

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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It's really over... even the shouting.

Over the last 15 days, the sub-continent, a large part of it anyway, has been engaged in re-establishing contact within entire lives lost for six weeks, thanks to the Sport-that-tops-all-others.

Families are talking to each other again – hesitantly – using words other than “runs”, “wickets”, “cheerleaders”, and the slightly riper language used when expectations are not met.

Bitter disappointments, and quarrels, are slowly healing, in this re-established atmosphere of calm restraint. Those soap addicts who had deflected for a while, or perhaps had the TV hijacked by a stronger faction, are busy catching up, noting that the Third Daughter-in-Law now sports another face, indicating that the creators have resorted to the old plastic-surgery ploy to deal with an out-of-control storyline...once again.

Old Second Cousin has changed her hair, while Left-Side Neighbour, going a bit further, has changed partners yet again; and let's not even get started on Grand Aunt Hooknose's short-term memory mess... but who had time to notice when knights, devils, challengers and kings clashed mightily with each other?

Slowly, life is returning to 'normal'... whatever that is.

But do not rejoice too soon.

Some brightly coloured uniforms were noticed kicking a ball around a few days ago.

And so it goes on.

Ranjitha Ashok



Are too many cooks spoiling Adyar broth?

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Adyar River is continuously in the news. If it is not a restoration of the Creek to its pristine state, it is a proposed six-lane road along its banks. Add a couple of parks, a plan for completely developing the riverfront like that of the River Sabarmati in Ahmadabad and you get the general picture. But reality on the ground is that the river is as filthy as it has been for some time. Are the multiple agencies involved, each with its own plan and most of them in conflict, responsible for this?

The Adyar Creek Eco System restoration, or the Adyar

Poonga Project, is being implemented by the Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Limited (TNUIFSL). The total cost of the project is Rs. 100 crore and the first of two parts of the restoration will cost Rs. 19.7 crore. The contract for the first part has been awarded to a consultant and will involve the creation of a natural park 58 acres in extent. There are ambitious plans to bring back native trees, set up nesting platforms for birds, colonies for animals and an education centre for children. There will be butterfly gardens, medicinal gardens,

walkways and an artificial hill-ock as well. All this will be along the Adyar Creek which is bounded by the sea, Santhome High Road and South Canal Bank Road. It is significant that the Poonga is not connected to the Adyar Creek itself, without which its sustainability will be a question.

The Highways Department has in the meantime been given the go ahead to build a six-lane road along the river from the Adyar Bridge to Saidapet via Kotturpuram. This is to decongest Sardar Patel Road. Encroachments were removed

along this stretch in 2007, but after this little has been heard about this project. Environmentalists have cried foul over this attempt to build a road. It is feared that the logical alignment of this road will be along the Creek and it will cut off the wetland from the high tide which is a major source of water to it.

Meanwhile, TNUIFSL has also decided to take up an Adyar River Front Project as the first part of a Rs. 2,300-crore Chennai Circular Corridor. The

(Continued on page 8)

Are development plans threatening Railway heritage?

(By A Special Correspondent)

Even as the city's Egmore Station celebrates its centenary, heritage lovers and others concerned about the city are wondering what threats to Singara Chennai there may be from the Railways' ambitious plans to commercially exploit its land.

With massive investment being mentioned to build its infrastructure (at least one account puts it at Rs. 280,000 crore during the 11th Plan period), Indian Railways has decided to meet the cost by developing its properties. These could include station buildings,

offices and bungalows, in addition to the vacant land in its possession.

The Railway Land Development Authority was set up in 2006 by a special amendment to the Indian Railways Act of Parliament. So far, this authority, which will be the special purpose vehicle to commercially exploit real estate, has concentrated on vacant spaces and has identified a total of 43,000 hect-

are across the country. 109 plots of land have been handed over to it and the Authority is now proceeding with the task of appointing a real estate consultant to evaluate the possibilities of maximising revenue through development of this acreage. It is significant that the areas identified for development have not yet been made public.

In cities such as Chennai, the Railways is among the largest

landholders. And what it possesses carries much more than mere commercial value. However, a recent debate in one of the city's dailies may well highlight the attitude of the Railways over its properties. At the heart of the matter is the façade of the Egmore Station which is practically hidden by commercial hoardings. On being told of this, the Railways' spokesperson has said that such hoardings do not in any way damage the structure but, more importantly, they generate revenue, so what is the problem?

(Continued on page 7)

Precedence for poor governance at Elliot's Beach

— CAG

Readers are already acquainted with the bungalow that is being constructed on the beach for the Governor. Both the Government's reluctance to share information and the procedural flaws of the construction, reflected in responses to RTIs filed by CAG, leave much to be desired.

It is appalling to note the inadequacy of the responses and the failure to share all relevant information. This secrecy over the 'renovation' activity is strongly condemned and in a participatory democracy such an approach is uncalled for. Making matters worse, misleading information has been supplied by the Public Department in an earlier instance, demonstrating a clear lack of conviction to share information, leaving citizens to resort to the RTI as the only tool to address information requirements about government proposals.

Even assuming that there was a need for such a building for the Governor, it has to be examined in the light of the current developments along the coast. A strong voice of the fishing community demanding rights and provision for housing along coastal areas; a public demand for open spaces for leisure and recreation; demands of elected representatives such as S.Ve. Shekar, MLA, representing the area, to stop the activity; and a petition signed by at least 500 citizens of the area op-

posing the activity, have all been ignored and the construction continues unabated.

It is revealed from the copy of the CRZ clearance granted that several irregularities exist. The CRZ clearance for renovation or modernisation has been obtained only after the construction had begun. This is evidenced by the dates of correspondence of CAG with the Governor's office and media reports based on civil society action.

This post-facto clearance places conditionalities which appear to have been violated. While the clearance for renovation or modernisation only allows for any proposed additions/alterations on the landward side of the existing building, it appears that this building has been clearly extended towards the seaward side through the construction of a compound wall.

Also, while applying the statutes of the CRZ notification, it is evident that the validity of clearance provided itself is questionable since while only the Secretary (Environment) or State Coastal Zone Management Authority is empowered to provide clearances and take action against violation, the clearance in this case has been granted by the District Coastal Zone Management Committee, a subcommittee that does not have such powers.

Interestingly, CAG's research on the CRZ, protection of CRZ I zones in particular, reveals that a lot is desired in terms of identifying and protecting areas of "outstanding natural beauty", which we believe should include areas such as beaches. Till such time the fate of Elliot's Beach and other stretches of beaches hangs in the balance. When the dust settles, yet another bad precedence on governance would have been set. But whether or not lessons on good governance are learnt, society will have to tolerate yet another incursion into its public space. Such incidents only indicate that transparency, accountability and public participation, essential elements of any democracy, have gone out of the realm of functioning of government. (Courtesy: *Public Newsense*, the journal of the Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG).

CRZ-I Category as under the CRZ Notification 1991

CRZ 1 areas include those falling between the low tide line and high tide line and areas that are ecologically sensitive or important – including areas rich in ecological diversity, areas close to breeding and spawning grounds of fish and other marine life, areas of outstanding natural beauty / historical / heritage areas, and areas rich in genetic diversity.

The CRZ notification identifies these areas as highly sensitive and talks about affording extensive protection through the prohibition of various activities in such areas.

MMM discovers the hazards of property-buying

The Man from Madras Musings is always on the look-out for a place to call his own and in the process of this largely futile search, has acquired considerable experience on how the real estate market functions in this city of ours.

Firstly, most of those in the business are agents and, rather like multi-level marketing companies that are always in the news when their proprietors are forcibly made to take a break by the law, the whole property business works in many layers. MMM assumes that there are kingpins in this business who run vast offices with plush interiors, but the dirty work is done by the agents who operate in a rather complicated world full of its own terms, language and *modus operandi*.

All agents carry cell phones which are the lifelines of their trade. If like MMM you don't have a cell phone, then you are outlawed straightaway from the business. Introductions are given through the 'missed call technology', which means the agent will call you on your mobile and you are not to answer but merely store his number. All agents promise the earth (which is, after all, what they trade in), but there are many pitfalls (Oh dear, yet another dreadful pun in the same sentence) in dealing with them and if you are not careful you may bite the dust (worse and worse) and dig your grave (this is really the pits). Most of these middlemen will quote figures to you without mentioning the units and, to MMM, who prides himself on his engineering background, the lack of units is anathema. Once MMM made bold to ask for them and was fixed in the eye with a glacial stare and told that all figures quoted are in Cs which to the uninitiated means crores. I and Thou have obviously long fallen by the wayside.

Viewing properties is a rather quaint ceremony. Rather like beating the bounds in a village parish, a custom practised in *Ye Olde Blighty*, the prospective buyer is taken to the middle of a vast expanse of land and told that the land that he is interested in buying is bound on one side by the hayrick, the other side being earmarked by the cloud in the sky, while the third side is marked by a dried up rivulet and the fourth is where the buffalo is grazing. Agents are at their best during such sessions, waving their hands a good deal and generally giving MMM and his ilk the feeling that they are monarchs of all that they survey. Very often two touts will meet on the same piece of green and each will claim the land is under his exclusive contract to sell. Each one will assure the prospect that his sole aim is to get the land sold at a reasonable price. MMM is

quite sure that they have promised the exact opposite to the seller.

Then, when MMM makes bold to ask for the layout plan and enquires if it is approved, matters and tone change. A good deal of chin scratching goes on at this stage. A few bright ones will state that the lay-out is approved and, when probed further, will say that the seller has approved it but the statutory authority (panchayat/corporation) is yet to do so and the go-ahead from that august body is expected at any time. Then, if a few like MMM may balk at the idea of buying something that is not approved, the agent will look pityingly at MMM and say that the land is a hot cake and many have snapped up the neighbouring plots, approval or no approval. "Be bold, Sar," one agent made bold to say and even poked MMM in the ribs, all the while winking roguishly. "Which purchase has been rejected so far?"

The story does not end here. That last is to do with the

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

colour of the money. In the US they may call it greenback, but here there are two colours, as we all know. For some reason, the colour black (rather like the Tamil film song that made waves a few years ago) is the favourite and if it is a mixed transaction, black outweighs the white by leaps and bounds. Now who said South Indians hanker for a white complexion? When MMM said that he had no access to black, he was immediately shunned and cast into the outer darkness. An apartheid of a different sort.

In short, buying property is a hazardous process and it is no wonder that the chicken-hearted ones such as MMM will continue for ever to hanker for a place to call their own but may never take the plunge to make it a reality.

At the Registrar's

The Man from Madras Musings is one of those who gives government offices a wide berth. As far as possible, MMM prefers sending others to deal with activities that involve filling forms in triplicate with details such as father's name, caste, colour and other wholly irrelevant information. But then he can never abdicate from such responsibilities and, occasionally, has to make the pilgrimage as a form of penance. The latest visit involved the registration of a power of attorney.

Government offices are of various kinds. There are old ones which fall into two categories. The first kind is a vast airy mansion set in enormous grounds and is maintained so badly that everyone within is

praying for the day when it will be declared unsafe and then pulled down to make way for an ill-ventilated, ugly and badly-maintained modern monstrosity. The second variety is one which is housed in a dark and dingy, old, low-ceiling building and is maintained badly. This is the kind where lizards, cockroaches and rats hold court and if you raise your arm to take an oath you will brush a few cobwebs off the ceiling. The new government buildings are of two kinds again. The first is a vast, ugly, ill-ventilated modern monstrosity and the second is a hole in the corner, covered in asbestos and a veritable downsized version of an inferno. It was to this last variety that MMM went.

The man who was to assist MMM in going through the motions was late and MMM had plenty of time to observe those dealing with the proceedings, surly men and women at desks that stood in danger of being covered in an avalanche of rotting files at any moment. The supplicants were expected to stand respectfully around in a ring which kept closing in on the desks, whereupon an officious voice would bellow an order to retreat and the ring would fall back again. This ritual was interrupted by one or two people stepping up to the desk in answer to summons and, amidst much swearing in and swearing at, the deeds were registered. MMM's escort arrived and none too soon, for what with the temperature in the lower forties, MMM had reached a trance-like state with nothing much registering.

Presently, MMM was asked to step forward and a man lunged at him and grasped MMM's left hand with what appeared to be the sole aim of wrenching off the thumb. MMM, in shock, stepped back only to tread on one of those forming the ceremonial ring that kept moving in and out. "Be still and cooperate," hissed MMM's escort and before MMM knew it, his left thumb had been pressed on a stamp-pad that smeared it with black ink. The thumb was then dragged over a sheet of paper and the deed was done. In keeping with the surroundings, MMM looked around for a rag to wipe his thumb when, surprise! the man in charge produced a scented wet wipe and gave it to MMM with the air of one rewarding a novice for having successfully gone through an initiation rite.

While MMM is all praise for the thought process that went into getting the wipes, he wishes the registration process was more civilised. In this era of hi-tech, can there not be electronic fingerprint readers installed?

— MMM

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



No postal response

I refer to MMM's item 'A delivery problem' (MM, May 16th) and send you my complaint to the Secretary to the Department of Posts and Chairman, Postal Services Board, New Delhi, of March 5th, to which no reply is received till May 20th.

What was once a highly efficient department, delivering letters from Chennai to Delhi the next day seems to have gone to the dogs – you may kindly see from the enclosed cover that a letter posted on Feb. 5th at Jammi Building P.O. on Royapettah High Road was delivered in Delhi on Feb. 28th. I have heard similar complaints.

Increase in the volume of mail may be an excuse, but the increase in e-mails and letters through couriers is much more. Perhaps your department is concentrating only upon Speed-posts and registered letters and is ignoring the "aam aadmi".

I shall be grateful, if you could kindly arrange to enquire into this delay and let me know the outcome in due course.

Incidentally, my experience with a courier is excellent. He delivers the next day of posting to all metros in the country with computer tracking. I think there is a proposal to spoil this by a legislation!

G. Sundaram, IAS (RTD)

"Burma House", 33/18, 9th Street
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Chennai 600 004

Let's be grateful

In "A delivery problem" (MM, May 16th) it was stated that an invitation stamped April 18th at Anna Salai Post Office was stamped April 22nd at the delivery office in

Tiruvanmiyur. We must feel very happy that the dates in the seals we clear so that a complaint could at all be made. Normally there is no date stamp at the delivery office or the dates are not at all clear. Probably it is purposely done to avoid complaints about the dates.

With the stamping sincerely done, we know that it has taken 4 days to travel from Anna Salai to Tiruvanmiyur. Why? Was the letter retained at Anna Salai Post Office or in Tiruvanmiyur? The authorities should explain.

In the days immediately after Independence, a letter posted in Delhi reached Madras the next day. A person traveling by train (G.T. Express, the only train at the time) could post a letter about his travel at Delhi station and his relative would be at Central to receive him. This is only a dream now. We have Express Delivery system, Mobile Post Office in Chennai, despatch and delivery of letters even on Sundays, etc. Isn't it possible for the postal authorities to see that letters posted for any city are delivered the next day?

R. Rajagoplan

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Chennai 600 091

Welcome humour

I have been reading your journal for a long time. Usually most of your articles are quite serious and there is not much humour found in *Madras Musings*. An exception was Short 'N' Snappy (MM, June 1st). I particularly loved the last bit, Cooum hazards. How well children know things (May be they would have seen actor

Vivek, having a bath in the Cooum in a Tamil film)!

Ramesh Kumar, C.B.

rameshkumar57@yahoo.co.in

Today's delays

This letter is prompted by MMM's comments (MM, May 16th) on the fate of some invitation cards. I have spent several years in the U.S. in the early 1960s and have also traveled widely in Europe. From personal experience, I can state that the Indian Postal system is still the most reliable, accountable and economical in the world, in spite of its decline in efficiency over the last four decades.

In the past, a letter as well as any material sent by book-post used to be delivered the next day within the city. A letter to any of the four metros used to be delivered on the second day to the addressee. Today, a local letter takes 3 to 4 days to reach the addressee. Material sent by book-post nowadays is given the last priority in handling and takes anywhere from 4 to 7 days to reach a local address and more days to reach other metros. This is because of the phenomenal increase in the volume of material to be handled.

Personal experience has shown that a book-post reaches Mumbai from Chennai in a few days, but is delivered only 10 or more days thereafter.

In this case, my guess is that

The danger to our coast

The Chennai coast is increasingly and haphazardly being intruded on with a variety of developmental interventions, jeopardising the pristine Coromandel Coastal Ecosystems, their eco-balances with the long-established coastal inhabitants, and pressurising their harmonious lifestyles.

The simple question is, why should all these polluting 'developmental eggs' be put into one and the same vulnerable 'environmental basket', that of the Chennai Coast alone?

Consider the following:

1. For a smooth functioning of the prestigious Ennore Port Limited (EPL), no other structure projecting into the sea should come up north of it. Because, following the general rule, accretion of beach-sand south of such a structure may clog the entrance to the EPL (though it is south-facing). Even the Ennore Creek itself may get clogged, permanently.
2. Beach-erosion north of such a projecting structure will surely intensify along the Koraiyappam beach, opening the sea into the backwaters and bringing about major geographic and ecological changes in the ancient Pulicat Lake ecosystem and affecting its one lakh fisherfolk.
3. The vast area of land required for developing a shipyard is not available in small Kaattupalli island nor in its SEZ hinterland, because it is bound by the Buckingham Canal and the Ennore Lake (backwaters) on the west and north, which flow northwards into the vast Pulicat Lake, while the Ennore Port is in the south.
4. The pristine ecosystem of the Kaattupalli island, with its high and rare sand-dunes, Tropical Dry Evergreen Forests, ancient

trees and sacred groves, rare biodiversity and grassroots level people like fisherfolk, farmers, tribals (Irulas) and Dalits living in five hamlets, would all be rendered developmental victims on their own native soil.

5. The shipbuilding industry with its metal scrap, rust, paints with lead and other toxic chemicals, and noise pollution would add to the inshore ecological crises that have already been destroying the fisheries, marine biodiversity and their breeding habitats on the 'Ennore Shoals', off the Ennore Coast.

From Sriharikota in the north upto Kalpakam in the south, the ancient Coromandel Coastal ecosystem has been totally destroyed by diverse unsustainable developmental interventions, without any 'Master Plan' for the coast.

The beach belongs basically to traditional fisherfolk, who catch 80% of our table fish, but they are being decimated all along the east coast, rendering them disgruntled communities.

6. Finally, what about the 'spillover effect' of all these industrial effluents on the beautiful beaches of Chennai? The quality of coastal waters as well as of the beach-sands so contaminated will surely have a damaging effect on the skin and eyes of the thousands of waders and swimmers in our inshore waters every evening. The long and clean beaches of Chennai may, thus, be destroyed by people sooner than later.

Development should go on, but not at the risk of the environmental and human capital of coastal Chennai.

Professor Sanjeeva Raj
Chennai 600 040

to a British Dominion (S. Africa) to set up practice. He would have continued and prospered had it not been for that impetuous policeman who pushed him out of the compartment, leading to a patriotic rash!"

N. Dharmeshwaran

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OUR ADDRESSES

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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

the invitations were sent by book-post. (Ed. Note: They were not.) If they had been sent as a closed letter at an extra cost of Re. 1, they would have reached in time. Pilferage of stamps from letters posted in bulk is, I would think, rare in the metros. Couriers charge twice the cost of an ordinary letter but generally deliver the next day or, at worst, on the second day.

Readers may keep these facts in mind.

Anonymous
(name and address received)
Chennai 600 017

Of heritage... & Gandhiji

Reader Ravindran (MM, May 16th) should realise that life is not a carnival of health, wealth and happiness but a concoction of disease, poverty and misery as well. But does this stop us from taking food, wearing nice clothes and enjoying ourselves though we see others in an unenviable situation? Thus, preservation of heritage and taking care of the poor are not mutually exclusive.

* * *

Regarding Ramunni Menon's views on Gandhiji's fast (MM, June 1st), I recently came across this really plainspeak about Gandhiji: "Gandhiji's father served at least two princely states quite faithfully; he sent his son for Law studies to England; on return, the son went

Trying to sell India to Satyamurti?

25 May, 2008

Most Respected Sir,
How else am I to address you, in English?

I could switch to Tamil and call you 'Maama'. But that would make you a son-equivalent to CR. And you were certainly not that!

So it would be best to stay with English! In doing so I would only be following CR's sound advice: Hold fast to your mother tongues but never give up on English. "Without English" (in his words) "India will become an archipelago of nations in a non-navigable sea". CR had a way with metaphors. There was none like him for strength of conviction. I once asked him about his style of writing. CR said, "Write as you speak, speak as you think, and think clearly." I can see you nodding in vigorous approval of my reverential admiration for CR, though your politics and CR's diverged. Both you and he knew that life is larger than politics.

When you were born in the hill-fort town of Tirumayam in 1887, Mohandas, then 18 years old, was preparing to leave Rajkot for London to become a barrister. CR – Rajan to his family – was nine years old. Jawaharlal Nehru was yet to arrive in the world.

The first was destined to be hailed as the Father of the Nation, *Desapita*. The second was to become India's one and only Indian Governor-General. The third was to become our first Prime Minister.

But when these great fulfillments took place, Sir, you were gone. I would like to believe there is a life after death and that, overcoming your regret at not being present in 1947, you yet rejoiced from on High. You rejoiced because the goal of *Swaraj* had been reached.

And well you may rejoice now, again, when our *Swaraj* has crossed its sixtieth year, for India at 60 is astir with life, with energy, with drive.

There are those who worry over the population question, of course. And they are not wrong to do so. India's population at 1100 million plus, 17% of the world's total, is huge and is growing. This places daunting pressures on land, on food, and livelihood security. But the rise

in our population is itself a sign of one signal success: the spectacular fall in our death rate, largely due to our immunisation programme. As a perceptive man explained, India's population is huge not because we "breed like rabbits" but because "we do not die like flies any more."

Life-expectancy has more than doubled since *Swaraj* – a formidable achievement which we should celebrate more than we do. Visually, this translates into our public spaces teeming with people, people, people – masses upon masses of them, moving in a never-ending procession, from everywhere to everywhere.

They look startlingly differ-



S. Satyamurti

million km of roads, connecting cities with towns, towns with villages. You will not recognise the inside of our railways either. Travelling in the cheapest class, we sit or sleep today on cushioned berths.

Eight more of the IRS series take pictures of what resources lie on and beneath the ground – a benediction for our Planning process. And we now have an exciting mission that is expected to take a spacecraft later this year 386,000 km away from earth on to the surface of the Moon. Chandrayaana I will reach the Moon in 5½ days and remote-sense it for us. If the mission succeeds, we will move on to, in 2011-12, when we will be marking 125 years of your birth, to Chandrayaana II.

We also make missiles, Sir, to defend our sovereignty. Agni, Prithvi, Trishul, Akash and Nag, with Agni as the work-horse, are meant to protect us from aggression. Agni-5

When Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Governor of West Bengal and grandson of Gandhiji and Rajagopalachari, recently released in Chennai *The Satyamurti Letters*, he did so in unique fashion, reading a letter he had written to S. Satyamurti for the occasion. Both letter and its presentation held his listeners in thrall. But, more importantly, the views he candidly expressed in it on India yesterday, today, and tomorrow struck your Editor as so pertinent that we are publishing the complete text of the letter in three parts.

ent from what they did in 1947 when you saw from on High our *Swaraj*. Almost no one in our towns and cities is without footwear; very few are without wrist-watches, almost all of Indian make. And, yes! If you were to come into our midst today, you would wonder why so many of them hold their hand close to their ears, like Gangubai Hangal used to while singing. They are carrying that marvel – the mobile telephone. Of the 'fixed' phone which you knew of as a luxury, we have some 45 million. But of the marvellous mobile phones, we have more than 245 million! 245 million Indians talking to each other endlessly, restlessly, on their mobiles is a signature cameo for today's India, the India of the IT and the ICT age.

Because of the crowds on them, you will not recognise the roads you knew. But there is another reason why you will not recognise the roads – they are not what they were as you knew them. Our roads now are wider, smoother, with fly-overs, on which the great wheels of our progress turn. When you left us, we had a total of about 300,000 km of roads in the whole of India, from the big to the small. Now we have more than 3.5

Thanks to the ingenuity and adaptiveness of the Indian peasant, the vision of C. Subramaniam and M. S. Swaminathan and the back-up given by industry and the infrastructure of roads, power and irrigation, our land now produces a quantity of grain – over 200 million tons – you would not believe could ever be grown in India.

It is not just on land that India surges forward. We now have 2 million square km of what is India's own Exclusive Economic Zone in our seas, followed by another 1 to 1.5 million square km of continental shelf. We do not realise this, but there is an Oceanic India which is almost the same size of India's landmass. We navigate in that zone and use that ocean territory of ours heaving with rich deposits, for the advancement of our national wealth.

The skies are not allocated, yet. But we can now zoom through the firmament. Our expanding space programmes are subtly but surely transforming life for us. India has launched 50 satellites, 45 of them made within India. Eleven of them – in the INSAT series for broadcasting – inform us and also caution us about the weather, a boon for our farmers and fish-

could reach targets up to 5000 km.

Our GDP has grown phenomenally, standing at Rs. 3,760,285 crore for 2006-2007; our amazing services sector, our industrial vigour and our buoyant corporate sector have changed our rate of growth. 'The Unbelievable Bull Run' refers now not to the *jallikkattu* that you knew in Pudukkottai but to our stockmarket's Sensex journey ranging from 1,000 in 1990 to 19,000 in 2007.

You will feel proud to see these wonderful strengths and achievements.

But if you were to ask me to name one single change as the greatest change and achievement in post-independence India, I would, with our distinguished anthropologist and sociologist Andre Beteille, point to what lies not on land, water, air or in the stockmarket, but on an altogether different field: the heart of our society. This achievement may seem undramatic but is of profound importance to the structure of our society – it is the rise in the average age of marriage for India's women. In this, choice gets to assess opportunity. Your fellow-Pudukkottaiyans, Muthu-



Gopalkrishna Gandhi

lakshmi Reddy and Rukmini Devi, would applaud this achievement. When a girl-child becomes a wife and a mother before she is a woman, a promise is drowned. When a young woman, with choices made consensually, faces the world on her terms, a promise is redeemed.

India's women are doing brilliantly, Sir; they are doing us proud. You should see the new sense of confidence among them. After centuries, they are coming into their own in India – in professions one would not have associated them with, such as piloting aircraft, as rocket scientists, as sports champions, as elected representatives.

Elections see them at their best. They have not yet got a proportionate share of seats in our legislatures. But, thanks to a Constitutional Amendment you would have enthusiastically supported, there are no less than 1,000,000 women elected to our Panchayati Raj institutions, constituting some 37 per cent of all those elected. Bihar is often unfairly described. The percentage of women in Panchayat Raj institutions in Bihar, which has 50 per cent reservations for women legislated by the present Assembly there, is as high as 54 per cent.

Not just when they win but even when they lose, Sir, India's women can be most impressive. Your daughter, Lakshmi, has known electoral failure. But, Sir, she wears her electoral defeat like a badge of honour. More, she has done the most selfless work to spread awareness of rights and duties among electors at the grassroots. Be proud, Sir.

'Tamil India', as you loved to describe it, is in the forefront of the country's progress, particularly against illiteracy and for a higher life expectancy at birth.

You can be proud of your Province too, Sir.

Now, I can read a question in your thoughts. 'Are you trying to sell India to me – you do not need to!'

Well, as you know, Sir, I am of Bania stock. I am saying all this only to be sure our good news reaches you, for you have always been a positive man.

But let me balance the book.

(To be continued)

* Two volumes, Pearson.

Manikkodi

- The journal that seeded a Tamil literary awakening

'Stalin' Srinivasan (thus named by Nehru himself, after the Stalin-style moustache Srinivasan sported) founded *Manikkodi*, that famous Tamil literary journal of the 1930s, and Va. Raa. assumed editorial responsibility with T. S. Chokkalingam looking after the administration. The first issue came out on September 17, 1933; the day was also, by a strange coincidence, Va. Raa's birthday.

Srinivasan had earlier been in London reporting news for the *Free Press Journal*, Bombay, and returned to India in 1933. He

Va. Raa. were contributing. T. S. Chokkalingam was the assistant editor of Dr. Varadrajulu Naidu's *Thamizh Naadu*.

Manikkodi got its name on the sands of the beach near the Madras High Court. While the three of them discussed possible names one evening on the beach, they saw the Union Jack being lowered in Fort St. George. Their thoughts went back to the scene where Kamban describes the fluttering of the flags in Mithila as Rama and Lakshmana entered the city with sage Viswamithra. Another thought their struck them

the journal and discuss it. While opponents might attack the journal, friends would sustain it. They said, "*Manikkodi* is an attempt. Time will give its final verdict. *Manikkodi* heralds a new life. Its life and growth lie in our ideal, in your abiding affection and, above all, Divine Grace."

All of them were English scholars and, therefore, intended to have pages like those found in famous English journals. A. G. Gardiner, under the pseudonym 'Alpha the Plough' wrote sketches of personalities, both common and lofty, in a popular English journal. Following this lead, Va. Raa., writing under the name 'Nadaichithirangal' wrote on Cook Sama, Market Manickam, Dasi Kokilambal, Priest Saravanan, Hotel Mani, Constable Subbiah, and Dhobi Nagappan - in all 40 characters.

The *Hindu* welcomed *Manikkodi* thus: "We have received a copy of the first issue of *Manikkodi*, a new Tamil weekly edited by Mr. K. Srinivasan and published every Sunday from No. 35, Sembudoss Street, Madras. A glance at the issue reveals that it is a pioneer in weekly journalism in Tamil and is planned on the lines of such Sunday newspapers in England as the *Sunday Times* and *The Observer*. It contains selected news items with well-written and well-reasoned articles on subjects of topical and cultural interest. Cartoons and quips add the necessary spice to the fare thus provided. The price per copy is one Anna and the annual subscription is Rs. 3-8-0."

The impact of the journal on the profession of Tamil journalism was vividly described by B. S. Ramaiah in his book on the *Manikkodi* era (*Manikkodi Kaalam*). Ramaiah was the earliest outside contributor to *Manikkodi*. According to him, within an hour of the issue coming out, Kalki Krishnamurthi, editor of the then most popular weekly *Ananda Vikatan*, contacted Srinivasan and told him, "This is the ideal journal. The writings are unmatched by any other publication!"

It became evident within a short period of *Manikkodi's* existence that with it there was the beginning of a literary revival. In 'Chitti' Sundararajan's words, "The diffidence of newcomers was soon dispelled by Va. Raa's encouragement. He was generous to a fault in his recognition of new talent. He

The brief history of Manikkodi

- Publication of *Manikkodi* started on September 17, 1933, and the journal folded in 1939. Though it existed less than six years, it had made an impact. While K. Srinivasan had made Va. Raa. (V. Ramaswami Iyengar) its editor, T.S. Chhokkalingam, who was managing the business, had problems with Va. Raa. within a year.
- When Va.Raa. was engaged in spreading the Congress message, touring the Coimbatore area, the *Manikkodi* issue dated October 21, 1934 carried this message: "It is published in the Press that *Manikkodi* editor Sri Ramaswami Iyengar spoke in many places. This is wrong statement. We wish to inform that there is no connection whatsoever between Sri Ramaswami Iyengar and *Manikkodi* - Editor".
- As Chitti remarked later, the incident, which disturbed many writers like Chitti, was never explained and the trio who started the journal never met to discuss it. It was obvious that clash of egos was at the bottom of the whole affair.
- In October 1934, Va.Raa. took over the editorship of *Veerakesari*, published from Colombo. T.S. Chokkalingam joined the *Dinamani*, as its Editor, and K. Srinivasan left for Bombay to assist Swaminath Sadanand again with his *Free Press Journal*.
- In March 1935, B.S. Ramaiah took over as the Editor of *Manikkodi* and converted the weekly, which was being published every Thursday, to a bi-monthly, mainly for short stories, with an occasional political essay thrown in. P. Ramaswami assumed charge of publishing. But a financial crisis made the publication to cease in 1939. The number of short stories written by star writers of that day in *Manikkodi's* 46 issues was B.S. Ramaiah (20), N. Pichamurthy (11), Pudumaippithan (S. Vridhachalam) (17), Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan (6), Chitti (12), C.S. Chellappa (12), N. Chidambara Subramanian (10), Mouni (8), T.J. Ranganathan (1), Sangu Subramanian (3), K.N. Subramaniam (Ka. Naa. Su.) (4), Ke. Raa. (17), P.M. Kannan (8), Sundha (Meenakshi Sundaram) (8), M. V. Venkatram (9).

K.R.A.N

had seen some literary journals in the UK and wanted to have something like them in Madras. At the time, Tandukuri Prakasam, the Congress leader, was running a magazine, *Swarajya*, to which both Srinivasan and

was about Bharati's song on India's national flag. Bharati had called the national standard the *Manikkodi*, meaning beautiful flag in Tamil. And so they decided to name their new journal *Manikkodi*.

The first editorial, signed by the three pioneers, promised a new and healthy trend in Tamil journalism where language would come into its own, to convey ideas of growth and progress. They expressed the hope that people would notice

AUTHOR'S NOTE: All material culled from my *Sadharana Manithan*, a biography of Chitti P.G. Sundararajan, and from the blog *Chitti recollects* in the net sponsored by Korea N. Kannan.



The first page of the first issue of Manikkodi.

was of the firm opinion that appreciation was the staple food on which literary enthusiasm thrived and he saw to it that beginners got it in full measure."

The soil in which Va. Raa. sowed the seeds of literary awakening was rich and the fertilising influence of *Manikkodi* soon bore good results. The eternal flame of Bharati's poetry

responded to the invitation that was inherent in the pages of the journal. Dubbed by Va. Raa. as the twins after a pair of medieval Tamil poets, these two contributed a rich horde of story writing. The telling style of Va. Raa, reflecting all the nuances of the language, found worthy succession in the work of T. J. Ranganathan who handled Tamil as deftly in the short story as in the essay. N. Pichamurthy's technique never depended on extraneous devices like peculiarities of language or choice of unusual themes; a robust faith in human destiny combined with an unflinching sense of proportion gave a quality of deathlessness to his short stories.

Manikkodi gave a new life to the language and a new forum to talented aspirants. Most names in modern Tamil writing that are today synonymous with creative writing were part of this distinguished coterie.

(To be concluded)

● by
K.R.A. NARASIAH

burnt steadily in the verses of Bharatidasan who used his poems much as Va. Raa. used his prose. Stalwarts in the field of short story, like B. S. Ramaiah, whose gift for narration was unique, and Pudumaippithan, with his passion for realism, joined the ranks of this avante garde magazine. N. Pichamurthy and and Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan, who were building their literary nests on the banks of the Kaveri in Kumbakonam,

A big 'Thank You' to 40 of you

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

- Name the double-amputee sprinter who has won an appeal to compete in the Beijing Olympics.
 - What first was achieved by observing SN 2007uy in the spiral galaxy NGC 2770?
 - Who scored in regular time in the Champions League final that was won by Manchester United after a penalty shootout?
 - In what time did Usain Bolt blaze to the world record in the men's 100m sprint?
 - Which Asian country became the world's latest "secular, federal democratic republic" on May 28th?
 - What is the value of the World Bank programme created on May 29th to fight the global food crisis, including \$200 million given in grants to poor countries facing the direst needs?
 - After which famous naturalist has a fossil 'placoderm' fish, a 380-million-year-old specimen uncovered in Australia and now considered the oldest-known example of a mother giving birth to live young, been named?
 - Which world-famous European structure has now 'stabilised' and should remain so for at least another 200 years after a 26 million Euros project?
 - What genetic first did researchers at Leiden University Medical Centre in the Netherlands announce on May 27th?
 - Name NASA's robotic spacecraft that achieved the sixth successful landing on Mars on May 25th.
- * * *
- The new Chief Justice of Madras High Court is...
 - What important civic position for Chennai did R. Sekar assume on May 31st?
 - According to the revised fare, how much will it cost to travel from the airport to Central Station in Chennai in an air-conditioned MTC bus?
 - Name the two stations on Chennai's MRTS named after women.
 - Name the "three old towns" in Chennai which were purchased by Madras Governor Elihu Yale in the late 17th Century from the Mughal Viceroy, Nawab Zulfiqar Khan, and rented out to prospective tenants.
 - At which institution in Chennai did Dr. Andrew Bell's Monitorial System of education originate?
 - Which library in Chennai serves as a depository library for the UN?
 - Where in Chennai can you see a statue of Venus, Prosperity, a woman writing a letter and a former Municipal Commissioner of Chennai?
 - Which historic edifice's facade in Madurai did eminent builder R.F. Chisholm describe as a 'Saracenic arcade with a Hindoo cornice'?
 - How is Kinema Central, later Sri Murugan Talkies, part of Tamil film history?

(Answers on page 7)

The 'Sandow' who made a studio

While A. Narayanan and R. Prakash continued to dominate the film field in the late 1920s, another person, soon to emerge as their serious competitor, was making his way. This was R. Padmanabhan. Like Narayanan, Padmanabhan was also born – in 1986 – in the zamindari town Sivaganga. He entered the infant industry with his firm, Oriental Film Service. Under this banner he imported foreign films, arc light carbons and such accessories. He also bought films made in Bombay and other film production centres in northern India for distribution in the South. He did well, whereupon he opted for production.

Soon, he promoted a firm named Associated Films. He had a financial backer, a wealthy lawyer from the port town of Negapatam (Nagapattinam). K. S. Venkatarama Iyer had dabbled in many things besides his legal practice and acquired enough riches to jump into film production. With Iyer came his grandson-in-law, also a lawyer, Krishnaswamy Subramaniam. "Director K. Subramaniam", as he chose to call himself, was to rise to great heights in Indian cinema.

Padmanabhan produced his films at his studio, Associated Films Studio, on Wallajah Road. After a few years of hectic activity the studio closed its shutters and on its spacious site years later a cinema named 'Paragon' came up. For some years this cinema screened films successfully, but in due course its popularity waned and it closed down a few years ago.

Padmanabhan knew that Bombay was more active in film production than Madras. Films made there seemed better in almost all aspects. So he decided to import his talent from

Bombay. As a distributor he had developed contacts there and to help him he sought the services of a friend, a different kind of pioneer, S.K. Vasagam.

Vasagam was a Madras-based journalist who wrote about foreign and Indian cinema. As journalism did not give him enough to live on well, he had earlier worked as manager in a film distribution company in Calcutta. There he tried to run a film journal as a spare time activity and burnt his fingers. Back in Madras, he tried again, establishing in 1928 the first film magazine of South India, *Movie Mirror*, a monthly in English. He covered Hollywood and India, providing interesting fare to readers. His own column, 'Overheard in Broadway',

films produced under this banner. He directed most of them and played the lead role in all of them.

This films produced here were: *Anaadhai Penn* (1929), written and directed by Raja Sandow, with Leela as heroine. A buxom young woman, she played both heroine and vamp with some success in the early decades of Madras cinema. Off screen she was intimately involved with Raja Sandow. *Devil and the Damsel* (1930) was also written and directed by Raja Sandow and again had Leela as heroine.

Nandanar (1930), the popular folkmyth tale of Nandan, a low-born farmhand and ardent devotee of Lord Nataraja of Chidambaram. This story was



Raja Sandow

was directed by P.V. Rao, with Raja Sandow, Leela, and T.P. Rajalakshmi in the cast.

Sathaaram (1931) had been a popular folk tale that was a stage success. As usual, Raja Sandow and Leela romped through the film successfully.

In 1931, a new talent made its bow in the South Indian movie world; K. Subramanyam wrote the story and screenplay for *Signet Ring*, with Raja Sandow and Leela playing their now familiar roles behind and in front of the camera.

The final film from the studio came out in 1931. It was *Taranhar*, written by K. Subramanyam and directed by Raja Sandow with Sandow and Leela in the lead roles.

The studio went out of existence when movies began to talk in 1931 with *Kalidas*, and Raja Sandow took off to Bombay where he played a significant role in films made in many languages.

Not many are aware that even after movies began to talk in 1931, silent films continued to be made in Madras until 1934. During those three years, movie houses which were not equipped with sound projection continued to play silent films, while movie houses which had sound projection facilities added a suffix to their names, 'Talkies'. It is a word that baffles visitors to this part of the country, including Americans!

Round the City's old studios with RANDOR GUY

was popular and soon *Movie Mirror* established itself as a force on the movie horizon. Film folks, one of them being Padmanabhan, sought his friendship and help to obtain talent.

Padmanabhan and Vasagam travelled to Bombay where, thanks to Vasagam, Padmanabhan succeeded in hiring a man to direct his first film. Already popular as a silent film hero, director and skilled technician, this man with the novel name 'Raja Sandow' was one of the most colourful figures of Indian cinema and deserves a fuller study.

Between 1929 and 1931, Associated Films was fairly active in the production of silent films in its studio. Raja Sandow was the key person in all the nine

filmed several times both as a silent film as well as a talkie. There were two silent versions and in this 1930 version Raja Sandow played Nandan's role. N. Viswanatha Iyer, a wealthy man with interest in movies, played the Brahmin landlord under whom Nandan worked.

Rajeswari (1930), again written and directed by Raja Sandow, had besides Leela, a pioneer of Tamil cinema, the stage, silent film and Tamil film star of the early decades T.P. Rajalakshmi.

Usha Sundari (1930) featured the same team, besides P.V. Rao, an actor and director who attained notoriety for many reasons in his later career, leading to his early decline.

Bhaktha Vatsal (a.k.a. *Durvasa Garva Bhangam*) (1930)

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— The Editor

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Press 'I' for 'Incomprehensible'

Computer's out again?
And you have no clue what to do?

Now, in the old days, a sharp whack on the side of an errant appliance proved astonishingly effective in getting things to start working again.

You can't do that any more. Everything's become too highly-strung and over-bred.

At the same time, like doctors making house calls becoming a rare phenomenon, getting techies to come home to repair stuff is becoming an outdated practice. 'Walking' the user through the repairing process is, however, getting to be the order of the day.

If you are one of those who cannot talk to an answering machine without hyperventilating, you'd better pray that nothing, ever, ever goes wrong with anything in your house. Because the whole exercise of following the instructions crisply delivered by a tech-support team can be flustering – and can certainly give you a huge complex.

To get back to your rebellious computer – after pressing a few keys and cursing a bit, you suddenly remember the emergency number provided precisely for such situations.

You make the call. The ring is answered; you launch into your complaint, then realise that you are talking – like it happens all the time these days – to a disembodied voice, who, with carefully orchestrated cheerfulness, tells you to 'Press 1, if you need information; Press 2 for complaints....'. The list is long and impressive.

The technical world obviously likes to be prepared for as many contingencies as possible.

But, while you can understand the need not to sound like a sombre voice speaking from a particularly dark tomb, this excessively upbeat Mary-Poppins tone – like a kindergarten teacher talking to a bunch of unresponsive 5-year-olds – can throw you off a bit.

Cursing a bit more, you try to remember which number the dratted voice asked you to 'press', and comply.

You think you'll talk to a human then?

No chance.

● by
RANJITHA ASHOK

"Consumer number," the voice smiles winningly at you. You rattle off the first combination you can think of, and then realise you've given your cooking gas number by mistake.

You cannot help it – you have become a series of diverse numbers for so many different organisations, it is hard to keep up.

Finally, after a long drawn out symphony with the phone keys, you finally get to (drum roll, please!) a human being.

From the voice, it is clear that this person is younger than your youngest child, and you are unable to prevent a distinctly irritated Mom-tone from creeping in, just stopping short of snapping: "Sort this out at once, and no backchat."

And then the dance begins.
You: The internet isn't working.

Voice: Can you tell me what you see on the screen before you?

You: It's all black.

Small silence.

Voice: Er...yes, M'am. Now, I want you to go to the left...

You: Whose left?

Voice: Er...yours, M'am; the left of the screen, and click on the X icon.

Small pause.

Voice (tentatively): M'am?

You (equally polite): Yes?

Voice: Did you click?

You: Yes, and nothing happened.

Voice: Try again, M'am.

You (suddenly excited): I did, and a whole lot of letters and signs have appeared.

Voice (now sounding cheerful, possibly seeing the end in sight): Great. I mean, very good, M'am. Now, go to the end of the line that says pxsp, and add a semi-colon.

You: What?

Voice: pxsp.

You: What pxsp? I don't see any pxsp. I only see a wrtc.

Voice (starting to sound older): That's the previous line, M'am. If you scroll down, you'll see a....

You: Oh. Oh, yes, sorry, I just saw it. Now what?

Voice: Like I said, add a semi-colon with no space.

You: No space where?

And so it goes on.

It gets even better when they tell you to unplug things and move stuff around.



Voice: Unplug the reactor-pender.

You: What the hell is a reactorwhatsit?

Voice: M'am, if you look behind the screen, you'll see...

You (gasping): Dear God, you won't believe the dust here. Does no one clean anything anymore?

A small silence.

Voice: Er...yes, M'am. But to resume. If you look at the bedinger, you'll see the flexobus next to the thingamative... then...

You (staring at an array that looks like it could launch the Shuttle, and starting to get a bit hysterical): Then what? Double it?

Stunned silence for a second.

Voice (tentatively): M'am?

You (telling yourself not to get jittery, and therefore silly): Sorry, all these technical terms tend to play havoc on the old nervous system. Keep going.

Voice (sounding more and more unsure): M'am, if you look beyond the thingamative, you'll see a yellow plug and a red plug. Remove them, re-attach and switch on the fuselodon.

You (desperately juggling things around): The whate-lodon?

Voice (suddenly descending

to your level): The big black plug.

You: Oh that. Why didn't you say so in the first place?

Conversation then ends on an irritated note, with the Voice obviously trying to keep both employment, and your age, in mind, and resisting the temptation to somehow magically travel down the cables and throw something heavy on your head.

It never fails.

There is so much techie-gloss, but it is honestly getting tougher to handle when things turn up their toes and go bzzzt on you.

When will the getting-updated process end?

Here's an idea.

Given that they love options, here's one more.

Eerily Happy Voice (after going through the whole 'Press number so-and-so' routine): And finally, if you saw *Sholay* the very first time around; if you know all the words to *Stairway to Heaven*, and if you can remember a time when balcony tickets were under Rs. 5 – Press 10, leave your number and address, and a tech-team will be sent over at once. Thank you ssssoo much for calling."

Now that's service – with being kind to elders thrown in.

Plans threatening Railways' heritage

(Continued from page 1)

The present condition of several heritage bungalows belonging to the Railways in the Perambur area also adds suspicion to the thought that some other plans may be afoot for them. Some of them are in vast unkempt gardens and a few have been uninhabited for some time. Is the Railways planning to do away with these bungalows and construct highrises on the sites? A couple of years ago, the Railways had clearly stated that surplus and unutilised land in Villivakkam and Perambur would be developed. Perhaps this includes the grounds of the bungalows also.

What of the main stations, viz. Central and Egmore? Here the plans get even more grandiose. At Chennai Central, the

Railways is looking at the area next to the parcel office for the creation of an elevation above the circulating area of passengers. This will have rooms for passengers at nominal rates. If it is going to be a highrise, it will violate the uniform skyline that stretches from Ripon Buildings to General Hospital. In no other country would this be permitted. It is also learnt that the land at the rear of Central, close to the Sir Ashley Biggs Institute's Moore Pavilion (another heritage building condemned for demolition after poor maintenance had laid it low) is to be put to alternative use. At Chennai's Egmore terminal the Railways is planning a mid-segment hotel with 200-300 rooms. This again will violate a heritage precinct and also put pressure on an al-

ready congested road front. Also, can the Railways run hotels? Do they have the expertise for it? The worldover, areas surrounding railway stations have plenty of hotels, but the station proper never has them, though it does have shops and dormitories. Even when hotels adjoin station buildings, these are run by hotel chains of repute.

Shopping malls are also being planned at the MRTS stations which are, anyway, far too big for the kind of traffic they draw. These enormous structures are intended to be sites for outdoor advertising and also destinations for shoppers, thereby adding to the Railways' coffers. It is learnt that the Railways hopes to garner Rs. 100 crore annually from this kind of advertising in Chennai city.

What kind of shopper, apart from the commuter, would brave the dingy access areas of the MRTS stations to purchase his/her requirements is open to question.

Thus far, the Railways has been known to have worked with an eye on heritage and urban aesthetics to as great an extent as possible, given the huge traffic it handles. A good example is the façade of the new extension to the Central Station which blends completely with that of the old. But it appears that there is a complete change of heart in the recent past, with someone's eye solely fixed on the bottomline. But with that attitude prevailing all over the city and the country, can we blame the Railways alone?

Answers to Quiz

1. Oscar Pistorius; 2. NASA astronomers, using the Swift satellite, caught the first Supernova in the act of exploding; 3. Cristiano Ronaldo for Manchester U and Frank Lampard for Chelsea; 4. 9.72s; 5. Nepal; 6. \$1.2 billion; 7. Sir David Attenborough (*Materpiscis attenboroughi*); 8. The Leaning Tower of Pisa; 9. The first sequencing of an individual woman's DNA; 10. Phoenix.

* * *

11. Justice A.K. Ganguly; 12. Chennai Police Commissioner; 13. Minimum of Rs. 25 during the day and Rs. 50 at night, excluding baggage charges of Rs. 10 per piece of luggage; 14. Kasturba Nagar and Indira Nagar; 15. Egmore, Purasawalkam and Tondiarpet; 16. Military Male Orphan Asylum, Egmore; 17. Connemara Public Library; 18. My Lady's Garden; 19. The Tirumalai Nayak Palace; 20. It screened the first Tamil talkie, *Kalidas*, in October 1931.

Nostalgia

Cricket commentary during the 1960s and 70s was a great experience for us. We were students of Government Arts College in 1961 and five of us who were studying in PUC there were cricket fanatics.

We wanted India to win all matches, but India was almost always at the receiving end. Pankaj Roy and Vinoo Mankad used to open the Indian batting, facing the speed of Gilchrist and Hall without helmets. Mind you Roy was bespectacled and was never hurt! Such was the technique with which they played the game in those days!

There was no TV in those days and we were dependent on the radio. During college working days we used to go to a small radio shop to listen to the commentary. The shop owner would switch off the set and tell us one valve was de-

fective. He would say that the cost of the valve was Rs. 5 and we used to forego our lunch and part with the money. He would then say that he was hungry and we would get him *masala dosai* from nearby Swamy's Cafe in Mount Road. After all this, he would switch on the radio and we would hear Vizzy narrating the game in his own style. Once, India lost both openers cheaply and one down was Vijay Manjerekar and 2 down Vijay Hazare and 3 down Polly Umrigar who were all our for a paltry 25. Vizzy exclaimed, 'Vinachakala Vibaritha Buddhi' meaning 'misfortune never comes single!'

Listening to radio commen-

taries was a thrill in those days. Nowadays, cricket can be watched from the drawing room, but we can never forget the golden voices of John Arlott and Brian Johnston of England, Michael Charlton and Alan McGilvary of Australia, Dicky Rutnagur from the West Indies and the likes of Berry, Ananda Rao, Balu Alaganan and Narottam Puri of India.

Cricket commentary was the golden aspect of the audio revolution and even TV cannot beat.

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Cricket 'Bytes'

Among other things which I have undergone sea (she?) change in Chennai is the atmosphere at the cricket ground and the behaviour of the spectator.

All these years, the agreed purpose of watching a cricket match live was just that – to watch cricket. Not any more. The joke is that a fellow was shopping for a pair of powerful binoculars at P.Orr & Sons. The shopkeeper asked if it was to watch the IPL matches at Chepauk. The young man truthfully answered, 'No, to watch the cheerleaders!'

Sivamani's drums sort of blend into the carnival ambi-

ence, but it pains me to see Vikku Vinayaga Ram play his venerable ghatam in that 'galata'. The newspapers are also catching the festive fever and shaking loose.

In the old days S.K. Gurunathan used to give staid accounts of the day's play. Now the papers are saying that Dhoni has been smitten by Lakshmi and Lakshmi has been bitten by Dhoni. It is all very confusing. Thank God, there is TV to avoid the maddening crowd.

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(Continued from page 1)

financial services firm has decided to clean up the Adyar, use the Adyar Creek, and build a dedicated carriageway on both sides of the river for a Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS) to reduce traffic congestion. From Ramapuram to Porur-Poona-

mallee, the BRTS would be on an elevated corridor that would connect with the Chennai bypass (Maduravoyal to Manali). The TNUISFL has brought out a 10-minute video to promote this project and has also asked

for international consultants to draw up a feasibility plan. Rather strangely, tenders for assessing the feasibility of this have been called for by the Adyar Poonga Trust which was supposed to restore the Adyar

Creek! Where does the road and a bus transport system help in ecological restoration?

The third development belongs to the PWD. Five acres of land opposite the Madras Club is being worked upon by the agency to facilitate the planting of trees with the help of an NGO. The idea is to develop this as a tree park with walks in it.

Chennai Heritage and *Madras Musings* had organised a presentation of Ahmadabad's Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project last year and this was followed up by a visit to that city by a high-powered Government delegation. It was learnt at that time that the Government was mulling over a similar plan for a 12-km stretch in the Adyar and would soon make its plans

public. But this proposal has been under wraps ever since.

Clearly, there are many ideas for the development of the land along the river. But what of the water? The Controller and Auditor General of India's reports of 2006 came down sharply on the local government for spending crores of rupees on the water with nothing to show for it. Untreated sewage from Metrowater continues to be discharged into this river with impunity. Intriguingly, the Metrowater Chief is also head of the TNUISFL and the Adyar Poonga Trust!

So where does this leave the river? Much the same as it has been. So many government agencies with conflicting aims and ideas working on the water-body does not bode well for it.

Are too many cooks spoiling Adyar broth?



Till June 20: Art Axis, an exhibition of paintings and sculptures by artists from all over India, and an exhibition of paintings by G. Suvedha (at Vinnyasa Premier Art Gallery).

Till June 25: An exhibition by upcoming artists of Chennai (at Prakrit Arts).

June 20: Citizens' Run, a run that during the past ten years has raised funds for various NGOs across the city. This year, to be a



part of Citizens' Run you will have to buy its T-shirt and put it on to join the run. The money from the T-shirt sales goes towards the NGO funds. The target for this year's run is 10,000 people.

Contact: www.citizensrun.org.
June 20-26: Photo stories from thousand lights, a photography workshop, organised by Max Muller Bhavan and Tara Publishers (at Max Muller Bhavan).

June 21: Bead Jewellery Workshop (at DakshinaChitra. For details: 2446 2435, 2491 8943 or Lakshmi: 98417 77779.)

June 21: Fete de la Musiq: Rock-Funk-Blues-Jazz concerts by young Indian bands from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. (at Alliance Francaise).

June 28 and 29: Roo-Ba-Roo Theatre Group (at the Alliance Francaise).

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