

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

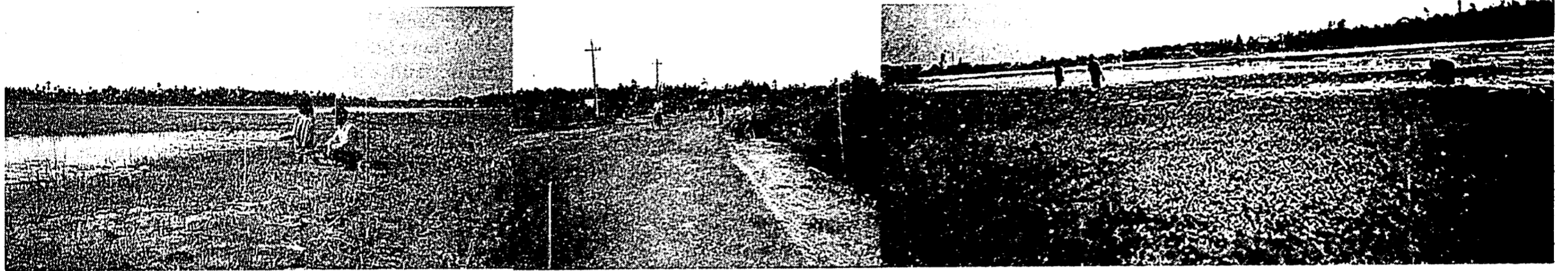
INSIDE

- Shaken innocence
- Tibetan students in Madras
- Neil Harvey in Madras
- One for Plum!
- Dance, sex & spice

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## Two wetlands threatened

Two more wetlands in Chennai are now threatened, the Madhavaram and Manali Jheels situated across from each other by the Manali Highway in North Chennai.

The total extent of the two *jheels* used to be 133 acres and this acreage was owned by the Tamil Nadu Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department. The Department granted this land to the Tamil Nadu University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (TANUVAS) to put up an administrative block and research laboratories, one to be exclusively for Leptospirosis, the only research centre of its kind in the State.

This acreage has however shrunk due to various reasons. The Madhavaram Jheel is now only 30 acres and the Manali Jheel 40 acres. Both areas are found listed in the *Directory of the Wetlands of India*, compiled by the World Wild Life Fund for Nature.

With any vacant land in the city drawing the attention of developers, the *jheels* have been no exception. The Madras Refineries pressed its claim for the Manali Jheel in 1990, to put up a staff hospital and recreation centre for its employees. The MMDA drew up plans to resettle and rehabilitate slum dwellers from elsewhere in this land in 1992. The then Director of TANUVAS, Dr. AT Venugopalan, would not agree to these plans. But Manali Jheel, which was about 70 acres, nevertheless shrank as MMDA subsequently took over about

30 acres of land for a housing complex. Unauthorised settlement followed thereafter to the east of this complex.

The latest threat to a part of the wetland is from a dhobi colony, well-known V Guru-

**Text and Pictures  
by  
Rajind N Christy**

swamy, naturalist, points out that such a settlement will pollute the water, the detergents destroying the flora and the fauna of the area. The noise from the washing will also disturb the birds.

The Madhavaram Jheel had a storage capacity of 3-4 feet of water during the Northeast Monsoon and 2 1/2 feet of water along the slopes. The *jheel* was developed in 1993 to store more water. This led to the disappearance of the floating vegetation and the Pheasant-tailed Jacana, whose favourite haunt the *jheel* was, deserting en masse. The birds moved to the Manali Jheel, where they had been not seen from 1981. They have been breeding there again from June 1996, says Guruswamy who has been monitoring the two *jheels* on a sustained basis.

The Animal Husbandry Department has been allowing fishing in the *jheels*, compounding the problem. Exploitation of the *jheels* by the fishermen has led to bird settlement and, more importantly, the breeding cycle of the jacanas being disturbed.

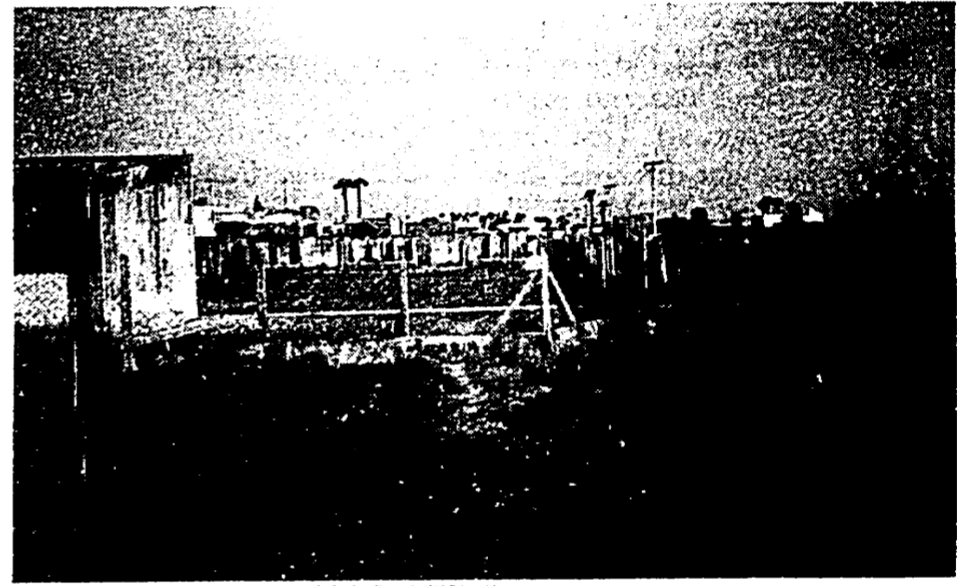
Fishing was stopped in the early 1990s, when a fence was erected by the Veterinary Department to restrict trespassers and save the birds.

Both *jheels* dry up during the summer. The flora of the *jheels* include lilies, wetland grass, rushes and calatropis, and the fauna include tilapia, cat fish, freshwater gastropods like snail, mussel, amphibia, crustacea and wetland insects like dragon flies, damsel flies, water skater and others. About 45 species of wetland birds can be spotted in the areas, the cynosure of bird watchers' eyes being the Pheasant-tailed Jacana seen in large numbers and breeding during the Southwest Monsoon.

P. Ramanan, wildlife photographer, points out that no

(Continued on Page 8)

These pictures of RAJIND N CHRISTY show, from top left and going clockwise: fishing in the Manali Jheel; the Manali Highway that separates the two *jheels* and the fencing on either side of it 'protecting' these wetlands from trespassers; snail-trapping in the Madhavaram Jheel; Government construction alongside the Manali Jheel for displaced slum-dwellers; and a Pheasant-tailed Jacana in one of the *jheels* (photograph of the bird was taken some time ago by P RAMANAN.)



## DRAWING UP PLANS FOR WORLD-CLASS SCHOOLS

(by Priya Krishnan)

What is a world class school of the 21st Century likely to be like? it will have the best curriculum — well crafted and finely honed — trained and committed teachers, possess good infrastructure, provide a social environment conducive to learning and will also serve as a spawning ground for athletes, according to Ravi Parthasarathy who heads infrastructural Finance and Leasing Services.

City schools with access to technology still have a uni-dimensional approach, Parthasarathy feels. Faced with the opening up of the global environment, there has to be a move in education to integrate with the rest of the world. In the contemporary situation, the mass of information available is impossible to absorb by rote learning, he points out, and says the role of the teacher, therefore has to become one of a fa-

cilitator, not an instructor, helping children to access material.

This, Parthasarathy said, requires a change in the mindset of the establishment. Private schools in Chennai having contributed to improving standards in education, could lead the way in effecting change and injecting dynamism into the system, thereby helping to

(Continued on Page 8)

# Baked beans and spaghetti, anyone?

Can't get baked beans and spaghetti in India? Can't get roast chicken and apple pie at the Taj Coromandel? How puerile can Shane Warne get, *The Man From Madras Musings* wonders. Surely all he had to do was ask, and one of the world's great hotels would have gladly delivered.

But he doesn't ask and he gets himself a blaze of publicity. And the beneficiary of much of that publicity is Heinz, the international food giant, who promise to rush tins of both by the thousand to Madras to ensure that the Australian cricket team did not starve by not eating all that 'curry' the Taj kept serving them! That's good business, all that publicity, it is, muses *The Man From Madras Musings*.

The sad thing about it all is that the Taj did not capitalise on it and get itself a bit of publicity of its own. A large poster in the lobby to greet the Australians and a couple of advertisements in the local papers could have promised baked beans, roast chicken, spaghetti, apple pie, and other sahiby delicacies, as much as you could eat of them for Rs.X, in The Pavilion (the Taj's coffee-shop and multi-cuisine restaurant). That would surely have got the hotel some attention in the Press, the MMM rather thinks. Particularly if it also announced Kissan's baked beans instead of Heinz's!

## Breakfast beans

Shane Warne's problem with food and the baked beans issue figured in a conversation with an Australian cricket fan and his wife whom *The Man From Madras Musings* met at a reception during Cricket Week. It was a reception at which there were present a number of older Australians, officials, fans and business types and the one whom MMM got into conversation with on this tasty morsel was a retired businessman who said that in retirement his chief occupation was following the Tests around the world, particularly if the Australians were involved. He had, he said, seen 64 of the 67 Tests Warne had been involved in — and had never once heard of the ace spinner's secret for success being baked beans and spaghetti.

But this fan did make the point that on all his visits to India, and he particularly remembered his last visit to Madras when he had stayed at the Taj, there had always been baked beans on the breakfast buffet menu. On this trip, however, he didn't find any. And, he added, throughout his travels in South and Southeast Asia, he found that the hotels never really changed the breakfast buffet menu as far as Western food was concerned, only the local breakfast menu changed daily.

If that is a thought, here's a poser. Peter van der Meuwe, once a name to reckon with in South African cricket and a

former Springbok captain, was in Chennai as he was the Referee appointed for the Test. Finding him articulate and having exchanged thoughts on the public school system, *The Man From Madras Musings* wondered aloud why Indians were not taking to cricket at all in South Africa, particularly with the subcontinent's tradition for the game and with several South Africans of Indian descent holding key positions in the administration of South African cricket. The Coloureds had taken to the game some decades ago, the Blacks were beginning to take to the game and had begun to produce players of almost top calibre. But there was not a single Indian making a mark in Cricket in South Africa. Why? You tell me, countered van der Meuwe. And I had no answer. And he had no answer. And, MMM learnt from him, that the Indians in cricket administration also had no answer. Perhaps they were all just too busy making money, mused van der Meuwe. Does anyone have an answer to that poser?

## House to go!

Some months ago, *Madras Musings* (MM, March 1-15, 1997) had stated how happy it was that two young Frenchmen, from the House of Lesage, internationally renowned embroiderers for a century and more, had leased an old garden house in Madras that was under threat of being pulled down and had decided to restore it. Since then they have done quite a bit of work on the house but found that there's too much to be done and none of it will come inexpensively. So they plan to move on from here and the owners, no doubt, will go back to their original plan of pulling down *Lux House* and developing it.

*The Man From Madras Musings* can't help be saddened by the thought, for this is a house full of history. This was the house where Buchi Babu, the 'Father of Indian Cricket' in Madras, lived and died. This was where Indian Cricket in South India was really born, nurtured and developed through the Madras United Cricket Club that Buchi Babu founded. This is a house that, renovated, is fit for a cricket museum, not a block of apartments, MMM suggests. Who'll save Buchi Babu's *Lux House*, particularly for this purpose?

## No politics?

*The Man From Madras Musings*' family doctor is a dedicated BJP loyalist. And but-tonholing MMM the other day he complained, "*Madras Musings* must be the only paper in the whole of India not to have said a word on politics and the situation in the country".

Not to let the doctor down, MMM has decided to slip this paragraph in. If MMM had his way, he'd have formed a group

of like-minded, totally disillusioned persons to visit every polling booth and stage one of those protest dharmas beloved of politicians. And the cause? To get the entire country NOT to vote. Yes, MMM would have liked to see what would have happened in the country if not one vote was cast, not one politician elected. Surely the situation couldn't have been funnier than the present one which involves so many games being played by so many jokers.

Yes, the MMM philosophy that no vote should be given to any of the present crop of politicians has brought the ire of several people — particularly a number of feminists — on his head. To vote is your duty, they keep thundering. Perhaps getting the entire country NOT to vote may be a greater duty!

## Citizen's rights

*The Man From Madras Musings* had spent long years watching the political scene at other times, in other climes, and been disillusioned with them all. But if you get him started on politics you run the danger of not getting him to stop, doctor.

**SHORT  
'N'  
SNAPPY**

MMM will, however, try to stop with just one more point this fortnight.

And that's on this question voiced by many asking: 'How can a foreigner — an Italian — become Prime Minister?' As for as MMM knows, you can be born Burmese, Italian, English or any other nationality, but the day you become an Indian citizen you are entitled to all the rights of an Indian citizen. And that includes being elected to any office or employed in any post. Some countries do insist that for election to the highest office a person has to be native-born, but India does not. And if the founders of our nation in their wisdom decided that every Indian citizen, native or foreign born, is entitled to ALL civic rights, aren't these players of the Italian card being untrue and unfaithful to our Constitution?

MMM, as made clear above, has no political leanings at all, except to want to repeat over and over again "A pox on all politicians". All that he wants to draw attention to with these remarks on the Italian in our midst who is Indian, is that politicians — and their most vocal supporters — should play fair. It is because they are totally unable to play fair or to be principled that MMM says "a pox on all of them". Are these the people we want to vote for?

In the alternative they should have got their leaders to cam-

paign on the platform, "India does not want foreign-born citizens in politics and when we come into power we will amend the Constitution to ensure that".

That, MMM is sure you'll agree, Doctor, is enough of the MMM brand of politics!

## In brief

★ Something that *The Man From Madras Musings* watches with some concern is the way three experts on the Tamil Film, you might even say South Indian Film, keep finding fault with each other. The three are more than acquaintances and often enough consult each other, the three are undoubtedly people who have the most knowledge — and concern for — this world of Southern Cinema, and the three are certainly the most informed about the history of that Cinema, particularly among those writing on it in English. Yet whenever they write about or speak about each other's published work, they spend more time finding fault with each other's facts than with the work. The fact that there are thousands of facts in each work and the errors are less than can be counted on the fingers of both hands doesn't seem to bother them; those few need to be pointed out. With almost no documentation in any field in India, with little attempt to create any kind of archives or specific subjects, with writers and researchers having to rely on the memories of others — most of them aged — errors are bound to occur. Need such a song and dance be made about them? Wouldn't a note to the author suggesting the errors be corrected in subsequent editions be a kinder and more helpful thing to do, wonders MMM. Indeed, when they should be co-operating to bring out a definitive work on South Indian (or, at least, Tamil Cinema), they spend their time nit-picking. Sad, sad! muses MMM.

★ It's nice to see a little heritage-consciousness around — even though *The Man From Madras Musings* can see many wondering what's so nice about remembering the British part of the country's heritage. Be that as it may, when the Adyar Gate Hotels Limited and the Welcomgroup recently opened Sullivan Court in Udhamandalam that was Ooty, even MMM wondered whether the companies were not overdoing the sahiby bit. Till MMM suddenly realised that the hoteliers were paying tribute to the man who deserved it most, John Sullivan, Collector of the Nilgiris, who 'discovered' the mountainous green area that became known as Ootacamund and built there his *Stone House* which still stands. By remembering Sullivan, the hoteliers were in some way compensating for forgetting history when they changed the name of the Adyar Gate Hotel to the Adyar Park; if

any park existed there it would have been Moubray's Park. The 'memorial' in Ooty — 'Sullivan Court' — might have been still more appropriate if the refurbishing of the shell of the earlier built hotel had been done in the same style as *Stone House*; there are faint echoes, but more could have been achieved in recalling Ooty's first building.

★ Discussing 'Viceroy' Dixit's Assignment Colombo at a Madras Book Club meeting, Professor V. Suryanarayan, Director of the Centre for South and South-east Asian Studies, University of Madras, drew attention to the fact that several Indian Foreign Service officers and diplomats had written their memoirs and accounts of places they had been posted in, thereby leaving behind a valuable lode of material for researchers in the future. He regretted that their Sri Lankan counterparts had not done the same, thereby depriving us of another view of Dixit's days in Colombo and the momentous events that occurred during that period. If Bernard Tillekaratna, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in New Delhi, ever recalled those days in print, he would no doubt have much to say about Dixit being given the opportunity TWICE to address the Sri Lankan Cabinet whereas he couldn't even get a foot into the Foreign Office door, leave alone meet anyone at a higher level. Nor did his own government keep Tillekaratna in the picture, Suryanarayan pointed out. But what *The Man From Madras Musings* found most revealing about those days was the fact that the only person to oppose the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and point out its pitfalls — most accurately at that, in hindsight — was P.V. Narasimha Rao, then India's Foreign Minister. But then, Rajiv Gandhi had no time for him. If he had followed his advice and got the LTTE to sign the Accord with the Jayewardene Government things might have been different in the Island and Rajiv Gandhi might be alive today, MMM is inclined to think.

★ *The Man From Madras Musings* was intrigued to read this letter recently in *The Times*, London, written by a Mrs Mary Beard. The letter said: "My father, who was for many years an engineer and administrator with the South Indian Railway, used to recount with great admiration the story of a local magistrate who had an enviable reputation for fairness and integrity. When asked how he had achieved this, the magistrate is said to have replied: 'I always accepted the bribes offered from both sides, then I would consider the case on its merits and return the bribe to the side which I found against.'"

This bit of Solomonic wisdom could well be the philosophy — with variations — of many a bribe-taker, MMM would think, reading the newspapers these days.

MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Who'll save us?

Your article on air pollution (MM, December 16th), was very enlightening. Our rulers' have not bothered to provide us hapless citizens clean air — the basic human necessity.

I cannot believe the statistics in the table which shows Chennai as a city better than other cities. I, being on transfer every few years, have lived in the ten biggest cities of India, except Calcutta, and feel that it is Chennai that is the worst in air pollution. This is also the experience of at least six members of my extended family, who have all opted for transfers out of Chennai and only 'visit' here out of necessity for two or three days at a time.

The smoke in Chennai is worse as it is trapped in the highly humid air and results in all kinds of lung and breathing diseases, cough, and cancer and other troubles. This is caused by all kinds of vehicles on the road, particularly the diesel vehicles and scooters, motor-cycles and autos. And nothing worthwhile has been done at all to bring them under check.

Only private cars, which contribute the least to pollution, are made to pay and be checked in what is a new business in Chennai. The state transport buses, all the city-based lorries and the other culprits mentioned above appear to be 'touch-me-nots' as far as the police are concerned. Is there any authority in the city really bothered about reducing air pollution in Chennai? All are lip-service providers at best.

Chennai will never improve, I regret. It has several other types of pollution — the noise from autos (deliberate) and rattling lorries. Is there anybody worth his salt or salary to stop these vehicles and save the city from pollution?

G. Shyamala  
Chennai - 600 037.

### Acknowledgement

The article 'TN: A major A-power state' in the March 1st issue of *Madras Musings* was by V. Jagannathan.

— The Editor

### Easy payments

In a very humorous manner, I Sanjay Pinto narrates the travails of the bill-paying consumer (MM, February 16th). (Is he making the mistake of going on the last day? Woe befall such a consumer!). Hopefully his light-hearted attitude carries him through his bill-paying ordeals and he emerges more or less unscathed.

A scheme may be started wherein ex-servicemen, war widows, policemen's widows are appointed as authorised bill collection agents for telephones, electricity, milk etc. They may be allowed to set up a small bunk at prominent locations in the city. Payment would be preferably by cheque which they would collect upto seven days of the payment due date. They may be authorised to deposit the cheques directly into the bank accounts of the concerned depart-

ments. A week's time is necessary to ensure and verify that the consumer's account is credited. (The consumer is bound to have a nagging doubt and hence, the last date for the collection agent is a week earlier).

The collection agents may be authorised to collect a small service charge of 50 paise or one rupee per bills. Alternatively, the concerned departments could pay them this amount. The latter is preferable, since the former may encounter some consumer resistance even though the amount is small (why must we pay extra, it's a matter of principle). The latter alternative can also be justified since the additional cost incurred may well be more than offset by the savings due to reduced manpower and lower processing and handling costs incurred by the departments.

Initially, there is no doubt that the scheme will be a colossal failure due to lack of faith and trust. (Government employees may be encouraged to use the 'system'. If they don't have faith in themselves, who will?). However, by patience, persistence and perseverance, the scheme may be made a success. The collection agents may also be authorised to sell postal stationery. (In America, supermarkets sell stamps).

Then all Sanjay Pinto would have to do to pay his bills would be to go to a bank (conveniently located), give a cheque and collect a temporary receipt (even this is not necessary if one trusts the collection agent) and come back after a few days and collect a permanent receipt. But this will have put paid his enjoyable steambaths and his hopes of becoming a karate champion and an expert ballet dancer as well.

When full computerisation is in place, such a system can be taken to the extreme. The collection agent will have a computer terminal with on-line access to the various computer systems. The consumer's account will be credited on the spot and an official receipt generated by a computer printer given.

B. Gautham  
122 Wallajah Road,  
Chennai - 600 002.

### A picture story

That picture of mine of the little boy on his baby catamaran which *Madras Musings* used in its February 1st issue has quite a story behind it.

I was sitting there on the beach with my Nikon fitted with a 135mm medium tele-lens, which turned out to be exactly the right one for this subject. The little boy came up with his baby catamaran and tied the pieces together. He was quite alone could not have been more than eight or ten and even more remarkably took absolutely no notice of me whatsoever. There's a delightful shot of him tying the logs together with his tongue protruding, a gesture many people do unconsciously when engaged in some extreme effort. This is unique

● As the Woodward appeals get underway in the U.S., JITENDRA VERMA writes that the shaken baby syndrome is not as uncommon as we think.

# Shaken Innocence

*Guard well your baby's precious head,  
Shake, jerk and slap it never,  
Lest you bruise his brain and twist his mind,  
Or whiplash him dead, forever.*

Writing in the US medical journal *Paediatrics* in 1974, paediatrician John Caffey was making a point that few have taken.

In November 1997, Matthew, eight-month-old son of Sunil and Deborah Eapen, died in Chicago, USA, after being shaken and slammed by Louise Woodward, the 19-year-old *au pair* of the Eapens. The court case that followed, sparked a flurry of debates ranging from family values to the system of having paid non-family members looking after infants. But for the medical community, the controversy brought to light the disastrous consequences of violently shaking children — a common practice, with no harm intended most of the time.

Matthew's was a clear case of child abuse by violent shaking,

or what is known as "shaken baby syndrome" (SBS), says P S N Menon, Additional Professor of Paediatrics at the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), New Delhi. "SBS is not a new phenomenon and is prevalent in most developed countries," he points out.

"Despite increased awareness of the presence of child abuse, nearly 1,100 children still succumb to fatal shaking or blunt traumatic injuries inflicted by adults each year in the US," wrote Robert M Spear and his team at the Children's Hospital and Health Centre in Colorado, California, USA, in a letter to the editor published in the *American Journal of Diseases in Children*.

"Nearly 150,000 children suffer serious injuries and many are permanently disabled," Spear indicated. The authors cautioned paediatricians to look out for any sign, symptom or laboratory result in a child that might indicate child abuse due to SBS. Taking note of them may prevent further abuse — or even death.

behaviour, for usually kids like that are a perfect nuisance to any photographer, particularly a foreigner. Throughout this episode the little boy did not seem to be even aware of my presence. He was in fact the ideal model, a photographer's dream.

As I watched and kept taking pictures, he completed tying his tiny catamaran together, launched it, which alone must have taken quite some strength, and furiously paddled off to confront the first of the breakers. His catamaran almost immediately capsized, and he briefly disappeared under the foaming surf, but he popped up again, somehow straightened his little craft, climbed back aboard and was ready to confront the next breakers, which he was doing when that particular picture was taken, in fact the picture shows him looking ahead at an oncoming breaker.

I came away therefore with a whole series of pictures which, together with an article entitled 'In His Father's Footsteps', I marketed through my London agent.

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

### Buses the worst

The article headlined "The Poisonous Indian Air" by Ajit Chak (MM, February 16th) gives a timely warning to the public and to the authorities concerned about the dangers people will have to face if immediate steps are not taken to control the pollution menace.

The Transport Commissioner announced that about three lakhs of vehicles would have to obtain pollution-free certificates before the end of July 1997, which was extended to December 1997 and again upto the end of March 1998. Some honest vehicle owners got their vehicles duly certified before the deadlines, but thousands of vehicles, especially government buses and two-wheelers, even now throw up thick black smoke on the public while plying on the roads.

There appears to be no will to act on the part of the government excepting through some statistics published occasionally to justify their existence.

C. Lakshmi Narain (Secretary)  
Accident Victims Association  
11 Kandappa Achari Street,  
Purasawalkam  
Chennai - 600 007.

SBS is characterised by bleeding within the skull and the eyes. Even though there are no external signs of head injury, there can be substantial bleeding within the brain or a cerebral injury leading to permanent neurological disorders. This can also cause mental retardation and physical handicap.

Infants who have suffered injuries resulting from vigorous shaking, experience bleeding of the retina before physicians can identify subdural haematoma (bleeding within the covering of the brain). Matthew's autopsy revealed retinal haemorrhage.

"The ophthalmologist may therefore be asked to evaluate an early manifestation of this condition before the complete evolution of its neurologic complications," wrote W Scott Wilkinson and his team in the journal *Archives of Ophthalmology*.

Between 1983 and 1988, Wilkinson's team studied 14 successive cases of SBS at the child protective services of University of Michigan, USA. Paediatricians sent children who revealed symptoms of SBS for physical examinations and radiological studies. Those with symptoms of intracranial injury underwent computerised tomography (CT).

Ophthalmologists checked for internal eye injuries. They found the severity of bleeding inside the eye correlating with the severity of the neurologic injury. In short, if the baby shows signs of internal eye injury, it is likely to have suffered severe injury to the brain or the nervous system due to SBS.

This phenomenon is fast catching the attention of physicians, says Menon. In India, he notes SBS is hardly reported as working parents generally leave their children with an old nanny or a relative. However, Menon adds a note of caution. "The only solution is to create public awareness — especially in young working parents — of how shaking babies can lead to dire consequences." — (CSE/Down To Earth Features).

Jitendra Verma

# A milestone for Chennai's Tibetan students

It was a cold December morning, last year, and the dew had already settled on the overgrown lawns of the War Memorial, when two youths riding cycles came to a halt. They wore the thinnest of cotton clothes and ignored the unusual cold weather. They seemed in a hurry, but didn't have to wait long; soon a few more short-statured youths joined them. Their number gradually increased to 15. A silent nod was their only expressed mode of greeting and recognition.

by Refai Salafis

The group then came together and held a muted conference. They went back to their respective cycles and waited impatiently for a sign. A stouter, older looking youth cycled forward, halted and looked back; the rest assembled behind him nervously in a more or less uniform manner.

The leader then gave a cry not heard in Tamil Nadu before and the others followed suit. That did not make matters clearer. But passersby noticed their brightly coloured 'T' shirts and what they proclaimed loudly: "Miles for Free Tibet".

And thus, the Tibetan students of Loyola and Madras Christian College began their 7-day cycle rally from Chennai to Bangalore. It had one purpose: to spread a message of freedom.

"Most of the people in Chennai, and South India in general, are unaware of the fact that we Tibetans were once the owners of a land which is two-thirds the size of India," says Thampa, a final year M.A. (Econ) student in the Loyola College, who led the rally.

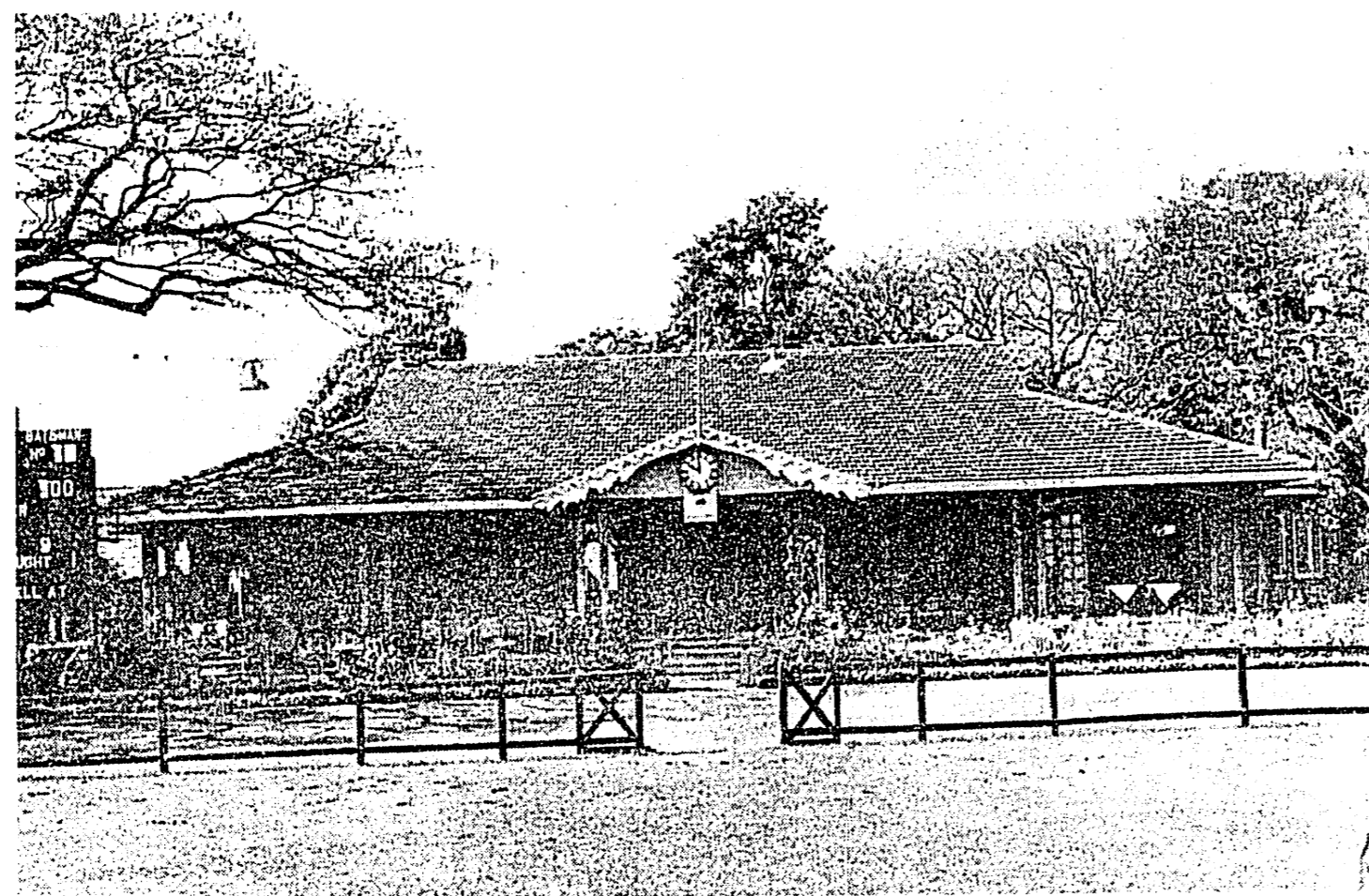
Thampa's parents came to India when he was a child and that was 17 years ago. Now in his late twenties, he is the ideologue of the Tibetan Students Association of Madras.

There are about 10 Tibetan families in Chennai and most of them sell shawls during winter and farm during the other seasons. According to Thumba, most of them are not economically sound and suffer from tuberculosis due to climatic and work factors. Tenzing Lekshay, president, Tibetan Students Association of Madras, says that they have been having talks with the Corporation authorities to establish permanent premises for the Tibetans who sell shawls.

Tenzing is also a student at the Loyola College. He, like Thampa and many other educated Tibetans, hope to work for the Tibetan government-in-exile at Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh.

Chennai became a regular stopover for the Tibetan refugees in the early Eighties. Forays into Chennai began when the Tibetan settlement on the outskirts of Mysore grew in size and strength. Since most of them are first generation migrants to Chennai, none of them here has made the city his home; they prefer the exclusive society of their displaced counterparts to being known as a vibrant mercantile community.

Every winter, a dozen or so families visit Chennai and put up ramshackle pavement shops in busy Parry's Corner, Pondy Bazaar and Purasawalkam. These families live in a small commune near Sydenham's

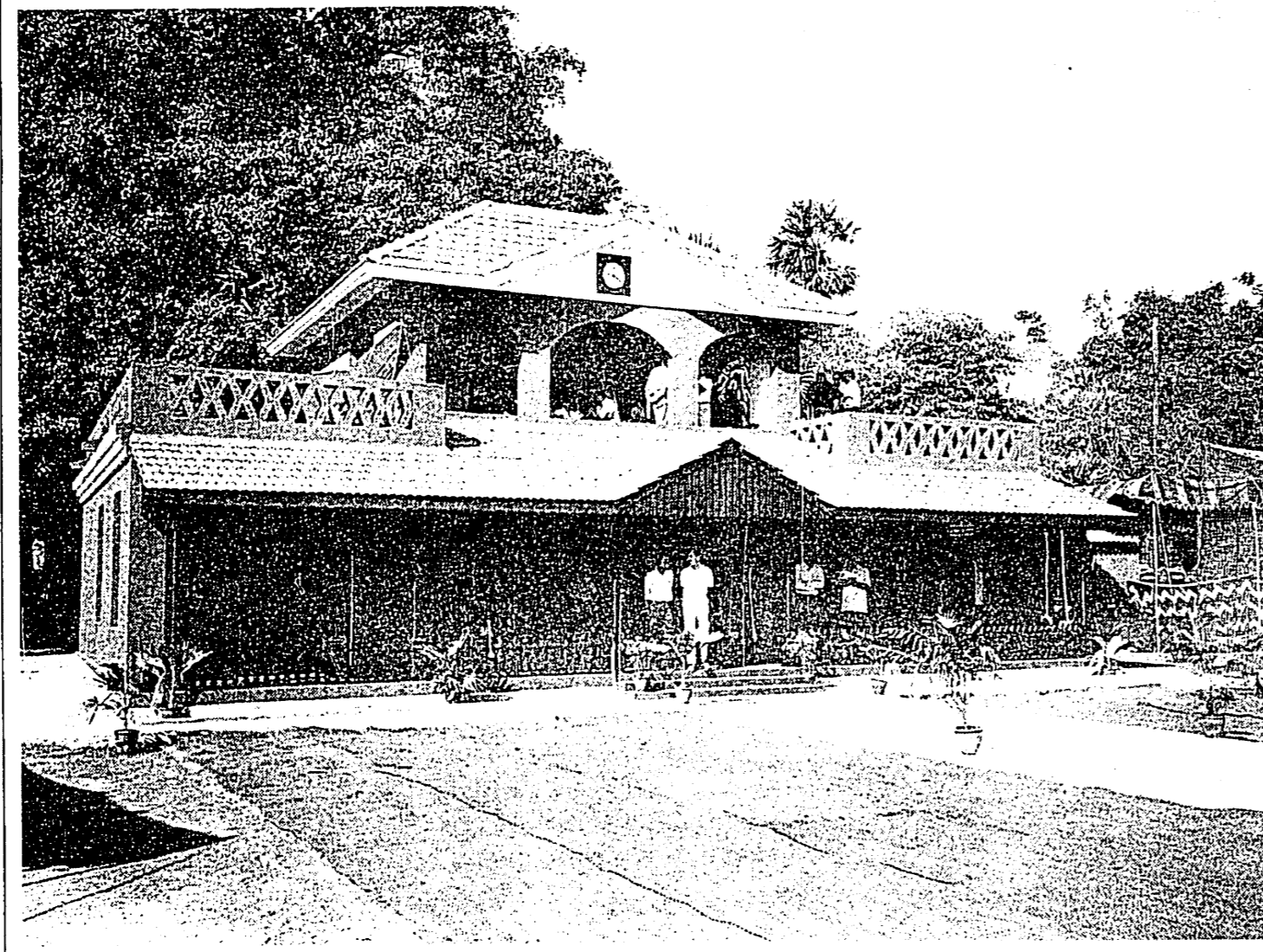


Our OLD is of the Madras Cricket Club's second pavilion which Henry Irwin, the leading architect of the day in Madras, built in 1892. The pavilion, a landmark in the city with its red tile-roof and dark green woodwork, its 'Long Bar' and the polished panelling with the names of representative Madras teams engraved on the panels, was pulled down in 1981 once the M A C Stadium was built by the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association and a portion of it became the new home of the Madras Cricket Club. The story of all this and more, particularly the stories of the contribution made by the Club to the development of Sport in South India, especially is Cricket, Hockey, Tennis and Squash, is told in a book, *The Spirit of Chepauk*, being released on March 21st, when the Club will mark the conclusion of the celebrations of its 150th year.

## THE OLD...

The NEW is of the Sanmar Pavilion, recently opened by former Australian cricketer and selector Neil Harvey at the IIT-Chemplast Sanmar Cricket Grounds in the IIT campus. The ground floor of the new pavilion does in many ways bring back memories of the Irwin pavilion at Chepauk, particularly in its red tile roof, green woodwork and the long viewing verandah. But what's intriguing about the new is its 'cap', the first floor. The tile-roofed portion for invitees reflects the ground floor and on either of this covered portion are open verandahs. What is intriguing about this is that there was a proposal in 1907 to build a first floor for the Irwin pavilion to include a Billiards Room and a Card Room and this covered area was to be surrounded by verandahs. The plans never materialised, but if a first floor had been built, would it have looked anything like the Sanmar Pavilion's 'cap'? Intriguing thought. (Also see page 8.)

## ...& THE NEW



Road, Periamet. Like others from mountainous terrains, these hardy people are inheritors of a disciplined social life, and even the youngsters are taught a dignified etiquette from a very early age.

Thampa's room at the Loyola hostel is reflective of that ascetic taste which is synonymous with the land of monastics.

Immediately on entering his room, you see a picture of the Dalai Lama pasted on a window sill. A white, laced scarf is delicately placed over the picture. Books on the sayings of Aurobindo, Zoroaster, Swami Daya-

nanda and J Krishnamurti lie alongside a picture of the incarnations of the Buddha.

Contrary to popular beliefs, Tibetans eat meat. "The cold climate in our land demands a little discretion," smiles Phuntasok Taschi, an economics student at Loyola. However, meat-eating is severely frowned upon by practising Buddhists.

All their major dishes are easily adaptable to non-vegetarian delicacies. One such item is the Momo — shredded mutton wrapped in wheat flour. 'Skin' Thuppu is another favourite food and is similar to noodles. The Tibetans are taught to cook when they are young.

Taschi and Thampa became quite adept at cooking even before their tenth birthday.

On occasions like the Tibetan New Year (February 27th) the birthday of the Dalai Lama and on the day of the conferment of the Nobel Prize on their spiritual head, the students of Loyola and MCC visit the Tibetan commune here and indulge in day-long prayers, dance and feasting. On such occasions they cook their traditional dishes.

The Tibetans love a lively outdoor life. In sport, their

(Continued on Page 7)

# Neil Harvey's other Madras connection

Fifty years ago in January, Neil Harvey, later an Australian cricket legend, established a Madras connection he recently recalled on the occasion of his establishing a new connection — but now with Madras that is Chennai. On that memorable first occasion, he was, as a teenager, making his Test debut at Adelaide. It wasn't a memorable debut, the Madras connection, C R Rangachari, cutting his innings short in rather emphatic manner. But in Melbourne in the last Test, Harvey got the measure of the Madras paceman — whom the legendary C P Johnstone had specially trained by getting him to bowl ball after ball at a single wicket on Chepauk's lovely turf midst instruction after instruction and comment about each ball —

among the runs to any appreciable extent in the two Tests, but that did not prevent Australia winning by an innings on both occasions. On this visit, nearly forty years later, he got an opportunity to see the Chepauk ground he did not play on when it was the immaculate sward it was in the Fifties. More importantly, he did see a ground that resembled the Chepauk ground of that period and, inaugurating the new pavilion at this ground, he was thrilled by both ground and facilities.

That splendid turf ground in one corner of the IIT campus is the home ground of all Chemplast and Sanmar sponsored teams as well as of the IIT. Here, Chemplast and Sanmar have now embellished the tree-girt, Chepauk-reminiscent turf



The beautiful, tree-girt expanse of turf in one corner of the IIT campus that is the IIT-Chemplast Sanmar Cricket Ground.

pect of the reproduction that will hang in Chennai is that it has not only Don Bradman's signature on it but also Neil Harvey's.

Bradman, says Harvey, was in a class all by himself, somewhere way up there, while all of us mere mortals were way down here. But the mortal that



The rural 'pavilion' at the IIT-Chemplast Sanmar grounds.



Neil Harvey, former Australian cricketer and selector, inaugurates the Sanmar Pavilion at the IIT-Chemplast Sanmar Cricket Ground. In the picture are, from left to right, Dr. Natavajam, Director, IIT, Chennai; Bill Jocelyn, Group Managing Director, GIO, Australia — the Sanmar Group's partners in the finance sector in India; Harvey; N. Sankar, Chairman, Sanmar Group; A C Muthiah, President, Tamil Nadu Cricket Association; N Kumar, Vice-Chairman, Sanmar Group; and K S Narayanan, Chairman Emeritus, Sanmar Group.

and the rest of the Indian attack, "ambling", as he recalled, to his first Test century (153).

On the more recent occasion he remembered those two innings and Rangachari as well. "Is he here today?" he interrupted his speech, but Rangachari had long passed on to where all good fast bowlers eventually go despite the language: many of them use down here. What does exist is a ground and a pavilion strongly reminiscent of the ground where Rangachari had achieved many a success in his heyday, the Chepauk cricket ground of the Madras Cricket Club.

Harvey, during his two later cricketing visits to Madras, had played at the Corporation's Nehru Stadium. He was not

with a thatched shed out of rural India for casual, spectators and the Sanmar Pavilion, which reflects the old Madras Cricket Club pavilion in its architecture (see THE OLD and THE NEW, page 5), for the players and invitees. Brightening the pavilion will be a reproduction of a colourful painting that Bill Jocelyn, Group Managing Director of GIO, an Insurance major in Australia with whom the Sanmar Group has recently forged joint-venture ties, presented the Sanmar Group on the occasion. The painting is of the crowd cheering Don Bradman running the 100th run of his 100th first class century. That was in Melbourne and taking the run with him was Neil Harvey; the unique as-



This reproduction of a painting, of Don Bradman scoring the 100th run to get his 100th century in first class cricket, was presented by Bill Jocelyn to the Sanmar Group. The reproduction, signed by Donald Bradman and Neil Harvey — who was batting at that time with Bradman in this match played before a large crowd in Melbourne — will hang in the Sanmar Pavilion.



A group of Tibetan students from Chennai with the Dalai Lama

# This one's for you, Plum

I shuffled past a poster-laden notice board at the club the other day. I was preoccupied, my heart bowed down with...well, maybe not the weight of woe exactly, but certainly with that sluggish "why-me?" feeling familiar to home-makers the world over. And suddenly certain words fleetingly caught my eye. For a second, I thought I was mistaken. I paused, retraced my steps, and stared at the poster. No, I wasn't mistaken. There it was, the lettering in big bold letters, announcing a talk on (hold your breath now!) "Sex and Violence in the Novels of P.G. Wodehouse"! Naturally enough a large group, positively with curiosity and what-not! — I mean to say.... Sex Violence...and Young Plum? — assembled to hear Jasper Utley of the British council, the speaker responsible for springing this topic on us.

Here was a true instance of the hour producing the man.

A man of such gentle men, you could hear the milk of human kindness sloshing around inside him even at a distance. And I must say, his choice of ties endeared him right away to an audience already in a happy Wodehousian frame of mind. Mr Utley elected to appear before us sporting raiment strictly in accordance with Bertie Wooster's article "What the Well-Dressed Man is Wearing", except that he chose to embellish his striking ensemble with a dark tie covered entirely with cute pink pigs. Yes...Pigs!

Does the name "Empress of Blandings" ring a bell? If Mr. Utley had wandered thus into the Senior Conservative Club, he'd have caused a sensation among its geriatric members, with the exception, of course, of Lord Emsworth.

Was there any sex in the novels of Wodehouse? Well, as Mr. Utley pointed out, that depends on one's point of view. In an obsessive age that demands constant baring of souls, we find frank, forthright emphasis on sex in everything...from music, art and literature to the sale of batteries and toothpaste! In 1998, most books are so warm and so crammed with every variety of panting passion, you need gloves to take them off the shelves. P.G. Wodehouse's works would appear a particularly mild baby pink next to all



Sex and violence in the works of P.G. Wodehouse (from covers in the Penguin series).

this virulent purple. But if you pause awhile and think (assuming, of course, that you were not dropped on your head when a baby, and therefore can think!), you will admit that Sex, while not exactly rearing its explicit head in the world of Blandings and Wooster, certainly plays its part, causing the most fearful fuss and imbrogios imaginable. Couples are rent asunder, the lute goes mute with alarming frequency, boy falls for wrong girl or vice versa, and girls get their wires crossed and force engagements on chevaliers too proper to tell them to pop off. This world also has its wolves and Romeos. After all, what price Freddie Widgeon and his long line of girls, or Pongo Twistleton, whose heart "had always been an open door with 'Welcome' clearly inscribed on the mat"? Romance, with all its accompanying trials and tribulations, has been the basis for many Wodehouse stories, and the more the trials the better!

The divine pash, it must also be said, is not the sole prerogative of those filled to the brim with Norman blood. Life among the working classes is equally mixed up, with French cooks falling in love with housemaids and policemen getting their lantern-jawed faces slapped by nannies. As for ever-lasting love, as far as I am concerned, Gally Threepwood's love for Dolly Henderson puts him right up there with the likes of Cyrano de Bergerac and Sidney Carton.

And so to violence. Mr. Utley provided a truly startling

list of mayhem and destruction: Pig-napping, kidnapping, an entire household subjected to a horrific day thanks to an airgun (a situation in which the most respectable people behave with regrettable impulsiveness), policeman-helmet-stealing, nobbling practices leading to a sharp decline in the purity of the Turf, attempted theft of practically everything from manuscripts and babies to cow creamers and amber statuette-making — at a school of all places — lost tempers on golf courses, not to mention both threats and actual fisticuffs flar-

By Ranjitha Ashok

ing up between such unlikely combatants as Roderick Spode, Gussie Fink-Nottle, and the Rev. Stinker Pinker... and Bertie and Orlo Porter. There was a rather thoughtful silence as this list wound to an end and the audience brooded on visions of clergymen running amok with bleeding noses and people dotting other people's guests with large portraits.

Having established the fact that the world inhabited by the Wodehouse characters was liberally sprinkled with blood, intrigue, misunderstandings, family rows, and sleazy characters like Claud Pott and Percy Pilbeam, Mr Utley then asked a very vital question. How does one explain this fascination for Wodehouse in a culture so far removed from his own world

and the world of his novels? The humour section in any bookshop in this country positively groans under the weight of row upon row of Wodehouse books. Did part of this interest lie in the picture created by Wodehouse's works? This is perhaps how we want to perceive England—a land of afternoon tea, dreamy peers, castles, country houses, and young men with no chins lounging around in soup-and-fish. Which, as Mr.

drippiness. Witness the manner in which she tried to turn Gussie into a vegetarian against his wishes.

Does everyone like Wodehouse?

The audience that particular day were all pro-Wodehouse, but I've known of instances when a fan's obsession with old PGW has led to distressing scenes, with accusations of being a "throw-back brown sahib" (whatever that is!) and "an Anglophile" being flung about. (The fatheads!)

But, you know, pigeon-holing all this analytical stuff about why anyone should be fond of Wodehouse, I think we need to stick to the point at issue, as Constable Oates says. The point at issue...or the res, one might say...is really very simple. Why does the world like Wodehouse? Because his work is funny, simple, gentle, escapist fare, perfect for human beings of all sizes, shapes, colours, and cultures, for whom the daily task of living gets a little too much at times. Of course we know it is all fantasy...but it is fantasy tinged with the little details and truths of life, presented with compassion, and sympathy for the bumbling human pitted against an inexorable Fate.

There is a sense of Hey-I've-been-there-myself. We have all tripped over our feet; we have all had Fate deal us blows with sand-laden socks just when the going is good; we all have relatives who give us the heebie-jeebies; and friends who drag us into their affairs. While physical or environmental details may differ, the World of Wodehouse is really inhabited by people we can recognise, caught up in situations we've been in. Not in the large-scale confusion created specifically by the novelist to keep the plot moving...but in the little details, word-play, or character sketches. Like these words: "It is always annoying when you are up against it and people tell you what a jolly time you could be having if you weren't and how topping everything would be if you were somewhere where you aren't." This is where the timelessness and universal appeal of Wodehouse come in.

Finding a fellow human-being who shares one's sense of humour is a rare and wonderful bit of luck. Finding a room full of people laughing their heads off at all the lines that have convulsed you over the years is magic. For a brief while that evening, Mr. Utley and his audience dwelt in a world filled with characters we have all known a long while. It was like meeting up with old friends, and meeting other people who have also known and loved our old friends. And all this overlaid by the very gentle spirit of the man who created them — P.G. Wodehouse.

Utley pointed out, was perhaps always a bit of a fantasy, now more so than ever. He couldn't remember ever having heard the words "Toodle-oo" or "Pip-Pip"... and who in heaven's name ever says "Jolly good show, what?"

A few Tough Eggs in the audience put it down to a very natural desire on the part of the Indian, particularly in the 40's, or even the 50's, to make fun of British stereotypes and eccentricities. Wodehouse himself was a bit of an anti-establishment character. The very use of the word "Drones" as the name of Wooster's club sums up his opinion of upper-class shenanigans. He also appeared to have scant respect for the public-school trained mind. Remember, it is Jeeves who is the brains behind every enterprise of Bertie's or his disaster-prone friends, and who rallies around every time a sharp crisis in the affairs of his boss "would appear to have been precipitated...." "You might say," suggested Mr. Utley seriously, but with a definite twinkle in his eye, "that Wodehouse was a bit of an anarchist".

Anti-establishment anarchy and romance? Well, well....!

As for the Wodehouse women characters, these are forces to reckon with. The women are invariably tough, self-willed, and the stronger (at times deadlier!) sex in his books. Maybe that's why he created a Madeline Bassett as a sort of balance, except that she was tough too, for all her

# Dance, sex and spice

— at Khajuraho

Chennai kept its flag flying high at the recently concluded Khajuraho Dance Festival, with Anita and Pritha Ratnam and Chandralekha's dance group bringing the curtain down on the last day of the festival. The tourists and locals packed these final performances which took place just outside the western group of temples, which created a magnificent backdrop to the dances. In fact, it seemed the whole town had turned out to attend the two performances, because the next day Anita and Pritha were mobbed by autograph-seekers and every shopkeeper was keen for them to step inside his shop.

Khajuraho is a major tourist destination and this sleepy little

town boasts of an airport, an Oberoi Hotel, a Holiday Inn, Clarke's and numerous other hotels and lodges, including an Italian restaurant with an Italian chef. So tuned into tourism,

While we were these, Khajuraho found itself in the middle of a new controversy. 'The Spice Girls', Britain's all-female pop group, who have been sizzling the airwaves with their

by Mithran Devanesen

Delhi Dhabha proudly boasts that its speciality are hamburgers and pizzas.

The main attraction here are the beautiful 9th Century temples that are famous for the erotic carvings that adorn the walls. That the focus is on the erotic is unfortunate, because the sexual depictions form less than ten per cent of the beautiful carvings in the temples.

music and 'dare to bare all' attitude are scheduled to perform here. This has raised a storm of protest from certain quarters which feel that the blatant sexuality of The Spice Girls is not in keeping with the spirit of Khajuraho. This prompted me to do a mini-telephone survey...

V R Devika, folklorist, dance critic and columnist of

## Madras offers Asia quality ad films

The quality of advertising films from Madras is better than the quality found in Mumbai and Delhi. The Madras films are fresher, more regional, much more rooted in the culture of the country. They are more ethnic and very special. The style of film-making is also representative of the Asian ethos, said Prahalad Kakkar, President of the Indian Association for Advertising Film Art, when he spoke at the Advertising Club, Chennai, some time ago.

A lot of things are being initiated in Chennai, he added, and urged the film-makers and technicians of Chennai to "put this country on the Asian advertising map with their style of communication".

"We at IAAFA are coming to Chennai not because there is much money here, but because we would like to learn from Madras," Kakkar pointed out.

Kakkar went on to say: "In India, our style of communication is specifically Asian, though we still have a tendency to compare our advertising in terms of those from the West. We must recognise that all advertising from Nirma and Asian Paints are products of the Asian mind, Asian aspirations, and Asian endeavour. A lot of

people are flocking to India now because of liberalisation. But the problem with the Western clients is that they do not understand our advertising. They say, they eventually will. All our major works are exciting, because our style of advertising is more relevant to the people, to what they are doing every day, although some of our works are mere copies of Western productions. Others have a lot to learn from us — not in technical execution but in terms of our ability to communicate."

This Asian relevance has encouraged multinationals to come to India, Kakkar went on. And he added, "In fact,

Unilever are looking to India as a master production centre for all their advertising work, because most of their products produced and sold in India are also manufactured and sold in other Asian countries as well. They are prepared to provide us the facilities, models, situations, etc., relevant to each country.

"Singapore too is looking upon India as a business base, as a possible expansion centre for its work. Another reason for the entire Asia-Pacific region's keenness to make India a production centre is our economy of costs."

— Courtesy: Headline.

## A MILESTONE FOR TIBETAN STUDENTS

(Continued from Page 4)

mountain hardy muscles come in handy. Most Tibetan students opt for stamina-oriented games.

The Tibetan students in Chennai have adapted well to the local milieu. "Every Tibetan feels that he is an ambassador of Tibet" says Taschi. And so the students themselves take

the responsibility of pulling up one of their number if he does not conform to local traditions. They have willingly taken up the task of integrating with the mainstream. "It is necessary for us to be flexible, instead of craving for a separate identity," says Thampa as the strains of an old Tamil songs blare from his radio.

"There have been numerous

Madras Musings felt that there was nothing lost should a Spice Girls concert take place at Khajuraho. Meenakshi Doctor, who is a stringer for the BBC, said a definite 'NO' to it and felt that the Spice Girls are a media hyped group and that the best way to enjoy the Spice Girls was to shut off the sound Chetan Shah, film director and playwright (*Slow Dissolve* and another at first draft stage) said in his ironic way, "What's wrong? The spot is not sacred and today anything goes." A line in his new play reads, "When you are among friends nothing counts as bad taste any more other than farting in your friend's face!" The first reaction of Dr Ravi Santhosham, President of the MMA, was "Fantastic! When do they come down?" When I explained about Khajuraho, he came down a notch or two and felt that The Spice Girls' act was too electronic and, as such, unsuitable for such a venue. As an afterthought he added that if the BJP came to power the idea would be chucked out anyway. Ranvir Shah, style guru, actor and theatre director, felt that there was no problem, that we held too romantic a notion of Khajuraho, a sleepy little temple town. The income would be welcomed by the locals who he felt were savvy enough to know what's good for them, and if our temples can have neon signs on them, what's wrong with techno-pop?

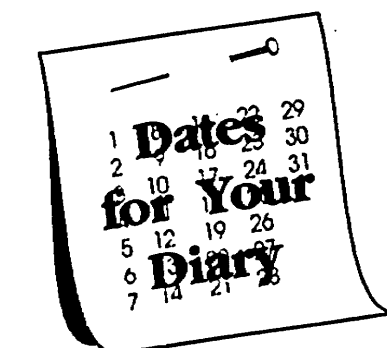
As for me, having strolled through all the dusty lanes and bylanes of Khajuraho, having stood in awe in front of these Chandela temples, having watched devotees of Siva anoint the almost 1000-year-old lingam of the Matangesvara temple, having enjoyed mingling with and talking to its trades-people, I would be sorry to see this town invaded by hordes of yuppies and groupies bringing to it all the attendant vices of the metros. There is a deep spirituality that comes from the wellspring of rural India. To see this corrupted is a sad thing for me. As for the Spice Girls, I will remain a fan as long as they stay confined to the TV set.

The Puppets Unlimited with *Everyday Materials* has evolved through a workshop with children and traditional puppeteers and the focus is more on the process and not so much on the product. The release function will begin with a short puppetry-performance which will include the process of making the puppets and putting the play together.

March 22, 24, 25 : Swiss Film Festival. At the Film Chamber Theatre, Anna Salai.

March 23 & 24 : A version of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* abridged to 2 hours (at the Max Mueller Bhavan, 7.00 p.m.).

*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, performed as *theru-k-koothu* by the Purisai Duraisamy Kannappa Thambiran Paramparai Theru-k-koothu Mandram in collaboration with Koothu-p-pattarai, is part of the Bertolt Brecht Centenary Celebrations of the Max Mueller Bhavan.



March : Craftsmen in residence at Dakshinachitra: Ramu Vellar — Potter; Ramachandran — Kalamkari artist; and soft stone workers.

March 19 : *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht performed by the Purisai Duraisamy, Kannappa Thambiran Paramparai Theru-k-koothu Mandram (in Tamil, at Purisai, from 9.30 p.m. through the night).

March 21 : *Puppets Unlimited with Everyday Materials*. A Tara publishing book release (at the Max Mueller Bhavan, 6.30 p.m.).

In 1995 MMB and Tara Publishing collaborated in a major illustration workshop which brought together well-known illustrators of children's literature and visual artists who ventured into such a space for the first time. The book being released will be published in German in April 1998. The first in this series, *Child Art with Everyday Materials*, has already been published in German.

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for the students there. On December 27th, they ended the 240 km rally in the presence of their spiritual head, Dalai Lama, who was on a two-day visit to Bangalore.

Thampa, Tenzing, Tsering and many more have a dream, and that is that they have miles to go. The Tibetan students of Loyola and MCC reached the first milestone with their rally.

The Tibetan students halted at numerous schools en route and performed cultural shows

# Playing the game a gentleman's way

• The recent unhappy events at Chepauk, which are now being discussed, reminded a reader how different sportsmanship used to be on that same ground. Cricket, he says, used to be a game for gentlemen like Balu Alaganan, the hero of this little anecdote. In that same spirit of sportsmanship, will he who fiddled with the pitch on the recent occasion own up, wonders the reader who sent us this story from the past.

A remarkable incident occurred in a city league match last Sunday at Chepauk which, as far as I am aware, has not been mentioned in the daily Press. A fast bowler, on coming up to the wicket, slipped and the ball fell a few yards away from him. It was thereupon picked up by a nearby fieldsmen.

Such incidents are far from uncommon. But what followed invested the occurrence with more than ordinary interest.

The batsman, possibly guided by the fact that his team was in need of runs, insisted that as the ball had been bowled he was entitled to hit it. Thereupon, while the fieldsmen stood around him in wondering array and with neither umpire offering any opposition, he stationed the ball much as if he were playing golf and hit it into the "country". However, his partner, who is the Madras State captain, declined to take any runs. He (the 'golfer') returned to the wicket and was, perhaps not undeservedly bowled when his side needed four runs to achieve victory.

This strange incident provoked much discussion. It is not clear whether the batsman could not have been given out for handing the ball had an appeal been made against him. There was also this fact to be considered, that the ball had been previously touched by a fieldsmen. The fact, to be highly applauded for the splendid spirit

it displayed, that no runs were scored for that particular stroke (three could have been made), rescued the incident from further, possibly acrimonious, complications, for the team, as I have already said, badly required runs.

The essential factor of course, is that the runner disdained to utilise the opportunity to amass some runs. In the paralysis of action which had apparently overtaken the umpires, he could have well done so. In fact it must have been difficult for him to resist the great temptation. If these runs had been taken, his side might have won. But it is to his credit that he refrained from doing so. There was a nobility about him as he waved back his impetuous colleague. This incident more than any other confirmed him in his moral right to be appointed the captain of Madras.

(From *Swatantra*, December 1965)

N.S. Ramaswami

# PLANS FOR WORLD-CLASS SCHOOLS

(Continued from Page 1)

elevate their status to world-class institutions.

We were obviously talking in this discussion about schools that have access to computers and — it would then be implied — the wherewithal to implement innovative programmes to make learning interesting and help students keep in touch with the rest of the world, through their fingertips. This panel discussion on "World class schools of the 21st century. Can yours be one?" was sponsored by Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services and *The Hindu* and was held at the Loyola College.

IL and FS wishes to invest in the field of education and set up prototype models by working on two initiatives relating to schools and an MBA programme. It is looking at 100 schools in three different states to implement a distance learning programme in collaboration with the government of Canada. Parthasarathy, an alumnus of Loyola and full of ideas on using technology to facilitate distance learning, spoke of the experience in Canada and Australia, pioneers of the distance learning programme owing to their size. The model programme he plans would be called *School Net India* (as in *School Net Canada*.) Schools would be connected through V-SAT technology to provide interactive learning. There would be an institutional Learning Memory, creation of a universal software shell and the use of multimedia, making subjects

like Nature Study and Ecology a visual treat.

A soft launch is planned around April providing "a touch and feel experience" between two schools in two cities, in Canada and India. Topics of discernible interest to children would be chosen and the modalities are being worked out to make them work interactively across the seas. The decision to start with established schools has been taken to test the waters, to elicit responses and then move ahead.

New Gen, an organisation based in Chennai, engaged in the training and development of students and youth, and with programmes for schoolchildren, aims to empower them by harnessing the right attitudes and skills. It will help co-ordinate this effort with the schools concerned.

The plans are ambitious, as it is an awesome task to redefine a syllabus, to contend with the hand of the Government and the mindset of the policy framers. The most significant hurdle is finance. "Education should not be a giveaway", Parthasarathy contends. With reasonable expectations with regard to returns, financial investment in education is extremely viable. It should be self-sustaining, with a surplus for regeneration.

With negligible investment by the Government in elementary education in India, technology-oriented schemes like these need benefactors from the private sector with the vision and the ability to think big.

# TWO WETLANDS THREATENED

(Continued from Page 1)

other wetland habitat sees such a gathering of the Jacanas and, therefore, these *jheels* should be protected. Other birds seen are the Rail, the rare Ruddy Crake, the Bitterns, the migratory Waders, Wagtails, Temminck Stint, Osprey, Marsh Harrier, Spotted Eagle, and Purple and Grey Herons. The Bronzewing Jacana was also spotted 15 years ago, but has not been seen since. Guruswamy attributes this to neglect and destruction of the wetlands. The *jheels* also serve as feeding habitats for the wetland birds of the Simpson Estate where they are completely protected.

There are regular illegal activities, such as fishing, snail gathering, shooting of birds, invasion by the buffaloes, cattle and pigs, to be seen in both *jheels*. Snail-gatherers are the worst offenders, their trespassing destroying the floating vegetation and the nesting of the Jacanas. The Simpson authorities, together with other like-minded organisations and TANUVAS, are making an attempt to protect these habitats. They have erected hoardings warning trespassers to 'keep off from the place. Dr. R. Manickam, Director, Centre for Advanced Animal Health Science,

has promised to help in protecting the fauna.

There is a proposal to deepen the Manali *Jheel* to improve its storage capacity and erect embankments on its sides. Guruswamy says deepening will facilitate additional water storage. This would allow the migratory birds to breed regularly. The need of the hour is to educate the people about the importance of the habitat, encourage students to take up study of the *jheels* and involve unauthorised dwellers to safeguard the place against further trespassing.

Rajind N. Christy

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INDIA CEMENTS LTD.

KASTURI & SONS LTD.

The KCP Group

Murugappa Group

Pond's

Rane Group

SANMAR  
The Sanmar Group

Sf

Sundaram Finance Limited

FOODWORLD

Spencer & Co. Ltd

TVS

Sundram Fasteners Limited



The Taj Group of Hotels



Thiru Arooran Sugars Ltd

TVS-SUZUKI

TVS Suzuki Ltd.

WELCOMGROUP  
Chola Sheraton