

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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I have studied the satellite picture and can't see any rain clouds over the house... so, we can have the party outdoors!

Under a cloud

The morning newspaper.

Everyone has his pet reading patterns.

Some start with the Sports Page; some are inveterate headline-readers; and others, displaying a rather Stephen King-ish approach to life, begin with the obituary columns.

In Chennai, during the last few weeks, the average citizen, having received the cheery news that the 'NE Monsoon is active over Tamil Nadu', invariably starts with the INSAT picture.

Those ominous, distinctly swirly, dollops of white bring mixed feelings.

On the one hand, the rains have arrived and water problems appear solved for now. For once, Nature and the Human Being are in sync.

On the other hand, you now need a boat to leave your house. Knee-high water in the living room was probably not something architects or builders had in mind. And the thought of placing even your smallest toe in that unhealthily coloured liquid moving menacingly around your front step creeps you out.

Those who have unwisely planned outdoor events in this season develop an eye-condition, which forces them to gaze fixedly at the INSAT picture, trying to convince themselves that that minuscule 'clear' dot in the middle of that thick, white patch is positioned strategically over their chosen venue.

But Destiny, clearly in a mischievous mood, draws its patterns firmly – in black and white.

And not even the strongest, longest gaze can lure IT into changing even the tiniest cloud into a bright, dry ray.

Ranjitha Ashok

The rain in October

– That always leaves a battered Chennai

(By A Special Correspondent)

The monsoons came to Madras that is Chennai in the last two weeks of October. It rained incessantly for two days and with that the city threw up its hands in despair. For the residents of the city it brought back memories of the last year's floods at the end of a bountiful monsoon. And, as usual, the administration was caught napping.

The worst affected were the subways and underpasses, most of them vital arteries for road transport. While the ones at Vyasarpadi, Perambur and Mambalam are old and it can be argued that they need structural repairs before water can be drained, it was amazing that flooding took place in the subway on Harrington Road, completed after many years of inaction and a cost overrun of 30% over budget and inaugurated with much fanfare a few months ago. It was then announced that the subway had been provided with two wells to drain rainwater, but apparently these had failed for some reason.

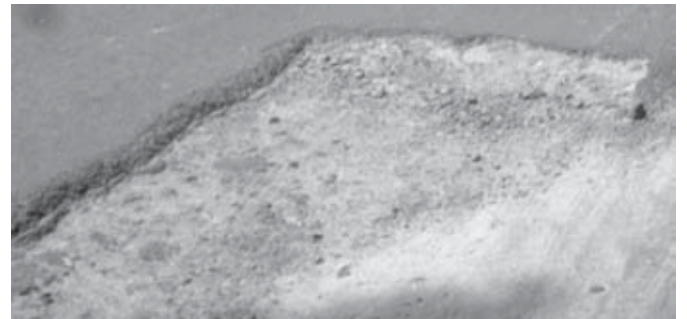
The roads were also very badly affected. The very methods used for filling up potholes – loose debris and stones, with improper packing – caused big craters to open up. A classic example was the Madipakkam Main Road where the Highways Department had dumped gravel to increase the height of the road to prevent flooding. The gravel worked loose and the road got flooded, in turn causing gridlock. Buses, in particular, found it extremely difficult to negotiate huge chasms, resulting in major traffic jams. In addition, when water filled the potholes it was impossible to gauge road levels and many a car and two-wheeler was stranded.

Chennai this year has also been witness to the ghastly tragedy of three people suffocating

to death in an airconditioned car stranded in water.

The authorities found that the easiest way to drain the water was by opening the man-holes and this only added to the hazards on the roads.

North Chennai and suburban south Chennai, in particular areas such as Velacheri, were the worst hit. The Taramani Link Road, which is used by most commuters going to the all-important IT Parks, was completely flooded on October 31st, making it impossible for people to reach their workplace on time.



One battered Chennai road – and there are scores more like this. (Photograph courtesy: Nandanam News)

Yet another problem was the uprooting of trees. Several fell across arterial roads, resulting in more chaos. Residents and tree-lovers are of the view that the authorities are themselves to blame for the weakening of trees by the covering up of roots with concrete despite a government regulation banning this. In addition, the planting of trees

not suited to the violent monsoons of the South is cited as another reason.

Chennai also carries with it the legacy of several failed monsoons when dry lake beds began to be looked at as ideal sites for encroachment and illegal property development, to all of which the administration

(Continued on page 6)

To transplant – or not?

When around 50 mature trees on the Gandhi Mandapam Road in Kotturpuram were shorn of almost all their verdant, shade-giving branches, enquiries revealed that the Highways was involved in 'transplanting' the trees to within a campus close by. The root systems, rather shoddily exposed, were peremptorily cordoned off with tape. About a month later, they still remain in that state.

Around ten days ago, a couple of other trees were reduced to stumps in front of a school on Besant Avenue by the Corporation authorities. Officials confirmed that five trees on the same road were to be 'transplanted' at another location. The move, however, generated much protest from schools and citizens in the locality. While many felt the trees should not be removed, others felt that trees had no place on roads and had to go. The incident raised larger issues, and not just about the five trees! Whether to transplant or not,

for instance. How best to go about it, and whom to involve. And, most important of all, a serious call for participatory decisions involving citizens in urban planning measures, at least in their own localities.

A spokesperson for Nizhal, an NGO that speaks for trees in

• by
SHOBHA MENON

urban areas, says, "Generally, trees are the first casualties when roads are widened, supposedly for increasing mobility of traffic. But 'traffic' consists of not only motor vehicle users but also cyclists and pedestrians. It is possible to incorporate certain traffic/infrastructure management solutions so that, wherever possible, old trees need not be considered as 'interfering' with vehicular movement. 'Developers' have to take into account the crucial fact

that trees grow and mature over many years. Where a particular tree affects the visibility of a road user and becomes a threat to movement on the street, it necessarily should be removed or transplanted if possible, BUT in a participatory manner involving local citizens/groups, etc."

An urban development expert feels, "The trees certainly were not originally in the road! But since it was the planners who were responsible for their presence on the road, the least they can do is incorporate them into future development plans in a sensitive manner."

Technically speaking, tree transplanting involves "removing a fully grown tree from its original location to a new one, for the sake of protecting the tree." This operation should be carried out in phases after sufficient pre-curing (treatment that includes root and shoot pruning, excavation of the tree with the ball of earth, etc.) of the root system and canopy by

(Continued on page 6)

Ever rising levels

If you thought water and noise are the only two phenomena whose levels are rising in the city of Madras that is Chennai, think again. *The Man from Madras Musings*, who lives in a modest bungalow which is about 40 years old, speaks from first-hand experience.

The road outside MMM's house is 'topped' every year, thanks to it being the route that many VIPs often take when they go about busily on whatever errands they go on. The road is never re-laid, in the sense that the top layer of macadam is never removed and replaced, for that would involve the road being closed for long stretches of time, thanks to the speed at which our PWD works. After all, when a road is closed, how do VIPs cut across the city on their errands? So an alternative plan that benefits all but one was devised. Which is simply to slap on another coat of tar each year on the road, thereby leveling the mounds and potholes (or are they hills and wells?). The tar has to be laid to the height of the highest mound, which means the road level rises by a few inches each year. The PWD is happy and the VIP is also happy. But what about those like MMM who live in houses by the side of these roads. Well, they get a sinking feeling.

To paraphrase Wodehouse, in the past the road lay at the bottom of the garden but now the garden lies at the bottom of the road. And when it rains, the gardens are the places where all the rainwater collects and never drains. It is worse when the road gets flooded and pumps are pressed into service by the powers-that-be to drain the water. Most of the water floods the nearby gardens and then it is upto the householders to do whatever they can. Which is very little, beyond praying that the sun comes out soon.

During the recent rains, MMM went row-about and found several others in the same predicament. The only option for such people is to raise the levels of their gardens to match the road. That is all well and good till the garden comes on par with the ground floor of the residence proper. Then what do we do? Raise the flooring, thereby reducing the height of the rooms? And where does it all end? MMM has visions of himself crawling into his house when the ground floor becomes a mere four feet in height. Then, when even that is gone, we will shift into the first floor. And build a floor above it. Presto! A highrise comes up to match the roads!

Recently, a city newspaper reported that a resident of Kancheepuram has lodged a complaint with the PWD that most temples of that town have now gone below road level and that when it rains most of these shrines get flooded, thereby not

only hindering worship but also posing a threat to our architectural heritage. He has demanded that original road levels be restored. But such pleas usually fall on deaf ears.

Rising manholes, too

The PWD and the Chennai Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CWSSB) appear to be in a fight to the finish when it comes to increasing heights. Shortly after any road is topped up, the CWSSB sends in its army of diggers, layers and mixers and raises the height of the manholes. These form small platforms that not only wear out car and two wheeler tyres, but also pose great hazards, especially during the rains when visibility is low.

The manhole covers, surrounded by a small circle of concrete, stick out above the road surface, thereby ensuring no water can drain through them. These are worn down over a period of time by the passage of vehicles on them. When they come on level with the road, the PWD comes along and slaps another layer of tar. The CWSSB then follows with its army of diggers, layers ... You get the picture anyway.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

MMM wonders why is that in most other countries manhole covers are always an infinitesimal level below the road, thereby facilitating easy driving and also ensuring proper drainage.

Saving a market

It has all the makings of a John Grisham novel. A marketplace that has been in existence for nearly a century. Now a 'developer' arrives on the scene and, having enticed or 'persuaded' with his minions most occupants, gets the vendors out and then negotiates an undisclosed price for acquiring the vast property. His aim? To build a (what else) shopping mall, thereby choking the life out of what is an already congested area.

What sends a chill down the spine of *The Man from Madras Musings* is the fact that not one person in the know is willing to disclose the name of the purchaser beyond referring to him respectfully as a "big developer with interests in retail". MMM is talking about the proposed makeover of the Thanneerthurai Market in Luz, Mylapore.

Citizens of the area need only to look at what has happened to T'Nagar to worry about the future of Luz and Mylapore. Will the stretch of Royapettah High Road from Luz Corner to Sanskrit College soon become another Panagal Park, making it to the news for traffic congestion and high levels of particulate matter in am-

bient air? Most likely. And yet not many of the area's residents appear to be unduly worried, judging by the attendance at a meeting called by Namma Mylapore, an NGO, to discuss the issue at the Srinivasa Sastri Hall in Luz. MMM would like to think that the rain may have had something to do with the thin attendance. But, at times, MMM does wonder about public apathy. MMM, however, was heartened to see the local MLA in the gathering and note his concern over issues affecting the area.

An action plan was drafted at the meeting to save the market from extinction and MMM hopes that something will emerge that will be beneficial in saving the ethos of the area. MMM will be the first one to agree that the market by itself is no beauty and has plenty of problems in terms of drainage or sanitation. But the proposed acquisition and construction is not a solution. The real challenge lies in retaining the market, and making it a living, thriving public space with good civic amenities.

MMM also cannot help wondering as to what awaits the Sultan Market on Royapettah High Road, near Pilot Theatre, which has also been suddenly emptied of all its vendors and is locked up. Something is rotten in the city of Chennai. But not many appear to have woken up to it.

Regulating autos

Now that was something that *The Man from Madras Musings* thought was well nigh impossible. But recent noises made in the newspapers suggest that the powers-that-be are considering legislation to restrict the number of passengers in such vehicles. Letters have also been sent out to the manufacturers to work out methods by which such restrictions can be made effective.

At present, most autos, especially those plying in the city's outskirts, appear to function on the policy of more the merrier, thereby taking in as many passengers as they can possibly hold. It is, therefore, no surprise to see arms and legs sticking out in all directions. In addition, the driver also has two passengers on either side of him on the front seat, holding on to dear life, reminding MMM of Ravi Varma paintings of old depicting Vishnu with two rather unsteadily perched consorts on either side of the mythical Garuda. All this is readily inviting trouble and fatalities. Worse, hosts of children are also ferried this way between home and school. The faith that such users repose in their guardian angel and general good luck never ceases to amaze MMM.

Hopefully, better sense will now prevail.

— MMM



Armenian Church

Breezing through a challenge

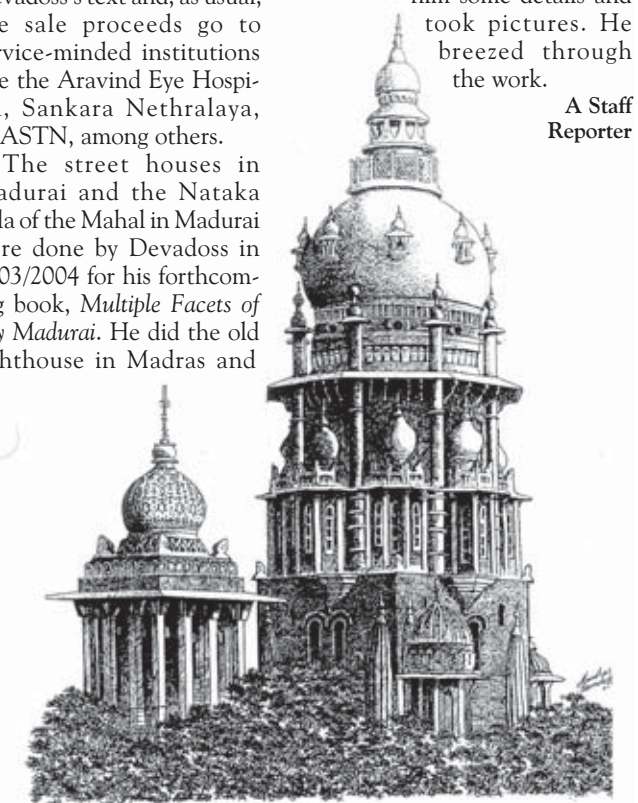
Manohar Devadoss's greeting cards with their exquisitely detailed pen-and-ink drawings of historic monuments this year feature the historic Armenian Church and the stately old lighthouse in Chennai, the charming Thiruneermalai temple, the impressive Thirumalai Nayak Mahal in Madurai, and the elegant street houses that are vanishing from the Madurai city. All cards are accompanied by Mahema Devadoss's text and, as usual, the sale proceeds go to service-minded institutions like the Aravind Eye Hospital, Sankara Nethralaya, SPASTN, among others.

The street houses in Madurai and the Nataka Sala of the Mahal in Madurai were done by Devadoss in 2003/2004 for his forthcoming book, *Multiple Facets of My Madurai*. He did the old lighthouse in Madras and

Thiruneermalai, near Madras, in the mid-1990s. But the Armenian Church is an entirely new work which his daughter Sujatha persuaded him to do despite his vision being what it is now.

He took up the challenge, made many, very early morning visits to the church with Sujatha and her friend Joan and they helped him to "see" the structure 3-dimensionally. They made rough sketches to show him some details and took pictures. He breezed through the work.

A Staff Reporter



The old lighthouse.

A big 'Thank You' to 22 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.10.06 and 15.11.06, 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.

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Looking at Heritage

Yet another heritage walk in Chennai

There are several walking tours in Chennai today. Mylapore, San Thomé, Fort St. George, George Town, Park Town-Periamet, Classical Music and Dance Heritage, Tree trails in the Theosophical Society and Guindy National Park are some of them. Unfortunately they are only occasional offerings, and their volunteer leaders need to team together to launch an organisation that will arrange these tours on a more regular, year-round basis.

That heritage-awareness in the city is slowly growing is evident from other walking tours that are being discussed. Meanwhile, one more has joined the list of those in place. This one is called "A Walk Through the Historic Cemetery of St. George's Cathedral." This walk is also different from the others; your guide on this tour is a well-produced folder that contains not only a "route map" but also a wealth of information. Some of that information is excerpted here.

There are over 700 identified British graves in this 1.75 acre cemetery, where the first burial was in 1818.

Many of the tombstones and memorials have been damaged due to the ravages of the climate and some vandalism. Recently, with assistance from the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, London, St. George's Cathedral Trust has repaired and renovated these graves and made them suitable for viewing.

Information about every grave has been recorded, with the help of *List of Inscriptions on Tombs or Monuments in Madras Possessing Historical or Archaeological Interest* by Julian James Cotton (Government Press, 1905). Cotton died on June 20, 1927 and his is the very first grave viewed on the route laid out for the walk.

Also restored is the Gateway to the cemetery, which was completed in 1832. It is on record that in the early days when the congregation was small, the coffin was not taken into the Church for the funeral service. The service was conducted in a small chapel which formed part of the Gateway, that has been restored too. A large bell which is 6 feet wide



The memorial to Elizabeth de Havilland.

and 8 feet tall is mounted in the belfry on the Gateway and it was the custom to toll that bell when the coffin was lowered into the grave. The large bell's deep resonant sound could be heard throughout the city.

Apart from Cotton's grave, some of the other significant ones are of: Elizabeth de Havilland, the wife of Major Fiott de Havilland, who built St. George's and St. Andrew's Churches. The land for the entire cemetery was earmarked by her husband a few years earlier when the construction of the

Church was nearing completion. Here is perhaps the most beautiful tomb in the cemetery.

John "Deaf" Binny, founder of Binny & Co. His tomb, in the 'Binny Plot' dates to June 2, 1864.

Sir Vere Henry Levinge of the Madras Civil Service who died on March 22, 1885. The development of Kodaikanal owes much to him.

The Right Reverend Daniel Corrie, who died on February 5, 1837. He was consecrated as the first Anglican Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Madras, but held that office for only 18 months. His name is remembered in Chennai through the Bishop Corrie Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School.

Mary Patterson is the oldest person resting in the cemetery. She died at the age of 105 on October 24, 1838.

John William Dare, Esq., Senior Partner of Parry & Co.,



The St. George's Cathedral Cemetery.

to whom the company owed much for its growth. When Parry's headquarters building was opened in 1940s, it was called *Dare House*. He died on May 18, 1858.

Norman Robert Pogson, C.I.E., F.R.A.S. was a most distinguished astronomer. He discovered twenty new variable stars and ten new minor planets, four at Oxford and six at Madras. He was assisted in his

work for some years by a daughter only less talented than himself, Miss Isis Pogson. He died on June 23, 1891.

The folder lists 25 gravesites with stories to tell. But it promises to add more in the days to come, as work goes on in documenting every grave in detail.

It is to be hoped that the cemetery on The Island of St. Mary's in the Fort will follow suit.



The restored Gateway.

DakshinaChitra at ten

On December 14, 1996, a rainy day, DakshinaChitra opened its doors to the public. We've come a long way since then. Those were the days of no tree cover, only sand for pathways and a centre struggling to be built. I remember the euphoria all of us had when we opened.

We were a small core group guiding those early activities. Gita Ram, Visalakshi Ramaswamy, Geeta Vasudevan, Maureen Murari, Kausalya Jagmohan, V.R. Devika and our active board members, M.V. Subbiah, Malcolm Adisheshaiah, Indira Kothari, and S.L. Rao, among others. The construction was going on in full swing. Laurie Baker was the mastermind and my guru, P.T. Krishnan, was prominent among those who helped answer all the riddles that construction brings; and, finally, Benny Kuriakose came to help along with his team of masons and carpenters trained in the Laurie Baker style. Benny, with his intimate technical knowledge of traditional construction and his architectural know-how, got us moving so we could finally open our doors.

Phew! We all felt great! Twelve years of preparation documentation, school programmes, object collections, fund-raising and building had gone into this day. The next morning was something else. I woke up with the realisation that building was only a part of the job and we now had to run and programme the centre for the public six days a week, 52 weeks in a year. We had a vision for our educational and academic programmes as well as how we wanted to help and promote both craftspeople and folk performing artistes, and create awareness about the importance of our architectural heritage. We needed staff and it was clear that except for myself everyone else had too many outside commitments to work on this 24/7.

So in 1997 the real work began. Staff was hired and immense efforts went into training. Charles, our present Admin Manager

at DakshinaChitra, was already on board, and much credit goes to him and his team for the well-managed centre you see today. Vikram Parchure, a J. Krishnamurty educator and NID designer, who was the director for the year, laid the groundwork for our education programmes along with V.R. Devika, and craft development activities.

That first year was a year of transition. Our new staff interacted closely with our volunteer/colleagues who led and shared their vision.

We note with pleasure the large number of craft workshops that have opened up in the city, many of whose owners were participants in our craft workshops. We empathise with the many talented folk performing groups who have performed at DakshinaChitra, and are happy to note that many have substantially more programmes today than before. We look back with pride on our major international seminars, our village outreach programmes, our new Arts Management Internship Diploma programme now in its second year, our education programmes, architectural and craft workshops, and on our budding foray into contemporary art with artists' camps and exhibitions in our Art Gallery.

A 10th Anniversary is a time to look ahead and a time to re-evaluate our vision and plans for the future. Our collaborative projects have been extremely fruitful and we look forward to many more such efforts with other organisations, on both programmes and seminars. Culture has never been static and DakshinaChitra's programmes reflect that.

Meanwhile, we still need to finish our Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh sections as well as other projects.

Deborah Thiagarajan

To transplant – or not?

(Continued from page 1)

skilled gardeners under a trained horticulturist.

Many factors need to be considered when severing roots of established trees, horticulturists point out. It is very important to know the location of various kinds of roots. Key factors to successful results from severe root pruning include: a tree species with adequate health, adequate moisture in root area, healthy carbohydrate reserves, proper timing and knowing how to judge a tree that should not be severely root-pruned. But are the authorities aware of all these factors?

The Tamil Nadu Road Development Corporation (TNRDC) has been taking some tree-sensitive measures in its IT Corridor Project. V. Ramkumar, Manager-Landscaping, TNRDC, says, "Though originally the idea was to remove 386 trees, and plant four times the number (as instructed by the Forest Department), we decided, in March-April 2005, to realign the roads to accommodate 67 trees in the central median (all these were planted in 1962 by the late veteran horticulturist Inder Sen)."

The TNRDC's Right of Way (ROW), of 41m, included service roads, footpaths, and a planted strip. Fiftyeight trees in the RHS carriageway were retained after further realigning. Then came the transplanting issue: Where, When and How? Ramkumar says, "Institutions in the area (NIFT, the Regional Labour Institute, Tidel Park etc.) all showed their interest in saving the trees. Though 82 trees (more than 80-100 years old, with trunk girth more than

1.5 m) had to be removed (because of machinery not being available for transplanting them, the process being very expensive, anticipated poor survival rate, etc.), 145 were to be transplanted. The process included pitting; rubber wrapping so that at least 50% of the roots were protected; and 0.2% root treatment of copper oxychloride, or carbondiazime, to avoid any harmful microbial infection as fungicide. Before replanting, the roots were dipped in a rooting hormone like indole acetic acid solution of 100 ppm. The average cost was Rs. 3000 per tree (mostly on machinery and manual labour). Within three months, white roots formation indicated success and survival. The entire process can be completed within 48 hours using the above method." However, of the 145, only 92 trees survived. Elsewhere, relocation of 35 trees in the SIDCO office campus, at the Kathipara Junction, necessitated by the flyover construction, has been a complete success. All 100 trees transplanted into the Army Cantonment Area four months ago on account of the Airport Flyover Project, have survived.

Organic farmer S. Natesan says, "Before attempting to transplant a tree, you have to have a thorough understanding of the science of trees, their anatomy, the function of the various components of trees, the soil, the climate, the season and the cost involved. Spraying of water and cladding the tree trunk with water retaining fabric enhances the success rate.

Aftercare to assist the tree to start a new life in fresh surroundings plays a major role.

"The success of transplanting depends upon the age, the size, the shape of the canopy, the health and the species of the tree; also climate, season and time (of the day) of transplant. If a tree is very old, say, 40/50 years, it will generally be huge and have a defective trunk and main branches. Cost and effort of transplanting will be very high and success rate low. Also the transplanted tree will be weak for a few years and hence susceptible to damage due to storm or even high winds. Its resistance to disease will also be very low."

The Highways Manual brought out by the Highways Department in 1957 includes a section on tree issues. But it was last updated way back in 1987. Transplanting, a relatively new concept, has not even been mentioned.

A statutory rule of the CMDA requires the Highways Department to get permission from the Corporation Commissioner to remove trees for widening roads, subject to the condition that they are transplanted. Though the first experience of transplanting for the Highways was in 1993 along the ECR, no clear-cut guidelines have been provided yet for the contractor in charge of the transplanting.

A senior horticulturist feels, "The trees in Kotturpuram could have been handled better. To minimise root shock and temperature shock, such transplanting operations should be carried out during cooler times, and when the ground is wet. It should also be in a sensitive, phased manner so that the tree that is relocated will suffer less trauma and has a better chance of survival."

A senior management consultant suggests, "The trees alongside the road in Kotturpuram (that are to be transplanted) can be incorporated in

Transplanting tips

Species amenable for transplanting: Those that have a natural fibrous root system, like coconut, toddy palm, bottle palm and plumeria. Also those that have the capacity to produce adventitious roots (that originate from any other part other than tap root) and aerial shoots, including the banyan, peepul, yellow tecoma, maramalli, portia, lagerstroemia, kassod, polyalthia, coral wood tree, and pungam.

Trees that rarely respond well: Gul mohur, copper pod, rain tree, Indian nedlar and neem.

Soil samples of location need to be checked before transplanting. Calcareous soil with a high pH value is inadvisable for relocation.

Post transplanting care is very important for survival.

NOTE: A tree older than 20-30 years has a slower capacity to produce new roots, slower cell division and greater hormonal imbalance. A tree with a trunk diameter greater than 1.2 m, is not likely to prove a successful transplant. Hard wood trees (like tamarind, neem, vilvam etc.) are slow-growing, transplanting is time-consuming and post-maintenance care high.

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a more sensitive plan. Why not, for instance, a pavement under the trees, and a service lane at the corner? It is time for holistic management solutions!" T.K. Shanmugasundaram, Chief Engineer, Highways, strikes a positive note: "The idea of incorporating traffic/infrastructure management solutions wherever possible to save trees will definitely be considered. And we will be happy to work with NGOs who can share their resources in this field."

Prof. P. Dayanandan, formerly HOD, Botany, Madras Christian College, says, "It's a matter of knowing which tree to transplant and at what age, so that threshold of damage can be minimised. A Rain Tree is very difficult to transplant. But a palm can be moved even upto 25 years. Wherever possible, trees should be transplanted into a safe location, say, a park, where they can be monitored. The relocating authority should clearly indicate where the tree is being transplanted. We can use this kind of occasion to generate more tree awareness – public announcement of the species, where transplanted, invite interested groups for viewing/monitoring, publish information about the tree etc!"

Back in 2003, a draft legislation — 'Tamil Nadu Preservation of Trees Act' — was re-

ported to have been prepared and the Government was to constitute a Tree Authority in specified urban and rural areas. Initially, the law was to cover six Municipal Corporations and was to be later extended to the rural areas. The Tree Authority in an urban area would include the Mayor, District Forest Officer/Wildlife Warden, Honorary Tree Warden, Corporation Commissioner or the Chief Executive Officer, besides a Councillor. Carrying out a census of the existing trees and obtaining the number of trees from private houses, specifying standards for the number and kinds of trees to be planted in each locality, laying down guidelines for the planting and transplanting of trees during the construction of new roads or widening of existing roads were some of the duties prescribed for the Authority.

While the Act is still to be passed, the Corporations and other urban local bodies have not on their own tried to involve a systematised tree protection code – that lays down sensitive guidelines and provides information for everyone concerned with such issues – for trees in urban areas. How many more trees will have to go before their protection can be ensured by the authorities?

OUR ADDRESSES

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

– THE EDITOR

THE RAIN IN CHENNAI

(Continued from page 1)

turned a blind eye. These erstwhile lakes are the locations where the maximum flooding takes place, owing to the topography of the area. Government is now faced with a dilemma. Should it rescue those marooned or simply ignore them? In one particular case, residents stated that Government kept quiet when the number of households on a lakebed went

up from a few hundreds to 2000; now, it is refusing to grant drainage facilities, adding to the residents' woes.

In the meanwhile, by October 31st, with electricity failing in many parts of the city and the fear of epidemics breaking out due to contamination of groundwater, the powers-that-be swung into action. The Tamil Nadu Government set up a team of ten Indian Adminis-

trative Service (IAS) officers to take care of the flood relief work in Chennai, but it was clear that whatever was being done was only a temporary measure to alleviate suffering during the present floods. Unless a coordinated approach is organised between the various departments right through the year, it will be very difficult for Chennai to look forward to the monsoons.



November 19-25: To commemorate the World Heritage Week, the crafts shop at DakshinaChitra will exhibit classic and authentic heritage products.

Till November 20: A Print exhibition by Cynthia of Chennai (at Dakshina Chitra)

Till November 20: Exhibition of paintings by R. Sounderajan, R. Mahesh, M. Deivasigamani. A Sathish Kumar, Sabarish, Swaroop Shankar and B. Dinakaran, students

from the College of Arts (at Vinnyasa Premier Art Gallery).

November 21-30: *Vinnyasa Collection*, an exhibition of paintings and sculptures (at Vinnyasa Premier Art Gallery).

November 24: *A Time for Christmas: A dramatic musical* with a 40-strong cast written by Paul McCusker and orchestrated by David T. Clydesdale. It is directed by Michael Muthu. Proceeds towards social causes. Till No-

ember 26 (at the Museum Theatre).

November 25: *Warli Paintings Workshop:* Make a Christmas gift with a difference! Decorate a terracotta vase with this beautiful tribal art from Maharashtra. The workshop will be conducted by Surya Natarjan (at Dakshina-Chitra).

Till November 30: *Chasing the Reality*, a solo exhibition of paintings by Rm. Palanippan. (at Apparao Galleries).

Till November 30: A solo painting exhibition show by B.O. Shailesh (at Ashvita Art Gallery).

December 2-3: *Mosaic Mural Workshop* to give old ceramic tiles a new life! The two-day workshop will be conducted by Bo Shailesh (at DakshinaChitra).

December 4-14: N. Murthy from Karnataka will exhibit landscape paintings. (at the DakshinaChitra Art Gallery).

December 6: *Shapes*, a jazz concert with Wolfgang Haffner – drums, keyboards, programming; Christian Diener – bass; Sebastian Studnitzky – trumpet, piano/keyboards; and Frank Kuruc – acoustic, electric guitar. Wolfgang Haffner is one of the drummers most in demand all over Europe. In 2002, he formed the Wolfgang Haffner Band which has now played in more than 50 countries. (At Dublin at the Park Sheraton by pass - 7.00 pm.)



The rules of attribution

(Continued from page 4)

ent contexts. They need to learn that they can still work within those principles to create new works inspired by their creative heroes.

When the school day ends, students are inundated with an infinite quantity of recycled content in popular culture. They listen to music that uses famous riffs from other songs. They read books that are turned into movies, and then the char-

acters from those movies appear on an endless array of products, such as breakfast cereals, clothing, toys, and video games. Most students do not know that it takes hours of negotiation and boxes of trademark and copyright licences to make all this borrowing appear so seamless. The recording industry's lawsuits against students who pirate digital music may have taught our students that copying an entire work can get them in trouble. We must alert

our students to the reality that sometimes copyright laws also prohibit copying smaller portions of a work.

It is quite possible – and I believe likely – that Ms. Viswanathan's editors and advisers pushed her to write and publish without first taking the time to explain to her the basic principles of plagiarism and copyright. Much of the alleged copying in her work is not verbatim lifting but the creative recycling of ideas. The rules of what can be borrowed and when attribution must be given are complex and require vigilant attention. She confessed to *The New York Times*: "I feel as confused as anyone about it, because it happened so many times." It is so unfortunate to see a promising young writer taken out of the game because she did not understand the rules. My hope is that this incident will motivate parents and educators to remember that creative work has its rules and, if they want to stay in the game, our students should know them.

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

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

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

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

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

THE EDITOR

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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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:

(Continued from last fortnight)

The Government Oriental Manuscript Library has published a book titled *Idangai Valangaiyar Varalaru* (edited by Dr. S. Soundarapandian) in which four different manuscripts have been given.

They are:

1. *Idangai Valangai Puranam* (D. 2793)
2. *Valangai Sariththiram* (D. 462)
3. *Edangai Valangaisathi Varalaru* (D. 2751)
4. *Puthuvai Edangai Valangai Varalaru* (D. 3196)

From these it is seen that there were 98 castes in the Right Hand division and 98 in the Left Hand division.

Valangai Sariththiram (D. 462) was written by Vedanayak Sastry, a Christian convert, at the request of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, who was responsible for codifying the caste system in South India. (During his time, a massive team of draughtsmen and illustrators collated material researches on historic architectural sites, Hindu caste customs, folk tales, plant life and their various regions.) According to this study, the valangai people are Vellalla and all castes which are with them. Edangai or Left Hand caste comprises Kammalar and all those castes that are with them.

According to these documents, some of the known castes in RH division were: Chettis, Vellalar, Kalimpuchettis, Telungu chettis, Malumi, Malayamans, Maravar, Tuluvar, Malayalar, Ampattar, Kollan, Thachchan, Thattaan, Kalthachchan, Kuyavar, Naavithan, etc., and the LH division comprised, among others, the following known castes: Brahmins, Vanniyas, Hill kuravas,

Komuttis, pearl divers, different types of hunters, Muththaraiyas, Muhammadans, Kammas, etc.

A treatise in German called *Ostindien Seine Ceschichte Culture and Seine Bewohner von phillip van Mokern* says that there are nine castes in the Left Hand division and they are hunters, weavers, merchant chettis etc., and in the Right Hand division are potters, washermen, palanquin bearers, a sect of Muhammadans, etc.

The *Indian Antiquary* of 1876, on pages 353 and 354

“The Left Hand consists of the following nine castes:

1. The Panchalars, which include the five classes of mechanics or artificers
2. The Chettis, or merchants, who they say belong to Vysya caste
3. Weavers
4. Oil millers who drive their mills with two bullocks
5. The Gollur caste - people who are employed to carry money
6. The Palvanlu caste
7. The Palavantu caste - both cultivators, but not of

4. The Tailors
5. The Sandara caste - they are Mohammedian artisans
6. The Gujarati caste, merchants from that district
7. The Kamatigar caste - people of the vysya caste
8. The joiner or Jaina
9. Shepherds or weavers, especially of wool
10. Potters
11. Washermen
12. Palankeen bearers
13. The Padma-Shahalyavadu caste
14. The Barber caste
15. The tank diggers
16. The painters
17. The Gullaru caste, people who herd cows and buffaloes
18. The Whalliyaru caste, who are the warriors of this division; they commonly speak of themselves in the Tamil country as Valangais, but are the well-known Pariahs.

“The origin of the division of the Hindus into right and left hand is overlaid with fable. The oldest Hindu account attributes it to the Goddess Kali, at the founding of Kancheevaram, and it is said that the Pagoda there contains a copper plate, having upon it an inscription, that accounts for this division of castes. Both sides refer to this plate but neither has produced it, and therefore its existence may be doubted.

“The castes of which both sides are composed are in no way bound by any mutual obli-

gation of religion or of relationship. The great idea that keeps them together appears to be to attain more dignity. The right hand claim exclusive right to have a Pandal under which to perform the marriage ceremonies; and they maintain that the left hand have no right, in their marriage processions, to ride a horse, or to carry a flag upon which there is an image of Hanuman. The left hand assert a right to all these and appeal to the copper plate already mentioned and they further assert that to them belongs the higher rank, because the Goddess placed them on her left side, which in India is a place of honour.”

James F. Kearns concludes, “It is difficult to say what the origin of the division was, but it does appear to have been caused by some person or persons who were strangers to Southern India; and from the fact that Muhammadan artisans form a portion of the right hand division, we may conclude that it cannot boast of a very great antiquity. These Muhammadans were a necessity to the right hand because in time of fighting no Panchalar would work for them.”

However, during the rule of the Company in Madras, the Left Hand castes were the trading communities and the Right Hand castes were artisans. The heads of the divisions were useful to the English for their control over the other natives. While the glossary of Edgar Thurston does not specify the LH and RH castes, Maclean in his glossary has stated (Vol III Glossary page 1036-37) that the disputes were centred on “Conjeevaram where there are to this day special halls for both the parties.”

(Concluded)

● by K.R.A. Narasiah

talks about the LH and RH castes. The correspondent, James F. Kearns (an S.P.G. missionary) states, “In the village of Sathur Periil, there reside a large number of Panchalars or five classes of mechanics, who claim their descendency from Viswakarma and call themselves Viswa Brahmins, affixing ‘acarya’ to their names; they also wear the thread. They not only set the claims for themselves but for all the Viswakarmas of the South. They performed their functions with one of their men acting as the priest; they opposed the Brahmanas”.

He also quotes a German book and says the castes were divided thus in Seringapatam:

8. Hunters
9. Tanners and shoemakers.

“The Panchalars command the entire body, but the tanners and not their warmest supporters in all difficulties, because in matters of dispute they are very adroit.

“The Right Hand caste consists of 18 castes:

1. The Bangaru caste - this embraces many occupations and many Hindu castes. They are mainly traders or shopkeepers
2. The Wodigar caste, the Sudra cultivators
3. The oil millers who drive their mills with but one cow

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