

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Quality healthcare for all
- For a lasting solution
- Sacred groves are safe groves
- Madras Nose
- Capturing the spirit of the Islands

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Well, I would say it is the bird-flu virus!

Fowl mood

Someone up there seems pretty mad at us. First, scary SARS that had everyone starting nervously, spinning around with deep suspicion at the sound of a sniff or a sneeze. And now this bird-flu – the latest Mexican-wave of panic and doubt to engulf the world. It has unfortunately changed the way one regards a fellow-species. Our feathered fowl friends in Chennai are in a disgruntled mood, one hears. They have so far been used to eliciting certain stock responses from most viewers, who either go “Awww, how chweet” or “Yuummm”, depending on individual points of view... (and no, we are not getting into any debates here). Of course, a fairly large chunk of the populace has no strong feelings either way, and will inform you, rudely enough, that they have better things to do with their time, thank you very much, should you press for an opinion. But now, the chick-brigade is beginning to feel discriminated against. Hitherto opposite schools of thought are suddenly united in looking askance at them, they say, adding that their lot is tough enough without being slandered like this. The general feeling is that they should be judged as individuals and not clubbed together with their unfortunate brethren in other parts of the world, sorry as they are for them. “Use common sense,” they urge. Ah! there’s the problem.

Ranjitha Ashok

Groundwater exploitation must stop

Saline intrusion into coastal aquifers is a major concern all over the world. Investigation of saline intrusion is extremely important because it constitutes the commonest of almost all pollutants in freshwater. Generally in coastal aquifers, which are hydraulically continuous with the sea, the excessive pumping may disturb hydrodynamic equilibrium. Also, reduction of groundwater gradients allows saline water to displace freshwater. Intrusion deteriorates forever the valuable and easily available freshwater.

Over the years, due to urbanisation and growing population, the groundwater is pumped out excessively along the coastal stretch of Chennai to meet the daily requirements. Since 1996, the C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre has been conducting extensive survey of groundwater in the coastal stretch of Chennai. The Centre identified 150 wells and borewells in the coastal area from Injambakkam village in the south to Ennore town in the north. Samples were collected from these sources and were analysed periodically, not only for salinity but also for other chemical components.

To investigate salt-water intrusion, the salinity, level of chloride ion present and the increase of these in the six-year duration were increased. The Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) and chloride content increased significantly during the six years. This clearly projects the seriousness of the status of groundwater in these areas. This is an alarming fact and urgent and stringent steps must be taken to control the over-exploitation of groundwater.

Site selection

The entire coastal area of Chennai was divided into three zones: South Chennai, Central Chennai and North Chennai. About 50 sources, wells and borewells, currently in use, were

selected from each zone. Samples were collected periodically and analysed at the Centre’s laboratory.

The details of various water sources surveyed in each zone are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Details of water sources

Zone	Area	No. of water sources surveyed
South Chennai	Indira Nagar	8
	Besant Nagar	8
	Thiruvanmiyur	8
	Palavakkam	8
	Neelankarai	8
	Injambakkam	10
Central Chennai	Mylapore	10
	Triplicane	10
	Raja	
	Annamalaipuram	14
	Mandaveli-pakkam	9
	Santhome	7
North Chennai	Royapuram	9
	Tiruvottiyur	10
	Nethaji Nagar	10
	Ernavoor	10
	Ennore	11
Total		150

Parameters analysed

Samples were analysed for the following parameters as per standard procedures: colour, odour, turbidity, pH levels, electrical conductivity, total dissolved solids, alkalinity, chloride, total hardness, calcium and magnesium.

Results and discussion

Salinity or TDS in water virtually means the amount of all soluble salts. The classification of natural water with respect to its TDS is given in Table 2 (on page 2). In drinking water, 500 mg/l is the desirable TDS limit. Seawater contains an average of about 3.5% salt (35,000 mg/l) in which sodium and chloride are the major ions

(Continued on Page 2)



• This building, opposite Pachaiyappa’s College, abutting the compound wall of St George’s Orphanage on New Avadi Road, was built on one-and-a-half grounds by veteran builder Frankpet Fernandez to commemorate Madras’s 350th anniversary in 1989/90, about the only monumental commemoration of the anniversary of the city. That’s a fact marked by its name on the long marker to the right of its entrance. The building became a landmark, attracting passers-by by its classical style with pediments, pillars and ornamental scrolls as well as by its workmanship, contributed by traditional masons.



Fernandez used the building as his office for a while, before selling it to other commercial interests. Today, anything but the gleaming white landmark that it was, the building has been further defaced with hoardings raised high atop its roof. To raise hoardings on commemorative buildings is desecration, not to mention the danger hoardings on such heights can be. Surely the authorities could do something to stop such callous treatment of landmarks. (Photographs by REFLECTIONS.)

Tourism focus on Chettinad

Determined to give tourism a much-needed thrust, the Tamil Nadu Government had a year ago nearly doubled its budget, earmarking more than Rs. 10 crore for infrastructure development – accommodation, public conveniences, roads, lighting and drinking water. The focus was on eco-tourism as much as on heritage conservation. The Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation had shown interest in initiating discussions with the owners of several Chettinad homes to get them to rent them out to tourists.

Taking that initiative forward, the State’s Tourism Department has now taken the

welcome step of helping owners of some of the ancient houses in the region restore their properties and convert them into heritage hotels, according to a recent BusinessLine report. Once restoration is over, the Department wants to get tourists to experience the magnificence of the 19th Century homes of the prosperous Nattukottai Chettiars, homes that are famous for their striking architecture, enclosed courtyards, and intricate carvings on ceilings and doorways.

The report adds that the Department, at the WorldTravel Mart in London recently, promoted Chettinad as an excel-

(Continued on Page 8)

Quality healthcare for all – challenge to be met

Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, and Christian Medical College, Vellore, are the only two hospitals in Tamil Nadu to find places in the top ten, in a recent *The Week-TNS 19-city survey* of the best hospitals in the country. The results are surprising because Chennai has for long been considered one of the best places in India for quality medical care in a range of specialities, even called the 'Medical Capital of India' by many. Some of the city's hospitals are well known even beyond the country's shores as are, indeed, several of its highly regarded doctors, surgeons and specialists in medicine who have made a mark with some sterling work in them. Surprising also, because the city can proudly showcase the Madras Medical College (now 150 year old) as a pioneer institute in the country as well as several other outstanding training centres.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, bags the top spot overall as a multi-speciality hospital. Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, ranks second and is rated high for cardiology, gynaecology and obstetrics, and plastic surgery. Ranked fourth, CMC Vellore, is rated high for nephrology and orthopaedics. Others in the list include: Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh (ranks 3rd; strong in gastroenterology and neurology), Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai (joint 5th; cardiology, orthopaedics, gynaecology and obstetrics, plastic surgery), National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore (joint 5th; neurology), Jaslok Hospital, Mumbai (7th; gastroenterology, gynaecology and obstetrics, nephrology), Bombay Hospital, Mumbai (8th; nephrology), Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai (9th; oncology), Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi (joint 10th; cardiology, nephrology, orthopaedics, gynaecology and obstetrics), Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences,

Lucknow (joint 10th; gastroenterology, nephrology), and Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre, New Delhi (joint 10th; cardiology).

Among the best hospitals in Chennai, according to the survey, Apollo Hospitals, with a rating of 42 per cent, leads by a huge margin. Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute come second (8 per cent), followed by the Government General Hospital (6 per cent) and Madras Medical Mission (5 per cent). Apollo Hospitals tops again in Madurai, with a rating of 41 per cent, leaving Meenakshi Mission Hospital and Research Centre a distant second (26 per cent). Arvind Eye Hospital (11 per cent), Government Rajaji Hospital (11 per cent) and BM Hospital (7 per cent) are the other three top-ranked hospitals in Madurai. In Coimbatore, G. Kuppuswamy Naidu Memorial Hospital tops with a rating of 22 per cent; Kovai Medical Centre and Hospital comes second (20 per cent), followed by KG Hospital and Post Graduate Medical Institute (16 per cent), PSG Institute of Medical Sciences (13 per cent), Sri Ramakrishna Hospital (12 per cent) and Coimbatore Medical College (8 per cent).

However, a few Tamil Nadu hospitals have made a mark when rated individually for specialities. Apollo Cancer Hospital, Chennai, which has a tumour board with a panel of oncologists and diagnostic consultants to offer comprehensive cancer care, is ranked second in oncology (Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, occupies the top slot), while CMC, Vellore, and G. Kuppuswamy Naidu Memorial Hospital also figure in the listings. Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, the first to perform coronary artery stenting in Asia, is ranked third in cardiology, with Delhi's Escorts and AIIMS ahead of it. CMC, Vellore, and Madras Medical Mission, Chennai, are also listed.

Ranked fourth among the

best in orthopaedics (AIIMS, Delhi, ranks first), CMC, Vellore, has over the years attracted poor and rich patients from India and abroad. In fact, most of the patients travel long distances from West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, even the Northeast, and come to CMC, assured of good treatment. Founded by Dr. Ida Scudder over a century ago in Vellore, a small dusty district town that does not have an airport, CMC caters to more than 4,000 patients every day. *The Week*, while reporting that CMC has its own sewerage treatment and water reclamation plants, points out, "The hospital does not hide its simplicity. In fact, it seems to hide its hi-tech features so as not to scare poor patients away."

SASHI NAIR
pinch-hitting
for MMM

Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, is among those listed in this section. No Chennai hospital finds a place among the best in gastroenterology and neurology — CMC, Vellore, and Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, are, however, listed in both specialities. But CMC, Vellore, tops the rankings in nephrology and urology specialities.

While upgradation of equipment and improvement of services by hospitals are to be welcomed, we cannot afford to ignore the other side of the story, the more important part — the cost of quality medical care that seems to be well beyond the means of the Indian middle-class. Indeed, medical insurance can no more be considered a luxury, it has become a necessity. Thankfully, insurance systems and mechanisms have slowly changed to benefit the policyholder. The emergence of third party administrators (TPAs) or healthcare management organisations is possibly the best thing to have happened to the medical

insurance field. TPAs, granted a licence by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority, provide the policyholder the immensely convenient 'cashless access facility', which means that the policyholder does not have to pay at the hospital for treatment and then claim reimbursement from the insurance company as has been the practice thus far. The system saves patients insured under medical policies the hardship of mustering money to pay the hospital as well as the bother of later claiming reimbursement from the insurance company. Third party administrative services to medical insurance policyholders mean that the TPA pays the amount to the hospital and is in turn reimbursed by the insurance company issuing the policy.

The health insurance market in India is simply huge. Although *Madras Musings* does not have reliable statistics, it is clear that health insurance covers only a minuscule percentage of the potential insurable lives. The onus is on insurance companies, agents, advisers, TPAs and even the Government to ensure that even the not-so-very-well off can access quality medical treatment. They need to work together to ensure that domiciliary treatment and hospitalisation facilities are affordable to the common person through insurance. This will, in the end, lead to healthier and more productive minds and bodies, an important catalyst for the overall economic development of the country.

Chennai residents who have enough battles to fight might well say, "So what? Let's make do with what we have". However, have we cared to think about the impression these erring drivers make on visitors to our city? When the situation is so vastly different in cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kochi, what is it that prevents Chennai from having people-friendly public transport drivers? At the Bangalore Cantonment Station, for example, the prepaid auto/taxi service, a joint venture between the State Government, the Railway Police and the Auto/Taxi Drivers Association, is efficient. A ticket is quickly issued, complete with receipt number, vehicle number, date and time, destination and the fare to be paid to the auto driver. You pay Re.1 as service charge at the counter. Now, can't we have a similar system at the Chennai Central Railway Station at least? Or is it asking for too much?

Can we improve?

Reining in erring autorickshaw drivers has not been an easy task for Chennai's police force. Although some headway seems to have been made in respect of 'tampered meters', it appears to have become practically impossible to stop auto drivers charging a lump sum instead of an untampered meter reading, because most Chennai residents

continue to accept it as a way of life. Passengers, put up with rude and indecent behaviour, refrain from reporting the matter to the police, more out of fear than anything else. Perhaps to assuage city residents' feelings, the City Police Commissioner recently announced that it would be his team's effort to ensure that passengers get a better deal and that vehicles complied with traffic norms; the effort, he pointed out, would be part of a multi-pronged focus on better traffic management and discipline. While, on the one hand, enforcement of traffic rules is absolutely necessary, efforts have to be made, on the other, to create a sea-change in the attitude of public transport drivers, many of whom care a damn about courtesy and discipline.

When share autorickshaws started plying recently, many thought that a solution to their travelling problems had arrived. But, alas, due to increasing demand, share autorickshaw operators have started violating transport rules too, resorting to overloading and overcharging.

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Table 3. The elemental composition of seawater

Element	mg/l	Element	mg/l
Sodium	10,500	Chloride	19,000
Magnesium	1,350	Sulphate	885
Calcium	400	Bromide	65
Potassium	380	Carbon	28
Strontium	8	Boron	4.6

some sources in South and Central Chennai show levels of TDS that have increased threefold.

Please refer Tables 4 to 6 (page 7) for a comparative report on groundwater, and to Table 7 for an example of chloride level increase spread, both over six years.

Findings

1. The coastal stretch between Injambakkam and Thiruvottiyur is affected by salt-

water intrusion.

2. Among the three zones, Central Chennai is severely affected. A comparison of the level of TDS and chloride in 1999-2000 with the current level shows that there is a huge increase. This clearly projects the over-exploitation of groundwater in these highly populated residential areas. Among five residential areas surveyed in

(Continued on Page 7)

OUR READERS WRITE

Subtle humour

Remembering Rajaji and his good deeds on the 125th year of his birth is the sacred duty of those who revere and hold him in high esteem. A stickler for a simple, disciplined and honest life, a politician with noble ideals and courage of conviction, an administrator par excellence, a strict observer of probity and rectitude in public life, a philosopher-statesman and a litterateur of high calibre, he is a role-model for every one.

Rajaji is also well known for his subtle humour. Examples:

In the late 1930s, when Rajaji was the Prime Minister of Madras Presidency, the Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastry, a member of the Legislative Council, made a brilliant speech and was applauded. Rajaji in his reply likened Sastry's speech to a Paris lady's parasol — attractive and admirable but of little use during rain or shine. It raised laughter among the members.

Once in Delhi, when he welcomed a visiting Russian VIP, he addressed the person as "Your Excellency". The Russian intervened saying such formalities existed during the Czar regime but after the Revolution they regretted it. Rajaji quipped, "Regretted! What, the revolution!"

A well-known *Harikatha* *lalakshya vidwan* during a chat with Rajaji made a remark that he was not as capable as Rajaji was, in speaking 'sarcastically'. Rajaji retorted, "Your remark is laced with enough sarcasm".

M.R. Pillai
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Incidents at 'Big' School

As a bachelor, I lived at the hotel just next to the 'Big' School five decades back. The first floor of the school had been the venue for many good things. Once, there was a Carnatic music concert by the celebrated G.N. Balasubrahmaniam, son of headmaster G.V. Narayanaswamy Ayyar, which was performed to a packed house.

GNB enjoyed a graceful personality and a ready wit. The concert was on its last lap. The audience was looking forward to the pleasing *ukkadas*. A girl stood up to leave. Just then, the song that could be most appropriate to bid farewell to that young music enthusiast, 'Nalla sakunam nokki selladi' meaning 'check the good omens and then proceed', came most suggestively from him. The audience broke into laughter, the girl, too, relished the suggestion, and sat down once again.

Once, Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Ayyar was giving a concert there with his disciple, a young T.N. Krishnan. The audience admired the talented violinist's play and applauded frequently. The renowned vocalist, hailed as *Sangita Pithamaha*, advised the audience,

"Your appreciation of my ward's play is understandable and welcome; but if you applaud him so frequently, he may think that there is nothing further to learn and his *vidwat* and wisdom would get stunted".

N. Rajagopalan (IAS RETD.)
"Mayur Apartments"
No.7, 24th Cross Street
Indira Nagar
Chennai 600 020

George Town memories

I refer to 'Memories of George Town' (MM, February 1st).

In the George Town area, there are still two government high schools for the Urdu linguistic minority; one on Popham's Broadway Road for Muslim girls, and the other for boys in Sembudoss Street has now shifted to Portuguese Church Street. The boys' school was started in 1910, and many students from the Muslim Bohra and Sait community were on its roll. The Persian language (spoken in Iran) was taught in those days in this school from Form I to Form VI.

Dr. Syed Mohammed Ibrahim had served as the headmaster and tried his level best to maintain the school's name and fame. After his retirement, G. Vincent has been trying his best to improve the standards and increase the student strength by motivating the Muslim community to admit their children in this renowned institution.

On P.V. Iyer Street is the A.J. Urdu Seminar Library, which caters to Urdu readers.

It may not be out of place to mention that George Town was previously known as 'Dark Town'.

Mohammed
Zubair Ahmed
6/175, Kalaimagal Street
Senthil Nagar
Osteri Extn, Vandalar
Chennai 600 048

Butterfingers

I enjoyed reading C.G. Prasad's letter on Coronation Durbar and its sad demise, for the humorous aside on the Irani restaurant custom of shouting the bill amount as a client approached the counter on his way out. It brought back memories of my life in Hyderabad during 1971-81. In a city where 'butterfingers' was apparently endemic, the poor bloke who sauntered in for a drink of water and dropped the glass in the process invariably suffered the ignominy of becoming the centre of attention for his crime. Only the words shouted had been adjusted for inflation and it went: "Khaya nahin, piya nahin, kali peeli gilas phoda, ek rupai!"

Naturally, given the Hyderabad's penchant for the metaphor, the usage gained almost universal application in the twin cities. For example, I vividly remember my cricketer friends Nagesh Hamand and the late Mumtaz Husain targeting a batsman who "ate not, drank not, but for no rhyme or reason shattered the glass", by first

Laws galore, but enforcement...?

This is with reference to the article, "All for a clean and green Chennai", by Sashi Nair (MM, February 16th). I enjoyed reading this thought-provoking and informative article. Even though I am a resident of Vellore I have been visiting Chennai quite often. It is true the land application method can be used to dispose of sewage sludge in India. But this is possible only when highly toxic industrial sludge does not get itself mixed up with sewage sludge. The sludge from hazardous industries like dyeing, sago, tanneries and cement has been posing great problems to the civic bodies in proper and safe disposal. Some of the industries are located in residential areas.

Dr. G. Thiagarajan, former Director of Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai, has stated that there is no safe and viable method found out anywhere in the world for the disposal of the chrome sludge generated by tanneries. The Anna University with two NGOs has released a report coming under the UNICEF project in which it has revealed that chrome sludge generated by tanneries in Chromepet, Pallavaram, Tambaram and nearby places in Chennai is dumped near the Adyar and Cooum rivers resulting in ecological degradation accompanied by the breakout of water-borne diseases.

We have laws galore. The fact is that stringent provisions are not enforced. Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000 and Hazardous Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 1989 do contain provisions for management and disposal of various kinds of wastes including domestic, industrial and other kinds of sludge. In the case of Chennai, the sludge generated by hazardous industries near residential areas should be effectively checked by ordering closure

of those units that do harm to the health and ecology.

I should say that the 60-strong Federation of K.K. Nagar Residents Welfare Associations had rightly moved the Madras High Court and I appreciate and congratulate for the interim order it has obtained for the removal of encroachments on all the main roads in K.K. Nagar. I do not agree with the observation in the article, "While encroachments need to be removed, at the same time, space has to be found for the encroachers who serve the community." Serving the community does not mean squatting in places which are pathways intended for free and easy access to reach places in the traffic-ridden roads and marketplaces. The Government can take steps for allotting other places for these hawkers.

The Madras High Court had observed, "The idea of tolerating the virus of encroachment for the benefit of the poor and landless people is only a myth; it helps the land grabbers and the corrupt among the Revenue officials and politicians who actually benefit ultimately as a result of legalising such illegal occupations by granting patta." It has further stated that the real beneficiaries are the land grabbers and those who overpower the poor people through money or muscle power so that the encroached property is finally vested with them for enjoyment for ever. (Victory Educational Trust etc. vs. The Principal Commissioner and Commissioner of Land Reforms and others — Mr. Justice K.P. Sivasubramanian.)

P.S. Subrahmanian
"Muruganadi"
No.1 (Old No.47)
Phase I, Sathuvachari
Vellore 632 009

running out his partner and then getting out himself without troubling the scorer.

V. Ramnarayan
25, Kalki Nagar
Kottivakkam
Chennai 600 041

Reader's pangs

I refer to the letter from M. Alexander ('Helping Restoration', MM, February 1st). The lines in para two, "But the copy of MM was cleared away after 2 or 3 days, according to household routine..." wrings the heart of a reader like me, who preserves the copies and loves to re-read them at frequent intervals. The pang is all the more because the writer is a retired school teacher.

I have even got issues of MM photocopied as a collector's item.

N. Dharmeswarar
21, Kumaran Nagar
Guduvancherry

Madras Tamil

The words coined recently, like *Hello machi, dhool* — all express the feeling of affection and praise, unlike the slangs of old which were nothing short of vulgar.

P. Ranganathan
Old No.16, New No.24
Vedachala Garden
Mandaveli Street
Chennai 600 028

Sheer discomfort

"A balm for sore minds" (MM, February 1st) was particularly interesting. In the good old days, marriage receptions usually had *kuacheris* by noted Carnatic

vidwans or exponents of the veena, violin, etc.

Today, things are so very different. Several weddings have orchestras playing loud enough to blow your ears off.

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

Local camps better

I love wild elephants well enough to care. They fascinate me. The Teppakkadu rest and restoration camp in Mudumalai has attracted much attention and controversy. People have forgotten a vital factor, namely, infection. I have lived not far from the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. During the rinderpest epidemic in 1967-68, brought in by scrub cattle allowed to graze there, it swept through the entire lower Nilgiri plateau, wiping out almost the entire *gaur* (Indian Bison) population. For ten years or more, I never set my eyes on a bison there. The threat persists as herds of diseased and decrepit cattle continue to roam freely there. And no one seems to care.

I recall the days while driving through the Mudumalai-Bandipur belt during the rinderpest epidemic, holding my kerchief doused in eau-de-cologne close to my nose to avoid the stench pervading the air from rotting carcasses of these mighty, magnificent animals. The Range Officer lamented, "The authorities allow me just one bottle of kerosene to burn a carcass. What can I do?"

Fortunately, a few animals that had retreated to the mountain slopes returned after a decade to re-

claim their original home. Are they safe? I am anxious that the bison story should not be repeated in the case of the highly endangered wild elephants in and around Mudumalai, a prime elephant habitat.

At a camp such as in Theppakkadu, a sick animal can spread the virus through various agents: dung, urine, water and air or at the common bathing ghats.

Mudumalai, according to me, is a bad choice for such a camp. The trauma of long-distance travel by trucks, particularly over ghat sections, and the pushing and prodding are not good for the animal. Why not localised camps close to where the animals are? These small camps should be away from wild elephant habitat.

E.R.C. Davidar
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P.S. The writer has tracked in the Anamalais and Nilgiris, tracking elephant movement.

PLEASE NOTE

• All letters for The Editor's attention should be addressed to The Editor, c/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

• All business correspondence should be addressed to The Director, Chennai Heritage, 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.

• Madras Musings does not accept letters by e-mail.

GROUNDWATER EXPLOITATION MUST STOP

(Continued from Page 1)

present. When water is pumped continuously near a coastal area, there is the possibility of seawater intrusion and the salinity of that particular source increasing. So, by analysing the salinity, sodium, chloride and other ions at proper intervals, it is possible to check the salt-water intrusion.

Seawater contains, on an average, about 3.5% salt. Table

3 shows the elemental (important) composition of seawater.

The chloride element is present in huge quantity in seawater. When the water sample collected from a borewell near the seacoast is analysed and if the TDS and chloride levels are found to be in excess, and are increasing continuously, it indicates the intrusion of seawater into the groundwater.

Saltwater intrusion depends

Table 2. Classification of natural waters

Classification	T.D.S. mg/l	Comments
Seawater	6,000 - 50,000	Typically 35,000
Brackish water	1,500 - 6,000	
Saline water	800 - 1,500	
Freshwater	< 800	Typically < 600

on the depth of the well and the intensity of pumping. Further, the infiltrated rainwater, which floats on the saline water layer in the aquifer, gives freshwater, if we pump only this upper layer.

Increase of TDS and chloride levels

The level of TDS and chloride is increasing in almost all places from Ennore to Injambakkam. Among the 16 places surveyed, Thiruvanniyur in South Chennai, Royapuram in North Chennai, and Mylapore and Mandavelipakkam in Central Chennai are the worse-affected areas. Nethajinagar, Ernavoor and Ennore are the least affected areas. During the six-year study,

For a lasting solution, with people's aid

Indians are traditional worshippers of rivers. Many rivers in India are named after Hindu goddesses. People bathe in these rivers to purify their souls. The so-called worshippers have today turned into villains destroying the sanctity of most of the rivers by polluting and overexploiting them. They are also not using this divine resource judiciously and have turned it into a massive dumpyard for industrial effluents and domestic sewage. Recently, holymen refused to bathe in the River Ganges due to over pollution. The condition of other rivers in the country is no different.

In this article, an attempt has been made to discuss the status

high in both the States. Agitations in the form of riots, bandhs, hartals and rallies take place. In the previous year, even local cable television operators from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu joined in the agitations by banning Tamil channels and Kannada channels in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu respectively. Film personalities form both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka organised agitations to show their solidarity with the people. Agitations organised at Neyveli and Chennai became a platform for film personalities to express their egoistic feelings and their loyalty to their respective political parties. The Cauvery dispute has become an emotional issue for politicians

• by B. Vijayasarathy

of River Cauvery, which continues to receive wide media publicity, due to conflicting and contending claims made by the people of two neighbouring states - Karnataka and Tamil Nadu - for a share of its waters.

The 770-kilometre-long Cauvery River originates in the Brahmagiri Hills of the Western Ghats near Coorg. The total basin area of the river is 8.8 million hectares of land in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka each sharing 56 and 41 per cent of the area respectively, while the remaining is in Kerala. More than 28 million people depend on the Cauvery River. The actual yield of water from the river is 780 tmc (thousand million cubic) feet per year but the demand from the river is more than 900 tmc feet per year from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. According to the Central Water Commission (CWC) report, water utilisation level in the Cauvery basin is the highest among all rivers in the country. It is one of the most exploited rivers in the country: nearly 95 per cent of water abstracted is for agriculture, domestic use and industry. How long will the overexploited river be able to withstand this stress? Will there ever be an agreement over the long-standing Cauvery River dispute?

The dispute

The Cauvery River dispute is a long-standing dispute between the Tamils and Kannadigas from the 19th century onwards. Whenever the monsoon fails, tension runs

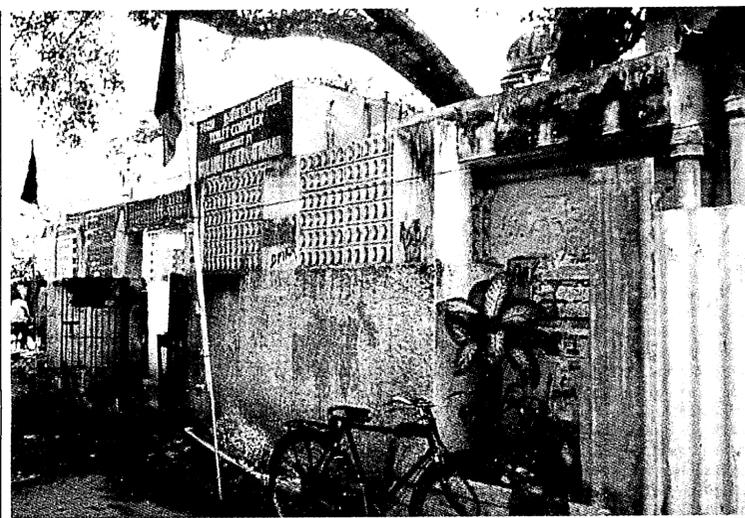
to exploit and settle political scores with their opponents. The outcome of these agitations has cast a shadow on the real issues pertaining to the dispute.

The main problem is the conflict of interests between:

- Karnataka, an upper riparian State and a late starter in irrigation development projects, which has been making rapid progress and has the advantage of being an upper riparian state with greater control over the river water.
 - Tamil Nadu, a lower riparian State with a long history of established agriculture based on Cauvery water, which is now in a state of insecurity due to diminishing flow in the Cauvery River.
 - Kerala, an upper riparian State, with modest demands on the Cauvery River.
 - Pondicherry, a lower riparian territory, with low demands on the Cauvery River.
- From 1970, talks on the Cauvery dispute went on intermittently but produced no results. The Government of India has made repeated attempts to solve the Cauvery issue, but the dispute remains unresolved. Lack of planning and unsustainable land use has led to the agricultural sector consuming a lion's share of the water. Hence, most of the blame for providing a solution for the Cauvery dispute must be borne by that sector.

Some reasons for the degradation of the river:

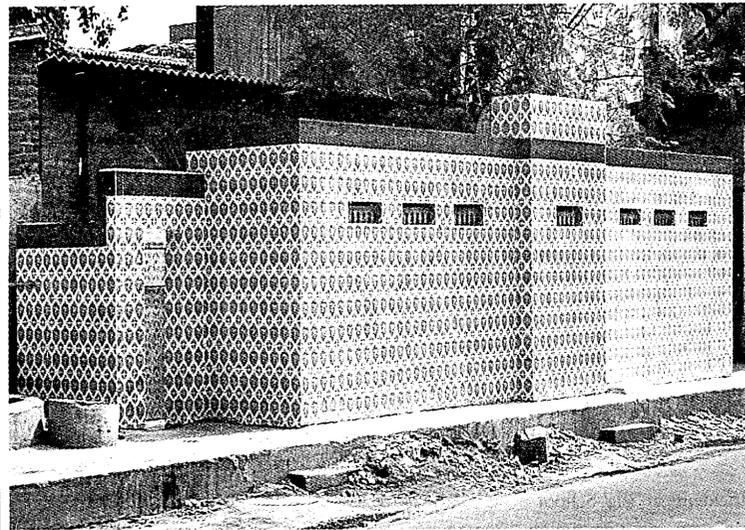
- In the last 50 years, the Governments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have encour-



Our OLD (above) shows the dirty facade of a municipal toilet complex that almost resembles an abandoned tenement, in Ganeshpuram, near the Hotel Park Sheraton & Towers. That the walls have not had a coat of paint for years is one thing, but the fact that the insides stink (REFLECTIONS' photographer had to rush outside even before he could have a proper look) is quite another. Our NEW ...& THE NEW

...& THE NEW

on South Canal Bank Road, Raja Annamalaiapuram (below), is another municipal toilet, but what a contrast; it has had its exterior recently embellished with colourful tiles and presents a much more attractive face to the street. However, toilets being given a brighter look outside to present a better-looking Chennai is all well and good, but do they look as good inside, and is maintenance inside keeping pace with exterior appearances? Our NEW seems acceptable on this count for now, but will it last? After all, sustainability is one of this city's biggest problems. (Photographs by REFLECTIONS.)



aged the farmers to grow water-intensive crops such as rice and sugarcane, totally neglecting dry land crops such as maize, ragi, millet, etc.

- Construction of dams and heavy investment of basin States (Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) in irrigation development projects.
- Traditional rainwater harvesting structures such as tanks, ponds, etc. in the river basins have not been properly maintained and the farmers have stopped using them. Most of these have silted up and dried. This has resulted in more pressure on the river.
- Use of flood irrigation, leading to constant waterlogging in the paddy fields, has resulted in deterioration of soil fertility along the basin. This has also increased the need for irrigation.
- The quantity of wastewater

discharged directly into the Cauvery is approximately 87,600 cubic metres per day. (1) Large quantities of fertilisers and pesticides are being discharged into the river as agricultural run off, (2) Major towns like Srirangapatnam, Pandavapura, Narsipur, Nanjangud and Bangalore discharge their untreated sewage into the river, (3) A total of 61 industries in Karnataka and 1139 industries in Tamil Nadu are letting their untreated effluents into the river.

What needs to be done?

- According to Mahapatra, former Chairperson of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), only one crop of rice should be grown under irrigation in a year in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The period of cultivation should be limited to June-July and October-November in Karnataka.
- Traditional rainwater harvesting structures in the basin area should be revived.
- All industries should treat their effluents before discharging them into the river.
- The municipal authorities should set up treatment plants for treating domestic sewage before letting it into the river.
- The governments of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala

(Continued on Page 5)

Sacred groves are safe groves

Sacred groves are parts of forests left untouched by the local inhabitants and protected in the names of local villagefolk deities. These groves harbour vegetation in its climatic formation, and probably constitute the only representation of forest in near-virgin condition in many parts of India (Gadgil and Vartak, 1976).

Sacred groves are repositories of several unique and rare plants. They are the home for myriad of insects, birds, reptiles, animals and are storehouses of the country's diverse natural wealth. Sacred groves help to retain the subsoil water of the area, providing life sustenance for the villagers.

These groves may be preserved out of belief, fear or reverence, but the practice of con-

stone, or a small round stone representing ancestors is generally placed by the side of the deities. The worshippers of these deities fear that even breaking a dead piece of wood in a grove may result in serious illness or violent death. Such strict taboos have indirectly preserved these sacred groves in their virgin form, relics of the forest that must have once covered much of Peninsular India.

These sacred groves are the only remnants of the original forest in many parts of Tamil Nadu. As such, these groves now play a vital role in the conservation and preservation of species diversity. The sacred groves represent a variety of vegetation types from semi-evergreen to dry deciduous, corresponding to climatic regions,

people from evil spirits. During the festival of *Aiyandar*, the people of Tirunelveli and Tuticorin Districts make offerings of an image of a crawling baby in order to fulfil their vows, to protect their children from evil forces and to ensure health and prosperity. Next to *Aiyandar*, the most favoured deity of the district is *Karuppuswami*.

It is believed that if cut coins are offered to the deity, He will punish one's enemy. People of Puthupet near Pondicherry believe that a string tied below the knee of the horse has the power to do good or to cause harm to an adversary. The sacred *Puthu* (termite mound) is situated under an ironwood tree (*Mexylon umbellatum*), on which numerous cradles are tied with cloth. This practice is followed in order to be blessed with a child. In all the districts of Tamil Nadu, votive offerings of terracotta figures are made to



Sacred groves dedicated to Karuppuswami.

Aiyandar in fulfilment of a vow. The terracotta figures are usually domestic animals like the horse or bull. Sometimes, terracotta figures of elephants are also offered. For other deities such as *Karuppuswami*, *Muniyappa*, *Veeran*, *Kaliyamman* and *Sellyamman*, animals are sacrificed.

A village named Nakkambodi in Perambalur District has a grove dedicated to *Manjamuthaiyah*, where no villager dares to remove even deadwood. It is believed that a person disturbing the groves will vomit blood as punishment meted out by *Manjamuthaiyah*. In a village named Kanapadi of Turaiyur taluk in Tiruchira-

ppalli District there is a small grove dedicated to *Karuppuswami*. According to the *pujari*, if anybody loses anything or has a theft in his home, he comes with a live fowl and worships the deity. The belief is that the lost thing will be returned soon. If successful, the worshipper returns with a fowl, sacrifices it and makes *pongal* as an offering to the deity.

Conservation of sacred groves is of vital importance to maintain the ecological balance at a time when development is taking place at a rapid pace. At the same time, the sacrifice of animals needs to be stopped. — (Courtesy: Indian Folklife.)

• by M. Amirthalingam

serving them is deep-rooted and cuts across caste and communal barriers. They probably represent the single-most important ecological heritage of the ancient culture of India and are both a conservation area as well as a spiritual retreat. From ancient times till today, the villagefolk believe that anyone harming these groves would be punished by the gods. Womenfolk, in particular, are afraid even to go near these groves.

In Tamil Nadu, sacred groves are found in Dharmapuri, Erode, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Salem, Sivaganga, Namakkal, Nilgiri, Tiruchirappalli and Tiruvannamalai Districts. *Kovil kaadus* (temple forests) are found in every village settlement in Tamil Nadu and are regarded as the abode of the Mother Goddess and the guardian spirits of the village such as *Aiyandar*, *Muniswarar*, *Karuppuswami* and *Veeran*, who are powerful and can fulfil wishes. These deities, generally of an extremely primitive nature, are often in the form of an anthropomorphic stone slab, a hero stone, *sati* stone or a trident. Irregular humps of stone serve as the deity in some places. They generally are sited under a tree/shrub or are open to the sky, smeared with vermilion and turmeric powder. Often, a thread is tied around a tree or miniature cradles are hung from the branches. The first is a form of prayer, while the second is a prayer seeking a child, particularly a male one. The cults are often associated with ancestor worship. A hero stone, *sati*

with an annual rainfall of 930 mm. In Tamil Nadu, they range from a clump of a few trees to 20 hectares, though the majority are fairly small, being only about 1.5 hectares, as well as in the hill regions of the eastern and western ghats.

Folklore plays an important role in the conservation of sacred groves — not only by the tribal people but also by the ruralfolk. Folklore gives rewards and blessings for good behaviour, and punishes the non-believer or atheist.

The annual festival is celebrated in all the groves of all districts accompanied by community offerings of *pongal* and animal sacrifice. *Aiyandar* who lives in a temple is, however, happy with an offering of only a coconut and *pongal*. In all the districts, offering *pongal* to the associated deity is either by individuals or by the community. Sacrifice of a fowl, goat or sheep is offered to all the deities except *Aiyandar*. In some groves associated with *Karuppu/Karuppuswami*, a pig is sacrificed. During the festival, the villagers organise a form of folkart called *terukoothu* (dance-drama) at night.

The people of Keelvanakkambodi in Chengam taluk of Tiruvannamalai District worship a hero stone in the name of *Ammacharu*. The name suggests a Telugu origin. A festival is celebrated once a year during the summer months. They sacrifice a goat and a fowl as offerings to the deity. According to local belief, *Ammacharu* is a goddess who has the power to protect

FOR A LASTING SOLUTION

(Continued from page 4)

- should set up an expert group and panel of user groups who should formulate micro-level planning strategies for protecting the river.
- Law enforcing agencies should act tough against leaders with linguistic feelings who ignite the emotions of the people with their speeches and actions.
- Politicians should not use the Cauvery issue as a platform to settle scores with their political opponents.
- Awareness campaigns on rainwater harvesting, ways to minimise water usage in agriculture and importance of dry crops should be conducted in schools and villages.
- The Cauvery Water Tribunal is a judicial body presided over by a distinguished judge. Thirteen years of laborious work have finally led to a judicial verdict on the Cauvery dispute. The Governments of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Pondicherry should honour and implement the order.
- A panel representing all user groups viz. industry, agriculture, urban consumers, etc. of the two States should be educated about the problem. The Madras Institute of Development, Chennai, undertook a major initiative with support from IWMI-TATA Water Policy Programme, Anand, and

the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, to solve the Cauvery issue. This initiative is called 'From confrontation to collaboration: Multi stakeholders' dialogue; a means for breaking the Cauvery deadlock'. As a part of the initiative, it organised two workshops in Chennai and Bangalore for the people of the basin states of Cauvery. People from different streams of society, farmers, NGOs, intellectuals, academicians, retired bureaucrats and journalists participated in the workshops. The main objective of the workshops was to solve the Cauvery issue with the involvement and approval of the people. One of the speakers in the workshop, R. Ramaswamy Iyer, former Union Water Resources Secretary, wondered why Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, part of one country, cannot come to an understanding when India and Bangladesh and India and Pakistan could work out the Ganga Water Treaty and Indus Water Treaty respectively. The participants of the workshops shared their knowledge and experiences in water availability, water resource management, change in crop pattern in the delta regions of basin states, exploitation of water and historical link between people of the two states. Puttannaiah, President, Karnataka Farmers Association, and S. Ranganathan, General Secretary of Cauvery

Delta Farmers Welfare Association, appreciated the efforts of MIDS for continuing the dialogue between the farmers of two States.

The resource persons and farmers' rights' leaders at the workshop focussed on:

- 1) Optimising use of currently available water for the benefit of all riparian states.
 - 2) Exchange of farmers' teams to study agriculture and land use pattern in both the states.
 - 3) Construction of a small dam with storage capacity of 10-12 tmc feet between Hogenekkal and Mekedatu to give power to Karnataka and water to Tamil Nadu.
 - 4) Continuation of the dialogue between farmers to keep the people-to-people contact programme intact.
 - 5) Formation of a nine-member committee representing farmers from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- Without people's approval and involvement, one cannot force a solution on the people. We should find a permanent solution to the Cauvery issue with the strong approval and support of the people. Local people must be helped to understand the issues better and each other's problems, besides reorienting their approach towards the issue and finding amicable solutions for implementation. — (Courtesy: CPREEC Eco News.)

Madras Nose

Did you read the report about the IIT convocation in the newspaper last month? I mean the report that was in the newspaper, not the convocation that was in the newspaper; it would be rather difficult to organise a convocation in a newspaper, wouldn't it? How it all comes back to me! It seems not so long ago that I passed out of IIT myself, but in fact it was in the 1980s. The "B.Techs" who passed out this year would still have been in their nappies — figuratively speaking, at least.

What's that you asked me — I get lost in my memories — what was Madras like when I was at IIT? Oh, it was different; Anna Nagar was a remote outpost in those days. It still is, I hear you say. As for Adyar... Adyar was the sleepest village you ever saw. Just look at it now.

I remember, in those days no one had heard of STD booths, you know, these ubiquitous cubicles where you can make telephone calls and get a free steam-bath at the same time. If you had mentioned the term to the average man he would have shaken his head in incomprehension or directed you to the blue structure at the end of the road that dispenses the daily half-litre of milk. How did you make telephone calls without STD booths? I'll tell you. You went to the post office on Mount Road, armed with a novel, preferably a novel built on the lines of *War and Peace*. You booked a trunk call early in the morning, sent up prayers and then forgot all about the call. You had a long read. If you were lucky, your call went through by afternoon. If otherwise, the book served as a pillow.

Now, don't get the wrong idea. Things were not as bad as I say. I must admit I exaggerate a little. Of course we had the amenities of civilisation. Yes, we had TV. Only one channel, I admit, but for a full five hours every evening!

We even had computers then. No, no Internet. It was all very simple. You just took a deck of cards and punched holes in them to programme the computer. Yes, you had to programme the computer. What is a programme? A programme... let us talk about that some other time, shall we, but let me set the record straight: things were not very different.

In fact, so many things have not changed that I sometimes think Madras is one of those cit-

ies where time has stood still. Take Madras Nose, for instance.

I had been in Madras hardly six months when my respiratory system rebelled. My nose ran chronically. I sneezed volcanically. My eyes were swollen and watered perpetually. I coughed and wheezed.

"He can't go on like this," said GV.

"It's too bad. Just look at his breathing — it's like the bagpipes," said Jayant indignantly. I was in no state to ask Jayant how one looked at breathing or whether he had ever heard the bagpipes, and so let it pass.

"Yes, I can hardly concentrate and I have an exam tomorrow," said CSR morosely. "It's not fair. How can I study with all this noise?"

"It's like a hospital ward," complained GV bitterly. "Hacking and huffing all around."

"Listen, fellows," I said, interrupting my considerate friends. I dabbed at my eyes and my nose with my handkerchief. "Have you considered the possibility that I am not doing all this for pleasure or even voluntarily or that I may actually be suffering?" Rude and insensitive chaps that they were, I don't think this bothered their conscience (if they had one).

"Let's pack him off to the hospital," suggested CSR unkindly.

My protests were interrupted by a series of giant sneezes, and my concerned peers retreated with a rapidity that I felt was uncalled for.

"I think he's given it to me already. I can feel an itching in my throat," said GV.

"More likely all those *pooris* I saw you stuffing yourself with in the morning, GV," remarked Jayant.

An intense battle of sarcasm would have ensued had I not broken into a paroxysm of coughing. The attention came back to me.

"I think he has asthma from this dreadful Madras humidity. My cousin gets it the moment he sets foot in Madras," said CSR.

"No, no, humidity and asthma are old housewives' tale. It is the pollution that sets off asthma," said GV.

"Pollution? Who said Madras is polluted?" started off Kalyan, who was a 'local' lad, but he was quickly hushed.

"I think K has not had his room swept for weeks. The dust is the cause of his woes. Be warned, all of you with poor housekeeping habits," said Jayant, rolling his eyes significantly in the direction of GV.

"I know what the problem is," said GV with a scornful look at Jayant. "It's this *odeur terrible*

that is wafted to us each evening from Le Canal Buckingham. Yesterday it was so overpowering that I felt quite faint." He accompanied this with a most realistic imitation of a strong man swooning under the influence of dangerous vapours.

Finally, they took me to the hospital. The doctor pulled out my tongue and examined it. Then he listened to the strange sounds my chest was producing, with his stethoscope.

"Allergic rhinitis," he pronounced. He scratched out a prescription. "Once a day, five days, just before going to bed," he said.

The tablet was quite effective. My nose stopped running and I slept undisturbed for those five days. On the sixth day, it was back to square one. Soon enough, I found myself facing the doctor again.

This time, he gave me a pink-coloured cough medicine. It was a fine cough syrup. It was

strong stuff. I used to have a plant growing vigorously in some water in a glass bottle in my room. It was a healthy plant — a happy plant. I wanted to see if my cough syrup would turn that plant pink. I poured a spoonful of the syrup into the bottle. The next morning a black shrivelled mass was all that remained of the plant. My breathing, however, had not improved a whit. So back I went to the medicine man.

This time the doctor gave me an inhaler. This was a device that squirted a cloud of medicine into the lungs *via* the mouth. In theory, one or two squirts of this would have you back on your feet in an instant. Wheezing would disappear, as though by magic. In practice, nothing happened.

My prospects of leading a normal life looked fairly remote, as the miracle cures of modern medicine failed one by one. At this point, I discovered 5BX, the 11 minute-a-day physical fitness plan for men, a series of exercises developed by the Royal Canadian Air Force. A get-fit, stay-fit course for today's

town dwellers, said the cover of the 5BX book. Whenever the wheezing and the sneezing reared their ugly heads, I only had to start my 11-minute routine and the air passages cleared wondrously. The hitch was that the wheezing and sneezing were at their worst in the night, not allowing me to sleep. So it came to pass that at midnight, or in the unearthly hours of the morning, I could have been noted getting up and doing my exercises, counting the number of push-ups, stationary runs, half knee-bends and so forth.

Some months ago, I came back to Madras for my second innings. I was initially rather disturbed by all the changes I saw. So many places looked so unfamiliar...

I need not have worried. My nose is running again and I have begun sneezing. My eyes have started watering and I have developed a cough. I struggle for every breath. It's all so familiar! Madras Nose is an abiding reminder that, in spite of any indications to the contrary, this city has not changed at all.

Kumaran Sathasivam

Good wine needs no push

On one of my weekend shuttles from Karaikal to Pondicherry, traffic near Cuddalore was brought to a standstill by an accident. A constable on duty informed me that it would take a minimum of two hours for the traffic to clear. And all that I could do was to get out of my car and move around socialising with others stranded there.

People usually mix with their own age group. But I love the company of oldies, for they easily open up to anyone who approaches them with love. Fine wine improves with age. I make use of the experience of this ignored lot who really need company.

I found one such couple standing near their car a few yards from mine. Both of them were decently dressed and, in spite of their old age, looked hale and hearty.

I roped them into a conversation that started with road accidents, moved on to deaths in the air and on the sea. We inquired into each other's family matters and became closer.

"All of a sudden, the old lady's eyes fell on something and stayed glued to it.

"What's it, dear, that you are so engrossed with?" asked the old man directing his eyes towards the object of her attention. I followed suit.

On the other side of the road

was a small hotel that called itself Sree Sai Bhavan. To its right stood a tea stall and to its left near the entrance of the hotel stood a dark skinned man with his hair unoiled and uncombed. He was half-clad and only a placard that hung from his neck covered his bare torso.

"Come, let us cross the road and have a cup of tea," said the old lady and started forward. The old man and I fell in line, on either side of the lady.

"Three cups of strong tea," the old lady said to the tea master. A cup of tea in hand, I moved towards the human placard to take a closer look. The placard read: I stole food from Sree Sai Bhavan.

I was taken aback. Then I started studying the man. I could not see an iota of guilt on his face, neither any sense of shame. I looked at his eyes. They were neither gloomy nor sad. His hands and legs were not in chains and yet he stood like a pillar without making the least attempt to escape.

The old lady arched her eyebrows before she asked, "What prevents you from running away from here?"

"What for? If I do that, who will give me food three times a day and twenty rupees at closing time?" said the poor man with a sense of duty.

"Oh, all this for the sake of publicity! And for giving publicity to his hotel its owner has put

you to such a humiliation?" said the old man. We then began to move towards our cars.

"This fellow seems to have no self-respect. For the sake of food and a few bucks should he demean himself?" commented the old lady and added, "Shameless fellow!"

"That is India, Madam!" I said, "The moneyed can easily buy the needy. And the needy helplessly suffer in the hands of the moneyed, all to quell their hunger."

Meanwhile the traffic got cleared and the old couple got into their car. As the wheels started rolling, the old man, before bidding goodbye to me, said, "I think this publicity is in poor taste. Good wine needs no push."

As I got into my car and started it, an old story came to my mind.

Once a man who wanted to buy ghee went in search of a ghee merchant and was thrilled to see a signboard displayed in front of the shop. It read: 'Good pure ghee sold here'.

The buyer said with contempt: "What a signboard! Do you sell bad pure ghee too?"

The merchant understood his fault and had the word 'good' removed from the signboard. Now the board read: 'Pure ghee sold here'. The merchant was happy that someone pointed out his error.

(Continued on Page 8)

Capturing the spirit of the Islands

One fan called it "deja vu to a disco beat with bits of memory sewn together in a brilliant patchwork with a life of its own". She was referring to a recent spellbinding presentation in the city of the unusual 'chutney music' by Drupatee Ramgoonai Prasad and Rikki Jai of the Trinidad and Tobago Islands. Actually a mix of Bhojpuri, Bollywood and a smattering of English set to vibrant calypso rhythms, chutney music represents the culture of the descendants of indentured Indian workers, migrants to the other side of the world in the 19th century. And accompanying reworked renditions of old Hindi

the Indian bell. Fast-paced foot-tapping music accompanied the enjoyable dances, particularly the song of a girl who sells *shoo shoo*, a favourite vegetable back home (our very own *chow-chow*). A youngster, pleasantly surprised by the enthusiastic response of the mixed-age audience who joined with Islanders to do the traditional Segha dance on stage, gushed, "Well, well, Chennai sure has moved to a different mode!"

Renowned dancer V.P. Dhananjayan who first visited the Reunion Islands in 1982 to a wonderful response feels, "Especially in Mauritius and the Reunion Islands, the many Indian

Bharathi Vyapuri of Reunion Islands studied here and went back to popularise the Bharata Natyam form. Many teachers are now periodically deputed to the Islands, both to teach and perform."

Dancers from Mauritius presented a fusion of Indian-Oceanic dance forms 'In African mood' choreographed by Anna Patten (who learnt Kathak in Delhi for five years) and Sandeep Bhimji. Fusion of Kathak, combining its technical and expressional facets with other modern dance forms like mountain jazz, called *Kathazz*, was a continuing refrain in the creations of the Art Academy.

Says V. Raman, Honorary Consul, Republic of Mauritius, "With 70 per cent of the population of Indian origin — two-thirds are of Hindi-speaking origin, and others of Tamil origin — Indian influence on the Islands' dance and music is certainly very predominant. No wonder Mauritius is often called 'Little India'! In fact, if you want to witness the purest form of celebrations of festivals, pujas et al, this is the place. And there are about 75 Hindu temples on the Island! Cultural interactions are actively encouraged, with dance, music and Tamil language teachers sent on deputation to Mauritius for a two-three year period. Many students in turn are eager to come to India for learning Carnatic music, the *veena*, *mridangam* etc. Besides, the two institutions that support interest in Indian culture on the Island — the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Culture (supported wholly and managed by the Indian Government) and the Indira Gandhi Institute for Indian Culture (supported by the Indian Government and managed by the Mauritian Government) encourage Islanders with a keen interest in Indian Arts."

Rajeshwari, Principal, Government Music College, Chennai, who was on deputation for a few years to Mauritius, says, "In this region, the traditions of ancestral generations who moved from the South and North of India to work in the sugarcane fields of the Islands are very marked. In the last 30 years, many from the Island have come forward to learn the nuances of the traditional Odissi, Kathak and Bharata Natyam dances, and also Tamil as a core subject. Many students come to learn music and musical instruments like the *mridangam* and violin. The *bhajan* tradition is also predominant. Ritualistic *pujas* and songs fill

(Continued from page 2)

this Central Chennai zone, Mandavelipakkam is badly affected and most of the samples show a TDS level more than 2000 mg/l.

3. In Central Chennai, about 85 per cent of the water sources show increase in TDS level within three years. In Mylapore and Mandavelipakkam, the TDS has doubled in the last three years.

Table 4. Comparison of TDS level in groundwater (South Chennai)

Area	96-97	98-99	02-03
Indira Nagar	1516	1725	2037
Besant Nagar	676	653	805
Thiruvanniyur	501	673	1439
Palavakkam	1047	1292	1301
Neelankarai	547	586	828
Injambakkam	668	558	989

Table 5. Comparison of TDS level in groundwater (Central Chennai)

Area	99-00	02-03
Mylapore	955	1941
Triplicane	1009	1507
Mandavelipakkam	1788	3277
R.A. Puram	970	1690
Santhome	1275	1535

4. In North Chennai, about 50 per cent of the sources show an increase in TDS level

Table 6. Comparison of TDS level in groundwater (North Chennai)

Area	99-00	00-01	02-03
Royapuram	747	1147	1928
Thiruvottiyur	2015	2329	3217
Nethajinagar	636	529	511
Ermavoor	1178	1068	1136
Ennore	1456	1413	1503

Table 7. Comparison of chloride level (Central Chennai)

Area	99-00	02-03
Mylapore	226	643
Triplicane	223	289
Mandavelipakkam	663	1300
Raja Annamalaiapuram	267	547
Santhome	415	505

during the last four years and Royapuram is the worst affected area in that zone.

5. In 1996-97, the TDS level at Thiruvanniyur was within 500 mg/l. But now, nearly 70 per cent of the samples show more than 1000 mg/l. On average, the TDS level has increased three-fold during the last six years.

6. In South Chennai, about 66 per cent of the sources show increase in TDS during the six years of survey.

7. Among the three zones, Central Chennai is the most affected zone. — (Courtesy: CPREEC.)

the celebrations of *Thaiposam Kavadi*, *Karthikai* and *Govindan Pujas*, which are accompanied by *nadhaswaram* and *tavil*. What particularly impresses me is the sweetness of their voice quality and their urge to learn Indian music. Maybe the folk music passed on in the sugarcane fields has nurtured their passion for traditional music."

As Mauritian-born Ekambari Sornum, a III-year student of the B.A. Tamil course at the Queen Mary's College, who will in a couple of months return to the Island to teach Tamil at collegiate level, felt, "Indian culture is an intrinsic part of the Islands. The culture our ancestors brought with them when they settled in strange lands, has been fostered and supported through the mass media and programmes offered by institutions like the Mahatma Gandhi Institute that offer evening classes for those interested. And, of course, cultural exchange programmes and performances serve to add more impetus."

Sri Lanka's dances were presented by the Rajini Dance

Group, accompanied by the imitable Sudha Gunadasa on the traditional drums throughout. There was delightful Indian familiarity and grace in every performance — from the Ves, which seemed very much like the *Kathakali* of Kerala, to the *Gajaga* or Duet Dance, and the *Kolam*, a traditional performance that goes on through the night like the *Koothu* of Tamil Nadu. The music and dance of the tea pluckers and village women going through their domestic routines had an especially evocative haunting lilt.

S. Rajappa, Regional Director, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, said, "The Ministry of Cultural Affairs wished to avail of the opportunity of the Festival of Islands that was going on in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the benefit of people in Chennai. Initially, the ICCR was apprehensive of the response. But we've been amazed and overwhelmed by the positive reactions that have poured forth. It definitely has strengthened cultural relations."

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Why not two for TN, too?

There is a strong case for Tamil Nadu to field at least two teams, one as the Chennai Cricket Association and the other as Tamil Nadu District Cricket Association. Besides, there could be a separate team from Pondicherry. It is surprising that while Pondicherry is allowed to field a separate team in all national sporting events, the union territory is denied the same in cricket.

At present 27 State associations, including the Indian Railways and Services, out of 31 affiliated to the Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI), are permitted to take part in the Ranji Trophy tournament. However, the Cricket Club of India (CCI), the University Board, National CC and Sikkim Association are not allowed to play in the Ranji Trophy. But Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are fielding three, two and two teams respectively. Tamil Nadu with abundant talent is allowed to field only one team. This season, 12 players from TN are playing for other associations in the Ranji Trophy as guest players.

Getting Tamil Nadu and West Bengal to field two teams each can easily be done by giving separate affiliations to the two metros – Chennai and Kolkata – as in the case of the other two metros – Mumbai and Delhi – which are already members and are fielding separate teams in the Ranji Trophy.

This alone will do justice to the players of Chennai and Kolkata metros. Steps should be taken immediately to get separate affiliations for Chennai and Kolkata. Tamil Nadu and Bengal should have separate teams. It is heartening to note that Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Uttaranchal are going to be given affiliations, though belatedly. These associations should also be permitted to take part in the Ranji Trophy from the 2004-2005 season. Apart from this, tournaments should be conducted for all age groups for States like Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Chandigarh.

The present points system that is being followed in the Ranji Trophy does not reflect the real strength of the teams. The teams, which deserve to be

retained in the Elite Group, are relegated to the Plate Group while the team, which should be demoted, continues to be in the Elite Group. The whole system needs review.

Reverting to the old format in the Duleep Trophy will be a disadvantage to the players in the Plate Group and for players from South and West Zones of the Elite Group. Many players from the Elite Group will not be able to play in the Duleep Trophy if the last season's system is not followed. This is amply evident from the South Zone team that was recently announced.

Further, instead of inviting an outstation team to participate in the Duleep Trophy, it will be prudent to have four teams from the Elite Group and two teams from the Plate Group. This alone will do justice to all players from all zones.

The Deodhar Trophy games should also be played on the lines of the Duleep Trophy.

The number of guest players in each Ranji team should be increased to four from three and this rule should be strictly followed. During the current season, some associations fielded more than five guest players by providing local addresses. Assam was prevented from playing three extra players when an association protested to the BCCI in this regard. But some associations in the Plate Group also violated this rule. This will not help the local players to improve their game. –

(Courtesy: Straight Bat.)
R. Chandrasekaran
(Former Ranji Trophy player)

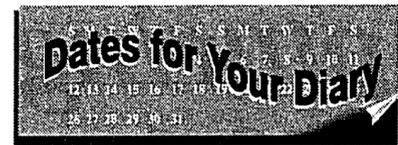
Focus on Chettinad

(Continued from page 1)

lent destination for foreign tourists. Chettinad, the Department feels, can also be used as a base camp to visit Rameswaram, Tiruchi, Madurai and Thanjavur.

However, efforts to bolster the image of the State as a pre-

ferred tourist destination will succeed only if attention is also paid to the basics – cleaning up of destinations, relaying roads, turning shops and service counters into friendlier places, and providing regular electricity supply and safe drinking water.



March 6: An evening of music with The Little Theatre. (At Max Mueller Bhavan, 5.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.)

March 6: International Women's Convention. (At Hotel Taj Coromandel, Chennai.)

March 6: 20th Anniversary Celebrations. (At DakshinaChitra.)

March 7: R. Rajendran exhibits reproductions of Ravi Verma and Rembrandt and his own paintings. (At Vinyasa Art Gallery.)

March 10: Paintings by Achuthan Kudaluar, Babu Xavier, S.G. Vasudev and K. Muralidharan. (At Mukti.)

March 11: Exhibition of paintings by Veena Krishna Kumar. (At Vinyasa.)

March 12: Handicrafts of Andhra Pradesh in all three galleries; wooden toys, dolls and jewellery are some of the items on display. (At C.P. Arts Centre.)

March 12: British Council brings you a workshop on online information resources and services for library professionals and students. (At University of Madras. To participate or for more details contact Vijaya K Sundaram at 28602860, Extn. 290 or e-mail: vsundaram20@hotmail.com.)

March 16: Group Exhibition by five artists from Karnataka. (At Lakshana.)

Upto March 17: On Exhibit & Sale presents Here & Now paintings by Supriya Naren. Supriya Naren is an artist from Bangalore who exhibiting her artwork in Chennai for the first time. She has created this series titled 'Here & Now' using oils and acrylics on canvas. She lives and works in Bangalore. (11, Second Street, Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004.)

March 18: Asit and Shukla Sen Poddar are holding an exhibition of paintings on landscapes and graphics. (At Artworld.)

March 21: Group show by artists from Bangalore. (At Vinyasa.)

March 22: Village scenes of India – an exhibition of paintings by a group of artists. (At Prakrit Art Gallery.)

March 24: Solo exhibition of drawings by Porchezhiyan. (At Lakshana.)

March 25: Spread over six days Kalakshetra Foundation will stage six parts of Ramayana. (At Kalakshetra Foundation, 6.30 p.m.)

March 27: Theatre group from Pondicherry will perform Moliere's play, Mains Sales. (At Alliance Francaise.)

Good wine...

(Continued from page 6)

A couple of days later another customer whose eyes rested on the board said, "What sort of publicity is this? I don't understand. Do you sell impure ghee too?"

The merchant thought a while and found that there was reason in what he said. And so he had the word 'pure' erased from the signboard.

Now the board displayed only three words: 'Ghee sold here'.

The same evening another customer pointed at the board, "What is this board doing here? Even without it, people will easily know that this is a ghee shop. Your ghee is so good and pure that like a sweet scented wild flower it emanates its fragrance all over the market. In fact, it was the smell that pulled me to your shop to buy ghee."

The shopkeeper happily removed the board. (Courtesy: Sri Aurobindo's Action.)

P. Raja

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