

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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The price we pay

— for free power to some

Tamil Nadu incurs an expenditure of around Rs. 1200 crore a year by supplying electricity free to agriculturists. Five years ago, this subsidy was in the region of Rs. 600 crore. You can only expect the volume to increase.

For Rs. 1200 crore, facilities for around 300 MW power-generation can be installed. In five years this would mean an addition of 1500 MW. Contrast this with the poor addition to fresh capacity made by the State over the last six years. There is a long wait for sanctioning new loads. Outside the Madras metro it is common practice to go without power for long hours. Agriculturists get power only for limited hours in a day. Due to capacity constraints there is frequent load shedding, damaging sensitive equipment in industry, farms and homes. Nothing much can be done to improving the quality and reliability of supplies. If only 300 MW could be added every year, the State as a whole, including agriculturists, would benefit from better quality and quantity of supplies!

The supply of power free has spread profligacy and irresponsibility among the beneficiaries. Since pumped water has no electricity cost, there is a tendency to go deeper and deeper to exploit scarce groundwater resources. It is a common practice to go for submersible pumps to pump water from depths of over 100 feet.

There are two immediate risks in continuing with this mindless exploitation of ground water: 1. Saline incursion: the entire water table can turn saline by seawater entering the artesian substrata. Large stretches of the Gujarat coast were ravaged in the recent past.

It will take years and massive resources to restore land devastated by saline incursion. 2. The whole of Bengal, both west and east, suffer extensive damage by arsenic poisoning that result directly from mindless exploitation of ground water. Protecting the present interests of a section of agriculturists should not make us blind to the future health of the state as a whole.

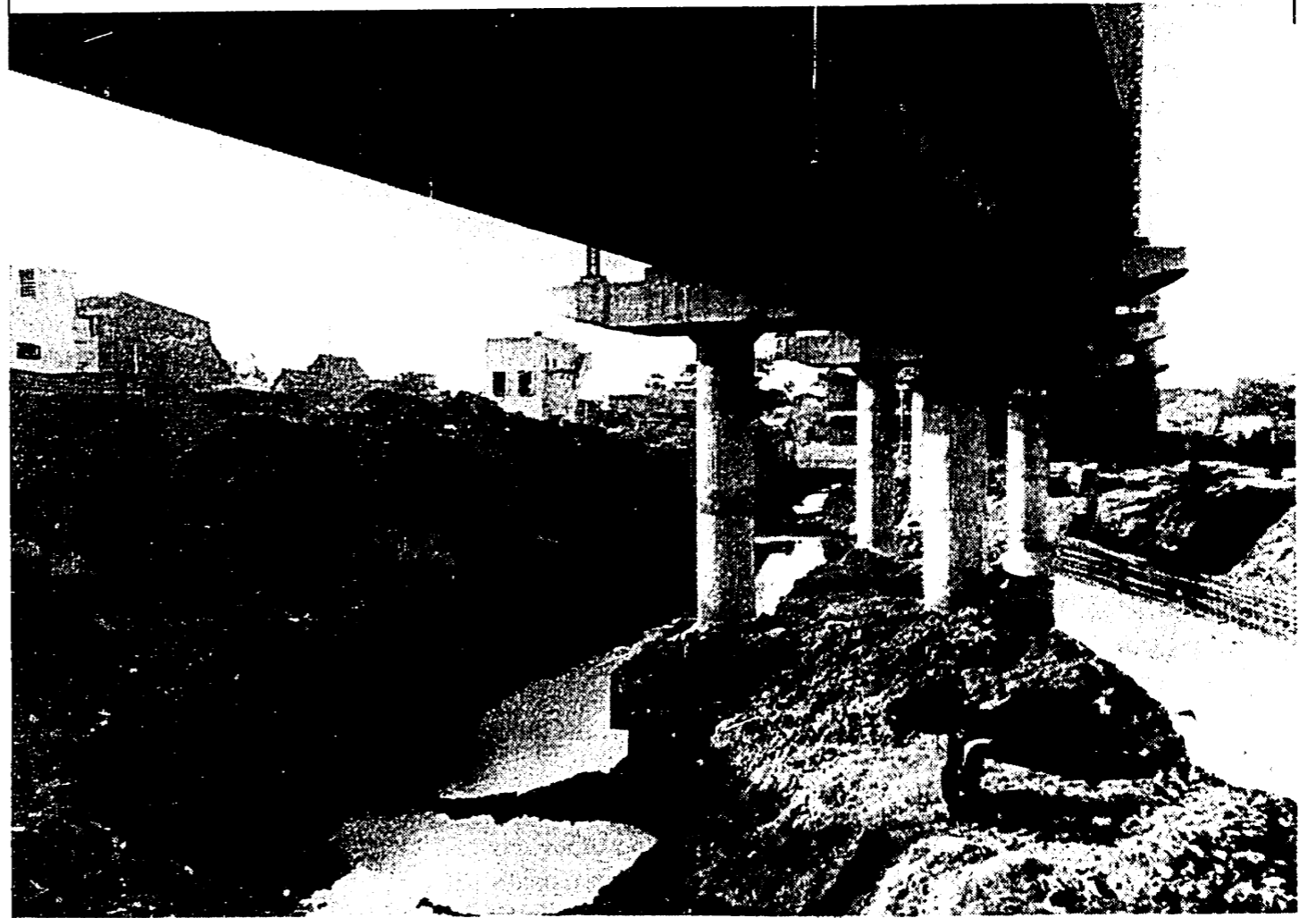
Sadly in Tamil Nadu the issue has a strong political flavour. After 12 years of unsuccessful attempts to defeat the AIADMK, the DMK promised in its election manifesto of 1989 to offer power free for agriculture. Karunanidhi promptly implemented this policy soon after assuming charge as Chief Minister. Surely a more equitable method to take care of the interests of the farmers is to provide a better price for his produce! When the average price of rice in the open market has increased over three times and that of sugar nearly doubled in less than a decade, there is little justification for the state paying such a subsidy on power.

The Rs. 1200 crore saved can go to improve education, public health and dozens of other welfare schemes directed at the deprived sections of society. The Government should focus its energy more in improving the lot of these deprived children than on providing massive subsidies for farmers, large sections of whom can afford to pay for the power they consume.

Like the truck operators, the farmers are organised and any popular government is afraid of annoying this sacred cow.

Sadly nullifying the efforts of the Centre to persuade states like Tamil Nadu to levy mini-

Having made this stretch of canal unusable...



There are once again plans to reintroduce water transport by making the Buckingham Canal navigable again. Sadly, no thought was given to this possibility when the Metro was planned. The result is stretches like this in the heart of the City that prevent not only navigation but which also create problems during the rains by not providing adequate drainage. (Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

Southern canal to be made navigable?

(By A Special Correspondent)

Once again, plans are being talked about for resuscitating the Buckingham Canal for navigation. The Public Works Department (PWD) states the Central Government

is keen on making the Buckingham Canal navigable again. The canal's lower reaches, from Adyar to Mamallapuram and further, would be taken up first to make them navigable. The northern part of the canal, between Basin Bridge and Sriharikota, is to be covered later, Madras Musings understands. The reclamation work is to be done with the intention of making the Canal usable by power boats upto 150 tonnes and ensure more efficient goods transportation in the respective areas. At present, the canal has an average depth of 2.5 metres, suitable for country boats. To make the canal us-

— (Courtesy: Industrial Economist.)

able for power boats, the depth will have to be increased to 4.5 metres.

Maintaining the water level round the year will not be a problem as there are sluice gates which can be opened when necessary, say officials. The plans call for the removal of silt to bring the canal waters back to their original level. Navigation in the stretch of the canal that is within the city, linking Cooum and the Adyar Rivers, will however, not be practical because of the many encroachments, including the MRTS pillars that have come up right in the middle of the canal at Mylapore, it is stated.

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Also see Page 3

No answers to gas leak question

The Sterlite gas leak episode has some curious features to it. Chief Minister Karunanidhi remarked two weeks after the Government-appointed committee submitted its report on the leak that he was not happy with the report. He did not exactly say why nor was the report made public. He then

met with the Committee and now it was stated categorically that Sterlite was not responsible for the gas leak. But this changing stance has made many wonder.

Though the State has permitted Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd's copper smelter plant at Tuticorin, closed on 5.7.97 the day of the gas leak — to re-open, several basic questions remain unanswered.

— WHAT was the gas that affected 146 people working in Ramesh Flowers Ltd's dry flower unit situated next to Sterlite? and

— WHO was responsible?

Soon after a 'yellowish' gas affected its works, Ramesh Flowers cried foul and pointed an accusing finger at Sterlite. The District Collector and Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board ordered the closure of Sterlite's copper smelter plant on the night of the leak. But, strangely, the administration did not seal either factory!

Henri Tiphagne, Director, People's Watch, and a lawyer by profession, points out that the failure to take blood samples from the workers, admitted by the hospital, mostly girls 17-22 years of age, is a serious lapse on the part of the hospital authorities as blood tests would have revealed the nature of the gas.

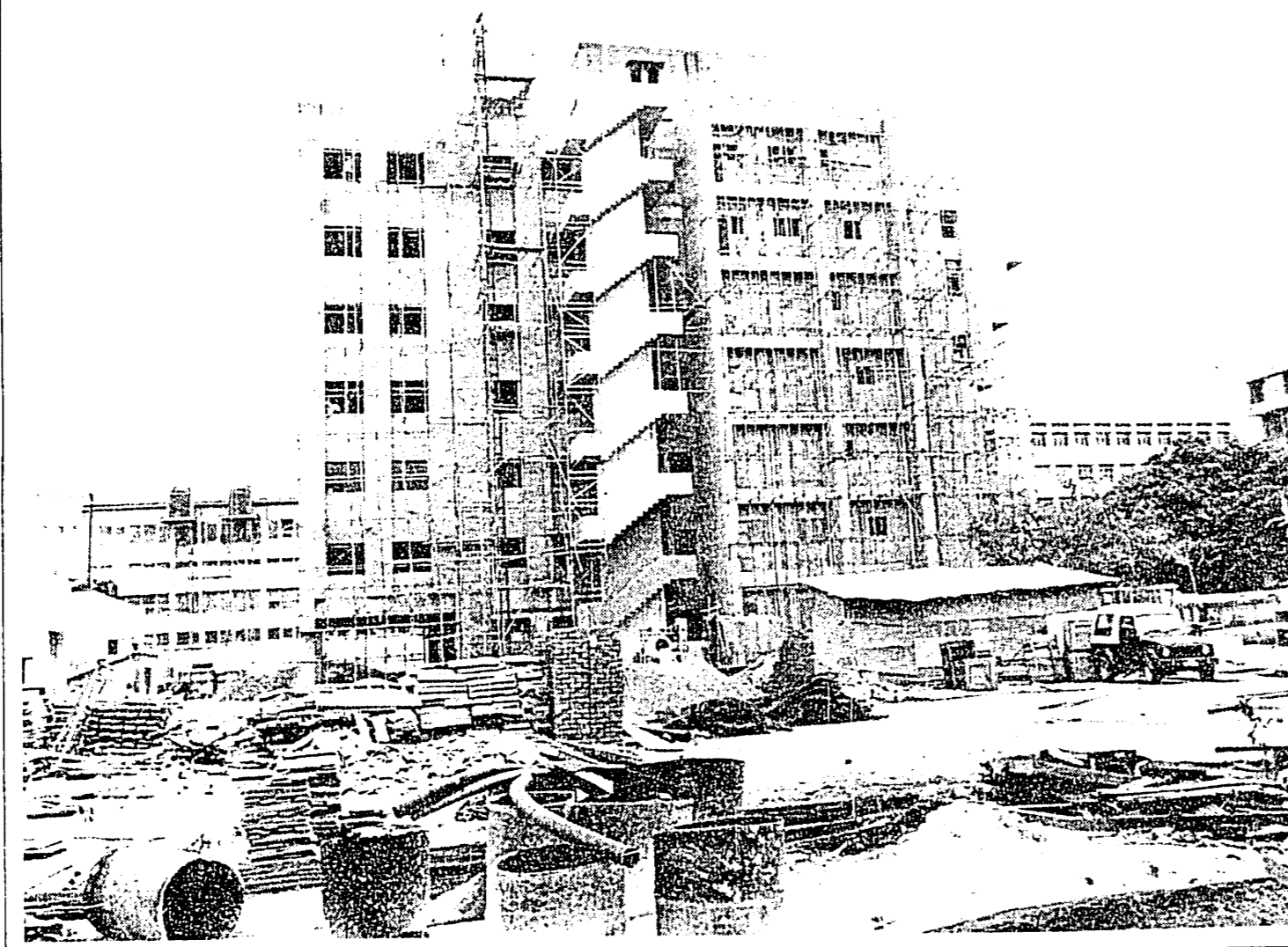
He also blames the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) for not taking water/leaves samples from both factories to determine the nature of the gas, despite being the first authority informed of the mishap by Ramesh Flower's officials.

A People's Watch team headed by Dr C E Sooriamoorthi, Professor and Head, Department of Solar Energy, School of Energy Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University, has reported that, "the process of making dry flowers involves dyeing, bleaching, colouring, desizing and fumigation of wild flowers/leaves etc.". But, it



HARRY MILLER who contributes our OLD and the NEW this fortnight says, "The old garden house — I wonder whose it was? — was almost at the end of Club House Road, just before Express Estate. It was used by a transport service before it fell vacant. Look what's coming up in its place! Another one of those characterless, multi-storied tower blocks for offices. And there are two more coming up across the way from it. With Club House Road such a narrow street, I wonder how anyone will be able to make their way down the road, considering all the cars the three tower blocks are likely to bring to an already crowded street. When are we ever going to learn to build, keeping in mind the available infrastructure?"

EDITOR'S NOTE: The block, we understand, is part of the property development plans of that Larsen & Toubro building giant ECC. It'll be a fine building, no doubt, but has Chennai lost something more valuable?



Venkatachari Jagannathan looks at THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE

Sterlite's furnace? This could result in emission of large quantities of soot which, together with any leak of sulphur dioxide, could have adverse affects.

A Sterlite spokesman says the Sterlite plant automatically shuts off if it detects the presence of sulphur dioxide in excess of the prescribed limits. However, he agrees that a lot more can be done to improve the safety aspects of his plant. The official report too states that fumes or gas mixtures emanating from the dyeing and bleaching process carried out by Ramesh Flowers combined with background sulphur dioxide concentrations from Sterlite could have led to the reported symptoms.

There seems to be a lot of conflict in the various reports on the mishap and there appear to be no clear-cut answers as to what caused it. In these con-

fused circumstances, these questions remain:

— Why was Ramesh Flowers not closed down when Sterlite's plant was closed for more than a month, resulting in a loss of Rs. 2 crore a day for the company?

— Shouldn't the Government/Pollution Control Board have some form of disaster management plans, which should include provision to take blood/water samples immediately after such an accident? Who is to pay compensation to the affected workers when blame is not pinned on one party?

— When does the public get a clear-cut report laying categorical blame on one or the other or both parties, and information on what action will follow this ascertainment of guilt?



Making dance respectable

Sadiri (Dasiattam), the traditional classical dance of the Tamil country, had been brought to glory by its hereditary custodians, the devadasi community. In the late 1920's, a campaign to abolish the devadasi system of ill-repute had reached feverpitch. The proposed legislation for abolishing the system and redeeming its victims threatened to snuff out sacred Sadiri. At this stage, the newly established Music Academy of Madras and E. Krishna Iyer, its knight in shining armour, stepped in to save the dance and assist in transforming sullied Sadiri into Bharata Natyam. Significantly, the Academy staged dances by outstanding devadasi performers

themselves to establish the beauty of the art in the public's mind.

The Indian National Congress decided to hold its 1927 annual session in Madras during the last week of December. It was customary in the north to hold an All India Music Conference along with the annual Congress session. Music enthusiasts in Madras, who had already met in 1926 and resolved to establish an institution to foster classical music, wanted to avail themselves of the opportunity to hold an All India Music Conference, the first of its kind in the south. At the conclusion of the conference, a resolution was passed urging the formation of a permanent

institution to promote the cause of music. At another meeting on January 28, 1928, it was resolved that "an Academy of Music be started at Madras." On March 5th, a provisional executive, with Dr U.Rama Rao as President, E. Krishna Iyer and S. Rajagopalachari as Secretaries and T.V. Subba Rao as Treasurer was constituted and

The Kalyani Sisters who made history on March 15, 1931 by dancing at the first ever dance recital organised by the Madras Music Academy.



The nautch controversy

In 1932, certain social events, in which nautch featured, gave rise to controversy.

Sri Sri Sri Raja Sir Swetalapathi Ramakrishna Bahadur Varu Ranga Rao, Raja of Bobbili (a principality within the Madras Presidency), was elected Leader of the Legislative Council of the Presidency late in 1932. In that capacity, he became Premier of the Presidency's Government. When he assumed office, a public function was organised to felicitate him — and it included nautch dancing. The Raja took it in his stride. A temple dancer of Bobbili named Sitaramudu had been sent south to learn *Kamatakam* — the term used for Sadiri by the devadasis of the Telugu districts — from Bangalore Nagarathamma and she had danced at his 'coronation' in 1920. He was no stranger to nautch.

But the Anti-Nautch movement people were enraged. Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy, the staunch leader of the movement, shot off angry letters to *The Hindu* and *The Mail* criticising the Premier for associating himself with the nautch party. Her ire was laced with pain because on the committee of hosts for the celebration were some of her friends who had given their unqualified support to her goals. Even if they had not

known that nautch was to be presented, they had not protested or walked out.

Dr. Reddy was upset too that nautch was performed at another public function also, a garden party given in honour of M.A. Muthiah Chettiar, Kumarraraja of Chettinad.

The letters published in *The Hindu* drew a response from E. Krishna Iyer and the issue blossomed into a full-fledged controversy.

Krishna Iyer was not against the right kind of reforms. He agreed that dance should not be used to lure clients for immoral purposes. But he wanted the art to be preserved. He noted that 50 years of the Anti-Nautch movement had nearly killed the art even while failing to eradicate immorality.

Svarajya, an English daily edited by T. Prakasam, the Andhra Congress leader, urged that the precious art be separated from its evil association, but added that this would be possible only if an increasing number of votaries of the art imparted to it something of the purity of their own lives. It was a call for girls from 'respectable' families to take up the dance.

The Mail conducted an opinion survey. It was generally felt that anything in this world was liable to be abused and misinterpreted, and the wicked mind al-

ways saw the wrong side of things, which was no reason to do away with Bharata Natyam an art full of the poetry of motion. Significantly, a cross-section of devadasis voiced their emphatic protest against the Anti-Nautch movement. They argued that, because some devadasis were living immoral lives, all of them should not be condemned as prostitutes and the dance associated with them as evil. They held that the art would die if it was dissociated from their caste. The twin arts of singing and dancing had been their inheritance and they knew how best to preserve their divinity, they asserted.

In the end, E. Krishna Iyer wrote an open letter to the President of the Music Academy saying, "In view of the recent controversy over the Anti-Nautch movement, and the precarious existence of the art, as evidenced by the difficulty of the Academy itself to find proper exponents of art at the present day, I request you to bring the matter to the notice of the music conference for the necessary lead in the matter and action thereon."

The Academy brought the matter before its sixth annual conference and it resulted in a historic resolution which, among other things, renamed Sadiri as Bharata Natyam.

by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer in August 1928 and it was registered formally under the Societies Registration Act in the following year.

E. Krishna Iyer, one of the Secretaries of the Academy and its driving force in its eventful life of the first decade, was himself a trained musician and dancer. He was most eager to introduce Sadiri in the Academy's programme, but had to bide his time.

When, in 1930, S. Muthulakshmi Reddy, a doctor and social leader who belonged to a devadasi family, brought a bill in the Council seeking to prohibit the performance of the devadasi dedicatory ceremonies in Hindu temples, the Academy, which was closely watching the developments, saw the seriousness of the situation and felt that something ought to be done urgently to safeguard the continuity of the classical traditions in dance before the hereditary custodians of Sadiri — who belonged to the devadasi community — were forced to give up the role. The Academy took a bold step. On March 15, 1931, it presented on its own platform two dancers known as the Kalyani Daughters. The performance drew only a small crowd and a meagre gate collection, but it was a significant event. It was reported in the Academy's *Journal* thus:

"There is a point which has struck this year by the Academy commencing its season with a Bharata Natyam performance by Kalyani Daughters of Tanjore. It has almost become a fashion nowadays to condemn the Indian Nautch and look askance at it. In our view this condemnation is least deserved. Such of those as have feasted their eyes on the performance of Krishna Bhagavatar of Tanjore of Harikatha fame, will testify to the grandeur of this art (of dance) and expose the utter unworthiness of the criticism that is levelled against it. We are glad that the performance served as an eye-opener to those who came to witness it. We hope that in the days to come, public opinion will veer round and give unto Abhinayam its proper place."

The Academy thereafter, continued to encourage the art of dance under its new name of Bharata Natyam. But a major controversy over the pros and cons of the art of dance ensued and there was much discussion about the preservation of the art.

The controversy over the nature of classical dance and the advisability of its revival were led by Anti-Nautch leader Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy for the antagonists and by Krishna Iyer for the pro-art protagonists. The English language press made space available for the controversy which helped to open the eyes of the public to the richness of the art of dance. This controversy started at the beginning of December 1932 and lasted many weeks.

The decisive discussion on the fate and future of dance was held on the sixth day of the sixth annual conference of the Music Academy. The venue was a special pandal erected for the occasion to the north of the Ripon Buildings in the then People's Park. December 28th was entirely devoted to a discussion of the 'Nautch Question'. At the outset, Tiger Varadachariar, who was presiding, read out a letter he had received from G.A. Johnson, Assistant Editor of the *Madras Mail*, who had been invited to take part in the proceedings. The letter read, in part:

(Continued on Page 7)

Just outside my window

Just outside my window
The building rises
Tall and high
Making me sigh.

This concrete monster
Forebodes only disaster
Gone
Are the verdant trees
That used to sway
Gently in the breeze.

Oh, it isn't fair
That my little patch
Of bright blue sky
Should, each day,
Slowly become smaller
As the building rises taller.

No longer will I see
The stars
Come and go,
Nor watch
The beauty of the moon
Or the sun's glory
At high noon.

Yet the criss-cross
Of steel rods
And silhouetted scaffolding
Rising part by part
Have the strange beauty
Of modern art.

"You are a lone voice
In the wilderness,"
They say
"How else will the city
progress?"

Is there no healthy
compromise,
Whereby concrete jungles
Need not
Wipe out natural ones?

Mahema

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mahema Devadoss is a quadriplegic, who has to spend long hours in bed. "The bedroom window, therefore, becomes very important to me; it is virtually my window to the world," she says.

Youth to the fore in TNCA league

Two selectorial decisions came in for much critical comment during Tamil Nadu's last essay in the Ranji Trophy national championship. Both related to the omission of senior players in pursuance, ostensibly, of a policy to promote young talent. The two players so omitted came back into the side before the season ended — with mixed results. D Vasu, the allrounder, failed in the only opportunity he received while Venkataramana took five wickets in the first Bengal innings during the super league fixture at Chepauk, following it with a millionaire-like second innings display.

Vasu and Venkataramana are already in the thick of action in the TNCA league which has got off to a rather rapidfire start this year with each team completing 8 matches already out of a total of 11. Some of the games have been interrupted by rain but there have been some good performances overall. Vasu has been among the most consistent players in the league, thus staking a strong claim for his recall into the state team. Venkataramana, however, appears beset by the bowling horrors, his form as poor as to suggest he is more a candidate for the Indian team than one for Tamil Nadu!

In the recent Buchi Babu tournament, the off-spinner who made way for Venkataramana in the State side last year, Chandramouli, bowled well enough to play a role in District XI's success over Hyderabad. Subbiah of Indian Bank and young Ganesh Kumar

of Kohinoor XI are the other off-spinners to impress, but my vote for the best bowler of that type goes to J Ramdas of Jolly Rovers, who has struck an easy rhythm in the early part of the season, troubling batsmen with his consistency and nice loop.

In the left arm spin department, Sunil Subramaniam is yet to strike his best form after a promising start to the season. This game fighter must consider himself extremely unlucky that he has been overlooked by the Indian selectors in favour of the likes of Nilesh Kulkarni but poor recent form had ruled him

working up a lively pace while his direction has been spot on, his awkward bounce making him a nasty customer even on good wickets.

Among the batsmen, Hemang Badani has been consistency personified as has been his lefthanded senior in the state side, S Sharath. The youngish veteran W V Raman has also been among the runs though he tends to give an impression of boredom, much in the manner of Barry Richards in the county circuit. For Raman finds hardly any challenge in domestic attacks and that includes first class cricket.

Other batsmen to show promise have been Vasanth Saravanan and Harish Nataraj of SPIC,

though both have to get many more big scores before they can trouble the State selectors who have an abundance of batting talent to pick from. S Ramesh, who came close to being picked for India, has made a double century this season, but is yet to fulfil his enormous potential, tending as he does to play somewhat away from the body. Here is another player to whom batting comes without effort.

The number of young cricketers — mostly in their teens — in the First Division league this year must be a record for Chennai. Two sides fielded by India Cements, UFCC T'Nagar and Sridhar, Kunal Engineering's Rising Star and HCL-HP's Kohinoor are all almost wholly composed of school and college boys. While this large dose of youth has meant that these teams are struggling to remain in the senior division, it has at

• by V. Ramnarayan

out as a candidate in the last year or so. Subramaniam can still serve a reminder to the selectors by getting wickets by the bagful as he so often did in the past. The other left arm slow in the state team, Sriram, is now known more for his immaculate batting. 15-year-old Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan of Sridhar CC is enjoying an impressive first season in the senior league. We'll surely hear more about this confident teenager who gives the ball a genuine tweak. A glimmer of hope in the distant horizon has been provided by what seems to be a welcome return to form of former India leg spinner L Sivaramakrishnan.

The outstanding bowler of the season so far has been the state's opening bowler S Mahesh of Indian Bank who has proved more than a handful to most batsmen. He has been

Some thoughts triggered in the Buchi Babu

As we go to press, the final of the annual Buchi Babu tournament is underway. Significantly, the two finalists to emerge from a strong field are both local teams, though MRF has a couple of guest players. Their batting strength has almost invariably come from local talent. Former State player, Senthilnathan, was in great form as was Aashish Kapoor, who also learnt his cricket here, in the role of opening batsman. The all-rounder Ramprakash too displayed consistency along with old reliable Gautam. In the bowling department, the most impressive performer was the Pace Foundation quickie Pandey.

Sanjay Manjrekar and V.V.S. Laxman were arguably the outstanding batsmen, their hundreds failing to win matches for their teams. Sharath and Hemang Badani, the TNCA left handers, too, were among the runs. S Mahesh and D Vasu were prominent among the bowlers, the former some one the Indian selectors might look at. A notable absentee from Buchi Babu was young leg spinner Balaji Rao, said to be concentrating on academics. An-

other who ought to have been on view but was not selected was off spinner Ramdas.

All has not been well with the administration of the game in the State for some years now, with some officials — and players — assuming greater importance than the game. While corporate sponsorship has taken important steps in the development of the game, there has been no concerted effort to link incentives to performance, to promote the team spirit and encourage teampersons, to cut youngsters down to size for their own good when they get carried away by early recognition to the detriment of their game, and to be sympathetic to players in times of trouble. Such a culture exists in Mumbai, resulting in level-headedness and longevity of cricket careers.

New cricket manager K Srikanth will have succeeded where others have failed in the recent past if he can mould Tamil Nadu's players into a fighting unit determined to win the Ranji Trophy. In its captain, Robin Singh, the State team has a stirring example.

V.R.

the same time been a most refreshing sight to see so many young players gaining exposure. This tendency to promote youth rather than bank on ex-

perience augurs well for Tamil Nadu cricket. For that we must thank the sponsors who have shown an enlightened approach.

Answers to Quiz

1. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose; 2. Gulshan Kumar of T-Series; 3. Goutam Ghose; 4. Calcutta; 5. Lt. Gen. V.P. Malik; 6. Pargat Singh; 7. Maurice Greene (men) and Marion Jones (women), both from the U.S; 8. 122 years; 9. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose; 10. Sanath Jayasuriya and Roshan Mahanama of Sri Lanka; 11. Montserrat in the Caribbean; 12. The Insurance

Regulatory Authority Bill; 13. Sanjay Ghosh; 14. Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore; 15. Dilip Kumar.

* * *

16. The State's Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi; 17. Representatives of Dalit organisations; 18. Rukamani Lakshmi pathi; 19. The State Election Commission Office in Vadapalani and the Russian Cultural Centre at Alwarpet; 20. St. Thomas Mount.

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