

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

**INSIDE**

- How concerned are we?
- No celebrations these
- More ideas for Chennai
- Saving a dance form
- Helping hands

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*We're still talking of a sustainable Chennai...*

## But where is the action?

(By The Editor)

Two years after the United Nations Development Programme-assisted and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements-supported Sustainable Chennai Project got underway and one year after the Consultative Groups the Project had set up had made their recommendations on what Chennai needed to make it a sustainable city, the Project, being implemented by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, took its second step earlier this month. This was its first City Consultation Workshop at which the Government, the public sector, the private sector and the people's sector were all to discuss and arrive at recommendations on how best answers to the three priority environmental issues could be arrived at and implemented.

No doubt, it's a pleasure to find the SCP alive, well and taking its second step, but did the Consultation take the hopes of the city any further? With Government not taking the greatest of interest in the proceedings, reflected in non-arrivals and late arrivals of its various representatives, with former Civilians lecturing on the PPPP Process and then taking top down approaches after talking of bottom up needs which had been suffocated by the Imperial Age, and with NGOs using the occasion as a forum to vent their grievances, did we get anywhere? As one observer said, with so many speaking in so many voices, how do you expect to find solutions even for just three issues?

What, however, struck us about the Consultation was the

lack of a meaningful consultative process. To judge by the list of key participants, Government, elected representatives and the public sector comprised 70-80 nominees, the majority Civilians and senior officials; the people's sector was represented by 30-40 persons, half of them VIPs, the rest from NGOs of various sizes, and the private sector, meaning Business and Industry, by just two representatives, both of whom did not

**Also see page 4**

turn up — or, at least, we did not hear their voices. Indeed, what transpired appeared to be a consultation among the stars of Government's officialdom.

Now we have nothing against a Consultation of senior officials. For, as former Chief Secretary Karthikeyan said, they're pretty good, even if they're today different from the past, preferring individualism to teamwork and finding it difficult to effectively coordinate with others. But that is exactly the point. The recommendations that emerged on the three major issues may not have been anything new, but they made eminent sense; the main issue, however, was how do you ensure the coordination necessary to push those recommendations through to their culmination as fulfilled promises. There wasn't one official who got up and said, "My department or ministry promises complete cooperation with any or all of the others in any project we are involved in".

With the lack of that spirit, we heard a variety of views and no suggestions on how the three major projects could be implemented by a team, except for that former Civilian's presentation of a complex framework for cooperation by committees, a suggestion none of officialdom seemed very keen on even discussing, leave alone pursuing.

A couple of other things also emerged loud and clear. One was the 74th Amendment to the Constitution which would, when it becomes law, ensure much greater roles for Local Bodies and that people's participation might be made easier at that level — at the Ward Level, for instance, in the metropolis — than at present when, only recently, the State's hands have become stronger. The other was that all the institutions are in place; new apex bodies are not needed; all that the existing bodies have to do is to cooperate more effectively, consult more freely with the PEOPLE and act within a timebound framework. For that, all that is needed is for Government to appoint a nodal agency, order the other departments to cooperate with the agency and tell everyone concerned that the work must be completed within a given timeframe, after discussions with the local people on every project — or else! And a third aspect was that the private sector, which can play a major role in several projects, is either not wanted at such discussions or does not see itself having a role in such fora. Whatever the reason, the absence of a strong private sector presence in the deliberations of the Sustainable Chennai Project is a tragedy.

## The Consultation recommends...

### 1. Improving the waterways

1. A number of studies have been carried out. Their finding and recommendations should be taken into account in formulating the action plan.

2. There is a need to form a single "Chennai Waterways Entity" for planning, implementing and maintaining the waterways of Chennai. Such an entity must have representation from all the Government departments concerned with waterways and non-governmental organisations in order to adopt a co-ordinated approach.

3. Entry of waste and untreated effluent into the waterways must be prevented. For this:

— all the larger developments, such as hotels, multistoreyed buildings and industries, should have their own treatment plants and should let only treated waste into the waterways.

— the squatter settlements along the waterways should be removed and their residents relocated elsewhere, including *in situ* development.

4. Improvement of waterways is financially viable and bankable projects should be formulated.

5. Restoration of the Otteri Nullah and Buckingham Canal should be taken up on priority basis. Abatement of pollution in the Cooum and Adyar River should be simultaneously taken up.

6. Unauthorised/untreated entry of waste into waterways should be prevented. The action plan should set the standards for the quantity of waste entering into the waterways.

7. Old sewers have to be repaired/replaced, depending upon their conditions and volume required.

8. Future growth of the city has to be taken into account and a long visioned action plan made out.

9. The sources of the waterways should be cleaned. Tanks and other catchments areas must also be maintained.

10. Environmentally rich areas should be conserved and made use for ecotourism, research sites and nature education parks. A separate working group for nature should be created.

11. The original width of the waterways must be maintained by removing the encroachments and by building up banks on both sides of the Adyar and Cooum rivers.

12. The waterways must be desludged immediately.

13. Allowing sea water into the Cooum and facilitating transportation along the waterways should be explored.

14. Clearing the banks and maintaining pathways along them should be taken up.

15. Citizens have a fundamental duty to keep the waterways clean and the necessary resources should be mobilised from the citizens of the city.

16. Educational institutions should be involved in the movement to clean waterways, thereby creating a sense of belonging and responsibility.

17. The outfalls, discharging waste into the waterways must be monitored continuously. For this, Citizens' Vigilance Committees may be set up.

### 2. Reducing road congestion

#### A. ENHANCING THE MODAL SHARE OF TRANSIT SYSTEMS

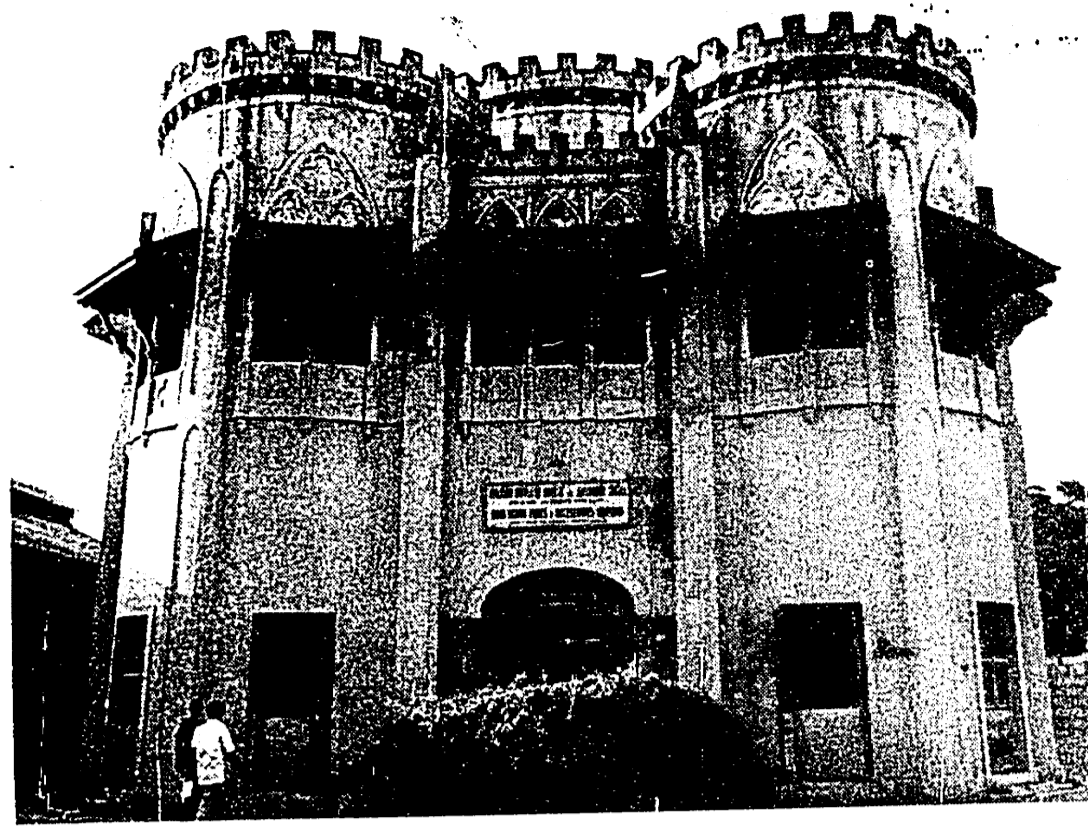
1. The urban rail system should play a greater role in carrying the mass transit trips.

2. There must be greater coordination between the existing rail and bus transport systems through inter-modal inter-

changes in the immediate future and fare integration in the long range.

3. As the metropolis has grown over the years as bus-dependent and will continue to be so, efforts must be directed at optimising the existing bus

(Continued on Page 4)



Our OLD this fortnight was sent to us from his collection by HARRY MILLER with the question, "Do you know what this building is? I don't even remember WHERE I took it, but it was some time in the Seventies, I believe." RAJIND N CHRISTY who provides the NEW found out that it was way back from Anna Salai, hidden by the roadside Rayala Building, when it was pulled down in 1981 by the developers who had planned to raise Rayala Towers. The massive Towers, work on which began in 1983, is still under construction, though it is partly occupied. As for the OLD, its last occupants were the Indian Motor Parts and Accessories Limited, and a few other smaller companies. An old-timer who worked here recalls having been told that at one time the building was a hospital. Its proximity to Addison's and its castellated appearance, however,

**THE OLD...**

made us recall a reference in the Simpson's history, Getting India on the Move. And that states that The Addison Press was founded in 1873 by a Mr Garratt and his brother-in-law, the Rev. Money and "was housed in what was called the Eastern Castle, Mount Road. The building, which had the appearance of a small castle, and the business were taken over by a Mr W Stephenson and, from him, by Tom Luker in 1886. Luker was a journalist who had strayed into business." It was Luker who founded Addison & Co, using the name of the press he had taken over — the press itself being named after Joseph Addison, the English essayist and poet. A few doors north of Eastern Castle was Venca Castle, but with little known of the latter and the rather obvious castellated appearance of the former, suggesting it was Eastern Castle seems like a good guess.



...& THE NEW

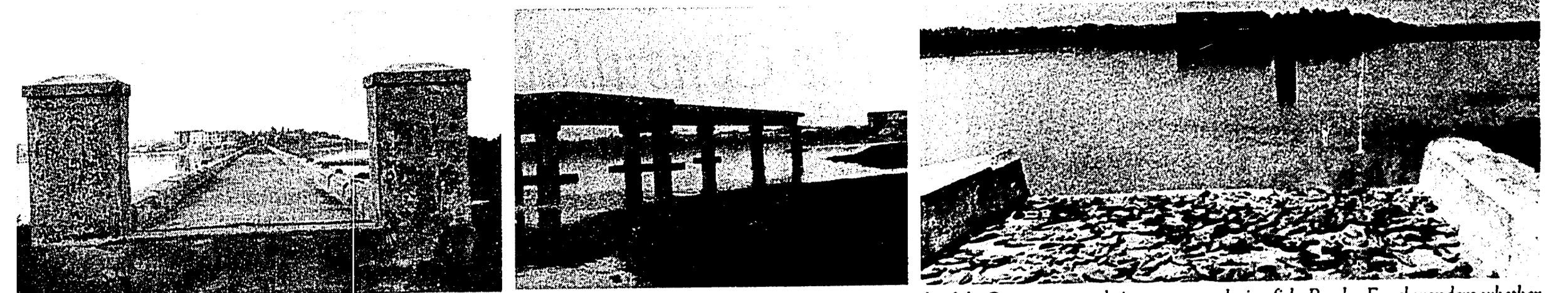
# How concerned are we about Sustainable Chennai?

A selection of drawings from the art competition conducted by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority was on display at the Sustainable Chennai Consultation held recently in the City. And The Man From Madras Musings found them most revealing. Of the 50 or so pictures, a better Chennai tomorrow, with well-organised traffic, even a few planes offering travel, highrise buildings, some with solar energy packs, and clean streets seemed to be the focus. Indeed, transport and highrise seemed to be the preoccupation of almost all the pictures. Only two pictures took a somewhat different view and MMM's prize would go to them, the first to the child that envisioned a worse Chennai in the future. And the second to the child who saw, in maps, Chennai being choked by burgeoning population. When MMM expressed this view in an aside at the exhibition, a CMDA official felt that MMM was becoming cynical. All MMM can say is that his cynicism is based on being present to hear the views of many in what was meant to be a participatory consultation where the majority of invitees were either not present or could not find more time than what was needed to state their two naya paisas' worth. The elected representatives turned up for the VIP occasions and were hardly seen thereafter. Senior officialdom dropped in to offer its brief contributions and vanished hurriedly from the scene. The private sector representatives, MMM could not find. And so the floor was left to the CMDA planners — whose job all this is, anyway — a few retired civilians and other officials, and several NGOs whose greater interest seemed to be the axes they had to grind than any concern for the City. Which all left MMM wondering how seriously concerned are we — particularly those invited for the Consultation — about this city of ours. Judging by the talk shows, the absenteeism, the vanishing acts and the boredom demonstrated by many, Chennai does not seem to be too high on anyone's priority list. And MMM is saddened that so much effort was put in for so little enthusiasm. Even former Chief Secretary Karthikeyan's frank appraisal of a Civil Service that is less than committed, that works individually and is riven by ego clashes did not elicit a challenging response or a promise to work as a TEAM in the future, at least on this project! Is there hope for this City, MMM wonders. And can't help but again endorse that lone child's view of a city doomed to disaster tomorrow.

## Heritage hidden... SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Amongst all these concerns for the City, listed and unlisted by those working on the Sustainable Chennai Project, heritage and conservation did not figure at all. Who was it who said that a people without a history are not a people... or something to that effect? Whoever it was, such views are obviously not the views of those concerned with evolving a better Chennai. No one at the Consultation seemed to feel a small dose of the Humanities might do a world of good in raising children more concerned with their City. The overall impression that The Man From Madras Musings got at the Consultation was that a Better Chennai was some type of engineering or MBA exercise, something apart from people and their problems in daily life. In such an atmosphere, it was no wonder that a small but gallant attempt to introduce a bit of heritage-consciousness, an attempt to create a bit of pride in trying to get a city of chaos back to what it was, a city of great gra-

MMM



What's left of a bridge across a part of the Adyar Estuary. It was meant as a short-cut for pedestrians and cyclists when it was first built. But when a storm took a part of it away, its users were forgotten... and the fishermen took it over to dry fish. Our pictures by RAJIND N CHRISTY show the entrance at the Foreshore Estate end, the gap that's left, and the use the bridge is now being put to — drying fish. Reader Fazal wonders whether this bridge cannot be brought back to life again to make life easier for hundreds of Chennai citizens.

### Bridge'll save time

There is a road bridge across the River Adyar (near Foreshore Estate), past Greenivasapuram which joins Besant Nagar. There is a straight road on the beach, which ends abruptly at the bridge, which got washed off during torrential rains some years ago. Only the spans of the bridge are visible now.

If the PWD can repair the bridge and lay the road, it will serve as a vital link to reach VGP and the New Mahabalipuram Road, easing the already congested traffic on Greenways Road, Thiru-vi-ka Bridge and Adyar.

M. Fazal  
Flat No.1, Seaview Apartments,  
16 Leith Castle Road, Santhomé,  
Chennai 600 028.

OUR READERS WRITE



# A celebration that was not

every summer Indian neem trees, are attacked by an insect called 'tea mosquito' with the result that the end leaves of the trees turn a dirty brown and fall off. According to the report it was a mystery "why a tree renowned for its insecticidal properties is itself so vulnerable to the attacks of an insect".

Harry Miller  
3-A Satyanarayana Avenue  
Boat Club Road  
Chennai 600 028.

### Petrol price hike

The Government has the unique expertise to harass people. For many weeks people were kept guessing about the announcement of the petroleum price hike. I was a little worried and thought of alternate plans to beat the hike. I left my scooter at home and started early to office. A sense of sacrifice filled my heart. "I can save at least Rs.200 a month," I commented to myself. Am I not a patriot for saving oil for the nation?

The first day was a thrill and joy. The train was just late by 20 minutes. The journey was an eye-opener. There is a spirit of friendship among common people. They are ready to adjust, to help one more to sit in the cramped seats. They share their joys and frustrations with one another. It is possible to make new friends. This can never happen when you travel by scooter. I could observe the behaviour, ideas, philosophies, pains, frustrations, aspirations and ambitions of people. I was in touch with the real human world, away from my individualistic dream world.

But I was late to office. The journey that should have been completed in 25 minutes by scooter took one hour and 25 minutes. Another skill I needed was to be a shock absorber and athlete. To save oil for the nation and money for myself, I have to invest two additional hours daily. Is it worth it? I am back with my scooter.

Unless the Government offers good public transport that is punctual, quick and clean, individuals like me will never think of using public transport.

J. N. Manoharan  
11 Gandhi Nagar,  
Kulathur,  
Chennai 600 099

### Minerva times

Anna Varki's letter about the Old Minerva Theatre (MM,

What a damp squib our 50 years of Independence turned out to be! What should have been the celebration of a lifetime passed off like just another lazy Sunday. We thought we'd go dancing in the street — only to find the roads deserted and most people in bed. Out of sheer perversity we set off a few fire crackers — and that was greeted with hostile looks from our neighbours who were awakened by the noise.

There were a few events that created some interest for the public — like the 1050 metre flag that the DMC cadres carried to Ripon Building from Anna Square. At the IIT Cricket Stadium, 20,000 school children performed a mass drill and spelt out '50 years of Independence'. In Triplicane, TMC

April 16th) made me nostalgic about the Madras of the 1950s. Minerva was the first airconditioned theatre and was housed on the first floor of the building (ground floor had some commercial establishments) with a seating capacity of about 300. The seating arrangement was in a different manner, in twos and threes with flower pots in between, exuding a homely atmosphere. If anyone in the audience was unruly, or talked loudly, he would be refunded the cost of the ticket and sent out. The theatre staff used to count the number of persons in the queue and after counting would turn away the excess number; they would not permit them to stand in vain.

In those days, Minerva, Casino, New Elphinstone, Odeon and Midland used to screen only English films and what films they were! Such wholesome, entertaining and educative pictures do not seem to be produced any longer.

The audience at these English theatres was a disciplined lot; no whistling, no smoking, no chattering. The tickets would be issued just 15 minutes before the show and the people would enter in an orderly manner and go through magazines till the beginning of the show. What a contrast now!

Those days were really golden!

T.M. Sundararaman  
19 Nallappan Street,  
Mylapore,  
Chennai 600 004.

Councillor Nagarajan took to the streets with brooms to clean up the area (new brooms sweep clean?). In the villages just south of Madras, school-children took out a bullock cart procession, acted out skits and pledged to look after the environment. At Stella Maris College, students and staff met in a thanksgiving service. August 15, 1947 also happened to be their founding day, so the post office issued a special cover with a drawing of the college building on it. At W.C.C., students cleaned up the campus, while the Indian Airlines office handed out sweets and paper flags to pin on your shirt. RPG

### by Mithran Devanesen

offered its cellular users free air time and the Chola Sheraton gave a 50% discount on food at the Peshawari to its cardholders. Pepsi sponsored an all-night disco to which India's Michael Jackson, film star Prabhudeva, was supposed to turn up and shake a leg. A few buildings hoisted the tricolour and some hoardings sprang up announcing their advertisers' ride on the bandwagon. Most people and institutions, however, seemed to have opted for small, private flag-hoisting ceremonies.

Two projects that didn't get off the ground due to corporate indifference was a 50-metre long cake, the sale proceeds of which were to go to CRY, and a project to have 1,00,000 post-cards distributed to schools and colleges in Madras, to be posted to anyone outside the city with a message of National Integration on it.

At the national level, the PM called for satyagraha against corruption, forest brig- and Veerappan made it to the headlines and Bodo militants shot and killed 13 villagers.

At the international level things were different. New York city witnessed a mammoth pa-

rade, South Africa and Britain had major celebrations. American friends of mine from Washington called to tell me they attended a huge parade that culminated in a fireworks display and large servings of Indian food. Even Sri Lanka took a break from beating the day-lights out of us in cricket and the President admitted that India needs to play a vital role for peace and progress in her country.

Back at home, a champagne brunch I had planned, fell through, as most of my friends left town for the cooler climes of Bangalore. But August 15th, 1997 remains a sad day for me because, amongst all the goings-on, the one image that remains etched in my mind is that of a young, mentally disturbed beggar eating out of a garbage bin on Pantheon Road, home to several designer garmentware and up-market shops.

As one of Midnight's Children I took freedom as my birthright. After seven years of living in the West, I returned home because I wanted to be a first class citizen and not an immigrant. I am proud to be Indian (and I don't need a Timex watch to tell me so). I am proud of our culture and heritage, of the great strides this country has made, but the downside of life for millions of my countrymen sans basic needs — food, shelter, healthcare — makes me weep. After 50 years of Independence, perhaps the overwhelming statistics of our population did not give us room to celebrate in a style that would have told the world that we have arrived, that we have placed our footprints in the sands of history, that we are a Nation on the move. Perhaps the next 50 years will be different, but I despair for the MTV generation that must take over the reins. What legacy do we leave them? Will Kellogg's cornflakes replace idlis and sambar for breakfast?

Despite it all I am still proud to look heavenward and shout 'Vande Mataram'.

# Quest for views on Sustainable Chennai priorities continues

Having focussed on five major issues in the first stage of the Sustainable Chennai Project — Water and Sanitation, Urban Infrastructure, the Economy and Urban Poverty, Environmental Management and Pollution Control, and Land Use and Development — and chosen, from the various recommendations made, three thrust areas — the waterways, road congestion and improving sanitation among the weaker sections and in Greater Chennai — I fail to understand why the inaugural and plenary sessions of the recent 'City Con-

people's sector, pointed out the following as important issues:

1. Depolluting the waterways in Chennai and maintaining them in good condition;
2. Garbage collection and disposal should be effectively implemented with the active cooperation of the public;
3. Action should be taken to improve our living environment by removing and rehabilitating all the cattle in the city;
4. Employment generation, economic development and poverty alleviation should

## by a Special Correspondent

sultation Workshop' had to search for key issues all over again.

Since, however, they were sought again and recorded, I report what several VIPs in the City feel are their concerns for it. Dr Arcot Ramachandran, former Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, drew attention to the following key issues facing Chennai:

1. Environmental degradation and the need to maintain green areas in cities;
2. Understanding the need to conserve and carefully use water and other resources;
3. Effective monitoring of pollution levels;
4. Encouraging public transport systems such as trams and LRT;
5. Providing adequate safety for pedestrians on the roads;
6. Working towards economic growth and employment generation;
7. Democratising and decentralising the planning and development process and evolving desirable strategies;
8. Careful accounting of social, economic and environmental aspects;
9. Strengthening local governments and involving community based groups;
10. Creating public awareness by educating the users and providing training that works towards attitudinal changes for public co-operation and involvement.

The key interventionists, many of them VIPs from the

receive top priority while working out strategies and programmes. The TNSCB should not only function as a provider of housing, but should also aim at human resources development among slum dwellers;

5. Children should have access to quality-based primary education. This step, if taken, would help greatly in achieving the goals;
6. Existing rules, regulations and provisions of various acts should be enforced strictly;
7. Use of hoardings along highways and indiscriminate advertising on city roads, should be curbed;
8. The Adyar river estuary and other water bodies should be conserved, protected and improved to function as a natural habitat;
9. The experience of Calcutta and Surat should be studied, and taken note of for Chennai;
10. The public should be treated as customers by the Government agencies and Government, in turn, should use the media to make people aware of their responsibilities and create among them a sense of belonging.

Almost as though to convince themselves that they were on the right track, the organisers of the Consultation handed out a questionnaire which sought prioritisation of the City's problems by the few hundred present at the inaugural session. The choice given them was:

## The Consultation recommends...

(Continued from Page 1)

systems. This could be by rationalising the bus routes, bus stops, longer bus-stop spacing, optimal mix of different sizes of buses, etc. The feasibility of introducing an exclusive bus lane along major roads, such as IRR, could be examined.

4. To make the bus transport system sustainable, it is necessary that fares are fixed realistically, commensurate with the operating cost.

5. There must be a sense of self-restraint on the part of every individual in the use of private motorised vehicles. They should strive to make as much use as possible of public transport. Car-pooling and van-pooling should be encouraged.

### B. MAXIMISING THE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

1. As trips by cycle and foot constitute about 50% of the total trips in the metropolis, it is imperative that there must be commensurate efforts to promote their cause considering their eco-friendliness. The existing footpaths should be made walkable and efforts must be made to introduce cycle tracks along major routes. Incentives in the form of a cycle allowance may be given to cycle users.

2. To decongest the city-core, the planning and development of the mofussil bus termi-

nal at Koyambedu should be implemented expeditiously.

3. An appropriate land use plan to ensure evenly distributed traffic on both sides of the road by eliminating uni-directional flow and to reduce travel in the metropolis is necessary.

4. Lorry-attracting commercial activities should be relocated outside the CBD area.

5. Planning and development of a special market for the auto scrap trade in the city fringe should be examined.

6. Off-street parking standards should be made more stringent so that there is adequate parking space in the multistoreyed buildings for the occupants and their visitors.

7. Traffic enforcement should be made more stringent. Offending road users, particularly bus drivers and lorry-drivers, should be suitably fined.

8. Overaged vehicles should be removed from the roads in view of the high air pollution caused by them.

9. The potential of a Geographical Information System (GIS) should be exploited for traffic enforcement.

10. While short-term measures are implemented, efforts must be made for long-term planning of transport infrastructure. Provision for over-passes, under-passes and grade separators should form part of the medium-term solutions.

### 3. Improving sanitation for the poor and in the suburbs

#### A. NON-HAZARDOUS SOLID AND LIQUID WASTES

##### 1. Primary level

Wherever possible local initiatives shall be developed, with each Ward/Division Councillor in the Local Body taking responsibility for this and working with NGOs.

##### 2. Secondary level

Privatisation either through contracting or as business propositions would be more effective. The package may include not only transport of waste but also its treatment.

#### B. HOSPITAL AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

The responsibility of its proper segregation and disposal should be the sole responsibility of the waste-generator. There should be strict monitoring of waste-generation and disposal by the Local Body.

In the case of small units of waste-generators, the Local

11. The feasibility of cleaning the Cooum river and using the banks of the river for road development should be examined.

#### C. IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

1. A mechanism should be established to measure the pollution of air caused by traffic and provide necessary feedback to the planning process.

2. Public awareness about the disadvantages of using private transport, including its adverse impact on the environment in terms of air and noise pollution, its contribution to environmental degradation, and the positive effects of using transit systems should be created by utilising the media.

#### D. IMPLEMENTING MECHANISM

1. Considering the limitations of the resources at the disposal of Government, it is pertinent that the participation of the private sector in the development process be encouraged. It is desirable that a market-oriented approach is pursued in the implementation of the transport schemes.

2. The action plan prepared should be implemented with a timeframe, monitored and evaluated by a broadbased committee, comprising of all the stakeholders.

Body could assist in setting up common treatment plants.

#### C. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. The Working Group shall meet on fixed days in a month so that the public and NGO sector can participate more effectively.

2. It is necessary that NGOs form coalitions and also sub-groups if necessary to ensure community participation and effectively interact with the main working groups.

#### D. TRAINING

1. Training is one of the most important aspects for sustainable development. This should embrace not only the citizens and citizen groups, in general, but especially the technical and administrative personnel. In fact, doctors and paramedical staff in hospital management require intensive training in understanding the complexities and handling of hospital waste.

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A commemoration feature:  
E. Krishna Iyer 1897-1968

## Saving a dance in distress

Some persons fight for the right causes, win battles, ensure that their achievements yield benefits to society, shine in well-deserved limelight, but then disappear into the shadows of time, leaving succeeding generations hardly aware of their place in history. E. Krishna Iyer was such a fighter, but is now half-forgotten. As described last fortnight, he played a decisive role in the renaissance of Tamil Nadu's classical dance and its transformation from *Sadir* (a.k.a. *Dasiattam*) to Bharata Natyam.

Krishna Iyer was born on August 9, 1897 in a village in Tirunelveli District in the Tamil country. He was the eighth of the 14 children of Kailasa Iyer and Ananthalakshmi Ammal. As he was the eighth child, that too a male, the parents named him after the eighth incarnation of Vishnu and the eighth son of Devaki. The comparison did not stop there. Like the mythological Krishna, who was given in adoption to Yasoda and Nanda, this Krishna too was given in adoption, to Eswara Iyer and Meenakshi Ammal who lived in Kallidaikurichi, a village in the same district. They were a land-owning middle-class family.

Kallidaikurichi was once called the 'Brahmin Chettinadu' by a wisecracking Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, presumably because it was noted as much for its considerable number of rich families with large tracts of land or who engaged in the hundi business and handloom cloth trade as for its orthodoxy and traditional culture. Every summer, there would be marriages in its rich families and no wedding among any of those families was complete without high class music and dance performances. Apart from eminent musicians, *Sadir* exponents, such as Muthuratnambal, would be engaged to provide entertainment. E.K. grew up in this atmosphere and from a young age acquired a taste for good music and dance.

As a youth Krishna Iyer joined Madras Christian College and took his B.A. degree. Then he studied Law in the Trivandrum and Madras Law Colleges. While he was at the Law College hostel in Trivandrum, an amateur dramatic house requested him to play a leading female role in their play. The play was Sambanda Mudaliar's *Sarangadhara*. A few days after the play, he was pleas-

antly surprised to read good notices about his histrionic talent.

Spurred by this, E.K. wanted to receive musical training. He studied with violin *vidwan* Neelakanta Iyer of Papangulam and, in Madras, he came under the tutelage of Violin Srinivasa Iyer of Tirunelveli, who, above everything else, taught him a critical appreciation of the arts. E.K. started to attend all music concerts of note and absorb the finer points.

E.K. was called to the Bar in 1922 and developed a decent practice both on the original side and the appellate side of the High Court of Madras.

The next year, he joined the ranks of Suguna Vilas Sabha, the premier theatrical group of the time and played several prominent roles in Tamil



As Malavika. (Photographs courtesy SRUTI.)

dramas. According to Mudaliar, E.K. besides being an actor of remarkable ability, was also a great male dancer whose performances were the best he had seen.

E.K. was inspired to become a dancer by the example of one Rangavadevelu of the Suguna Vilas Sabha who was the first male dancer to don and perform in female costumes. E.K. got his chance to take on this new role when he played the part of Malavika in Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra*. The part required him to act, sing and dance. In preparation for the dance sequences, he learnt *Sadir* from Madurantakam Jagadambal, a celebrated dancer who was a disciple of Samu Nattuvanar, the maternal grand-



E Krishna Iyer in the pot and plate cosmic dance.

a member of the Congress Committee. Not surprisingly, he was appointed to serve as one of the Joint Secretaries of the Reception Committee of the Music Conference and he worked tirelessly not only to make the Conference a success but also to make the establishment of the Music Academy a reality. He was one of its Secretaries during 1928-32, 1934-35 and 1937-39.

Even from the very early years of the Academy, E.K. was eager to introduce dance in its programmes. T.L. Venkatarama Iyer, who later became a

## by ARUDRA

judge of the Supreme Court, has recalled how he and most of the other members of the Academy opposed E.K.'s attempts. But, although very eager, E.K. was not impatient and he bided his time, awaiting a suitable opportunity. Meanwhile he was incarcerated for his political activity.

E.K. did not idle his time away while in prison. He met many a leader there and tried to convince them of the need to revive the dance. Most of them agreed with him. In any case, he was not alone in his efforts to represent the water and a pot the cosmos. The infusion of the spiritual element into *Sadir* thus started in the late 1920s.

\* \* \*

In 1925, a group of prominent citizens of Madras, among them E. Krishna Iyer, envisaged the creation of the Music Academy. Its establishment three years later was facilitated by the convening of an All-India Music conference as an adjunct to the 1927 session of the Indian National Congress held in Madras. E.K., besides being a lawyer, actor, musician and dancer, was also a freedom-fighter and

them. Kalki started to write supportive articles in *Ananda Vikatan*.

When public opinion began to soften towards the desirability of saving *Sadir* dance with its good qualities, E.K. requested his colleagues in the Academy to boldly introduce dance in the Academy monthly and annual programmes and they agreed, notwithstanding stiff opposition from C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, T.L. Venkatarama Iyer, Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri and others belonging to the elite. In 1931 the era of dance started at the Academy.

In the early 1930s, E.K. started yet another facet of his career and became a music and dance critic as well. Khasa Subba Rao, who founded *Suwantra* which later became *Swaraja*, has pointed out that when E.K. took up this new line, there were no readymade technical terms in English for use in dealing with Indian arts. E.K. had to improvise a new vocabulary to do justice to his assignments. The public and the artists alike thought that E.K. was an impartial critic, although there were a couple of contrasting occasions, once when he unfortunately allowed a nephew to use his name to attack a dance recital of Balasarawati's which he himself had not attended; another when he wrote a review of a radio programme which in fact had been cancelled.

As one of the Secretaries of the Academy, E.K. invited Rukmini Devi to attend a dance recital of Meenakshisundaram Pillai's disciples on the New Year's Day of 1935. After seeing the dance, Rukmini Devi decided to learn the art herself. According to her own testimony, she consulted E.K. and he showed great interest in her desire to learn the art. Pandanallur Muthiah Pilai, son of Meenakshisundaram, has recorded that his father was reluctant to accept Rukmini Devi as a disciple but E.K. had prevailed upon him to do so. E.K. considered Rukmini Devi's success important since she could win friends and influence other people with her passionate advocacy and example.

In 1936, E.K. did another great service to Bharata Natyam. He was, at that time, also the correspondent of the Teachers' College of Music started by the Music Academy. One day an old man in his sixties came to the office and introduced himself as a retired school teacher who could teach *abhinaya* and make fancy things from paper. He wanted employment. After seeing his demonstrations, E.K. arranged for him to teach Bharata Natyam to two young sisters, Selvamani and Saroja. Following two years of training, their *arangetram* was

(Continued on Page 8)

## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN's questions pertain to the period August 16 to 31. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.

- On August 31st, Parliament saw a new record set. What?
- Why was 2nd Lt. Puneet Datta in the news recently?
- Who has been named the new Managing Director of Maruti Udyog Limited?
- India's first naval communications museum has come up at..?
- Name the two film luminaries nominated by the President to the Rajya Sabha.
- Which 'godman' was sentenced to two successive life terms and fined Rs. 66.40 lakh for committing various atrocities?
- The 'Qawwali Shahenshah' passed away on August 16th. Who?
- An interim report, running to about 2000 pages, on a national tragedy six years ago, was submitted on August 28th. What report?
- Complete the list: Princess Diana, Dodi Fayed and .....
- Who was awarded the Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavana award on the deceased Premier's birthday on August 20th?
- The U.S. Patent Office has, on an objection by CSIR, cancelled a patent on a remedial substance. What?
- Name the Chief Electoral Officer of Tamil Nadu who passed away on August 25th.
- The Parliament has put a curb on 'Freedom of Speech'. Explain.
- The Union Defence Ministry has declassified 990 World War II records of which famous fighting force and put them on public display?
- Here is a question for the MTV Generation literally. Name the four VJs selected after a nation-wide search.

\* \* \*

- Which team annexed the prestigious Buchi Babu title this year?
- On August 23rd, a flushing operation was conducted in the vicinity of the IAF Station at Tambaram. What was flushed out?
- On August 18th, Route 27B of the MTC was the first to have a new feature. What?
- Which telephone exchange in the city is the first to introduce a 'work order completion intimation system', a pioneering concept in subscriber audit?
- Which Chennai-based golfer won the South India ladies golf title in the competition held in the city recently?

(Answers on Page 7)

# Helping to build a better world

I chose India because I heard the project would be very tough," says young Leonard Kraaijenbrink, "but I've been having more problems with the heat and the spicy chicken!" Leonard is one of 35 spirited young persons from the Netherlands, who, as a part of an organisation called World Servants, are in India to build, with their own hands, an extension building for St. Thomas' Care Home, an orphanage for boys, in Sriperumbudur.

These young men and women, ranging in age from 16 to 23, chose to do something different with their vacation this summer. Inspired by the idea of offering practical help to people in poorer countries, they joined World Servants because this organisation gave them an opportunity to build orphanages, schools and clinics in parts of the world where these were most needed. Under the guidance of project leaders, several World Servants groups leave every summer for countries like Ghana, Kenya, Egypt, Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic — and, now, India.

Unfamiliar activities like brick-laying and cement-mixing



The World Servants group volunteers from Holland spent three weeks at the St. Thomas' Orphanage in Sriperumbudur, where they helped put up a new building. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

carried on several animated conversations at once — in Dutch, English, and a peculiar sign language for the benefit of the local masons hired to lend a hand with the construction. In fact, they seemed more comfortable relating to these workers from a nearby village, sharing with them a common dignity of labour, than they were with strangers from the city. Shy, and hesitant at first to speak in English, they took a while to relax and come forward to speak about themselves. A few had been on trips to Third World countries before, and these seemed more at ease than the others.

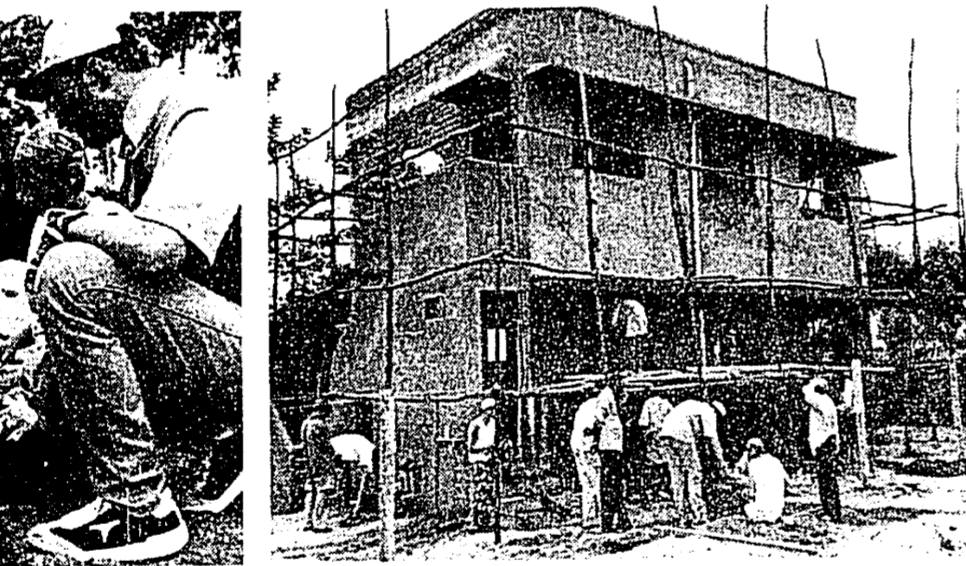
Unfamiliar activities like brick-laying and cement-mixing

aside, the sheer heat is enough to knock people who are not accustomed to it off their feet. Yet this team have stuck doggedly to their tasks, not quailing even under the mid-day sun, their faces flushed with exertion and the determination to see their project through.

Sleeves rolled up, hair dripping wet with perspiration, they

● by Kavita Milner

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The World Servants group volunteers from Holland spent three weeks at the St. Thomas' Orphanage in Sriperumbudur, where they helped put up a new building. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

## On the Bookshelves

Rajiv and Sanjay, throwing light on their triumphs and tribulations, both nationally and internationally. It provides a glimpse into their private lives as well.

**Rajaji — A Life** (Penguin, Rs.250.00) by Rajmohan Gandhi is a condensed version of the two volumes on Rajaji's life published earlier. Gandhi paints an unparalleled portrait of one of India's greatest politician-statesmen. Gandhi is the grandson of Rajaji and Mahatma Gandhi.

Now from the people who made Independence a re-

Edwin de Borst, a young naval architect, was particularly happy to interact with visitors to the site, and took time off from his building to introduce some of his friends. Though the conditions here are rather different from what they are used to back home, Marloes Mege-man (18) and Petra Eveleens (19) agree that "it is very nice to work here with Indian people". The children at the orphanage enjoy having these "foreigners" around, and have already learnt to pronounce their names and to sing a Dutch song. Petra, training to be a nurse, says that she has found the ideal opportunity to practise her nursing, since a good one-third of her friends promptly fell sick on arrival in India!

Joop Van der Meer, the leader of the group, came across as a rugged, intelligent man with a wry sense of humour and a genuine love of his fellowmen. The founder of World Servants, he says that it all began in 1981 when he led the construction of a social centre for the underprivileged in Cairo. In 1986, when a hurricane hit the Dominican Republic, he took a group of 46 young persons there

Herman, a fresh-faced teenager with tousled hair, and Edwin say that for them World Servants has been a great way to see other parts of the world and to mix with people from other countries. Many of the other members of the group were particularly keen to visit India because they felt it would be "interesting". But their answers to questions about their impressions of India were always brief — "Hot!" they said, mopping their brows feverishly.

Talking about chapters of World Servants in other countries, Joop Van der Meer explains that there are now equal partner organisations in the Domination Republic and Kenya, countries from which people had expressed the desire to do similar work. Coming out of the tiny cramped dormitory with its sea of white mattresses and mosquito nets — the temporary home of the team — he says, smiling, "If you want to start one in India, the initiative has to come from you".

Leaving the construction site, after an hour of watching these young people from another land lay brick upon brick under the most daunting conditions, Van der Meer's words echo in my head all the way back to Madras, the busy traffic and screeching lorry horns taking second place for once.

Gautam Padmanabhan



Volunteers from Holland plastering a wall at the St. Thomas' Orphanage, Sriperumbudur.

to help with re-building tasks. From then on, the numbers have increased every year and projects have been organised in association with the local people in various countries who need help. This year, the organisation is taking 566 volunteers from Europe to less developed parts of the world, with their work being subsidised by the Dutch government.

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The nightingale of South India, M.S. Subbulakshmi, is about to take the North by storm. The Hindi version of the film Meera is being released on Friday, August 15, and will be one more reason for making the day memorable.

The film shows an enchanting Subbulakshmi who does perfect justice to her musical gifts as she enacts the role of Rajasthani princess Meerabai, who later becomes an itinerant singer, addressing her songs to a demystified ideal of Krishna.

Poetess-politician Sarojini Naidu, while introducing Subbulakshmi in the Hindi version of Meera to North Indian audiences, talks about "the beauty of her voice, the magic of her personality, the gracious charity of her heart." In the wafting notes of *Yaad Aave*, the Hindi version of *Kaatrinile Varum Geetam* (written by Kalki Krishnamurthi), Subbulakshmi certainly sets her inner spirit free with amazing lyrical abandon.

Her captivating rendition of 18 Meera bhajans in Hindi cuts across the linguistic barrier that had so far restricted her fame to south of the Vindhya and is certain to give her an instant and countrywide constituency of admirers.

Subbulakshmi's mother, Shanmukhavadi, herself a renowned veena player whose fame

MELODY QUEEN: Subbulakshmi does perfect justice to her musical gifts as she enacts the role of Rajasthani princess Meerabai in the film Meera.

## Celebrating with dance & controversy

The dance community in Chennai has been offering its own inputs to the nationwide celebration of the 50th year of Independence. Apart from the official presentation that has brought music and dance from all over India to Kalakshetra, the Narada Gana Sabha's Natyaramam association came up with the brilliant idea of asking dancers to compose dances for contemporary poems and for songs from the Independence movement. The challenge was accepted by many dancers willing to show a

### Answers to Quiz

- The Lok Sabha sat for a record 22 hours; 2. He has been awarded the Ashoka Chakra; 3. RSSLN Bhaskarudu; 4. Southern Naval Command's Signal School at Kochi; 5. Shabana Azmi and Mrinal Sen; 6. Swami Premnanda; 7. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan; 8. The Justice M.C. Jain Commission's enquiry into the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi; 9. Henri Paul. All killed in a car crash; 10. Lata Mangeshkar; 11. Using turmeric to heal wounds; 12. K.

● On August 14th, The Telegraph, Calcutta, brought out a unique supplement. It was an August 14, 1947 newspaper — written by the journalists of 1997. Its Arts Section featured the following:

## SOUTHERN NIGHTINGALE SET TO WIN NATION'S HEART

### CINEMA

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begun accompanying her mother to all concerts.

Srinivasa Iyengar was urged to initiate Subbulakshmi into the rigours of classical music.

Iyengar began her lessons with the ritualistic breaking of the coconut and went on to teach her the basics upto the *varnam* stage.

By this time, the magical quality of Subbulakshmi's voice was already evident and mother and daughter changed roles. Shanmukhavadi began sitting with the audience at her daughter's concerts.

It was the same *prakasam* that captured the attention of T.T. Krishnamachari at a concert at the Soundarya Mahal.

In the early 1930s, at the young age of 17, Subbulakshmi's stature as a musician was already at par with leading exponents of Carnatic music. She was then in-

vited to sing at the Madras Music Academy.

By 1938, Subbulakshmi, who was already being visualised as something of a Chola icon come to life, had become as much of a visual sensation as a musical sensation.

Director K. Subrahmanyam invited her to play the lead role in *Sevasadan*, a Tamil film replete with nationalistic motifs. In the next few years, as the freedom struggle gains in intensity, one of the most celebrated scenes of the film has become the shot of Subbulakshmi working on the spinning wheel between calendar portraits of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi.

The success of this film was followed by *Sakuntala*, also in Tamil. It is based on Kalidasa's classic and Subbulakshmi plays the lead opposite singer G.N. Balasubramaniam. Then came *Savitri*, also in Tamil, where she plays the role of saint-singer Narada.

It was at around this time that Subbulakshmi met Tyagaraja Sadasivam, a fervent nationalist and dedicated follower of Gandhiji's *khaddar* programme. Sadasivam and Subbulakshmi were married in 1940 at Tirunelveli in a lavish ceremony with wedding expenses amounting to a fabulous sum of Rs. 150.

Sadasivam has been a strong, positive influence for Subbulakshmi whose performance in Meera will definitely become a cornerstone in her career.

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suit her body, attitude and the work she puts in. The Kalakshetra style emphasised the body line and the *araimandi* (half-sitting position). Many dancers have become well-known and popular without the prescribed *araimandi*. While accusations fly about the lack of fluidity in the Kalakshetra style and the lack of technique in the other styles, one dancer has proved that the two can be beautifully blended. Leela Samson is a Kalakshetra prod-

uct and has brought her own inputs into her dance made rich with the Kalakshetra technique. The fluidity and grace is all her own and the quiet dignity and slow pace of her dance make it all the more delectable. At the NGS-Natyaramam contemporary poets challenge, she chose a poem by Nirmala Suresh as a tribute to the great banyan tree of the Theosophical Society. Nirmala wrote the Tamil poem after a cyclonic storm had brought down the 400-year-old tree. She recalls the day she spent with the tree while doing a TV programme on it and the self-confidence it oozed despite its shrivelled trunk. Leela Samson's depiction of this modern poem could have had more excitement in it, but it left us with the quiet satisfaction of having seen a very aesthetic production.

Leela and the other senior dancers showed at this performance that the traditional dance is actually very contemporary and completely adaptable. The celebration also marks a healthy trend, bringing together contemporary literature, music and dance.

## NOSTALGIA

# Surprising the Olympians

The comments of K N Prabhu on the Hockey match between the Indian Olympic XI and an All-Madras XI some 65 years ago kindled the memories of this writer who witnessed that match.

It was a packed house at the MCC ground that saw some vintage hockey by the Olympic team on its way to the Los Angeles Olympics. The year, I think, was 1932.

The match was a thriller, the first big match of that order to be played at Madras. The Indian team consisted of the redoubtable Dhyana Chand, the greatest centre-forward of all time, and his brother the renowned Roop Singh. The other forwards were Carr on the right extreme and Jaffer, a fine figure with a moustache curving upward at the ends, on the left extreme. The other inside player was a Sardarji, could it be Gunmeet Singh? The centre-half was the great Penniger, the captain; my memory fails who the other two halves were, though their faces are etched in my vision. Hammond and Tapsell were the backs and Allen the goalkeeper. It was a stellar team, all great players, the pick of the Indian Hockey dream.

The Madras XI was made up of, among others, Gilbert and Blankley, two fine forwards and M J Gopalan, who played a fine match and was to emerge as a great star, at centre half. Todd and Webber were the backs and Aide, the goalkeeper. I am unable to recall the other names.

The match turned out to be a thriller. Madras fought gradually and, with Gilbert and Blankley ably fed by Gopalan, made many an assault on the Indian fortress, breaching it on quite a few occasions.

Amidst delirious support from the home crowd, Madras snatched the lead and, if I remember right, was leading 4-3 with less than 10 minutes left for close.

The ground went into raptures and some caustic comments were made about the impending defeat of the Olympic XI. Pankaj Gupta, the umpire overheard these comments and reported — "Wait, there are a few minutes left". Even as he was speaking the equaliser came and within a couple of minutes two more goals. In the

end, the Olympic team won 7-4 or 7-5.

Such champagne hockey provided by champions was something Madras had not witnessed before. But there was compensation for the locals. Blankley and Gopalan revealed their class, particularly the latter who had arrived as one of the greatest centre-halves in the country. It was this performance which earned for him a place in the official Indian team which toured New Zealand a few years later. His brilliant performance on the tour, when he played in all the 'Test' matches, made him an automatic choice for the Berlin Olympics. The fact that he chose to go with the Indian cricket team to the U.K. is another story.

An Octogenarian

## The way to referee!

I was just 18 when I was taken to witness the MUC Gold Cup Hockey Final between Spencer's and Khalsa Blues. The referee was T.M. Ramachandran who was nicknamed Laddu. He was very popular for his dramatic actions.

The game was a thrilling one, no quarter asked, nor given. The pace was so fast, causing rough play by both the sides and the ever-vigilant referee regularly pulled up the offenders. There was a following among the crowd of spectators for the referee and his every action was applauded.

When there was violence after the visitors were leading, the referee whistled and beckoned all the 22 players to fall in line at the centre line and individually warned each player, irrespective of whether he had indulged in rough play or not. He severely admonished them and categori-

cally told them that if there was another foul of playing the man instead of the ball, the game would be abandoned and he would recommend that the team that was ahead be declared the winners.

Play resumed but tempers had not cooled, and when a Spencer player raised his stick while tackling a Khalsa player, a free-for-all ensued. The referee blew his whistle, the longest I've ever heard on a playground and called it a day. The tournament committee sat immediately and declared the visitors, who were then leading 2-1, winners.

Such discipline and fast decisions are not seen nowadays. Referees like Laddu are rare commodities now.

K.S. Kandhaswamy  
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Chennai 600 041

## Saving a dance in distress

(Continued from Page 5)

celebrated in 1938. The performance of the sisters was of a high standard and it was only then the old man revealed himself as Mattumannargudi Muthukumara Pillai, a first-rate master of the authentic dance tradition.

Muthukumara Pilai had given up his intimate association with *Sadir* when it came under a cloud and had taken up a teacher's job and eventually retired. When he heard that the dance had been rescued in Madras, he came to the right person and got rehabilitated. He trained Baby Saroja, Baby Ka-

mala, Baby Srimati (sister of Y.G. Doraiswamy) and Baby Meenambal, daughter of E.K. He served as a dance master in Kalakshetra for some time and gave Rukmini Devi further insights into the intricacies of Bharatanatyam. He also taught Mrinalini Sarabhai and Ram Gopal.

E.K. belonged to the socialist section of the Indian National Congress and his concern was always for the cultural welfare of the common people. That was the reason why, in his later endeavours, he concentrated on reforming Bhagavata Mela and rescuing the folk heritage. But even then he did not

forsake Bharata Natyam. In 1942 Baby Kamala's *arangetram* took place and she captivated the audience. E.K. took special interest in promoting her. With Kamala's advent, E.K.'s dreams started to come true. Many parents wanted their girls to learn Bharata Natyam and Kamala's dances sowed the seeds for a new group of dancers.

In his eventful life E.K. received many honours, awards, titles and tributes. The best was from Muthulakshmi Reddy, his one-time opponent as the leader of the Anti-Nautch movement. On his 61st birthday celebration, she said that E.K. had done a great service to

Bharata Natyam by regenerating and restoring it to its original purity and dignity and making it popular not only in every household but also in all educational institutions.

Ironically, however, E.K.'s influence in the Academy waned with the passage of years. In latter day chronicles, his contributions to the organisation seemed already half-forgotten. As Vazhuvoor Ramiah Pillai, a friend of E.K., would say: The world is like that.

(● This two-part feature is from a booklet published by the Madras Music Academy based on articles in *Srutii* by ARUDRA. Our acknowledgements to all of them.)

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