

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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The only positive side-effect of the board exams is that I have lost 10 kilos!

Weight(y) matters

'They' are really over.

Finally!

"Oh, the dark days are done; the bright days are here...er... ummmm..." (Sorry - didn't mean to break into a song like that. And how's that for an age-revealing faux pas?)

Seriously, those who walked in the shadow of the Board Examinations know what it feels like to come into the light... lighter, literally.

Have you noticed how trim and toned some parents of excitable, unpredictable kids 'taking their Boards' have become?

The whittled-downers differ over what causes greater weight loss.

"Physics. Worth 10 kg," some opine, patting their flat tummies proudly.

"Computer Science," says another.

"Maths...any day. 15 kg," says a particularly tired bunch.

"Hey, you know how I had to fight to prevent English being taken for granted? 'Think what it will do to your average'... that's all I told him every morning for six months," discloses a startlingly shrunken soul.

Your heart goes out to a family that now has to rise above such nightmare conversations, and fight its way back to a sweeter, gentler time.

Two pallid creatures, seeing the outside of their gates after weeks, take in each other's emaciated frames.

"Chemistry," the first one rasps. The other sighs. "Disinterested Commerce."

Oh, well, at least they're nice and slim for the holidays. With no gym-ing, fad-dieting... and for free.

Ranjitha Ashok

Better times ahead for heritage buildings?

(By A Special Correspondent)

While privately owned heritage and historic structures in the city are continuing to lose their battle against the wrecker's hammer, it would appear that better days are here for some under the control of the Government.

A recent question in the Assembly had the PWD Minister furnishing several details regarding the restoration works that are ongoing or planned. Most of these are being taken up under the grants of the 12th Finance Commission. Among the ongoing works are renovation of the Ophthalmic Hospital building in Egmore (it is to be hoped that he meant ALL the historic buildings here), the Banqueting Hall (Rajaji Hall) in Government Estate (budget Rs. 91 lakh), the upgrading of the Tamil Nadu Archives building at a cost of Rs. 2.16 crore and the renovation of the compound wall of the Government Museum at a cost of Rs. 77 lakh. However, the minister's reply is silent on the fate of the Museum building and the National Art Gallery, which badly need attention.

Quite a few new projects are on the anvil as well. Tendering process for the renovation of the Amaravathi Gallery of the Government Museum is underway. Lighting of the façade of Fort St George is in the same stage. The budget for these is Rs. 80 lakh. Lighting arrangements for the High Court complex and the restoration of the Madras Literary Society building are to be taken up this year. The latter is expected to cost Rs. 40 lakh. Besides these, the renovation and preservation of Brodie's Castle (present home

of the Government Music College) on Greenway's Road and the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court building on Rajaji Salai are expected to be taken up at a cost of Rs. 83 lakh. Similar work is also to be undertaken at the offices of the Deputy Inspector General of Registration on First Line Beach (Rajaji Salai) for which a budget of Rs. 50 lakh is to be allocated.

A project that will be of great



Ripon Building... once a conservationist's report is in, restoration may start.

interest is the proposed restoration of Chepauk Palace. Rs. 3.5 crore has been earmarked for this. However, details of what is to be done have not been furnished. It is to be hoped that the Government will appoint a consultant for specifying the exact nature of renovation to be

done, something which is of prime importance for a heritage building, in this case one of the oldest surviving buildings of the city. The PWD's own talents in this area need to be better honed. In this connection, it is heartening to note that the

(Continued on page 8)

May we hope for it to remain a woodland?

The recent judgement of the Madras High Court, allowing the State Government to resume the rights to the lands leased out by it to the Agri-Horticultural Society has brought the verdant sprawl of 18 acres or so on either side of Cathedral Road into the news.

While much is being made out about the fact that the popular Woodlands Drive-In restaurant in the place has closed down, not many are worried about the future of the Horticultural Society itself or the fate of the green expanse. In many ways, the Society itself is to blame for the situation that it is in.

A historic body founded with the best of intentions, the Madras Horticultural Society was started in 1835. An active member on the committee was Dr. Robert Wight, Surgeon in the Madras Medical Service, who also brought out a number of publications of botanical in-

terest. 22 acres of land were leased out by the Government to the Society in the area beside the St George's Cathedral which had been consecrated in 1816. The Society changed its name to the Madras Agri-Horticultural Society in 1860 and

By the 1960s, the Society had begun to face financial difficulties and it was then that Krishna Rao, the man who had brought Udipi cuisine to Madras, approached the body with a proposal to set up a drive-in restaurant in the gardens on the left of the road as you approached Gemini Studios. The Society was initially reluctant, but the rent offered was attractive and the Society, hard-pressed financially, agreed. It is interesting to note that none pointed out that sub-letting a leased property was in any way not legal, the precise argument on which the present judgement is based. Be that as it may, the Woodlands Drive-In Restaurant, an innovative concept in India, was inaugurated on April 15, 1962 and became a runaway success. In an era when there were not many cars around, it was considered fashionable to drive in to Wood-

(Continued on page 8)

• by A Special Correspondent

over the years its annual flower show was much looked forward to, with the Governor of Madras, the Patron-in-Chief of the Society, inaugurating it. The Society boasted of a good library devoted to publications on botany and did much to foster a keen interest in gardening in a city that was full of bungalows. With the laying of Cathedral Road in order to connect Adyar and South Madras to St George's Cathedral, the property became divided into two and reduced to its present size.

Names of villages in Tamil Nadu

A reflection of ecological tradition

The study of the names of places in a specific area is called Toponymy. The toponymical study includes the origin of these names, their social and cultural meanings, and the identification of patterns, if any.

The five-fold landscape categorisation in the early Tamil tradition derived its names from the significant natural vegetation found in the regions. The hilly tracts of land were named after the flowering plant *kurinji* found in the hills; the forest tracts were named after *mullai*, the wild jasmine rampant in those areas; the cultivable tracts were named after the majestic tree *marutham*, which is always present near freshwater resources; the littoral land was named after *neythal*, the water lily found in the pools of the coastal areas; and the arid tracts of land which are usually between the hills and the forests were named after the *paalai* tree *Mimusops hexandra* (Roxb) which is strangely fresh and green even in arid conditions.

Ecological factors influenced human settlements in Tamil Nadu. This is amply borne out by the geographical names of the villages. The names of the villages located near the hills invariably have *kundru* or *malai* as a prefix or suffix. A few examples are Kundrathur, Paramkundram, Nerkundram, Neerkundram, Arungunram, Thirukkalukkunram, Thirupparuttikunram, Alagarmalai, Thirunirmalai. Villages located on the banks of rivers have names with *aarur* or *thurai* as either prefix or suffix (Thiruvarur, Thuraiyur, Arugatturai) and villages situated at the confluence of rivers had the term *koodal* as a suffix (Thimmukoodal).

Villages near the lakes have *yeri* as a suffix (Maraneri, Murukkeri, Tiraineri, Thenneri, Pazhaveri, Kadapperi, Ponneri).

The names of villages with prominent tanks have the suffix *kulam* (Karungulam, Kattankulam, Malayankulam, Perumkulam, Ayyangarkulam, Vepangulam, Pammadhukulam,

Thannerkulam, Tiruvallikkeni) or the one with waterfalls, as Peraruvi in Tirunelveli District. Thiruvaiyaru, as the name aptly suggests, is located at the confluence of five rivers.

There are also numerous instances of places named after animals and birds. Puliur, Pulivoy, Pulipakkam, Thirupulivanam (Chengalpattu District) are named after the tiger/leopard. Karadipatti (bear) (Madurai District); Aanaiyur, Aanaika (elephant); and Maanaturai (deer) (Tiruchirappalli District); Mayiladuturai, Mayilapur (peacock); Koliyur (hen) (Tiruchi District); Kuyilkudi (cuckoo) (Madurai District); Tiru-kalugu-kunram (vulture) (Chengalpattu District); Kalugumalai (vulture) bear the names of birds.

The names of places at times also reflect the nature of the soil as is evident from Semmanjeri (red soil), Karisikadu (black soil), Manalur (sandy village) and Sembulam (red soil).

Quite a few names of places are associated with trees, like Panaimarathupatti, Panaiyur (Indian palm), Veppampaati (neem), Alapakkam (banyan), Navalur (Indian black plum) and Iluppai (Indian butter tree). Thiruppaalaivanam (Thiru+paalai+vanam) was once covered with the paalai (Ceylon iron wood) tree.

Arani denotes a place surrounded by a forest. Mangadu (mango grove/forest), Chaikadu (place once covered with chaai or korai grass), Attikadu, Athipattu (Indian fig) and Alankadu (banyan) find references in the Sangam literatures such as *Ahanaanooru*, *Puranaanooru* and *Aingkurunooru*.

The fact that the villages in Tamil Nadu were named after the natural resources of the places amply demonstrates how environmentally conscious the ancient Tamils were. The need to respect and further perpetuate the ecological traditions is the object lesson Sangam literature holds for us. (Courtesy: *Eco News*, Journal of the CPREEC.)

M. Amirthalingam

A big 'Thank You' to 61 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.3.08 and 15.04.08, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *MADRAS MUSINGS*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

— Chennai Heritage

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Bawling into the mobile phones

The Man from Madras Musings recently read an article in *The Hindu* on the trial of John Clifford, a man who assaulted people who spoke loudly into their mobile phones while travelling by train in New York. He claimed that they interfered with his right to be left in peace and quiet and that they were guilty of breach of train etiquette. He was arrested and produced in court where he defended himself.

Musing on him while on a train journey, MMM could not but help think that there was much in what JC stood for. As MMM tried to catch up with his thoughts and brood on life in general, a woman next to him was talking loudly into her phone about how her daughter-in-law had not conceived despite many years of effort, no doubt on the part of the mother-in-waiting and her hus-

band. Even as MMM, not wanting to be privy to a conversation replete with terms such as ovulation and fertile period, turned the other way, he met with a blast from an elder who was on the phone trying to tell his son – who, MMM could glean, was living in faraway Florida – that the documents he, the son, had couriered to him, the father, had not yet reached.

After having analysed the relative merits and demerits of many courier agencies, the old man disconnected and then, having prodded MMM in the ribs, promptly informed him (MMM) that his (the old man's) son was concluding a "firshth classh" real estate deal on Poonamallee High Road and that he (the old man) was the power-of-attorney holder for him (the son). In case the documents did not reach within two days, added the old man, no doubt by then convinced that MMM was an intimate acquaintance, the consequences would be dire. He then glared at the woman who had by then moved on to topics of general interest and informed MMM that if only people spoke softly into their mobiles, others could get on with their lives.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

partment door, only to find a busy business executive yelling into his mobile about a payment that was long overdue and if the party of the other part was not willing to honour its commitments, then his company, no doubt the party of the first part, would soon be taking steps.

As to what these steps were, MMM was not enlightened about, for the train then went through a "no signal" patch. Immediately there were withdrawal symptoms all over the compartment. People continued shouting their "Hello! Can you hear mes" into their phones. Some cursed their respective service providers while others immediately got up and rushed to the open doors no doubt with the idea of receiving what little signal could be obtained. A sullen peace then came about the place once they

all realised that nothing could be done. After half-an-hour, the signals returned and everyone went back to their non-stop talking.

MMM wonders at such open discussions on private matters. Can all these not wait till people have gone back to the privacy of their homes? What about people who need to rest? Don't they have any rights?

JC was, incidentally, acquitted of all charges. There is much food for thought in that decision.

Mowbray's Road maze

The Traffic Police must have no doubt felt that life was dull. Perhaps the plethora of flyovers had solved all their traffic problems and they felt that something new must be stirred up to keep themselves occupied. So, a rather complicated system of one-ways was envisaged around the busy Mowbray's (TTK) and C.P. Ramaswami Iyer Roads. Despite a series of announcements in the English and Tamil Press, everyone was taken by surprise when the actual scheme was implemented. Traffic piled up in every conceivable direction and there were gridlocks galore. The Man from Madras Musings, who has to use this stretch often, devised an alternative route comprising a series of narrow alleyways and found that he could reach his destinations much faster than before. But others were apparently not so fortunate.

The police in all their zeal had put up a series of notices on the roads giving car and other vehicle users the directions they

ought to take. But what puzzled MMM no end was that each one of these announcements was in pure Tamil with nary an English word in sight. While MMM is all for the local language, and is indeed one of its great admirers, he could not help thinking of the many foreigners who now live in this area. At last count there were Americans, Scandinavians, British (and that includes the Welsh, Irish and the Scots), Koreans, Russians and even a Costa Rican or two. Many of them now drive about the city, incredible though the feat may seem. How they managed to understand these signboards is a major mystery. But anyway, all's well that ends well.

The police, no doubt tired of the amusement the traffic jams caused, decided to revoke the scheme and went back to the old one. The only point was

that no announcements were made to this effect. By then, many people had resigned themselves to the new scheme and kept along the routes it dictated. The chaos that reigned on the day the old scheme came back had to be seen to be believed.

The Man of the City

There are days when the Chief, overwhelmed by his correspondence, allows *The Man from Madras Musings* to attend to some letters. And one such really caught MMM's fancy. It was addressed to "*Madras Musings Muthiah* for Chennai Heritage." Now MMM does not think the Chief is standing for elections, but if he did, then this would be as good a slogan as any other.

Language of finance

The Man from Madras Musings regularly goes through the financial papers, but understands very little, though he sometimes gets a laugh or two from the headlines which are anything but comprehensible. Recently, however, he has been intrigued by a new term – 'degrowth'. Apparently this stands for lack of growth or negative growth. Going by the same logic, would we say that a person is "defatted" when he slims and a car "de-forwarding" when it reverses? The possibilities are limitless and will no doubt keep MMM occupied happily till the next fortnight.

— MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Who triumphs?

It was reported in a section of the Press that a retired Army General, who held many key posts and decided to settle down in Chennai, has been battling for the last fourteen months to get a ration card for his family. As his efforts to get the card became futile, he, through the Army, took up the issue with the Chief Secretary, who, it appears, has promised to take up the Civil Supplies Department.

The fault with the retired General was that he refused to grease the palms of the officials. Had this been done, the General would have received the card at his door step.

The situation is indeed pathetic, and, this is definitely not the way to treat a person from the services. If this could happen to a retired army person, one can well imagine the plight of others.

It is, in this context, one should view the announcements made by the Chennai Corporation, while presenting the Budget. The civic body offered to issue birth and death certificates free of cost. It also indicated that there will be no cremation charges and that it will provide free of cost a van to transport the dead to the crematorium.

While the services would be free, will the officials manning the department allow the public to get away with such ser-

vices? Definitely not, for they demand something, and, anyone refuses to budge, will have to go the army person way. Corruption has indeed taken deep roots and nothing gets done in the government departments if one does not yield to the requests of the officials. In the emblem of Tamil Nadu, there is an inscription which states that 'Truth alone triumphs'. It needs to be re-written with 'Corruption alone triumphs'.

V. S. Jayaraman

31 Motilal Street, Chennai 600 017

Philistinism

I too wept while going through the letter of Anna Varki (MM, March 1st) about the poor maintenance of hoary institutions like Presidency College and Queen Mary's College.

It is worthwhile to remember the services rendered by these institutions for a century and more in South India in the cause of education. They have produced Nobel Laureates in Science, world-class mathematicians, philosophers and administrators. Surely they deserve better.

I am endorsing a copy of this letter as well as a copy of Ms. Varki's letter to the Hon. Minister of Education of Tamil Nadu. I hope he will do something.

Prof. R.C. Narayanan

25, 32nd Cross Street
Besant Nagar, Chennai 600 090

Very sketchy

I am glad that at last "OUR Museum" has been noticed in the columns of *Madras Musings* (April 1st). But as happens in many writings about the Museum, the article gives the impression of a "general passivity" in the Museum and is now sought to be enlivened through a "Friends of the Museum concept, a bookshop, curio corner, canteen". One expects more from a journalist like Shobha Menon than such a sketchy write-up.

Even the inset - Museum Story - ends with a factual error making it look as if the Museum is housed in one building designed by Henry Irwin and inaugurated on December 5, 1896. Actually, it is in a complex of buildings, each with a history of its own.

Unfortunately "OUR Museum" has not been a hit with the elitist sections of our society.

N. Harinarayana

120, Big Street
Triplicane, Chennai 600 005

Today's Madras

'Madras in the 1890s' (MM, March 16th) provided excellent reading. Times have changed and yet they haven't. On the one hand, the Cooum stinks more, the streets are filled with slush during the monsoons, and water scarcity is ready to pounce on Chennai the moment a single monsoon fails.

On the other hand, the variety of food available in present-day Chennai is mind-boggling, conveyance is by latest model AC cars, and the malls are wonderlands, making one feel like Alice. Moreover, the fat dark chap Ramdas who used to bathe people for a fee will not find any takers, now that the papers are full of names of ladies promising to massage to "your fullest satisfaction".

The one stark irony-cum-tragedy now is that some of the longest water queues can be seen in Seven Wells area which was once the precursor of the Kilpauk Water Works! The entire George Town area, which was the Madras of the 1890s, has gone to mongrels, the lesser dogs.

C.G. Prasad

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

A guru's picture

When Swami Vivekananda first visited Madras, Dr. Nanjunda Rao (MM, April 1st) had met him. Earlier, Dr. Nanjunda Rao paid a visit to the Theosophical Society along with his friends. At the Society, an American member of the Society was cleaning the premises and was seen casting away certain things to be destroyed. Dr. Nanjunda Rao had noticed a picture of a *sadhu* among the discarded materials and asked whether the picture of a *sadhu* could be burnt. The American replied that nobody knew about this *sadhu* and all the unwanted things had to be cast away. So Dr. Nanjunda Rao took the picture with the consent of that member and got it framed and had it hung in his pooja room.

Whenever anyone asked

Euphoric over a 'grade separator'

On July 16, 1999, I had made an appeal through the Editor of *Madras Musings* for a flyover at Kathipara Junction and it was published in *Madras Musings* on August 16th. It was endorsed by another reader, Vijaya Ganapathi, in the issue dated September 16th; she had sought at least a signal. The signal was not granted then or later!

Now, nearly a decade later, the much sought after flyover is nearing completion. In fact, one stretch of it has been inaugurated.

Being a motorist, I have been enduring this traffic chaos for over a decade now. As I find my dream flyover becoming a reality now - within my 'lifetime' - I feel a sense of great personal achievement, though I had nothing to do with the physical planning or execution of the flyover, now re-christened as a 'Grade Separator'!

(Incidentally, subways have become 'under-passes' and flyovers have become 'grade-separators'. Is there any significance in the revised nomenclature except to introduce some fancy words?)

My euphoria has no bounds now as I drive over this Grade Separator. But will my name be 'engraved' in some remote corner of a commemorative plaque on the Kathipara 'Grade Separator'?

In the Grade-Separated traffic flow, I observe, all right turns will now become left turns - after some climbing up and going down through a loop.

In the futuristic Kathipara Grade Separator, I am confused by how a vehicle from Mount Poonamalle Road will join GST Road towards airport when rushing to catch a flight or to take NH-45. Or how to take a right turn from Guindy into Inner Ring Road towards NH-4 (GNT Road). (Both are right turns.)

It would be better for *Madras Musings* and its readers to think and plan ahead on which lane to take, by stopping 5 kilometres ahead of this Grade Separator - till they get used to the new system. Else, they will find themselves lost in it.

My next worry is after whom are we going to name this 'grade separator'. What does 'Kathipara(i)' stand for? Should it be reserved for future luminaries or politicians-in-waiting? Why not name it after the Common Man by naming it Podhujana Yeeradukku Membalam as a tribute to the travails he has long undergone?

My deep appreciations to *Madras Musings* for giving me an opportunity to express my wish for the people of Chennai a decade back when, in 1999, there was no IT boom, few small cars, less private jet liners or ultra deluxe or A/C MTC buses, no CMBT, no BG trains, no elevated rail/road corridor, no IT super highway!

Madras Musings should celebrate being ahead of planners by pointing out the need of a flyover in the cause of public interest. Even then, infrastructure was inadequate. Now that we have the grade separator ten years later, will it prove adequate?

V. Rajagopalan

Chennai 600 061

about his guru, Swami Vivekananda used to reply, "What merit do I have to talk about my guru?" and did not reveal the name of his guru. Swami Vivekananda paid a visit to Dr. Nanjunda Rao's house and was led to the pooja room.

Swamiji on seeing his Master's picture in the room was moved to tears and told the Doctor that the picture was that of his revered guru.

T.M. Sundararaman

19, Nallappan Street
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

Machi and me



I refer to my letter (MM, April 1st). This photograph is of my grandmother Madhavi Amma (Machi), with me, when I was four-years-old.

Readers who read the letter - My Grandmother-Machi may like to see what she looked like.

Madhavi Ramachandran

203, Peters Road
Gopalapuram, Chennai 600 086

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

THE EDITOR

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **hand written** letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i-s' and crossing the 't-s'.

Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

THE EDITOR

A Fort gallery for the Daniells

It was a very pleasant evening when the Archaeological Survey of India's "Daniell Picture Gallery" was inaugurated recently in the Fort Museum. The ASI produced for the occasion a well brought out and informative handout about the Daniells and their work in India.

History records that Thomas and William Daniell had sailed for the East from England with their drawing material and returned only after about nine years. During this time they travelled through China and India to find suitable material to make sketches of, and they found plenty in the shape of landscapes, mountains and especially ruins! William meticulously maintained a journal in which he recorded their impressions of the places they visited.

Thomas, born in 1749, was twenty years older than his nephew William and William lived three years short of the el-



Thomas Daniell.



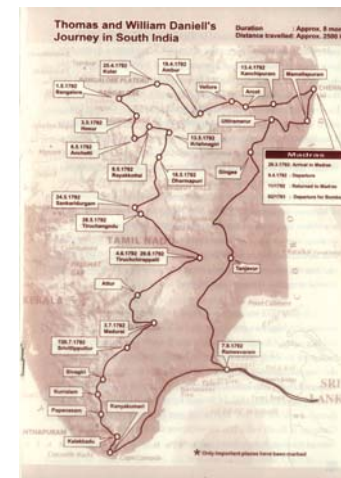
William Daniell.

lator of the *Gita* into English) and William Jones helped him to find the locals for his sketches. The Daniells became members of the Asiatic Society and that gave them a still better opportunity to learn more about India. Around this time, an earlier artist, William Hodges, published aquatints of the great monuments of northern India. The Daniells were determined to produce better prints. They toured extensively, recording sketches of the impressive buildings and scenes they saw. They were so impressed by the Taj Mahal that, apart from doing a large size aquatint, Thomas noted: "... being a spectacle of the highest celebrity (it) is visited by persons of all rank, and from all parts. This high admiration is however not confined to the partial eye of the native Indian; it is beheld with no less wonder and delight by those who

have seen the productions (of others) in various parts of the globe".

After recording some exceptional scenes and buildings in Agra and Lucknow, they returned to Calcutta. As they needed money for further progress, they auctioned their works, the auction being announced in the *Calcutta Gazette* of January 5, 1792. Though the auction had satisfactory results, the younger Daniell in his letter to his mother stated, "the people were more ready to admire Uncle's paintings than buy them."

The money they got emboldened them to travel south. After spending almost four years in the north, they arrived in Madras on March 29, 1792, and travelled



The map depicts Thomas and William Daniell's journey in South India.

through the districts starting from Kanchipuram where the "great pagodas" attracted them. They travelled for about nine months, visiting places like Arcot, the Carnatic plains and, later, Madura, Trichinopoly and travelling upto Kanniyakumari, recording all the while in



Interior view of the Palace, Madura.

sketches what they saw. Trichy and Madura provided them a great feast for their pencil and brushes. But they had their own miseries too; once their personal luggage was stolen and on another occasion their dubash ran away with some money.

They did several views of Madras. Among them, the one that depicts Fort St. George seen from sea during a storm, with the waves lashing the shore, is remarkable for its content and form.

Sarojini Naidu described Delhi as "the splendid tragedy". She might have said that of the ruins of the Mahal in Madurai too. Those ruins and the great towers of the Meenakshi temple provided food enough for their artistic appetite and six views resulted.

During the seven months they travelled in the South, they covered over 1500 miles. They stayed in Madras from November 1792 to the first quarter of 1793. They auctioned their drawings and oils while in Madras and were more satisfied with the response than what they had first got in Calcutta. From Madras they sailed to Bombay and worked there mainly sketching the Elephanta Caves.

After reaching England, they published their aquatints (which took almost six years to prepare) and engravings. By 1808 they had published 144 coloured aquatints of 'Indian Views' in six

series. The first three were called *Oriental Scenery*; *Twentyfour Landscapes*; and *Antiquities of India and Hindoo Excavations*. Each series contained 24 aquatints.

They are now exhibited in the Fort Museum Gallery and include *Ruins of the Palace, Madura*; *The Great Pagoda, Trichinopoly*; *Interior View of the Palace, Madura*; *The Great Pagoda, Tanjore*; and *The Water-fall at Puppamassum*. There are several others from North India.

As the ASI handout says, "Their contribution to India was immense. They were great human beings. . . . The dedication and application of the Daniells was simply amazing. Secondly, to produce over a thousand aquatints in a short period and drawing numerous oils and watercolours and definitely unlimited sketches for further drawings is an overwhelming effort... They brought awareness among the British and other like-minded Westerners about India's great architectural traditions. Their views stand as an accurate documentation of Indian Monuments in the late 18th century."

This is a "must visit" exhibition, particularly for students to see the glory that was India. (NOTE: P.S. Sriraman of the ASI informs me that the two handouts they have produced, one on Fort St George and the other on the Daniells, are not for sale but are available on request.)

To boldly go where most have gone before

In a rapidly-changing metropolis like Chennai, some believe that nostalgia is a game for old fools. But 26-year-old Chandrachoodan Gopalakrishnan, or CCG as he is known in the blogosphere, makes you question this assumption. This adman is the founder of the concept of Chennai photowalks - camera expeditions through interesting parts of the city. "Because I'm this guy who is obsessed with the city's history, my routes are always through old Madras," says this blogger.

Once a month, CCG leads devoted Chennaittes on a fun outing to shoot people and places in the city. The idea is to walk through a neighbourhood and capture in pictures - the buildings, the people on the streets, and the very ethos of the place. Photowalkers also chat with long-time residents to learn the lore of the locality. At the end of the self-guided heritage walk, they post their digital snapshots on flickr.com.



Above: The photowalkers find children smiling subjects. Right top: Crossing a road in a rush; Right middle, A view of the Adyar River and Estuary from the broken walkaway; and Right bottom: A boat in city waters. All photographs from the Chennai photowalkers' collection.

group, they are also curious. They ask members of this Tamil-speaking bunch if they are from Malaysia or Singapore. "In their

your enthusiasm for anything is not easy at the end of a six-day workweek, says G.V. Balasubramanian, a 54-year-old banker. But once on the walking trail, we find we are learning photographic techniques and more

nary walk has a history angle to it. "There is a rumour that an Arya Bhavan chef invented the *Masala Dosa* - I want to dig into the origins of this dish," he says.

The photowalkers have covered a lot of ground by picking places that offer promises historically and photographically. "I have never had to sit down with a map to plan a walk yet," says CCG. Eventually, he hopes that these expeditions will be documented not just digitally, but in a coffee table book. Someday, we may also go beyond the city and into other historically significant places in Tamil Nadu, says CCG. "And which place isn't historical in this state?" he asks.

Chandrachoodan is one of those rare people whose eyes, ears and heart remain attuned to his surroundings, no matter how familiar they become, says Manivannan. Plus, of course, he

has this unique ability to inspire other Chennai-buffs to join him on intimate explorations of the city. Some of the digital snapshots taken by this growing band of photowalkers make people - especially the ones who have moved away - fall in love with their old city all over again.

FOOTNOTE

For information on the next photowalk, check out the Chennai Metblog for updates: The URL: <http://chennai.metblogs.com> You can also visit CCG's blog for the same: <http://www.selectiveamnesia.org> To find pictures from the photowalks, go to www.flickr.com and type **Chennai Photowalk** in the search box.

P.Orr & Sons, Anna Salai, composed from 4 images.



Photowalkers take a break at Tidel Park

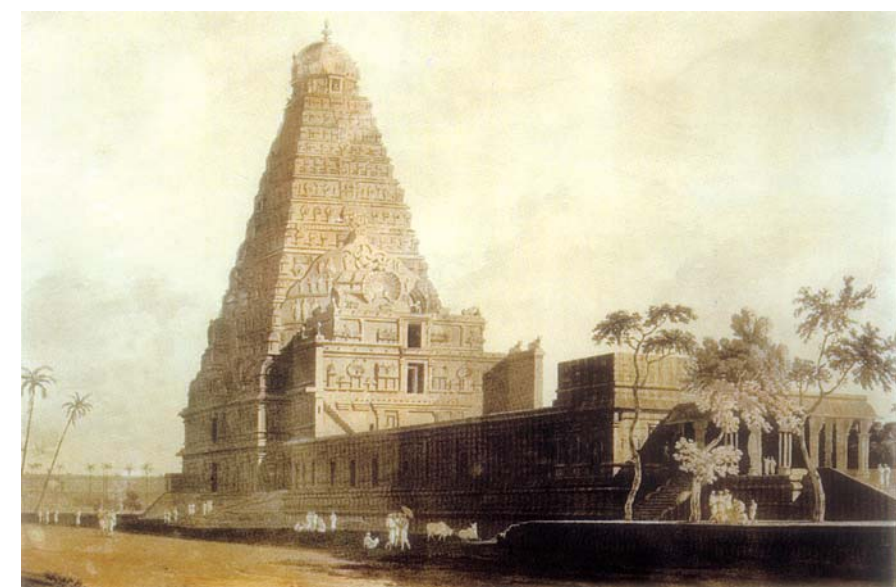
"The photowalks are a wonderful idea, and it's not surprising how quickly they've drawn attention," says Sharanya Manivannan, a critically acclaimed Chennai-born poet who joined the February walk. The walks are egalitarian: it doesn't matter if you're carrying a cameraphone or something with a zoom the length of your forearm; even those with no cameras are welcome. "All that matters is a willingness to wake up at an ungodly hour and take your time to appreciate familiar places."

But Chennai photowalkers do run into surreal problems. "Photography is prevented in most places in the city because the authorities think we will sell our valuable secrets to foreign powers," says CCG. While guards of monuments and public buildings are wary of this camera-toting

books, only foreign tourists will photograph places like the LIC building."

Till the end of March, the group had been on five walks. CCG mentions the Royapuram railway station with awe. "It's a fantastic little place - rotting away, weeds overwhelming the tracks, and was the first ever station in South India." Today, only suburban lines pass through. But here too, the police shooed the group away just as they got ready to click pictures. Ultimately, the very sights compensate for all the needless hostility - as do the auto drivers and strangers who give us helpful directions when we are lost, says CCG.

There is a certain strength in numbers. The social aspect of the photowalk makes it easier for the amateurs to indulge in their hobby. Otherwise, mustering



The Great Pagoda, Tanjore.



The Great Pagoda, Trichinopoly.

Quizzin'
with
Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period March 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. French architect Jean Nouvel won the premier architecture honour recently. What is it called?
2. Name the Australian male swimmer who smashed the 50m freestyle world record repeatedly in a span of days to be the undisputed 'fastest man in water'.
3. Which Asian kingdom became the latest democracy after its first general elections held on March 24th that saw Druk Phuensum Tshogpa sweep to power?
4. How did a 10-second recording of a singer crooning the folk song *Au Clair de la Lune* achieve record status on March 28th?
5. The airlines of which two European countries bought the struggling Italian carrier 'Alitalia' for 138 million euros recently?
6. Another business question. Who sold British luxury-car brands Jaguar and Land Rover to Tata Motors for \$2.3 billion?
7. March 24th is observed by the UN and the WHO as what 'day' to serve as a reminder of a disease which still kills an appalling 4,000 people every day?
8. Dr. Manmohan Singh's new Pakistani counterpart is...
9. Which annual feast day for a saint was moved from March 17th to March 15th because it fell in the Holy Week, the first time it has been done since 1940?
10. By hitting his second triple ton in Tests, Virender Sehwag recently joined two other cricketers in the record books. Who were they?

* * *

11. Where did the 'Order of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary' found its first school in Madras in 1884?
12. Madras historian S. Muthiah's book *Born to Dare* is about which Madras-based Indian Army hero, the first Indian instructor to be appointed at the Indian Military Academy?
13. Pallivasal in Samattipuram on the Dindigul Road is a memorial to...
14. Which classic Tamil film, starring MKT, tells the story of a Sanskrit poet's love for a devadasi (after whom the film is named)?
15. Two roads in Chennai – one between Gandhi Irwin Road and Casa Major Road and the other connecting Taylor's Road with Kilpauk Garden Road – have the same name. Name the road(s)!
16. Which distinguished Chennai resident holds the distinction of having been the first woman Sheriff of Madras, one of the founders of the Guild of Service and the driving force behind the 50-year-old Chennai Cheshire Home?
17. Dr. S. Kameswaran's multi-authored compilation *Multi-faceted Legend of the Dravidians* is about...
18. Which three different European nations have the offices of their Honorary Consular Representatives in the Sanmar headquarters on Cathedral Road in Chennai?
19. Name the firm behind the construction of such Chennai edifices as the RBI building, Customs House, *Dhun Building* and *Abbotsbury*?
20. Which venerable Chennai institution was inaugurated in 1928 at the James McConaughy Hall in the YMCA, near the Esplanade, with Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar doing the honours?

(Answers on page 7)

Commerce and Charity in Old Madras

Business houses

Tawker & Sons

Raghunatha Tawker of Ekamreswara Agraharam was a great jewel merchant. He was a Gujarati Brahmin. He first started his business in his house. Then he constructed a big building on Mount Road named T.R.Tawker & Sons. He was a dealer in gold, silver and other stone jewellery. He had more business than P. Orr & Sons. His customers were kings, zamindars and millionaires. He built a palatial building by name *Tawker Gardens* for the sake of kings and zamindars who visited Madras. When they departed, he sold valuable and rare jewels to them. He made crores by this business. But finally the business had to be wound up. *Tawker Gardens* was sold off recently for Rs.2.5 lakh.

Moses & Company

Their business was to supply state dresses and other dresses to kings. The owner of this company was Sitaram Chetty. While Tawker & Sons made their fortune by jewels, these people earned lakhs and lakhs by supplying dresses. Gradually they also had to close their business.

T.V. Subbanna & Sons

When I came to Madras, T.V. Subbanna & Sons of Govindappa Naicken Street were good at drawing pictures. They were artists from Karvetnagar State. Afterwards they settled in Madras. They used to draw pictures with golden lining, which lasted for many years. Even now we find their drawings in some houses in Madras, especially in the

Ramanuja Kootam of Alwar Chetty in Govindappa Naicken Street. I also learnt this art for some time, but I could not progress in the field due to my business commitments.

Yet, I always longed to preserve good pictures in my house, wherever I saw them. I often encouraged and helped artists. Kata Sri Rama Sastri and sons who were working in the *Grihalakshmi* office also got help from me. Venkatrao's pictures are seen in most of the houses in Madras. He used to give tricolour pictures to publish in *Grihalakshmi*. He is no more.

The tricolour pictures of Srimathi Ratnala Kamalabai are often seen in the issues of *Grihalakshmi*. Knowing her pro-

was a devotee of the Brahmins and was a God-fearing man. He built *dharma chatrams* in Tondiarpet, Tiruvellore and Kanchipuram. If we go through the writings of his son Ranga Nayudu, we can understand his good character. In the Tondiarpet Chatrams, students and others (about 160 people) and about 60 peons had good food three times a day. Here students were given food and taught Vedic hymns. Vedas were chanted in Tiruvellore and Kanchi Chatrams by the Brahmins (about 12 of them) and they were given food and made to read religious books. *Rama Nama* was chanted a number of times. Rama Nayudu stipulated in his will that two Brahmins be employed in his house to always chant the name of Rama.

Brahmins had difficulties if anyone died in their family. Most of them occupied rented houses and other tenants objected to their performing ceremonies after death. Even *dharma chatrams* did not allow them. To solve this problem, one good Brahmin allotted a house with garden in

daughter requires is a mother, is it not? This Sabha has grown inch by inch and has now become a big institution. Not only are girls educated here but they are also taught to earn their livelihood. There is a place for the girls to stay. There are facilities for games and music. The institution is managed by efficient ladies. This is not an orphanage. It offers facilities for women to improve their talents in different arts. In the beginning stages, I had also rendered help to this Sabha.

Hindu Yuvathi Saranhalaya

This is an institution founded by a woman by name Yamini Poorna Tilakamma. She educated the children of *devadasis* and got them to marry instead of following the *devadasi* profession. She invited me one day to her school. It was in a small building. I took a big bungalow in Kilpauk and shifted the school to that place. The children were taught arts and crafts and weaving thread etc. I supplied *charkas* etc to the children. I brought them to Kesari Kuteeram and taught them to make hair oils, tooth powder etc and made them to sell these by going to various houses. I provided them clothes. They were made to learn crafts to live independently. But when they grew up they left to their own respective houses and so the school was closed. Though she had the spirit and the interest to work, Tilakamma lacked the support of a man. Now she is running a small school in Tambaram.

Seva Sadanam

It was founded by Mutha Venkata Subba Rao and his wife Andal amma. Subba Rao was rich enough when he started this and, so, it is running well. Those who were the products of this institution are all well placed in life.

Avva Saranhalaya

It was founded 18 years ago by Dr. Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddy. She is an efficient lady who made this institution progress well. She got a grant from the government to build a school for Rs. 39,500. She is collecting about Rs. 40,000 from the public. In Adyar, there are big buildings attached to this institution. The main idea of this institution is to protect poor ladies and children from falling into bad company and, thereafter, bad activities. They make them do good work. They are trained to work as teachers etc. In 1946-47, about 20 old students gave Rs. 1287-8-0 as donation to the institution. This shows how well off they are. In 1948, many girls got married. I have contributed money to this institution also.

(To be concluded)

• Reminiscences of Dr. K. N. Kesari - IV

iciency, I once gave the *Grihalakshmi* gold *kankanam* to her. I bought many such pictures to adorn my house. These pictures are also displayed in arts exhibitions.

Charitable institutions

At that time, Vaisyas, Nayudus and Mudaliars had great respect for Brahmins. Whenever there was marriage or other functions they used to feed Brahmins with food and sweets and also give them gifts. There were so many *chatrams* where thousands of Brahmins were given food. At the beginning of my stay in Madras, I also had my food in these *chatrams*.

Tanjore Rama Nayudu's Chatram-Agraharam is on the Thiruvottiyur High Road. He

Royapuram called Brahma Teertham for this purpose. Only Brahmins were allowed to do *karma* after death at this place. Now this place has developed and 10 to 12 *karmas* are conducted daily there. There are facilities for staying and performing *karma*. The institution provides necessary vessels also. Rich people even constructed small houses in the garden in memory of their departed ones. In villages, it was difficult to get Brahmins and preachers. In this place, they provide all facilities. There is also a tank for bathing. Necessary leaves and grass are also available in the compound. Some engage contractors to do all the work. There is no need to go in search of crows to eat the *pindam*. Many crows have made their abode in the trees there.

Andhra Mahila Sabha

Srimathi Durgabai amma garu (later Durgabai Deshmukh) was responsible for founding the Andhra Mahila Sabha. Her work for the progress of this Sabha is praiseworthy. This institution has a mother, but no father. Durgabai has worked in the place of a thousand mothers. What a



On extreme left is Tawker & Sons' building. (Courtesy: VINTAGE VIGNETTES.)

A slightly gentle mirror

There's something you have to address before settling down to a chat over Kausalya Saptharishi's debut novel *The TamBrahm Bride*.

Kausalya takes you through the tortuous process of main protagonist Shalini's parents out on a bridegroom-hunt within the 'arranged marriage' framework – the trials and tensions they face, the distinctly deserve-a-kick-in-the-rear behaviour of some of the 'boy's-side' samples, the endless rounds of 'tiffin'-making forced on the 'girl's mother and the well-meaning suggestions of *homams*, *poojas*, prayers, numerology – everything and anything is worth a try in this megaguest for a bridegroom for Shalini.

Now, Shalini, or Shalu as she is known through the book, is, by all accounts, bright, educated, and a copywriter in the feisty work-environment of an ad agency. Her application list to US universities reads like a Who's-Who or a What's-What of prestige – Berkeley, Northwestern's Kellogg, Cornell....

Her e-mail id, thetambrahmbride@hotmail.com shows the presence of a deliberately self-deprecating, incisive wit.

Now, would a girl like that put herself through what turns into a distinctly unsavoury, humiliating process – not once or twice, but 25 times – just to get married?

At one point, Shalini's father, Sundaresan, declares: "The man who has a daughter should swallow his pride and be willing to bend over backwards to marry her off."

As a reader, therefore, you have to suppress a temptation to literally reach into the book, yank out some of the stereotypes (on both 'sides') and tell them off. But you have to read the book for what it is – a light-hearted attempt to poke gentle fun at the arranged marriage processes so familiar within the TamBrahm community.

Actually, make that 'India-General'.

Does this happen, in the manner described, even today? YES!

Someone forgot to tell the Indian Arranged Marriage Process that the 21st Century dawned a while ago.

One point – Do families with eligible youngsters need a 'way' to meet each other, especially in

clearly drawn between the 'girl's side' and the 'boy's side' – in fact, those terms become crucial identities for respective families until the process is over and done with. It is true many families wait for the 'girl's side' to make the 'first move'; it is true that society tends to grant the 'boy's side' emotional, psychological, and every other kind of advantage, placing them in a position of power...if you allow it. The distinct 'eager-to-please' element thrust upon the 'girl's side' is jarring but, unfortunately, it happens.

Most matrimonial ads even today stress 'fair, tall and slim' as feminine must-haves to find a place in that long list of possibles for Prince Charming. And many families want 'well-

traditional scenarios that do not allow boys and girls to fraternise, even mildly?

Yes, fair enough, but somewhere along the line the system became designed to favour the 'boy's side'.

The fact that that hasn't changed, judging by this book, is sad.

Traditional families, even semi-ones, given the "traditional, though not exactly orthodox, and modern," mixed bag that Urban India has become, will recognise stock characters and situations in the book.

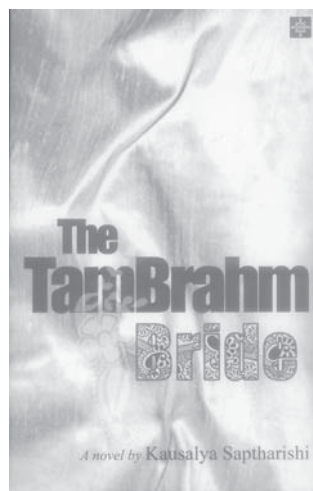
It is true battle lines are very

qualified smart girls' who should however be ready to jettison a hard-earned career, and magically turn into TV-serial-like daughters-in-law at the flick of a switch...or the tying of the proverbial three knots in this particular cultural context.

For many, the book will feel as familiar as the whiff of freshly-made *rasam*.

The Ponnun Paatis; the marriage broker, complete with 'the yellow Nalli bag wedged under his polyester armpit', et al; and the *bajji-bonda*-ness of the whole process of 'seeing' the prospective bride. Contemporary twists like seemingly 'ca-

● by
RANJITHA ASHOK



sual' meetings in coffee shops merely show same intent, dressed up differently. Unmarried men and women, well into their 30s, are referred to as 'boys' and 'girls'. While, if you marry straight out of college, you're considered grown up enough to take on a whole new family with its tumultuous (and not always pleasant) history.

(Yeah, you can almost see the empathetic, emphatic nods.)

And where would several generations be without good old *Samaithu Paar*, and its wonderfully-literally-translated-English-titled counterpart, *Cook and See*?

It is also a deliciously endemic fact that we as a race can house two completely contrasting viewpoints in comfortable co-existence in our heads.

Which is why someone who's personally moved away from the traditional life still doesn't think it contradictory to 'allow' his parents to run around brandishing horoscopes. Which, along with the list of qualifications given, tend to sometimes become examples of creative manipulation....and all for that elusive 'kohinoor' of a bridegroom. Oh well, a bit of camouflage here, and slight clouding there....we're the

people who proclaim that even a thousand lies are justified in the pursuit of marriages.

We've changed so much, and yet so little – another ethnic, living dichotomy.

It's amazing how Maama-Maami language has morphed over the years, thanks to this exodus US-wards. 'Labour approval', 'I-485' – the terms trip from lips that chant the *sahasranamam* with equal ease and authority.

Inane conversations, lecherous dirty-gazers, people using jet lag as an excuse...the book showcases a parade of (im)possible bridegrooms (and their equally impossible parents). You can't help but look at the display with knitted brows.

(Having said that, you accept that it's unfair to tar all 'boy's-sides' with the same brush. There are probably horror stories featuring the 'other side' too – waiting to be told.)

"Delhi-girls" and "Bangalore-girls" tend to be approached with caution (Dear God, even today?!), and the metro-non-metro debates bring back memories of summer holidays filled with shrill arguments with visiting cousins, especially, as Kausalya puts it, the TINIS, the 'Tamilians-In-North-India'.

The author stops short of being pointedly satirical, even within this not-too-serious look at the arranged marriage scenario. Her particular mirror ultimately prefers reflections that have sharp edges smoothed away.

Would she have had even more fun if she had taken her characters further?

Now, that might have made the reading experience a little more like taking a walk through those hilarious (and slightly bizarre) 'Hall of Mirrors' attractions in fun fairs, or, as we say, 'exhibitions'.

All those pause-for-thought reflections – stretched out, flattened, bloated, elongated – still in fun, of course.

● *The TamBrahm Bride* is published by Indian Writing, the English imprint of New Horizon Media, Chennai.

Subscriptions and contributions

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— The Editor

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Answers to Quiz

1. Pritzker Prize; 2. Eamon Sullivan; 3. Bhutan; 4. Recorded in 1860, it is now considered the earliest recording of the human voice; 5. France (Air France) and Holland (KLM); 6. Ford Motor Company; 7. World TB Day; 8. Yusuf Raza Gillani; 9. St. Patrick's Day; 10. Don Bradman and Brian Lara.

* * *

11. Vepery; 12. Lt. Gen. Inderjit Singh Gill, PVSM, MC; 13. Maruthanayagam (Yusuf Khan); 14. *Chintamani*; 15. Hall's Road; 16. Mary Clubwala Jadhav; 17. Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi; 18. Denmark, Greece and Spain; 19. Tarapore & Co; 20. Music Academy.

Better times ahead?

(Continued from page 1)

Government has appointed a technical consultant for the repair works to be undertaken to protect the crumbling bastion at Fort St George. *Madras Musings* had reported on the damage caused by the weight of the new flagpole in its issue of January 1, 2008. The technical consultants, it is understood, have filed a report and it has been discussed by a high level committee which will soon finalise what needs to be done.

While welcoming all these activities, it should be pointed out that the number of members mentioned is far too small for the proper restoration of all these buildings. What is of concern is whether we will see only patchwork being done instead of proper restoration.

Apart from the information furnished in the Assembly, *Madras Musings* learns of several

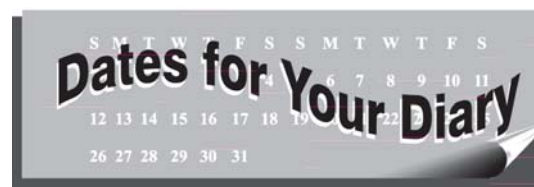
other activities in progress on the heritage front. A conservation consultant has been appointed for the restoration of *Ripon Buildings*. Once the report from the consultant comes in, it is understood that work will begin. Money for the project is available, given that Rs. 10 crore was allocated for the work as far back as in 2003/4.

Discussion has also been initiated on the best way to restore the Naval Office building inside Fort St. George. Last heard, it had been decided to get a consultant to recommend the exact nature of restoration work, on the lines of what has been done for *Ripon Buildings*.

It is a busy season for consultants specialising in heritage architecture, for reports commissioned by the respective authorities have been submitted for restoration of the State Bank of India main branch building on Rajaji Salai and the

High Court buildings. Work is expected to begin soon.

There is, happily, some promise too of restoration of heritage buildings owned by private organisations and individuals. It is understood that a consultant appointed by the Madras Club has completed his recommendations for what needs to be done to its main building. St Ebba's School's main building, once *Sullivan's Gardens*, long on the threatened list, has suddenly been given a new coat of paint, thereby indicating that demolition plans have been put on hold. As for Bharat Insurance building, its fate is still uncertain, with a Court decision awaited. However, the elements are wreaking havoc on this landmark structure, now a roofless shell and, quite literally, it appears that only the heavens know what the future holds for it.



Till April 20: Paintings by Kavitha Shah (at Vinnyasa Premier Art Gallery).

Till April 19: Sapling Exhibition, composing 30 messages — photographs of tree saplings with captions that hope to inspire people across the world to plant trees and heal the earth. All tree saplings used in the campaign are native to India and an indicator of the trees that can be planted. (at Alliance Francaise).

Till April 20: *Indian Princes and Parisian Jewellers*, a photography exhibition that depicts jewellery designed by renowned houses in France for members of Indian Royalty belonging to the various princely states. There are also films that accompany the exhibition that will be screened in conjunction with the exhibition (at Government Museum).

Till April 21: Summer Camp for Children — Five-day art, craft and theatre workshop for children five years and above. Workshop includes paper sculpture, clay modelling, props and accessories for theatre and dance / theatre performance. Workshop dates are April 21 to 25, April 28 to May 2 and May 5 to 9. To register call 42115596/97 (at Forum Art Gallery).

Till April 30: Exhibition of the works of upcoming Chennai artists (at Prakrit Arts).

April 19: Handmade paper product workshop to make your stationery, and

April 20: Screen Printing workshop (at DakshinaChitra).

April 20: *Pramil After Pramil*, a retrospective of poet Pramil's works. Pramil was the enfant-terrible of modern Tamil writing. Starting his life as a painter and sculptor, he later began to write New Poetry and literary criticism. He was given the Pudumai-Pitthan award in 1995.

To celebrate the beginning of his 70th birth anniversary, a series of events to commemorate this great poet, including photography and painting exhibition on the poet, poetry reading sessions, book release and also discussion on his life and work, is being organised (at Alliance Francaise).

April 21-30: Paintings by Sarah Davidar (at Vinnyasa Premier Art Gallery).

April 21-22: Koothu-p-pattarai celebrates 30 years with a symposium featuring prominent theatre personalities of Tamil Nadu and former directors and actors of Koothu-p-pattarai (at Alliance Francaise).

April 26-27: Indianostrum Theatre presents *The Barber of Seville*, an adaptation of the play by Beaumarchais in Tamil, in the Comedia dell'arte style (at Alliance Francaise).

MAY WE HOPE IT REMAINS A WOODLAND?

(Continued from page 1)

lands and hang out there. Many celebrities patronised it, the last being P.B. Srinivos, the popular playback singer.

By the 1970s, the Society stopped holding its annual flower show and the gardens went completely to seed, though the part that housed the little heritage bungalow that was the head office of the Society was better tended than the rest. The activities of the Society itself became shrouded in secrecy with the library of books becoming out of bounds. The sale of seeds and potted plants became the only activity of a not very courteous set of people. In the 1990s, the old heritage building was razed to

the ground and a new structure on roughly the same lines was put up, but by then the Society had become the cynosure of land sharks, many of them front-men for powerful forces, who were trying to gain control of the vast lands that the Society had in its possession.

Litigation ensued when the Government in 1989 passed a GO for the takeover of the lands. The District Registrar of Societies issued a show-cause notice regarding nine charges mentioned therein. All these were challenged in Court by the Honorary Secretary of the Society, who alleged that the action was taken due to political vendetta. However, certain realignments in political forces nullified that argument in recent

years, resulting in the Court deciding in favour of the State Government. In its judgement, the Court said that there was no doubt that the government was the owner of the lands. When the government in the capacity of owner of the lands required them for the stated public purpose and had also found misuse of the lease by the allottee, the Bench said it could not find fault with the actions of the government.

With this the Government has taken over the lands. However what will be of interest to conservationists and nature lovers will be the eventual use that the Government will put this green area to. While it has been stated that the lands will be for public use, it is not clear

as to what that term means. Will the area be left as it is, a natural park in the heart of the city, or will it become a site for putting up Government buildings? In recent years the Government has shown that it can restore parks quite well. The success of *My Lady's Gardens* is an example.

It is to be hoped that good sense will prevail and the flower shows of the past will once again be revived in what could be developed as a splendid horticultural and botanical garden. And if such a garden materialises, there is no reason why the Drive-in cannot remain *in situ*, following the pattern of internationally famous gardens having a foodspace within them.

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