains – 46.044 km completed
- As part of the programme to resettle 8164 slum families, Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board has already completed the construction of 3000 tenements in Okkium Thuraipakkam
- Desilting and resection of main Cooum and Adyar Rivers within Chennai City
- Construction of flood defences and resection of drains in Chennai Metropolitan Area
- Removal of sandbar and prevention of sandbar formation at the mouths of the Cooum and Adyar Rivers
- Mapping of outfalls
- Closure of outfalls
- Monitoring of water quality in waterways and STPs

The Government of India component towards the CCRCP is Rs.491.52 crore. The State component through the PWD, which is in charge of macro drainage, desilting and removal of sandbars in the Cooum and Adyar Rivers and improvement to river banks, is Rs.236.90 crore. The Chennai Corporation is in charge of the micro drainage and solid waste management, construction of stormwater drains, and desilting of canals (Rs. 109.25 crore). The TNSCB is involved in resettlement and rehabilitation of slum dwellers living on the river banks. The CMDA has completed 5164 houses at Semmencheri, and the CMDP 1404 tenements. The CMWSSB's outlay is Rs.228.63 crore. The project formulation, monitoring and coordination is done by the CMDA (Rs.20.20 crore).

residents will have to be persuaded, may be even coerced, to stop polluting."

A source at the Directorate of Environment, which is the nodal agency for the project, says, "Whatever the nature of the debate on this issue, public involvement through awareness campaigns is the only way to clean up waterways. Every Department involved in the process must budget for awareness campaigns. Each must address its own responsibilities to bring about change. There is excellent coordination between the departments involved."

Though 5000 tenements are ready at Semmancheri, only families from 3000 tenements have been relocated (of a total of 33,000 tenements). The Directorate of Environment is firm that all slums on banks must be shifted. "The slackness of the PWD, that is the mandatory body in charge of waterbodies, has caused the whole problem. This is the time political leaders and heads of departments should capitalise on the flooding issue to resettle slum dwellers and remove encroachments, either by legal action, coercion or by persuasion," says a retired government official.

"How can we insist on these people to feel concerned about the environment, when they're too poor to even have the barest necessities? Legal intervention cannot work. Cross subsidi-

sation is a better alternative that the Government should think of," feels another expert. And says another, "The Metrowater needs help from other agencies involved to handle this tricky issue. All concerned should do their work and involve the community in waterbody protection on a sustained basis. Educating with sensitivity on every individual's stake in the environment is important. Suggestions like separate protection forces for waterbodies will only create undue conflict."

Says Prof. Walther, "Tackling the issue by creating awareness, and providing relevant solutions go hand in hand. There has been a lot of support from the Directorate of Environment that has always been ready to gather stakeholders whenever issues have been raised. However, it is important to understand that every intervention needs to be sustained. The public can be easily motivated, but also easily disheartened. The River Rhine took 20 years to clean up! Cleaning is not the issue here, maintenance is! Now the pollution level in Chennai's waterways has come down to a bit more than 50%. Will it continue to remain so, is the question."

An official wonders, "Like taking a horse to the water, we've carried out all the preliminary measures for clean waterways, but how we are going to make it drink is the point?"

Monitoring of city's waterways

Chennai waterways have since April 2005 been monitored under the NRCP thus:

- 24 sampling stations in 6 waterways
- 8 sampling stations at inlets and outlets of 4 STP locations
- Analysis of 15 parameters on a monthly basis
- Analysis of 25 parameters on a yearly basis
- Sampling date is 11th of every month
- Duration, 5 years from April 2005

Says a senior official at the DOE, "The cleaning of the waterways is almost complete. As for the few missing links, details have to be approved by the GOI. All the river systems within the city have been treated. However, unless we check the many panchayats and municipalities that continue to cause pollution, it will continue to remain unclear. The four zero waste STPs commissioned use the latest technology and are zero energy consuming – with energy required for maintenance being generated by the waste itself in a process called biomethanation.

"The most positive evidence is that there is no stench as you cross the waterways. By March, the entire sewage of Chennai will be taken care of at the STPs. But it is necessary for the Corporation to put in place well-maintained pay-and-use latrines, and similar sanitation measures for this cleaning effect to be sustained."

Shobha M

A big 'Thank You' to 17 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.1.06 and 15.2.06, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *MADRAS MUSINGS*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

— Chennai Heritage

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OUR
READERS
WRITE



Waves and water

Although the article 'Those waves of destruction' (MM, January 1st) referred only to the tsunami of 856 A.D. (perhaps recorded), there were tsunamis in the 5th Century B.C. and 3rd Century B.C. The Pandyan capitals of the first and second Sangam periods were on the coast and were engulfed by the sea. They then moved their capital inland to Madurai and this was the third Sangam.

The article also refers to the Andaman and Nicobar tribes making it to high ground after observing animals during the tsunami. A similar scene is described in the Sangam literature, *Purapporul Venpamalai*, where the mountains re-appeared after the deluge and the local tribes were found on the trees!

The African descent of the Andaman tribes and even the tribes in the Gir forest of Gujarat are explained by the fact that it was one land-mass from Africa to India to Indochina to Australia. Early man moved on this land-mass which was engulfed by the sea over millions of years. DNA studies of these tribes, including the Maoris of New Zealand, seem to prove this.

This kind of sea action still continues as is evident from the world map. Increasing global warming and melting of the ice in Antarctica as well as the consequent rising of sea-levels accentuated by earthquakes are bound to engulf more portions of the ocean-rim of various countries in the coming years. The Maldives are already threatened. Sri Lanka and peninsular India will also have to face loss of land.

Another article in the same issue was the one by Shobha Menon on the deluge Tamil Nadu suffered recently. This was due to bad water management and of the environment. During the Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagar periods, the department of irrigation was kept with the Central Government and was not given to the local governments. Only the maintenance of lakes was

with the local authorities. Besides, punishment was severe for tampering with lakes and waterways. With the recent abolition of Maniyakarans and Karnams, those who prevented encroachments, and the introduction of Village Administrative Officers, who hardly remain in their villages, our lakes have disappeared under encroachments and local panchayats merrily tamper with the water systems.

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Censorship information

I was an NRI, now back in India. I am also a postal history collector and a member of Civil Censor Study Group, UK. This group focusses on all aspects of postal censorship which was imposed during World Wars I and II in India and other British dominions.

Even though the initial work was done by Brig. D.S. Virk in 1983 in his published article *Postal Censorship in India 1939-1945*, all subsequent updates, and the only definitive book on this subject, have been written by a German collector, K. Morenweiser, in his monograph called *British Empire Censorship Devices, World War II*.

For the World War I period, there is only one monograph available and that was written by a British collector, Alan Baker, and published by Chavril Press, UK. I am attempting to update it and fill in the many gaps in the information it contains.

Madras was one of the major censor stations during both Wars, but not much information is available on the extent of censorship done, the guidelines, the location etc. There were also interesting periods during the World War II when St. Thomas' Mount was used as an assembly camp for German civilians arrested by the British in September 1939, before they were sent to various Internment/Family/Parole camps. Kodikanal had a Parole camp for families during 1942-1945 and Yercaud housed Parole camps for women and children during both Wars. We have no information on these.

The study of World War II

The article by your Special Correspondent on 52 years of motor racing in Madras reminded me of a few anecdotes. As I was directly involved in them, I hope readers will forgive the use of the singular number first person "I" in several places.

In 1951-52, a group of motorcyclists started the Twin Wheelers Motor Cycle Club. We used to conduct our own meets, such as beach racing near Kovalam, and gang rides to places close at hand. Later, this club became The Challengers Motorcycle Club. There was no motor sports club in the city before this. It was during this time that some car enthusiasts began planning to start a Motor Car Club. The meetings used to take place in the motor cycle parking lot of Devi Theatre where there was a foreigner by name Vyvodek (spelling forgotten), who ran a workshop for cars. People like R. D' Souza (Boo), Donner, Belgamwala, Varugis, Strong, etc., used to meet there. These stalwarts interested in motor racing formed the Madras Motor Sports Club.

The story of Varugis and Reg Strong (NOT Rex to the best of my knowledge) regarding their race from *Chesney Hall to Catholic Centre* is correct. The first-ever meet of the Motor Sports Club was a Drag Race of 1/4 mile in a straight line using the Sholavaram air strip from north to south on the north-south runway. I came first on my Triumph Speed Twin, 500 cc, in this meet. At this juncture, an Englishman by the name John Dye, came up and said to me, "I wish I had a bloody bike", I said to him "take mine". He did so and beat my timing by 1 1/2 seconds. He had done some racing in England and it just goes to show how experience pays.

and said to myself that if Mr. Menuhin has to practise after all these years, what is the use? So I have quit." Fortunately, reader Gautham and others didn't.

I would be very interested to get in touch with anyone in Madras who has information on these matters or who could point me in the right direction so that the existing knowledge bank can be updated.

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Practising perfection

Reader B. Gautam's letter (MM, January 16th) regarding Zubin Mehta's concert in the Music Academy reminded more of a humorous article in *Reader's Digest*, 'McEvoy in Nurseryland', in which the author, J.P. McEvoy, recounts how his two children did not practise their piano lessons and, to inspire them, he had asked his friend Yehudi Menuhin, the world-famous violinist, who was on a visit to his town to be his guest, to provide the inspiration. Menuhin was rehearsing/practising for that night's performance in his room and the children raptly watched him practising. Their father hoped that they would similarly practise on their piano. But, alas, they did no such thing and when asked, why they hadn't, one of them replied. "Well, Daddy, I have been thinking about Mr. Menuhin

Memories of another motor racing day

The second event was a Scavenger Hunt. It was about 112 km and started and ended at the Gym Club. We had to go and collect various items and write down certain information. One of the items was to collect a petrol bill from Pallavaram. Also the latest weather report from the control tower at Minambakkam. Can you imagine this happening today!! Another item was to pick up a live animal but not your pet. Rao picked up a small baby goat at Pallavaram. Then we had to pick up a spare wheel but not your own. My friend Rao, riding a Bullet, had a pillion passenger. Hari Rao and I were riding solo, I decided to pick an ant and put it into a match box, as I could not possibly collect the other two items mentioned. Joga Rao won the first prize. I got a bottle of beer at the Gym as booby prize.

I was called upon to lay a Moto Cross for two-wheelers at the new track at Irungattukottai without any financial help. This was to prove to the villagers that we owned the land. Now I was in a quandary as to how to arrange the jumps. The only natural jump was the dry canal. The other jumps were small mud bunds separating one field from the other. This was horrible, as poor front shocks were completely bottoming and many riders came off their bikes. But at least we did ground breaking with footrests and fallen bikes and riders. The next item was off road event for cars. The rest is history as mentioned in the articles in *Madras Musings*.

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teur magic tricks, the 70-year old house in which the art centre is located was also part of my boyhood."

This has been edited to read:

"Not only was the old house a part of my boyhood, but its owner, a distant relative who was a big hit with the younger generation with his jokes and amateur magic tricks, was part of my boyhood."

V. Ramnarayan

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Editor's Note: We regret the error, particularly the inadvertent omission re. the opening of the centre by Advocate General N.R. Chandran.

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

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

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

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

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

THE EDITOR

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For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: MADRAS MUSINGS, C/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

On editorial matters: The Editor, MADRAS MUSINGS, C/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

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

THE EDITOR

100 years of making an ancient language come alive

A recent nine-day conference on 'Samskrtam and Samsriti' had renowned Sanskrit scholars from across the country presenting papers on Ayurveda, Architecture, Music, Dance, and 'Sanskrit as the basis for all the world languages'. The Conference, that included an *upanyasam* on the *Valmiki Ramayanam* by Sri Krishnapremi Swamigal, marked the formal initiation of the centenary celebrations of the Madras Sanskrit College a few weeks ago.

The Madras Sanskrit College came into being due to the zeal of V. Krishnaswami Iyer, a legal luminary and philanthro-

by Shobha Menon

ery student would be enabled to acquire a decent knowledge of the English language and "the methods and results of Oriental Research hitherto conducted by European scholars" so that he "may assimilate the result of modern scholarship and appreciate and utilise the value of ancient teachings in the light of modern criticism."

On February 1, 1906, the Madras Sanskrit College began to function in a rented building belonging to Sir Bashyam Iyengar in Pelathope. A committee was formed by V. Krishnaswami Iyer, Rao Bahadur A.

Department of Public Instruction and placed in the list of aided institutions, entitled to a grant of Rs 1000. And thus the Madras Sanskrit College excelled over the Sanskrit Colleges founded in the neighbouring princely states of Mysore and Travancore. English was regularly taught for a long time, and the College's first Principal, Kuppuswami Shastri, a Pandit and an M.A. held regular classes in criticism and comparative and critical studies. For a few years, there was even a healthy collaboration between the M. A. University classes and the Sanskrit College. With the development



The first building of the Madras Sanskrit College.

pist, at a point when Sanskrit had received a fillip due to the interest of Western orientalists and a fresh awareness had been created within the nation itself of the cultural heritage of India. However, even while reports in the late 19th Century by English academicians clearly enunciated the intrinsic value of Sanskrit and its usefulness to enrich the vernaculars as well as scientific, philosophical and other branches of modern study, the Government—which had begun to follow a policy of opening English schools and colleges—felt that Sanskrit colleges could be left to the princely states where they could receive support from the maharajahs.

Krishnaswami Iyer, whose hope was that Sanskrit should be studied in the traditional manner, felt that it should also be guided by "English-educated Sanskritists" and that ev-

Krishnaswami Iyer and A. S. Balasubramanyam Iyer. On October 7, 1907, the Trust deed was registered, with the committee members and Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar as the first Trustees. Krishnaswami Iyer was a philanthropist exemplary. Whenever there was a need expressed by the College, he donated liberally—over a period, about Rs 50,000! Other benefactors helped through donations and scholarships, so that all students could be provided the benefit of free education in Sanskrit.

Every student was to study the basic preliminary works in *Vyakarana* (Grammar), *Tharka*, *Mimamsa* (Interpretation of Vedic Texts) and other special branches. The period of study was five years, at the end of which the 'Visarada' certificate was awarded in the different branches. In 1907, the institution was recognised by the

of Universities and the introduction of the Honours and M.A. Course in Sanskrit there resulted a bifurcation of Sanskrit studies, the Oriental Title courses concentrating on traditional mastery of Shastras as their *raison d'etre* and the Degree course concentrating on traditional mastery of comparative and historical studies.

The College buildings and the hostel were completed by 1910. By 1912, the College was affiliated to the University of Madras in the branches *Vedanta* and *Mimamsa*. The Oriental Titles examination was introduced. The average number of students in that period was 25. When the College became affiliated to the Sahitya group of the University, numbers increased to 40. The students who'd passed the Siromani exam usually went into employment as Sanskrit Pandits in High Schools and Colleges. But



V. Krishnaswami Iyer.
Founder, Madras Sanskrit College.



A. Krishnaswami Iyer.
Member 1906-1918;
Secretary 1918-1937.

by 1948, Sanskrit was becoming an alternative to the first language, and then the third language and the numbers began to dwindle.

Distinguished visitors to the College included Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindarnath Tagore, C.D. Deshmukh, G.D. Birla, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Rajaji, learned professors of many foreign universities, Dr. Annie Besant and others. The Kanchi Mahaswami and Swami Dayananda Saraswathi regularly stayed in the College and gave discourses.

The golden jubilee of the Madras Sanskrit College was celebrated on January 27, 1957 under the Presidency of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, then Vice-President of India, with Dr. C.P.R. Iyer presiding over a Vidwat Sadas. As an institution in "real national service" its noble work was commended by K.M. Munshi as "the premier college in South India for the higher studies of Vedanta, Mimamsa and Sahitya." Hailed as "a landmark in the cultural history of this part of the country," its establishment and its founder's "tremendous faith in the undying vitality of immortal traditions" were lauded and vouched for as "abundantly justified" by Raghunatha Aiyar, then a Committee Member.

The Madras Sanskrit College's service to Sanskrit and preservation of Indian culture has been recognised by the Government of India through the grant of financial assistance under the Adharsha Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya scheme since 1977. A scheme for the study of Veda Bashya has been supported by the Ministry of Education, Sanskrit Board, with assistance of 75% of the total expenditure of the classes and 95% of salaries being granted. The College currently offers Siromani courses of the University of Madras in Sahitya (Literature), *Vyakarana* (Grammar), *Jyotisha* (Ancient

Mathematics, Astronomy, Astrology), *Vedanta* (Philosophy), *Mimamsa* (Interpretation of Vedic Texts) and *Nyaya* (Logic) sastras. Around 100 students study and conduct research at the institution. Free boarding and lodging facilities are provided.

B. Madhavan, the Secretary of the Trust since 1988, and the grandson of Krishnaswami Iyer, says, "In order to move with the times while retaining old values, computer teaching has been included in the College, and library facilities are also being computerised this academic year. It would be good if the Central and State governments extend support in the renovation of the College building in this centenary year, in the cause of heritage and culture. Extension of aid to teaching of the *Nyaya Shastra* (introduced six years ago)—that has hitherto not been supported—would also help greatly." The celebrations planned for the centenary include Vidwat Sadas, conferences, seminars and workshops, Vedic demonstrations, souvenir etc.

"Many students from foreign universities come as research scholars, stay for 3-9 months or more and avail of the facilities at the Kuppuswami Shastri Research Institute (KSRI), a Centre for Indological research, a treasure house with more than 50,000 books and over 10,000 back volumes of journals, that is open to Ph.D. scholars and the public," says Dr. Kameshwari, its Director. The College Library has over 20,000 rare books on the *Sastras*, but unfortunately has no space of its own (it is currently housed in the KSRI). Funds are needed to improve all these facilities and it is hoped, the Centenary Celebrations will help donors to recognise the College's requirements if it is to contribute even more meaningfully to preserve what we have called "this magnificent inheritance."

Adoption: Infinite patience needed

(A sequel to last fortnight's review of *My Temporary Son*)

In his book, *My Temporary Son*, Timeri N. Murari states, "To legally adopt an Indian child, a couple must have infinite patience."

The trustees of the 25-year-old Karna Prayag Trust's Welfare Centre for Women and Children, Uma Narayanan, Purna Shankar and Dr. K.R. Rajanarayanan, spoke about adoption processes and the length of time involved.

Yes, it does take time, they assert, especially in the case of 'inter-country' adoptions as compared to 'in-country adoptions', where the time taken can vary from three months to a year. Many people have this misconception that adoption is an instantaneous process, that they can walk into an agency and pick up a baby. It does not work that way. Dr. Rajanarayanan states firmly, "We give priorities to the babies, not the parents. It is not the yearning of the parents that is being satisfied here, however sympathetic you might feel towards them."

Legal and medical forces, in-house pediatricians, or those connected with the agency, and the Department of Social Justice have to clear each baby for adoption. In the case of abandoned babies, each case has to be reported to the police

left in foster care, with people who are willing to care for them until parents are found for them. The agency is required to check on these foster parents. Legal clearances are required even for foster care, with the Social Welfare Departments being kept informed at all times.



When prospective parents approach the agency with adoption in view, they are subjected to a pre-adoption counselling session, involving social workers and psychologists. This helps determine why the couple has chosen adoption. Forms have to be filled with guidelines in keeping with the rules laid by the national-level Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA), the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the State-run Voluntary Co-ordinating Agency

(VCA). This takes time, as it requires the procurement of many different certificates.

The profile of the parents who choose adoption cuts across the entire social gamut, defying any attempt to categorise them. Invariably, Indian parents opt for adoption when they do not have children

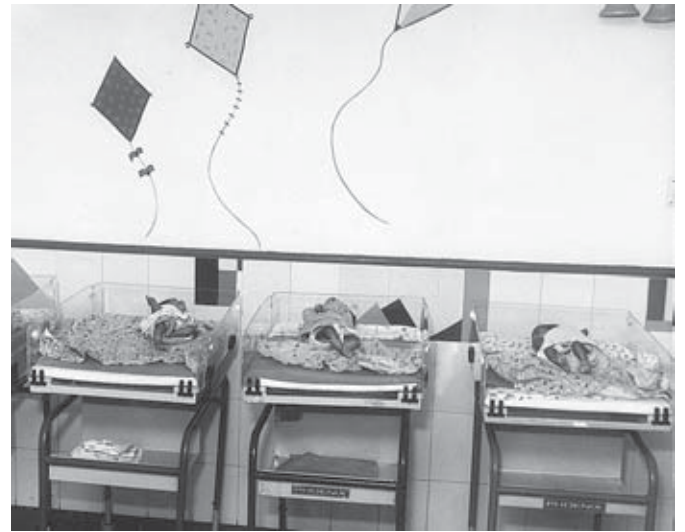
of their own, although there are a few exceptions. One healthy trend the Trustees speak of is that in Tamil Nadu more and more couples are choosing baby girls, particularly in the last five or six years. "This is an indication of a positive social change," they declare.

"We don't go by income," Dr. Rajanarayanan states. Earning capacities are checked, but are not high priority. The in-depth and detailed 'home studies' carried out by the agency's social workers are more important, as they provide a better picture of prospective homes, including the extended family. After the reports are carefully scrutinised, prospective parents are called in for an interview to meet the Trustees. The Trustees, with certain children in mind deemed ready for adoption, try to 'match' the child with a particular set of parents. Babies are not 'shown' to the parents, nor are prospective parents allowed to wander through nurseries, 'choosing' babies. There are certain rules that ap-



by the agency in the picture. When babies are 'surrendered', the parent, or whoever is doing the handing over, has to give a document or certificate to that effect, having signed it in the presence of a notary public. Records are maintained regarding the person who surrendered the baby. If, years later, children come back in search of their biological parents, the agencies are expected to furnish this information.

There are agencies in some cities that do not have nursery facilities. Babies are therefore



ply here. For example, if your first child is a boy, then you have to adopt a girl.

When a 'match' is found, the parents are called in, and that is when they 'see' their baby for the first time. Obviously, this is a very crucial meeting, and the trustees watch the parents very closely – their body language, their emotions. "That first second, when they set eyes on their baby for the first time, gives you so much information," says Dr. Rajanarayanan, adding that gut feeling, instincts and sheer experience help them 'read' the situation. "There are so many different reactions. Many begin to weep; in some cases, the husband leaps up, gathers the child, and hands him or her to his wife. This gives us an idea of how supportive a father this man is going to be."

At this point, the choice is with the parents. They can

smooth. There have been very few instances where babies have come back. But it sometimes happens that, even after such stringent scrutinies, the agency discovers that lies have been told, facts fabricated. At the first sign of any such discrepancy, the baby is taken back. At times, the parents are overwhelmed, and find, for a variety of reasons, that they just cannot handle the situation. They are then advised to bring the baby back. But these instances are extremely rare. There have been times when everything begins very well. Then, tragically, during the temporary custody phase, the child contracts a rare or deadly illness. Although they can, strictly speaking, return the child at this point, people don't. They tell the agency that this child was given to them; they'll take everything that comes with the territory. Many babies

● by **RANJITHA ASHOK**

decide immediately if they want the baby or not.

They are expected to take the baby to a pediatrician of their choice, accompanied by a designated social worker. "We tell the parents – to the extent both you and we can – let's make sure the child is healthy." In some cases, certain problems cannot be detected early. They can, and do, surface later. If, after this visit, they do accept the baby, a period of time is allotted for temporary custody, at the end of which the parents are given a chance to change their minds. During this period, social workers check on the child, with and without notice. This period of temporary custody helps both sides – the agency, and the new parents – to decide if this is going to work. During the period of temporary custody, if the couple has to travel outside the city, they have to inform the authorities.

The process is generally

All pictures are of infants at Karna Prayag awaiting adoption.

subsequently do very well. "This is so heartwarming," say the trustees.

"Wherever they are sent and grow up, there does come a time in all their lives when a child asks, 'Who am I?'" says Uma.

"All of them seek closure of some kind", says Purna. "They need to be told that they are very special to the parents who 'chose' them."

Sadly, there is still a demand for 'fair' babies. And a few, very few, Indian parents come forward to adopt special needs children.

Inter-country adoptions work better for special needs children. Purna explains this.

"Apart from sheer generosity, the fact is that they have the wherewithal to support special needs children. Their social systems offer facilities, foster-care money, special schooling... there is a very effective support system that works most efficiently; there is still a distinct

(Continued on Page 8)

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Why was the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in the world news for all the 'wrong' reasons recently?
2. Who were the three victims of Irfan Pathan during his historic hat-trick recently?
3. How many grand slam crowns has Mahesh Bhupathi won till date?
4. The world celebrated the 250th birth anniversary of which legendary Salzburg-born composer on January 27th?
5. Which Islamist group swept the Palestinian parliamentary elections recently?
6. Name the Sikh included in England's cricket team to tour India in the next few weeks.
7. Who was the chief guest at this year's Republic Day Parade in New Delhi?
8. What distinction has *Paedocypris progenetica*, a member of the carp family found in Sumatra, achieved?
9. Name the (now ex) Governor of Bihar pulled up by the Supreme Court for the dissolution of the State Assembly last year.
10. Name the spacecraft that blasted off from Florida on January 19th for the first-ever mission to Pluto.
- * * *
11. What portfolio has been given to the Congress leader G.K. Vasan?
12. Name the Managing Partner of the high-profile RmKV & Sons who was killed in a road accident recently.
13. What did AV stand for in A.V. Meiyappan's name?
14. Which Tamil film was the first to have playback singing?
15. What distinction does Sir Benegal Narsingh Rao, a resident of T.P. Koil Street, have in the history of world law?
16. Of the Southern Railway's five divisions, three are in Tamil Nadu. Where?
17. What public office does N. Muruganandam hold in the city?
18. Which respected place of learning in Mylapore completed 100 years of spreading knowledge after it was started on February 1, 1906?
19. Name the three Padma Bhushan recipients (including one posthumously) from Tamil Nadu this year.
20. In which district has the Centre sanctioned 430 acres of salt land for Maritime and IT complexes.

(Answers on page 8)

The modern Trishanku's abode

"I had a fantasy," Nancy wrote on her last blog post for 2005. She even had a title for it – *A Weekend at the Oceanic*. "People dressed in elegant clothes with a crumbling building in the background. Nadira in a glittering long gown singing the hit from *Shree 420* 'mudmudke na dekh' (Don't turn around)."

The crumbling building in the fantasy is real. It is the Hotel Oceanic on San Thome High Road. Once a glamorous place, this defunct hotel may soon become another victim of the building boom which is completely transfiguring the city. Reading about the possible demolition on Nancy's blog 'Under the Fire Star', I was stunned by this rich imagery. Nancy Gandhi, an "outsider in Chennai", grew up in the East Coast of the US. Her blog always celebrates the small joys of living in Madras and this is not the first time Nancy has astounded me with her aesthetic perception and keen understanding of the place.

In a manner of speaking, Nancy and I have traded places because now I am the New Englander who endures bitterly cold winters. A non-resident Indian, I read two "local" online newspapers daily – one from the place where I live now (Boston) and another from the city I grew up in (Madras). I was happy when the Red Sox won the World Series baseball championship after 83 years while the recent monsoon in Madras, following years of drought, made me ecstatic. Like most people who can call two countries home, I love this new virtual space where I can talk about my hybrid experiences.

My blog 'Apropos of Nothing' connects me to other global souls as well as people who are happily rooted in one place. Many 'Madrasis' muse on the Internet, whatever their current location. For those who have moved away for higher studies or jobs abroad, nostalgia has struck sooner. When the NRI viewpoints get too tinged with nostalgia, the current residents are quick to offer them reality checks. 'Chennai Central', Thennavan's blog, has an exhaustive list of people who are united by their love for the old city. Some of these bloggers grew up in Madras, for some it is a temporary halt, and there are others like Nancy Gandhi who call it Home. Each of them had a unique perspective on the city and its charms.

"Our first observation is that it is very sticky in Chennai. Everywhere all the time, 24/7, all sticky, all the time." This is the

first blog entry of Yitzy and Esmerelda, two New Zealanders, who will be living in Chennai for an unknown period of time. Kiruba, a native of the city, says in his eponymous blog, "Those who know me know my passion for cycling. What most don't know is that I'd love to sweat, profusely at that. And I love the heat, love Madras for that."

"Like I said, I love to sweat," he continues. One of the best compliments he has received, he says, is when a colleague saw his sweat-soaked shirt and stopped to ask him "Kribs is it raining outside?" This popular blogger shot into prominence with his efforts to help tsunami victims. His readers pitched in financially, because they already 'knew' Kiruba and trusted him to use the money well.

The largest percentage of bloggers on 'Chennai Central' is from the US. 'Lazy Geek',

Filthy, funny, flawed, gorgeous. The name of the blog lists the attributes of this London blogger's personality. 'Ammani' is renowned for her haiku-like short-shorts which she terms 'Quick Tales'. Sample this:

She married one, loved another.

He became her husband, the other her password.

Writer Sujatha mentioned this quick tale titled "Secret" as the poem of the week in his *Ananda Vikatan* column. 'Ammani' maintains a vegetarian food blog called 'Chai Pani'.

Apart from being a skilful word-crafter, 'Ammani' is a mother and a marathoner. While she creates poetry with words, R. Balaji of 'in Camera' entrances us with the visual lyricism of his photoblog. Though he claims to be an amateur, his

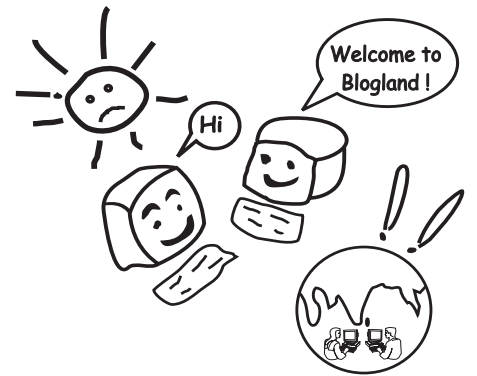
● by **VIJAYSREE VENKATRAMAN**

who welcomes you to drop in at <http://tilotamma.blogspot.com>

who used to keep readers posted about happenings in the city, is currently on assignment in Seattle. His blog's byline is "celebrating literature, fine arts and of course life". His readers are mainly Tamil movie aficionados who are delighted to find a public forum to discuss the many joys of Kamal-Rajni starrers and the prospects of the newer contenders to this duo's thrones.

Egged on by his readership to constantly dish out more news from Kollywood, a recent, 'Lazy Geek' post came even with the disclaimer, "May not be all that interesting as these are personal posts." He continues, "I just wanted to register interesting and funny stuff about childhood in Chennai. These were one of the prime intentions when starting the blog. Along the way, I drifted elsewhere and now I'm trying hard to get back the original groove."

This may never happen because 'Lazy Geek's' devoted readership voted him a Lifetime achiever at the Indibloggies in 2005. In the blogosphere, there is a thing as being the victim of your own popularity. 'Teakada', a bi-lingual Tamil Nadu-Focused blog, was an excellent hangout for those who want to catch up with the latest on politics and movies in the State. Of late, the 'Teakada' 'master', 'Instant Kaapi' seems to have lost interest in the proceedings and let things drift.



come to class when she had her periods. The reason was that, if she were to touch these instruments – these pure, manifestations of god – "cracks and tears would develop" consequent to the pollution. The common practices of a traditional city seem truly ridiculous when seen through the eyes of the outsider.

'Hawkeye', a Michigan-based blogger, talks about the traditional unquestioning attitude of most young men in Madras who hardly ever take their own decisions on important matters. "I have seen people consulting their parents before switching jobs, making career decisions, buying diapers for their children, etc. This is not a virtue. Parents don't know stuff and even if they know they sometimes should not be consulted. Most parents are bankers, retired government folks or owners of provision stores. There is a good chance that they do not know anything about your work or the kind of lifestyle your work dictates. So how does being a parent make one special enough to advise his/her children?" he asks reasonably.

The 'Dabbler' has a heartwarming story to share with his readers. "Aachi, how do you make such wonderful *idlis*?" people have asked his mother for years. She has now turned her expertise into a business and sells *idli* better to the grocery store. The shopkeeper said, "You are using high quality rice. Normally people use ration rice, so why don't you also do the same?" 'Dabbler' says, "The board of directors of the business (myself, my father and mother) sat together and decided that quality is more important and we would not sacrifice that." There is a spring in his mother's step, he says, which comes from doing something entirely on her own.

The inhabitants of the blogosphere share their interesting stories through this vibrant new medium which has managed to create a virtual community. It resonates with thoughts and ideas which we don't have the time and space to share in the real world. In a metaphorical sense, the blogosphere is the modern version of Trishanku's heaven. It is neither paradise nor earth – it is something in-between – a specially designed online universe for global souls.

COMMUNITY FESTS

(Continued from Page 1)

New ideas to tap into the community to enlarge the fest worked.

Ten families whose craft-works made up their annual Navaratri *kolu* displays in their houses created an exhibition with their displays.

Then, art teacher Sasikrishnan brought his students from Chettinad Vidyashram, stretched out a canvas, and worked on a Mylapore theme. Visiting children daubed a bit. Clearly, schools want to get involved.

The Kalaripayattu performed by youngsters on the main stage on Sunday (courtesy – Aseema Trust) made a huge impression, especially on young people. The team had just flown in from Spain, after taking part in a Gift of Magi fest in Madrid.

Ten women, skilled in different crafts, were resource people for weekend workshops that drew a sizeable crowd of women, including women in purdah.

So what prompted some business houses to go to court to halt a community event in a heritage zone?

Over the years, as the annual *kolam* contest grew into the Festival, and came out into the open, its contours took on a different shape. Events have been designed to involve dif-

ferent sections of the community. Major businesses around the temple and in Mylapore are always briefed about the fest and ideas have been shared to involve them – as sponsors, as exhibition hosts, etc.

However, the Mada Streets and R.K. Mutt Road are churning. Bigger stores have moved in despite lack of space for people and traffic. Huge buildings dominate the Mylapore landscape. With intense business competition, some businessmen have little time for heritage and the arts.

You don't lose much when one side of the main street is made 'vehicles-free' for just one hour to host a *kolam* contest which attracts a modest 5000 people of an evening.

Some businesses fail to appreciate the fact that the fest (30 events, over 200 artistes, four days) brings thousands of people from all over the city as well as tourists and that this can only help business, not cause "huge losses".

This time around, the opposition filed a case in the High Court on the eve of the fest. Which meant the organisers had to be in court from 11 am to 4 pm on Day One of the Fest, thus frustrating the preparations at the venue.

Orders were passed that shops should not be put up on Sundaeswarar Street because

there are two schools here and untoward incidents could take place.

Because the court order directed that nothing be placed in front of Radha Silks, poles put up to provide a roof for huge canvas kites created by young artists had to be removed, and hence, artistic works rendered waste.

Ironically, foreign shoppers at the shop happily enjoyed the shows from the sidelines.

As the Day One events got underway, suddenly some men opened the manholes on East Mada Street, drew out sewage, dumped it in the middle, and disappeared. Vehicles running on it spread it far and wide. Was this another method to create a stink at the fest?

Strangers rapped the staff of the lighting contractors, asking them to shut off / shift generators. Momentary darkness followed. Another way to frustrate visitors?

As the public became aware of what was happening, it expressed its annoyance vociferously.

Political meetings at Mangollai, day-night poojas outside the temple, large street-corner clothes sales, private parking cornered by a few businesses – all these flourish here. But a unique, not-for-profit cultural event, managed by a small team, is being challenged. Yet such festivals, as has been seen the worldover, could do much for the community and local business – if only it participated wholeheartedly.

The good news is there have been some positive developments. More neighbourhoods organised *kolam* festivals in January 2006. The 'Triplicane Thiruvizha' was planned by two women, backed by the Srinivas Young Men's Association (SYMA), and staged outside Sri Parthasarathy Temple. They were guided by the Mylapore Festival team. Artistes and sponsorship were shared. There were also *kolam* fests in Ashok Nagar, Nanganallur and Tiruvanmiyur too.

There is the grand plan to work out a focus on temple heritage zones in Tiruvottriyur, Triplicane, Mylapore and Tiruvanmiyur. It is proposed to organise the local communities to play hosts for festivals using local talent and tapping into local traditions, get sponsors to support fests across the city and involve state-run arts agencies to send folk/classical dance/music/theatre troupes who can be rotated at these festivals.

If this does become reality, then the city will be host to a series of fests held during the 'Margazhi' season. Driven by communities. In fact, it could become a 'Chennai Festival'.

Subscriptions and contributions

● Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), *Madras Musings* has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to CHENNAI HERITAGE and send it, together with the COUPON BELOW, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 260-A, TTK ROAD, CHENNAI 600 018 or C/O LOKAVANI-HALL MARK PRESS PVT. LTD., 122, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

An ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of just Rs.100 covers only a part of our costs. Corporate support and YOUR support will continue to be essential for Chennai Heritage and *Madras Musings* to play a greater role in creating awareness about the city, its heritage and its environment. We therefore look forward to your sending us your contributions IN ADDITION TO your subscriptions.

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

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to *Madras Musings* for 2005-06 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

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

— The Editor

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the most influential rock bands in history, Jimi Hendrix was discovered and made famous in Britain.

Deep Purple, of course, is the timeless icon of rock and has its roots in the 60s.

To take us through this musically potent time zone will be the 'loudest band in India' – Metakix. Around from 1995, this Mumbai band has braved the rock-storm for the past 10 years. The band came out with their first album *Headlines* in 2002 and have been featured on various compilations like *Deeppthroat*, *I Rock* etc. (At the British Council, 8.15 pm.)

February 22-March 4: Exhibition of paintings, sculptures and mixed media works by Progressive Painters' Association from Cholamandal Artists' Village. (At Lakshana Art Gallery.)

February 25: *Panchtatva*, a concert by Pandit Jasraj vocal, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia flute, U.Shrinivas mandolin, Taufiq Quereshi percussion and Selva-ganesh *Kanjira*. (At 6 p.m. at Music Academy.)

February 25: Urban Folk Singing. (at 7 p.m. Amethyst.)

February 18-23: *Pranavam-2*, an exhibition of paintings. (At the Lalit Kala Akademi.)

Till February 20: *Retrospective of Pierre Coulibeuf*, an art documentary filmmaker. (At College of Fine Arts.)

Till February 28: Annual Exhibition by the resident artists of Cholamandal Artists' Village. (At Cholamandal Artists' Village.)

From February 20: Group exhibition of graphics and drawings. (At Lakshana Museum of Arts.)

February 22: The '60s Show', music by *Metakix*, Mumbai.

The '60s brought out some of the best rock 'n' roll acts in history from the UK. **THE WHO**, for instance, is considered one of the most influential rock bands in history, **Led Zepellin** is one of

Senate House Conservation Fund

● The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust appeals to all alumni of the University of Madras and heritage lovers everywhere to contribute to the Senate House Conservation Fund which the Trust is managing for the purpose of restoring *Senate House* to its old glory and maintaining it thereafter in the same condition. Cheques should be made out to the Senate House Conservation Account and sent to the Registrar, University of Madras, Chennai 600 005. Contributions are eligible for benefits under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

Dear Registrar,

I am pleased to enclose a cheque for Rs. as my contribution to the restoration and maintenance of *Senate House*. Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Name:

Address:

I am an alumnus/alumna/heritage lover and wish the project all success. My college was

Date: Signature:

Adoption: patience needed

(Continued from Page 5)

lack of this in India. An Indian parent's reluctance is understandable, and must not be judged." As Murari says in his book, India is, as yet, not a special needs-friendly country. Society still attaches an element of stigma to special needs. Karna Prayag has, over the years, placed more than 900 children inter-country, many of them special needs children, says Purna.

Families in the West do not mind a cultural melting pot in their homes, or having very large families. "The adopted child is very rarely the first child of these people," says Dr. Rajanarayanan. He mentions an application that has come from a home which already has seven children from all over the world.

These concepts are far less common here. Yes, things are definitely changing, and you can take heart. But, like all major social changes, the process is slow.

The age of the babies?

"0 days; one hour old to 9 months old at times, although the latter is very rare, and usually in the case of abandoned children. Surrendered babies are usually less than a month old."

In the case of some children, adoption is largely ruled out – HIV positive, chronic illnesses, multiple problems and challenges. Such children are sent to relevant institutions and special organisations where they will receive the best possible care.

If a child is to be placed for inter-country adoption, there are many conditions. The baby

has to have been refused by three Indian couples before it is placed for inter-country adoption, says Dr. Rajanarayanan. First priority is therefore given to Indian parents. Second priority was used to be given to NRI Indians. But CARA changed the rules, and now, they are subject to the same rules as 'foreign' parents, with no particular advantage over them – a fact that they are apparently fighting. The VCA,

medical reports and other relevant information, who then communicate with the parents in question. As far as possible, the 'foreign' parents must come down here to see the baby and give the agency a chance to see them, says Dr. Rajanarayanan. There are some agencies that work around this, by sending the baby with an authorised person, but many agencies prefer and encourage the parents to come down. The couple



who also maintain a list of prospective parents, and CARA have to 'give clearance'. Prospective parents abroad have to register with a CARA-approved agency in their own country. The agencies deal with each other – not with the parents. All early procedures are carried out by the foreign agency, which then sends the entire dossier, containing home study reports and required notarised documents to the agency in India. The criteria and information collected are the same as what is required for in-country adoptions. Photographs of the chosen child are sent to the CARA-approved agencies abroad, along with

then meets the Trustees, and if all goes well, they are given a chance to spend time with the baby here in the city, get to know the child.

The child then has to get its passport, where there are sometimes delays, needing High Court clearances. Inter-country adoptions can therefore run into a minimum of 1½ years. And it does involve a stay of a few weeks for the parents in India.

Purna also points out that for inter-country adoptions, it is mandatory that for five years after adoption, reports and complete dossiers on every aspect of the child's life have to be sent to the agency.

Following the system according to rules laid out does mean delay. Uma, Purna and Dr. Rajanarayanan state emphatically that parents who wish to go in for adoption must be pragmatic about their expectations of the time involved. But they emphasise that the time taken "is well worth it" – and necessary. "We are equally keen on finding homes for all our babies. We also want to see them go home, where they will have one-on-one care and all the love and nurture they need." But they point out, heartbreaking and harsh as it is for couples perfect in every other way for the baby, there is certain logic in establishing rules. This is particularly so regarding the age of the couple.

The trustees state that the act of adoption in itself is only one step. Society has to learn how to treat and respond to families that have adopted children.

Judging from feed-back and reports, it isn't a rosy picture always. There are some concerns, based on specific social environments – racial and colour discrimination, glaring physical differences between parents and adopted child coming in for comment, a pattern of delinquency in some cases when

children become teenagers, anxieties about marriage proposals when these children grow up, and acceptance from other families – all of which prospective parents need to consider before choosing to adopt. The fact that 'happy' stories far outweigh the others does a great deal to diminish the problems, though.

The very fabric of society has to change, help parents provide a happy, fulfilled life for their adopted children. Dr. Rajanarayanan says that everything has to do with spreading awareness through education in the real sense. The question to ask is, "You may be literate; but how educated are you?"

All checks and rules are to safeguard the child, painful as the process may be for parents anxious to get their baby. With all of that, you still hear of things going wrong, where the whole process of adoption is turned into a racket. There is no doubt that this situation provides fertile ground for the unscrupulous.

Perhaps Dr. Rajanarayanan sums it up best when he says: "Our job is to find good parents for the baby; not good babies for prospective parents."

Answers to Quiz

1. It carried cartoons of Prophet Mohammed leading to much outrage; 2. Salman Butt, Younis Khan and Yousuf Youhana; 3. Ten; 4. Wolfgang Mozart; 5. Hamas; 6. Mudsuden ('Monty') Singh Panesar; 7. Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al Saud, the King of Saudi Arabia; 8. It is now officially the smallest vertebrate in the world; 9. Buta Singh; 10. 'New Horizons'.

* * *

11. Union Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Implementation; 12. K. Viswanathan; 13. Avichi; 14. Sri Valli (1945); 15. He was the first Indian judge at the International Court of Justice, The Hague; 16. Chennai, Madurai and Tiruchi; 17. He is the Collector for Chennai; 18. Madras Sanskrit College; 19. Jaiveer Agarwal, V. Shanta and P. Leela (posthumous); 20. Kancheepuram, about 28 km from Chennai.

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