

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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Yes, Sir, I've brought ALL the supporting documents... choose whichever you want, but, please, all I want is a visa!

## Outward Ho!

It is time for the annual visa-rituals to get underway once more, and the forces of Chance and Destiny begin their unpredictable and sometimes deadly dance.

Just as one set of parents heaves a sigh of relief after having got their young hopefuls into some, or any, college – another begins a long vigil with mixed emotions – hope struggling with the daunting prospect of partially or wholly empty nests.

Everyone's talking countries, colleges and combinations of courses.

Which direction do you choose to travel? Do you apply to some or several schools? Why is the mere process of application so costly? And the weightiest question... Will you get "Aid"?

Suddenly, names of states and counties in far off lands spill merrily and confidently from lips – a situation that appears particularly funny in the case of those who are still pre-disposed to label cuisine from our very own neighbouring States as 'unfamiliar'.

With "virtual visits" now being the norm, surreal, astral-plane conversations describing campuses and hostel rooms in detail abound.

Long queues begin to snake outside embassies while faces reflect a hope that someone in there will say, "Welcome".

Those of us who have reached the stage of not having to worry about waist sizes or future prospects, dreamily recall a certain charming, twinkly-eyed performer, who once sang:

"Thank God I'm not young any more."

Ranjitha Ashok

# Poised to lose more living heritage

(by A. Rajaram)

Madras Musings has often highlighted many heritage sites and landmarks being lost to the citizens. Today, I wish to highlight the plight of yet another endangered heritage entity – this time a living one, the blackbuck, considered the most beautiful of all antelopes. It has virtually been eaten out of existence in Guindy by the cheetal (spotted deer)!

The Coromandel Coast (of which Chennai forms a part),

with its dry evergreen scrub forest is a preferred habitat of blackbuck. At the turn of the last century, herds of blackbuck were plentiful all over the Deccan, bounding along at a pace of upto 40 mph, easily escaping their predators, the most important of which was the cheetah. The cheetah became extinct around 1955 and the blackbuck was also nearly shot to extinction. But with the enforcement of wildlife protection



Blackbuck courting at Guindy – a sight that may soon be lost to Chennaiites.

laws, it has survived in pockets. On the Coromandel Coast, Chennai and environs had a good population in the Guindy forest while there are more in another pocket in Point Calimere.

The animal's home in Chennai is the Guindy National Park, its history precis here reproduced from an article written by R.K. Menon in 1986 in

the Madras Naturalists' Society's journal *Blackbuck*.

Between 1671 and 1678, Governor William Langhorne carved out a garden from the forest which is now Guindy. His country retreat here, *Guindy Lodge*, changed hands many times before it was acquired by the Government in 1821 for 10,000 pagodas, Governor Sir Thomas Munro being responsible for the purchase. The adjoining Joseph Nazer Shawmier property was later bought and the present Raj Bhavan estate came into being with yet another land purchased in 1823 which linked the two properties. Between 1837 and 1842, Governor Lord Elphinstone added to and altered the buildings to their present shape and built an approach road. The forest around the buildings was called Government House Forest and managed by a team of forest officers under the Military Secretary to the Governor.

In March 1958, the then Governor of Madras State, A.J. John, handed over the bulk of the Raj Bhavan Forest to the Forest Department and, thereafter, it was watched over by the Forest Department Range Office, Tambaram.

The Guindy Park Forest, as it was renamed, got its first superintendent on 20.10.1959 and became a separate entity. A year later, it came under the supervision of the State Wildlife Officer. The area of the park was then 504.8 hectare. In

(Continued on Page 6)

## Sewer lines to be laid on bridge?

Adyar Times reports that, as part of the Chennai City River Preservation Project, sewer pipes are being laid on the old Adyar bridge, and along the Adyar river banks, upto the Perungudi sewage treatment plant. A separate pier will be constructed alongside the bridge.

The aim of the work is to expand the capacity of the existing sewer system. The starting point for the laying of the pipes is the Adyar Pumping Station. Pipelines will be laid upto the Perungudi plant. The sewer system will cater to the entire South Chennai area.

"The work is being done with focus on the sewer system that will be necessary in 2021. It is for the future development of the sewerage system of the whole of south Chennai. Previously the work was stopped by the Pollution Control Board. But the bridge is old, not only in disuse but also being misused by the public. We hope to get the permission of the Board to go ahead with the project this time and put the bridge to use. Constructing underwater pipelines will be comparatively much more expensive and time-consuming," said the Superintending Engineer of the Chennai City River Preservation Project.

About 61% of the overall project has already been completed, and the work is scheduled to be completed by June 2004.

(Also see page 2)



On August 1, 2002, Madras Musings had published this picture and report:

• One fine day recently, someone found new use for the Veeramam pipes. Madras Musings understands that the use they were to be put to was to connect the sewage pumping station on Greenway's Road with Perungudi. For all we know, that might be a laudable object, but did those plans need to involve digging close to the old Elphinstone Bridge across the Adyar and laying the pipes? Surely such action would threaten the bridge which the CMDA's Heritage Committee considers a heritage construction and which it wants to develop as a birdwatchers' platform and a strollers' walkway. The only reason these plans have been held up is because of the hoardings blocking both ends of the bridge. Why those hoardings can't be removed, no one in authority seems to be able to explain. Neither is it likely that they can explain who ordered the trenching and laying of pipes that has been going on, after demolishing a part of the bridge. Someone, however, appears to have cared for the threat to the bridge and ordered a halt to the work. It is therefore time for the CMDA Heritage Committee to swing into action and not only see that the threat does not raise its head again, but that its own plans to convert the historic bridge into a green walkway get underway at once.

## What's happened to the CMDA's Heritage Committee?

Whatever has happened to the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority's Heritage Committee? It has not met for months now, in fact not since a couple of months before the Queen Mary's College contempers started. At the last meeting, the CMDA presented its plans for the Marina that had been finalised with the help of the Committee and several interested NGOs. At that meeting, the Committee was told that work would start on the plans once the same presentation was made to the Chief Minister and her support assured. At that meeting, it was also stated that the Heritage Regulations, drafted by the CMDA, the Heritage Committee and other experts, had been finalised and accepted by the CMDA and were being sent to the Secretary for Municipal Administration for further action.

The next *The Man From Madras Musings* heard was plans for multistorey development of San Thomé Beach, manmade beautification of the Marina and the raising of a new Secretariat on the Marina. Since then, the only word MMM has about the Heritage Regulations is that they've been bounced back to the CMDA, where no doubt they've found a convenient, and comfortable, pigeonhole.

The state of the Heritage Regulations and plans for the Marina have long been interlinked concerns of MMM. But MMM bringing up the issue again out of the blue is due to quite another heritage concern — the old Adyar bridge.

In over two years of meetings, the one thing the Heritage Committee managed to get underway, to at least the planning stage, was what to do with the old Elphinstone (Adyar) Bridge. It was decided that INTACH-Tamil Nadu's advice would be followed and that the bridge would be made a promenade with seating and bird watching facilities in situ. Three or four designs for such a promenade were produced, including one from the School of Architecture, and various plans had been drawn up to meet the cost of this restoration and reuse of public space. But the meeting that was to be held to finalise all this was suddenly cancelled — and that was the last MMM heard of this proposal, all the happenings on the Marina having overtaken this very minor effort of renovation, as it must have been considered.

While the future of the Adyar Bridge was being discussed over several meetings, at one of them, about a year ago, it was pointed out by one NGO that there was some mysterious activity going on, on either side of the bridge, with large pipes being unloaded for laying. Curiously, no one from officialdom at that meeting — and that included several senior CMDA officials — was aware of why the pipes were being brought in, but promised to find out. This, of course, struck MMM as being par for the course, Government's left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing. Be that as it may, at the next

meeting it was reported that it was something to do with sewage — presumably, therefore a government department — and that the laying of the pipes would in no way interfere with the Elphinstone Bridge; the planned promenade project could go ahead unhindered.

On Page 1 today, *Madras Musings* carries a report from *Adyar Times* which categorically states that the pipes are to be laid ON the bridge — and NOT underground. This rather makes nonsense of the CMDA's and the Heritage Committee's plans to beautify and restore the Elphinstone Bridge. How what's happening has been permitted without the Heritage Committee's knowledge, rather puzzles MMM, for there has been no notification of the Heritage Committee being dissolved.

But even if the CMDA has no time for its Heritage Committee these days, perhaps it will find the time to save the Elphinstone Bridge from unimaginative reuse and put it back as planned for public-friendly use. When, MMM wonders, is the CMDA ever going to take a stand on any issue concerning the degradation of this city?

### Water transport

Seeing great potential in using the waterways of the country for cargo transport, has been the Secretary to the Union Ministry of Shipping. He sees as becoming a dynamic sector shipping that uses the inland waterways and the coastal waters. Such transport will not only be cost-effective but less polluting as well, he recently stated. But have the States really looked at this transport option? In fact, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh were till the 1950s linked by one of the best inland waterways systems in the country, but what have we done with it in the last few decades?

*The Man From Madras Musings* is referring to the Buckingham Canal, over 400 miles in length and 9-11 yards wide, stretching from Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh to Markanam in Tamil Nadu. A hundred years ago, over 1500 country boats used to ply in the canal, carrying rice, salt, agricultural produce, firewood — and passengers. There was regular traffic from Mylapore to Covelong and Mamallapuram. But all that's a thing of the past in Tamil Nadu, though some traffic continues upto Ennore, from Andhra, using the Pulicat Lake link.

Here is a waterway whose revival has been discussed for well nigh a quarter of a century and *Madras Musings* has from its first issue urged the restoration of this waterway for use by both cargo and passenger transport. MMM has also from time to time urged the development of coastal transport for both cargo and passenger use — motorised cargo carriers and passenger hovercraft linking Madras, Cuddalore, Pondicherry, Nagapattinam and ports South up to Kanniyakumari would not only ease the pressure on the highways but would, as the Secretary says, be cost-effective and less pollut-

ing, besides being a service that could be made a tourist attraction.

But what have we gone and done? We have in the city made the Buckingham Canal totally unusable, not by just not caring for it for decades but by allowing the Railways a free hand to use it to raise the pillars of its Metro in! Worse desecration of a public treasure, MMM would be hard put to find. But even now it would not be too late to revive the Canal — if only there is a Government commitment to it and waterway transport and the involvement of the Railway by at least playing a developmental role to compensate for what it has made unusable.

### Winds of hope

A few years ago, Tamil Nadu was on its way to setting an example to the country by pioneering the development and use of wind energy. Wind farms in the State's deep south were models for the rest of the country — and promised, if they were further developed and added to, to make a considerable difference to the power scene in the State. Sadly, *The Man From Madras Musings* finds, an ill-wind has not only

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slowed this down but has investors in wind farms having second thoughts about even their own projects.

Today, the State meets 12 per cent of its power requirement through wind energy — both by quantity as well as share, the highest in the country. But the enthusiasm with which many major industrial houses and other energy promoters entered the field of wind farming has, MMM finds, diminished quite considerably, in fact, so much as to cause concern. A matter of even greater concern is that several of these investors have begun looking at neighbouring states. And all this has been because, they say, impositions by the Tamil Nadu Government make wind energy propositions in Tamil Nadu "no longer a lucrative proposition".

Given the energy position in the State, if what the investors claim is true, then Government would need to rethink its whole attitude towards the non-conventional energy sector. And MMM hopes that debate is sooner than later.

### Railway tourism

*The Man From Madras Musings* has been hearing of several different routes for a southern 'Palace on Wheels' and hopes that that much-hyped Southern States' partnership to jointly promote tourism in the South will eventually sort out how the luxury train is going to link the States. Meanwhile, the Railways are beginning to look at whether they can't on their own make major contributions to tourism.

Two destinations they have been looking at, MMM hears, is Puri in Orissa, with its temple and

nearby beaches, and Dhanushkodi with its beaches and nearby Rameswaram temple. To make access to Dhanushkodi possible, the 18 km line from the mainland that was washed away in a cyclone a couple of decades ago is to be restored, the Railways have indicated. That restoration, MMM is sure, will go a long way towards developing the area as a sun, sea 'n' sand holiday destination — provided the rest of the infrastructure is in place. And the lack of international quality infrastructure is one of the major factors holding back tourism growth in the State, MMM is convinced.

Take recent discussions going on about Heritage Tourism. Heritage sites that are in the World Heritage class — or deserve to be — include Mamallapuram, Thanjavur, Madurai and Gingee. The last three have no infrastructure — or virtually none — of international class to speak of. Other heritage sites that could be developed as heritage destinations include Pulicat, Tranquebar, Chettinad and Gangaikondacholapuram. And they have even less of such infrastructure.

Unless Government and the private sector sit down and thrash out a joint policy on infrastructure development, national and international promotion, and, above all, improvement and maintenance of the sites, there's little hope, MMM feels, of any progress on the tourism front, no matter whether it is the Railways or any other authority or the private sector who are planning the development of a destination.

### RWH urgency

For years now, *Madras Musings* has been carrying features on rainwater harvesting. In more recent times, other publications too have been focussing on RWH. Yet few among the public did anything about it — even after regulations were introduced a couple of years ago. Indeed, public apathy deserves the shock treatment Government is now proposing. That Government would press the button sooner than later, given the water situation in the State, seemed obvious to MMM. And, hopefully, RWH will, as a consequence, now go into place.

But what strikes MMM is the fact that while Government wants the public to prevent water draining away from residences, factories, institutions etc., it has not looked more closely at the area where there is the greatest loss during rains. And that is from the roads and drains of the city, from which water rushes into the sea. MMM has heard no Government authority talk of how it is going to prevent this loss of water that is an annual phenomenon.

Elsewhere on the water front, MMM on a recent trip South saw work going on apace on the Veeram project. And if the tempo is kept up, the project might be in place by the next monsoon. But will that answer the City's needs? Many, indeed, doubt it. In fact, there is a growing unanimity that the only answer to Chennai's problem of water shortage is desalination. Government, MMM is glad to note, has sought quotes for

a pilot project. But MMM can't understand why Government doesn't encourage the private sector to set up desalination plants and offer the water to those who can afford it. The mineral water boom, private sector driven, would undoubtedly have helped for the better the water situation in the State — and so would desalinated water from the private sector. Little drops of water... and so on and so forth will go a long way, MMM would think.

### Common problems

The editor of the journal *Sri Aurobindo's Action* recently struck a chord *The Man From Madras Musings* has many a time in the context of Chennai. The Pondicherry editor writes:

"The present state of pollution of air and water in this once-upon-a-time clean city, coupled with noise pollution in this once-upon-a-time village-like quiet city, has brought the citizens of Pondicherry to the brink of a disaster of which more and more people are becoming aware, as a result of the activity of the environmentalists as well as of their own suffering because of the pollution..."

In Pondicherry, as in many other places in India, the Government funds are available for the promotion of tourism, and, although in principle, our primary concern should be for the welfare of the citizens of the soil, we take the practical view that if support is available in the name of tourism promotion, there is nothing against it if the cause of the environment gets promoted as a side result. But, in practice, the tourist promotion projects turn out to be money-earners for the ever-alert entrepreneurs and the favourites of the raj. Little attention is paid to the environment and even further environmental damage is caused...

In Pondicherry, as elsewhere, first something destructive and negative is done, and then the struggle begins to undo it. While a lot of energy and time goes to undo the harm, quite a number of damage is done elsewhere in the meantime. (For instance), the beautiful beach was destroyed knowingly, and now it will take years and a huge amount of money to restore it. The Beach Road, which is without a beach now, is undergoing a 'beautification programme'. In practice it is being converted into a noisy place full of restaurants and cheap meetings, exhibitions and entertainments which are disturbances for the residents there and which will be unfriendly to the beach when it is restored. The Grand Canal which can be converted into an area of flowing water, boating, cultural museum, educational centres, green avenues, etc., has been turned into one of the filthiest places, and after several years of effort, some patchwork has started as one more instance of wastage of money and labour due to lack of planning and imagination."

MMM is sure many a reader will remember similar sentiments being expressed in this column on several occasions. Nothing changes in India.

— MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Destruction sans Act

The High Court of Madras campus, with its wonderful, century-old Indo-Saracenic architecture, would be considered a heritage precinct if only Tamil Nadu had a Heritage Act and Chennai a Heritage Listing.

If only both had been in place, the old Post Office building behind the Court Hall and a huge century-old tree in front of the Post Office would not have been destroyed. And the multistorey building coming up, which would prevent us seeing our beautiful High Court buildings, from several angles, would have had to be located elsewhere.

**E. Brahmanandam**  
44, Anwarameyan Garden  
L.B. Road, Adyar  
Chennai 600 020

### The boys' urinal

There is much talk about literacy programmes for the underprivileged and grants to schools for disadvantaged boys and girls. But when the authorities do not provide them the very basic amenities like toilets, how can we expect these young adults to develop hygiene and social consciousness?

We live on the East Coast Road at the end of Kottivakkam. Our house is situated on the main ECR. Adjacent to our house, at the beginning of Palavakkam, is a Government Adiravida School — the Ambedkar School. This school has several hundred boys and girls studying there. It has four or five toilets, which are reserved for the girl students. The boys have no toilet facilities! During recess, around 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m., dozens of boys line up along our compound wall to urinate. They also enter our private road to urinate inside our compound.

We have complained to the Principal of the school, but he seems quite helpless. Before the expansion of the ECR and the construction of the middle divider, some of the boys used to cross over the ECR to urinate. As a result, the western side of the ECR adjoining the school has now become the urinal for the boys. Our entire compound wall on the outside is a urinal now. Can the authorities help the school and us? When will the despicable culture of men urinating everywhere all over the city stop?

To promote a sense of hygiene and cleanliness, shouldn't the

authorities insist on them and provide basic amenities like toilets? Children need to be educated on health and hygiene and not encouraged or forced to urinate or defecate in public places.

**M. Subramanian**  
150/3A, East Coast Road  
Kottivakkam, Chennai 600 041

### Termite danger

Some of the trees lining the 2nd and 3rd Seaward Roads in Valmiki Nagar seem to be termite-ridden. One actually fell and had to be removed. Could the cause be examined and will the Corporation/Forest Department take action?

Builders and flat-owners should also be educated to plant the kind of trees most beneficial to their area. Other readers who have experienced the termite problem might also like to share their views.

**Chitra Ragulan**  
9, Seethamma Road  
1st Floor, Alwarpet  
Chennai 600 018

### Call to NGOs

The call of the Catalyst Trust (MM, July 1st) to all NGOs to join together to evolve a common minimum programme of action for their effective functioning in the present context is most laudable.

When the political parties of our country are becoming more irresponsible and are ignoring even the basic needs of the people, it is the NGOs which come to the rescue of the people. Hence a confrontation between the social activists and the vested interests of political parties has become inevitable.

Recently, the residents and social organisations of Ayanavaram had taken efforts to desilt the age-old Parasuramalingeswarar temple tank and implement rainwater harvesting there, but now the work is being stalled by a councillor for political gain!

While NGOs should try to face any challenge from anti-social elements, they should also develop mass contact as their security.

**V.R. Chandran**  
'Nambagam'  
155, Konnur High Road  
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Chennai 600 023

### Published & unpublished

I am glad that many readers have responded to my suggestions on improvement of Tamil phonetics. I must also appreciate *Madras Musings*, willing to publish my letter, which many leading Tamil journals and newspapers did not want to publish some years ago for fear of criticism from some quarters, even though it is only an intellectual exercise. Only one of them carried a truncated version — and that in an obscure corner.

In order to protect my copyright of the idea, I had sent this to a committee on Tamil grammar under the then Minister of Tamil Development, Thamizhakkudimagan. It

## A suggestion to improve bus services in the city

If the following suggestion of city bus transport operation system is implemented, buses can be run less crowded and made more functional. The system envisages a two-tier system, the first one envisaging major bus stations and the second developing minor bus stations.

### Major bus stations

The city could be divided into 10-15 convenient geographical segments, with one major bus station centrally located in each. From each of these stations, buses to all other major stations should be operated at an interval of 10 or 15 minutes. These should be point-to-point services with no stops in between except at any major bus station that may come in between. (Arterial roads like Anna Salai, Beach Road, Poonamallee High Road and Inner Ring Road may be exempted and have intermediate stops.)

### Operations and benefits

The circular route services should be operated continuously

as these are the main feeder services for the innermost areas of any major segment.

The services from one major bus station to another should be operated exactly to fixed timings as these carry the bulk of the passengers to their work spots.

Anybody from any area will have to take a bus from the nearby bus stop to the major bus station of that segment. There, one will board a bus to the major bus station that is central to his/her area of work. From there he/she will take another bus that goes nearest to the work place. The same is repeated in the reverse order in the evening.

Since the services from minor bus station to major bus station are circular routes operated continuously, one can board any bus at any time to the major bus station. The waiting time is reduced.

Since the services from one major bus station to another are operated at regular intervals, as point-to-point, the running time is reduced and the buses will

also be less crowded. Rates of tickets can be fixed at convenient denominations. Continuous journey passes can be issued. Conductors can also work with less tension and the time consumed for issuing tickets is reduced.

Since the waiting time and running time are reduced, boarding of 3 buses (maximum) will not be felt inconvenient. Buses can be run on time with lesser crowds. There will be less number of buses on roads since overlapping of routes is avoided.

### Conclusion

This suggestion may kindly be given a thought by the concerned authorities at all levels and implemented with proper infrastructure developed fully. I am sure this will turn out to be a big success and will prove to be a boon both to the department and the public.

**S. Balasubramanian**  
Plot No. 61  
AIBE Nagar  
Mugappair, West  
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must have been assigned to a file in the Secretariat, for I heard no more about it.

**G. Sundaram**  
'Birma House'  
New No.33, Old No.18  
9th Street  
Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai  
Chennai 600 004

### 'I love Madras'

I was born and brought up in Kerala and came to Madras in 1956 with three small children and my husband, an assistant engineer in a government department.

For the last 47 years, Madras has been our home. Before we built our own small house in 1973, we lived in four different rented houses.

My children had their education here, school and college, and all three married into families settled here, like us.

I have three more families now to call my own and none of us regrets our decision to stay in Chennai. We have large houses and relatives in Kerala, where we occasionally visit, but Madras is home.

True, Madras has seen better days. But, with all the slums, dirty roads, unbearably hot summers, scarcity of water — and everything else irksome — I love this city, which will always be my home. The majestic temples, churches, mosques, famous educational institutions where my children studied and where my grandchildren study now — incidentally, my husband did his Engineering in Guindy, back in the 40s — the annual music, dance and drama festivals, all make me love this city more and more.

I love Madras even now, just as I loved it from the beginning — from the 50s — and whatever happens, I will never leave this city, my be-

loved Madras. I just can't understand Reader Janaki's attitude (MM, July 1st).

**Bhavani G. Menon**  
'Rajamalli', Q 47  
Anna Nagar, Chennai 600 040

### For the record

While it gives great pleasure to see Tamil writers being written about in the pages of *Madras Musings*, several statements in Randoir Guy's 'Stirring emotions with short stories' (MM, July 1st), call for correction.

Randoir Guy begins his essay on Pudumaipithan by suggesting that he met Nathuram Vinayak Godse 'almost daily' in Pune. What is the evidence for this totally unheard of story? I hope this is only an innocuous fancy of the author rather than an ideologically-oriented wishful thinking. It is factually incorrect to say that Pudumaipithan received the news of the Mahatma's death in Chennai. He was very much in Pune at the time, even writing a letter to his wife on the night of January 30, 1948. In fact, he stayed on in Pune until the fag end of April 1948. And then, he did not return to Chennai due to ill-health but, rather, proceeded to Thiruvananthapuram, his wife's hometown.

Pudumaipithan worked in *Oozhiyan* before joining *Dinamani*, not after; further, during the time he worked in *Oozhiyan* (1934-35), this nationalist weekly was being published from Chennai and not Karaikudi.

It is simply not true that 'no serious effort has been made to render his body of work into English'. Kacha last year published a wonderful volume ably translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom. In

any case, shouldn't the intelligentsia in Chennai be reading Pudumaipithan in the original Tamil?

**A.R. Venkatachalapathy**  
79, Second Main Road  
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Editor's Note: *Madras Musings* has been writing about Tamil writers, Tamil art, music and dance and other facets of Tamil heritage from its inception. Perhaps Venkatachalapathy has just caught up with us.

### Ideal openers

A glaring omission in reader Tagat's letter (MM, July 16th) regarding Andhra cuisine is 'gunpowder', so lovingly served at, say, Hotel Navayuga off Radhakrishnan Salai. I have seen Telugu people make a small fortress of white rice and generously sprinkle the 'gunpowder' on its ramparts. Then ghee is dribbled over it and the mixture lovingly handled and eaten as a prelude to non-veg items to follow. 'Gonkura' and 'gunpowder' are to Andhra Cuisine what Hobbs and Sutcliffe were to English cricket — ideal openers.

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

### Of a name and a pillar

Alluding to Reader Sivaraman's reference to Ashok Pillar (MM, April 1st), I feel it is Capt. (not Mr.) Gnanavolivu who had left his imprints in many cities. For instance, Gnanavolivupuram in Madurai. Persons of his ilk are in paucity today.

**N. Dharmeshwaran**  
21, Kumaran Nagar  
Guduvanchery

# Another first for Chennai

Here's a book that is destined to leave a clear and indelible imprint upon the mind of everyone who shares a love for the architecture and history of Madras, that remarkable city.

It is no accident that this long looked-for and detailed description of Chennai, or Madras as it has been for most of its existence, has been compiled by Tamil Nadu Chapter of this India-wide Trust, an organisation dedicated to the promotion of conservation and to enhancing public awareness to the importance of the nation's cultural legacy.

Nor is it surprising that several of the writers who have contributed to the book are people who are deeply concerned with the need for active preservation of all that is of value in that heritage, be it maintenance of historic buildings or the adequate upkeep of the open space which links them together.

It is an attractive and important feature of the book that both the text and the exceptionally clear and easy-to-follow maps, for which the publishers deserve special commendation, are designed to demonstrate the vital relationship between the buildings described and their surroundings.

Apart from a handful of guidebooks to Southern India, some of which are more skilled than others in capturing atmosphere as well as trotting out facts, few publishers have concerned themselves with the history, architecture, the natural environment and wildlife of Tamil Nadu as a State. Though the present volume is confined to Chennai, its publication does go some way towards redressing the balance, and it is sincerely hoped that, with publication and distribution to many parts of India and abroad, the way will be opened for further guides of comparable depth and quality to be tackled before long. Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Bangalore, Mysore and Hyderabad spring to mind as being cities which cry out to be properly documented in the same manner as Chennai, and a well written and informative guide to the State of Tamil Nadu still requires someone to write

and publish it. INTACH has shown itself to be an eminently suitable medium for works of this kind, and in the book on Chennai it has clearly established the necessary standards for research, presentation and, yes, sheer readability. It would be wonderful to think that, eventually, every chapter of INTACH would follow this lead and be in possession of an up-to-date guide, like this one for Chennai, for immediate reference to everything of architectural and historical value in its patch.

And hasn't Chennai set off with a headstart! I am, of course, referring to the advantage it has over most other Indian cities in being already well documented in the books of S. Muthiah. It is clear that the new guide will sit very comfortably beside his *Madras the Gracious City* and *Madras Discovered* (and *Rediscovered*), and will be found also to share a complementary relationship with them.

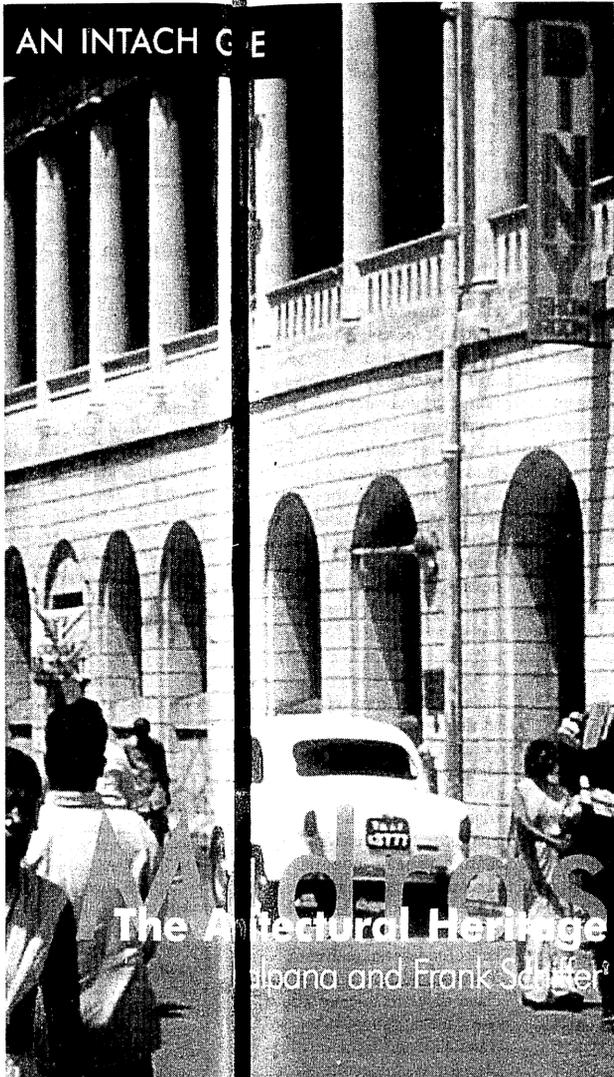
As Chennai has not in the past had the benefit of such a detailed guide, it is interesting to reflect that the actual compilation of this guide, as an inventory of what the City possesses within its boundaries, may have brought many instances of real and potential danger to the attention of INTACH for the first time. Its value as an exercise will thus have begun on Day One.

Considering the very short time which was spent carrying

• by **TOM INGLIS**

(An architect, who is a regular visitor to Chennai and South India from Mid Calder, Scotland.)

out the research, taking the photographs and drawing the plans and maps, the book is remarkably comprehensive. Nonetheless, one may say with certainty that its circulation to a receptive and dedicated readership cannot fail to unearth a host of new inclusions for the next edition. To turn to the maps, so far, I have discovered no mistakes in INTACH's guide, an indication of the painstaking and fastidious way the Trust has conducted its research. Nevertheless, there are a few omissions, but I would be carping to make too much of a fuss about them at this early



stage; this is, after all, a first acknowledgement, at the beginning and, like *Discovered* and *Rediscovered*, there will always be a huge task of preparing the necessary drawings was carried out by revisions. Meanwhile, let students from a broad spectrum enjoy the maps for their help at universities and colleges. That is the least and the last.

An attempt has been made to ensure that the knowledge which INTACH wishes to impart, namely that the dawn of Indian architectural history did not coincide with Independence, but goes back thousands of years, will have taken root at the very beginning of the exercise, and in the understanding of a generation still battling in its own formative processes. If you want to open hearts and minds then you have to involve them, and at the earliest possible stage.

There is evidence that European architecture, the legacy of the last four hundred years, is scarcely known about at all among present-day students. This is because there is no adequate textbook on this phase of Indian history available for almost the same length of time. It is excellent news then that the book which, since 1960, has been the definitive work on the subject, Sten Nilsson's *European Architecture in India: 1750-1850*, is likely to be re-issued as a

## Conservation, not demolition; Preservation, not destruction

While America was pounding Baghdad with bombs from the air and artillery from the ground, destroying a city considered to be the seat of one of the most ancient civilisations of the world, the world watched angry but impotent. Nearer home, in Madras preparations were in full swing to evacuate and demolish a 150-year-old educational institution, Queen Mary's College, whose campus was sought by government for development. It was at this time that a group of architects and conservationists, under the umbrella of INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage), Tamil Nadu Chapter, brought out *Madras - The Architectural Heritage*, paying homage to the architectural heritage of Madras, one of the important metropolitan cities of India. It amounted to an act of redemption in a world which has lost its human — and humane — tendencies.

The timing could not have been better; it was a silent exhortation on the need to conserve and not demolish, preserve and not destroy. To an intellectual and informed human being, this gesture from those behind this publication signified hope and sanity more than all the rallies and protest meetings held against unacceptable and uncaring destruction of valuable heritage.

It is obvious that the publishers of the book believe in the authenticity of content as well as the quality of presentation. It manages to be elegant in appearance without being ostentatious; it combines information with erudition without pretension; it is thorough in its research with regard to facts, maps and engineering plans without turning the whole effort into a mere academic and boring exercise. By giving the history and technical details of the architecture of 254 buildings of Madras, the book gives glimpses of the history and patterns of living of the city.

Through essays written by experts, it emphasises the need for preservation and conservation. By including photographs taken from interesting angles, thus giving a visual feast to readers, it draws the attention of even the most uncaring and self-centred individual to the splendid architectural heritage of the city. In fact, it is only when we see these photographs, we realise that once upon a time Madras was a gracious and beautiful city. To those of us who have only seen the post-Independence, hasty and unplanned urban development efforts, this is indeed an eye-opener. We may not be able to set the clock back, but we can at least arrest the uncaring and indifferent demolition and the crude and insensitive building activities.

The book contains a wealth of information on the history, architecture and ways of living in Madras through the ages. It is structured like a good documentary film revealing the various facets of Madras through different techniques — assembling of archival material consisting of local history, recommended walks for experiencing the specific atmosphere, landmarks, maps, engineering plans, presenting of views through essays which talk of the concepts as well as the practical aspects of conservation and last but not least photographs which capture in black and white the time-immemorial beauty and solidity of buildings. The three architects — K. Kalpana, Frank Schiffer and P.T. Krishnan — responsible for assembling the book have produced an invaluable guide to Madras for the tourist, the student, the architect, the historian and the conservationist.

Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan

facsimile of the original, in India and in Chennai itself!

The task of designing the book and, imparting that remarkable clarity and civilised sense of understated order to its pages, fell to a young German architect Frank Schiffer who was attached to the architectural practice of P.T. Krishnan, INTACH's Convenor for Tamil

Nadu. A simple three part formula for the contents was agreed which enabled, in addition to the larger sections devoted to what is entitled 'Archive', the inclusion of eight essays on various aspects of history and conservation. These are not arranged in one continuous mass but are interspersed among the various district-by-district inventories of

significant buildings, and the guided walks. Such a format makes it very much easier for the book to be accessed at any point, always the hallmark of a good work of reference.

The 'Archive', which constitutes the core of the book, takes the form of seven sections. The historical characteristics of the individual buildings featured are discussed in considerable depth. Interleaved with these are the 'Walks', and these also adhere to a standard format, each equipped with its own map.

Perhaps breaking new ground, as far as Chennai itself is concerned, the producers of the book have been concerned not only with the recording and conservation of buildings and monuments, but also with the upkeep and enhancement of urban open space. Sensibly, then, parks and the 'external rooms' of the City, if they can be so described, are given a chapter for themselves. The sea front, from Fort St. George to Mylapore, a linear park which provides a buffer between the Urban Edge and the Bay of Bengal, is given due prominence. A description, which makes for rather sad reading, is included on the remnants of public parkland which survives jammed in between the Buckingham Canal and the Nehru Stadium. It is an unfortunate characteristic of the City's history that, while a view from the roof of any tall building will show a good deal of greenery in every direction, the way Chennai was allowed to spread across the Choultry Plain did not allow for anything like adequate provision of open space for public recreation.

The final chapter, a particularly well argued essay by Theodore Baskaran, on the historical wastage of opportunities for conserving green space and wildlife, makes for uncomfortable reading. Because of my concern for the evolution of a bio-diversified urban landscape in the UK, I approached the book from the trail end and read Baskaran's essay first!

The book is destined to sell to a wide and varied readership. As a means for encouraging a wiser husbandry of both the humanly constructed as well as the natural environment, this book must be celebrated as yet another First for Chennai.

To conclude this appreciation of a book which is not only a useful document but has a most sophisticated and attractive way of conveying its message, it would be remiss not to point out an error of some magnitude. It can only be surmised that during some moment of inattention on the part of the compilers, some developer down in Mylapore has been at work. Judging by the photograph of the Luz Church, which appears in Essay B and also

## Next time around

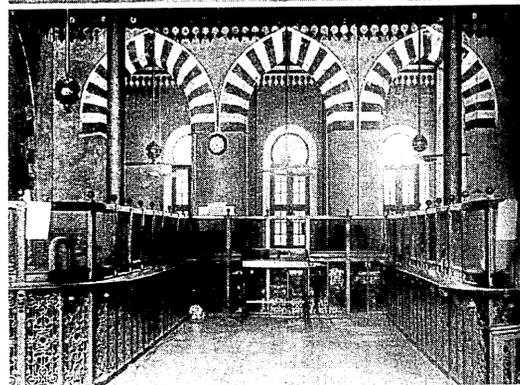
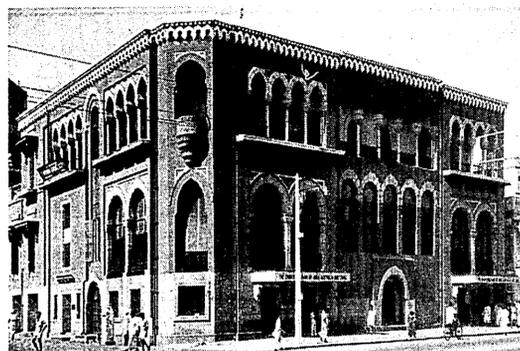
What then can we expect the next version to have inserted into it, to make it even more comprehensive and useful than it is today? No doubt some of the data missing in the title boxes of the pages devoted to biographies of individual buildings will come to light, contributed perhaps by the users of the book. There are a number of omissions in the present guide which, it is reasonable to expect, only time will eliminate; some, perhaps, will remain permanent features unless readers share their own knowledge. Because circumstances are constantly tossed about in the masala boat of change, there will always be occasions where some data, for persuasive reasons, has to be left out, probably because it lacks some vital detail. Thanks to the computer, the insertion of what is missing at a later date is simplicity itself.

Sometimes the reasoning behind an omission in this guide looks less obvious than that. Sten Nilsson's *European Architecture in India* is one such case. Given that it is quite evident that at least one of the publications listed in the Bibliography is the better for containing material which had its origins in Prof. Nilsson's book, it would have been fairer to have included it in the list as well. In the world of serious scholarship there is nothing wrong in acknowledging a source.

The Bibliography may be expanded to include 'Suggested Reading'. A bibliography may lose its point if it is too long, but it is worth asking the question why no reference is made to Frank Penny's trilogy, *The Church in Madras*. This appeared at around the same time as Col. Love's *Vestiges of Old Madras* (which is listed) and, quite apart from the virtually exhaustive covering he gives to church building in Southern India, he provides an enormous amount of useful insights into three hundred years of its history.

T.I.

on page 219, the building has undergone a significant widening, presumably to accommodate the ever-growing local congregation. It is estimated that space for at least a couple of hundred new worshippers has been added in a most unfortunate manner. Imagine the bemused, and not entirely disinterested, expression on the countenance of the ghost of the 16th Century Portuguese designer of this delightful building, as he gazes down from his celestial drawing office and sees what has happened!



Our OLD and NEW today are of a building at the junction of Armenian Street and N.S.C. Bose Road that has undergone two major architectural 'operations', each time changing its looks rather dramatically. The building is the branch office of what was founded in 1853 as The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, but which today is known as The Standard Chartered Bank.

The building, our OLD on top of the page, was raised in 1871, but for some curious reason never occupied till 1900, because the Bank did not make up its mind till then to establish a presence for itself in the South.

A feature of the Indo-Saracenic styled building was its rather church-like banking hall seen in the OLD second from top. Then, presumably, to celebrate its golden jubilee in Madras, the Bank gave itself a facelift circa 1950, choosing for the 'beauty treatment' (see above) the leading Madras architects of the time, Prynne, Abbott and Davis. Art deco — so much in vogue at the time — was what the architects favoured — and it took on the looks of many another public building raised in Madras during the late 1930s and 1940s.

In the last quarter of the 20th Century, the Bank — presumably to celebrate its new name — decided to give itself another facelift. And so we got the rather anonymous looking block seen in R. EASWARRAJ's picture of the NEW below. What was once a landmark on what was then Esplanade Road is rather a nondescript building today. And matching the clean lines of the exterior is a less ornate interior — presumably reflecting a greater businesslike approach.



\*MADRAS: The Architectural Heritage by K. Kalpana and Frank Schiffer (INTACH, Tamil Nadu). Rs.425.



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

1. According to a poll by BBC during the Wimbledon championships, who was voted the greatest male champion of all at tennis' most famous tournament?
2. Which Indian has been named as the International Monetary Fund's Chief Economist?
3. Whom has the Income Tax Department appointed to handle all PAN-related services from July 1st?
4. What is the 'Grid' in the world of information?
5. Name the partner of Alisa Kleybanova of Russia who created sporting history for India.
6. Name the co-joined Iranian twins, on whom an unsuccessful separation operation was carried out recently, attracting world-wide attention.
7. What is India's position on the Human Development Index rating of 175 nations, released recently by UNDP?
8. Which Indian computer features in the 'Top 500' super-computing club in 171st place?
9. Name the new Pakistan High Commissioner who presented his credentials to the President on July 10th.
10. 'Sada-e-Sarhad' (Call of the Border) made news on July 11th. What is it?
11. The TESMA, which was enacted last September, was used for the first time during the recent strike by Government employees. Expand TESMA.
12. Which century-old store, named after a Viceroy, was founded by Chimata Alavandan Chetty on Wallajah Road?
13. What distinction does the club Pals in Chennai have?
14. According to a new initiative launched by the Union Tourism Ministry, which two historical places in Tamil Nadu are to be developed as 'hubs of culture, tourism and clean civic life'?
15. What is common to the sweetmeat *poli*, Kaalakshepam, Poikkal Kuthirai Aattam and Tanjore paintings?
16. Which group of buildings in Chennai now stands on what was once called 'Guava Garden' and had a Protestant cemetery?
17. The local name for it is 'Koradu Malai' or 'Kuridi Malai'. Name the range which is named after a famous surveyor.
18. Where does Tamil Nadu stand in India as regards 'human development'?
19. Where is the State Government identifying sites for locating agri-export zones for cashew nuts and plantain crops?
20. Which former Chief Minister, national leader and Bharat Ratna awardee, whose 101st birthday was celebrated on July 15th, was born in Virudhunagar?

(Answers on Page 7)

## Why not look at desalination?

Nearly two decades after the grand public meeting at the Marina, participated by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and five Chief Ministers, to hear about the grand Telugu Ganga project, and years after Tamil Nadu handed over to the AP Government Rs. 1000 crore, Krishna water is still not flowing into Chennai. Many had warned even at that time on the infeasibility of conveying water through open canals on the grounds of it getting lost both through seepage and pilferage. But in a State where such decisions are the result of impulse and the directions of the supreme leader, such objections were set aside. Conveying water through closed pipes

would have delivered results long ago.

Sri Satya Sai Baba has taken the bold initiative to line the entire length of the canal to prevent seepage, at an estimated cost of around Rs. 250 crore. Sri Sai Baba has commanded the services of L&T-ECC for this job. This is being done at a frenetic pace and is expected to be completed in the next few weeks. But, sadly, flows in the Krishna and at Kandaluru are much reduced and not much relief is expected this summer. Hopefully, with good monsoons and Sri Baba's blessings, there can be relief after July.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha has revived the Veeranam scheme involving an

outlay of Rs. 800 crore. Of course, the flows are dependent on the Kaveri which in itself is the bone of contention between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. And other political parties like the PMK and farmers in and around the Veeranam lake, are vehemently opposing this project, fearing it will affect water supply to those regions.

Why is a more permanent solution, such as setting up desalination plants, not vigorously pursued? Tamil Nadu has a long coastline! But, desalination is costly and energy-intensive. However it can be a reliable and copious source of water.

Can't the scientific community, the large concentration of CSIR labs, IIT-Madras, Anna University, Madras University

and sections of industry, put their heads together and work out a viable and cost-effective solution? A Chennai-based chemical unit, TEAM, ran an experimental unit on the Marina successfully for several months. Could we not evaluate and improve upon the experiment that seems to have run an interesting course?

The relentless over-exploitation of groundwater has turned several parts of the city like Besant Nagar saline. The Tamil Nadu Government has succeeded in getting the World Bank interested in looking at several infrastructure projects. Desalination projects could well deserve the highest priority for such funding. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*.)

## POISED TO LOSE MORE LIVING HERITAGE

(Continued from Page 1)

1961, 154.8 hectare was de-reserved and handed over to the Indian Institute of Technology. In 1970, 8.0 hectare was handed over for the building of the Guru Nanak College. The Cancer Institute was granted 2.28 hectare in 1977. Still further inroads into the forest were made when a Governor orally handed over 7.32 hectare for the memorials for Gandhiji, Kamaraj and Rajaji. Earlier, on 19.11.1970, 0.4 ha was leased to Romulus Whittaker to set up the Madras Snake Park Trust. The area of the Park today is 270.57 ha. This includes the 8.8 ha children's park. East to West is 2.05 km while North-South, is 1.42 km. The length of the perimeter is 9.45 km.

The Guindy Park was elevated to the status of a National Park on 4.9.1978. A horse riding club and school that had operated within the Park has recently stopped its activities.

The Guindy National Park (GNP) is separated from the IIT campus by a high stone wall built in 1987-8. The IIT campus measures about 200 ha now, additional land having been added to the original grant. This forested area was originally contiguous with the GNP, but much land has now been built up.

At the IIT, the favoured spots for blackbuck are the sports stadium and the NCC training field. The blackbuck here are well used to people, and human activity seems to

cause them little disturbance. But the construction of the wall separates the two populations and free movement is impossible.

On 22.6.1982 Menon reported a population of 515 cheetal (spotted deer) and 235 blackbuck in the IIT area and 756 cheetal and 391 blackbuck within the GNP. In the early 1990s, Shankar Raman, Menon and Sukumar did a study of the deer and blackbuck population at GNP and published their findings in the scientific journal *Current Science*. They noticed that the blackbuck population was decreasing drastically. Their published figure was around 85 blackbuck in GNP. The total population of cheetal in both areas was around 1000.

So, from a total of around 600 in 1982, the blackbuck has come down to around 100 in 1990s (based on information that the IIT blackbuck population is 16, down from 235 in 1982). These are certainly not viable populations since inbreeding would eventually eliminate the species later if not sooner.

The spotted deer, introduced into Guindy Park by a governor in 1948 or so, to add beauty to the forest (gilding the lily), has multiplied and displaced the blackbuck as the main herbivore in both places. Only when the forest is nearly destroyed and the animals have nothing to eat, will the numbers of spotted deer decrease. By that time, the blackbuck would be extinct here. As it is, there is little that can be done, as it is almost too late.

Some control of the spotted deer population is required, at least to preserve that green lung of Chennai, the Guindy Forest. Cheetal are both grazers and browsers, meaning that they eat grass as well as shrubs and anything within their reach — not unlike goats. But blackbuck are specialised grazers, eating only grass and some species of shrubs characteristic of the Coromandel Coast. They are the original inhabitants.

The GNP today has a predominance of trees rather than shrub species. It may look green, but this green is deceptive — edible shrubs have been eaten away for the most part by the spotted deer. Even in the Madras Christian College campus, where the spotted deer have multiplied, it is reported that most of the original vegetation has been eaten by the deer and, in consequence, the insects and birds that subsist on the shrubs have been displaced for good.

If the scrub forest nature of the GNP is altered in similar fashion the insect and bird communities which use this habitat may no longer do so and the GNP, which we know as not only the home of blackbuck but also the resident and winter home of many species of birds, will lose its eminence as a city bird preserve.

The Forest Department has tried to reintroduce blackbuck into Guindy from the stock they have in the Children's Park but they have found that these return to their enclosures hoping for an easier feed. If the blackbuck is to be preserved, in

at least some form of natural setting other than a zoo, the Forest Department should be allowed a free hand in checking the spotted deer population. A trial at sterilising them can be made, as has been done for many animal populations abroad. The problem is sentiment — the spotted deer look so pretty, and visibly harmless and, hence, endear themselves to all. Many would involuntarily exclaim they are so 'cute'! Even the mere suggestion to tranquilise and transport them elsewhere can evoke strong emotions within the scientific community itself, as I found recently.

If the present *laissez faire* attitude is to be adopted as inevitable, at least the gene pool of the blackbuck of the GNP must be preserved. The remaining survivors should be shifted to a safe habitat like the Point Calimere Sanctuary. The descendants of these blackbuck be brought back at some favourable time in the future when the spotted deer have destroyed themselves by consuming the whole vegetation and after the natural vegetation gets subsequently re-established. Perhaps a temporary loss, even for a few decades, is better than losing the heritage forever!

Note: S. Muthiah, in one of his articles on Chennai Heritage in *The Hindu* mentions a former Governor of Madras having introduced the blackbuck into what is now GNP but, according to the naturalist M. Krishnan, blackbuck could be seen in Mylapore in his younger days and were to be found in other Madras environs, being native to the place (please refer *Nature's Spokesman* — M. Krishnan, ed. Ramachandra Guha, OUP 2000).

## The changing face of the Indian classical musician



If a tally were to be made of the various categories of people who are the most frequent travellers in the country today, a rather surprising fact would emerge. Up there among the hot-shot business executives and the successful professionals who log up frequent flyer miles faster than one can spin a *chaugun taan*, would be the classical musician. Jetting in and out of India, you see them everywhere these days, a peripatetic presence in airport lounges, railway stations and taxi stands. Their presence is unmistakable, their profession easy to recognise. For, their luggage is distinctive. If other people travel with strollers and cabin baggage, classical musicians carry differently-shaped cases that immediately mark them out. However, these cases and bags containing their precious instruments are no longer what they used to be a decade or so ago. Creativity has spilled over from music to the sphere of luggage design as well.

No longer does the *tabla* player, for example, lug his instruments around in the canvas bags that used to rule the roost till some time ago. No, keeping in mind the demands of walking through miles of aerobridges on his way to some foreign destination, and also keeping in mind that the price of portage in those countries is murderous, he carries his percussion instru-

ments in a nifty case that is a masterpiece of design. The *tabla-s*, upto four of them, are stacked on top of each other inside a fibreglass tower into which they fit snugly. This tower is a wheeled and padded contraption, that can easily be pulled along behind the travelling *tabaliya*, while its padded interior protects the delicate instruments both from the vagaries of temperature and from the inevitable shocks and blows to which they are subjected during transcontinental travel.

And it's not only the *tabla* player who travels with designer luggage. Most successful musicians are now jet-setters — Hong Kong one weekend, Chicago the next, then back to India to perform during the music season. Then off, to Europe perhaps, to take part in a workshop on African and Asian music. Following him everywhere is his uniquely-shaped luggage, fibreglass-and-padded creations that protect the *sarod-s* and the *veena-s*, the harmoniums and the violins (both these instruments, originally from the West, are now considered very much part of the storehouse of Indian instruments), the *sitar-s* and the *pakhawaj-s* as he carries them about, usually on wheels, through his sojourns everywhere.

The luggage is a metaphor. The evolution of the classical musician himself has been just

Ahmed Khan; 10. It's the name of the Delhi-Lahore bus which resumed plying on that day.

11. Tamil Nadu Essential Services Maintenance Act; 12. Curzon's; 13. It's Madras' first and still 'only' night club; 14. Mamallapuram and Kanniyakumari; 15. They were all introduced by Maharashtrians into Tamizhagam; 16. The Law College buildings; 17. Lambton Range, named after William Lambton; 18. Third after Kerala and Punjab; 19. Vriddachalam and Tiruchi; 20. K. Kamaraj.

### CHENNAI HERITAGE

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as dramatic. From a *paan-chewing*, other-worldly individual who was heavily dependent on students, organisers, and family to shepherd him through the complexities of negotiating the real world, today's generation of successful classical musicians is as savvy about the intricacies of making it through Customs and Immigration in a foreign country as it is about the triple-speed *taan-s* traversing three-and-a-half octaves that their vocal recital is liberally sprinkled with.

Of course, the music, the core of the musician's life, remains a constant. It is rigid in its rules, and unforgiving in the discipline that it imposes on its practitioners. Other than the music, however, much has changed in the sphere of Indian classical music these days, both Hindustani and Carnatic. Today, it is not just the scion of a traditional musical *gharana* who carries forward his guru's legacy. In a welcome development, the secrecy and mystique surrounding the practice of this art have almost vanished. A guru welcomes and teaches any student, from any background, these days, irrespective of caste, race, religion or gender. Indeed, many even flaunt foreign students as a status symbol — a sea-change, indeed, from the time when students outside the immediate family of the guru had a tough time accessing the intricacies of the music. No longer is the guru's knowledge passed on only to the boys who are the members of his family (yes, invariably boys, hardly ever girls in those days). And quite often, we see an 'outside' student surpassing 'internal' ones. This is a very positive development, a fallout of democracy, perhaps!

These boys and girls from families that are not traditionally of musical *gharana-s*, bring to their pursuit of serious music much else besides their thirst for music knowledge. Many come from backgrounds where academic education is highly prized. As a result, their academic careers, too, are usually quite impressive. Indeed, among today's galaxy of rising talents in the field of classical music, we come across vast numbers of highly qualified people such as postgraduates, MBAs, engineers and others. This is indeed a change from the scene perhaps half a century ago, when the profile of the classical musician was that of a man whose academic education was rudimentary at most, some

of them even totally illiterate, in spite of their musical genius.

One direct result of this is that performances are now edited to suit the changing times. Whereas in the past, three-hour recitals were common, the trend these days seems to be to present hour-long, or even forty-five-minute, recitals. Whole-night performances are now a thing of the past. Organisers as well as artistes realise that in this demanding era, audiences have neither the time nor the attention-span for those leisurely expositions. Editing and tightening, when done well, is carried out in such a way that nothing of the traditional is lost, while much immediacy and professionalism are gained.

Another direct fallout of education has been the respect for time that is now seen among professional musicians. Gone are the days when the audience would have to wait for hours for the Ustad to appear on stage. It used to be a kind of prestige issue to make a late appearance. And when the maestro finally appeared, he would spend a further half-hour or so tuning his instruments on stage, while the audience waited patiently. These days, performers know exactly when they are expected to appear on stage, and they are there in the wings, waiting with instruments tuned and vocal chords ready. A welcome development, indeed.

Many other things have vanished, or are slowly disappearing. The image of the traditional classical musician as a *paan-chewing*, spittoon-using, accurate-spitter of red betel juice, who would repeatedly interrupt his or her programmes in order to aim at some corner of the dais, has changed. Hardly any top-notch performer is a *paan-addict* these days. For, in today's health-conscious world, the harmful effects of *paan* on his voice as well as general health are fully recognised. This, of course, is a major change of image.

Indeed, many scientific health tenets have been incorporated into the lifestyles of practising musicians. The diet of the committed musician of the past would include so many maunds of ghee, so many seers of dry fruits and, if he or she were a non-vegetarian, so many *kadai-s* full of chicken or mutton *kurma*, not to mention towering stacks of oily *paratha-s* and vast quantities of rice. Indeed, organisers of musical functions often had a tough time keeping the *Ustads* satisfied, in culinary

terms. Of course, all this food resulted in premature corpulence, since none of them was a great believer in brisk exercise. Shortness of breath — a killer of a vocalist's professional life — and lack of stamina — ditto for an instrumentalist — were the inevitable consequences of all this hearty wining and dining, which often finished off the most gifted of musicians prematurely. But a look at today's musicians shows how health-conscious they have become. Practically nobody is corpulent, most are slim and fit-looking. Many work out in a regular manner. All are conscious of the need to look photo- and tele-genic — and fat is a definite no-no.

Scientific tenets are being increasingly used in important spheres also, most notably in teaching methods and in voice culture. The *guru-sishya parampara* by which the tradition of Indian music is passed on from teacher to student, was hallowed by the custom of centuries, even millennia. The student learned from his teacher by careful listening, and attempting to reproduce what he or she heard. No attempt was made by the teacher to actually explain how the effects were produced — hard work, perseverance and talent were deemed to be enough for the student to follow what the teacher was doing. But these days, students have a much more questioning mindset. Besides, the gurus, too, are undertaking a lot of research into the theory of music, and of musical sound. As a result, the training, too, is becoming much more scientific. This has had the welcome fallout of reducing the time required for the dedicated student to attain a degree of proficiency, and of stage-worthiness.

Musicians also seem to have adopted many of the benefits of science with a gusto that seems astonishing if we view it against the inflexibility that was sometimes their hallmark. Most of the younger lot, and a surprising number of the older ones, have e-mail addresses — and, indeed, they communicate freely with organisers as well as with each other through this convenient medium. Many of them have their own websites that are updated on a regular basis whenever a new CD of theirs is released, or a new award is received.

Indeed, the very attitude of musicians has changed. This is a welcome trend in many ways. The need to be 'difficult' the urge to indulge in '*nakhra-s*' and tantrums that were unfortunately rather common in the past, are slowly going away. Professionalism of approach and pleasantness of manner are encountered more often than not these days. In these competitive times, musicians realise that organisers of *sabha-s* and

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For the first time in years, the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association has got right down to business, ensuring that the first round of league matches is completed before the start of the Buchi Babu tournament. The Association showed where its priorities lay when it firmly stated the local league could not be disrupted by participation in the KSCA tournament at Bangalore, in which Tamil Nadu teams had achieved success over the years. There may be different views on which is more effective in moulding young cricketers — participation in local cricket or exposure to tournaments outside the state — but it is good to see the league off to a solid start, with no fear of its being dragged into May next year. As we go to press, every team in the First Division is playing its fourth match of the season and, though rain has interfered with the progress of a couple of games, it has not prevented several impressive performances with bat and ball.

Three front-runners, Vijay CC, Jolly Rovers and Globe Trotters, have registered innings victories, Parry's Recre-



ation Club being the losers twice and ICF once. Encouragingly, the best bowling performance of the month came not from someone from a fancied outfit but from medium pacer G.V. Manivannan of promoted team ICF when he took 7 for 94 against India Pistons.

On the whole, the bowlers performed well enough to suggest that the cupboard is not as bare as popular perceptions would have it. A number of left arm spinners have been successful, among them D. Vasu, Syed Meeraj, R. Ramkumar, Sree-kumar Nair and Aaditya Srikanth. The last three have also batted impressively. The good news has been that a few off spinners have the star turn as well after a period of relative lack of productivity. D. Dandapani of India Pistons and vet-

## Some impressive early performances

eran R. Venkatesh of Mambalam Mosquitos have been the most successful, while Sanjay Satpathy of Vijay, Aashish Kapoor of Globe Trotters and Kulamani Parida of Jolly Rovers have been others among the wickets. Another off spinner, S.R. Ganesh Kumar, whose career has floundered a bit after a promising start, has had moderate success with the ball, but underlined his all-round utility with a hundred for SICAL versus SPIC. Leg spinners K.A. Aashrith of UFCC T'Nagar and M.P. Rajesh of SICAL have had a couple of good matches, while a number of medium pacers — Tinu Yohannan, S. Sreeshanth, Ishan Malhotra, C. Ganapathy and T. Kumaran prominent among them — bowling incisive spells.

As in the first round of matches, there have been a number of century makers.

S. Ramesh who made 168 against ICF, has already crossed the 500-mark for the season, Rajat Bhatia too made a hundred in the same innings, and S. Vasanth Saravanan, Sujith Somasundar, Vikram Kumar, Pravanjan Mullick, B. Ramprakash, K.N. Ananthapadmanabhan, S. Suresh and R. Satish were others to cross three-figures. Somasundar (147) and Vikram Kumar (195), who were involved in a huge opening partnership against Parry's, followed that with another century partnership against Alwarpet. Pravanjan Mullick made two hundreds and Vasanth Saravanan missed one by 5 runs against SPIC, as did Dinesh Mongia against Mambalam Mosquitos.

Though the league has not thrown up any surprise results or individual performances so far, a bit of drama was enacted

in a drawn encounter when the last Mambalam Mosquitos' pair added 102 runs after nine batsmen had been dismissed for 185 in reply to UFCC T'Nagar's 155 (R. Venkatesh 6 for 55), with pacer C. Ganapathy remaining unbeaten on 70 and No.11 Tirupathiraju making 53.

The first four matches of the season have provided ample proof, if proof was needed, that the TNCA's decision to introduce the three-day league format has been a wise and correct one. The longer duration game has clearly served to separate the long distance runners from the sprinters, and the handful of spectators at the grounds have been treated to some entertaining batting and more purposeful, effective bowling than expected at the start of the season. But for interruptions by weather, there might even have been a few more results.

Till August 8: *Chennai Reclaimed* presented by the British Council. (At Forum Art Gallery.)

August 9: *Dear Liar*, a play by 'Mortley', starring Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah and directed by Pandit Satyadev Dubey. The play, an adaptation of the correspondence between George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, is presented by the Spastic Society of Tamil Nadu and Ellements as a fundraiser for the projects of the Society. (At the Music Academy, 7.00 p.m. Tickets at 98400 38368 or at the venue from August 5th.)

August 9: 'The Child Rights Discourse in the South Asian Context' — The Indian Council for Child Welfare, Tamil Nadu's Golden Jubilee Lecture



by Prof. Savitri Goonesekere, Professor of Law, University of Colombo. She has previously been Vice-Chancellor, University of Colombo; Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; and Head, Department of Legal Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka. Professor Goonesekere is a Member (and former Chairperson) of the Committee on Feminism, International Law Association, U.K, and of Sri Lanka's National Committees on both Women and Children. At Freemasons Hall, 87, Ethiraj Salai — 5.30 p.m.

## CHANGING FACE OF THE INDIAN MUSICIAN

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conferences have a wide choice when it comes to the selection of musicians for their shows. Nobody is impressed with a prickly demeanour, or a demanding presence, any more. While excellence is always valued, a difficult attitude on the part of any musician means that he or she is out of the circuit for good.

Almost all young classical musicians these days are aware of the need to look presentable, even attractive, on stage. No longer do they clamber on to the platform clumsily, looking scruffy and unkempt. Indeed,

the classical musician's dress these days is a joy to behold. Even the male performers — or indeed, one should say, especially the male performers (in the Hindustani circuit) — appear to have stepped straight from the pages of a fashion designer's portfolio. While women stick to beautiful sarees and jewellery, the successful male musician is into *zardosi*-embroidered long *kurta*-s, *pashmina* shawls, and heavily-worked *jooti*-s. He is not averse to a necklace or two, while flashing rings that catch the arc lights while he coaxes out a glissando on his *sitar*, are mandatory. Even the male Carnatic

musician, always simple in costume, is now invariably nattily dressed in clothes as white as a heron's wing. His long *kurta* is made of purest silk, while the folds of the *dhoti* that peep out from below it are edged in gleaming gold *zari*. And Kolkata's fashion pundits turn out smartly pleated, designer handloom *dhotis* with deep borders.

The good thing about these changes that are taking place in the world of our traditional music is that they show a vibrancy, a vitality in the field that augurs well for the future of the genre of classical music itself. (Courtesy: *Sruti*.)

Mitra Phukan

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