

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Look at it this way... when you buy this car, you are buying 'history'!

Forever Amby...?

The Ambassador car is all set for its fiftieth birthday this year.

Isn't that something?

In a new world where a car is practically a fashion accessory, filled with attributes that seem more intimidating than strictly necessary, the good old Amby has stood its ground, refusing to give in to this obsession for a slim, sylph-like figure, staying bulky and flaunting its famous 'bench seat'.

Think Amby – and an image of sturdy stability brushed with nostalgia appears.

For the generation that now looks back on a mostly mispent youth, the Amby is a symbol of the past – visits to grandparents, the beach, drive-in restaurants, matinee shows, and shopping sprees to book or toy shops, albeit under supervision, and on a very tight budget.

This was the one car that was generous enough to embrace a bunch of kids, unwilling to be separated even for short drives. The car gave us freedom, although it had a slight tendency to suddenly get all steamed up, requiring irate drivers to examine its boiling entrails beneath the yawning hood.

Now there's a sight you hardly see these days.

Apparently, the Amby, today, is regarded as an integral part of mostly government cavalades or taxi stands, definitely retro in character.

Never mind, Amby.

There are those who know your worth, like tourists who insist on using Ambys for the 'true Indian Experience'.

Happy Birthday, old friend.

Ranjitha Ashok

Can 'The Season' lead to a Chennai Festival?

(by Sriram V.)

Hardly had the curtain been rung down on the Music Season of 2006 when the Government of Tamil Nadu announced an ambitious plan to work towards marketing what has become arguably a unique cultural festival. The December Festival today does not begin from 15th December and end on 1st January as it did a couple of decades ago; it now spans the period mid-November to the middle of January, signing off with the end of the Pongal festivities. With the weather being tolerable at this time of the year in our city, it has become a season for tourists and NRIs as well. All this makes it an ideal festival package to market and it is heartening to see that the Government has

come forward with a proposal to work with the city-based *sabha*-s. The Music Academy has apparently been asked to work out a consultation paper on how the cultural organisations can work with the Government in this regard.

Such a proposal is not new. An earlier attempt to create a Chennai Festival around the Music Season was promoted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (Tamil Nadu Chapter), but it did not go much beyond a few tea-and-talk sessions, largely because there was little attempt at getting the event a broader base and wider public and trade participation. Writing about this in February 2002, the Editor of this journal had said
(Continued on page 7)



Scenes from the Mylapore Festival ... a sign of things to come? (Courtesy: Mylapore Times. (Also see pages 2 and 5.)



'Make villages, not cities, magnets of hope'

— R. Ramraju, CHAIRMAN, IIA-TN

R. Ramraju, Chairman of the Indian Institute of Architects, Tamil Nadu Chapter, speaking on 'Cities, Magnets of Hope', the theme for World Habitat Day, 2006, urged that the bright lights of the cities should be created in villages of India to make them magnets of hope.

A four-fold increase in world population within 200 years and an eight-times increase in urban population due to huge migration were making 'drinkable water' and 'breathable air' rare commodities that would soon be unaffordable to ordinary people. Reviewing the present scene in Chennai, he said, "Just a few decades ago, T. Nagar was planned as a model neighbourhood for the old city

of Chennai, but it is now congested and not suitable for decent living. Earlier, the entire stretch of East Coast Road upto Mahabalipuram was preferred as a peaceful weekend retreat. Now, change in water quality, the tsunami after-effects, privacy loss due to commercial activities, etc. are forcing people to search for alternative weekend retreats."

He also pointed out that by spending more and more money in the name of new technology, materials and modernity, more problems/challenges were being posed. "Glass boxes in the name of modern, corporate imaging and MNC glamour are drawing the new skyline of Indian cities. Though we live in the tropics, where enormous heat and light

are available throughout the year, those glass boxes are preferred. Attracted by glass facades, we search for technical solutions to reduce heat and light and come up with costly answers, such as sun control layers, tinted glass, colour glass, double glass and reflecting glass, only to emit more heat and light into the atmosphere and making it warmer. On the other hand, our traditional architecture adopted passive techniques through forms and elements to absorb excess heat and light." He further said people in the name of modernity failed to adopt natural ways, which were cheap, easily solvable and, above all, renewable.

He recalled the statement made by United Nations Secre-

tary-General Kofi Annan that evictions or demolitions were not answers to the challenges of rapid urbanisation and only pro-poor and public participatory policies could ensure more conducive and sustainable urban developments. "Ironically, approaches that we adopt are always on the negative side. Satellite towns are decided at the Secretariat, where it was proposed, not by Chennai's people or by local villagers. The fate of a remote village is decided at a place 500 km away from it. We spent thousands of crores of money year after year, only to have unused, abandoned, and dilapidated structures standing in every village in the name of health centre, community cen-

(Continued on page 6)

A Festival by the people, for the people

The annual Sundaram Finance-Mylapore Festival is not only growing in different ways each year, but is going from success to success, *The Man from Madras Musings* finds. This year, the events at the Nageswara Rao Park, a neighbourhood now managed by Sundaram Finance, had increased from morning kutcheris by teenagers to various contests and creative workshops for children.

With several playgrounds and smaller parks and quadrangles in the periphery of the festival zone – which is Sri Kapali temple – perhaps there can be activities in all of them next year.

MMM, however, has been distressed to find there is opposition too to the festival.

A few stores have murmured about the use of public space for the festival, stating it hurt their business. One large shop even took the Mylapore Festival organisers to court, but lost its case. Yet, out of sheer frustration, it had its vans parked all of 24 hours in the areas where shows were held. Can there be bigger spoilsports than these?

The court case had its pluses. MMM was delighted to hear Justice Prabha Sridevan's thoughts which she shared with the petitioner. That the festival promises to accommodate the needs of locals, and is not a hindrance to people. That such festivals are popular abroad in zones that are 'walk only' areas, thus prohibiting traffic. That culture must be encouraged. That fests which engage the youth must get due importance if they are to be part of such fests.

MMM hopes that in the future, other heritage areas will host similar festivals too. One NGO group has already made a beginning by hosting two-day events around Sri Parthasarathy Temple in Triplicane. With other communities joining in, perhaps all this can develop into the Chennai Festival *Madras Musings* has been urging and which Government hopes will develop around the Music Season. MMM hopes those asked to present a concept paper to Government based on a Chennai Festival growing out of the Music Season, will also see community festivals, other festivals and shopping and dining experiences as all being part of one great, big festival promoting Chennai.

Mount Road heritage

The Man from Madras Musings has some kind of a fatherly love for the old Bharat Insurance or *Kardyll Building* and looks at it fairly often, all the while maintaining a safe distance, what with the placards all around warning of the building being in imminent danger of collapsing. In the last



Signage gone wild at Agurchand Mansion.

one month, MMM has been somewhat intrigued to find a rather neat scaffolding erected around both the towers. Is that an indication of some renovation and restoration? MMM hoped that the LIC had seen the light and was taking up restoration, but the only people on

themselves on passersby at all times seeking alms. The structure itself is used by political parties and others for posters. The side closest to the Quaid-e-Milleth College is used as a urinal, thanks to the privacy it allows. No doubt fertilised by all that organic waste, a tree

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

the premises appeared to feel that the scaffolding was meant for protection and not so much for any repair work.

Meanwhile, the building has been practically roofless for over six months now, no doubt causing more damage. MMM hopes that something positive will soon happen, else the building, like the proverbial Arab, may silently fold its tents and vanish into the night.

Still in the same area, *The Man from Madras Musings* wonders what is being planned at the South Indian Railway Booking Office that abuts the *Kardyll's Building*. MMM could be mistaken, but the place looks uninhabited. Is it being readied for an eventual knocking down? MMM hopes not.

Agurchand Mansion, which is close by, has, however, been given a fresh coat of paint and the restored pediment, all bright and yellow, literally glows against the red colour of the main building. What, however, puzzles MMM is the lack of standardisation in signage and door designs among the occupants of the building. These are basic requirements when it comes to heritage structures and only go towards enhancing the beauty of a place.

Looking towards Binny Road, MMM wonders what the peculiar cylinder of concrete just at the junction of that road and Mount Road is meant to signify. Was it meant to be the pedestal for a political leader's statue and was that plan abandoned? The structure is being put to good use though. At its base lives a thriving family whose members literally fling



A tree grows on the Mount Road in a cylinder without purpose.

now flourishes from the top of the structure. MMM feels that this curious object should be left as it is and must be designated a protected monument, for, in MMM's opinion, it somehow seems an allegorical representation of road space in the city.

A soothing sight for sore eyes in an increasingly ugly Mount Road is P. Orr & Sons' showroom next to *The Mail's* offices. It just goes to show what a fresh coat of paint can do to a heritage structure. Amalgamation's Higginbotham's, illuminated at night, shines like a beacon for all heritage lovers. But MMM is sad to note that the dreadful monstrosity almost cheek by jowl with this building has now sprouted additional floors and thrives like an eczema.

Cricket season

It is that time of the year again and the powers-that-be have wisely refrained from holding a match during the monsoon and

moved cricket in Madras that is Chennai back to January. *The Man from Madras Musings*, however, still strongly feels that Pongal is the time to have international competitions in the city.

Last year, when the match was called off due to rains and no refund was forthcoming, many swore that they would never again buy a ticket and watch matches at Chepauk. But came the day when ticket sales opened and the long serpentine queues clearly indicated that public memory is at best very short.

Open House?

The Man from Madras Musings was delighted to hear the Madras University say that the restoration of historic *Senate House* would be completed by the Tamil New Year's Day and that the building would be opened for public use thereafter. MMM has always

Sastriar's *Noah's Ark* and drew thunderous applause.

The question-answer session at the end showed how extremely interested the audience was in her subject and how comprehensively she had studied it. She handled every question with ease.

MMM hopes to see more of and hear Dr. Peterson and her ilk in Chennai, sharing their knowledge with those interested.

Infinitely troublesome

Rushing to the Roja Muthiah Library an hour before closing, *The Man from Madras Musings* drove past the roundabout leading to the library, not once but twice. All this because the signboard bearing the library's name had been uprooted, thanks to the ongoing IT Corridor work. What is more, on eventually discovering the turn and driving in, MMM discovered that the library, like castles of old, had cut itself off from the main road, thanks to a moat-like chasm. MMM abandoned his vehicle and was wondering whether to jump across, when a construction worker motioned him to a metal sheet that served as a bridge. MMM gingerly stepped on the sheet, feeling rather like a victim of Long John Silver walking the plank, when the metal sheet suddenly sprang to life and began swinging to and fro. MMM's entire past sprang up before his eyes and he could vaguely remember a story of three billy goats that tried to cross a bridge with a troll rocking it from below. Fortunately, the onward journey ended without mishap. On the way back, MMM found that, like castle drawbridges, the metal sheet had been drawn back at sundown. Perhaps this column would not have made it to this issue and MMM may still be standing on the other side had not the same worker obligingly laid out the sheet again, rather like Raleigh spreading the cloak for Good Queen Bess. MMM, while all for heritage, would definitely not like harking back to the Middle Ages when it comes to visiting research centres and hopes that normalcy will soon return to the road. IT should not mean Infinitely Troublesome.

Height of lawlessness?

The Man from Madras Musings knows that there are several definitions to this. But in Chennai it must be a government vehicle careening down the wrong side of Kamarajar Salai flouting all speed restrictions, with no bull's eye on its headlights and its driver speaking on a mobile phone all the while. Can you beat that?

– MMM

argued for the continued use of heritage buildings, for that is the best way to preserve them. At the same time, a note of caution ought to be sounded.

It is best that a list of dos and don'ts and a code of conduct within the premises is drawn up before such buildings are handed out for public functions. Given the nature of some of our public, it would be putting the *Senate House* to great danger if such written safeguards – and enforcement of them – are not there.

Serfojee's Noah's Ark

Chennai recently played host to Dr. Indira Viswanathan Peterson of Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts. The professor, who has done in-depth research on the Maratha period in the history of Thanjavur, gave two talks in the city, one at the Roja Muthiah Library as part of its monthly lecture series and the second at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, with the Max Mueller Bhavan and *Madras Musings* partnering MIDS in sponsoring the talk.

MMM, attending the second presentation, on the role of the German missionaries in shaping Serfojee's thought process and also on his patronage of the Christian composer Vedanayakam Sastriar, was struck by the knowledge of the presenter and the manner in which she presented the subject. Being fluent in German, English and Tamil and being able to read from Sanskrit and Marathi texts would have been enough, but she also sang – and extremely well at that. The song was from Vedanayakam



The threatened hall

As a student I have listened to many eminent men and women speak without using the microphones at the Gokhale Hall (MM, December 16th). Sarojini Naidu spoke (in 1944-45) to the youth kindling in them the national spirit. Many renowned musicians gave concerts. The canteen run by the YMIA was popular in the neighbourhood for its inexpensive but good quality coffee and onion vadai.

It is sad that such an important landmark, built through the toil and dedication of Annie Besant, is in danger of being brought down by those turning a deaf ear to the appeals and entreaties of those genuinely interested in preserving the city's heritage.

When the Gokhale Hall was built, motorised transport was in its infancy in this city and there was no need to think of parking space. Most of those thronging using the Hall used the inexpensive but dependable services offered by public buses and trams. The elite used horse-drawn Victoria coaches or ornamental private man-pulled rickshaws. Today, things are different and parking space is a problem. But solutions can be found if an open mind is kept and a dialogue with the heritage lovers pursued.

D.V.Subramanian
6, Sriram Colony
Theosophical Society
Adyar
Chennai 600 020

Beware walking here

I wonder whether any readers have recently walked on the Thiru Vi Ka bridge connecting Mylapore and Adyar. I did.

Regularly reading in the media about the steps initiated by the Government to clean the Adyar River, beautify the Adyar neighbourhood and improve the Adyar Creek, I thought that I would take a walk on the Thiru Vi Ka Bridge on Christmas Day evening. There were many surprises in store for me as I walked from the Adyar end of the bridge towards Mylapore.

I found that I was the only person walking on the bridge whereas scores of two-wheelers and four-wheelers were crossing at breakneck speed. Soon, I discovered why I was the sole person walking.

The Adyar River beneath the bridge has dark, thick water that is certainly not river water or water from the sea but is sewage. The nauseating smell would drive away any person attempting to walk on the bridge. With great difficulty I put up with the smell and the ugly sight and walked on. At one point,

More fuel to the helmet debate

Articles appear in the media frequently (including *Madras Musings*) strongly advocating helmets for two-wheeler users to reduce fatalities. However, most of them are not backed by sound statistics to support their case. The Chennai Police have put up numerous innovative signboards on the roads extolling the virtues of helmets. Two writ petitions for making helmets mandatory are pending in the High Court. Is helmet-wearing indeed the panacea that it is made out to be?

Helmets were originally justified on the basis of accident statistics originating mainly from the U.S.A. Even if these statistics justified helmets in the U.S., it is simplistic to project their validity to Indian conditions, as these statistics were not for traffic within the cities but on the local and national highways where only four-wheelers and high powered motor-bikes moved. Because of excellent road conditions, cruising speeds are much higher there. Accidents occur mostly due to rash driving, speeding and drunken driving.

Contrast this with India: Besides motorised vehicles, we also have cycles, cycle rickshaws, bullock carts, hand-carts, pedestrians, and even dogs and cattle, all competing for the limited road space. Road discipline is poor. Running a red light is routine, whereas it attracts very stiff punishment in the U.S. Overtaking from the left is as common as from the right. In India, it is not speed or drunken driving that alone kills but open or badly filled potholes, unmarked and often badly designed speed-breakers, poor road lighting, powerful, blinding and unfocussed vehicle headlights, and heavy vehicles flouting rules with impunity. Do the statistics have relevance in our conditions?

Even the U.S. statistics have been questioned in an article in the respected British journal, *The New Scientist*, by London University's Prof. John Adams.

According to the Jt. Commissioner of Police (Traffic) (MM, March 1, 2006), "In 2004, of a total of 605 (two-wheeler) fatalities, 234 persons were without helmets, i.e. 39%. In 2005, of 493 fatalities, 162 were without helmets, i.e. 33%." He credits the 6% rise in helmet-usage to the police's sustained campaign. Let us look at these figures a little more carefully. The reduction in the number of fatalities can be due to many reasons, and cannot be connected straightaway to helmets. The conclusion that helmet usage has increased is fallacious as the usage has been based neither on the total number of drivers nor on the same representative sample studied over the two years. But the real and more worrisome conclusion that his data presents is that a larger percentage of helmet users died in 2005 (67%) than in 2004 (61%)! One possible explanation for this could be that more pillion riders died from accidents in 2004 than in 2005, because they are much more vulnerable to injuries in an accident than the drivers, and mostly don't wear helmets.

We need to collect more detailed statistics before reaching conclusions about helmets. While recording data, it is essential not merely to record how many were helmeted, but also whether the vehicle was a moped, scooter or a motorbike; whether the driver or the pillion rider died; whether the accident occurred at night or during the day. Such statistics will show where the risk lies, what corrective action is needed and where helmets can play a critical role.

What about the quality of helmets? According to Dr. Dinesh Mohan, then of the Centre for Bio-medical Engineering, I.I.T., Delhi, the Indian Standard for helmets is itself defective and does not provide adequate protection to the head. This is like dispensing poor quality prophylactics during an epidemic to control it.

What about medical opinion? The eminent neuro-surgeon,

Dr. Ganapathi, states (MM, March 1, 2006), "Protective head-gear certainly reduces the severity of the impact on the brain. Unfortunately, the majority still prefer a severely injured brain to a fractured helmet. Of the 7000 head injuries I have treated over the last 30 years, I can count on one hand the number of deaths due to brain injuries, among the group of two-wheeler riders using helmets."

On the other hand, in *The Times of India* of 4.8.1989, Dr. Vikram Marwah, renowned orthopaedic surgeon and former Dean of the Nagpur Medical College, stated, "The helmet is as protective to the head as lipstick is to the lips – both are cosmetic. The helmet neither protects the vital portions of the head nor protects it from rotation injury nor from hyperextension injury. It does not control the injury resulting from spinning of the brain, which is most dangerous, mostly resulting in fatality... The popular notion about the fractured skull is not correct. It is laconic but true that if the skull is fractured, the fractured skull leads to the blood seeping out, rather than collecting inside and killing the patient due to internal haemorrhage." He adds: "If a person has an accident, his skull would be hurt, but it would absorb the shock, and the injury would be an inconsequential one. But with a helmet on, the shock would be transmitted to the brain substance within the skull. More serious will be the injury to the neck when it is inflicted by the helmet. The vital part of the brain is at the base of the skull. While the helmet saves the head, it exposes the neck. Wearing a helmet usually leads to serious injury to the neck in an accident. If the neck is broken, you have had it."

The positions taken by two surgeons may seem contradictory, but a simple correlation could be that helmeted drivers who die of neck injuries do not reach the surgeon's table at all, and only those with head injuries survive and reach it. More meticulously recorded statistics would throw a lot of light on this.

Dr. Marwah also points out that the ear is an important radiator of the human body whose effectiveness is lost with a helmet on. As a two-wheeler driver for over forty years in Chennai, I would give considerable value to this comment since a driver has to constantly monitor the sounds emanating from behind him as vehicles merrily overtake as much from the left as they do from the right. He also has to constantly monitor the sounds emanating from his own vehicle, as these sounds are vital messages of the impact of poor roads on his machine.

All this takes us again to the fundamental causes for two-wheeler accidents mentioned earlier. While advocating helmets, we need to keep in mind that the percentage of two-wheeler accidents itself in relation to the phenomenal number of two-wheelers on the road and to the phenomenal number of their running hours is small. If these fundamental causes are tackled, two-wheeler accidents will themselves come down drastically and also the very scope for fatalities. Instead of treating these fundamental causes, is it fair to force all two-wheeler drivers to wear helmets in the hot, humid climate of Chennai? And given the enforcement record of the Chennai Police, will making helmets mandatory automatically solve the problem?

The purpose of this letter is not to decry helmets *per se* but to plead for a better understanding of two-wheeler accidents and the role of helmets under our road conditions *vis-a-vis* the various types of two-wheelers used here, before making them mandatory for the entire lot of two-wheeler drivers.

Indukanth S. Ragade
A-3, 'Prabhat Apartments'
1, Kamala Bai Street, T.Nagar
Chennai 600 017

there was no sewage to be seen but there were thick bushes that were no better sight.

As I walked on and reached the other end of the bridge, I was surprised to find a garden maintained by Chennai Corporation! The garden was certainly green, but it had not been maintained in a proper manner. Fortunately, there was no one sitting in the garden that appeared to be a health hazard for anyone.

Just beyond the garden is a public toilet. I went in to see what condition it was in and all I can say is that it was a terrible sight.

I decided to do the return trip by autorickshaw.

Later in the day, I happened

to meet a doctor friend and narrated my experience to him. He advised that elderly persons like me, whose body resistance is low, should not take a chance by walking near sewage sludge, a breeding place for viruses.

I wonder whether any responsible person in Government or in the Chennai Corporation has cared to walk on the Thiru Vi Ka Bridge and seen these conditions.

N.S. Venkataraman
M 60/1, 4th Cross Street
Besant Nagar
Chennai 600 090.

Despoiled tank

Travelling on Spur Tank Road to Chetput Bridge, I

was surprised to see buffaloes and cows on the embankment along with several hutment dwellers. The stink was abominable. Surely, these cattle breed all types of diseases.

The Chetput Tank used to be a reservoir for rainwater. The Corporation of Chennai has not cleaned this tank for decades and has failed to move the cattle out of the city.

When is this sorry state of affairs going to cease?

R. Jagannathan
4 (Old), Spur Tank Road
Chennai 600 031

Accumulating filth

The filth that accumulates on EVR Salai, caused by

business houses, hospitals and fastfood restaurants, is unbearable. This forces pedestrians on to the road, where they are under threat from reckless auto- and bus-drivers, not to mention car-drivers. Although the speed limit mentioned is 40 km, they speed at 60 - 80 km. On the top of all this, the footpath is used as an urinal.

It is sad to see top police personnel, politicians and ministers travelling on this road without anyone bothering to take any action to ensure pedestrian safety and well-being.

R. Ganesh
4th Main Street
Anna Nagar
Chennai 600 040

Songs of the crossroads

In these days of SMS, MMS, e-mail and other forms of communication, it is difficult to think of a period when news and messages to the public of our city were transmitted by the medium of songs sung at crossroads and other important locations. And this was not very long ago. The practice existed right up to the 1940s after which it faded away.

This "street corner literature" has been the subject of research of Dr. A.R. Venkatachalapathy, the well-known scholar, and *Mucchandi Ilakkiyam*, a Tamil book, published by Kalachuvadu Padhippamam, has been the outcome. An immensely readable work, it is an important addition to the volume of historic material available on the city of Madras that is Chennai. It looks at documentation of the city's history, much of it social and cultural rather than political, from the common man's point of view. Refreshingly, it is a genre that looks at history not from the point of view of the victor alone.

The *modus operandi* was simple. Any significant news or event of the day would be turned into a song set to the tune of a popular theatre song or of a folk mode such as *venba*, *kaliturai*, *viruttam*, *kummi*, *chandam*, *chindu*, *vannam*, *oradi*, *kalivenba*, *tazhisai* and *kirtana*i and sung. Pamphlets containing the lyrics would then be sold. These sheets also indicated the tunes to which the song was to be sung. Compilations of several such songs would also be sold in the form of booklets. The prices of these books rarely exceeded ¼ or ½ anna and so they were also called *Kaalana* or *Arayana Paatu Pattagam*s.

The more popular name for these creations was *Guzili Paattu*. *Guzili Bazaar* was the name given to the Evening Bazaar that was an important thoroughfare near the China and Ratan Bazaar areas. It later moved to Moore Market. It was the place where most articles of everyday use could be purchased at throwaway prices. Since many stolen goods also landed up there for sale and since pickpockets also made hay among the crowds that thronged the street, it was also called Thieves' Bazaar. This area was the home for the songs of the crossroads, for singers would sing them here and the books containing song compilations were also sold here. Not surprisingly, *Guzili Bazaar* was also the subject of some songs.

Almost anything and everything appears to have been grist to the songsters' mill. There are songs structured as debates, to be sung as a duet, with each singer taking up one point of view. Thus there are discussions on castor oil vs kerosene oil, rice vs wheat (a new import to Madras during the years of food scarcity) and coffee vs tea. Some songs even have a third party sitting in as a judge during the debate. Thus, in the song on coffee and tea, rice gruel appears as judge. The more popular variety involved news on murders and this spawned a new genre of songs called the *kolai* (murder) *chindu*. There are topical songs ranging from an unknown Rajambal who was murdered in the Bangalore Mail to the sensational murder of C.N. Lakshmi Kantam of *Indu Nesan* fame. There is even a song on the collapse of the Arbutnot Bank. Nationalist songs were also

very common and among these it is Bhagat Singh who emerges as the people's choice. The nationalist theme brought these songs, their authors and publishers under the British Government's scanner for some

time and there were frequent attempts to arrest those involved with such literature.

Composing, typesetting and printing on a shoestring budget must have always been a challenge and recycling of blocks containing illustrations was very common. Similarly, the recycling

of poetic material was also done. Almost all songs begin, in true theatrical style, with a prayer to a favourite deity. The haste with which the pamphlets had to be prepared led to errors in printing and very often the language used was not according to the best tenets of composition. Not surprisingly, intellectuals such as Subramania Bharati, A. Madhaviah and T.K. Chidambaramudaliar looked down on such literature and wrote disparagingly about it. Notwithstanding that, the *Guzili* art appears to have flourished for over fifty years.

To any historian of the city, the songs on Madras are perhaps



The cover of Mucchandi Ilakkiyam

the most important feature of these books. There are songs on People's Park, on temple festivals such as the Arubattumooar of the Kapaleeswarar Temple and *Vedarperi Mahotsavam* of the Kandaswami Temple at Rasappa Chetty Street. There is a song on a great fire that broke out in the 1890s at the South Indian Athletics Association's annual fair at People's Park and there are songs on important incidents concerning the city, such as the raid by the *Emden*.

The *Mucchandi Ilakkiyam*, written with a gentle humour that pervades it, is a must for anyone interested in the history of Madras that is Chennai.

South Indian maps – and South Indians in Terra Australia

The State Library of Victoria in Melbourne houses a valuable collection of rare books and manuscripts which are displayed in a rotating exhibition. The earliest exhibit is a cuneiform clay tablet c. 2000 B.C. from Mesopotamia, about the size of a matchbox, that carries a detailed account of the number of goats and cattle paid as taxes by a certain individual for a specified area of land. So much for shorthand!

A Melbourne letter from SIMEON MASCARENHAS

It is not every day that you get to see a copy of Galileo's *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, published by Giovanni Battista Landini in Florence in 1632, or a Fourth Folio of the *Plays of William Shakespeare* (1685). Incidentally, the portrait that the world believes is a true likeness of William Shakespeare was engraved by Martin Droue-shout after the writer's death, so

nobody knows what he really looked like.

What excites the Madras visitor to this exhibition is the presence of maps dating from 1715, and a translation of a 'novel' (1684) from Spanish about the "Laws, Customs, Manners and Fashions of the South Indians"!

But first the maps. The earliest attempts at true modern cartography were made by those amazing pioneers of exploration,

throne that was appropriated by the King of Spain roughly between 1580 and 1640, the Dutch and the English began a determined and ruthless expansion that gathered momentum in the 18th Century. It is not surprising then that the best maps came out of Holland in the 16th Century, but were often printed in Germany. 17th Century cartography belonged to the English and the French due in large part to the division of Germany into small and quarrelsome principalities.

The *Atlas de la navigation et du commerce qui se fait dans toutes les parties du monde* – 'Atlas of commerce and navigation in all parts of the world' – was published in Amsterdam in 1715 by Louis Renard, a French Huguenot whose family had fled to Holland in the 1680s, when he was a boy. It is a very large book containing 25 maps and 4 plates in colour, long descriptions of countries, their people and products, and is surprisingly accurate. The western part of Australia, called *Hollandia Nova*, or New Holland by then, is amazingly accurate; the eastern seaboard had not yet been mapped, for good reason. The Portuguese had reached the continent and found it lacking in a trading nation. They had ventured at least as far as Warrnambool on the Victorian coast, but at great risk: they were sailing outside the Line of Tordesillas, the north-south meridian determined by the Pope and the representatives of Portugal and Spain on June 7, 1494 in Tordesillas, Spain, that divided the world outside Europe for exploration and trade by Spain and Portugal.

Renard's 1715 map clearly shows India and its major cities and ports. The Coromandel Coast is significant. In it are named "Catelour (Cuddalore), Armagoan, Pallecatta (Pulicat), St. George de Madras, Sao Tome, Cloother (Kallathur?), Cabelam (Covelong), Nooge Ruch?), Pondicheri, Porto Novo, Tranquebar, several more ports, Tuticorin and Cap de Comorin." All the above, with the exception of St. George de Madras, were Portuguese trading ports before passing into Dutch, French and finally English hands.

A world map, drawn in colour by Franz Hogenburg, and the date of which I was unable to determine, shows India in excellent detail. It clearly predates the Renard map as it makes no reference to Madras, but does have

that meal is a mystery, but walk they do and crossing the 'Tandavarayar Tanneer Pandal' (near the present-day Kallu-kaaran Street, Royapettah), they move closer to Mylapore. Edward Eliott's (Radhakrishnan) Road is not mentioned, but they sing of a 'Prasanna Vinayagar Sannidhi' and then the famed *Amabattan* (Hamilton) Bridge. They must then have crossed *Nattu Subbaraya Mudali Street* and *Mundaga Kanni Amman Koil Street*, though these are not mentioned. The next sight is the *Apparswami Koil* and then *Kosapettai* (today's 'Tanneer Turai Market' and the *Anjaneya Swami Temple*). They then cross over to Mylapore's tank and the *Mada Streets*. The journey ends with a burst of devotion, for the names of the 63 *nayanmar* are recited and then a glorious description of *Kapaleeswarar* and *Karpagambal* follows, as the idols come out of the temple in all their finery.

The song is not a great composition in the literary sense, but it holds an immense amount of information about the city of Madras that is Chennai.. (courtesy: RojaMuthiah Library) S.V.

A victory for people fighting for space

VINCENT D'SOUZA of the *Mylapore and Adyar* Times writes, with reference to the recent Mylapore Festival:

The new year has brought for us a moral victory. But we have not had the time to savour it.

I suppose people in the media must be reminded that theirs is a job to report and publish.

And that it makes immense sense not to cross the Lakshman rekha.

But in real life, this isn't the case. Often we are called upon to go beyond reporting, editing and publishing.

We are called to take a stand. And stand by it. We are challenged and thwarted.

And we find ourselves in public spaces and in the thick of public issues that challenge us.

There have been some local issues that keep popping up as we go about reporting our neighbourhoods.

When I first witnessed the mortar and bricks devouring the avenue trees and gardens of Gandhi Nagar after we came to live in the Adyar neighbourhood, it was not a very nice sight.

Today, there are thousands of apartment blocks in Gandhi Nagar which seem to have staved off crises in water supply, garbage clearance and traffic flow.

But the 'nagar' is under seige.

Will there come a time when we will have laws that ban commercial spots from residential nagars?

See the fate of Indira Nagar, Kasturba Nagar and K.K. Nagar.

In a few months from now, a road proposed on the banks of the Adyar River to carry Mylapore-

bound traffic from the Kotturpuram side to the east coast side will come up.

The City Fathers claim it will provide a short cut. Perhaps they have not travelled on the Adyar Bridge Road between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. and between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. when traffic crawls on this old bridge.

Where are the same voices of the community who can debate such plans?

Why are there fewer public debates on such issues that affect communities?

Some of us who are interested in history and heritage imagined a time when the city's development authority, the CMDA, would declare the Mada Street area of Mylapore a special zone so that its architecture, layout, business and life would be protected from the onslaught of the gargantuan plans of big business and fly-by-night middlemen.

The laws are not in place. So we can challenge neither the State nor private plans.

There is a need for cautious urban development here. A need to have better traffic regulation, modern parking.

A campaign to coax shoppers and devotees to walk the Mada Streets and leave their cars and buses at parking bays constructed at the MRTS station campus.

So when Justice Prabha Sridevan acknowledged the spirit behind the annual Mylapore Festival which was challenged in court recently and left some positive thoughts with us, we felt happy.

The Mada Streets area could be occasionally made 'walk only' zones. And they become a zone that fosters shopping, gawking, walking and day-dreaming!

The Ballad of People's Park

Among the collection of *Guzili* songs available at the Roja Muthiah Library is the *People's Park Vazhi Nadai Chindu* published in 1915 by the Chakravarty Achchukoodam of 13 Nambulayar Street, Madras, wherever that is. The song is about a beau of George Town asking his girl, the toast of Mullah Sahib Street, to walk down with him to Mylapore to see the Arupattumooar festival at the Kapaleeswarar Temple. The song is set in the form of his telling the woman all about the sights that they see *en route*. Though its name has *People's Park* in it, it paints a much larger canvas.

The Romeo asks his beloved to set out from Mullah Sahib Street, George Town, after suitably attiring herself in silk saree and blouse, gold jewellery and applying a variety of native perfumes on her person. Addressing her as a lily-eyed doe, with speech like a nightingale, he leads her out from her street. They cross Chengam Bazaar (once the red light area of the city) and, walking via the Ranganathaswami Temple, the Arunachaleswarar Temple and the Dharmaraja Temple (particular attention is drawn to a water tank at this shrine), emerge at Elephant Gate (just west of Sowcarpet).

Walking by *People's Park*, he sings of the Victoria Gardens (My Ladies' Park?) with its high compound walls and beautiful gates. The joys inside the garden are also described in detail. There is a pond (Lily Pond?) with a wooden bridge over it and it also has the novelty of piped water being supplied from Pugal. The song notes several women filling water from the pipes.

The Zoo is described next (for it was then in *People's Park*). They see male and female bears, a big tiger, a cheetah and what is sung of as "the famous" lion. There is a stone elephant kept in a tin shed and to see it a gatekeeper charges ½ anna. Boat rides in the pond cost ¼ anna. More fauna such as snakes, foxes, jackals, turtles, civet cats, monkeys, mongooses and rabbits, follow and then they visit a large aviary with every bird imaginable. Describing the place as heaven, the couple then crosses the bandstand where 'English' music is played for the "Durais" every Tuesday and Saturday in the evenings. *People's Park*, according to the song, also contained a tree whose sapling was planted by Prince Albert Victor (in 1889). Attention is drawn to Overseer Willis' bungalow inside the garden. The couple gazes at a



Courtesy: Roja Muthiah Library.

lawnmower which can cut uniformly and then they marvel at a huge weighing scale used for sizing up the bales of grass for auctioning.

The Jail comes next and the duo claims to be able to see murderers, pickpockets and frauds going about their penitentiary duties. They also see the women's cells and the gardens tended by the convicts. *Chintadripet Bridge* comes next, followed by the bungalow of one *Murugappa Mudaliar*. We are possibly near *Harris Road*, for specific mention is made of crossing *Sami Naicken Road* which is perhaps an erroneous reference to *Dubash Sami Naidu*, who lived off *Harris Road* in *Lang's Garden Road* and

whose descendant was *Krishnaswami Naidu*, a judge of *Madras High Court* in the 1960s. A park, much neglected, stands even now in *Sami Naidu's* name in that area.

What is the *Arupattumooar* festival without the *tanneer pandal*s where water, buttermilk and sweetmeats are distributed to those visiting the event? The man sings of a 'Glasskaaran Tanneer Pandal' and then of a 'Tailor Taccha Chavadi' (was it a colony of weavers and carpenters?). They cross a group of square shops built to honour *Ashton Durai* (a web search on *Ashton + Madras* revealed a web site - <http://valmayukuk.tripod.com/id39.html> - where there is a page on a *Madras Notebook* of 1883 which clearly states that a *W. Ashton* lived on *Mount Road*) which are now in *Patter's* Gardens. Mention is made of the *Club House*, whose rear entrance they must have crossed, and then they are standing next to a *Taana Maada Koil*, which could be the *Wesley Church*, for they say it is next to a school in *Royapettah*. Apparently, *Chellappa's Sweet Shop* was the rage of *Royapettah*, for here the singer asks his girl to savour *puri halwa*, *laddu*, *jalebi*, *adirasam*, *palgova* and *pagoda*.

How they could walk after

Maliapur, one of the Portuguese spellings for Mylapore. This is the only eastern port depicted. All the ports and inland cities shown were either well-known to the Portuguese or established/developed by them. In the west Cambaia, Goa, Calecut; in the east, Narsiga in the area labelled *Orixia*, clearly a Portuguese spelling, pronounced 'Oreasha'. In the area we would expect to find Calcutta we see "Iameri" (?) pronounced *Yaameri*. Pretty good for a world map produced in the late 1600s or early 1700s.

The mention of *Delhi* is significant: it reveals the contact between the Portuguese ambassadors with the Moghul Emperor and supports the exchange of ideas between the Catholic Jesuits and Akbar, along with representatives of other religions, that resulted in the new amalgamated faith that Akbar tried to promote.

We see that the names of towns and ports along the Indian coast were established enough to make it to important maps. **Madras is clearly located, and there is no mention whatsoever of Chennai.** The Portuguese did not make up names: they had no need to, unless they established a new town, as Portuguese pronunciation and spelling easily accommodate Indian names. Their spelling and pronunciation were the closest to the original of all

the European nations to come to India.

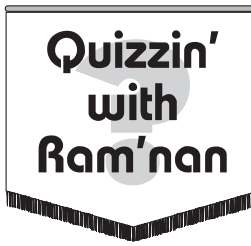
The frontispiece of a certain book next caught my eye and stopped me dead in my tracks. It read: "The *Travels of Don Francisco de Quevedo Through Terra Australis Incognita Discovering the Laws, Customs, Manners and Fashions of THE SOUTH INDIANS*" – a novel. Originally in Spanish. London, for William Grantham at the Crown and Pearl over against Exeter-Change in The Strand 1684". Quite a mouthful. Indeed, one that would quite easily be stuffed into my gaping mouth on beholding the words 'South Indians' in capitals. The word novel meant 'adventure' in those days, so it is entirely possible that the whole thing is a fabrication, rather like *Don Quixote*. The title itself is staggering enough. Who would not like to read about the 'fashions' of the South Indians of the 17th Century? The mind boggles. If there is any truth in the account, there must be reference to the established Euro-Indian community, then almost entirely of Portuguese descent, today known as Anglo-Indians.

Far-fetched as it might seem, there is an element of truth in the juxtaposition of the terms 'terra australis' and 'South Indians'. I have no doubt whatsoever that the Aboriginals of Australia are proto-Dravidians, since Australia and South India, together

with Malaysia and Indonesia, were once joined in the ancient land mass called *Gondwanaland*. They share many physical characteristics, customs, spiritual beliefs and even linguistic patterns with the true Dravidians of India before their (often superior) culture was diluted by Aryan impositions and exchanges. The only significant difference is that while the Dravidians developed into generally excellent agriculturalists, the Aboriginals remained basically hunter-gatherers, like a few Indian tribal communities, until European settlement or invasion. Darwin's, or Wallace's, theories of natural selection due to geographical isolation explain the development, or concentration, of certain anatomical features. Hence my use of the term *Proto-Dravidian*.

What was a *Spaniard* doing in "Terra Australia", writing about "South Indians"? It defies logic and credibility and, therefore, excites curiosity. I can't wait to be allowed to examine the book once the exhibition concludes, if that is possible.

Amongst the other books of interest on display are a copy of *The Wheel of Fortune* by Mahatma Gandhi, published by Ganesh and Co. of Madras in 1922. The cover bears the quaint inscription "Clothed in Khadar". It is a small book, very neatly bound and forms part of the Rare Books Collection.



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

1. Name the veteran Indian diplomat appointed as his chief of staff by the new UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon.
2. Which Englishman was Shane Warne's 1000th international wicket?
3. The Dandeli Project Tiger is the newest one to get approval. It is in which State?
4. Who was sworn in the 37th Chief Justice of India on January 14th?
5. Name the U.S. Club that David Beckham is joining for a world record fee.
6. Which two countries joined the European Union on January 1st?
7. Why was Nancy Pelosi in the news recently?
8. What new, exciting product did Steve Jobs unveil at the annual Macworld Expo recently?
9. Who has announced the launch of the world's first terabyte hard drive, the Deskstar 7K1000?
10. Name the rocket launched by India on January 10th which successfully put four satellites into orbit.

* * *

11. Who were conferred the prestigious 'Sangita Kala Acharya' awards of the Music Academy this Season?
12. Who won the singles title at the Chennai Open this year?
13. Which former international is the Chief Coach of the Chennai Veerans in the PHL?
14. Which 'social' scheme, part of the election manifesto, did the State Government launch on January 14th?
15. What are the new autorickshaw fares in the State following a fare revision after 10 years?
16. What is the title of the Tamil translation of General Musharraf's book, *In the line of fire*?
17. In the Tamil version of Mani Ratnam's latest offering *Guru*, who have dubbed for Abhishek and Aishwarya?
18. To which non-Tamil Nadu city has the Chennai Egmore-Coimbatore Express been extended from January 3rd?
19. Who wrote *Thiruppugazh*?
20. Who made his debut as a hero in the 1953 film *Manampol Mangalyam*?

(Answers on page 8)

Still waiting for a master plan?

Chennai, the fourth largest urban agglomeration in India and with a population of 6.4 million (2001 census), is growing at a rapid pace without any plan in place. The last time the city had a master plan was in 1975. The city is now spread over 172 sq.km. and along with its hinterland (Chennai Metropolitan Area) covers 1177 sq.km. An updated plan and a new vision for the city are long overdue.

The Government of Tamil Nadu recently returned the draft master plan that was submitted by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) in 2005. It has suggested that a fresh plan be prepared incorporating recent developments. This further delays the possibility of a plan.

The Madras (now Chennai) Metropolitan Development Authority was constituted in 1971 to plan and manage the city's growth. It published the first master plan in 1975 with a vision to decongest the city core by moving wholesale markets, restricting further densification of places such as Triplicane and George Town. Development rules and land use plans were put in place and new towns were proposed.

Thirty years have passed since and the city has grown in many directions. Some of the proposals envisioned in the first plan, such as the shifting of the wholesale vegetable market, have been realised. Proposals to contain the city growth through new towns did not work and places like George Town still remain congested. The building rules did not regulate or discourage illegal construction. The ring roads, instead of easing traffic, have themselves become the centre of traffic congestion.

Meanwhile, many projects, such as the IT corridor and new

industrial parks, which were not envisaged in the master plan, have been implemented. The real estate boom has redrawn the city's contours. Though the plans regulated the Floor Space Index, many buildings have not complied with it and the impact of this unregulated growth is visible in places like T. Nagar. At present, the growth is concentrated in the southern part of the city and its suburbs. North Chennai, which was the industrial hub of the 1970s, has not attracted any major development to enhance its economic value or improve the quality of life. The city stands split in the middle.

• A new plan with a new vision for Chennai is long overdue, says A. SRIVATHSAN

In 1994, the second master plan was drafted and public opinion was invited in 1995. Strangely, the comments and objections were not followed and the plan was shelved. Citizens of Chennai are eager to know how their city is being shaped and managed. The present silence and inactivity are in stark contrast to the commitment and attempts made during the 1960s through the late 1980s.

The first town-planning scheme for Madras was prepared in 1957, followed by the Madras interim plan in 1967. The 1967 plan was significant because it conceived city management in two stages. Through the interim plan, use, circulation and standards were envisaged. And through the comprehensive development plan it evolved investment structure, priorities and phasing. The next stage in Madras's planning came in the form of Madras

Metropolitan Plan in 1971. This plan envisaged the city growth for the next 20 years and came up with land acquisition measures and development projects. This plan was the first to envisage three satellite towns in Chengalpattu, Gummidipoondi and Tiruvallur and six urban nodes in places including Tambaram and Alandur. The idea of satellite towns was mooted even earlier. The 1969 report by the Town and Country Planning Department had suggested it. With the help of World Bank funding the Madras Urban Project was conceived in 1974. This was followed by the first Master Plan in 1975. The Madras Urban Development Plans I and II were prepared in 1977 and 1981. The structure plan for the Madras Metropolitan Area was proposed in 1980 to review and push forward the city planning ideas. Since then, there has not been much activity except for implementing projects in *ad hoc* manner. A well thought out plan in 1996 could have gone a long way in improving the city but for reasons less known it was not pursued by the CMDA.

By any standard, 30 years is a long period for any city to grow without a proper plan. Even though the earlier plans were not successfully implemented, the very act of planning spoke for committed concern. The CMDA, which was constituted to plan the city, has been entangled with issues of licensing and regulation.

Strangely, the Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Limited (TNUIFSL), a body constituted to look into infrastructure issues, has recently come out with a Chennai Development Plan. This vision document is a part of its application for funds from Central Government under the JNNURM scheme. Unfortu-

nately, this plan was not put up for public viewing, neither before nor after its finalisation. I am not sure in what direction the city is heading.

Experts are worried what would happen to the city if each agency prepares its own plan without any integration. At present, the master plan prepared by CMDA alone has legal validity. Pressing issues such as public housing, public transport, urban waterways, implementation of development control rules and integrating infrastructure planning with land use need to be comprehensively addressed. Many projects, such as metro rail and satellite cities, are in the pipeline.

How will these piecemeal projects be integrated? Would they work in tandem or at cross-purpose? What relations do we envisage between development and environment? Many issues remain to be addressed.

With more powers devolved to the local bodies there is a confusion as to what role does the CMDA have in future? The second State Finance Commission constituted in 2000 had recommended that the CMDA should confine itself to goal-setting, resource allocation, determining priorities, capital budgeting, coordination and monitoring. It clearly states that the CMDA's expertise and manpower should not be dissipated in dealing with granting planning permissions and licences. The commission has also recommended that the CMDA be used as a secretariat for metropolitan planning and reiterated the need for a separate Chennai Metropolitan Planning Committee. These recommendations are yet to be implemented.

The importance of a dedicated body that will look into issues of planning for the city need not be stressed.

As the citizens await the plans, the city grows. Plans serve the purpose better only when they are proactive. Certainly Chennai needs a lot more attention from its planning bodies. — (Courtesy: *The Hindu Property Plus*)

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

THE EDITOR

MAKE VILLAGES MAGNETS OF HOPE

(Continued from page 1)

tre, library, schools, etc. This is because they were decided not by locals, but by a person totally unrelated. Suppose the same was decided by locals, then the involvement of people would not leave those structures unused, and the people would act as caretakers, perhaps even behave as owners. Pro-people and participatory policies alone will bring more meaningful, sustainable development acceptable to

all." This, said Ramraju, would help villages to gain a magnetic power, generating more hope, and stop people's migration to urban centres. "Unless the bright lights of the cities are made available in our villages," he warned, "within three decades, 50% of the world's population would be living in urban centres, creating alarming situations and frightening challenges." — (Courtesy: Tal October, 2006)

From 'The Season' to a Chennai Festival?

(Continued from page 1)

that the group needs to "stop talking and get down to looking at some of the suggestions made for such a festival. Namely:

- "An art, heritage and theatre festival on Pantheon Road. The Museum Complex, with the Art Gallery and the Museum Theatre, will be a perfect venue for this. Shopping and eating out will be added attractions here.
- "Cathedral Road-Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai-Edward Elliot's Road is a stretch for a food and music festival. The stretch has some of the best and most frequented hotels, restaurants and food stores in town. The Music Academy can serve as the venue for music concerts and visitors can move about the long stretch to savour the food of their choice.
- "A beach festival on Kamarajar Salai with the Marina as the backdrop."

The Editor also suggested a few other roads, like Nungambakkam High Road, the East Coast Road, and the Mylapore and Triplicane Mada Streets, which could be activated for a Chennai Festival.

All these suggestions hold good even today and, what is more, can be implemented fairly easily if only some thought is given to the methodology.

What the Government ought **not** to do would be to start off one more music festival and join the bandwagon of *sabha*-s dishing out awards and concert opportunities. It will have to facilitate the conduct of the cultural season by providing infrastructure and that would mean some of the following things:

1. A common inauguration of the festival on the beach: Today, it is quite common to see *sabha* after *sabha* holding an inauguration with the same tired dignitaries making the same speeches and handing out awards, all of which sound and look alike. Why can't the cultural season have a common inauguration at a venue such as the *Senate House* or, if larger crowds are expected, at the beachfront? This would not only avoid repetition, but also bring about a focus to the festival.

2. Better transport arrangements: Let's face it. Today, the idea of everyone driving up to popular cultural events is a thing of the past, thanks to our traffic. The Government, which in the 1970s ran special buses to the Music Academy and the Tamil Isai Sangam, should look at reviving the arrangement

with some modifications. These buses must be airconditioned, battery-operated and also be accessible to senior citizens and the physically challenged. Pick up and drop arrangements could be at schools where car parking facilities could be organised and public transport accessed. For those who prefer to walk, the least the State authorities can do would be to ensure footpaths and exclusive pedestrian areas, at least during the festival.

3. Becoming tourist-friendly: *Madras Musings* (February 16, 2002) had said that while it accepts the Government contention that Tamil Nadu is the most preferred destination in South India for tourists, this was only from the point of ARRIVALS. Very few tourists remain in the city, or in Tamil Nadu for that matter, as most make a beeline for Kerala. "What tourists want is clean and comfortable accommodation in clean surroundings, friendly service with warmth and a smile, good food that in its variety still takes into consideration visitors' tastes, and absence of harassment at tourist sites" is what the *Madras Musings* stated in that issue. These are all aspects that the city administration needs to look into before it can market the festival. Yes, the requirements of the upper class tourists are definitely met by star hotels. But what about those of the budget class tourists? And what about tourists who would like to live with Indian families and soak in the atmosphere? The Government could take a leaf out of the *Mylapore Times'* Season Guide and begin publishing information of homes that would like to take in visitors, with the rates and facilities clearly stated in advance. And while we are on the subject, what about some special season maps?

4. Inducing trade participation: Whatever little participation there is today by the trade in terms of hotels and

shopping, it is mainly due to private initiative. And very often this depends on the man in the decision-taking seat in corporates and this could change at his whim and fancy. The Government needs to think of schemes and chalk out incentives for encouraging participation in the festival. This will definitely give the season a fillip and possibly open it up to more sponsorships. In fact, when *Madras Musings* in 2002 championed a Chennai Festival, it picked certain thoroughfares which would be the nucleus of the Festival, as they would be able to offer special accommodation, food and shopping concessions, besides the entertainment in and off them.

5. Broadbase the event: The season should not be seen as a classical music and dance festival alone. It will have to bring in films, history, exhibitions, theatre and folk art. The Other Festival, which showcases a diverse set of talents, has been a success in the city. The Mylapore Festival, too, has brought in plenty of folk art and this trend needs to be encouraged. Another aspect is to get more localities other than Mylapore and Triplicane to participate in the Season. At least four areas, namely T. Nagar, Egmore, Kilpauk and George Town, have to be brought into the gamut of the festival, failing which such an effort will simply not take off. For a start, the Government could think of renovating and opening Rajaji Hall. Similarly, it could ask the organisations controlling the Victoria Public Hall, *Senate House*, the Gokhale Hall and the Pachaiyappa's Hall to make them available for season-related events. Such a move would not only ignite interest in these buildings but also make the areas come alive. Many temples would also prove ideal venues.

There is a lot more that can be done if there is a will to do it. Is anyone listening?



Till February 9: *Yugma - in union*, an exhibition of paintings by Thejomaye Menon (at the Forum Art Gallery).

February 9: Marie Darrieussecq, a French contemporary novelist, will present her works in English and read some extracts from her books in French and English. (At Oxford Bookstore, 5.30 p.m.)

Till February 10: An exhibition of paintings by Sakti Burma. There

will also be an exhibition of the artist's photographs in Apparao Infinity during the same period (at Apparao Galleries).

February 12 -24: *Transfer*, an exhibition of prints, by V. Anamika (at the Alliance Francaise).

Till February 28: *Vasantha Vizha* - annual children's mela with bullock cart rides, shadow puppets and special activities (at DakshinaChitra).

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

— The Editor

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Senate House Conservation Fund

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

Dear Registrar,

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

Name:

Address:

.....

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

Date: Signature:

The divas of dining

Chandra Padmanabhan of EastWest Books believes that a cookbook is a record of social change, of fusions and influences of different cultures.

Keeping the popularity of cookbooks in mind, EastWest Books and Westland Books Pvt Ltd., leading distributors and publishers in Chennai, have launched a series, published under the aegis of Westland Books.

Chandra Padmanabhan, herself the author of successful cookbooks on South Indian cuisines, with Harper Collins and Penguin India, is in charge of this series.

Sabita Radhakrishna's book, *The Quick Cook*, is the first to be published, with the second, also by the same author, titled *Kids' Kitchen*, inspired by her grandchildren, now ready for publication.

Chandra discloses that a series of nearly a dozen books by Karen Anand, all of them with catchy titles like *For the Desperate Housewife* and *Simple Cooking for Singles*, targeting different audiences, are also in the pipeline.

The books in this series are aimed at an audience "that knows very little," says Chandra. In today's context, speed, nutrition and dietary considerations are major factors in the choosing and construction of recipes, especially with heightened health-consciousness. The scope is vast, because "Indians eat everything these days."

The increasingly easy availability of different ingredients in local markets has also been kept in mind.

Chandra Padmanabhan has approached chefs in leading five-star hotels in the city to provide recipes collected from sources all over the country, and many have shown keen interest in the project.

She is on the look-out for traditional recipes, and is also interested in reviving old, even out-of-use, recipes. She talks of

a 120 year old Tamil cookbook in her possession, filled with recipes using outdated measures. She hopes to have it translated. "The whole world today is speaking Aloe Vera. This book has recipes using Aloe Vera, which is very good for diabetes, over 100 years ago. I wonder who the target audience of this book was," she adds, "because in those days women did not look at cookbooks. This

book is South Indian, but shows a great deal of Maharashtrian influence – natural for one written in Thanjavur, given the Maratha presence in the area. A cookbook is a social statement, a historical record."

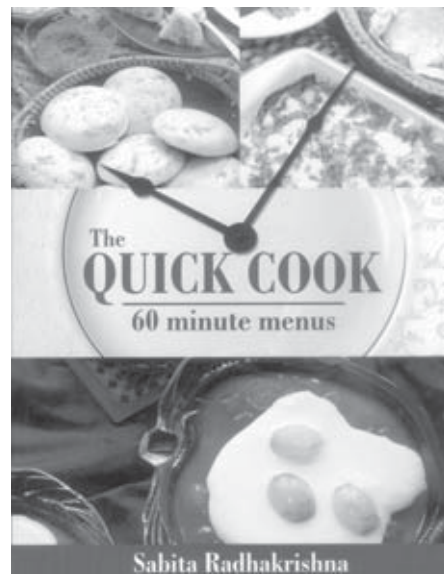
Sherna Wadia, editor, freelance writer of cookery books, brings her considerable skills and her "very meticulous and amazing attention to detail" to this series. While recipes written by people known for their culinary skills are not tried out, those sent in by lesser known, or new entrants, are tested at random.

Both Chandra and Sabita Radhakrishna agree that the family invariably is the main source of inspiration behind cookbooks. A family interested in good food, encouraging of your efforts, provides a great foundation for such projects. Cooking ceases to be a chore, when you are inspired towards innovation and variety.

Chandra's first author, Sabita Radhakrishna, wears

many hats – fashion and textile designer, fashion show choreographer, freelance writer, television programme presenter, and active executive committee member of the Crafts Council of India.

Sabita is the recipient of the Gourmand World Award for the Best Indian Cookbook for 2002, for her book *Aharam* on the traditional cuisine of Tamil Nadu. "I have always been interested in both innovative and traditional cooking," says Sabita. Given that she was in the habit of cooking for her en-



menus are provided, so designed that a meal, consisting of three dishes each, can be cooked simultaneously within 60 minutes. Like – 'Light Pulao, Tomato Curry, and Pudina Pachidi' or 'Golden Soup, Spinach on Toast and Baked Aubergines.' All you have to do is follow the individual colour-code prescribed for each dish.

The book teaches you both cooking and time management. Novices who probably get into a pickle (no pun intended) by cooking one dish at a time, will find this useful, as will those who have been running kitchens for a while but who can do with new ideas that bring fresh perspectives to old habits.

Menus are simple, keeping speed in mind and leaving no room for doubts. She sent her menus to "young people", to ensure these factors were satisfied. This then meant "some elimination, some re-doing."

"I was also particular that the entire recipe must be seen at once. No page turning." Working with Westland Books Pvt Ltd has been a wonderful experience in making this possible, says Sabita.

Sabita believes that in today's world, cooking provides a great avenue for de-stressing and is therapeutic. "You must learn to enjoy it, and not get bullied into doing things a particular way," she advises.

● by **RANJITHA ASHOK**

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Vijay Nambiar; 2. 'Monty' Panesar; 3. Karnataka; 4. Justice K.G. Balakrishnan; 5. LA Galaxy; 6. Romania and Bulgaria; 7. She is the new Speaker of the US House of Representatives and the first woman to hold that post; 8. The iPhone; 9. Hitachi Global Storage Technologies; 10. PSLV-C7.

* * *

11. Bharata Natyam guru C.V. Chandrasekhar and music teacher Seetha Rajan; 12. Xavier Malisse; 13. Md. Riaz; 14. Free LPG connection and gas stove scheme; 15. Minimum Rs. 14 for the first two km and Rs. 6 for every subsequent km; 16. *Udal Mannukku*; 17. Suriya and Rohini, respectively; 18. Mangalore; 19. Arunagirinathar; 20. Gemini Ganesan.

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