

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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Vol. VII No. 17

FREE ISSUE

December 16-31, 1997



Untended buildings, threatened buildings are Chepauk Palace above and the Bharat Insurance Building on right. Green growth flourishes on these and other buildings like them which should be at the top of any Heritage Building list. What are we doing to save such buildings, renovate them and protect them? (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

Save these buildings!

Will new V-C show the way?

Despite all promises to restore it, the Senate House of the University of Madras, one of the finest examples of Indo-Saracenic architecture in the City, is deteriorating day by

day. And there is no reason for this except what strikes us as a sheer lack of will to get going on the restoration.

When plans were drawn up to restore the building, not only was enough money raised to make a start (we understand there's some Rs.60 lakh in the kitty, about half of what, it was estimated, would be required about seven years ago) but the Expert Committee also appointed five specialist committees to study particular aspects of restoration and supervise the work that would be done in their specialities. About a year ago, these specialist committees were ready to go, but there seemed to be a search going on for a coordinator. To date, neither has the coordinator been found, nor has the Expert Committee made adequate efforts to push its advice through. The tragedy of this is that all on the Expert Committee are graduates of the University and most of them must have received their degrees in this very building. It strikes us as amazing that none among them seems to feel the necessity to restore in a hurry a building that should be considered an integral part of their lives!

The University now has a new Vice Chancellor, an engineer at that. Would it be too much to ask Dr. Manoharan — from one of the elite institutions of the New India — to take a greater interest in restoring a part of the traditions of this city? Would Dr. Manoharan the engineer take it upon himself to coordinate the effort and get work going on Senate House before it is too late? From his first day at the University he has been talking of action; would he set January 1998, a month from now, as the target date for stopping the deteriora-



tion of Senate House and commencing work on its restoration? Will he, as head of the premier educational institution in Chennai, set an example for others in the city?

Meanwhile, we welcome the appointment of R.C. Sharma as the Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, because, among other reasons, his last posting was as head of the Police Housing Corporation which is undertaking the restoration of the DGP's Office and State Police Headquarters on the Marina. While getting this work underway he was not only forthcoming with information but was always willing to lend his ear to suggestions. Madras Musings hopes he will take this a step further now and appoint an expert committee who know about conservation and restoration techniques and back them in putting their advice into practice. At the moment, the restoration work underway will undoubtedly give the building a new lease of life but it could, through the use of unfriendly techniques, shorten the building's overall life.

What the Police have begun

(Continued on Page 6)

The Veerappan paradox

Call him what you will — elephant poacher, sandalwood smuggler, murderer — but Veerappan has vexed Karnataka and Tamil Nadu for over 14 years by evading arrest. He has cost their exchequers millions of rupees and claimed the lives of 32 police personnel, 10 forest officers and 77 villagers.

Ironically, it is the state that has created Veerappan and many like him by alienating them from their land's resources. The paradox of Veerappan is that he was born of the uneasy alliance between the law and the law of the people.

The law hounds smugglers, murderers and poachers. But at the same time it deprives the people of the resources of the land. The law of the people says that the crop that grows in your field is yours. But the law of the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu makes sandalwood the exclusive property of the government, be it in the forest or in the field of an individual.

While a citizen does not have any responsibility for the tree that is on government land, he is responsible for the protection of the tree when it is on his land. The person who cannot protect a tree that grows on his land from loggers is penalised. Also, the state forest department is free to issue licences for the removal of sandalwood trees from a particular

plot. It normally pays the person 75 per cent of an amount predetermined by the department.

Tamil Nadu Minister of State for Forests, P.N. Palaniswamy, admits that illegal trade in sandalwood smuggling gets a fillip because of the inconsistency of Indian laws towards sandalwood. "There should be a uniform policy on sandalwood. Laws applicable in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are separate from the rest of the country", he says.

There are efforts to change the government rules regarding sandalwood at the state level. There are two opinions in the forest department on sandalwood policy. One is for opening it up and encouraging farm-

ers to plant and grow sandal trees. The proponents of this policy feel that when the tree is made accessible to the people, sandalwood smugglers like Veerappan would be marginalised. "It is a crop as far as the farmer is concerned. Give the people a stake in such resources and let market forces dictate sandalwood policy and they will protect the crop with their lives," is their line of argument.

The other view, epitomised by the Principal Chief Conser-



Veerappan as seen by CSE-Down to Earth Features caricaturist NICKY THOMAS.

vator of Forests, Karnataka, B.S. Adappa, is against liberalisation. "When there are no controls, anyone can exploit the situation," he argues. Under the present policy, when a seller brings sandalwood to a government depot, which has the exclusive selling rights, he has to bring along documentary evidence that the sandal belongs to him. Any change in policy would do away with this check, and anyone could sell sandalwood to the depots.

He does have a point. Changes that would make sense, he says, are payment of 90 per cent of the market value to the grower and the removal of the responsibility clause, which has created the maximum resistance among people.

(Continued on Page 8)

● by
Rajat Banerji

Rain, Rain, go away... till...!

Given the parched state of Tamil Nadu for most of the year, the November-December rains are welcome. They assure us another year of water, another year of crops. But in the last few years, *The Man From Madras Musings* has been crying "rain, rain, go away" and adding, "at least till Chennai is ready to cope with rain". Madras, certainly, was never like what Chennai is unless a cyclone hit the city. What's happened since we got Chennai?

MMM lives in a part of the city that two years ago hardly ever got waterlogged, even after the heaviest of rains. Now all it needs is a good hour-long shower and the whole area, covering at least a couple of square kilometres, is under at least a foot of water. And if you have a few days' rain, as at the beginning of December, you are virtually marooned unless you walk or cycle. Two- or three- and four-wheeler owners and drivers drive through the area in a state of tension if they dare attempt to travel on roads that become rivers; having engines die out on you and a vehicle blocking other traffic is an accepted part of every journey here.

The moment the rain stops for a few hours, the rivers vanish like magic, except for the occasional, but avoidable, deep pool. What is left, however, are roads with crumpled surfaces, roads with potholes, roads with width-long trenches, roads that are nightmares. Some roads are almost impassable during the rain as well as after the rain, so battered are they. And if you decide walking is the solution, the mud, the soaked garbage not collected for days and which has now spread itself, and the heady mixture of mud and garbage are enough to daunt anyone who is the teeniest bit finicky. Not to mention the open manholes and deep potholes hidden in the water and posing a threat to life.

This is not MMM's experience alone. This is the experience of tens of thousands, perhaps even millions, in several parts of the city. Why, it's even the experience of all those who work at the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority. The road by one entrance to it is now being used as a 'central' garbage dump (should MMM consider it 'fill' for an overbridge that's taking its time coming up?) and the mess it is in after the rains as well as the sad state of that particular stretch of road only emphasises the fact that even the planners are helpless to save this city.

Stormwater drains kept uncleared and ill-maintained, road-laying of the worst quality despite the money spent on it, and uncleared garbage with no containers for it, all contribute to a citizenry that is positively beginning to hate rain — no matter how much it is needed, and welcome on that count. More and more seem to feel like singing "Rain, Rain, go away/Come again an-

other day/When Chennai is made ready/For cats and dogs and downpours steady!" MMM is no poet, but even bad verse is more morale-building than rain in a city not up to meeting the challenge of its consequences.

Secondary business

When Anuradha Rajivan, a Civilian who enjoys writing anything from children's stories to serious studies on women's literacy, was looking for a title for her latest book — on fifty women in enterprise in India, a FICCI Ladies' Organisation celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Independence — titles suggested to her included 'Minding Her Own Business' and 'Secondary Business'. And *The Man From Madras Musings* heard her narrate the other day that both were typical reactions to businesswomen; either people were being frivolous about what were considered ventures for a lark or there was a chauvinistic streak that tended to make many feel that business was purely secondary to housekeeping. But what she found was that all fifty women entrepreneurs she met, from the 80-plus Sumati Morarjee to the young matrons adding to the family income, considered what each was doing "A Business of Her Own", the title Rajivan chose.

It might be "a business of her own", but banks did not appear

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

to think so. One thing Rajivan found common to all the women entrepreneurs was the difficulties they faced with banks when they first started out. Some banks wanted them to show results before their applications were considered, others were not sure of the woman's ability to run the business, all wanted male signatures as guarantors. In fact, one woman running a successful business for years had to get her husband's signature as guarantor despite the fact that he was running a business that was in difficulties! On the other hand, whatever the attitude of banks, most of the women found the men in their families taking a more positive attitude to their enterprises, though few males actively suggested they shed domestic responsibilities. The women might run businesses of their own, but they had to, in almost all cases, look after their homes and families as well. Which made for a long day — or, as Rajivan put it, better time management.

Among other things Rajivan found during the course of her interviews for the book was that almost none of the women was qualified for the business she managed. In most cases — almost all were graduates, something significantly different from elsewhere — their qualifications were worlds apart from what



Garbage dump or land 'fill'? Whatever it is, it makes getting to the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority's headquarters, just across the road, a nauseous experience, with both visitors and staff having to run a gauntlet of malodour. (Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

their businesses required. Nevertheless, they learnt fast on the job. They also did not particularly employ more women, though male employees were not always comfortable with them. Above all, none of them found that being a woman was an advantage in business.

Discussion time, MMM found, brought from Madras Book Club members a couple of other features outside the findings of the book. Men are generally more diffident when raising issues when a woman is the head of an organisation, the result being a slightly more dictatorial attitude on the part of the woman, suggested one member. The women for their part find it more difficult to cope with bribery, corruption and other such uncomfortable demands, suggested

another. As someone said, there are obvious differences between men and women! *Vive le difference!*

Being tough

Judging by the radio and television reports after the recent bomb blasts on the trains from Madras, *The Man From Madras Musings* can't help but think that the one thing our leaders are leaders in is in uttering inanities. Or is it that the audio and video journalists see only such inanities as news!

Through programme after programme over a 24-hour period at the time, all MMM heard was the country's leadership saying that investigations would be pursued vigorously, that when the culprits were caught they would be punished severely, that the greatest precautions would be taken to ensure that these dastardly crimes were not repeated in the future. Surely, every crime needs to be investigated vigorously, surely the guilty must be punished according to the grievousness of their crime and surely the duty of every government is to ensure that its citizens are protected from such crimes.

What, then, was new about what all these leaders of the nation kept repeating? Was it necessary to give such inanities so much air time in this age of

was its President-Emeritus R. Venkateswaran. The *Man From Madras Musings* was not very clear what the felicitations were for till he discovered that the Forum had jumped the gun a bit; Venkateswaran, the doyen of Indian printers, would next year, 1998, complete 60 years from the time he was one of that group of four who were the first in India to receive the Licentiate in Printing Technology and were able to put the initials LPT behind their names. That designation came as a result of student leader Chandy Kurien meeting Prime Minister (as the Chief Minister was then known) C. Rajagopalachari with a delegation of printing students and arguing that Printing, a trades course, should be treated on par with Engineering. Appropriately, the Chief Guest at the function was Dr. V. C. Kulandaiswamy who had been Director of Technical Education and then, as Vice Chancellor of Anna University, had helped start the first degree course in Printing Technology in India. Venkateswaran played a major role in getting that course off the ground in the engineering college.

Prasar Bharati? If anything, MMM is inclined to think, AIR and DD, in the era P.B., are worse than ever, if you don't count the gimmicks of technology that usher in programmes that revel in such drivel.

In brief

★ Apropos *The Man From Madras Musings'* remarks on the travails of small but solid-in-content-though-not-backing journals coming out of Chennai (MM, November 1), the Editor of music magazine *Sruti* points out something MMM has long noticed. During a recent trip to the U.S. and Canada, Pattabhi Raman had found that several people he met had read issue after issue of his journal with great interest. But he also found that most of them had read BORROWED copies; few were subscribers! In India, 25 persons reading a copy was a *Sruti* finding and Editor Pattabhi Raman was even prepared to accept that position, considering the local demand for the rupee. But, he wonders, is \$22 a year too much for all those who talk of the fortunes they are earning and saving in the West? MMM has had the same experience in different connections with all those who headed West, making him think twice about help from such quarters.

★ It didn't find a place in Chennai newspapers, but *The Man From Madras Musings* learnt from newspapers in other parts of the country that Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga was not exactly enamoured with the umpiring of our own S. Venkataraghavan in the First Test. Venkataraghavan is considered one of the best umpires in the world today, certainly amongst the top five, but in the Mohali Test his turning down several l.b.w. appeals did not exactly please the Sri Lankans. The reports speak of an exchange of words between Ranatunga and Venkat, though Match Referee Simpson put it down as "an explanation being sought". One news report said, "it wasn't a big deal", according to Simpson, but quoted Venkat as adding, "At least not now". Are the end-of-match and -tour reports going to add much to what just might be a storm in a teacup?

★ Recently felicitated by the Printing Technologists' Forum

was its President-Emeritus R. Venkateswaran. The *Man From Madras Musings* was not very clear what the felicitations were for till he discovered that the Forum had jumped the gun a bit; Venkateswaran, the doyen of Indian printers, would next year, 1998, complete 60 years from the time he was one of that group of four who were the first in India to receive the Licentiate in Printing Technology and were able to put the initials LPT behind their names. That designation came as a result of student leader Chandy Kurien meeting Prime Minister (as the Chief Minister was then known) C. Rajagopalachari with a delegation of printing students and arguing that Printing, a trades course, should be treated on par with Engineering. Appropriately, the Chief Guest at the function was Dr. V. C. Kulandaiswamy who had been Director of Technical Education and then, as Vice Chancellor of Anna University, had helped start the first degree course in Printing Technology in India. Venkateswaran played a major role in getting that course off the ground in the engineering college.

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MMM

OUR
READERS
WRITE



The Duke & the sailor

MM (November 16-30) did well to raise a query on the picture of the Duke of Edinburgh pointing to the sailor's uniform. It is a well composed photo, with everything in it taking the eye to the spot the Duke is pointing at. In fact, the subject of the query is the sailor's medal ribbon as I can make it out, but without the medal.

In India it takes many months for the man to get the medal after he has earned it. The usual 'governmental' reasons cause the inexcusable delay. Quite correctly, the services allow the man to proudly wear the ribbon (or riband as it is called) without the medal. One can see in the photo, the man on the right of the picture (with three stripes) has the same riband with the medal. Each medal is a personal possession with the man's name engraved on it, and no one can borrow or exchange it with someone else's.

The Duke, as a former naval person, must have been surprised by the absence of the medal and stepped off the carpeted path to enquire. On receiving from the commander of the guard of honour the peculiar explanation, the Duke might in all probability have muttered, "extraawd'nary!" He would no doubt include it in his repertoire of stories on Indian variants of the Anglo-Saxon military tradition.

Most VIPs in India when honoured by the guard, just walk by the men. Only those with an aesthetic sense appreciate the effort which goes into the event. The turnout, drill, precision and ceremonial, display the best in the country's military tradition. Those who care, stop at a soldier and say a word of appreciation. Others — particularly of the genus politician — just walk past without bothering to even thank the commander of the guard. They walk at their strolling pace, unrelated to the music the band is playing, which puts the guard commander into all kinds of confusion. He can hardly walk in the ungainly manner of the person honoured, nor leave him behind by going ahead at military pace. One can, of course, understand the politico taking his honours in his fluttering dhoti or mundu and chappals, is at a slight disadvantage in such trying circumstances.

Little would such personages know what the men of the guard call them in the barrack rooms. It may therefore be a good thing they do not tarry too long with the guard. A question by the VIP can also lead to unpredictable answers. There is the story of King George V (or was it Field Marshal Haig) during the long years of World War I. He kindly asked the soldier in a Guard of Honour, "Well, my dear man, where did you start the war?" He meant, of course, where did the soldier join the war. Misunderstanding the query, the soldier tremblingly answered, "Begg'n' yo'r pardon sir, but I never started it."

I have been studying in the city for a long time. I can assure you that 99% of the chain-snatchers are educated men, generally unemployed graduates. Very, very few slum dwellers indulge in this pastime. We can trust these ill-clad people more than the dangerous white collared thieves in the garb of gentlemen.

Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian
"Mira House"
5 Subramania Nagar Corss St.
Rangarajapuram, Kodambakkam
Chennai-600 024.

Lt Gen (RETD)
V R Raghavan
D-419 Defence Colony
New Delhi.



Sudden memory

For all we know, the commander's consternation (MM, November 16th picture on page 3) may be due to his sudden recollection of the incident many years ago in Sri Lanka in which a cadet in the parade tried to attack the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who was on a visit to that country.

P K Visvesvaran
1759 Vasanth Colony
Chennai 600 040

Spay your pet

My letter under the heading 'Cats and Dogs' was mutilated in editing. I wanted the owners of cats to spay their pets to keep the cat population within limits and not the Corporation to get rid of them.

O.T. Ravindran
10 Main Road
Nandanam Extension
Chennai-600 035.

Editor's Note: While saying 'sorry', we wonder whether the writer hasn't missed the point. Pets can be spayed. But pets are not the problem. The problem is with the stray cats, which are not only considerable in number but also prolific breeders. What do we do with them? Climb trees, run in circles to spay them?

Adding 'singaram'

Re O.T. Ravindran's letter. (MM, November 16th) I wonder if the great beauty of Chennai is marred only by cats and dogs? I suppose many feel that people spitting in the middle of the road, urinating at the side and throwing garbage all over the place constitute pretty sights?

The real danger

In the article on the MRTS (MM December 1st), it has been stated, that many passengers avoid Tiruvallikeni and Light House stations after dusk because there are many huts near the station.

I have been studying in the city for a long time. I can assure you that 99% of the chain-snatchers are educated men, generally unemployed graduates. Very, very few slum dwellers indulge in this pastime. We can trust these ill-clad people more than the dangerous white collared thieves in the garb of gentlemen.

Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian
"Mira House"
5 Subramania Nagar Corss St.
Rangarajapuram, Kodambakkam
Chennai-600 024.

Maybe people need to be reminded that there are so many pigs around the place simply because there is so much garbage for them to eat — incidentally, they clean up

after humans. The cows are more disciplined than any Chennai driver. In fact, their sitting neatly in a row along the centre of the road provides a more effective median than any other anyone can ever come up with.

Coming back to the issue regarding cats and dogs, I really wonder if it is only people who can add "Singaram" to Chennai.

Lakshmi N.
'Director's Residence',
I.I.T. Madras,
Chennai-600 036.

State of graveyards

The condition of the graveyards in Chennai is highly deplorable. It is suggested that a separate set-up may be organised by the Government of Tamil Nadu to look into the problems pertaining to these.

Many of these, especially located in areas like Manali New Town, lack even proper approach roads. The graveyards are full of thorns and bushes.

It is high time that the authorities give due importance to this problem.

V. Rajasekaran (President)
M.M.D.A. Housing Scheme
Manali New Town
Chennai-600 103.

Waiting time

Re letters by R V Chandramouli, IAS, RETD., and C. Kesi, "Police in-action" and "Police-in-action" I & II (MM, November 16th), they are entirely to the point. The traffic police are not helping pedestrians at all; they make them wait maximum time at all road junctions.

Meenakshi Enterprises
Plot No. 50, Appar Street
Thiru Valleswarar Nagar
Anna Nagar Post
Chennai-600 040.

That Roman script

While the use of English as recommended by B. Gautham (MM, August 16th) can be readily implemented, the use of the Roman script as suggested by Anna Varki (MM, November, 16th) for Indian languages is questionable. A Government announcement in an Indian language if rendered in Roman script is still useless for a person not knowing the language in the written form. Certain English terms have become a part of all our languages (e.g. Police, Income tax etc). These are better understood as they are, than in the translated versions, even by the speakers of the languages.

Further, the Roman script is hopelessly inadequate and does not represent all sounds used in Indian languages. It is a conglomeration of

A bright spot...

I have lived in Madras (I am yet to get used to Chennai) for 14 years at different times during the last 30 years and more. I have known Madras from the days when it was just a pattinam in the early Sixties to a metropolis in the mid-Seventies and am now a sorry witness to its decline. Gone is the relaxed atmosphere and gone are the quiet residential areas.

I have also been a witness to the residents of the City changing from soft-spoken, hard-working Madrasis, to confident citizens of the world and, now, to self-destructing persons with neither self-respect nor respect for the other man. This tendency of trying to pull everyone down to their level will I am sure, finally lead to the demise of Madras.

But there are bright spots. Recently I drove on a road connecting the Old Mahabalipuram and New Mahabalipuram Roads and was amazed to see the Buckingham Canal flowing with clean water. I am enclosing two photographs, one taken towards the north (left above) and one towards the south. How different is the canal here from elsewhere!

V R Srinivasan
15 II Cross Street,
Indira Nagar, Chennai 600 020.

Editor's note: These pictures were taken well before the rain, for the letter was dated November 25th.



... this too could be

Our NEW (on top) is not exactly new. It is how the Buckingham Canal has always been once you get out of the confines of the City. RAJIND N CHRISTY'S

OLD (above) is what the Canal is really like in several parts of the City today. If it ever gets restored to the state of the NEW that is not

new, then it will really be a picture worthy of being labelled NEW. Will that ever happen? Or is it doomed to remain a morass that the citizenry perforce has to use for want of other options in a City lacking facilities?

consonants interspersed haphazardly by vowels at varying intervals. In Indian languages, the letters are neatly grouped into vowels and graded variations of consonants. For a word which can be represented by a few letters in an Indian language, the Roman script needs twice the number of letters. Even then, it cannot provide the finer nuances of Indian language pronunciation. Look at the distortion caused to place names like Tanjore for Thanjavoor, Nagapatnam for Nagappattinam etc.

It is true Roman script was introduced to learn other languages. This is because the native language had to be learnt by British rulers and they would learn it quicker if rendered in a script familiar to him. Various other countries have adopted Roman script for reasons that are not relevant to our country.

The prime need of our country is to understand one another. Our language chauvinism comes in the

way of learning other Indian languages. The same is true for recognising one of our languages as a lingua franca. The only (best) solution is to retain English in addition to the regional language. It is also significant to note that our legislators in Parliament fight it out in English.

M. Sethuraman
8, IInd Cross Street
Mahalakshmi Nagar
Chennai-600 088.

Wanted more
Our Readers Write column is really superb. Why not a column of Questions & Answers on Cleanliness, Hygiene, Development, etc. in the city?

S.R. Shanti Lal Nahar
15, Kanakasi Nagar
Cathedral Road,
Chennai-600 086.
Editor's Note: We wish we had the space for all suggestions received.

What's different this Season?

Chennai's Margazhi music season started on a sad note this year with the death of T. Sadasivam, the husband of M.S. Subbulakshmi. They were a couple whose presence honoured any sabha. They, in turn, demonstrated so much grace wherever they went. I remember the way they sat through the Hindustani *dripad* concert of the Gundecha brothers one afternoon at the Krishna Gana Sabha. There were only a handful of people in the audience, but Sadasivam and M.S. stayed till the end. What a boost this was to the young singers. Sadasivam will be mourned by all on the concert scene, in season and out.

The Chennai music season is called the music season not for nothing. Vocal rendering of Carnatic music is the feature of the majority of performances during The Season. Then, there are the instrumental renderings of Carnatic music and, only after that, dance, almost entirely Bharata Natyam. Several *sabhas* do not offer any dance performance at all, but two which do are the Krishna Gana Sabha and Bharat Kalachar, not to mention Kalakshetra.

Kalarasana, which is conducting its festival from December 13th to January 1st at Rani Seethai Hall has a programme on January 1st on Indian contemporary classical music featuring Rikhi Ray on *vijra veena*, B. Raghavendra Rao on *violin*, Selvaganesh on *kanjira* and Umashankar on *ghatam*. It should be a programme that's different.

There are very few Hindustani music programmes this season. But there is some Odissi by Madhavi Mudgal and Aloka Kanugo, Mohini Attam by Bharathi Shivaji and Kathak by Kumudini Lakhia. There is also a modern dance presentation by Astad Deboo at the Krishna Gana Sabha on December 28th.

We won't be seeing any Kathakali, Koothu or Yakshagana. These forms cost money when presented. The Chennai music season offers only prestige

and very little money. *Sabhas* need to add to their corpus funds for building and maintenance expenses, and that leaves them with little to give as fees, to artists.

The vocalists are far too many to mention and, in any case, each has his or her own following. For the uninitiated, it is easier to listen to instrumental



A candid camera look at the SEASON is this three-hour visual experience of what Chennai's December Music Season is like. RV Ramani spent hours with the artists in their homes, at their rehearsals and at their concerts, as well as in *sabha* precincts, to capture on film this visual treat that reveals a significant facet of South Indian culture. One of the highlights of Season '97 is this look at Season '96 which is being screened on Saturday, December 20th, at 3.30 p.m. and 6.30 p.m., at the Film Chamber Theatre. Further screenings can be arranged through Ramani, Tel. 4420359.

Not for fame or fortune

Devadasi *Murai* (remembering Devadasi), a CD-ROM production by the Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and 'Parampara' was presented recently in Chennai by Dr. Saskia Kersenboom of Holland under the auspices of Dr. V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts. Parampara was founded in 1994 by Dr. Saskia in Holland to support the traditional arts of South India. One of its activities has been to promote the knowledge and expertise which have survived through the living exponents of the Devadasi system. Parampara also conducts regular classes in dance and music, organises lectures on the languages and texts of dance and rituals connected with the performing arts, and holds exhibitions of Tanjore

paintings, jewellery, bronzes and textiles.

Saskia started learning ballet from the age of four, and later learnt modern dance and jazz. She was also a prize-winning gymnast. But somehow Bharata Natyam appealed strongly to her when she was introduced to it.

At Utrecht University, she studied Indology and learnt Tamil under Kamil Zvelebil and Sanskrit under Prof. Gonda (incidentally, she speaks very good Tamil). Searching for something more lively than book learning, she came to Madras to learn Bharata Natyam under Nandini Ramani, a disciple of the immortal T. Balasaraswathi. Explaining her interest in Bharata Natyam, Saskia says she felt that it combined not merely dance and music but also revealed a lot about

ancient Indian thought and philosophy. Studying it gave her a greater insight into both. According to her, language is behaviour and behaviour is language.

by Lakshmi Venkataraman

guage and Bharata Natyam is behaviour. While in Chennai she also studied Sanskrit under (the late) Dr. V. Raghavan, particularly the Agamas connected with the temple rituals and arts.

Saskia was 17 when she started learning Bharata Natyam in 1975. She later studied under P. Ranganayaki, a grand daughter of the well-known *devadasi* Subburatnamma and who was dedicated to the temple at Tiruttani when 17. Saskia learnt

THE CHENNAI SEASON

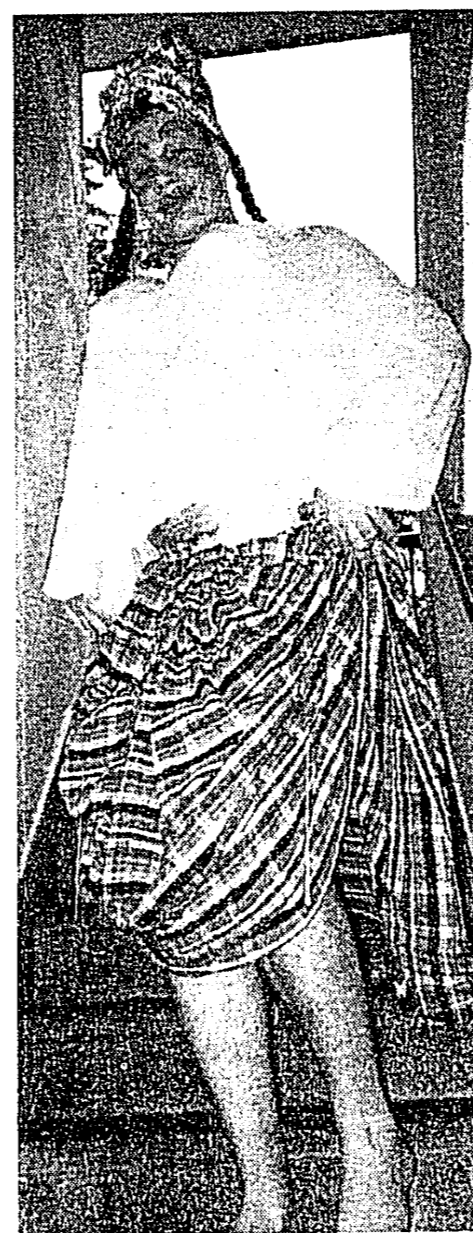
music. Ravikiran on his *gottu vadnam*, or *chitra veena*, Kadri Gopalnath on his *saxophone* and U Srinivas on his *mandolin* will be giving concerts almost every day. There are also several *veena* and *flute* concerts. The violin seems to have taken over the music season and has more concerts than the flute. Apart from the father and children who are the Lalgudi trio, there is also the Parur trio playing the violin and N. Ramani playing the flute with his son and grandson.

Kapali Fine Arts is presenting a special dance series for young dancers at Kalapeetham auditorium. Small auditoriums have come to stay. With dwindling audiences and the great choice available during the season, organisers are certainly better advised to go in for small spaces for performances. Kapali Fine Arts is distributing its programmes between Srinivasa Sastry Hall, Gokhale Sastry Hall

and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, which has been spruced up. Karthik Fine Arts is dividing its programmes between the Narada Gana Sabha, RR Sabha and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Many of the programmes of Padma Subrahmanyam's Nrithyodaya are being held at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

The leading dancers have about five programmes each. Sudharani Raghupathy, who recently celebrated fifty years of association with Bharata Natyam, tops the list of performers, if you include her group programmes. Then comes Chitra Visweswaran, who is also the convener of the Natyakala conference of the Krishna Gana Sabha. Padma Subrahmanyam is performing at several venues and so too is Malavika Sarukkai. Malavika and Alarnel Valli are the two top dancers among the younger ones. Urmila Satya-

narayana is catching up with Valli and Malavika and is a dancer to be watched this Season. The Dhananjayans have decided not to perform this Season to make way for younger dancers. Kalpalathika and Ravishankar make up for the absence of Kuchipudi dancers Raja and Radha Reddy this year. They are very good. There is also Parvathy Ravi Ghantasala, who is being presented by many *sabhas*. It must have been a moment of triumph to have been presented at Kalakshetra recently. There is also Revathi Ramachandran in the same category. Srikala Bharat is dancing in a few places. But good dancers like Srilatha Vinodkumar, Priyadarshini Govind and Barga Bassel have hardly any opportunities. Dance is considered a means of making money by some *sabhas*, with the dancers having free dance programmes



The Dame shows a leg and has RAJIND N CHRISTY'S camera take a close look at her in a series of pictures. You'll be able to see more of her at Pantomime '97.

and charge tickets only for music concerts!

Leela Samson who receives the award of Nrityachoodamani at the Krishna Gana Sabha this year, is a popular choice. The other dancer from Kalakshetra who is making a mark during The Season is Anandashankar Jayanth, who dances at the Music Academy. I am also looking forward to Anita's production *Gajananam* with the drummer Ranganarajan from Thanjavur.

My own very biased choice is to see as much that is out of the ordinary and from as far from a ringside seat as possible. In fact, I'm finding that the early morning *bhujans*, *namasankertanam* and *upanyasa*, are a threat to every *sabha*; they are a great experience even for the non-religious.

V.R. Devika



The Dame plays Rugby

Rene Verduijn has been a resident of Mylapore and working with the Bay of Bengal Programme of the FAO of UN for over a year now. In all that time neither his striking good looks nor his 6 foot-something brawn turned as many heads as did his Dame at the Global Adjustments event at Park Sheraton early in December — a kind of promotion of everything that happens around Christmas time in Chennai. Rene's spirits didn't exactly wing at the prospects. But then the food they served was good, in particular the turkey. "And the Tupperware lady was there." Rene had been looking for Tupperware for sometime.

There he was all draped and stuffed as he will be at the Pantomime on December 21st and 22nd. "I felt I had a moral obligation as the Dame — so I quickly organised a Tupperware party — got a lot of orders too. It was a lovely rehearsal in costume. Oh, it was so easy to embarrass people. They (especially the men) stepped back when I went up to them!" Oh yes it is — Oh no it's not!

Rene saw a pantomime for the first time last December, at the Museum Theatre, liked it very much and decided he wanted to play the Dame this year. It was there for the asking — the audience at the British Council was very appreciative of his performance as Sir Henry Lawrence in *Larins Sahib*, and have, since, been curious about his intentions for the stage.

When he first came to Chennai he hung out like most expatriates with other expats, in his case with an English crowd. "There's definitely a difference in culture. So that's why perhaps it is easier to pick up with an Englishman than an Indian — at least, initially." Besides, Rene had been in northern India in 1993. "I was a tourist and people treat you like garbage and I didn't like that.... Madras on the other hand, is very pleasant but the difference is, here I am a resident." And then, as misfortune or fortune would have it, some six months ago more than half his friends went back to England. He felt lost. But the nice

thing is that he discovered a home in Chennai.

"In Madras you can do anything you want to. You can get anything you want. There is a variety of discotheques, good restaurants, there are cheap restaurants which are very good..." Raama's on C.P. Ramaswamy Road is a favourite for *masala dosa*. After a year of going out during the week, he now enjoys evenings at home reading or logging on to E-Mail. Sindoori's roof top is another favourite for its north Indian food and music. "Yes, I feel this is home."

After a two-year stint doing research in Malaysia, working with fishing communities in Sabah, Rene returned home to a year to get clearance from the Government of India to join the FAO project in Chennai. "I always wanted to work abroad, especially in the field of development. So there was really no point in staying back home....at best I could have added a few games with the national team." What he did not anticipate was the drastic change in lifestyle. "I was training everyday and my body had built up a need to exercise. And there I was at BOBP, sitting all day and going home and out and drinking beer.... and you slowly die. In the beginning, it was difficult not having a sport for general fitness. Of course you can do aerobics or exercise at home, but I have always been an outside person — jogging early in the morning or late at night on the streets is also not an option for me. Rugby is my way."

After a two-year stint doing research in Malaysia, working with fishing communities in Sabah, Rene returned home to a

by Elizabeth Roy

He did a play-reading with the Madras Players and enjoyed the time he spent with them and went native in the bargain, cultural gaps bridged. A widening circle of Indian friends enjoy having him drop in on them. Children and dogs love him. "I love children. I'd love to settle down, and enjoy a family life. I guess its just that I have not found the right girl!!!"

The 31-year-old Dutchman was born in a small town in the Netherlands among large forests and moors. Father in the army, mother head of an institution for spastics, a brother and a sister. Till he was 18, apart from school, all he did was sports, football, tennis, athletics, 100 metre sprints, bar jumping. The

marketing job in Utrecht. He hated it.... "selling is a disgusting trade." His help line lay in rugby. So he joined one of the best clubs in Amsterdam. "After work, at 5.15 every day, I caught a bus, the bus would bring me to the train and the train would bring me to Amsterdam, and one of my pals would pick me up and we would go off to train and play rugby in the club late into the evening and then return to Utrecht. That was my day, every day of the week. Get up at seven in the morning and return home at midnight. Next morning I went to work again." By the end of the year he was playing with the national team.

Rene by then had turned 30 and had been waiting for half a

year to get clearance from the Government of India to join the FAO project in Chennai. "I always wanted to work abroad, especially in the field of development. So there was really no point in staying back home....at best I could have added a few games with the national team." What he did not anticipate was the drastic change in lifestyle. "I was training everyday and my body had built up a need to exercise. And there I was at BOBP, sitting all day and going home and out and drinking beer.... and you slowly die. In the beginning, it was difficult not having a sport for general fitness. Of course you can do aerobics or exercise at home, but I have always been an outside person — jogging early in the morning or late at night on the streets is also not an option for me. Rugby is my way."

To pack it all into one word, it was kismet. Rene's stars moved in conjunction with the right planets even as the Chennai Cheetahs emerged rubbing sleep out of their eyes. Rugby is back into Chennai and Rene is back with rugby, rapidly getting back into shape. "So it is decided I would be the coach. Because I am the youngest and have the most time on my hands, being a bachelor," chuckles Rene. But then that is the next chapter.

(Also see Page 7)



December 17: Drouet/Pare Duo — a percussion troupe from France (in collaboration with Alliance Francaise) at the Museum Theatre, 6.30 pm.

December 18: Sutra Dance Theatre from Malaysia (at the Kamaraj Arangam, 6.30 pm.) December 20: Display and sale of cakes in the decorated main lobby of the hotel. (at Park Sheraton)

Karaikudi R. Mani on the mridangam (at the Narada Gana Sabha).

December 21 and 22: Christmas Pantomime - 1997 - The Frog Prince and the Royal Catwalk. Presented by The Little Theatre in aid of underprivileged children. Directed by Mithran Devanesan and Noshir J Ratnagar. Scripted and Produced by Aysha Rau with Costumes by Megan Utley. Choreography by Jeffrey Vadon and Music by Victor Phillip. (At the Museum Theatre, 3.30 pm and 7.00 pm, each day.)

December 22: A children's workshop, for children ages 8-12. Choose from making stuffed elephants; clay sculpting; tie and dye (bring your own pre-washed white poplin); or making cards and stationery (10.00 - 4.00 at Dakshinachitra. Cost Rs. 225/- including lunch.)

December 22: Bharata Natyam re-

presented by Malavika Sarukkai, at the Narada Gana Sabha.

December 24: Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan on the violin at the Narada Gana Sabha.

December 26: Pottery workshop. (10.00 — 4.00 at Dakshinachitra. Cost Rs. 225/-, includes lunch)

December 26: The annual dance and music festival of Kalakshetra begins with the dance drama presented by the students of the school. Events every evening for a fortnight. (at Kalakshetra.)

December 27: Bharathi Shivaji in a Mohini Attam recital (at Kalakshetra).

December 28: Kathakali dance-drama by the students (at Kalakshetra).

January 3: Kalamkari workshop (10.00 - 4.00 at Dakshinachitra. Cost Rs. 225/-, includes lunch)

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN'S questions are from the period November 16 to 30. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.

1. Which male tennis player was named the Best Player of the last 25 years by a jury of experts?
2. Name the popular matinee idol and Telugu Desam MP who was injured in a powerful blast in Hyderabad recently.
3. On November 19, Kalpana Chawla became the first Indian-born woman to...
4. The 1996 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development was presented to...
5. According to Kevin Costner, the lead actor of the hit film *The Bodyguard*, who expressed her desire to star opposite him in the film's sequel?
6. Name the historic Royal castle which rose from the ashes recently after being destroyed in a blaze in 1992.
7. According to the National Lake Conservation Programme, which are the two Tamil Nadu lakes chosen for conservation?
8. Zhao Yu Tu, more than 2300 years old, was discovered in China's Hebei Province. Who or what is it?
9. Name the Indian writer, a self-confessed 'anglophile', who celebrated his 100th birthday on November 23rd.
10. Ms. Diana Hayden of Mumbai is the...?
11. Which British political figure has been appointed legal guardian of the inheritances of Princess Diana's two sons?
12. Name the popular lead singer of INXS who apparently committed suicide.
13. To whom did the Indian pair of Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes lose in the final of the World Doubles championships?
14. Name the distinguished scientist awarded the Bharat Ratna recently.
15. Makhaya Ntini of South Africa recently achieved a first. What?

- * * *
16. Where near the city is the Tourism Department planning to set up a theme park spread over seven acres?
 17. The new Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, is...?
 18. Which city church celebrated its sesquicentennial anniversary on November, 23rd?
 19. Name the founder of *Kalki* magazine and husband of the singer M.S. who passed away on November 21st.
 20. Which popular group of the 70s and 80s came acalling in the city on November 19th?

(Answers on Page 7)

India's first radio station, eagerly awaited by all, was inaugurated in Bombay on June 23, 1927, by the Viceroy Lord Irwin. Over the next decade, both Calcutta and Delhi got their own stations, and, finally, on June 16, 1938, Madras opened her own window to the world. It was an enormously anticipated event — the launch of the station by the Madras Government and the BBC, in a building called *East Nook* on Marshall's Road (Rukmini Lakshmiipathy Salai) in Egmore (a site now occupied by Indian Airlines).

The opening speeches were delivered by the Governor of Madras Presidency, Lord Erskine, and the Prime Minister, Rajagopalachari. Rajaji's words were, "This is Rajagopalachari speaking. Can you all hear me clearly? Don't you want to know what radio means? The sound of our own speech, our singing, reaches the sound wave zone of the atmosphere. Radio receives the sound waves and broadcasts our speech and song to us."

All the visitors to the station on that memorable day were received by Victor Paranjothi, the Station Director. The first issue of *Vanoli* was released — a newsletter containing details of forthcoming programmes. And thus began the history of radio in the South.

Today, nearly sixty years later, not everyone has forgotten those early days. To remind those who have, and to educate the new generation, All India Radio recently organised with

AIRing history

little fanfare, an exhibition of old photographs, tracing the golden moments in the station's past. The display, which was interesting, if not aesthetic, had evidently been put together with great care — with photographs of early programmes being recorded, eminent visitors and innovations in broadcasting over the years. What was delightful was that these photographs, including one of Rajaji delivering his famous speech, have been preserved so beautifully. The sta-

tion staff were more than willing to take time off from their work and show visitors round the exhibition.

Some of the more eye-catching photographs were those of the first transmitter, the first station and early ones of poets and musicians in recording studios. There were several early photographs of freedom fighters like Ethiraj and Chengalvarayan; scientists like C.V. Raman and Dr. Chandrasekhar, musicians like M.S. Subbulakshmi, Semman-

gudi Srinivasa Iyer and Balamuralikrishna; politicians like C.N. Annadurai and writers like R.K. Narayan and Tamilvanan. There were also photographs of Maria Montessori and Alexander Fleming. And, quite unrecognisable, a picture of a young and black-haired Cho.

Perhaps more moving than the photographs themselves were the words of Gandhi that someone with a distinct lack of calligraphic skills had taken the trouble to write out on a chart: "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them. Mine is not a religion of the prison house.... But it is proof against insolent pride of race, religion or colour."

— Kavita Milner

SAVE THESE BUILDINGS

(Continued from Page 1)

— no matter the failings — and what we hope the University will begin, *Madras Musings* hopes will be followed in the case of several other historical buildings in the city crying for restoration and a new lease of active life. Among them are the LIC's *Bharat Building*, the State Bank of India's Main Branch in George Town and its Mount Road Branch, the General Post Office, the Royapuram Railway Station (featured in *Madras Musings* last fortnight), the Connemara Library and the

Museum complex, including the theatre, the Victoria Public, or Town, Hall, *Government House*, and, above all, *Chepauk Palace* and the buildings in the Fort. This is only a short list, but these are not only model buildings of historical and architectural value, but most of them also will not find it too difficult to raise the single digit crore each will need to make it last another couple of centuries. *Madras Musings* looks forward to each of the owners making a commitment to the restoration of their buildings.

We are authorised to say that INTACH's conservation and restoration experts — as well as the Taj Group's — would be willing to lend a hand with any advice needed.

Would the Vice Chancellor of the University of Madras, the Director General of Police and all the others in charge of the buildings mentioned take this call by *Madras Musings* as a challenge and commit themselves to saving and restoring these buildings that are the landmarks of Chennai that is Madras? Would they?

tawa and spread quickly outwards. Dribble a teaspoon of oil around the edges. Turn the *dosai* and cook the other side till golden.

Serve hot with a chutney.

ANDHRA PASHIRATTU

2 cups whole greengram dhal
1/4 cup raw rice
A small bunch of coriander leaves, chopped fine
2 or 3 garlic pods (optional)
1/2" piece ginger, peeled and grated
A few curry leaves
5 or 6 green chillies, chopped fine
Salt to taste
Oil for deep frying

Method

Combine the whole greengram dhal and rice. Wash in several changes of water. Drain and soak in 4-1/2 cups of water for 3-4 hours.

Drain and grind coarsely, adding salt, chopped coriander leaves, garlic pods, grated ginger and a very little water.

Heat a *tawa*. Pour a ladleful of batter and spread like a *dosai*. Dribble a teaspoon of oil around the edges.

Sprinkle a tablespoon of chopped onions and half a teaspoon of chopped green chillies. Turn the other side carefully and fry till golden. Serve hot.

Chandra Padmanabhan

spoonfuls of the batter into the hot oil. Fry on medium heat and turn frequently till golden brown and crisp.

Drain excess oil and serve hot.

PAYATHAM PARUPU IDLI

1 cup ordinary raw rice
1/2 cup greengram dhal
1/4 cup blackgram dhal
1/4 cup beaten rice, washed and set aside
2 or 3 green chillies, chopped fine
1" piece ginger, chopped fine
1 cup grated coconut
A small bunch coriander leaves, chopped fine
Salt to taste

Method

Wash the rice in several changes of water. Drain and soak in two cups of water for an hour. Drain well. Grind coarsely to a batter adding sufficient water.

Combine the greengram dhal and blackgram dhal. Wash in several changes of water. Drain and soak in 1-1/2 cups of water for an hour.

Drain well and grind to a smooth batter. When almost done, add the beaten rice, chopped green chillies, ginger, coriander leaves and grated coconut.

Combine both the batters. Add the salt and set aside to fer-

GREENGRAM DHAL DOSAI

1 cup parboiled rice
1/4 cup greengram dhal
2 tsp fenugreek seeds
1/2" piece ginger, peeled and grated
3 or 4 green chillies, chopped fine
A few curry leaves
1 tsp cumin seeds
A small bunch coriander leaves, chopped fine
Salt to taste
Oil for shallow frying

Method

Soak parboiled rice in two cups of water for 6 hours.

Soak greengram dhal and fenugreek seeds in 1 cup of water for 6 hours. Drain the rice and dhal well. Grind to a fine batter adding water in a liquidiser.

Add salt and set aside the batter for 6 to 8 hours to ferment.

Add the grated ginger, chopped green chillies, curry leaves, cumin seeds and coriander leaves. Mix the batter well. Add more water if necessary to make a batter of pouring consistency.

Heat the *tawa*. Pour a ladleful of the batter in the middle of the

Rugby returns

The ball is heeled out quickly and even as the scrum half picks it up, hurls himself almost parallel to the ground and sends out a long pass to a fly half almost knocking shoulders with the first inside three-quarter. Will he punt, will he skip the first inside and pass to the second standing deep with enough room to pick up momentum, or will he try to slip through on his

● by G. Krishnan and Rajind N Christy

own? Suddenly there is a flurry of action. The first inside has cut in, receives the scissors pass and he's off on the blind side. When his wing three cuts in for the reverse pass, there are only groping hands ahead and a try to be touched down.

Will he ever see such action again on the rugby fields of Colombo and the Hill Country, in Madras and Calcutta and the Anamallais, muses S. Muthiah, who once covered or watched Rugby Football in all these centres for nearly 15 years. Will he ever see the likes of Harvey and Joynt and Fleming, Osman, Rambukwella and Kobbekaduwa, the scrum half who became a general and who was blasted to death by a hidden assassin? Will he ever again play a role in Rugby, like taking on the elite Rugby clubs of Public School alumni and help pave the way for Services teams composed of rural soccer players who had never seen a Rugby oval, then watch them dominate Ceylon Rugger before civil strife engulfed the Island?

He may never do any of

Answers to Quiz

1. Pete Sampras; 2. Mohan Babu; 3. To go into space; 4. Mediceus Sans Frontiers; 5. Princess Diana; 6. Windsor Castle; 7. Ooty and Kodaikanal Lakes; 8. It is the oldest map; 9. Nirad C. Chaudhuri; 10. The New Miss World; 11. John Major; 12. Michael Hutchence; 13. Rick Leach and Jonathan Stark; 14. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam; 15. The first black African chosen to play for the South African Cricket team.

* * *

16. The Shore Temple; 17. F C Sharma; 18. Madras English Baptist Church; 19. T. Sadasivam; 20. Bonney M.

these again, but he yet may see a game of Rugby Football in Chennai if the hopes of the Chennai Cheetahs Rugby Football Club become something more than dreams. They're determined to bring Rucker back to South India. And we wonder whether the Madras Gymkhana, which gave South India Rugby, will lend a helping hand.

While the Madras Cricket Club spread the gospel of Cricket from its founding in 1846 and then added to its offering Tennis, Squash and Hockey, the Madras Gymkhana Club, founded in 1885, gave the city the two Football codes, Associated, or Soccer, and Rugby. Not long afterwards the game spread to the Anamallais and High Range and from time to time was even played in the Nilgiris, Wynaad, Mysore and Coorg. And there were, of course, the regimental teams of the British Army.



The ball is put into a scrum, on left, and, on right, a player gets ready to sling out the ball — remember, in Rugby, the ball is always passed backwards — to his three-quarters. (All photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

From 1900, the Madras Gymkhana Rugby Football Challenge Cup was competed for in an annual tournament organised in South India by the Club. The Calcutta Football Club, founded in 1872, disbanded in 1877 and resurrected in 1884, had introduced the game in the then Indian capital before it had got going in Madras, but once the game was established in the South, Calcutta-Madras matches became frequent. The first of these was played in 1908 and Bombay made it a triangular tournament before long. When Ceylon sent a team to Madras in 1920, the tournament became a quadrangular and the foundation was laid for the All-India Rugby Football Tournament, which got underway in 1924. In 1926, the British Rugby Football Union presented the tournament a trophy for competition, reciprocating the first Calcutta Football Club's last gesture in 1878, of presenting to the



Rene Verduijn (centre white shirt, grey shorts) instructs newcomers to Rugby Football on how the 'oval' should be handled.

Learning the game anew

Watching a young squad of greenhorns at practice, I see them using the hockey posts as imaginary rugby H-poles and drawing lines in their mind-pictures that stretch behind the hockey grounds as 'touch'. They warm up, learn rugby skills individually and as a team, and they end up with a brief game. The skills demonstrated by the seasoned campaigners are how to kick, pass, place the ball, side-step, tackle and much else needed for Rugby Football. A spectator watching all these curious but strenuous activities wants to know what is happening and in no time is invited to

join in. By the time the game ends, only the coaches are running around; the trainees have given up.

The newcomers have difficulty gripping the ball. Their passing has to be better. But most important, their fitness levels need considerable improvement. Mohan Krishna, a Black Belt in Karate, says that fitness is the key to success in this game.

Ian Booth, speaking to *Madras Musings*, says the Cheetahs plans to register itself as a club with the Indian Rugby Football Union which was founded in 1970 and looks forward to Dr. Vece Paes, President of the

IRFU, helping it to get its own ground in Chennai. Once the club gets its ground, it plans to promote the game widely in the State, taking it to the schools and colleges first. Booth looks forward to the Police and Services then taking to the game. And, finally, the clubs. This, he hopes, will lead to a healthy league system in Tamil Nadu.

The IRFU, now a member of the Asian Rugby Football Association, hopes it will be allowed to enter a team in the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998. Will there be a Chennai player ready for the team by then? R.N.C.

Madras Cricket Club, who always lent the Gymkhana a helping hand in the sport, now played a greater role in helping the Cheetahs to develop the game that is the fourth most popular in the world and the fastest growing one.

Rugby was reintroduced in Chennai by Mohan Krishna (NIIT, Chennai), Jeremy Tebbett from the UK (GM Finance, Zeneca ICA Agrochemicals Ltd.) and Rene J.C. Verduijn of The Netherlands (Fisheries Resource Economist of the FAO's Bay of Bengal Programme). The Chennai Cheetahs' team comprises NIITians, a Chartered Accountant, a businessman and a few students from the YMCA Sports School, apart from those who've played the game at 'home' and now play it for relaxation at weekends and look forward to the traditional drink and camaraderie after the game. Other expats include Ian Booth, a professional with the Morley and Wharfedale clubs in the UK and who played at the senior level, and John Begatte, a music teacher at the American International School and an American Football player.

During the first month of its existence, the CCRFC visited Pondicherry and played a 15-a-side game against a rather more experienced Pondicherry Rugby Club comprising of French and Indian nationals. The Chennai team lost by one try to

(Continued on Page 8)

A revolution in bus travel

There has been a quiet revolution in bus travel in Tamil Nadu. In the mid '70's when I was with MRF I would often go on tour. So did my friends whose tour itinerary would read Madras-Bombay-London-Paris-New York, while mine would be Villupuram-Trichy-Cuddalore-Kumbakonam-Panruti!

Even though I was entitled to first class train travel, I would use buses as they were more convenient. The seats were hard and straight backed, rainwater leaked in, any number of standees would pile into the bus and, as for time schedules, we were entirely at the mercy of the bus driver. Dusty and dirty we would reach our destination.

Today all that has changed. I was in Trichy waiting to catch a night bus to Madras a few weeks ago and the variety of buses I saw was stunning. Trichy is the hub for all bus travel and in the space of one hour I counted over 150 buses. Some were quite ordinary [Trichy used to have a bus service called TST, that people swore stood for 'Thallu, Saar, Thallu' (push, sir, push) owing to their frequent break downs]. Others were video coaches, with push-back seats, some were airconditioned and many displayed a windscreen that had flashing LED lights that spelt out its destination or just threw up random patterns like a Diwali night sky. Many had names like 'By Pass Rider', 'Iron Bird', 'Air Coach'.

Today, the most comfortable buses operating out of Chennai are KPN, Parveen, and Conti to name just a few. Operating a bus service is highly profitable and

there is fierce competition for bus routes and all the sins that go with it.

But the ultimate in bus travel is the Executive Coach run by Sharma Transports be-

by Mithran Devanesen

tween Chennai and Bangalore that puts Gryehound into the shade! A sleek, aerodynamic exterior painted a beautiful shade of purple (It would make a ZEN blush) with an abstract design like an early Thotaa Tharani, painted on its side, this A/C

coach has an interior like an aircraft — sleek, moulded well-upholstered reclining seats, a thoughtfully designed headrest, overhead lockers, plenty of leg room, elegant curtains and tasteful upholstery, overhead reading lights and a call button for the attendant. The engine is just a whisper. Once on board you are given a rose, a plastic bag with sweets and a sealed wet one plus a brand name fruit drink. The cost of the ticket is Rs.350. It leaves at 11 p.m. and arrives around 5.30 a.m. This is comfort at its best — the only thing is that you need a strong bladder as the coach makes no pit stops!

THE PARADOX OF VEERAPPAN

(Continued on Page 6)

"We want to see sandalwood grow on a plantation scale. We want even private companies to take it up and plant sandalwood like other cash crops such as tea, coffee and cardamom. Only then would the stranglehold of the smuggler and other vested interests be broken for good," argues Adappa.

He is not alone. Farmers of some villages in Karnataka say that if they are allowed to grow sandalwood on their own terms and get 90 per cent of the market value on it they would protect the trees. Here lies the crux of the issue. If farmers feel this way, the creation of another Veerappan — on the

gains from sandalwood — does not arise.

Yet, such chances are slim. "Sandalwood will continue to remain state property," says Karnataka's Law Minister, M.C. Naniah. "Whatever the proposal to amend the sandalwood rules, this one aspect cannot change."

While the government refuses to relinquish its hold over sandalwood, the fact that it is considering making the tree more people-friendly is certainly an improvement. This may be a late move, but a positive one that should remain in force and, if possible, be improved upon. Too many lives have been lost and a lot of the

taxpayer's money on a battle that serves little purpose.

The government has lost face as well. A majority of villagers in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu support Veerappan and are his informers, in spite of him using terror tactics against them and killing them mercilessly. If the Veerappan case shows anything, it is a reminder of how a top-down bureaucratic system alienates the people and encourages them to support what is against the law.

The law of the land derives from the people. The written code must follow the law of the land, not vice versa.

— CSE/Down To Earth Features

The return of Rugger

(Continued from Page 7)

five. The CCRFC team then entered the first Indian Sevens, which featured 12 teams. The Club's first Seven's team comprised of Anil, Arunachalam, Ian, Senthil Kumar, Sabanayagam, Meyappan, Jeremy, Gerald, John and Gosh. And they won one of the five matches they played, beating Bhubhaneswar Rugby Club 14-7. The Armenians from Calcutta, the country's best team, won the title as expected. "It was a great experience to expose the Chennai Cheetahs to the rest of the country," remarks its 31-year-old chief coach, Verduijn.

Rugby, a 15-a-side game traditionally, now has 7-a-side and 10-a-side versions, but what-

ever the team composition, it is a physical game. Verduijn, comparing rugby and soccer, says, "While football is a gentleman's game played by hooligans, rugby is a hooligan's game played by gentlemen".

Verduijn would like to invite various clubs to Chennai and reciprocate the visits on a regular basis so that the Cheetahs can play more matches. The CCRFC plans to host the Pondicherry Rugby Club in a return match in January '98 and tour Sri Lanka in February '98 to play a few clubs there. Sponsorship is what will make it happen.

Tebbett, a 43-year-old Lancashireman, played rugby in his county till college level and then for the London French. He, like Verduijn, is in search of a permanent ground for the Cheetahs and clubhouse facilities. The Madras Gymkhana and the Army Area Commander are those who may have the answer to that quest. Till that answer is found, the soft green carpet of the YMCA Sports School's hockey ground is being used on loan.

Verduijn is optimistic about the future of Rugby in India, as the people have the "right combination of strength, speed and body flexibility". India, he feels, could have a strong Indian Rugby team in five years if youngsters took to the game seriously.

The Chennai Cheetahs practise at the YMCA ground, Nandanam, on Saturdays (4 p.m. to 6 p.m.) and Sundays (7.30 a.m. to 8.30 a.m.) and seek more members. Contact Mohan Krishna 98400 - 99161 or 612983.

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