

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- Mullaperiyar: Another side
- The Music Academy trail
- Mylapore & ECR Festivals
- A century with a century

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"Appa, do you think the effects of global warming could make a lizard look like a crocodile?"

### Watch your feet

Someone needs to set limits to the motto 'Be prepared.' Consider this.

An innocent householder is bowling along the lane of his particular life, trying to make the best of things, when, Bham! – with absolutely no warning – he runs into a large beast in his home.

(And no, it is not one of his wife's relatives.)

Now, the householder is probably a very good soul, taught at his mother's knee to be kind to all animals. But what is he to do when a great big reptile, posing under the name 'marsh crocodile', is found in his bathroom?

What next?

A python nestling in the soap dish?

This takes the fellowship-with-all-creatures-great-and-small concept just that bit too far, besides being totally unfair. After all, the bathroom is the only place left which provides some peace and quiet ... and escape.

Unfortunately, a fresh bogey has now been pencilled into the minds of sorely-trying citizens.

The authorities concerned, displaying an admirably single-minded viewpoint, apparently checked the young fellow and pronounced him healthy and blessed "with powerful jaws".

How sweet!

What about the health of the poor householder who has probably lost several lifetimes in the shock suffered, and has now become even more wary and distrustful of life in general, and his environment in particular?

And Fate wonders why we treat her with a certain coolness and distance!

Ranjitha Ashok

# Super-corridor strewn with obstacles

(by A Staff Correspondent)

With Information Technology all the way as far as Madras that is Chennai is concerned, the infrastructure project that has hogged the limelight in the recent years is the IT Corridor to link Madhya Kailash Junction with Siruseri in the first phase. This 22-km stretch is where many IT giants have their offices and many more are expected to move in. When completed, it is estimated, the density of IT professionals per sq.km here will be the highest in the world, beating even the Silicon Valley. In the second phase the corridor would extend up to Mahabalipuram. But what's happened to the project?

The project, started in 2004, was estimated to cost Rs.84.41 crore in the first phase, which included the cost of setting up toll plazas, supervision costs and contingencies. The core activities included conversion of the stretch into a six-lane carriageway with medians and road signs. The cost of land acquisition was not included and this was estimated at Rs. 43 crore.

The Tamil Nadu Road Development Corporation (TNRDC) was allowed to set up a special purpose venture called the IT Expressway Limited for the development of the corridor. The TNRDC itself is a joint venture between Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS) and the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO).

The project was funded partly through a loan of Rs. 50.41 crore and partly by contributions from the State Government of Rs. 21.50 crore and the Ministry of Commerce (Govt. of India) of Rs. 12.5 crore. The last-named came under the Assistance to States for Infrastructure Development for Exports (ASIDE) scheme with the proviso that this amount was to be returned to the Government or set up later as an IT Corridor fund.

A high-powered committee comprising the Tamil Nadu Development Commissioner, Finance Secretary, Commissioner, Land Administration, Secretaries of the Highways and the Industries Departments, and the CEO of TNRDC, was set up to monitor the progress. Bids were invited for the execution and a Malaysian firm was selected. Work was to commence in April 2004.

Among the important features of the corridor was the introduction of an exclusive lane for non-motorised vehicles, which would provide for slow-moving and stalled vehicles, thereby ensuring free flow of traffic. Another highlight was a Partnership and Development Agreement with infrastructure and service agencies that the road would be free from digging and damage for 30 years. A service duct or corridor was to be laid along the entire stretch to ensure that all utilities could be accessed without hindrance to traffic. The shifting of utilities and the construction of the service trench, which cost Rs. 56 crore, was borne by the telecom companies and the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board.



Streamlined pedicabs favoured by tourists in Viet Nam. With well-dressed drivers in the rear, an open view in front and excellently manufactured, these cyclos are vehicles we should be thinking about, says the author-photographer.



## Let's introduce pedicabs

As a cultural tour guide, I find that many foreign tourists like to take a cycle rickshaw ride on the Marina as well as in crowded streets in Mylapore and George Town. When I accompanied German groups to Madurai, I used to organise rickshaw rides for a group of 28 people at 10 pm to take them from the hotel to the temple, a distance of 2 or 3 kilometres. They used to enjoy the ride.

In Srirangam, as the coaches are stopped before the main *gopuram*, the tourists are taken in rickshaws in the narrow streets, avoiding the menace of shopkeepers and beggars. This gives them a chance to see and photograph the daily life of the people.

Indeed, rickshaws have an advantage over other modes of transport. They are cheaper, yet provide a living for the poor rickshaw drivers. They can wend their way through narrow streets. They are open in front (unlike cars) and the tourists can take videos or photos of the daily

life rituals around them. Being a small vehicle, it can be parked a minute away from the tourist's destination without causing a traffic jam. It is pollution-free.

The minus points are, the driver sits in the front, blocking the view; the drivers also tend to look emaciated, are usually in torn clothes, and often dirty.

Recently I was in Viet Nam, where I saw a stylised version of rickshaws which impressed me a lot. I used one wherever I travelled in Viet Nam. It is called a Cyclo or a Pedicab.

It is open in the front, like ours, but the driver sits at the back, without blocking his passenger's view. The whole cyclo is made of stainless steel, has clean seats and is run by a smiling driver.

I suggest that we adopt this pedicab. It can be altered to suit our needs. This can be introduced in Mylapore, Kancheepuram, Parry's and Mahabalipuram on a trial basis.

K.N. Anandhi

However, despite all this fanfare and hype, the project, like all Government activities, got off to a slow start. There was great delay in land acquisition and still greater delay in shifting the utilities. The contractor had difficulty in mobilising resources, which resulted in further stretching of the timeline.

Acquisition of litigation-free land was the first hurdle and resulted in the commencement of the project being shifted to January 1, 2005. The TNRDC

(Continued on page 7)



# A different view of Mullaperiyar

Three score and ten is the Biblical lifespan of human beings. In "God's own country" that is Kerala, politicians have given its dams also a lifespan of 70 years. The Mullaperiyar gravity dam on the Periyar built in 1895 by Madras Presidency Chief Engineer Col. J. Pennycuik on land leased to Madras Province by the Maharaja of the erstwhile State of Travancore for 999 years, which is as good as perpetual lease, is 111 years old.

Considered at that time as the "most extraordinary engineering feat ever performed," the dam had changed the course of the river emptying into the Arabian Sea by diverting its water eastwards into the Vaigai river emptying into the Bay of Bengal. Kerala says the dam has outlived its lifespan by 41 years and it is about time Tamil Nadu decommissioned it and built a new one. It can burst anytime, threatening the lives of 3.5 million people living downstream. Gravity dams rarely burst.

The livelihood of the farmers of Theni, Dindigul, Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram Districts in Tamil Nadu depends on the waters of the Mullaperiyar diverted into the Vaigai. The area around the lake retains its pristine and virgin forests that are rich in wildlife. The hill slopes around the lake include diverse deciduous forest. It has become one of the most sought-after tourist attractions of Kerala. The 26 sq.km. thick tropical forest was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1934 and a tiger reserve in 1975.

Kerala maintains that the 1895 agreement was between the colonial British government of Madras Province and the Maharaja of Travancore, a mere vassal, and therefore it has no place in free India. The agreement, however, was reviewed and signed afresh in 1970 when both Kerala and Tamil Nadu had popularly elected democratic governments. While C. Achutha Menon of the CPI

● by **SAM RAJAPPA**

A veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai.

was the Chief Minister in Kerala, and Karunakaran of the Congress was his Home Minister, in Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanidhi of the DMK was the Chief Minister. Kerala wanted the lease rental, fixed in 1895, to be raised six-fold and Tamil Nadu agreed. The dam was already 76 years old then. Kerala never questioned its stability or asked for a new one as none in Idukki, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Alappuzha or Ernakulam felt threatened. The storage level in the Mullaperiyar reservoir was kept at 152 ft. as agreed in 1895 though the dam could have safely taken another three feet of water. In 1975, Kerala completed the Idukki arch dam 48 km downstream with a capacity to impound 72 tmcft water and generate 780 MW. It was executed with Canadian aid under the Colombo Plan. Contrary to the expectations of the Kerala Electricity Board, Idukki never reached its full reservoir level of 2,402.95 ft. in the following four years and the six generators of 130 MW each at the Moolamattam underground power house could never generate the optimum quantity due to the shortfall in water.

Faced with acute power shortage throughout the 1970s, engineers of the Kerala Electricity Board suggested that if the storage level of the Mullaperiyar reservoir could be lowered from 152 ft. to 136 ft., the Idukki dam could expect better flows. But it would result in reduced supply of water to farmers on the Tamil Nadu side. It was at this stage Kerala launched a campaign that the 94-year-old dam was in danger and the lives of 3.5 million people were in peril. Post-1977, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran agreed to lower the storage level of Mullaperiyar reservoir to 136 ft. on the understanding that it would be restored to its original height after strengthening the dam.

Within days of carrying out reinforcement works, on April 29, 1980 to be exact, the Central Water Commission, whose then chairman was a Keralite, recommended that the water level could

(Continued on page 6)

# Cinematic worries

The lot of a cinema owner is seldom a happy one. Apart from the uncertainties of a film's success, people in the movie hall business have had to contend with channel television, video tape and CD piracy and also the vagaries of taxation, which changes from budget to budget, government to government. Add to this the vandals who tear up seats just for the fun of it. No wonder many owners switch to real estate. The recent decision of the State Government to restrict the price of tickets has *The Man from Madras Musings* wondering if the move to real estate will soon snowball.

Though most theatres in the city are quite seedy and have clearly seen better days, some do take pride in their appearance and pay attention to patrons' comfort. The Sathyam Complex is a typical example. So is Mayajal, just outside the city. These theatres spend money on upkeep and also in ensuring that parking space is made available, a luxury in the present conditions where real estate prices keep going up every day. Adequate staff is also needed to ensure that day-to-day operations go on smoothly. For all this, some theatres charge a premium, which is perfectly acceptable.

With the government now stepping in, MMM feels that these theatres will definitely resort to cost-cutting measures and the outcome will be shoddy theatres that scrimp on minimum amenities. In an era where we keep talking of free enterprise, this move, ostensibly to protect the film industry from piracy, is clearly a step backward.

Whispers have it that there is more to this move than meets the eye, with politics, as usual, playing a key role.

## Parking blots

The battle over parking blots (sorry, lots) is hotting up once again. *The Man from Madras Musings* learns from the dailies that the CMDA has submitted its proposal for acquiring land and putting up multi-level parking facilities at five locations in the city, namely the T'Nagar and Broadway bus termini, the Madras United Club grounds, the Government Estate and an area "adjacent" to Panagal Park. While MMM is all for building parking lots at bus termini, considering that most of them are eyesores and the worst maintained among the city's public properties, he trusts that the bus termini will also continue to function from the same places. Removing them will only mean buses spilling over on to the main roads in these already congested areas. MMM is also glad to see that Panagal Park is not being looked at for development into a parking lot. Or at

least he hopes that by land "adjacent" to the Park, the authorities are not indulging in some legal speak and actually planning to acquire some part of the park itself.

Apparently, there is a similar proposal pending on developing the Adyar bus terminus as well. What shocked *The Man from Madras Musings* is that the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) is apparently reluctant to comply, as it hopes to develop the property into an IT park! Is there no restriction on who or what can develop into an IT park? Does everybody have to get on to the IT bandwagon? And what about the so-called social conscience of a government-owned corporation with the so-called motive of providing low cost travel facilities for the public? If it does not cooperate in building public amenities such as parking lots, who will? Also,

**SHORT  
N  
SNAPPY**

is it not high time that the MTC thought of making profits from its operations rather than from its real estate?

## After hotels...?!

Going, going, gone! Two more landmarks that will be gone by the time the year is out, unless there's some positive re-thinking by their buyers, are the Dasaprakash Hotel and, *The Man from Madras Musings* hears, the Ashoka Hotel. Both – they are two of the 'Big Three' that made Udipi vegetarian cuisine famous – have been bought, MMM hears, by one of the largest industrial groups in India, which has just entered retailing and has begun to look at hoteliering.

Are these two landmarks in the city to be pulled down for mega-malls or hyper-markets? MMM would much rather wish their heritage be respected and they were converted into top-of-the-line budget hotels, each with two restaurants, one offering Udipi vegetarian and the other South Indian non-veg. If there were heritage laws in place in the city, MMM might well have got his wish.

## Academy parking

The Music Academy has shown the way during the present music season, in terms of parking facilities. An arrangement with the St. Ebba's school that was finalised last year and continues this year as well. But that did not prevent the patrons last year from trying their luck inside the Academy compound, even when signboards clearly declared that

the parking lot was full. This resulted in needless chaos.

This year, the Academy has brought in a valet parking service with professionals handling the matter. The service is courteous, and surplus cars do not aggrandise the surrounding roads but are parked in the St. Ebba's compound by the valets. However, who can train our patrons and public into observing some minimum discipline? MMM was amused to observe the way patrons rushed to the valets after a concert last week and demanded their keys all at once. Some even snatched their keys from the counter without informing the valets and tried to take out their cars though others were blocking the way. With some keys thus having vanished, the valets were confused and it took quite a while to sort out the mess.

MMM wonders if the same patrons would behave this way at five-star hotels when they claim their cars from the valets after their visit.

## Noticing the Season

*The Man from Madras Musings* could not help smiling at an advertisement released by Tamil Nadu Tourism in the last week of December. This has several musicians on it and claims to market the Music Season and invites people from elsewhere in India and abroad to visit Chennai. Presumably the ad is aimed at NRIs, so Heaven knows what it was doing in an Indian, and a local, daily at that. Secondly, what is to be achieved by releasing such an ad at the fag end of the Season? Such publicity material makes better sense if circulated at least six months before the Season so that foreigners and NRIs can plan their travel. Unless our departments are being proactive and have released this ad keeping in mind next year's Season. MMM somehow does not think so. However, MMM is thankful that someone up there is finally sitting up and taking notice of the Season a good 80 years after it began.

## Chennai winter?

Chennaiites are a puzzled lot this December. The famed Margazhi *pani*, or dew, is completely absent and, in fact, there is a reasonable amount of humidity in the air. *The Man from Madras Musings* wonders what this change of weather means. Does this indicate that our brief winter is a thing of the past? Is it because of the increase in population and pollution? Perhaps some meteorologist will be able to explain.

– MMM





## Women's health

While inaugurating the annual conference of the Obstetrics & Gynaecological Society of South India in Chennai recently, the Union Health Minister, Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss, said the Centre would sanction Rs. 100 crore to modernise and upgrade the Institute of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Egmore, and the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital, Chepauk, both in Chennai. The Minister said the first priority would be to improve women's health by reducing mortality rates during deliveries and the only way to do this would be to ensure institutional deliveries.

Since Chennai already has many well-equipped hospitals with modern facilities, Government should first consider spending the proposed Rs. 100 crore to provide the requisite facilities in the various taluk hospitals and primary health centres. This will greatly benefit the much larger number of women living in the districts and rural areas.

J.W. Thomas  
9, Ritherdon Road  
Chennai 600 007

## A railway footnote

The write-up on T.S. Parthasarathy (MM, De-

ember 1<sup>st</sup>) made excellent reading. But for some reason not known, the name of the author was not mentioned in the article.

Incidentally, R.M.S. Sundaram Iyer did not serve in the Railway Department. Railway Mail Service is a wing of the Postal Department though its staff sort mail in running trains.

Another name also similarly misleading is the Commissioners of Railway Safety. These railway experts function independent of the Railway Board and are required by law to conduct a semi-judicial on-the-spot enquiry soon after every railway accident, big or small. Reports put out in the media, however, state that the Railway Minister has ordered an immediate enquiry by the concerned Commissioner of Railway Safety into the accident. Such reports are incorrect. Minister or no Minister, the statutory enquiry has to be held and the railways have no say in the verdict of the Commissioner.

V.E. Arunachalam  
16, Kamar Street  
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**Editor's Note:** The author of the article was Sriram V. His name was inadvertently omitted.

## Sickening blare

V. Ramnarayan's racy account (MM, December 1<sup>st</sup>) of listener's travails in music *sabha*-s applies to marriage receptions in Chennai as well.

Music groups, who charge upwards of Rs.75,000, come with mammoth amplifiers. When the blasting starts, you can only communicate through sign language. This has become a routine at the marriages of the rich

but sounds like the blare of politicians before slums. As P.B. Srinivas puts it, such music makes U SICK.

C.G. Prasad  
9, C.S. Mudali Street  
Kondithope, Chennai 600 079

## Dance addendum

In the last column of the article on Film News Anandan's book (MM, November 1<sup>st</sup>) the author wonders what role Rukmini Devi Arundale played in the film *Raja Desingu* (1936).

As a young boy I happened to see this film. Rukmini Devi's dance came as an addendum, probably to attract crowds. It was not a part of the main film. I also remember that in one film whose name I do not remember now, but screened in the early 1940s, Tara Choudhury's dance was featured in similar fashion. Older readers may remember that Tara Choudhury fairly often appeared on stages all over India in those days and was famous for her fast-paced dance numbers which did not belong to any particular school.

K.S. Krishnaswamy  
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27, III Main Road  
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Chennai 600 020

## PCB & noise polluters

Our Pollution Control Boards, both at the State and Central levels, are name-sake Boards, without concomitant enforcement authority.

On the noise control front, if our PCBs were really powerful, we should not be having rattling

ing areas, increasing as it would the carrying capacity of elephants, ungulates and tigers.

He also seems to have forgotten that elaborate strengthening of the dam had been undertaken and that this was supervised by the Central Water Commission, the highest technical body in the country, while he was in service.

When he questions the safety of the dam, is he not aware of the fact that the prestigious technical and scientific institutions over which he presided when he was in service, the Central Water Commission and the Central Soil Material and Research Station, vouchsafed for the dam's safety after conducting extensive tests on the dam?

Hasn't Col. J. Pennycuik's legacy made it possible to use the water gainfully and produce useful commodities, instead of wasting it by letting it run into the sea?

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A few readers, including the one who passed on this letter to *Madras Musings* urging us to give the other side, have felt that by re-publishing Ramaswami Iyer's article, we have "slipped into the political arena for the first time" and that *Madras Musings* "need not include articles relating to sensitive issues". If Mullaperiyar is a political issue, it has been made so by the politicians. As far as *Madras Musings* is concerned, it is a citizens' issue, just as heritage and the environment and a better Chennai are people's issues. It concerns people and the environment. It is the politicians who make every subject look like a political issue.

autos, two-wheelers with bizarre exhausts, and automobiles with 'tuned' mufflers on our roads, whizzing past us leaving us acoustically numbed. Add to this the aeroplanes with their high decibel take-offs. Near airport areas, can any peace-loving person put up with such a racket?

While we talk of Bharath Stage-II and Bharath Stage-III emission control norms, we do not have any significant control norms on the noise front.

Is it not our PCBs' duty to come down heavily on the noise polluters? Should not our PCBs neutralise the noise, by taking up the issue at the industry level itself with the manufacturers? Those who 'tune' their 'silencers' could be dealt with under the provisions of the law, when they violate it.

V. Rajagopalan  
2-B, 2/11, 38<sup>th</sup> Street  
Nanganallur, Chennai 600 061

## MIT left out

MM's report on the threat to the constituent colleges of Anna University (MM, December 1<sup>st</sup>) had an unfortunate contribution from the printer's devil. The Madras Institute of Technology, Chromepet, one of the four colleges, was erroneously called A.C. College of Technology, Chromepet. AC Tech was itself listed immediately afterwards.

Dr. Prema Srinivasan  
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**Editor's Note:** We regret the error.

# Save those historic names

The College of Engineering, Guindy, is the oldest technical institution outside Europe, having been established by the East India Company in 1794. It is our duty to preserve it and privilege to be proud of it. Heritage protection is not for buildings and monuments only. It is for institutions also.

This great institution has faced threat of extinction now and then, especially after the formation of the Anna University in 1978. Overzealous Vice-Chancellors try to enhance the glory of Anna University, in the process trying to obliterate the identity of the College of Engineering, Guindy.

One such occasion was in 1957. The alumni of the College had to campaign for the survival of the college and obtained a written assurance from the then Vice-Chancellor, Dr. M. Anandhakrishnan, that the name and the individuality of the College of Engineering, Guindy, would be preserved for all time to come.

Subsequent Vice-Chancellors attempted the same thing but their attempts were thwarted. Now one more attempt is being made to obliterate the name of this College.

Anna University was established as a Residential University with four constituent colleges, namely, the College of Engineering, Guindy, the Alagappa Chettiar College of Technology, the School of Architecture and Planning, and the Madras Institute of Technology (M.I.T), Chromepet. It was converted into an Affiliating University, then reconverted into a Residential University. Now the move is to make all four constituent institutions into four Departments of the University, abolishing the individual identity of these eminent organisations with a historical background.

M.I.T., Chromepet, was established by C. Rajam, an industrialist, by selling his big bun-

galow in Edward Elliot's Road, because he wanted to provide education in specialised courses of study, like Aeronautical Engineering, Automobile Engineering and Instrument Technology which were not available in Government colleges at that time. India's President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, is an eminent alumnus of this institution.

Similarly, the Alagappa Chettiar College of Technology was established through donations given by that philanthropist, K.V.A.I.Rm. Alagappa Chettiar, to provide facilities in Chemical Engineering, Textile Technology, etc. which were also not available in Government colleges.

Both the institutions deserve to maintain their identity in grateful memory of the great persons who established them long before Anna University.

The College of Engineering, Guindy, is the oldest and most eminent of the constituent colleges. Its alumni are spread all over the country, nay all over the world, occupying eminent positions. They will be shocked to know of the attempts to erase the name of their alma mater. In fact, the successive Vice-Chancellors who have been attempting to obliterate the name of the College are themselves alumni of the college. It is not clear as to why they are eager to glorify the name of Anna University at the expense of the identity of their own alma mater. Let them – and all concerned – be zealous in protecting the name and identity of historically important institutions which have done yeoman service to the country for decades.

C.S. Kuppuraj  
Former Chief Engineer, P.W.D.  
Former President, Alumni Association,  
College of Engineering, Guindy  
Chennai 600 028



• This was not another walk that SRIRAM V. took heritage enthusiasts on. This was a tour by van and foot following the peregrinations of the Madras Music Academy before it put down firm roots in Cathedral Road.

The Music Academy is a landmark institution as well as its building and location in Madras that is Chennai. Most people imagine that this is where the Academy has existed from its inception, but that is not the case. Today, the Music Academy's TTK Auditorium presents a solid front as the institution enters its 79<sup>th</sup> year. But in its initial years, it was a peregrinating organisation that was unsure of its future, suffering from want of funds and support.

were conducted at the **Museum Theatre**, Egmore. One of the resolutions passed during the session was to set up a Music Academy in Madras. The executive committee of the Music Conference met on January 22, 1928 and resolved to form the Music Academy. A provisional executive committee was appointed on March 5, 1928 to deal with the formalities. The committee comprised Dr. U Rama Rau, a leading physician and President of the Madras Legislative Council,

Kanchipuram Naina Pillai performing at the first concert. The hall where this was held is today known as the McConaughy Hall, named after the very dynamic secretary the "Y" had in its early days.

Beginning with 1929, the Music Academy has had an unbroken record of Annual Conferences. The first of these conferences was held between March 28 and April 1, 1929 at the **Senate House**. This fabulous structure, now beautifully renovated to reflect what it had been then, must have been a grand setting for the first conference, which had no concerts and devoted itself to discussions among musicians on *raga*-s. The second conference, titled the Preliminary Conference of Experts, took place between April 18 and

**Park**, all of which has now vanished barring My Lady's Garden. The pandal itself was circular in shape and could accommodate over 2000 people. The conference saw Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar presiding and was inaugurated by the Junior Maharani of Travancore. The annual conferences were held here till 1935.

In 1931, it was here that the Music Academy first expanded its conference to last a full week, from 25<sup>th</sup> till 31<sup>st</sup> December. It

# Following the trail of the Music Academy



Mani Iyer's Hall

cal dance as Bharata Natyam. It was also here that a valedictory function of the conference, now known as the *Sadas*, was first thought of and took place in 1935 with Sir Meverell Statham, Director of Public Instruction, presiding over it. Medals were distributed to the winners of competitions conducted by the Academy during the year.

The Academy had a full calendar of events each year comprising competitions, dance performances and concerts from 1931. These were held at **Gana Mandir**, 10, Thambu Chetty Street, the property of Dr. U. Rama Rau. He published a leading medical journal called *Antiseptic* from these premises and gave the place to the Music Academy free of cost. He even

was also here that it first began the practice of having concerts in the evenings after the deliberations of the conference had concluded for the day. In 1932, it was here that the discussions on the anti-Nautch movement took place which resulted in the renaming of South Indian classi-



Above: My Lady's Garden (People's Park), and on left: Senate House.

went to the extent of modifying the interiors to make a suitable music hall. It was here that the first public performance of *Sadir* (the dance of the Devadasi) was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1931 with the Kalyani Daughters of Tiruvallapattur performing. It was also at this location that the Music Academy's Teachers' College of Music conducted its classes. The College was inaugurated on these premises on October 20, 1931. *The Journal of the Music Academy*, begun in 1930, was also

published from here. The historical Gana Mandir today, alas, does not exist. It has been completely reconstructed and no trace of the old building remains.

In 1935, the dynamic lawyer, K.V. Krishnaswami Iyer took over as President of the Music Academy. He was to remain at the helm of affairs till 1965, ably assisted in administrative matters by such leading lights as Kasturi Srinivasan, TL Venkatarama Iyer and TT Krishnamachari. On the research and academic front, matters were in the hands of Dr. V. Raghavan who



Lodd Govinddoss Gardens.

edited the Academy's publications from 1935 till his death in the 1970s. Under KVK, the Academy's registered office and the Teachers' College shifted to 8, Philips Street, a location that is not identifiable today. It functioned from there till 1937.

The Annual Conference of 1936 saw the Academy shifting to Royapettah, with the proceedings being held in a pandal put up in the compound of **The Funnels**, opposite Congress Bhawan (on General Patter's Road). This property too is not identifiable now, though it is most likely to be where a warren



*Gruhalakshmi*. He gave his annexe of his house free of cost to the Academy in 1938 and that became the registered office of the Academy and also the venue for the Teachers' College of Music till 1946. Today, though Kesari Kuteeram has gone, the annexe still stands. The Annual Conference of 1938 was held in the sprawling premises of the **Woodlands Hotel** opposite Kesari Kuteeram. This property survives, though it is half hidden behind Woodlands Theatre.

The War years saw regulations that prohibited the congregation of people in open spaces and the Academy needed an enclosed area to conduct its annual conference. Thanks to S Sathyamurthy, it held its conferences between 1939 and 1941 at the **Senate House** of the University of Madras. Those were the years of the Tamizh Isai Movement, with the Academy fighting a bitter and losing battle against the Tamil Isai Sangam, which held its concerts at the St. Mary's Co-Cathedral Parish Hall and the Gokhale Hall on Armenian Street.

In 1942, the Academy moved its conference venue to the

Left: Kesari Kuteeram Annexe.



The old Woodlands.

**Sundareswarar Hall**, RR Sabha, Mylapore. It was here that it took the historic decision of conferring the title of Sangita Kalanidhi on the musician who presided over its annual conference; the first such conferment took place on January 1, 1943. The Sundareswarar Hall was the venue for the Academy's annual conference till 1955. During these years, the lecture sessions in the mornings would take place at the **National Girls** (now Lady Sivaswami Iyer) **School** on the same road. The school's prayer hall, where these lecture sessions were held, survives to this day, though Sundareswarar Hall was pulled down two years ago with, rather mysteriously, no signs of a new auditorium.

In 1946, the Music Academy acquired **Sweet Home**, at 115 E, Moubrays Road. The property, belonging to Ethiraj Pillai, was acquired for Rs 1.12 lakh, the bulk of the money coming from a loan negotiated with the Indian



RR Sabha, before demolition.

Bank. This became the registered office of the Academy and the Teachers' College shifted there. Thanks to the efforts of many music lovers and philanthropists and M.S. Subbulakshmi, in particular, funds were soon harnessed for a new auditorium on the same site. The foundation stone for the new building was laid on October 5, 1955 by Pandit Jawaharlal



The National Girls' School.

Nehru, then Prime Minister of India. While Sweet Home was knocked down and the process of building the auditorium began, the Academy held its conferences in a pandal within the same compound while the concert venue shifted to the **PS High School** grounds on RK Mutt Road.

On December 14, 1961, the Academy held the housewarming and grahapravesam of its new auditorium with group-singing by several musicians. The building was completed in 1962 an Jayachamaraja Wodeyar, the erstwhile Maharajah of Mysore, declared it open on 20<sup>th</sup> December. A long journey begun in 1927 saw its completion in 1962. The Academy, like Ulysses, had arrived at its Ithaca.

(Continued on page 6)

Quizzin' with Ram'n'an

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

1. Which former cricketer and now a MP has been convicted for a roadrage death in 1988?
2. Another simple one. In which city was the latest edition of the Asian Games held?
3. Near which station in Bihar did a bridge collapse on a moving train, leading to many deaths and outrage all over the country?
4. Who won the first gold for India at the Asian Games?
5. Name the ideologue and political adviser of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam who passed away on December 14th.
6. According to 'SAARC Human Rights Report-2006' and based on key parameters, India topped in human rights protection. Which nation came last?
7. Name the place in West Bengal where allocation of land to the Tata's had made Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee protest vehemently and go on an indefinite fast.
8. Name the second astronaut of Indian origin to be launched into space recently.
9. Name the new UN Secretary-General-designate who was sworn in on December 15th.
10. The statue of which former Union Minister and Dravidian leader was unveiled in the Parliament complex on December 8th?

\* \* \*

11. Name the first film in which legends K. Balachander and Ilaiyaraaja worked together.
12. What post does L.K. Tri-pathy hold in Tamil Nadu?
13. How many stops does the premium 'Yellow Line' bus service make?
14. Which heritage building on Armenian Street, one of Chennai's famous landmarks and founded by Annie Besant, is to be brought down at the behest of its owners, the YMIA?
15. Out of 2,103 km of metre gauge converted into broad gauge nationally during the 9th Plan period, what percentage was completed in Tamil Nadu alone, the highest for any State?
16. Which cricketer won the 'Man of the Match Award' in India's first ever Twenty 20 international, recently?
17. On whom was the Music Academy's prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi Award conferred on Dec. 15th?
18. Who is the general secretary of the Viduthalai Siruthaigal?
19. Who put Kathakurichi village in Pudukottai District to prominence for all the right and wrong reasons recently?
20. A website on which famous film composer, who has been dubbed 'King of Light Music', was launched by 'Cho' Ramaswamy?

(Answers on page 8)



Extreme left: Rama Rau Buildings, and on left: YMCA, Esplanade.

The Music Academy functioned out of several rented premises and held its annual conferences at various locations in the city before becoming financially comfortable and acquiring its own property.

A recently conducted heri-

who became President of the Music Academy, and the three secretaries, E Krishna Iyer, Prof. P. Sambamoorthy, and S. Rajagopalachari, assisting him.

Though it is not stated where the meetings of January and March took place, it is most likely

21,1930 at **Mani Iyer's Hall**, Raja Hanumantha Lala Street, Triplicane. This building is named after Sir Subramania Iyer, one of the earliest Indians to become a judge of the Madras High Court. The property belongs to the Theosophical Society, which maintains it well to this day. It was here that the Academy took the historic decision of shifting its annual conference to December to coincide with Christmas Week and thus began the tradition of a December Music Season. It was also here that the tradition of electing a musician/musicologist to preside over the Annual Conference began, with T.V. Subba Row becoming the first president.

The December Annual Conference of 1930 took place on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December, at a specially erected pandal behind Ripon Buildings in **People's**



Museum Theatre.

tage tour traced the Academy's various locations and this article is based on following that trail.

The All-India Music Conference was first held between December 24 and 31, 1927 at the **Spur Tank** which was then dry. The All-India Congress Session was held at the same time and the concerts during the conference were performed in specially erected tents. An exhibition of musical artefacts was held at the same venue. Lecture sessions and readings of papers on music

that they took place at **323 (present no. 144) Thambu Chetty Street**, George Town, which was where Dr. Rau had his clinic and dispensary. This building, extensively remodelled today and called **Rama Rau Buildings**, was to be the registered office of the Music Academy till 1935.

The Music Academy was formally inaugurated on August 18, 1928 at the **YMCA Building**, Esplanade (NSC Bose Road), by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer with





# Following the trail of the Music Academy

(Continued from page 5)

The recent tour of the Academy's locations took off from the present building at 6.00 a.m. The group of 30 music and history lovers was taken by van from there to the YMCA Hall, which was kept open

thanks to the interest shown by the office-bearers. Stepping over sleeping forms, the group climbed up the stairs to see the McConnaughy Hall. It was pleasing to note that among the participants was Lakshmi Balasubramaniam, one of the

granddaughters of the eminent lawyer T.R. Venkatarama Sastry who was a founding patron member of the Music Academy. From the Y, the group went to the Rama Rau Buildings and from there it was a quick dash to the My Ladye's

Garden as perhaps the last vestige of People's Park. Having relived the heady years of the anti-Nautch movement here, the group went to the Senate House where the Tamil Isai clash was retold. The tale of the three locations on Royapettah

was told en route to Mani Iyer's Hall which, being closed for repairs, was viewed from outside. From there the group went on to gaze at the empty spot that was once RR Sabha and then went inside the Lady Sivaswami School to relive the old lecdem sessions of the Academy. From the school it was straight to the Season's canteen for a hearty breakfast.

The tale of the Academy evoked a lot of interest. There were supplementary points of interest recollected by Manna Srinivasan, the music historian from Delhi who joined the group. The amount of information, according to Savitha Gautham of *The Hindu*, who attended incognito was so much that she wondered as to what to put in and what to leave out in her article on the tour. For a visitor from New Zealand, it was an entirely new experience, being able to relive the history of a city through a heritage walk.

*Extreme left: Sweet Home and, on left: the present Music Academy on the site of Sweet Home.*



## A different view of Mullaperiyar

(Continued from page 2)

be raised to 145 ft. as a first step. The Kerala Government objected to it. The AIADMK government did not act on the recommendation. After a series of agitations by the farmers affected in Tamil Nadu, Subramanian Swamy of the Janata Party, who had been elected to the Lok Sabha from Madurai, took the issue to the Supreme Court and obtained an order to raise the storage level to 142 feet.

Meanwhile, in Kerala, during the last 27 years, the people in the state have begun to believe that 3.5 million people are indeed in danger of drowning if the storage in the Mullaperiyar reservoir was raised to 142 ft.

The additional six feet water, which the Supreme Court permitted, would mean 25 per cent increase in storage and consequent benefits to farmers in Tamil Nadu. The full capacity of the reservoir at 152 ft. is only 15 tmcft. Half of it is dead storage. For 32 km downstream, the Mullaperiyar, a tributary of the Periyar, meanders through thick hilly forests with no human habitation. In the remaining 16 km stretch before it reaches the Idukki reservoir, which has the capacity to hold 72 tmcft water, there are just three hamlets which are likely to be inundated but not submerged in the unlikely event of the Mullaperiyar dam bursting. It has withstood more than 30 mild earthquakes in the last 111 years. At the time of writing,

the water level in Idukki was 2,385 ft. against the full reservoir level of 2,403 ft. The entire water from Mullaperiyar would not even add one foot to its vast spread of 36 sq km. The threat to 3.5 million people in five districts of Kerala is totally unfounded.

It may be pointed out that east of Tiruchchirappalli, on the river Cauvery, is Kallanai (Grand Anicut), built by a Chola King in 1100 A.D. Considered the oldest dam not only in India but in the entire world, it meets the irrigation needs of the delta region of the Cauvery. Nobody in Tamil Nadu even dreams of decommissioning this heritage dam simply because it is old. Sir Arthur Cotton of the Madras Engineers, known in Andhra Pradesh as the "Father of Irrigation," completed in 1852 the 3.62 km long Dowleswaram Barrage across the Godavari which turned the drought and flood-prone coastal districts into a granary of South India. This 154-year-old dam is still going strong with lakhs of people living downstream. More than 3,500 tmcft water flows through Dowleswaram against the meagre 15 tmcft in Mullaperiyar.

Nearer home in Kanniyakumari District, which was part of the erstwhile Travancore State, another British engineer, Minchin, built the Pechuparai dam in 1904, turning Nanjinad into a rice bowl, besides providing drinking water to the

people of the district, including Nagercoil. The mega atomic power plant coming up at Koodankulam in neighbouring Tirunelveli District is counting on this 102-year-old dam to supply water to cool its reactors.

While Kerala's fear about the safety of the Mullaperiyar dam is misplaced, the State does have a problem. Except for one thermal power station, in Kayankulam, Kerala depends entirely on hydel power. By lowering the storage level of Mullaperiyar dam, flow into the Idukki dam could be increased, enabling the Moolamattam power house to generate optimum power. Compared to Kerala, Tamil Nadu is much better placed in terms of installed capacity. Tamil Nadu should come forward and offer to compensate Kerala by supplying power in proportion to the deficit suffered due to inadequate flow of water into Idukki. Sending naval divers into the Mullaperiyar reservoir is not the way to ascertain the safety of the dam. They lack the expertise for the job. Like all other gravity dams of this kind, the Mullaperiyar has the regulation infiltration gallery with all instruments necessary to study its state of health. The Supreme Court, before passing the February 27th order permitting Tamil Nadu to increase the storage level from 136 ft. to 142 ft., had taken the expert opinion of leading structural engineers from Roorkee and the

Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi. — (Courtesy: *The Statesman*.)

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— THE EDITOR

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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





**January 4-7:** Sundaram Finance Mylapore Festival.

**Art Street:** All evenings. Creation, demo and sale of art works and craftworks by Fine Arts Dept. of Stella Maris College (on Pitchupillai Street, near Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan).

**Crafts bazaar:** All evenings. Members of women self-help groups display and sell products they make as entrepreneurs (off Ponnambala Vadyar Street, near Sri Kapali Temple).

**Tamil books exhibition/sale:** All evenings. Recent publications of book publishers on display and for sale. Special discounts offered (alongside Sri Kapali Temple Tank).

**Traditional games corner:** All evenings. Come, learn and play the games your grandmom and her friends must have enjoyed. *Pallankuzhi, paramapadam, daayakattam.* Organised by scholar Dr. V. Balambal (near Sri Kapali temple, off Ponnambala Vadyar Street).

**Food festival:** All evenings. The best spread of traditional South Indian food. *Pesarattu*, special *vadas*, paper *dosa*, *Kanchi idli*, etc. On January 7, South Indian breakfast from 7.30 a.m. onwards. Special Tanjore *sapad* from 11 a.m. onwards. Organised by Subham Ganesan. (At Vellore Kalyana Mantap, North Mada Street, and Chinna Karpagambal Hall, South Mada Street.)

**Kolam contest:** January 6 & 7 evenings. You must draw a traditional *pullikolam* in 30 minutes in a 4 ft x 4 ft space. Best 15 get prizes and trophies. Open to 100 each day (at North Mada-East Mada Street. Reporting time 3.30 p.m. Registration with Priya Ravi. Ph: 98410 71961).

Also Cookery contest, Heritage walks, talks, *pinnal* expo.

**Workshops for women on 7th 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

1. **Zardosi** by Ayesha Rehabilitation Centre. Bring: Flat chunkies, topa chunkies and beads (in the colours of your choice) 5 each, matching colour thread and needle, embroidery ring, zari thread, scissors.

2. **Crafts** - Making utility items like coaster-holders, folders, bags, cards and wall hangings from handmade papers by Mamta Creations. Bring: 1 sheet handmade paper, glue/Fevicol, scissors, hardboard (bound covers of used note books), lace, sequences, water/acrylic/glitter colour of your choice, brush.

3. **Flower/creepers making** by Meera Rao. Bring: organdy cloth of any colour for flower - 1/4 metre, metal wire (18 gauge, 22 gauge) 10 Nos. of 12 inches, glue, green crepe paper, floral tapes and waste cloth to wipe off hands.

4. **Silk painting** and papier mache multipurpose bowls by Lalitha Krishnamurthy. Bring: Organdy/Tussar silk cloth - 1/2 metre, Rounded soft brush (No.10), fabric paint of your choice, cotton buds 6 Nos, tracing paper, yellow carbon paper, ball point pen, embroidery ring, a glass/plastic/stainless steel bowl, old newspapers 5 Nos, Fevicol 100 ml, vaseline/petroleum jelly - 1 small bottle.

5. **Art/craft** in used polythene bags (to make purses, utility bags, wall hangings) by Revathi Radhakrishnan. Bring: Thin, plain polythene covers of different colours, crochet needle (No.10), scissors, woolen thread ball - 1 (small), candle, match box. (At Hotel Karpagam Hall, South Mada Street. Free to first 25 women at the spot. You need to bring materials listed.)

**Till January 12:** An exhibition of Yuvaraj Vivek's photographs of people and streets in Chennai and Ooty (at Ashvita Art Gallery).

**Till January 15:** The East Coast Road Festival, promoting all the fun spots, eat-outs, resorts and historical destinations on this highway and hosting many special events, such as:

**Coastal Heritage Tour:** Archaeologist Dr. Suresh starts the tour at Tiruvanniyur and shows you the grand temple architecture on the ECR as well as lesser known ruins and forts (European/South Indian). Visiting the oldest temple structure in Tamil Nadu, the Murugan Temple at Salvankuppam, will be the highlight of this tour which starts at Sri Marundeeswarar Temple (shopping complex), Tiruvanniyur, at 6.15 a.m. Light breakfast served. Tour date: January 7th.

**Nurture Nature Tour:** Explore the groves and weeds on the seashore and the amazing variety of plant life and the myriad life forms it supports with 'Nizhal.' Starts at Sri Marundeeswarar Temple shopping complex, Tiruvanniyur, at 6.15 am. Dates: January 6th and January 13th.

**Hunt for Herps & Herbs:** Watch expert *Inula* tribal trackers in action and join the traditional snake and rat-catchers in ferreting out snakes by searching for signs such as markings, droppings or skin, usually invisible to ordinary folks. Tour starts at Sri Marundeeswarar Temple Shopping Complex, Tiruvanniyur, at 6.15 am on January 6th.

**Van transport and light breakfast are provided for all three tours. Fee Rs.200 for each. To register call 98408 92939.**

Many more events are lined up for the Fest. Log on to [www.ecrfestival.com](http://www.ecrfestival.com).

## Subscriptions and contributions

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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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# SUPER-CORRIDOR STREWN WITH OBSTACLES

(Continued from page 1)

was reluctant to begin the work owing to clauses in the contract which allowed payment of hefty compensation to the contractor in the event of non-availability of encroachment-free land. The problem of over 120 linking roads in the area was apparently underestimated, leading to further blocks in the implementation. Several religious shrines in the area added to the problem, what with their shifting becoming contentious issues. Clearly, there had been several aspects that had been overlooked when the original project plan was laid out.

Work finally commenced in April 2005 and in order to make up for the delay, to some extent, it was proposed that activities should commence from both ends of the road and not from the Madhya Kailash end alone as planned earlier. In the meanwhile, the number of vehicles using the stretch burgeoned to

22,000 during peak hours by November 2004 and has continued to increase ever since. Two successively heavy monsoons have added to the project's woes.

The first milestone of the project, throwing open the 3 km stretch between Madhya Kailash and Tidel Park, was crossed in October 2005, a full 12 months behind schedule. The remaining 18 km stretch is expected to be completed by June 2007, but this is subject to the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board completing pipe-laying work by March end. Given the past experience, this looks doubtful.

The project cost has, meanwhile, escalated, what with labour and material prices skyrocketing, thanks to the industrial boom that is going on. The initial estimate of Rs. 84 crore has now been revised to Rs. 117 crore. There has been pressure from the Government to change the contractor owing to

the delays, but the monitoring committee has decided otherwise. In order to speed up matters, the earlier project management consulting firm has been done away with and the committee is directly dealing with the contractor. The composition of the TNRDC Board has undergone a change as well, with a view to keeping a tighter watch on the IT Corridor project.

How the entire activity will pan out in terms of time and resource estimates versus actuals is anybody's guess at this stage. However, those travelling on the first stretch are full of praise for what they see. But any road can be well managed only if there is traffic discipline and that appears to be wholly lacking here as elsewhere in our city. A recent photograph showing IT professionals jumping over the median on the IT Corridor in an attempt to quickly cross the road augurs for plenty of chaos ahead.

## 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: .....

# A century with a century

Tamil Nadu's veteran batsman Sridharan Sharath had the unique distinction of scoring 109 in his 100<sup>th</sup> Ranji Trophy game, against Saurashtra at Rajkot. It was a wonderful climax for one of the country's most prolific scorers on the domestic circuit and Tamil Nadu's most dependable batsman.

'Rock steady' would be the most appropriate adjective to describe the performances of this old warhorse who has played Indian first class cricket for close to 16 years and yet failed to play for the country. It has been truly unfortunate that Sharath just was not able to make it to the national team when he was peaking in the mid-1990s and being successful in the Irani Cup matches, Challenger series, Wills Trophy, Deodhar Cup, Duleep Trophy (playing for South Zone), the Ranji Trophy and the Super League Ranji matches.

Surely, something must have 'clouded' the eyes of the then national selectors who just could not see the speciality and durability of this Tamil Nadu

batsman's skills. No doubt the likes of Sourav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid and V.V.S. Laxman marched ahead of him into the Indian team's middle order. Sachin Tendulkar and Mohammed Azharuddin were there as well, at the top of the batting forefront. Yet you can't help but feel that batsmen of far lesser calibre were afforded opportunities to don the Indian cap.

This doughty left-handed stroke-maker from Tamil Nadu was among the best in the history of Tamil Nadu cricket, alongside batting greats like C.D. Gopinath, A.G. Kripal Singh, A.G. Milkha Singh, K. Srikanth, P.S. Moses, T.E. Srinivasan, W.V. Raman, Sadagopan Ramesh, Robin Singh and Hemang Badani, most of whom got a few opportunities to play for India. Name any stroke from the batting manual and left-handed Sharath was never found wanting. Like Moses, he too was caught up in an era when consistency among the Indian batting greats made it tough to get

into the national Test or One-Day team.

Like his 109 against Saurashtra helped Tamil Nadu declare at 500 for eight recently and thus helped ensure his side garner two points from a bat-dominated Ranji game, Sharath has had several outstanding double hundreds and centuries besides knocks that were close to a 100. These were not just for Tamil Nadu but also for other teams in domestic tournaments.

Having played for India Under-19, it was felt that Sharath would be an automatic choice for the senior side. India badly

nately lost despite brilliant bowling by Javagal Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad. Sharath was a master on seaming tracks and the wicket at Birmingham was just that. Quite ironically, another of his Madras-born seniors, Nasser Hussain, who was playing for England, scored a century in the match.

Sharath's performances in November 1996 Duleep Trophy games for South Zone were outstanding. Against a hostile North Zone attack, he scored 40 and 140. He also consistently scored in the Deodhar games as well. He was picked in the India 'A' squads that played South Africa, the SAARC tournament and Sri Lanka. But he never had a chance to show his prowess with the willow.

Some of his best Ranji scores in the South Zone league circuit came against one of the strongest outfits - Karnataka. His 88



Sridharan Sharath

the manner in which he grafted his runs and built up each of these innings. Each of them is an example for young players on how to score runs in a professional manner against top quality bowling.

Sharath is the ideal cricketer to emulate. He brushes aside all disappointments over non-recognition by national selectors. Once at the batting crease, he puts behind him all negative thoughts and bats with a unique hunger for runs that is hard to find in the domestic circuit. Even when Tamil Nadu wickets have fallen early, there is an air of confidence pervading the playing arena as all watching the game seem to chorus: "Ah! Here's the genius Sharath. He'll take care of everything!" This confidence has undoubtedly laced the over 8,000 runs that this Tamil Nadu stalwart has compiled amidst adversity and lack of opportunities. A national selector once confessed that his colleagues on the panel most reluctantly "bypassed" the left-hander for selection.

Sharath loves cricket and cricketers and the fans adore him and wish him a longer tenure for the State with many more big scores. After all, the 10,000 target is not far off and will surely be in the mind of this epoch-making cricketer whose consistency level is rare and unique in India. - (Courtesy: Straight Bat)

● by **BHASKERAN THOMAS**

needed an additional specialist batsman during the tours to South Africa and the West Indies in 1997. Those were Sharath's salad days, having scored tons of runs in that period.

Who can forget his 86 and 90 at Tirunelveli in February-March 1996 which helped Tamil Nadu get the better of Bombay for the first time in a Ranji encounter and that too in a quarter final game. He went on to hit 31 and 76 in the semi-final game against Delhi that followed, but the selectors did not short-list him for the trip to England that summer. His tight defence and watchful stroke play would have been ideal on that nightmare of a wicket at Edgbaston when India unfortu-

needed an additional specialist batsman during the tours to South Africa and the West Indies in 1997. Those were Sharath's salad days, having scored tons of runs in that period.

Other fine knocks of Sharath that come to mind are his splendid 131 in the quarter final Ranji game against Bengal; his superlative 88 against the Colombo District Association that helped Tamil Nadu wrest the Gopalan Trophy in Chepauk; and his 205 at Kanpur against Uttar Pradesh in Ranji encounter. It's not the size of these scores that fascinate a cricket connoisseur but

## ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Navjot Singh Sidhu; 2. Doha; 3. Bhagalpur; 4. Koneru Humpy; 5. Anton Balasingham; 6. Bangladesh; 7. Singur; 8. Sunita Williams; 9. Ban Ki Moon; 10. Murasoli Maran.

\* \* \*

11. Sindhu Bhairavi, IAS; 12. Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu; 13. Maximum of a dozen stops; 14. Gokhale Hall; 15. 24.21% (509 kms); 16. Dinesh Karthik; 17. Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan; 18. Thol. Thirumavalavan; 19. Santhi, who won and lost the women's 800m silver medal in the Asian Games; 20. M.S. Viswanathan.

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