

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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The poisonous Indian air

There is death in the air in India. In 1991-92, studies revealed that around 40,000 people were dying in India due to air pollution. By 1995 the figure had shot up dramatically, to 50,000. Is our quest for economic growth self-defeating? It seems so, for tiny particles of matter floating in the atmo-

the economy has to bear. Does anybody bother to take this cost into account? Unplanned economic growth has resulted in filthy, grimy and subhuman living conditions in our cities. Who is to blame for this? Industry? Automobiles? Or Government?

While industrial activity,

situation shows that Government is lagging behind in its efforts to address the problem. The bureaucratic response to the problem of air pollution has been typical — a procedure which only increases paperwork for Government. Government

(Continued on Page 6)

When a tree tilts and becomes a bit of nuisance to the neighbours, one way of tackling the problem is the way seen on the right. The other way, when it provides a road shade or a neighbour welcomes it, but property rights need to be respected, is to tackle the problem as shown in RAJIND N CHRISTY's other photographs. It may be a bit more expensive, but it allows a little bit more of the City's green cover to survive.



GREAT! NOW BEFORE ONE CAN SAY 'CHOKED TO DEATH' WE'LL REACH THE HOSPITAL

sphere (known as suspended particulate matter or SPM) are slowly but silently choking people to death.

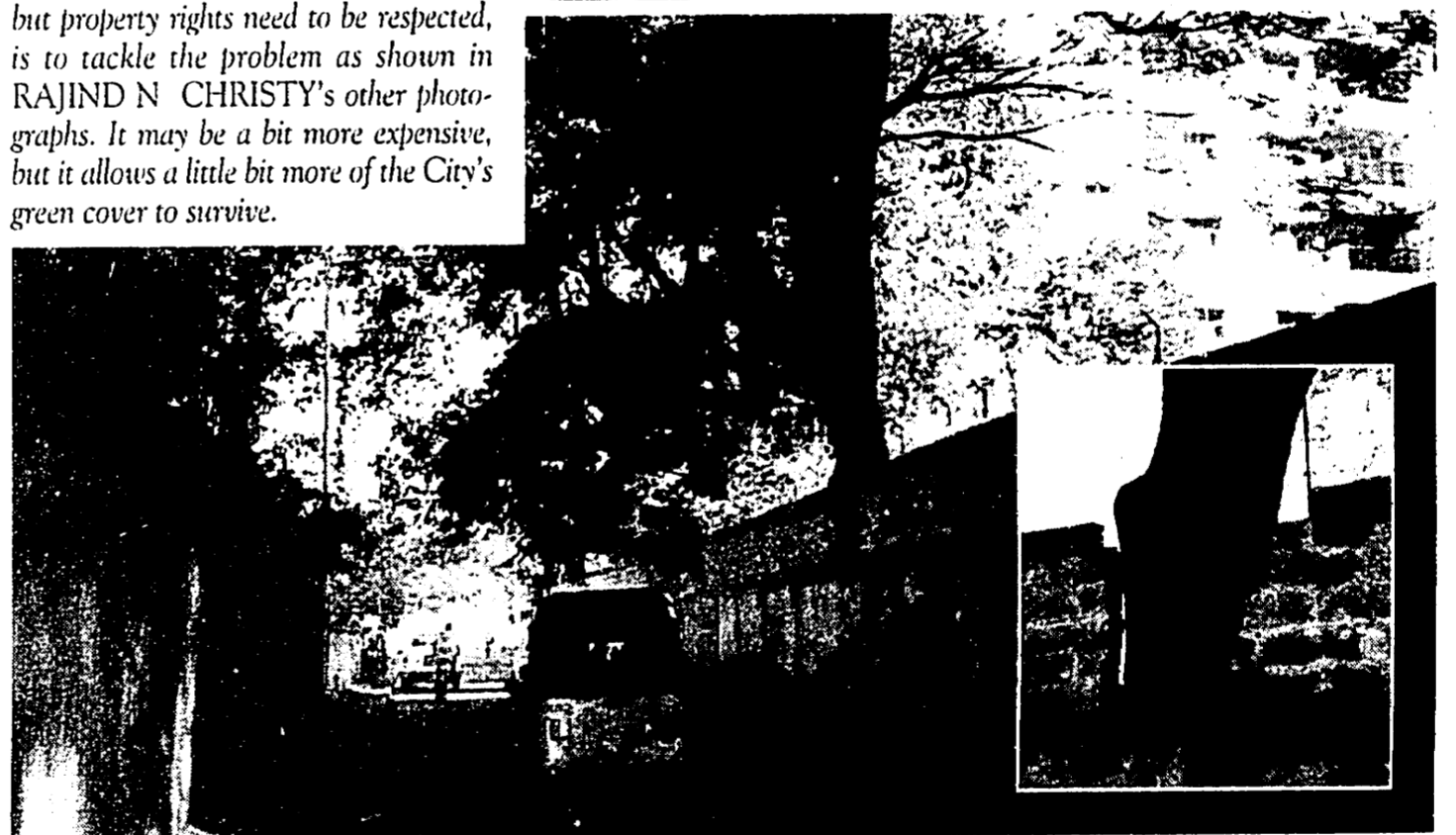
And this is not all. There are deadly gases like ozone and sulphur dioxide to add to the degradation. The more trucks we ply, the more three-wheelers we use, the more diesel cars we manufacture and the more power generator sets we use to make up for power cuts, the worse the situation becomes.

In 1991-92, 19 million people were taken ill or hospitalised in India; by 1995 the figure had reached 26 million. All this has a cost which

like thermal power production, contribute to more than 80 per cent of the SPM in Delhi, vehicles play a significant role as well. And junking old cars may not be the solution. It would merely be playing into the hands of the automobile industry currently facing a recession and seeking a way out of it.

The car — everybody's dream machine — has become a victim of its own success. What began as a middle class dream has become an ecological and health nightmare, for it is highly environmentally degrading to produce a car.

A brief examination of the



The problems with science & technology

The M S Swaminathan Research Foundation's annual dialogue brought scientists and technologists from all parts of the world to Chennai recently to discuss 'Malthus and Mendel: Population, Science and Sustainable Food Security'. That the problems Malthus pointed out might find an answer in some of Mendel's thinking, *The Man From Madras Musings* appreciates, but he did think that Malthus's view, that ways should be evolved "to prevent an increase of the population beyond its means of subsistence", got rather short shrift in this interdisciplinary dialogue. The emphasis, it appeared to MMM, was on science and technology and the answers they might come up with to ensure food security, rather than population curbs.

C Subramaniam always has a way of reaching to the core of issues and stating it succinctly. The increase in population in the world has been due to science and technology, he pointed out. And science and technology must find ways to contain the threat — what MMM would like to call the Frankenstein's Monster — they have created. That answer would not come from agricultural science alone; we will have to use science as a whole and spread its knowledge for the benefit of humanity. Science and technology create problems, a changing environment not the least of them, but it must not be allowed to endanger humanity. Yes, science and technology are important, but humanity is even more important, pointed out Subramaniam.

Undoubtedly, science and technology will progress to new frontiers and produce new strains to increase agricultural production worldwide. But it has already been proved several times that the production resulting from new strains has not been able to keep pace with burgeoning populations. In countries like India, it is not merely the population that threatens food shortages; it is the inefficiency and lack of storage, administration and infrastructure that keep many in a perpetual state of shortage. New strains alone will not solve these problems, it would seem to MMM.

Another point C Subramaniam made was that with the scope and size of research being what it is today, the multinational corporations with their tremendous funding were playing a major role. To meet the prices of their patents, global funds would have to be made available to developing countries through a new world organisation. Because of monetary considerations, the world should not be denied knowledge, he cautioned.

These two issues, restricting the population and working towards a global order that will ensure the fruits of science and technology to the farmers of the developing countries at a rea-

sonable cost, are the primary issues the Indian Government should be looking into. As MMM sees the record of the past few governments, governments so intent on liberalisation for the sake of increasing consumerism, these two items have been way down on their priority lists, if they ever were on them. Focussing on these issues NATIONALLY is something MMM hopes Dr Swaminathan and his Foundations will concentrate on even more in the days ahead.

Hit by technology

Whether it was the failure of science and technology or of humans, *The Man From Madras Musings* never did find out. But what MMM did note to his surprise at the opening session of 'Malthus and Mendel' was that Dr Ismail Serageldin, Chairman, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), could not get going without his slides. Some mix-up with the slides and he had to call halt to his presentation and request a pinch-hitter. When he did get his slides, they must have been meaningful to the scientists in the audience, but for workaday people like MMM he might just as well have got along without the slides.

Needing no slides was Dr Andrew Bennett, an Under Secretary of Her Majesty's Government, UK, who agreed with alacrity to pinch-hit; like all civil servants, he said, he was long on script and short on technology. And a very interesting script it proved too, platitudinous though it might have been. The developed countries, he said, should look at the issues as challenges and opportunities and not as problems. They should commit themselves to ridding the world of poverty and, to this end, look into the possibilities of working with developing countries in partnership. "Partnership", in case readers have forgotten, is the theme of every British delegation visiting India these past couple of years. MMM is still waiting to see that partnership take off.

Meanwhile, MMM was delighted to hear that Bennett found it fun to attend conferences like these. And for listeners who also felt that way he had a bon mot or two. Wearing his loyalty to Labour on his sleeve he announced that "Ethics was a word that I'd forgotten to spell until recently", then he paid his tribute to the scientists present by saying, "Man wouldn't have put anyone on the Moon if he had left it to a civil servant". He hoped that the dialogue would do better than such achievements; the world needs them more, MMM rather thinks.

Words missed

A house-full Music Academy awaited patiently for an hour-and-a-half to see the Chief

Minister release the first copy of Sivasankari's *Knit India Through Literature Series* (this column, last fortnight) and hear him express with his inimitable eloquence what he thought of her marathon effort and the contents therein. It should be noted that, before agreeing to release any book, the Chief Minister, unlike other dignitaries, reads through an advance copy of each publication and offers at the release function what amounts to a meaningful review of the work.

On this occasion, however, the crowd — and THREE Jnanpith Award winners and Tamil writer Jayakanthan who Sivasankari had hoped would have been the fourth recipient on the stage when she first planned the function — were in for a disappointment. A particular function would delay him by about 45 minutes, the Chief Minister had informed AGNI, the organisers, but then reports kept trickling in and announcements kept being made every few minutes thereafter that he was on his way. But finally the programme got underway without the Chief Minister and with

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

G K Moopanar, who was to share the stage with him, doing the honours.

What went wrong, was the topic of discussion among the audience long after the show. Could it be that he did not like a particular comment on the Tamil language in the book, wonders *The Man from Madras Musings*. Or did electioneering get the better of him?

Election graffiti

The same day that there appeared a news item in the local Press proclaiming how much the Municipal Corporation had gained from penalising those defacing the walls of the City with election graffiti and how proud it was about the prompt action it was taking, *The Man From Madras Musings* watched the walls of the old Horticultural Gardens (Woodlands) being daubed with all the war paint of a particular political party. And this was in broad daylight, with a dozen policeman in the vicinity enjoying the bright, sunny day. Wander around the City and you will see more walls painted or postered with political messages than walls on which they've been erased. And it is worse in rural areas. Certainly, political visibility — to the detriment of the City's looks — is much greater than during the last polls. MMM wonders whether

things are getting back to normal, now that the era of Seshan and his cohorts is over. If that is so, then what is visible on the walls could well be only the tip of the iceberg — and election practices are getting back to Square One.

In brief

★ *Dayraa* (The Square Circle), described by the Western Press as "unmissable" and "terrific" is still to be screened in India, where it was made nearly two years ago. Indian opinion hasn't, however, stopped the film from continuing to make waves in the West. The film scripted by Chennai's own Timeri Murari is now being released on the general market in Britain as a video — the first Asian film to be so released, *The Man From Madras Musings* is told. The video cassette cover, MMM hears, even has a quote from Gandhiji: "A man should remain a man and yet should become woman; a woman should remain woman and yet should become man." Now could you work that out for us, Tim, while waiting for an Indian release?

★ Perhaps the saddest of the tragedies that are a fall-out of the sentences delivered in the Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case is the future of six-year-old Arithra. Her mother Nalini, father Murugan (years younger than his wife) and her maternal grandmother Padma have all been sentenced to death. The little girl, born and brought up in Poonamallee Jail, is now with Murugan's mother in Tamil Nadu, awaiting the final disposal of the case. *The Man From Madras Musings*, however understands, that her grandmother wants to take Arithra to Jaffna and seek for her Sri Lankan citizenship after which she could be sent to relatives who have found refuge in Switzerland. Will there be a happier future for her one day than the prison walls that were once her home?

★ The man who saw the scientific future of the world in the skies during his World War II service as a lowly Royal Air Force officer is now in a spot of bother in his adopted homeland, Sri Lanka, where he had arrived in the late 1950s with fellow diver Mike Wilson to explore the coral reefs of the island. Arthur C Clarke, now 80 and not in the best of health, has denied several times the allegations made in the British Press about his being a paedophile, so he refused to accept his knighthood from the hands of Prince Charles during the latter's recent visit to the island. He'd wait till he was cleared, Clarke stated. But he has signed all his written denials Sir Arthur C Clarke, attended the State Banquet for Prince Charles, shaken hands with him and been the cynosure of all eyes as they spoke for a while together. Everything, it would seem, is likely to blow

— MMM

over in the Island — at least in this case. *The Man From Madras Musings* records these events because Arthur Clarke has from time to time found a place in the columns of this journal and is likely to do so again when fellow science buff Harry Miller makes reference to him.

★ The good news is that the top university in the world outside the U.S.A. is Bangalore's Indian Institute of Science, which has finished 18th behind 17 American universities, according to a rating by the World Education Report. The bad news, *The Man From Madras Musings* finds, is that IIT, Chennai, is ranked 115th, behind IIT, Kanpur (74th), IIT, Mumbai (101st) and IIT, Kharagpur (114th). Other surprises were that the University of Maryland, College Park, had pushed MIT into second place and Harvard was not in the first five. The assessment was done on ten counts, including papers in international publications, faculty-student ratio, research infrastructure, number of patents held, exchange programmes with other universities, feedback from institutions where research has been done by the college, corporate funding and collaborative research, and the number of students competing for entry.

Business briefs

★ Velvete International, the Chennai-based pharmaceutical manufacturer, is drawing up ambitious plans to launch its Memory Plus capsules internationally, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears. The capsules, reported to help memory and reduce fatigue, are now being targeted for the Hong Kong, U.S.A., U.K. and Australian markets. The company, MMM is told, is negotiating for endorsements of the product with action hero Jackie Chan, the doctor with a philosophy Deepak Chopra and an Australian Rules Football star. Now that's really being ambitious! Is Velvete International going to lead the Indian industrial pack into the international market, wonders MMM.

★ The Child's Trust Hospital, the dream of the late Dr M S Ramakrishnan, that eminent surgeon, has been in trouble ever since his death in 1991. *The Man From Madras Musings* hears that it owes the institutions over Rs. 10 crore. With the hospital under receivership and with at least Rs. 5 crore needed for modernisation, this hospital whose medical reputation is still high, has been on the look-out for a knight in shining armour to come to its rescue. Help, however, is more likely to come by way of a commercial takeover, MMM understands; in the race are Apollo Hospitals and Sri Ramachandra Hospitals, two trusts vying for a third.

OUR READERS WRITE



One of the old school

I have only just seen D. Anjaneyulu's tribute to A. Ranganathan (MM, January 1). I was greatly moved by it.

I had come to know Ranganathan only after I moved to Madras in 1989, but it was not long before I prized his warm friendship and his comments, in writing and in discussion, on what I wrote or said in speeches. In these he was always generous to a fault. He carried lightly a vast fund of knowledge, straddling effortlessly Sir C.P. Snow's two cultures. He gave praise without envy to the genuinely eminent intellectual. He was unfailingly courteous, as befits a gentleman of the old school, a type which, I think, he rather admired. He knew a great deal about our leaders, past and present, and about the I.C.S. and many of its officers. His comments on some of them were piquant, but never harsh.

He was good enough to let me see several of his articles and speeches as he turned them out. On scientific subjects they went above my head, but I always admired his felicity of style. I was surprised to see that he had never been abroad, apart from Sri Lanka, for I thought he had won a Fulbright scholarship.

I had had the privilege of being introduced to his mother and found in her a profound knowledge of north Indian and Western classical music, knowledge which, like her son in other fields, she never exhibited but which was reflected in conversation. Her loss, in perhaps the last year of his life, must have meant a void which it was impossible to fill. I have felt that the illnesses that beset him before his death were as much psychosomatic as anything else.

Ranganathan's was a friendship which came to me at an age when new friendships are rare. I shall greatly miss him.

K.P.S. Menon
'Jacinti'
Kaudiyar Road
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 003

Air safety

As per the Indian Civil Aircraft Act and Rules framed by the Union Government, slaughtering and flaying of animals and of depositing rubbish, filth, polluted and obnoxious matter including perish-

able matter is prohibited within a radial distance of ten kilometres from any aerodrome reference point. Does the same rule also apply to military airports in India? Are the rules observed?

C.A. Reddy
57, Rundalls Road
Vepery
Chennai - 600 007.

Music again

Can the Police Band play once a week again in the city somewhere? That was the practice about 50 years ago. Can it be revived?

K. Oza, (I.A.S Retd.)
1, First Cross Street,
Indira Nagar,
Chennai 600 020

Needs tending

The foot-bridge built by the Corporation of Madras for the Bata Showroom to the Egmore Railway Station needs to be properly maintained daily by the civic authorities, if Chennai is to become a Singara city.

C.A. Reddy
57, Rundalls Road
Vepery
Chennai 600 007.

Overwhelmed

As one who had appealed through your letters column (MM, December 1-15) for the Bharat Ratna to be conferred on M.S. Subbulakshmi, I was overwhelmed with joy and pride when this 'Queen of Music' and 'Angel of Charity' was recently awarded the highest award of the land.

Mylavarapu Rama Murty
Krishnampalem
Devarapalli Mandal
W. G. Dist. 534 313

We are told

Further to bit of information in MM January 16, we are told that the correct position is that the foundation stone of the residential building for the Parsi Priests was laid on September 6, 1991 and the building was inaugurated on the 82nd Anniversary of the Fire Temple, on July 17, 1992 (not 1985).

The Editor

Want to muse with MUSINGS?

If you would like to be put on *Madras Musings'* mailing list, just fill in the form below (use block letters/type) and post it to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, MADRAS-600 006.

Name

Address

.....

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Note: Overseas postage extra. Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Gulf: Rs. 375/year. US & Europe: Rs 425/year. Cheques payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press.

Wits' End

Spare a thought for the ordinary mortals of Chennai who, lacking a retinue of peons to perform their outdoor chores have to apply for an hour's permission at the office to go through that bi-monthly ordeal of paying their telephone, electricity and other bills. More often than not, the hour extends to almost half a day, thanks to the queues which just keep growing like Jack's beanstalk. The wait is not all that wasteful at some of the congested telephone bill collection centres, for you could unwittingly master karate strokes or teach yourself ballet, literally doing the 'balancing act'; and a steam bath comes free at the Electricity Bill offices, where, ironically, fans are often scarce.

And if you feel like venting your spleen at those manning the counters for their alleged snail's pace, spare a thought for them too. If every other remitter shoves a dozen or more bills, sometimes even without the exact amount, what can the poor souls do? This is bound to get any reasonable person's goat. That our place is full of altruists who want to pay the bills for the entire neighbourhood is something nice to know. But let not their 'social service' be at the expense of others who choose to mind their own work. Let the respective departments have a separate 'Good Samaritans Queue' for the bulk. Don't our suburban trains have special vendors compartments? And how about earmarking separate

days and timings when these noble creatures can be accorded a red carpet welcome and showered with confetti!!

Till very recently, we had the absolutely ridiculous practice of allowing women to form a separate line. You could find vivacious looking girls sauntering in and finishing their work in a jiffy to the chagrin of several doddering old men who had come in much earlier and con-

'Footing' the bills

tinued to languish in the 'underprivileged queue'. There too an oversmart chap bringing in a lady, either known to him or sometimes an utter stranger who would get a small commission, to pay his bill(s). Realising that women are also people of some 'standing', the Telephones Department has put an end to this practice. Thank God for small mercies!

Then there are those brokers who swarm the RTOs and those easy-going students who have the gall to wend their way from the tail to the head of the line

and then do a Swami Vivekananda by addressing you as 'Brother' or 'Sister' as they cajole you to buy their concession bus passes. Thank Heaven, they have not spread their wings to the Telephones and Electricity offices as yet!

Come to think of it, I wonder why the Transport Corporation cannot issue these Students Concession Bus Passes for the whole academic year at one go (optional, of course) akin to those post-dated interest warrants finance companies send their depositors. Or why can't Aavin sell bi-monthly or quarterly milk cards (optional again) and thus bring about a reduction in what now looks like a monthly thanksgiving service by its consumers for the excellent quality of milk?! Or why can't the Electricity Department combine in its meter readers the dual role of bill collectors? After all, many of these meter readers collect payments at the EB counters. Or why can't the Telephones Department extend the automatic bank-clearing facility it offers to 'high callers' to the rest of the tribe? It is the latter who need it more as the high callers would have their own minions to do their work.

All that is needed to break out of this mechanical rut is a little common sense. Unfortunately, this isn't very common! Meanwhile, enjoy the steam-baths, the karate and the ballet.

Sanjay Pinto

Music for the Mahatma

Writes a reader, a devoted Gandhian,

On January 30th, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Day was celebrated with a musical tribute that was unique. The All India Blind Welfare Trust, Chennai-81, sponsored this programme in which 18 visually impaired (blind) persons — the St. Louis Orchestra of the Blind based at Pallavaram, rendered 20 songs, on instruments, and vocally.

The first song *Tamil Thai Vazhthu* was written by scholar poet Manonmaniam Sundaranar. The second, *Bharata Samudayam* was written by Mahakavi Bharatiar. The third — a bhajan — *Vaishnava Janato*, was written by the saint poet Narasimha Mehta of Gujarat and was among the Mahatma's favourites. The fourth, *Lead*

Kindly Light, was written by Cardinal Newman and, at the Mahatma's suggestion, it was translated into several Indian languages. The fifth and sixth songs, *Kadavul Ullamey* and *Buddhan Yesu Gandhi* were composed by the poet Vali. The seventh song *Iraivan Varuvan* was composed by the renowned composer Kannadasan. The eighth song *Chinnappu* is a translation of a famous song by Rabindranath Tagore. The ninth song, *Heal the World* is by Michael Jackson. Song 10, *I know someone* is of unknown authorship. The 11th song, *Nearer my god* is what was played by the band while the *Titanic* was sinking with hundreds of people aboard. The 12th song *Sindhunadiyin isai* is among the song by Mahakavi Bharatiar.

Tagore's Bengali song in its English translation, *This is My Prayer*, was song 13. Song 14, *Abide with me*, was another great favourite of Mahatma Gandhi. The 15th song, *Sare Jehan*, was composed by Poet Mohammed Iqbal. The 16th song, *Nothing but win*, has the touch of the great master Ilayaraja. Songs 17 and 18 were Vande Mataram sung orally, then rendered instrumentally. The 19th chorus was *Raghupathi Raghava Rajaram* which often concluded the Mahatma's prayers. The last song, Tagore's famous *Jana Gana Mana* which became our National Anthem.

There could not have been a better choice of songs for a programme commemorating the Mahatma.

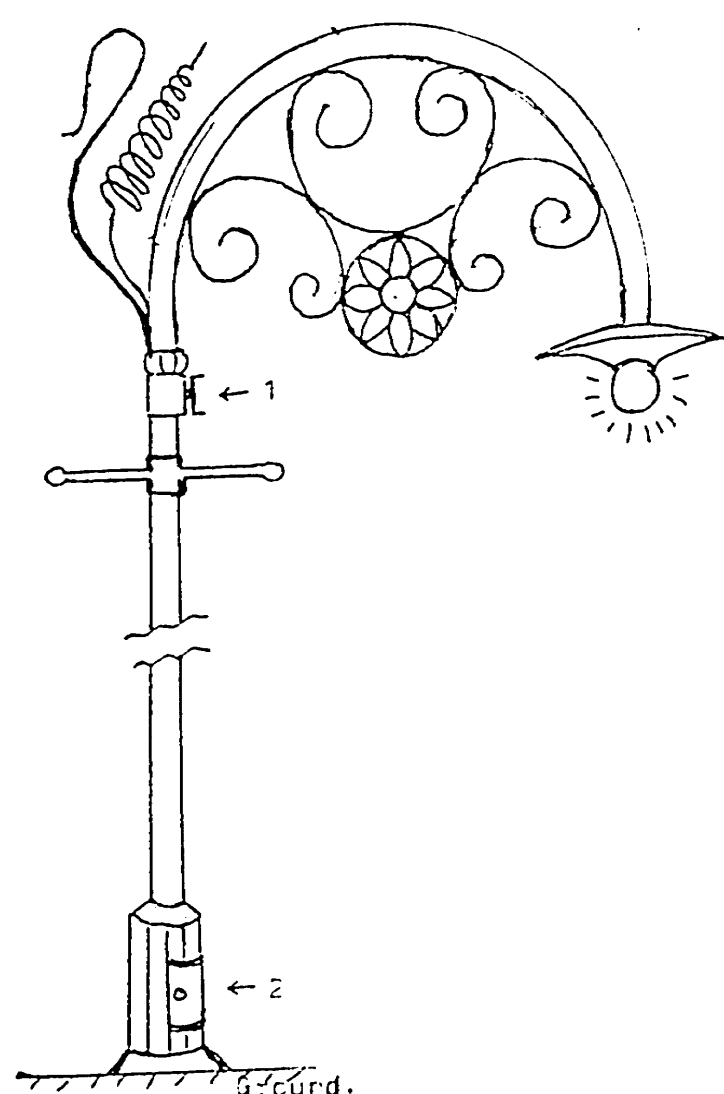
When electricity came to Pattinam

Electric power came to Madras in 1906 when the Madras Electricity Supply Corporation (MESCC) was formed in 1905 to supply electricity to the city. Most of the cities world-wide had begun installing coal-fired, steam-powered electric generators for their power needs. And Madras followed suit. But since power generation for lighting purposes alone was not a profitable proposition, another company, The Madras Electricity Tramways (MET) was formed, which undertook to use electric traction.

The MESCC was allotted a marshy tract of land on the out-

Full Moon nights, the lights were switched off at 10 p.m. Daily papers like *The Hindu* and *The Mail* gave Lighting On and Off times in their local pages along with the weather reports for the city.

Since the voltage generated by DC machines cannot be raised or lowered at will, there was a heavy drop in the conductors (wires) and the tail ends suffered from low voltage problems. To avoid this drop in transmission lines, industries that depended heavily on electricity came to be located close to the generating station. Thus, the M & S.M. Railway work-

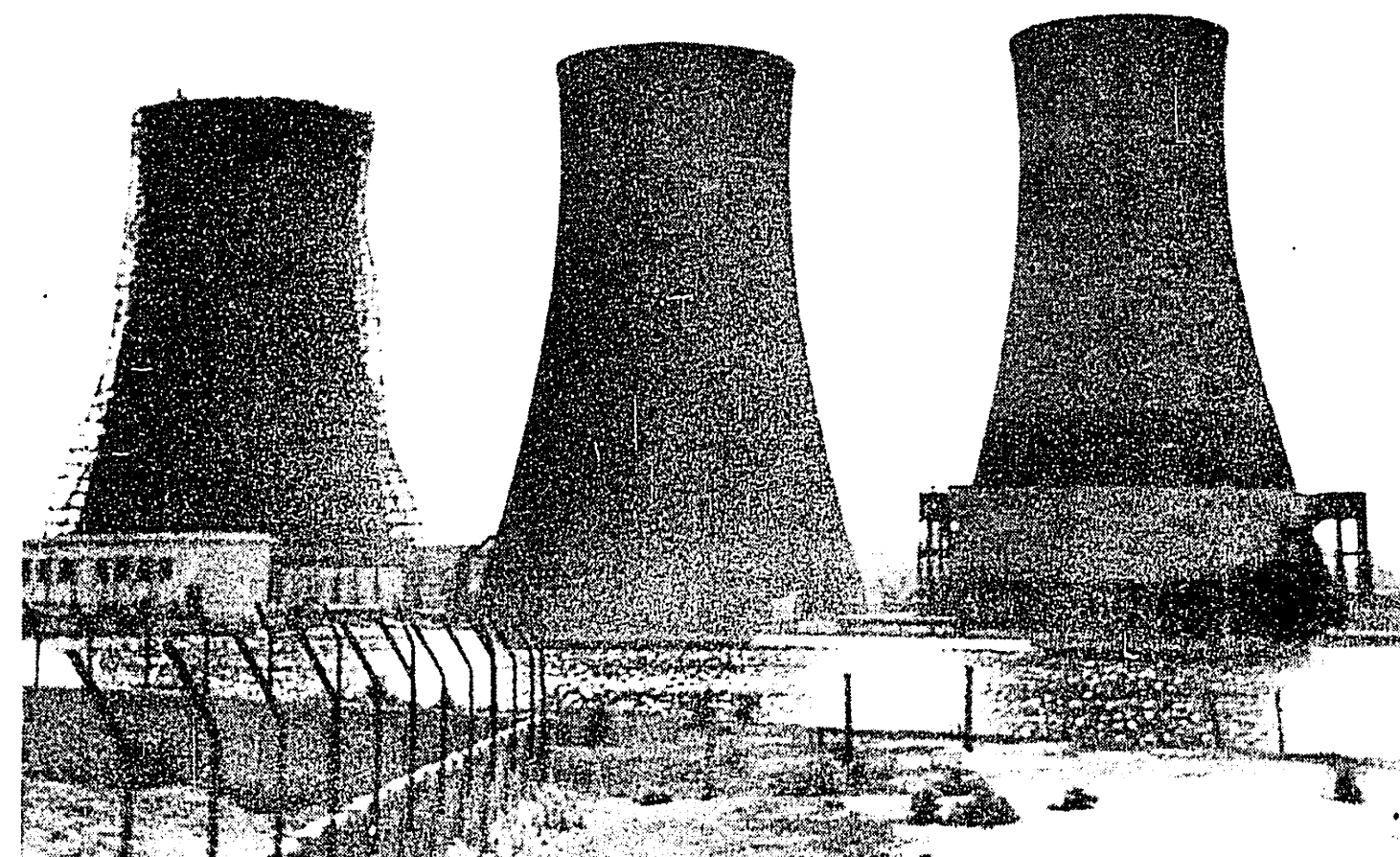


Ornamental lamp standard used for street lighting in Madras before the advent of tube lights and mercury/sodium vapour lamps. Note: 1. Lever switch, 2. Fuse box.

skirts of Vyasarpaty lake — the Basin Bridge area. It was considered far enough from Madras to cause no pollution. Direct current (DC) generators were installed and the streets of Madras were provided with ornamental iron posts for electric lamps. Initially, the lamps were lit individually, by a lever switch at the neck of the posts. A man went round the streets with a long pole tipped with an iron hook. With this he switched on each lamp of an evening. He again went round early morning to switch off the lamps. Later, group switching was resorted to by installing switching kiosks at certain convenient points. During cloudless periods around

shops and the B & C Mills were established at Perambur and Choolai respectively, in proximity to the generating station at Basin Bridge.

As the generated power was much higher than that used by these consumers, the MESCC was obliged to approach the householders of Madras to employ electricity for their lighting and other needs. In those days, electricity was cheap — at one anna a unit. There was a concession in this rate if the householder installed a fan or a well pump! But most citizens were wary of this new-fangled energy source. Every post that carried electric wires was fitted with a 'DANGER' board. A few fool-



The OLD...
...& the NEW

Our OLD is a picture of the towers of the Basin Bridge power generation station in North Madras — the first unit to supply electricity to Madras. The picture above is a picture of the 1980s, after the thermal power unit had been closed down and the towers had fallen into disuse. It was just a few years ago that the towers were eventually pulled down and an end written to the story of when electricity first came to Madras. Our NEW, on left, is the new power generation station on Ennore Island. It certainly looks more functional, but it doesn't carry with it the landmark status of the three towers that caught the eye of every passenger steaming into Madras Central railway station.

hardy boys who climbed these posts to recover kites entangled in the wires were electrocuted. So people feared going even near these posts. Others would not even walk under the overhead wires! There were also people who would not get into a tram car dreading that they might be electrocuted at any moment. Under such circumstances, it was an uphill task for the MESCC to sell their wares to the Madras public. But, slowly, people took to electricity when they found that its advantages far outweighed the evils that went with it.

In the generating field, when the superiority of Alternating Current over Direct Current was established, the MESCC went in for the installation of alternators (AC generators) in

a big way. One of the advantages of AC is that it can be transmitted at elevated voltages at which its transmission losses will be minimal and then stepped down by transformers to safer working voltages near the site of consumption. This was what the MESCC did. The city was soon dotted with transformer stations for this purpose. But the MESCC had to face the problem of electrical fans and machinery, which they had recommended to their domestic consumers, being incompatible with AC. So the AC power at the consumer points had to be converted to DC to make these devices work. And so, huge mercury vapour rectifiers were installed at the transformer stations to convert AC into DC. But these rectifiers consume a

lot of energy for heating their cathodes. And this was a waste of power. For some time, the MESCC resorted to giving AC power only for new connections while maintaining DC for old users. Later, they came up with the proposition of replacing all household DC machinery with AC operated ones. This was well received and Madras became a fully AC operated city.

Now, times have changed. The present 'Chennai' is fully soaked in electricity, with almost all home gadgets operated by electricity. Citizens cannot live without electricity even for a short while. A few hours of current stoppage due to a failure, or maintenance work, throws all jobs out of gear, let alone causing frayed nerves.

M. Sethuraman

• Another theory about

The great relief at Mamallapuram

At Mamallapuram, the artistic centerpiece is a prodigious *bas relief*, known alternatively as Arjuna's Penance or Descent of the Ganges. This sculpted scene covers the surfaces of two huge boulders and a narrow fissure between them. In addition to being listed as the greatest sculpture of India, it has also been described as one of the great masterpieces of world art.

The Great Relief (approximately ninety feet in length and forty feet high) is a vast panorama, which presents a truly impressive range and number of sculpted figures. The sculpture represents three distinct areas: 1. the celestial sphere, comprising the gods, sages, and heavenly musicians in the upper part of both rocks; 2. the terrestrial sphere, suggested by the central section with the temple and sages; and 3. the netherworld, implied by the elephants and snake deity of the lower section. While the two huge boulders are covered with figures (e.g., gods, flying spirits, heroes, hunters, elephants, lions and deer), the central cleft is the operative feature of this relief, both artistically and iconographically. The fall of water is suggested by the presence of a Naga and Nagini, followed by a third snake deity. "Water flowing from a great rocky height, furthermore, brings to mind the river Ganga... the sacred river that purified and sustained the three worlds of heaven, air and earth."

The overwhelming majority of scholars who have studied the large rock-cut relief at Mamallapuram have lined up behind two theories of interpretation: The Penance of Arjuna and the Descent of the Ganges. The myth behind the Penance interpretation centres on Arjuna, the third of five Pandava brothers, who, through religious austerity, plans to attain from Indra and Siva divine weapons to reverse the oppression suffered at the hands of the Kauravas. The Penance interpretation had wide acceptance until 1914, when V. Goloubew suggested that the Descent of the Ganges was the underlying meaning of the panel. The Ganges myth centres around Bhagiratha who performed severe austerities to enlist the aid of Siva in bringing down the celestial waters from the Himalaya to purify the ashes of his ancestors. According to each of these theories, the Great Relief portrays the grant-

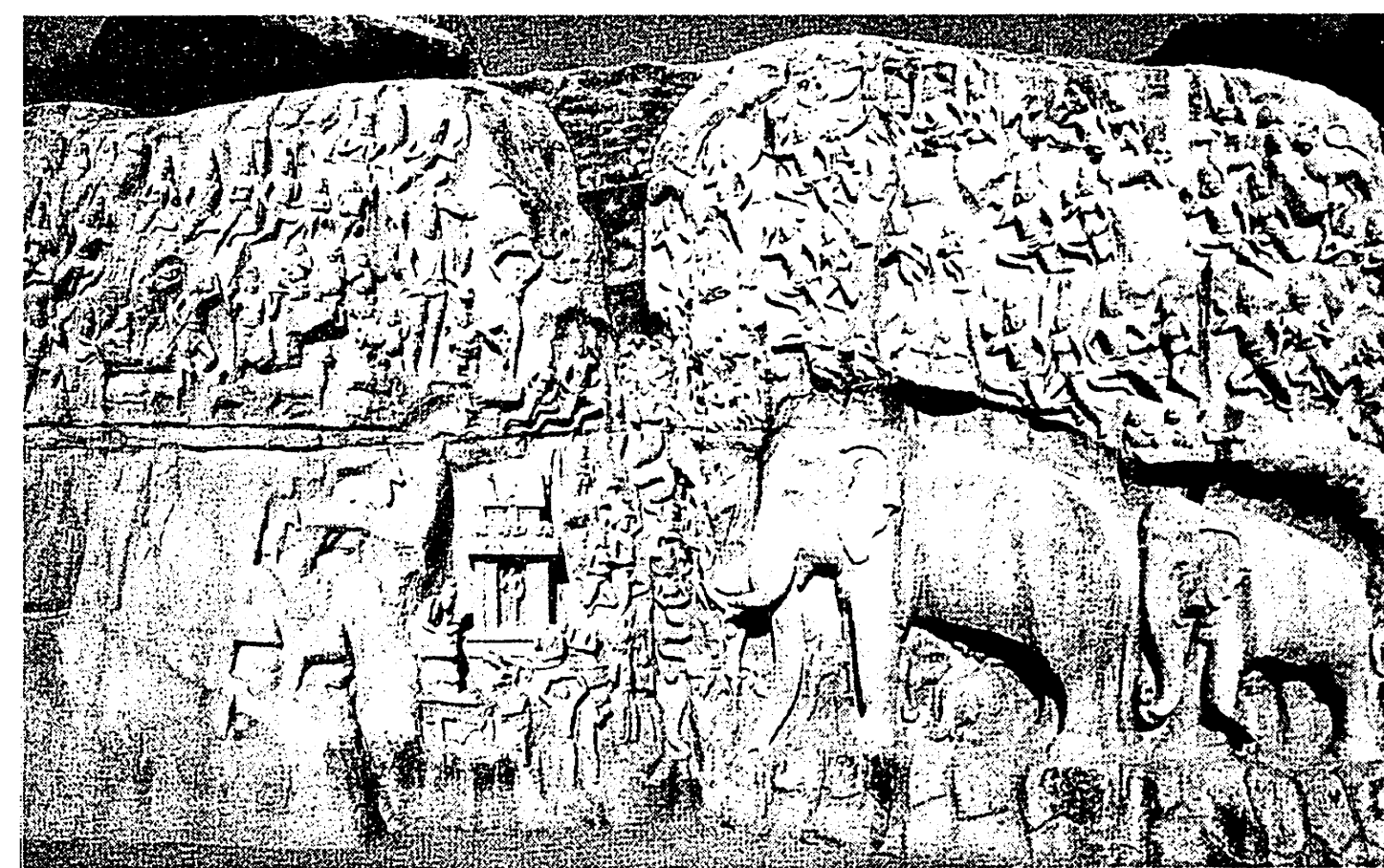
ing of a boon to a penitent by Siva, i.e., a single, albeit important, moment in time. In attempting to validate one interpretation or the other, frequent reference is made to two centrally placed scenes: 1. the bearded figure, performing penance in a basic yoga posture, with a four-armed figure of Siva to his right, with one of his left hands in the gift-bestowing position; and 2. almost directly below, an old man performing meditation beside a small temple built in typical Pallava style.

horizontality is strengthened by the coupling of figures in similar poses who have, as a common destination, the centrally located river. In several places, four or six figures are aligned, seemingly welded together by the parallel arrangement of their arms and legs, and help to amplify the horizontal strata that internally divide the left and right sections of the relief.

The relief contains many examples of repetition of form, a dynamic common to many areas of art, such as Cubism and Futurism. As originally con-

choreographed manner. Angles created by forward-thrusting knees and trailing hands on hips are echoed repeatedly and are clearly associative with the act of running. Viewed in its totality, movement in the Relief is not haphazardly distributed; repetition of form gives it a defined pattern, as if orchestrated towards a common end.

Just as the Great Relief demonstrates harmony between the hunters and their prey, and among all figures whether celestial or earth-bound, it contains also a harmonious organisation



The great bas relief at Mamallapuram that has for centuries had scholars brooding over its significance.

Different from previous interpretations is my belief that the Great Relief is not about a single moment in time. It is not merely an extended or more detailed example of the smaller sculptural subjects at Mamallapuram. The diversity and universality of its component themes render any single explanation unlikely and unnecessary. The Relief was meant to impact the viewer on an intellectual and emotional level. Its message is universal, pertaining to the cycle of death, rebirth and human behaviour. It seems a limited approach to deduce the overall meaning from five or six figures of a relief that contains about 150. To arrive at a proper interpretation of the Great Relief, I contend that it is necessary to examine its entire surface, especially from the point of view of the spectator, who rarely was or is privy to textual and other historical sources.

While the relief exhibits substantial verticality, especially in the area of the cleft, the dominant element of the presentation is horizontality. First, a horizontal frame of reference is established by the sculpture's thirty yards of length. The

received by Picasso and Braque, Cubism was "...a formal discipline of subtle balance applied to traditional subjects..." to more accurately discern their true nature. The Futurists sought the means by which to accurately express the 20th Century's new sense of time, space, and energy. "By adopting the simultaneous views of Analytical Cubism..." they were able to represent dynamic motion in time and space, i.e., the integration of activity with environ-

This dynamic is also on display in parts of the Great Relief. Movement begins most notably in the centre of the creation, the cleft. The "...three dancing snake figures, right in the middle of the rock, set the whole tone of the supple animal..." The Nagas consist of a human head and torso with a serpentine extension that strongly implies their upward mobility. Movement, suggested by animal and human figures throughout the Relief, culminates in the angelic figures at the top. Bodies and legs are bent, often in close juxtaposition; figures appear to be moving in tandem, often with their arms raised aloft, in an almost

of form. The variance in size of its sculptural components is huge; figures are crowded together, but each seems to have an unencroached space. Elephants and mice are comfortably represented in close proximity. In addition to the strong harmony of movement, the sculptors maintained a great efficiency of space; a high degree of organisation is evident. Given the sheer number of figures and scenes that comprise the relief, we know that geometry and composition are working in tandem to produce a compact and coherent image.

The relief depicts an immensely wide range of animal life (e.g., swans, elephants, geese, turtles, snakes, monkeys, lions, deer, mice and a cat), amply representing the celestial, terrestrial and nether worlds. It hosts a wide variety of people performing an equally broad number of tasks; deities and celestials are also well represented. In many instances, human and animal figures are shown in combinations that are unprecedented in the world, as we know it. Some figures are mixed together in an almost random manner, seemingly without any reference to each

• The author, a donor to the Guggenheim Museum, had never seen Arjuna's Penance till he visited Chennai a few weeks ago as one of the members of the visiting Guggenheim Museum group. Yet, studying secondary sources, he evolved this theory in 1994 as a study paper submitted at Columbia University, New York.

other. In short, the content seems too kaleidoscopic to represent any one scene. However, I believe the relief was not only meant to represent its creator's vision or 'dream' of the entire universe of divine, human and animal life but also to provoke thought and deliver a universal message.

The relief is akin to a 'Wheel of Karma', reminiscent of the cycle of death and rebirth. The three worlds are welded together, creating a kind of 'ladder' of life, beginning with the dank, dark netherworld and culminating with the airy world of celestials. From the depths up to the heights, beings have progressively less weight; they become more ethereal, more spiritual. The figures at the top "...do not share the weight and bulk of earthly beings," and "...are being carried along, not by wings...but by the nimble movements of their lovely, airlike forms..."

The Nagas are there to guide us, to indicate the direction in which we should proceed. Life begins at the bottom of the ladder, and there is spiritual fulfilment at the top, with perhaps many lives spent in between. All participants in the relief face and move towards the River Ganges which serves as a kind of 'elevator' to provide access between the different spheres and the varied lifeforms within them. Each being is in constant movement toward a next life that will either be higher or lower on the scale of possibilities. Arjuna, located prominently in the centre, represents "everyman" and is the only figure who directly engages the viewer. His activity is symbolic of the penance all believers must perform to advance their own cause.

In conclusion, the immense size of the Great Relief coupled with the extraordinary scope of sculpted figures contained therein virtually require a broader interpretation than smaller reliefs that depict a single moment of activity. Harmony, naturalism and humour are some of the timeless themes that are presented. The relief's message is universal: We are all constantly moving towards another life, and every action taken will produce a consequence during this or a future existence. The Great Relief delivers an ongoing challenge to all viewers to conduct themselves accordingly, so that they can achieve a higher state of existence.

Steven Ames

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN'S questions are from the period January 16 to 31. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.)

1. The 1997 Bharatiya Jnanpith awardee is...?
2. Name the American, the first to circle the earth, who is to return to space at the age of 77.
3. Michael Sauser, a 25-year-old-Swiss, recently entered the Guinness Book of Records for singing bars from 188 compositions in 6 hours. What sort of compositions?
4. The first Cama, called Rama, was produced successfully in Dubai recently. What is it?
5. Which Indian film won a Silver Peacock at the International Film Festival of India?
6. Name the film-maker selected by the Samajwadi Party to contest the Lucknow Lok Sabha seat against Atal Behari Vajpayee.
7. After whom has the Government of India named two national awards for wildlife conservation?
8. The new MD of Air India is...?
9. Why was 19-year-old Lymarina in the news?
10. Name the four sports-persons honoured with the Padma Shri this year.
11. Which album was recently voted as the 'Best Album of All Time'?
12. Who was the official Guest of Honour at this year's Republic Day parade on Rajpath?
13. Which two computer majors announced the biggest merger in the industry?
14. A 21-year-old icon, who makes every girl's dream come true, is getting a major facelift. Who?
15. 1988 is the Chinese Year of the ...?

* * *

16. Name the latest vessel to join the Coast Guard. (Clue: It entertained several special children for a couple of days recently.)
17. Name the four localities where Project 'Garbage Gone' was recently introduced.
18. Which school's float took top honours in the Carnival section at this year's R-Day parade in the city?
19. The fourth edition of the World Congress of what 'traditional' Indian export was held in the city recently?
20. The Centenarian Trust's Man of the Year is ...?

(Answers on p.8)

THE POISONOUS INDIAN AIR

(Continued from Page 1) issues pollution-under-control certificates to vehicle owners. While all this succeeds in creating an illusion that something is being done and an effort is being made to curb pollution, in reality what is being addressed is only the symptom of the malady, not the cause.

If the number of vehicles goes on increasing, so will the level of SPM, even if all vehicles have pollution-under-control certificates. Here again a bureaucratic response, like fixing quotas for car manufacturers, is not the issue. The idea is not merely to limit the number of cars or go back to the pre-liberalisation era when there was a waiting list for vehicles. The idea is to examine the quality of engines and of fuel available in India.

And who is the sole supplier of fuel? India is one of the coun-

tries where Government has a monopoly over fuel production, refining, distribution and retailing. The Government of India also decides how fuel should be priced. It is this fuel which runs trucks, cars and power generator sets, emissions from which result in SPM in the atmosphere. This fuel, particularly diesel, is used to run tubewell pumpsets for irrigation in rural areas. The government heavily subsidises diesel.

But does this subsidy benefit only the farmer? Unfortunately no. Almost all commercial vehicles, trucks, three-wheelers and even private cars use diesel today and the demand for diesel cars is growing as the Indian middle class finds it cheaper to run these *vis-a-vis* petrol-driven cars. Today, more than 70 per cent of diesel consumption is accounted for by the transport sector.

The quality of diesel in India is abysmally low. There has been a tremendous failure on the part of Government to set targets for itself. Diesel in India has a remarkably high sulphur content. By the year 2000, Government proposes to reduce this to 0.25 per cent, whereas in Europe and the United States, it is planned to be reduced to 0.05 per cent.

Primary emissions from diesel vehicles have a high SPM load, particularly PM 10, due to the high sulphur content. They also emit nitrous oxide, which releases ozone upon exposure to sunlight. Studies carried out in Japan in 1985 show an increasing incidence of lung ailments due to ozone. Ozone also escapes to rural areas where it reduces crop yields. A phenomenon which is now being noticed in India as well.

Government has a lot to

catch up with. While there has been an attempt to monitor SPM levels in India, there has been no attempt to monitor PM 10 and PM 2.5 particles which are less than 10 micron in diameter and which researchers think are more detrimental to health. In fact, PM 2.5 is supposed to be even more lethal than PM 10.

Therefore, whether you have a pollution control certificate or not for your vehicle, it really doesn't matter. The only way to steer clear of SPM is to hold your breath and wait for Government to act. But going by Government's record and the time that it takes for Government to react, it may be too late. For even holding your breath for too long can be fatal.

— (CSE/

Down to Earth Features).

Ajit Chak

| The Body Count | | | Quick, but ill | | | Monetary losses — I | | | Monetary losses — II | | |
|--|-------|----------|--|-----------|-----------|---|---------|-------|---|---------|------|
| Latest estimates of annual premature deaths in some Indian cities due to ambient SPM | | | Latest estimates of illness in some Indian cities due to ambient SPM | | | Resulting from premature deaths due to ambient SPM (in Rs. crore) | | | From sicknesses requiring medical treatment due to ambient SPM (in Rs. crore) | | |
| City | 1991- | 1995 | City | 1991-92 | 1995 | City | 1991-92 | 1995 | City | 1991-92 | 1995 |
| Calcutta | 5,726 | 10,647 + | Calcutta | 29,29,035 | 54,46,225 | Calcutta | 497.6 | 925.2 | Calcutta | 18.3 | 33.9 |
| Delhi | 7,491 | 9,859 + | Delhi | 39,48,923 | 51,97,018 | Delhi | 651.0 | 856.7 | Delhi | 24.6 | 32.4 |
| Mumbai | 4,477 | 7,023 + | Mumbai | 25,53,537 | 40,05,538 | Mumbai | 389.0 | 610.3 | Mumbai | 15.9 | 25.0 |
| Kanpur | 1,894 | 3,639 + | Kanpur | 8,03,729 | 15,44,377 | Kanpur | 164.6 | 316.3 | Kanpur | 5.0 | 9.6 |
| Ahmadabad | 2,979 | 3,006 + | A'bad | 11,77,925 | 11,88,445 | Ahmadabad | 258.9 | 261.2 | Ahmadabad | 7.3 | 7.4 |
| Hyderabad | 768 | 1,961 + | H'bad | 4,10,818 | 10,48,714 | Hyderabad | 66.7 | 170.4 | Hyderabad | 2.6 | 6.5 |
| Indore | 1,341 | 1,527 + | Indore | 5,62,227 | 6,40,275 | Indore | 116.5 | 132.7 | Indore | 3.5 | 4.0 |
| Agra | 1,569 | 1,449 - | Agra | 6,65,772 | 6,14,979 | Agra | 136.3 | 126.4 | Agra | 4.1 | 3.8 |
| Surat | 1,488 | 1,369 - | Surat | 5,88,295 | 5,41,445 | Surat | 129.3 | 119.0 | Surat | 3.7 | 3.4 |
| Chennai | 863 | 1,291 + | Chennai | 4,54,694 | 6,80,241 | Chennai | 75.0 | 112.2 | Chennai | 2.8 | 3.6 |
| Bangalore | 254 | 254 ± | Bangalore | 1,35,905 | 1,35,905 | Bangalore | 22.1 | 22.1 | Bangalore | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Kochi | 146 | 146 ± | Kochi | 84,919 | 84,919 | Kochi | 12.7 | 12.7 | Kochi | 0.5 | 0.5 |

(±, +, - represents Increase/decrease)

A quiet campaign

If you meet my friend Rajan Sekari, he will greet you with a smile and a fountain of jokes. He is the life of any party. Some days you will see him at a traffic signal on home guard duty. He runs a small scale industry and is a keen cricket fan. Today, he is a man with a mission. Talk to him and he will tell you the dangers of Hepatitis B.

For those of you who don't know about it yet, Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver, now regarded as one of the world's leading infectious killers. It is caused by a virus, and humans are the only known reservoir of this infection. The threat to the community posed by Hepatitis B is much more than HIV. In fact, Hepatitis B is a hundred times more infectious than AIDS and kills more people in a day than AIDS kills in a year! It is regarded as the second most important cancer-causing agent — next only to tobacco.

More than 400 million people worldwide are known to be chronic carriers of Hepatitis B. In India alone, there are about 50 million carriers — one in every 20, which gives us the dubious distinction of having the second largest carrier pool in the world! It is feared that India will become the largest pool of Hepatitis B carriers in the world by the year 2001.

The virus is transmitted mainly through infected blood products, close contact with a carrier, from mother to child at birth and between sexual partners. All of us are open to the risk of infection. So, if you haven't had yourself or your child vaccinated against it, I would urge you to check with your doctor and get it done. The immunisation is spread over six months of three shots. Coming back to Rajan, he has started a small campaign to get the less fortunate vacci-

nated against Hepatitis B. The cost of immunisation is Rs.900 for the three shots, which puts it out of reach for thousands of children; even though WHO has recommended that all newborn babies be vaccinated against it, the cost of the vaccine has placed it beyond our public health care system.

All Rajan asks is that you sponsor one child who cannot afford it. Already this word-of-mouth campaign has had over 25 children vaccinated and his Masonic Lodge has pledged to have 60 more children vaccinated. It is only by these small gestures that we in India can live with a social conscience, chipping away at larger issues that plague our country and our city.

So give Rajan a call at 6265306, spread the word, and be a part of a quiet campaign for a healthier Chennai.

Mithran Devanesen



February: One of the most outstanding contemporary French thinkers, Michel Serres, member of the Académie Française, Professor at the Sorbonne and at Stanford, speaks on the link between the human and natural sciences. (At Alliance Française.)
 February 26: Remembering the Founder, Rukmini Devi, with song and dance. (At Kalakshetra.)
 February 28 - March 3: Kalakshetra Publications celebrates its 50 years with Nachiappan, now the Swamy of the Koyilur madam and one of the press's founders, organising an exhibition of rare photographs of Rukmini Devi. Innovative books published by Kalakshetra Publications and the works of world-famous artist Francesco Clemente reproduced by Kalakshetra Publications will also be on display. (At Lalit Kala Akademi.)
 February 28: An annual event, children making walls of Max Mueller Bhavan glow with paint and their creativity.

Six holy homes in one sacred complex

On the border between Tiruvanniyur and Kalakshetra Colony in Besant Nagar there has come up a new temple complex, to Lord Muruga, and within its precincts there will be

the idol of Ganesha drank milk (called Milkday) there were 8000 people who got news from India about the phenomenon and brought gallons of milk for Ganesha to drink. There were



Dr. Alagappa Alagappan the temple-builder with one of the Aarupadai Veedu in the Lord Muruga temple complex he is developing in South Madras.

long queues and he was able to serve milk to the *panchaloha* idol only at midnight after all day!
 Alagappan believes in Naadi Jyotisham and consults mediums for answers to his questions. He recalls how an official
 Chennai's newest temple was consecrated on February 1st, by the Sankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt. In one acre, three stone temples and their cement *mantapas* have come up. The complex will be completed in two years' time, hopes Dr Alagappa Alagappan, the chairman of the temple trust.

Well-known for having initiated temple-building in the U.S.A., this retired U.N. civil servant says it has been divine calling and inspiration. He talks about many miraculous events in his life that led to the temple-building in North America where he has been living since 1961.

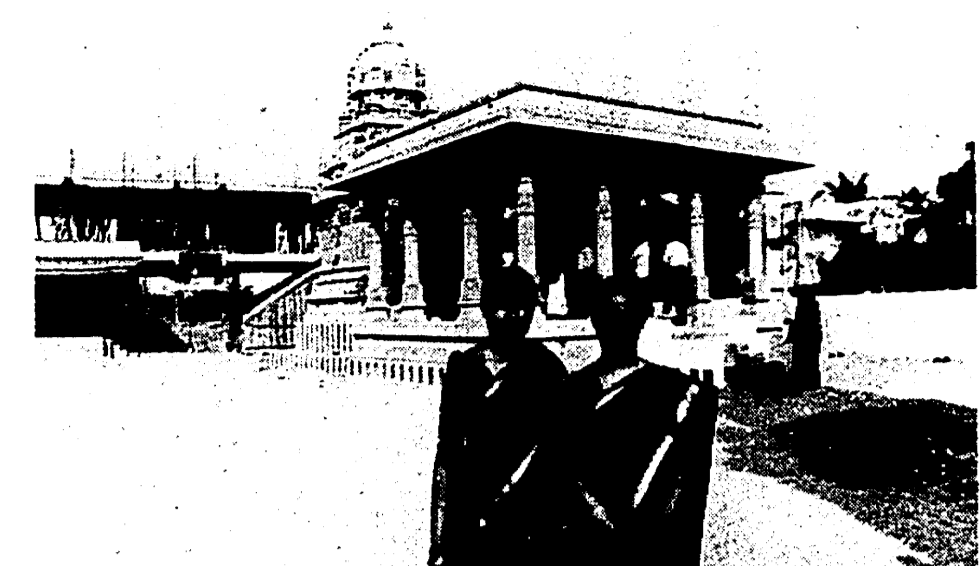


Courtesy: Ganeshanjali: Temple Newsletter published by the Hindu Temple Society of North America, N.Y.

On a visit to Madras in 1968, he had been taken by a friend to Agasthya Munivar, who told him that Lord Ganesha would take abode in a city with a name starting with 'N'. The next day, the Munivar said the Ganesha Temple Project would be the forerunner of several such projects in North America and would facilitate a two-way movement of people. On the third day, he said Alagappan should take care of this building activity. "With nothing but faith, I began the task of getting a temple for Ganesha built in New York," recalls Alagappan. The initial amount spent was \$51,000. Today, the temple has a fund of \$8½ million. A woman doctor donated \$1 million to it. Alagappan says that on the day

at the UN was opposed to the idea of his (Alagappan) building a temple, as he was known to take a drink and was a non-vegetarian. Alagappan brought the sceptic to the Paramacharya of Kanchi who said Alagappan must build the temple and showered him with gifts. After the Ganesha Temple in New York, Pittsburgh wanted one and, so, the Venkateshwara temple was built there. Then the temple in Houston came up. And others have followed. The Homes of Lord Muruga is the latest.

Once, when the Paramacharya was on a *padayatra* in Gulbarga, Alagappan called on him and discussed his dream of building the *Aarupadai Veedu*, in the six abodes of Lord Muruga, in one place. He was blessed by the sage and thereafter applied to the MGR Government for land for the temple complex. He was given the present



Alamelu Arunachalam (on right) and a friend who have been closely involved with the building of Aarupadai Veedu temple complex in South Madras, seen in front of one of the shrines at the complex. (Photographs by SANWAR.)

made a commitment of Rs. 50 lakh to build the *rajagopuram*.

Dr Alagappa Alagappan did his Ph.D in International Administration. His wife is a travel agent in New York. When he was working, he got tickets from the UN to come to India. "Now my wife gives me tickets," laughs Alagappan. His children (three sons and a daughter) are all settled in New York. The eldest son is a doctor, an associate Chairman of the Long Island Jewish hospital, the other

two sons run a worldwide franchise for tutoring young people for SAT and other such examinations.

Already a steady stream of devotees has begun to make its way to the *Aarupadai Veedu*. The residents in the area, who had had a quiet time all these years, are in for plenty of hustle and bustle around the place at the end of Kalakshetra Colony by the sea.

— V R Devika

Looking back on dance with Hope!



Hope Cooke

Remember the name Hope Cooke? She was the American wife of the King of Sikkim and made the headlines in the late Sixties. Today, she lives in New York and writes for a living. She also does walk tours. Her writing brought her to Chennai recently. She came to do research for a book she's writing on Ragini Devi, the American mother of the famous dancer Indrani Rehman. She has been reading up on Indian dance for the last two years and came to the City to discover how the dance scene in Madras has changed from the early Thirties when Ragini Devi first came here.

Hope Cooke also wanted to look at the physical terrain, Mylapore and Adyar, where Ragini had lived and danced after she was influenced by Annie Besant. She plans to create an impressionistic, novelistic reconstruction of the Thirties. Hope was also interested in the social context of dance, its earlier sacred role and its transformation to a performance art. She met several persons in Chennai to discuss this transformation.

She called me early in the morning after she arrived from Pondicherry and huskily said "This is Hope..." She then came looking for my house in an autorickshaw and decided that a woman standing at a nearby bus stop was the right person to ask. It turned out to be my

friend Usha Srinivasan who, when asked for directions, replied, "Are you Hope Cooke?". Hope was flattered that she was recognised, even in an unkempt state and looking like backpacker. But Usha told her, "Devika is expecting you at home," impressing her with the networking.

Together we met Chandralekha among others, visited Kalakshetra and The Hindu's archives, and roamed around Mylapore and Adyar during a busy two days. Getting about in Chennai in autorickshaws was no problem, for she asked for no change. And the autorickshaw guys were delighted with her, particularly her profuse "Thank you, Sir," she kept repeating at every opportunity. Then she was off...

...Back to New York, where she is best known for her book *Seeing New York*, which describes 'history walks' for armchair and footloose travellers. It is an entertaining and integrated account of New York's social history, architecture, physical space and culture and in it she tracks New York's economic development, journeying north, from The Village's beginnings as a refuge from dreaded summer fevers to the present day Dominican enclave at Washington Heights. "It was intended to make historical sleuths out of local residents and tourists alike," she says. Her off-the-beaten-path insights and witty

observations, a review says, have helped decode the urban landscape and reveal how social changes have reworked the city's terrain. Something like what *Madras Discovered* has tried to do for our city, it struck me as we talked about the book.

Hope's other books include *Time Change*, selected as an alternate selection for the 'Book of the Month Club' and used as text in women's studies curriculum at colleges all over the U.S., and *d'Amboise: Teaching the Magic of Dance*, co-authored with Jaques d' Amboise (selected as the 'Dance Book of the Month'). She also contributes to leading journals and is a reviewer for the *Chicago Sun Times* and the *Sunday New York Times Book Review*.

"Time Change is a fairy tale with a bizarre twist to it," says a review in *Asia Week*. "The prince and princess do not live happily ever after; Gyalmo, the former Hope Cooke is now Hope Cooke, the former Gyalmo."

Cooke, happily remarried to an American, has founded the Sikkim Society in New York. But she also yearns to come back to Asia.

Hope Cooke, fighting shy of being written about in India, nevertheless said O.K. to "a wee bit of write-up". This is it — and is why I did not even take a picture of her.

V R Devika

Fifty years of fun...

Celebrating 50 is The Children's Club Mylapore, a club that's still young at heart.

It was 6.15 on a bright Sunday morning. As I entered the Club, there were already several

turned" and "You just missed that" rend the air. There is a big shout as Vivek, a 12-year-old is bowled when he attempts to strike a ball from 13-year-old Raja, another "all-rounder".



A budding table tennis champion, during a training session at the Children's Club.

and brush a big lake with boats on it, other children are splashing colours around, trying to paint gardens. They are gently guided by Subha Bibikar.

By 9 a.m., the bubbling young cricketers wind up their game reluctantly. Preethi, a 10-year-old also packs up her painting paraphernalia and wishes her friend, "Best wishes to you. Let's see who gets the prize this time in the painting competition". Supervising everything is Shyamala the organizer, affectionately called "Aunty" by everyone. "Why didn't you come sometime earlier? We had a nice chess tournament here on January 10th and 11th. Mr Kameswaran, who once coached Viswanathan Anand, conducts chess training classes in summer here." I decide to make my son a member of the Club.

By 9.30 a.m., X, XI and XII standard students from schools like Padma Seshadri and Vidya Mandir start arriving. In a short while, the atmosphere becomes serious with professors from IIT Madras giving lectures on such diverse topics as Maths, Computers and Lasers. After this session, I take a break and go home for lunch.

I'm back by 4 in the evening. Girls and boys, all colourfully dressed, pair up and a right royal game of Table Tennis be-

...for children

gins. After a couple of games, I ask Divya Mohan, a talented 11-year-old, about the club. "I love the free atmosphere here and of course this game which is really fast". It was sheer delight to watch Shyam Sundar play; Kaliappan, the TT Coach, butted in. "He is shaping up nicely and is of tournament standard. And then tiny tot, Abhishek, attracts my attention by showing off his playing skills.

I am invited to attend the recitation contests — English, Tamil and Sanskrit — the next day. I manage to turn up during the Carnatic Music and bhajan singing competitions which are inter-school events. There are many promising youngsters in this area too.

I ask the Secretary of the Club, "What makes it possible to conduct such diverse activities under one roof?"

"Well, basically, it has been made possible by our interest in providing a nice place for the little ones to enjoy themselves and learn also. And, "Narayanaswamy adds, golden jubilee was celebrated on February 14th, 1998." I look up in astonishment. "We've been ensuring that children have fun in a serene setting these past 50 years. We've also ensured they gained new skills and knowledge".

Narayanaswamy, who has been involved with the Club from its early years, explain that they have been able to keep coaching fees for all games nominal through donations from industrialists. Several drama troupes who conduct their rehearsals in the Club after 6 in the evenings also help keep the Clubs' wheels rolling.

Hema Sundaram



Chess is encouraged through regular competition at the Children's Club.

tiny tots along with a few adolescents performing warm-up exercises dressed in pure white. They ran around the shady playground a few times, and then the enthusiastic young cricketers organised themselves into groups. On one side, young boys standing in a circle are given catching practice by the 'Pro', Club watchman's son Babu, who "is an excellent all-rounder", according to Karthik a 11-year-old bowler of promise. Shouts like "That ball really

Coach Asaithambi's eyes are ever watchful and he corrects the children whenever required. "There are about 50 students who undergo coaching in two different batches. We have summer training camps too," adds coach Amudham. The children seem to enjoy themselves thoroughly and that joy creeps into me too.

As I walk into the interior of the Club, I exclaim spontaneously, "That's lovely". A little girl is creating with her paint

Answers to Quiz

1. Ali Sardar Jafri; 2. John Glenn; 3. National anthems; 4. Cross between Camel and Llama; 5. Dr. Santwana Bordoloi's Adajya; 6. Muzaffar Ali; 7. Rajiv Gandhi; 8. M.P. Mascarenhas; 9. Miss India; 10. Ramesh Krishnan, Shiny Wilson, Pargat Singh and Lila Ram; 11. The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper Lonely Hearts Club Band; 12. The French

President, Jacques Chirac; 13. Compaq and Digital; 14. Barbie; 15. Tiger.

* * *

16. CGS Varaha; 17. Adyar, Indira Nagar, Besant Nagar and Tiruvanmiyur; 18. Presidency Girls HS School, Egmore; 19. Spices; 20. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.



Cricket coaching is put into practice in frequent games between teams selected from the members of the Children's Club.

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