

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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"Saar, we can't seem to find the kick-starter for the new police car...Do you know where it is?"

Street smart

Chennai streets are now showing a marked tendency to preen and give themselves airs.

Understandable.

After all, not too many of our cities can boast of having those smart-looking cop-cars darting around, all white, red and blue, complete with sirens *et al*, giving well-travelled citizens and movie/TV buffs a strange, uncomfortable feeling of having fallen through a looking glass, landing on another continent.

They needn't worry.

A large number of cop-cars have been donated by a certain well-meaning organisation. Nice of them, although what's missing is a racy background score every time these cars make their appearance.

But there is, as always, a flip side.

Apparently, authorities have noticed a strange reluctance on the part of some of our law-keepers to use the cars.

For some, the reason is simple—having devoted a life-time to cycles and motor-cycles, they've neglected to make themselves car-abled.

For others, the thought of negotiating the city traffic appalls them.

These stalwarts feel the sturdy old motor-bike is so much easier to handle, especially in dealing with particularly nimble law-breakers.

"How do you drive and keep an eye out for miscreants at the same time—in this traffic?" they demand querulously.

Obviously, you don't want to be on the wrong side of the law, so you're quick in registering sympathy.

But you cannot help grinning (secretly, of course) at the delicious irony of it all.

Ranjitha Ashok

From Fort St. George to Rock Fort?

(by The Editor)

We at *Madras Musings* have been delighted to hear some of the recent sounds in the political arena. One political party feels the pressure on Chennai should be reduced by moving some of the Government Departments out of the Capital to a second capital, Tiruchchirappalli. Another political party wants the capital to be shifted from Madras that is Chennai to Tiruchchirappalli. The idea is, of course, not new, for the M.G. Ramachandran administration thought of this as far back as in the 1970s. It was said that the then CM was close to inking the order when political compulsions prevailed and scuttled the move. The only outcome of that aborted attempt was the sudden springing up of several business class hotels in Tiruchi's cantonment area.

The subject has been talked about ever since then and much has been written about it in the columns of *Madras Musings*, which from its earliest issues has been calling for a move of the capital.

In 2003, the topic was revived, when the move to build a secretariat in Kotturpuram was uppermost in everyone's mind. The Editor of this publication

had then written that "overcrowding was making Chennai creak at the seams" and that it would be preferable to build a new capital "in the centre of the State, making it easier to access by citizens from every part of the State". The journal had recommended building a capital on some virgin tract of land between Tiruchchirappalli and Thanjavur and had suggested a Build, Operate and Transfer agreement with a private agency to ensure timely execution.

While on the subject, it is worthwhile considering that in the U.S.A., which is a country that we emulate, or at least try to, many a State capital is NOT a business capital as well. Thus, California has its seat of governance in little-known Sacramento and not in L.A. or San Francisco. Closer home, the reason why Thiruvananthapuram happens to remain full of open spaces is that it is largely an administrative capital as opposed to Kochi, which is the business capital. Given these examples, having an administrative capital well outside Chennai, say, in the centre of the Tiruchi-Thanjavur-Madu-

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Musings' stories a call away

Thanks to the efforts taken by the Roja Muthiah Research Library, Taramani, *Madras Musings* has, from its first issue, now been completely digitised and archived. The effort involved recording each issue of *Madras Musings* on microfilm and then digitising those microfilms into images and finally indexing the articles. The entire exercise has taken more than a year.

Madras Musings is now available for reference at the Roja Muthiah Research Library for research scholars and those interested in one of the most comprehensive records of Madras that is Chennai. The archive can be searched by article title, author's name and also by keywords. Soon, the exercise of making MM available on the world wide web will begin, with hosting provided by the Digital South Asia Library Project.

Those interested in browsing the MM archives can visit the Roja Muthiah Reference Library, Central Polytechnic Campus, Taramani, Chennai 600113, or contact them on the telephone at 22542551/2 and seek information.



A garbage dump being converted into a forest.

From garbage dump to forest

I'm standing outside the garbage collection point in Otteri that caters to Zone IV – Ayanavaram, Purasawalkam and adjoining areas, comprising 14 Divisions. Within the area, I can see whole families busily foraging for recyclable material from the filth and muck generated by citizens far removed. Just beyond is what was once the notorious Otteri Dumpyard. But now, the big signboard put up by the Corporation of Chennai outside its high wall says 'Pasumai Mara Ular Veppamandal Kadu' meaning 'Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest' (TDEF). What was till a year ago a stinking horrible mess, is being transformed into a tropical forest.

It was in 1998 that the Corporation of Chennai was directed by Court not to dump garbage within this area. Till about three years ago, the deserted yard was being used as a playground, with kite-flying a common pastime (even though kids had to scramble over much filth). Prostitution and drug trafficking too went on discreetly. Till a wall came up, cordoning off the 10.5 acres and paving the way for a transformation!

As I enter the area, a group

of kites circle around their once familiar haunt looking for some food. A particularly large specimen sits in the middle of the grounds, looking on rather disdainfully at the goings on around. Just ahead is a young *Spathodea* sapling, with a board that says 'Thaneerkai Maram' and details how its "Decoction of pulverised bark is used for skin diseases, dysentery, renal and gastrointestinal troubles. Infusion of leaves is used for urethra inflammation". Almost all species planted here have medicinal

uses. The TDEF is an indigenous forest of the Coromandel Coast, with over 160 woody species. Thick, dark foliage is seen through the year. Not more than 500 acres of the forest remain undisturbed. Today, there is hardly any part of this forest that remains free from human interference – most areas are little more than degraded thorny thickets lacking the inherent nobility of the climax vegetation. Says Joss Brooks, a greening consultant from Auroville, who has guided the entire project, "It's hard to imagine this was a dumpsite a few years ago. Planting work

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● by
SHOBHA MENON

Clearing the Mullapperiyar confusion

The first point to note in relation to the current dispute between Tamil Nadu and Kerala over the Mullapperiyar Dam is that it is not a water dispute at all. It is a dispute about the safety of a century-old dam. However, behind it lies a long and chequered history of differences between the two States marked by a strong sense of grievance on the part of Kerala. We have to view the current dispute against that background.

This is a case of a west-flowing river in Kerala being partially diverted into Tamil Nadu for providing irrigation waters to certain water-short areas of that state. In Kerala this is widely regarded as an unfair appropriation of Kerala's waters by Tamil Nadu. Proponents and supporters of the Inter-Linking of Rivers Project (ILR), announced by the Government of India in 2002, often cite the Periyar project as a century-old and successful example of inter-basin transfer; but when we consider the strength of feeling in Kerala against the project, it might well be cited as a bad example of inter-basin transfer and a powerful argument against the ILR Project. The accepted view in Kerala is that the more powerful Madras Presidency of British India imposed its will on the weaker princely state of Travancore, and that the latter signed an agreement against its own interests, giving away a significant part of Periyar waters for a paltry consideration.

A similar sense of grievance exists in Kerala even regarding the agreement on the Parambikulam Aliyar Project (again, a diversion of Kerala waters into Tamil Nadu) signed in 1958 – well after Independence. There is some justification for that sense of grievance, because the benefits of these two projects go overwhelmingly to Tamil Nadu, with relatively meagre financial compensation to

● by RAMASWAMY R. IYER

The writer is a former Secretary, Water Resources, Government of India. The author can be contacted at ramaswam@vsnl.com

Kerala (very low initially, subsequently revised, but still quite small). Looking back on that history, it is difficult to understand why Travancore/Kerala signed these agreements, but there were doubtless complex reasons.

Both Mullapperiyar and Parambikulam Aliyar projects were major and shocking interventions in nature which really treated rivers cavalierly as pipelines to be cut, turned around and welded, but it was not the practice in those years to do any Environmental Impact Assessments. All that you can say is that if these projects were new projects now put forward for approval, they are very unlikely to pass muster as environmentally acceptable. However, the environmental aspects have not figured much in the inter-state controversy, which has been largely about unfair sharing as perceived by Kerala. Confining ourselves to that aspect, it is very difficult to resist the conclusion that these agreements have been generous to Tamil Nadu at the cost of Kerala. Tamil Nadu officials and engineers, and the public opinion influenced by them, would undoubtedly question that statement, but it is made with a due sense of responsibility. (Incidentally, the parallel with the Nepalese sense of grievance *vis-a-vis* India over the Kosi and Gandak projects is striking.)

Be that as it may, the agreements were in fact signed by Kerala, and the projects exist; waters are flowing into Tamil Nadu, irrigated agriculture based on these waters has grown, and income and prosperity have been built in the Theni, Madurai and Coimbatore areas of Tamil Nadu. It is not possible to change that history. Even if Tamil Nadu had had no rights over these waters initially, it has been using them for a long period and has perhaps acquired some rights by long and established usage. That is not a legal statement, but merely the recognition of a fact. The projects stand, and the two states have to do what they can for adjustments in the interest of greater equity and justice.

That background has been gone into only to show there is a long history of dispute and difference that lies behind and colours the current controversy. This dispute is about the safety of the dam and the advisability of raising the water level from 136 to 142 ft. There is a divergence on this between Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Tamil Nadu wants more irrigation water and proposes to raise the water level. It says that the safety of the structure for this purpose has been vouched for by the Central Water Commission. Kerala is unconvinced and does not want to take the risk. What would be the right approach here?

(Continued on page 7)

Season of music – and some woe

It is now the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. The Music Season is just around the corner and while *The Man from Madras Musings* is all for culture and promotion of the arts, he cannot help shuddering at the thought of the increased chaos in traffic that the season is likely to bring. Not one *sabha* in the city can boast of parking facilities commensurate with the number of people it can seat.

The maximum chaos happens, as to be expected, in Mylapore and T' Nagar. The Vani Mahal roundabout experiences the worst kind of gridlock year after year during The Season, with cars spilling over on all the neighbouring roads. The Music Academy and Narada Gana Sabha add to the confusion generally prevailing in the evenings on TTK Road.

While the Music Academy makes some arrangements with the St. Ebba's School, most of its patrons still insist on trying their luck within the Academy premises. With one gate of the Academy permanently closed thanks to the flyover, entry and exit are through the gate on TTK Road and the chaos on an evening when a star musician is performing boggles the imagination. It is high time that the Music Academy began issuing car park passes to members with clear instructions as to where they are to park. There was a time when nearby Deivasigamani Street was full of wide bungalows against whose compound walls plenty of cars could be parked. But that is no longer the case, with more and more multi-storeyed buildings coming up, each with a watchman who ensures that no car is parked in the near vicinity.

The Narada Gana Sabha has even bigger problems. Patrons can no longer drive in from both sides of TTK Road, what with a barrier having now come up across the median. U turns are long distances away and poor CIT Colony bears the brunt of the parking problems.

The worst scenario is however in the heart of Mylapore, on East Mada Street, where the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan hosts several *sabhas* in succession. The R.K. Swami Auditorium on nearby Sundaeswarar Street also witnesses programmes. The pile-up of cars on the street has to be seen to be believed. It is perhaps fortunate that the RR Sabha has delayed the construction of its new auditorium. For with three *sabhas* in close proximity, MMM would not be surprised if a few cars land up in either the Chitra Kulam or the Kapali Tank.

It is high time that the Traffic Police take cognisance of

these hot spots during The Season and issue guidelines and allot space for parking. There has to be a disincentive for building auditoriums without sufficient parking facilities, failing which there must be common public transport arrangements for people to leave their cars at particular places and then travel in some comfort to the venues. MMM cannot but wistfully remember the days when the then Pallavan Transport Corporation used to run special buses during The Season to the Academy and to the Tamil Isai Sangam in south and north Madras respectively. Why this practice was discontinued remains a mystery, but MMM learns that politics had lots to do with it.

Travelling Indian

The Man from Madras Musings had the opportunity to travel by the National Carrier recently and realised, no matter what privatisation does, a leopard can never

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

change its spots. MMM reached the airport three hours in advance, following the usual regulations, only to find that there was no sign of the staff who were to man the counter. All other airlines continued busily checking in passengers, while MMM and a few fellow passengers had to cool their heels waiting for some service. The staff came a good half hour later. No explanations were offered and, as for apologies, that was a bit too much to expect. The rains were blamed for the delay in arrival of staff, though they did not affect any other airline.

When the aircraft did take off, after half an hour's delay, no explanations were offered once again. Inside the flight, it was freezing cold and when one passenger made bold to ask for a blanket, something that is given free in all other airlines, he was told that there were only four blankets in the flight and these had been taken!

Water & water bodies

The Man from Madras Musings could not but help a wry smile on reading reports of a seminar on cleaning up of the city's waterways that had come up with the sensational finding that these bodies are way too polluted and that unless some ways are found to relocate the slums on the banks and prevent effluents from being discharged into them, there is no future for these rivers. So

what's new? And does it require a seminar for this? Where is the political will to do the cleaning up? Unless that happens, all these discussions are so much water down the Cooum.

A second seminar was on water management in the city and had one of the city's renowned experts speaking on the availability of water in underground aquifers in Madras that is Chennai. The topic was made interesting by active audience participation.

MMM learnt that Chennai suffers from a multiplicity of government agencies, all of whom manage water or claim to manage it. However, what is lacking is a proper water map of the city which gives details of the type of soil (rocky, intermediary and coastal/alluvial) in each area and the availability of groundwater within. There are also problems of lack of information and coordination among residents in a neighbourhood, with each one wanting a borewell to himself, each of varying depth. Common facilities would not only lessen indiscriminate groundwater exploitation, but also promote awareness. Micro-management of water in each residential area appears to hold the key.

MMM learns that CMWSSB by itself meets comparatively only a small portion (15%) of Chennai city's total daily water requirement, leaving the rest of the requirement to be met by private sources, including household wells.

The Mylapore Tank

While escorting some friends from outside Chennai to the Kapaleeswarar Temple recently, *The Man from Madras Musings* had the opportunity to feed the fish.

MMM is happy to note that a guard with a stentorian voice has been appointed and he ensures that no one throws plastic or other waste into the tank which is now brimming with water. The steps of the tank, however, need to be cleaned regularly, for they are covered with moss and there is a foul stench that indicates that some people are using the tank for purposes other than washing of hands and feet.

The sight of so many fish, all of them thriving, is a heartening one. The temple authorities have now introduced some ducks as well. The tank also sports several lotuses and is a pleasing spectacle. Now if only the area around the tank is pedestrianised, what more can be asked for? MMM hopes for the best. – MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Better honours

Reader V.Theetharappan's request for the installation of statues of R.K. Narayan and M.K. Thiagaraja Bhagavathar (MM, November 16th) raises a question or two. Indisputably, both deserve the highest honours. But...

Following the assumption of office by the DMK-led Government, another season of installing statues has begun in Tamil Nadu. But do statues really serve the purpose? If the purpose of installing statues of leaders is to honour them, then this is not served. The conditions of the statues in various parts of the City tell their own stories. Though the installation of statues is undertaken with much fanfare, they are left to the care of Nature thereafter. As a consequence, the statues present a pitiable picture. These statues get a fresh coat of paint only when the leaders' birth/death anniversaries are observed.

Further, the places where the statues get installed are selected with little care. Since most of those who seek installation of statues of their leaders want them to be put up at vantage points, they hit hard the smooth traffic flow.

In view of all these problems, it would be better that we think of honouring people in a different way and not through the installation of statues. We can, instead, popularise, the works of the leaders by making them available as low-priced books. To my mind, this appears to be the best way of honouring them.

V.S. Jayaraman

31, Motilal Street
T. Nagar, Chennai 600 017

Subways & rail tracks

It has been proved time and again that all road subways under rail tracks in and around Chennai become practically useless for traffic when there is even a little rain. The pumps

installed to drain the water do not work, as they have broken down due to neglect or there is no electricity due to some fault caused by the rain. If these are good, the drainpipes are clogged and the water has nowhere to go. No wonder that in the most recent deluge all subways turned into veritable swimming pools enjoyed by local urchins. Some daredevils even used the rail tracks above as a diving board. Since almost all level crossings have been replaced by such subways, road traffic comes to a halt during the rains, resulting in great inconvenience to public.

To circumvent this predicament, the authorities should think of constructing road overbridges above the subway rail tracks. This will provide two roads, one above and one below the rail track. The road traffic may be segregated as Up and Down on the roads that would be available during normal times. This will ease congestion and avoid accidents. During rainy seasons, the flooded subways may be abandoned and bi-directional traffic may be permitted on the overways with the guidance of the Traffic Police. This will go a long way towards solving the growing traffic problem in the city. Will the powers-that-be listen?

M. Sethuraman
"Sankrithi"

6, Second Cross Street
Mahalakshmi Nagar
Adambakkam
Chennai 600 088

Father and son

I am the son-in-law of cameraman Ardeshir (Adi) Irani, (MM, November 1st) who with his uncle-producer Ardeshir Irani of the same name made

A success story facing teething problems

As a resident of Adambakkam, Alandur Municipal area, I wish to point out that all is not well with "Alandur underground drainage scheme" (MM, November 1st) and there are some teething problems which are yet to be solved by the authorities concerned. I am writing this letter not only as a resident of Adambakkam Municipal area, but also as the President, Income Tax Colony, South Sector, Vel Nagar Welfare Association, an area close to the pumping station of the underground drainage system at Nilamangai Nagar, Adambakkam, and also as the Convener, Federation of Adambakkam Welfare Associations (and also as a regular reader of *Madras Musings* who wishes to set the records straight).

From Day One (the scheme was commissioned in August 2004) when domestic connections were extended to the houses, our problems started. Even when there are moderate rains the open sump at the pumping station gets filled up to the ground level, sewage water level rises by 30 feet, and water starts flowing in the reverse direction in the drainage pipes. The household toilets get filled up with sewage water and water overflows the toilet and the entire house is flooded with 'black water'. This is the problem in most of the houses surrounding the pumping station to a radius of one kilometre. This not only creates unhygienic condition, but also the people living in the ground floor are not able to use the toilet. Even after the rains stop, people

find it very difficult to bail out the sewage water and clean the house. The domestic wells get contaminated with black water. We have been silently suffering for the last three rainy seasons, including the present one.

All authorities concerned are aware of this problem. Top bureaucrats and technocrats have visited the pumping station (including the Collector, Kanchipuram, Chariman, Commissioner, Municipal Engineer, Alandur Municipality, Chief Engineers from TWAD Board, Metrowater, PWD). So far, no remedial action has been taken and people of this area continue to face considerable hardships.

The company which executed the project has withdrawn from BOT contract. The Alandur municipality finds it difficult to maintain the underground system and pumping station and are making over the system to TWAD Board for maintenance.

Monthly maintenance charges for the sewage system for each household are fixed at a rate Rs. 200 more than what the people in the adjacent Corporation area pay, even though this is a unique "people's participation scheme", first of its kind in India, where each houseowner has paid Rs.5000 to Rs.6000 towards the project cost. Surely we deserve better.

G. Parthasarathy

24, Income Tax 1st Street
Adambakkam, Chennai 600 088

the first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara*, in Hindi, as mentioned by Randor Guy.

My father-in-law also took the first colour film aerial shots, underwater takes and also introduced new techniques in light and shadow as well as trickshots. He was the father of cameraman Mehli Irani, who won several awards. He now lives in Madras.

The memento given to his late father reads as follows:

"In Recognition of the Technical Services in the First Talkie 'Alam Ara' to Shri Adi Irani. Indian Talkie Silver Jubilee Committee Bombay December 22 1956".

R.K. Dastur

2, Wheatcroft Road
Nungambakkam, Chennai 600 034

Nature's warning

A recent Press report states that whales have died on account of the disturbance of the fragile ecosystem of Palk Bay, where the Sethu Canal is being developed. This is nature's warning.

Small fishes too will soon migrate or vanish. Some 10 lakh fishermen will become jobless. The rain forests of the sea - the coral reefs - have sustained enormous damage in the past. Now they too will face extinction.

Coral reefs are the nurseries for fish to spawn. If they are lost, there will be no work for the fishermen nor will rich seafoods reach the markets.

Does anyone in Government understand these concerns?

K.V.S. Krishna

2A, Parkland Apartments
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T. Nagar, Chennai 600 017

Our horror show

Re. 'Nothing seems to be in its right place' (MM, No-

vember 16th), some time ago a group of rich foreigners arrived by a chartered flight in Chennai while on a globe-trotting tour. Their Chennai itinerary was scheduled to last 2-3 days with trips planned to Kanchipuram and Mahabalipuram. Their base was to be a 5-star hotel in Nungambakkam. However, what they saw of the city from the windows of their hi-tech bus from the airport to the hotel shocked them so much that they cancelled everything and flew off to Delhi/Agra after just four hours!

Our exploding population is just too much for our antiquated infrastructure which can only cater to a Madras of 1956, not a Chennai of 2006. This reduces all our economic success, a tour de force, into a tour de farce and instead of driving Miss Daisy we are driving her crazy.

C.G. Prasad

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Kondithope, Chennai 600 079

How about us?

In her lament about the high cost of lentils (MM, November 1st), Vijayasree Venkataraman highlights the difficulties

of the NRIs in the US! What is the scenario in India where the people have no wherewithal to meet the unconscionably high prices of not only the dhals but also other essential food items including vegetables. A perusal of the provisions bill reveals the following: Sugar per kg. Rs. 22; Toor dhal Rs.50; Kadalai paruppu Rs.70; Urad dhal Rs.75; Greengram dhal Rs.63; and so on.

NRIs would not find it too difficult to make both ends meet even with the high cost of these necessities, but we in India certainly find it very difficult as our income is not commensurate with the increase in cost of living.

I am afraid that the reason for this spurt in the cost of pulses is the trading in commodities by those who no longer find trading in stocks or bullion lucrative. What is regrettable is that neither the Central nor the State Government seems to have taken note of spiralling prices which affect the common man the most

T.M. Sundararaman

19 Nallappan Street
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

The two palms

Madras Musings' Editor has wondered whether (A) the 'talipot palm' is the same as the (B) famed 'koondalpanai palm' (MM, November 1st). According to an official publication of the Tamil Nadu Government, the names are as follows:

A

Botanical name	<i>Caryota urens</i>
Tamil name	Kundalpanai/Kunthapanai
Telugu name	Jilugu/Yedarikodari
Malayalam	Chundapanai
Trade name	Bastard sago/Kitul palm

B

Botanical name	<i>Corypha umbraculifera</i>
Kannada	Shriali
Malayalam	Kodapana
Trade name	Talipot palm

So, the talipot palm is not the koondalpanai! My impression is that koondalpanai is normally found in Mariamman temples. There should be a point in that for research!

'Garland' N. Rajagopalan, I.A.S. (RTD.)
Mayur Apartments

7, 24th Cross Street, Indira Nagar, Chennai 600 020

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

When the sound of music's no music

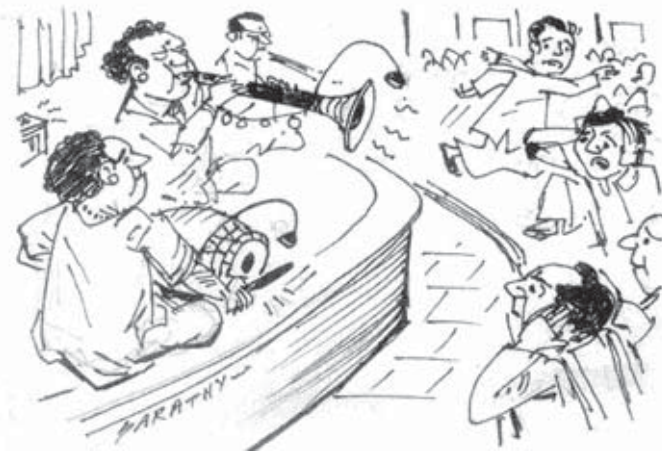
A recent concert of T.M. Krishna had the audience running for cover from the explosive decibellage of voice, strings and drums. The occasion was a memorial tribute to a patron of the performing arts and the invited audience the cream of Chennai's cognoscenti. Even a combination of their love for the vocalist's outstanding talent and their respect for the late S. Viswanathan's contribution to art was no antidote to the severe noise pollution the listeners had to suffer. The volume levels were unprecedented even for a city inured to unwholesome assaults on the listener's eardrums in the name of amplification considered *de rigueur* in the urban milieu of large halls with non-existent sound engineering. Sadly, the concert was taking place at the Music Academy auditorium, once famed for its perfect acoustics designed to accommodate mikeless concerts – before alterations to its structure changed that somewhat – but generally accepted as one of the better halls in the city for listening pleasure.

Why are audiences subjected to murder by sound by people who should know better – practitioners of *nadopasana* one and all, from musicians to mikemen to *sabhanayaka*-s, to steal a couple of phrases from *Sruti*'s founder? Why do musicians regularly agree to perform under acoustically unsatisfactory conditions, musicians who are used to state-of-the-art sound systems on their travels abroad? Why do listeners put up with tympanum-threatening noise instead of the divine music everyone proclaims Carnatic music really is? Why are organisers of concerts impervious to criticism and apparently reluctant to invest in equipment and personnel that can ensure such an experience? Why is a sound test at the start of a concert such a rare occurrence, if ever attempted, in Carnatic music?

At the 147th Meeting of the American Acoustical Society (ASA) at Hoboken, New Jersey, Dr. M.G. Prasad, a professor of acoustical engineering and a Vedic scholar, delivered a paper on the relationship between complex acoustical patterns in Hindu traditional chants and music and the deeper meanings found within the practice of the Hindu faith. "Music transforms the listeners," said Prasad. "Acoustics for Hindu sages was not only a tool of science, but also a spiritual

medium to understand life in all its aspects." Science? Spiritual medium? The professor was obviously not referring to the noise culture of contemporary Carnatic music when he attributed these lofty qualities to our music.

Not long ago, *The Hindu* commented editorially: "There is little doubt that the standard of acoustics at most venues falls short of a minimum assured quality. Improvements in this technical area will go some way in sustaining interest in live performances as a socially worthwhile experience in the age of mass-produced compact discs. Moreover, acoustic quality is a real concern to artistes, since the overall impact of a performance depends on the symme-



try between appropriate amplification and feedback on the stage. Debate on some of these wide-ranging issues will shape the future of Carnatic music in the 21st Century. At the same time, it is vital for the mega event – the extraordinary Chennai Music Season – to retain the character of a self-regulating enterprise, something it has managed to do over many decades."

In a tribute to his late guru on his 80th birthday, H.V. Srivatsan said: "KVN (K.V. Narayanaswamy) is equally impervious to hall acoustics. There have been many occasions where the music echoed so badly that even those on the stage could not hear each other properly, but KVN continued to sing as though there was no problem. He can sing just as well at the Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City as he would in a stone cave."

Back in the 1990s, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer told *Sruti*: "...it is neither necessary nor desirable to have separate mikes provided for the accompanists.

A single mike should do, preferably the sensitive kind that is hung from the ceiling. Where is the need for a forest of mikes planted on the platform in front of the artistes taking part in a concert?

"The number of loudspeakers used and their placement also contribute to the quality of sound... It is better to use several smaller speakers and place them judiciously around so that each part of the hall gets to hear the musicians as if there were no amplification.

"Ideally, of course, I would like the *kutcheri* to take place in a small air-conditioned hall without any sound amplification."

"Violinist Yehudi Menuhin,

on a concert tour of India, laid down a few conditions at the Swati Tirunal Sangeeta Sabha, Trivandrum. There should be no amplification; all doors should be closed once he started performing; all fans should be switched off; no member of the audience should be permitted to move about during the performance; so on and so forth. Menuhin was heard clearly at every part of the hall throughout the concert," Semmangudi added.

Vocalist Vijay Siva spoke up for the right use of technology in *Sruti* some years ago. State-of-the-art microphones could help to get the purest sound reproduction in recordings and also in the auditorium.

When I asked vocalist Sanjay Subrahmanyan for his views on the standard of acoustics in Carnatic music *kutcheri*-s, he wondered aloud if instead of writing about the unsatisfactory situation, someone would take the initiative in organising a workshop by an international acoustics expert on proper sound management at



concerts. He said that he never let poor acoustics or other inconveniences affect his performance on the concert platform. "I focus on my job – that of singing – regardless of the conditions. The only thing that can bother me is the recalcitrance of my voice if and when I run into such problems."

Speaking in a similar vein, Aruna Sayeeram had not long ago informed a small private audience that she would be willing to participate in any effort to educate sound engineers on the best contemporary practices in acoustics for music concerts. She was replying to a query from a Hindustani music aficionado about the high noise levels in Carnatic music concerts.

Audiences, sometimes even music critics, believe that the musicians are accomplices, often the instigators, of the excesses perpetrated by the soundmen. P. Orr wrote in *Sruti*, some years ago: "Poor acoustics is characteristic of a majority of the *sabha*-s. Many don't have really top class sound amplification systems and arrangements either... The musicians performing on the stage are the ones who usually tell the sound technician what to do. They always ask the volume to be jacked up."

Young vocalist Savita Narasimhan clarifies that the musician on the stage rarely asks for the volume to be turned up for the listeners. He or she is actually asking for help with the feedback (or fallback) so essential for the performer on stage. "Often the vocalist cannot hear the percussionist or violinist and vice versa. The musician's request to increase the volume of the monitor is misunderstood and the technician increases the volume for the audience." In the West, mikes are provided for the vocalist as well as the accompanying instrumentalists and the amplification is perfectly balanced. The result is aesthetically pleasing. For instance, even in concerts where two microphones are provided for the two sides of the *mridangam*, the overall balance is maintained perfectly, and the percussion does not drown the voice. It is this balancing, giving due weightage to different

types of voices and instruments, that is vital for correct sound amplification.

That brings us to the need for sound checks before the start of a concert. How often do we see this carried out? How often do we see artistes reach the venue in time to do so? Whose fault is it?

According to a Wikipedia posting, "Since artistes arrive right on time and the concert starts almost always without a delay, there is very little time the artistes get to interact with the sound engineer at the hall. It is common to notice, within the few minutes of their commencement of a concert, the artistes looking to their left (where the mixer unit and the sound engineer are) and asking for an increase or decrease of their monitor volume."

We'll soon be witness to the frenetic programming of The Season in which each *sabha* will pack three to four concerts into every day of the festival. The artistes of one programme will ascend the stage barely minutes after the previous performers have left it. What kind of sound check can be done in the time available? And, increasingly, *sabha*-s seem to dispatch their sound engineer – if such a species exists – to some unknown destination minutes before the concert begins, not to surface until the end of the programme.

Is it the time then to organise workshops on aesthetically acceptable acoustics in Carnatic music to be conducted by experts in the field of sound management, for every self-respecting *sabha* to hire a full-time acoustics engineer available round the year, or at least during concerts, to ensure listening pleasure, for auditoria specifically designed for music concerts to be built or for existing halls to be redesigned to suit the purpose, for audiences to behave themselves as they are forced to every time a Yehudi Menuhin or Zubin Mehta descends on us? — (Courtesy text and cartoons: *Sruti*.)

V. Ramnarayan

The dream TSP helped come true

The passing away of the nonagenarian historian and musicologist T.S. Parthasarathy recently is greatly mourned by the Carnatic music and research fraternity. The tributes were not for someone who had been active in the field many years earlier; they were for someone whose contributions to understanding the art and its personalities continued till the moment he died. So many scholars and researchers had called at his house in Saidapet every day of his life since he retired from the railways more than three decades ago. To all of them he freely gave the information he possessed.

He had a vast library which included many valuable treatises and manuscripts and he knew where each one of them was kept. Sitting at his desk by the window, wheelchair-bound following an ankle fracture, he held court, a court of wisdom and knowledge. With a deep chuckle and a smile that lit up his eyes, he would recount amusing incidents from the world of music, the British raj and the railways. I cannot claim to have been a close associate of his, but interest in music history brought us together and we spoke to each other over the phone more often than we met. The last call from him came before I left for an overseas visit. "I am 93," he said with considerable pride in his voice, during the course of the conversation. "Come back from your trip and we will meet one day and have a long talk," he said. Alas that talk never materialised. You don't think people like TSP will pass away.

TSP's contribution to the Music Academy and the documentation of music history is immense. For years he ran the *Journal of the Music Academy*. The Journal ceased to be a regular publication after he left the post of editor. He edited several publications on behalf of the Academy, one of the many being the last of the five-volume Tamil version of Subburama Dikshitar's *Sangeeta Sampradaya Pradarsini*. In later years he became a guide for several post-graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral theses in the field of arts. But he will perhaps be remembered most for his monumental translation of all of Tyagaraja's songs into Tamil, which was published as *Sri Tyagarajaswami Kirtanaigal* by the Sri Sadguru Sangita Samajam of Purasawalkam in 1967. The book has since been into several editions. Having a great flair for Telugu, TSP

retained the flavour of Tyagaraja's lyrics in his translations and that is what made the book so popular. TSP also wrote the biographies of several music composers. In this he was a true historian, eschewing myths that form most Carnatic biographies and restricting himself to facts that he verified for himself.

Yet another task, about which he was always modest, was his contribution in getting the lyrics of Tyagaraja inscribed in marble on the walls surrounding the saint's *samadhi* in Tiruvayyaru. The following account of that effort was once related by him to me and I am writing it here as my tribute.

Today, as visitors walk around the Tyagaraja Samadhi in Tiruvayyaru, they stand and

job, he selected Sundaram Iyer." TSP began the inspiring story of the marble slabs in this manner one afternoon.

It was 1955, and TSP was living in Murray's Gate Road, Madras. He had already begun the translation of the Tyagaraja *kritis* at the behest of Dr. Krishnaswamy of Glaxo, a brilliant, but visually challenged scientist, who was a great devotee of Tyagaraja. One morning, Sundaram Iyer walked in. He spoke to TSP about his ambition. It was a daunting task. But the excited Sundaram Iyer, his tuft wagging away, had everything planned out. He had decided that he would go about collecting funds from the common people, at the rate of Re. 1 per person.



The Tyagaraja Samadhi in Tiruvayyaru.

read the *kritis* of the saint, which are inscribed in slabs of marble on the walls of the shrine. Many do not even glance at them and just hurriedly move on. If they could only speak, the slabs would have a strange tale to relate. The story of an ordinary man, who had a dream of inscribing Tyagaraja's works on the walls of his *samadhi*.

The man was Sundaram Iyer. Short, squat and dark, he had no family. He worked in the railways as a sorter in the mail service. He was therefore referred to as RMS Sundaram Iyer (Railway Mail Service – RMS). Sometime during his travels to the north, courtesy the railways, he had visited the Tulasi Mandir in Benares where the *Ram Charit Manas* is inscribed on the walls. He immediately decided to do something similar for Tyagaraja. And yet a lowly clerk could in no way muster the resources for such a mammoth task.

"Tyagaraja Swamigal, when he wants to achieve something, always picks up strange implements for his purpose. For this

walls. The next hurdle was the supply of marble. Rajasthan marble was found to be brittle and it was decided to import marble from Carrara in Italy. Those were the years of the 'Licence Raj' and, hence, a special import licence was needed. TSP, through his Government contacts, got a special waiver of not only licence but duties as well and a suitable supplier was found. The landed cost was Rs. 130 a slab. In 1956, the first batch of slabs arrived in Madras Harbour.

M.V. Venkataraman of the Amalgamation Group got Group-head S. Anantharamkrishnan interested and the Group's Sri Rama Vilas Services (SRVS) helped in the transport of the slabs from the Harbour to the godown of Kathirvel, an engraver and tombstone maker, whose premises were in the vicinity of the Wellington Theatre on General Patter's Road. The engraver knew no Telugu. Every morning, TSP would write out a full *kriti* on a foolscap sheet which he would hand



T.S. Parthasarathy

meals there. The lady of the house would happily oblige. Having eaten his fill and appreciated all that he had received, he would be off once more, never once tiring of this Herculean task.

In 1956, the first set of slabs was on the walls. Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar was invited to unveil them. He donated Rs. 500, sponsored an *abhishekam* of the deity that day and also said that he would perform at the *samadhi* the same day, free of cost. That night, a vast crowd assembled to hear him perform, during the course of which he asked everyone to donate liberally for the "*kriti* scheme". This resulted in more funds pouring in.

By 1958, the space on the walls enclosing the *samadhi* was exhausted. There was Rs. 50,000 left in the kitty and more was coming in. It was then decided that a Valmiki Mantapam be built before the *samadhi* and its walls be utilised. TSP was posted to Trichy around this time as Divisional Superintendent. He got a Christian railway contractor, Yagappa Nadar (later a Municipal Councillor), to build the *mantapam* on a cost basis and the work was completed in 1960. That year, Rajendra Prasad, the President of India, visited the shrine and while performing the circumambulation, noticed the slab on which *jagadAnandakAraka* (the first of the *pancharatnams*) was inscribed. He stayed and read the lyrics again and again, his eyes wet with emotion, even as he waved his aides away, who were reminding him of his next engagement.

The work of engraving all of Tyagaraja's works was completed in 1964. His work done, Sundaram Iyer vanished from the pages of music history forever. He lived for sometime in Kutchery Road, at the house of his niece, Choodamani, who was a singer. Later, nobody knows what became of him or when he passed away. There is not even a photograph of the man. Like the proverbial squirrel that helped Rama build a bridge, he was the chosen medium of Tyagaraja for a mammoth task. And TSP had contributed in every way towards making that dream a reality. As long as the *samadhi* stands at Tiruvayyaru, the work of these two men will never be forgotten.

over to Kathirvel on his way to the Railway Offices. By evening, the engraver would have written the words in ink on the marble, copying TSP's writing letter by letter. This would be approved by TSP on his way back from office and then the engraving would begin. Once this was completed, the slabs were transported, free of cost, by SRVS to Tiruvayyaru.

Meanwhile, Sundaram Iyer's funds drive was snowballing into a major success. People were not willing to stop with Re. 1. A new scheme was devised whereby it was announced that anyone who contributed Rs. 108, could identify a *kriti* of his or her choice and also have their name inscribed as donor on the marble slab they sponsored. During these years, Sundaram Iyer could be seen at odd places and strange streets, accosting passersby for a donation. People like S. Rajam remember his sudden arrivals and departures. He would announce his entry with a cough and then say that he was going to have his

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Who was chosen the ICC Player of the Year and ICC Test Player of the Year recently?
 2. Name the senior United Nations official of Indian origin arrested recently for graft, leading to a buzz in the diplomatic circles.
 3. What are the three language plug-ins for Yahoo!'s recently-launched India specific IM 'IndiChat'?
 4. For what offence was Saddam Hussein sentenced to death on November 5th?
 5. In terms of a Supreme Court directive, who is to head a high-power committee to look into the problem of ragging in educational institutions and suggest remedial measures?
 6. Which Australian player was accused of 'pushing' BCCI president Sharad Pawar off the dais after the Champions' Trophy final?
 7. One more on cricket. Name the former India captain, and the first to hit a Test double century, who passed away recently.
 8. Who is George W. Bush's nominee for the post of U.S. Defence Secretary following Donald Rumsfeld's resignation?
 9. Which Asian electronics giant is to invest \$100 million in a new manufacturing complex in Sriperumbudur near Chennai?
 10. What path-breaking model of an important element of the human body has been unveiled by Norwich's Institute of Food Research?
- * * *
11. Name the new Commissioner of Chennai Corporation.
 12. Vengai Marbon, who is making a bio-pic on Pasumpon Thevar, is the son of which political leader?
 13. Who is the Tamil Nadu Minister for Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare?
 14. In which film did Muthuraman make his debut?
 15. What is 'Tiruttondar-Tokai'?
 16. For which English county did Srinivasaraghavan Venkataraghavan play?
 17. If Chennai's airport is at Meenambakkam, which Tamil Nadu city's airport is at Peelamedu?
 18. For which work was the present Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi, awarded the 'Raja Rajan Award' by the Tamil University, Thanjavur?
 19. In which battle in 1767 was Hyder Ali defeated by the British after he attacked Madras?
 20. Venkata and Chinna Thayammal were the parents of which Dravidian born in 1879?

(Answers on page 8)

A search for roots in Madras... ... & a promise kept



Pauline Price.

INDIA. As an 8-year-old, this was a word which was as familiar to me as was my own name. When uttered by my granny, Dorothy Harriet Lowe, who lived with me and my family, I knew I was in for a treat.

Listening to her stories of life in Madras, as the youngest daughter of Charlotte Amelia Lowe, née Fitzgerald, and Richard Brotherton Lowe, would guarantee my undivided attention. Being allowed to try on one of her treasured collection of sarees and pieces of jewellery, was pure joy.

She was born in Madras and baptised at the English Wesleyan Chapel, Black Town, as was her mother before her. She remained in India until after the death of both her parents, returning to England in her late teens. She later married and had three daughters, the youngest was my mother, Dorothy Amelia Lowe Watson.

Her love of the place of her birth was very evident. Strangely, though, she never seemed to believe that she would ever go back. However, she often told me that I should go one day and I promised that I would try.

Sunday morning January 29th, beginning at long last the visits to some of the places that had been so important in the lives of three, possibly four, generations of my family.

We made our way to St. Mary's Church, the first link with the past. It was here that my great-great-grandfather, Alexander Fitzgerald, married Arabella De Souza, his first wife who, sadly, died when she was 26. The couple had two daughters, Mary Ann Adelaide born in 1834 and Arabella Sophia born in 1837 and who died when she was 3. She was buried on May 22, 1840, just 3 months after her mother's death in March 1840. It is possible the couple also had two sons, one Alexander Vesey Fitzgerald born 1831 and another, Alexander John Fitzgerald, born 1832 died 1832. I still need to confirm these.

My first sight of the church was seen through eyes filled with tears, the first of many on this emotional journey. The church was undergoing major renovation, readying it for the 325th anniversary celebrations later in the year. It was virtually an empty shell.

Work was going on all around us, but to my delight we were able to go inside for as long

as we wanted. At last, as my first tangible connection with my ancestors, I was able to stand where they had stood and walk where they had walked.

We left for the next church on our list. We found an auto taxi, whose driver assured us that he knew where it was. As we passed Nehru Park for the second time, going in the wrong direction, my husband produced his map and with its help we arrived at our destination. We later realised that no potential fare would be refused and that we would get where we were going, eventually, often seeing wonderful sights that we would otherwise have missed.

I stood for a while in the doorway trying to imagine the scene at the wedding on June 18, 1868 of my great-grandparents, Richard Brotherton Lowe

• The author, PAULINE PRICE, and her husband John, came to India some months ago to (i) try to find out more about her ancestors, and (ii) to meet a little girl that they were sponsoring in the S.O.S. Village here. This is an account of her five-week-long search for roots in Chennai.

and Charlotte Amelia Fitzgerald, whose second name was handed down to my mother. Two young people at the beginning of what was, according to my grandmother, a long and happy marriage. A marriage that was to produce several children, the youngest of whom was my grandmother.

I went back outside and then retraced the steps of this 16-year-old bride as she walked towards her husband-to-be, a 26-year-old engine driver for the Madras Railway Company. A very emotional and spiritual experience, accompanied by still more tears!

We were invited to the service, which we accepted, and told if we came back the following morning, we would be able to see the original church register and hopefully the entry for the marriage. No one in the church could, however, tell us of an English Wesleyan Church and none had heard of Black Town. Later we were to get the same response from other people and were unable to find it on our map, although I was sure I had seen it at Home somewhere, but could not remember where. I had official confirmation dated 1951, which was in my grandmother's belongings and which stated that both she and my great-grandmother had been baptised there.

At the service, there was one other European there, a young Scottish man. We spent some time talking before the service began. Much to our mutual amazement, we discovered that his father was called Alexander Fitzgerald, the same name as my great-grandfather, the father of the bride. We also discovered that there were other similarities in our family backgrounds. He had been told by an elderly relative that there was an Indian connection and also a link with Ireland in his family's background.

I could hardly believe what I was hearing. I wonder what the odds are in favour of two British citizens, who had never met, with a shared family name, meeting in a church in Madras. Fairly high I would imagine. We exchanged addresses and

agreed that we must follow this up to find out if it was, indeed, just a coincidence.

The next morning, we were looking at the entry for Richard and Charlotte Amelia's wedding in the church. I was for the first time able to look at their names and signatures in their own handwriting, Richard Brotherton Lowe and Charlotte Amelia Fitzgerald.

And a bonus that I had not thought of, their fathers had both signed their names in their own hand. Sergeant Major Alexander Fitzgerald, born in India around 1790, and Richard Lowe, born in Acton Middlesex in England, around 1809. Richard was a Bombardier 2nd Batt. Arty who was "invalided" to Eur Vets in 1848. He embarked on Castle Huntley, March 5, 1829 for Madras. The date of arrival has not yet been confirmed.

Our next destination was St. George's Cathedral, where Sergeant Major Alexander Fitzgerald's marriage to his second wife, Harriet Margaret Stephens (Charlotte Amelia's mother), took place.

The lady who looks after the registers told us that they date back to the 1840s and she hurried away to bring them to us. She put two large registers before me and indicated that I could look myself.

Unfortunately, the records

only went back as far only as 1843. Their marriage took place on September 8, 1841. Although this was a big disappointment, it was overcome by the sheer excitement of being in this beautiful church where Alexander ended a period as a widower and Harriet, who it is believed was about 17 years old, started her new life as a wife and eventually a mother.

Again we enquired about Black Town and the English Wesleyan Church and no one knew of either.

But my hopes were raised again when we were told that many of the Wesleyan Church records in and around Madras were computerised and kept at the Diocesan Offices adjacent to Cathedral. These could possibly contain records of baptisms and birth dates of my grandmother's brother and sisters who would have been born between 1868 and 1892, when my grandmother, the youngest, was born.

I have searched the records at the Oriental and India Office Collections. However, only 80 per cent of the records of births, marriages and deaths were sent back to London. My best chance was here in Madras. Hopefully, in these computerised records.

On the 31st, with time very short, as we were catching the train to Jaipur, we decided that we should go in different directions. John went off to find and photograph a Wesleyan church which we thought might turn out to be the elusive 'English Wesleyan Church', Black Town, and I set off for the Diocesan offices, hoping to be able to view the Methodist records. My hopes were quickly dashed when I was told that they were not held there. No information was available as to where they are now located.

However, by an incredible stroke of fortune, one of the Pastors overheard me asking about the records and was interested in my search. When I mentioned my lack of success in finding Black Town, he not only confirmed that Black Town existed, later known as George Town, but also knew the address of the church. He gave instructions to my auto driver and we set off on a dash across Madras to try to find it before time ran out. I had experienced some amazing rides in last few days,

(Continued on page 8)



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. The Wolfgang Haffner Band has played in more than 50 countries. (At Dublin at the Park Sheraton by pass - 7.00 pm.)

Till December 8: *The Grammar of Strength and Desire*, an exhibition of the work of B.O. Shailesh (at Ashvita).

Till December 8: A painting exhibition by K.K. Sanilkumar (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

Till December 14: N. Murthy from Karnataka will exhibit landscape paintings (at the Dakshina-Chitra Art Gallery).

December 16-17: *Batik Workshop:* In Batik the resist material is traditionally molten wax. Wax resists the dye and leaves behind the impressions of beautiful hand-drawn designs. Sunil, Textile Designer from the Fine Arts College, will conduct the workshop.

December 16-23: 4th Chennai International Film Festival in cooperation with Indo-Cine Appreciation Foundation (at Film Chamber Theatre).

December 17: Tour of Historic Locations of the Music Academy, Sudarshan Buildings, Thambu Chetty Street; YMCA Hall, Esplanade; Senate House; Mani Iyer's Hall, Triplicane; Lodd Govindoss Garden, General Patters Road; Woodlands Premises, Westcott Road; RR Sabha, Sundareswarar Street; and the Music Academy, TTK Road. The tour is by bus and is guided. Contact V Sriram 98400 24200.

Till December 23: *Kammadiyuhum Kangal*, portraits of Tamil poet Nakulan, an exhibition of photographs by R. R. Srinivasan (at Alliance Francaise).



Kutcheribuzz gears up for The Season

That popular website for South Indian music and dance, www.kutcheribuzz.com, offers special features this December-January Music Season in Chennai. A special section on the website is dedicated to the happenings before and during The Season.

The schedule of concerts of leading *sabhas* in the city are posted on the website on a daily basis.

If you are visiting Chennai during The Season, you can also check out on the website what private accommodation is being offered by families. You can also read interviews with Sangeetha Kalanidhis from the year 2000 and many other artistes online. The music guide book listing select concerts of artistes in leading *sabhas*, will be released by December 6th and the dance guide book will follow not long after! Copies can be collected from the Kutcheribuzz office, Second Floor, Corporation Shopping Complex, 77 C. P. Ramaswamy Road, Alwarpet, Chennai - 18. Phone - 2499 4599.

The Kutcheribuzz newspaper will be distributed free at select concert venues from December 14th to January 1st. A collection of these newspapers will be available at the Kutcheribuzz office after January 5, 2007 for a fee, on first come basis.

For more information, log on to www.kutcheribuzz.com



Clearing Mullapperiyar confusion

(Continued from page 2)

Let us remember that the dam is 111 years old. There have been worries about its safety in the past. Regardless of the certification by the Central Water Commission, it seems to this writer that "the precautionary principle" should prevail. It would be wise to be very careful about subjecting the dam to any avoidable stress. Moreover, as between Tamil Nadu, which wants more irrigation, and Kerala, which is worried about safety, greater weight should surely be given to the latter. There is a tendency in Tamil Nadu to treat Kerala's objections as "political", but it would be wiser to accept the genuineness of Kerala's concerns.

This is a dam in Kerala, on land leased for 999 years to Tamil Nadu, operated for and by Tamil Nadu. While the benefits go to Tamil Nadu, the risks are borne by the people of Kerala. The Kerala Government has the prime responsibility to ensure their safety; their word should carry greater weight. It has had an Act passed enabling it to act in the interest of the safety of dams in the State. The validity of that Act has been questioned by Tamil Nadu in the Supreme Court. Talks between the two States do not seem to be making much progress. Kerala tried to have an independent assessment of the safety of the dam carried out, but abandoned the attempt when faced with opposition by Tamil Nadu. Farmers in Tamil Nadu, who stand to benefit from additional irrigation waters, have been holding demonstrations, stopping traffic and so on. Fortunately, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has requested the people of his State to be calm, not to resort to marches and demonstrations, and to leave the matter to be handled by the Tamil Nadu Government. It is to be hoped that the statesmanship that this shows will continue and prevail.

Is Tamil Nadu being high-handed and insensitive to Kerala's concerns? Is Kerala being unreasonable and negative? All that you can say is that the benefit of the doubt should be given to Kerala. The farmers of Tamil Nadu must remember their "rights" over Periyar waters are not natural or riparian rights; they are rights arising out of an agreement. They are receiving waters because Kerala has been good enough to give them that bounty. The attitude of Tamil Nadu farmers towards Kerala should be one of gratitude, and not one of anger or resentment. Secondly, the Kerala Government is entitled to exercise abundant caution about the safety of people, property, and wildlife in the State. Safety is paramount. Tamil Nadu's efforts should be to reassure Kerala and assuage its anxiety, and not to complain about its unreasonableness or accuse it of politicising the issue. – (Courtesy: *The New Indian Express*.)

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

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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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:

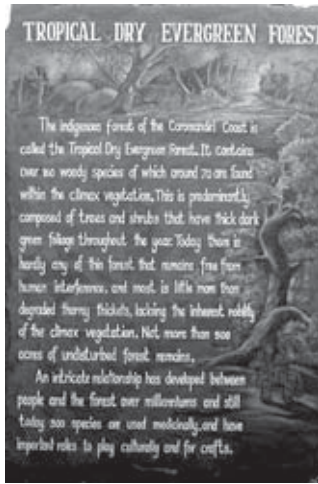
Growing a city forest

(Continued from page 1)

began last November with 15-20 people working here every day." Already about 3500 plants, of a hundred different TDEF species, have been planted. A thousand more will soon be added. Medicinal plants abound.

He is currently initiating a plan to sketch and paint the water *thottis* (strategically positioned across the area to store water when necessary), wall portions and pumphouse for better effect. A central lotus pond is planned.

The soil in the area is naturally nutrient-rich and plants thrive. A screen of trees and grass will hide the remnants of



the earlier mountain of garbage, and also the transit point for the garbage. (But isn't it necessary

that a clean and accessible route be provided to the forest being created? Or maybe every time you pass the collection point, the powers-that-be want to remind you of what it could have been!)

The maintenance contract has already been given to a private contractor. But how successful and sustainable the move will be will depend on the consciousness of the people involved. Says Joss, "We took a group of workers from here to Pitchandikulam Forest in Auroville for an orientation programme, to give them a feel. We could take others who are going to be involved too. There's a lot to be done, and I won't be totally idealistic. It is important to involve some local NGOs and schools in order to foster relationships; maybe set up a Local Interpretation Centre for children and bring in youngsters who can educate themselves on environmental issues."

"We try to focus on the positive. This project is the result of an aspiration: to convert a dumpyard into a tropical dry evergreen forest. But, then, if the transformation has to be sustained, there needs to be a matching energy. And that will depend on local groups and educators," says Joss. He and his team should be here till the end of the rains, and "would like to keep an eye on it too thereafter, occasionally".

Among the natural rock slabs painted at Auroville that line the boundary wall all around, I am enamoured by one of an amazingly realistic Golden-backed Woodpecker. If given a chance, this forest inside the city can, in time, bring back even the real woodpeckers!

From Fort St. George to Rock Fort?

(Continued from page 1)

rai triangle, would help in every way.

The problem, however, lies in the execution of the move. The infrastructure in the proposed capital will have to be laid in advance so that there are no hitches in the functioning of the government. Unfortunately, given our history of developing infrastructure after an area gets populated, this may not happen in reality. Similarly, as written on the subject in *Madras Musings* in 2003, there has to be a consensus among all the leading political parties about making the shift. This too looks unlikely, considering that these organisations do not see eye to eye even on flood relief. If a political consensus is achieved, the next step would be to speak with leading citizens, administrators (who, curiously, are stumbling blocks when in office but who see the light of day in retirement), business establishments, and trade unions. Once there is a commitment from all concerned, a shift could happen seamlessly.

How would Chennai benefit? Firstly, the shift would free major landholdings of the Government for development. The city can concentrate on build-

ing a commercial image. There would be a large-scale decongesting of the city as well. The water scarcity in the city may abate to some extent. And some of the historic buildings of the city may be relieved from Government occupation. The Thanjavur-Tiruchi-Madurai area would also benefit by being the recipient of large-scale and, hopefully, planned development. We would also have a capital in the centre of the State, a position that Chennai lost as soon as the erstwhile Madras Presidency was carved into various states.

We in India are no strangers to the shifting of capitals. New Delhi was built for this very purpose by the British Raj. Post-Independence, we have had Gandhinagar emerging as Gujarat's state capital and Dispur becoming the capital of Assam. Will the Government pay heed to this suggestion that's made from time to time? We only hope for the best. With the Supreme Court recently remarking that Chennai had become unfit for habitation, there should be some soul-searching among the powers-that-be which could lead to a brand new capital and a wide open Chennai.

Madras - and a promise kept

(Continued from page 6)

but this was by far and away the most exciting ride I experienced. Madras traffic makes London roads look like country lanes!

And then, there it was. Closed and with weeds and foliage growing around the doors, but definitely the right church. I cannot begin to describe my feelings as I stood on the steps. But what to do next? I ran to the rear of the building. There, in a little wooden building, were two young employees who, much to my amazement, produced a key to a side door. Moments later I stood at the altar where Charlotte Amelia and Dorothy Harriet, my great-grandmother and grandmother, were welcomed into the family of the church on May 8, 1852 and on December 18, 1892 respectively.

A lifetime's ambition to give thanks for the lives of these two women, as well as that of my own beloved mother Dorothy Amelia, here in Madras, had at last been achieved. I'm not ashamed to say that my tears really flowed. Although, sadly, my husband was not here to share this moment with me, I did not feel alone. The staff, my driver and some curious workmen who seemed to appear from nowhere, stood behind me. I was very touched to see some had also shed a tear or two.

This visit has in so many ways been such a special time in my life. I found kindness, friendship and a desire to help, from strangers, which I have not experienced on this scale, in any other part of the world, my own included. I came searching for the past and found so much more.

Answers to Quiz

1. Ricky Ponting; 2. Sanjaya Bahel; 3. Hindi, Kannada and Tamil; 4. For his role in the killing of 148 people in the village of Dujail; 5. The former CBI Director, R.K. Raghavan; 6. Damien Martyn; 7. Polly Umrigar; 8. Robert M. Gates; 9. Samsung; 10. The world's first artificial stomach.

* * *

11. Rajesh Lakhoni, IAS; 12. The former Speaker, the late K. Kalimuthu; 13. K.K.S.S.R. Ramachandran; 14. *Nenil Orr Aalayam*; 15. Sundarar's recitation of the names of the Nayanmar; 16. Derbyshire; 17. Coimbatore; 18. *Thenpandi Singam*; 19. Battle of Chengam; 20. 'Periyar' E.V. Ramasamy Naicker.

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