Madras Week – a great success

(By The Editor)

It’s been a great success, the Coordinators of Madras Week tell us. They have been 40 per cent more programmes than last year, they indicate, speaking of the programmes they were informed about. “There were many more we were not told about,” they add. These programmes started from August 1st and are going on till the first week of September, the core week having been packed with events and many more being organised during the week that followed, making it virtually a Madras Fortnight with promise of August-September developing into a Madras Month.

Studying the programme, attending the events, catching up with the numerous reports, still more blogs and even more activities described in person, we are delighted to find that some of the concerns of the Coordinators past years are being addressed positively. The major success story has been the number of schools participating. Apart from individual schools and some which teamed with a school or two in their neighbourhood, a significant contribution was that by PSBB, KK Nagar, and Pupil Saveetha Eco School, Poonamallee, who took it upon themselves to take the lead roles and act as nodal points for a cluster of a dozen and more schools each. About a hundred schools participated in numerous activities, some of the exhibitions they put up being, in particular, described as “excellent craftsmanship”. But the most significant contribution was that by the British Council, who contributed Rs. 2 lakhs to assist schools with necessary requirements.

Another heartening feature has been the extended spread of the celebrations. North and West Madras have seen much pioneering activity. Sri Theagaraya College in Washermenpet, St. Joseph’s High School in Erukkenchery and Ambal Matric School in Arumbakkam have all contributed to this in a significant way. Then there have been those who have turned the spotlight on Chennai of today that was once Madras. Namma Chennai and the Indian Press Institute have taken a lead in this. The British Council had several innovative programmes ranging from the past to the present. And, two surprises, the Reserve Bank of India got into the spirit of the celebration and organised programmes for its staff, and the Hotel Ambassador Pallava introduced what we pre-into the spirit of the celebration and organised programmes for its staff.

The muddle that is the ASI

The Comptroller and Auditor General recently filed a report that 92 monuments protected by the Archaeological Survey of India have gone missing over the years. The ASI has since ‘redeemed’ itself by its riposte that 47 out of the 92 have since been traced and the others had vanished years ago and the records were not updated owing to oversight. All this fuels us with no confidence in either the way the CAG did its survey or the methods that the ASI uses to protect its structures. It is a miracle that more buildings, icons and precincts described in person, we are delighted to find that some of the concerns of the Coordinators past years are being addressed positively, we are delighted to find that some of the concerns of the Coordinators past years are being addressed positively.

Listed among the missing monuments were two Chennai-based monuments – Hytter’s Obelisk in the Law College premises and the remnant of the old town wall on Old Jail Road. Both of them are very much there unless, of course, the CAG is looking for the rest of the town wall which, incidentally, was demolished in the 1850s (in which case the ASI takes really long to update its records). But what is interesting is that the monument that has really vanished, the Powney Vault, which stood next to Hytter’s Obelisk, finds no mention. The enclosure in which several members of the Powney family were buried has, most likely, fallen victim to the Metro rail development. This must have been allowed by citing that the Justice Padmanabhan Committee list does not specifically include the Vault by name.

Having said that, it must be pointed out that there is very little to rejoice about, for the ASI has not really covered itself in glory. Both the town wall and Hytter’s Obelisk have lost much of their sheen. The rampart is now a complete Kollywood style a few years ago. The rampart is now a complete Kollywood style a few years ago.

(Continued on page 2)
Brindian or Hindlish?

It could be said of the English that if you took away their Latin, Greek and French they would have to speak in sign language. But although Purists have decreed this allegation, this ease with which foreign words have been absorbed into the English language is one of its great virtues.

In the 18th Century there were so many Hindi words in the English language (as well as Tamil, Sanskrit and Urdu) that it could have been predicted that the English in India would eventually have been speaking Hindi and calling it English.

Even Edmund Burke admitted that as much as he would like to avoid these “New Abominations”, he could not, when talking of Indian affairs, be understood in Parliament if he did not use them.

First had come merchant words suggesting comfort and commerce. The master/servant relationship being so important, hundreds of words for all the infinite variety of tasks, and the servants to do them, were deemed, at that time, to be indispensable. Precoculation with the social classes ensured the establishment of such words as Mogul, Nabob, Brahmin, Sahib (did the British, I wonder, ever know that it meant friend?), wallah, coolie, pariah, babu.

Then came the soldiers with their Army Ranks and their endless military terms: Words like gykmaha, shikar, bungalow, ve-randa, cumumburnd, jodhpuri reflected the continued sense of privilege, and thug, dacoot, jungle, loot added another dimension to the heritage.

The foot-soldier, with his inadequate but poetic grasp of language, adopted khuki, cussky, dekko, bakshesh and the word plt which acquired an English onomatopoetic force most appropriate to its meaning. And, of course, there is blighty, the concept without which no British could think of leaving home.

Then the nostaglic words of the retired colonial who finds himself in a land he loves but is not at home in: amah, ayah, toddy, cheroot, chai, curry, chutney and all the other culinary words. Words like pulkap and parahd, dinghy, bandanna, bangle, salico, catarmaran, dungaree replaced others previously quite acceptable. Could a child put on this pajamas and crawl into his cot with quite the same degree of warmth if he wore a nightshirt and was pushed into a seat. Opposite him was a personable wench, speaking non-stop. This was the anchor and

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SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

The muddling ASI

(Continued from page 1)

Which brings us to the point at issue. Is the ASI really capable of handling the protection of monuments? If it is, its charter and guidelines were drafted when Lord Curzon was Viceroy and at a time when most monuments were in the open spaces. Today with congestion and encroachments being the chief threats, the organisation has to reinvent itself. It has to look at public-private partnerships, imaginatively promote its monuments in the manner in which it is done abroad, and take steps to garner funds independently and not merely through the sale of low-priced entry tickets. It has to look at making its monuments visitor-friendly and ensure that basic amenities are available for visitors. (When was the last time you needed to visit the toilet at a temple or historic monument?) And it needs a properly trained and dedicated watch-and-ward force, not the kind that merely shows away visitors and prevents the taking of photographs.

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Madras Week – MMM style!

The Chief spoke, and there was Madras Week. At the end of it all, pronounced a success by the three wise men who founded it, and their sidekicks who joined later, The Man from Madras Musings is likely to remain weak. It is the considered view of MMM that what with the Madras Week, the Music Festival, the Theatre Festival, the Literary Festival, the Adi Thalupadi, the Pongal Festi- val of MMM that Madras is Chennai is becoming a much too hectic place to live in.

But leaving that aside, let MMM describe his own exploration during Madras Week. The Chief had fixed him with a burning eye and commanded him to do his bit and MMM had proceeded, rather like the light Brigade. Chief of these was a television interview on Chennai, its historic begin- nings, the conflict of values and the day when MMM, having spent half the night studying the Chief’s magnum opus (or is it op?), woke up early, performed all ablutions and having dressed suitably, left for the TV studios. There were somewhere down south of the city and MMM was informed by the chap who fixed it up that it would take an hour to reach from MMM’s place.

It was an hour after jour- neying that MMM realised that he had got nowhere. There were glass towers on both sides of the traffic and thundered to the left and right. MMM’s chauffeur be- longs to a class which believes that asking for directions is infra-dig and so there was a bowling along at high speed. It was only after the route began to look suspiciously rural that MMM quelled the driver’s objection with a burning eye and asked him to enquire from the first grinder as to where we were in. And it was good that we asked too. Had MMM kept going he would have perhaps had to pass by some “Now Closed” signs with the natives appearing to be friendly and so he spent the night there.

The car turned round and new civilisation was sighted once more, by which time the programme in which MMM was to appear had already be-gun. MMM, therefore, called the producer and asked him if he could go back home. He half expected a petulant voice when she paused to take a breath, which was seldom, a reporter was holding forth on the civic problems that Chen- nai faced. We want to know...

Suddenly MMM came to grips with what was being said. The reporter ranted on about water supply, polluted rivers, terrible slums and the mosquito menace. After a while he paused for breath and the anchor very slowly got a sentence in edgeways, an-nouncing to the viewers that MMM was in the studios and would give them a solution for all their problems, namely, the poor roads, the er- ratic water supply, the polluted rivers, the terrible slums and the mosquito menace. The city, she said, wants to know. She then bemoaned expectantly at MMM.

“Ah..” said MMM. "Once again the reporter had something new. This time he had members of the public with him. He then proceeded to interview them. One man said he believed the traffic. A woman wept copi- cously on the water supply. A third accused the state of motion in which it remains till the refreshment counter is closed. The indelicacy of the grappin claw is directly proportional to the delicacy of the dish. Every grabber has an equally powerful and opposing grabber? MMM
Beginnings of the labour movement

When a doctoral dissertation submitted in 1987 takes the form of a full-bladed book 26 years later, it is a reflection on the historical relevance of the contents. More so, when the book comes four years after the author, D. Veeraraghavan’s death in 2009 at 51.

In his introduction to the 300-page book titled The Making of the Madras Working Class, Veeraraghavan, citing historian Sabayashchi Bhattacharya, says “the history of the history-less – the anonymous people who, in their collective acts, their work, daily lives and fellowship, have forged our society through the Left forces” was often neglected in social history. That explains the rationale for the author writing a book which falls under a specialised head such as labour history or socioeconomic history. The title of the book, according to A.R. Venkatalakapathy, historian and professor at Madras Institute of Development Studies, pays homage to English historian E.P. Thompson’s 1963 work The Making of the Working English Class. It was
to clean up the mess which hurt his religious sentiments. G. Selvaparithi Chettiar and G. Ramanujulu Naidu, two young businessmen at nearby D’Mello’s Road, Perambur Baracks, empathising with the workers organised a meeting in March 1918 at Janga Ramayammal Gardens on Starham’s Road. Sudarsana Muadil, Honorary Magistrate, presided and Thiru Vi Ka made a powerful speech which was well received by the gathering of 10,000 workers from the mills and elsewhere.

The first president of the Madras Labour Union (MLU) was B.P. Wadia, an associate of Annie Besant, and the Union was formally inaugurated on April 13, 1918 at its weekly meeting where Wadia addressed the workers in English and Thiru Vi Ka translated it into Tamil. The unionisation of workers was a natural outcome of the humiliation in the workplace and the rigorous discipline and racist attitude of the British government and employers.

Earlier, individual workers had resorted to absenteeism, high turnover, thievery, and even riots and strikes. One case of rioting was between weavers and European officers of the Buckingham Mills in 1917-18. It was a protracted strike which ended in 1919. It was pay cut was after the management found flaws in the yarn and defects in the weaving looms. Workers in the other department supported the weavers and rioted. Police and the Army were used to evict the weavers.

Other workers to follow the MLU lead and set up unions were those from the tramway, railway workshops, printing presses, kerosene oil distribution companies, and aluminium vessel manufacturers. Contract workers in the cigar factory of McDowell and Co. in George Town went on strike on the last week of June 1918. Evenrickshaw-pullers went on strike in the same period when their owners hiked the rent from four to five annas. They were addressed by Besant of the Home Rule Movement and were gifted two shiksha bills to be handed out to the members at four annas a day. About 225 workshop men of the Madras Corporation struck work on March 19, 1919.

During the period of the emergency between 1933 and 1937, one strand of Communist ideology believed in opposing the Congress and Gandhi because they believed the Congress was the imperialist party in the struggle against imperialism. Later, another school of thought decided to work within the Congress, and the Communist Party merged with the Socialist Congress Party and build a broad united anti-imperialist people’s front. But it is to be noted that the Tamil Nadu Congress was so hostile to socialism that even a Congress Working Committee (CWC) member, Achayut Patwardhan, was refused use of the Congress office during his stay in Madras because he was a Congress Socialist. Many CWC members including Rajagopachari sent a resignation letter to Nehru protesting against the Congress Socialism. But not all nationalistic Congress leaders were of the same persuasion. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai for one declared at a meeting in Nagapattinam (Nagapoondi) in September 1937 that the Indian National Congress was “an organisation of the British imperialist owners. The Labour movement was V.V. Giri who was an associate of B.P. Wadia, and S.S. Kannan, founder of the Karl Marx Library, who nurtured Veeraraghavan from his student days and translated into Tamil Veeraraghavan’s dissertation with Puduvai Ramam. The Tamil version is Chennai Perunagara Thoovirchiyana Vandram.


While describing the labour conditions and industrial development of Madras in the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, labour struggles and formation of the trade unions, Veeraraghavan draws the attention of the reader to a common factor between the origin of the city of Madras in 1639 – as a cloth producing centre – and the formation of the first organised labour union in India, the Madras Labour Union in 1918 – emanating out of the harrowing experience of a textile mill worker employed in the B and C Mills, Perambur. The trigger leading to the forming of the Union was a worker being forced to defecate in the open after being denied permission to leave the shop floor to relieve himself. Not only that, he had

Overcoming handicaps to write history

L eftist scholar, the author, late Dilip Veeraraghavan, lost his last term of his school final days in Kumbakonam due to retinitis pigmentosa. He moved to Madras and studied B.A. (History) at Vivekananda College, M.A. at Presidency College (1978-80) and M. Phil at Pazhavattuppa’s College (1980-81). In 1982 he joined IIT Madras for his Ph.D and submitted his thesis in 1987. The next year he joined the faculty and taught there for 12 years, until his death in 2009 at 51.

At IIT, Veeraraghavan was an inspiring social sciences and humanities teacher. Future technocrats were sensitised to social issues. Veeraraghavan was active in the Students’ Federation of India. He was close to the CPI (M) and maintained close relationships in the party with leading figures like P. Ramamurthi to the younger ones. During later years, he maintained a distance from the party due to differences on environmental issues. The judicious person that he was, Veeraraghavan was obviously somewhat of a loner. Venkatalakapathy recalls that even in the campus of the Tamil Nadu Archives, Veeraraghavan preferred poring over files with a research assistant to chatting over tea in the canteen. He was a regular at the city’s music concerts, being an ardent Carnatic music music nut.

Among the Communists, he belonged to those who were astute in their ways, using public transport in spite of the fact that he had a personal car and did not enjoy good health. Along with Venkatalakapathy, who prepared the manuscript of the book, another associate of Veeraraghavan, V.R. Muraleedharan, initiated the forming of the Dilip Veeraraghavan Memorial Trust. In his introduction in the book, Venkatalakapathy quotes the words of S.S. Kannan, founder of the Karl Marx Library, who nurtured Veeraraghavan from his student days and translated into Tamil Veeraraghavan’s dissertation with Puduvai Ramam. The Tamil version is Chennai Perunagara Thoovirchiyana Vandram.

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Goodness, mercy and toughness

Dr. M. Santosham was a gifted tuberculosis specialist when the disease was at its worst, saving the lives of hundreds of people with his practical treatment and accurate diagnosis. The demands of tuberculosis care led him to establish the first private sanatorium in Madras, setting it up in the outskirts of Madras to supplement his Lung Clinic at Egmore. He made a mark in the political scene as well, first as a member of Congress and then as a founder-member of the Swatantra Party. He was a close confidant of the party’s founder, Rajaji, and was elected as the Party’s MP from Timmendor in 1967. Dr. Santosham was the voice of the Christian community in Madras for years, heading several of its organisations. His interests also spanned music, cartooning and writing.

William Mathuram Santosham faced difficult times as a young man. But he stayed undaunted. He was sent to Madurai along with his brothers, Wilfred and Dharmaraj, by his father, Abraham Santosha Nadar, a tabulser, for studies. His zest for life, his booming voice and his captivating singing won him popularity during his days at American College and then at Madras Medical College (MMC) where, as a student, he is best remembered for his witty compositions and singing at functions. His political activities started at MMC when he founded the Madras Student Organisation, a student wing of Congress, but his deeper faith inspired him to spend more time with the Zion Church in Chentradipet, which was to remain a constant companion for the rest of his life. He aspired for a general medicine position after completing his medical studies as a 24-year-old in 1937, but his political activities having been noticed, he was asked to intern at the TB Institute. This was to prove a blessing in disguise.

TB was then a dreaded disease and was almost a death-deared disease. Dr. Santosham’s combination of compassion and expertise won him the hearts of tuberculosis patients and his small practice grew by leaps and bounds. In 1938, the front portion of a rented house on Egmore High Road became a Lung Clinic, a small four-bed facility. The poor patients were treated for free and stories abound about him giving money to patients to buy medicines. The clinic was later developed into a full-fledged hospital and still functions as the Santosham Chest Hospital. Dr. Santosham, who was a member of Indian Army Corps, served the civil defence’s An Raid Precautions (ARP) wing during the War in 1942. He was up to any challenge and never backed off, so much so that he operated on a goat first to learn surgery skills and, in later life when the suction pump failed during an operation, he himself sucked out the fluid, little worried about contracting TB.

Another tussle with the administration forced him to quit government service and start his own private practice. Dr. Titus – a compadre from Tiruvannamalai who came to MMC to formally study medicine – found his colleague Dr. Santosham to be a suitable match for his daughter Susheela, and the marriage was solemnised in 1944. Susheela got a hint of Dr. Santosham’s commitment to his profession when he rushed to attend to a bleeding patient while she waited for him to come back and take his marriage vows. The couple enjoyed a full life and grew a happy family of three boys – Rajan, Ravi and Roy – and two girls – Renuka and Ranjani.

Offering further hope to TB patients, Dr. Santosham decided to treat tuberculosis patients at a secluded facility that could provide the recommended TB treatment with fresh air and complete rest. He established the first private TB sanatorium, named after his late father A. Santosha Nadar, in 1946, acquiring 10 acres of land at Selayur, near Tambaram. The sanatorium took a life of its own and developed into a full-fledged facility with a poultry farm, kitchen, and graded accommodation for patients. Ten per cent of the patients were treated for free and the sanatorium’s doors remained open to all patients suffering from TB, irrespective of whether they could afford the costs or not. A resident doctor, support staff, and administration manager made it a self-sufficient TB care unit.

Dr. Santosham, with the objective of spreading awareness, wrote a book on TB. He then enrolled for postgraduate studies abroad to learn more sophisticated treatment methods and surgery techniques. With TB’s treatment advancing to the level of being treated at home, the sanatorium lost prominence after a 30-year life of enviable success. The space was then transferred for a nominal sum to his friend T.D. Boaz to run a psychiatric centre.

The political fortunes of Dr. Santosham stood in contrast to his medical practice, swinging from one extreme to another. He always remained staunch to his principles and was never put off by any setback. He believed in being clean and honest in politics, and his cheerful disposition won him friends across the political spectrum. Early electoral forays in mayoral elections in 1949 and Assembly elections in Perambur in 1952 ended in disaster. Dr. Santosham was then attracted to Rajaji’s plank of politics in the Congress. His initial rapport with Kamaraj eroded further when Rajaji broke from Congress to form the Swatantra Party in 1958, Santosham was to become one of the party’s strongest pillars in Madras, no mean thin margin and much to the surprise of political observers, and became an MP. He spoke eloquently on various issues in Parliament, the most significant one being the necessity for government to provide quality healthcare throughout the country. Later, shifting political fortunes led to the Swatantra Party joining the coalition led by Kamaraj’s Congress (O) in the 1971 elections and Dr. Santosham’s strained relationship with Kamaraj now turned friendly. But the alliance was no match for the popular rising wave of the DMK. With the passing away of Rajaji in 1972, it was also the death knell of the Swatantra Party, high on intellectual appeal and low on popular attraction.

Our political partners: Rajaji and Dr. Santosham.

Dr. M. Santosham

• by K. Venkatesh

<Image 151x615 to 270x769>

The political partners: Rajaji and Dr. Santosham.

<Image 281x28 to 529x224>

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Dr. Santosham was closely associated with Christian organisations such as the Indian Christian Association (ICA), Indian Missionary Society (IMS), and YMCA. He was president of the Club three times and constantly appealed to parties forming governments to give a fair representation to Christians in their cabinets. His membership of the DMK parliament from 1975 to treat Christian Harijans on par with Hindu Harijans won the government’s consent. He is credited with invigorating the DMK youth Club, a small vibrant group consisting of thirty Christian families, formed in 1956 to forge close relationships between them. As president of the Club, Santosham was the soul of the group whose members regularly met to socialise. Music was in his soul, and he composed a Cantata (text composition set to music) titled ‘Redemption.’ He remained on the fringes of the political scene thereafter, aligning with the Lok Dal and Janata Dal as State unit president in the final phase of his life. He was also instrumental in getting the DMK into the National Front led by V.P. Singh, which formed the government at the Centre in 1989. Prime Minister V.P. Singh offered him the position of a governor, but Dr. Santosham politely declined citing his failing health. The same day, January 30, 1991, he passed away. On the occasion of his birth centenary (June 21, 2013), his biography Goodness and Mercy: Life and Times of Dr. Mathuram Santosham, authored by V. Sriman, was released.
Nizhal among the trees

Nizhal took steps in a totally new direction... offering its very first musical tree walk with Dr. Soumya and her students at the verdant Kalakshetra campus. Great music under magnificent trees... digging deep into our heritage to discover the close connection between music and nature.

Winning T-shirt design

Vincent D’Souza displays a price-winning T-shirt design.

A Tiruvottriyur Walk

A group explored the heritage of Tiruvottriyur during Madras Week.

The heritage walk was led by Gokoulane Ravi with Jothi Vel Moorthi.
The Fort – in sketches, words & photographs

Ganapathy Subramanian says it in words and pictures.

52 people did the Fort St. George walk. The big group got the attention of the Police Intelligence, the Secretariat Outer Security, Inner Security and the Army folks. Was good to have the Arch students and the Madras Sketching Group! It was a great session exploring the Fort by foot. Vincent D’Souza's high energy time travel was enjoyable.

Another grand Fort building left to die.

King’s Barracks, said to be the largest barracks space in Asia.

The Grand Arsenal.

With the Chennai Weekend Artists

St. Mary’s Church

Cupola

Locks and keys at Fort St. George

Daggers

Cannon
A date with Adyar’s past

Traditionally it always rains when Sriram V. conducts a heritage walk and August 17th was no different, when he got Madras Week 98 to trekking start through Adyar. Notwithstanding the weather, 43 people had gathered at Gandhi Nagar at the crack of dawn. Sriram began with the story of Gandhi Nagar – the place that was once Bishop Gardens, belonging as it did to the diocese of Mylapore-Madras. The purchase was negotiated by C. Narasimham, Commissioner of the Corporation, and J.C. Ryan, Registrar of Societies, with the blessings of Daniel Thomas, minister for local administration. The two officials agreed to the Bishop’s price of Rs. 17 lakh for 136 acres, although their allocation was only Rs. 15 lakh, an instance of the freedom officials enjoyed in those days. The cost of land and construction came to Rs. 60,000 per house for the larger plots, which were a third of an acre! The roaring success of Gandhi Nagar as a housing colony saw the acquisition of 140 grounds from the Bengal brothers to create Kasturba Nagar in 1949. Other colonies came up thereafter.

The next stop was the Sri Amanthapadmanabha Swamy Temple, where Sriram provided many interesting anecdotes, chiefly involving the construction of the shrine thanks to A. Narayana Rao and other early residents of Gandhi Nagar with the help of the last ruler of Travancore, Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma. His statue, which once stood at the Travancore Mahara’s Park in the Esplenade, was shifted here in the 1990s by his admirers, the park having long gone and the use having become a spot of public convenience and nuisance. Its pedestal carries the famed Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936, an act for which the Naya Maharaaja received Gandhi’s appreciation.

We next came to the Madras Institute of Development Studies, the brainchild of Malcolm Adiseshiah, who also donated his residence for it and which is where it functions from. Sriram dwelt at length on Dr. Adisesiah’s illustrious career, UNESCO and as vice-chancellor, Madras University. The many facets of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy came to life at our next stop, the Cancer Institute, which is now a world-renowned institution, in 1954.

Her dream was taken to great heights by her successors – her son Dr. Krishnamoorthy and the disciple, Dr. Shanta. We then moved on to a school that started functioning in the 19th Century. In 1875, three patriarchic brothers, Bro. Ignatius Price, Bro. Paul Hughes and Bro. Finnem Parkinson, started St. Patrick’s School here. St. Michael’s Academy, another popular school, is an “offshoot of St. Patrick’s,” explained Sriram V. This school started functioning from 1953.

Elphinstone Bridge, connecting Mylapore and Adyar, was constructed in 1840 but fell into disuse after the Thiru Vi Ka bridge came up in 1973. At its northern end, we remembered Durgabai Deshmukh, founder of the Andhra Mahila Sabha, Sathya Studio opposite, another well-known landmark, was once Meenakshi Cinetone, later Neptune Studios and, finally, property of MGR, the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu. Now, a women’s college functions in these premises.

The largest island on the Adyar was Quibble Island, which later merged with the mainland. A cemetery here is the last resting place for many Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. Quibble Island also witnessed the Battle of Adyar on October 10, 1746, in which a small but disciplined French force defeated the 10,000-strong army of the Nawab of Carnatic commanded by Mahfuz Khan. It decisively demonstrated the superior training of the European forces, paving the way for an Empire.

The present-day Greenway’s Road was once lined with beautiful garden houses, each built with a different architectural style. Thanks to well-known musician E. Gayatri, who is now Director, Tamil Nadu Government Colleges for Music, we were allowed into Brodie’s Castle, one of the few to survive, which is where the Government Music College is situated. Even as Sriram told us the story of the several occupants of this palatial residence since 1796, we explored it with him.

From the veranda, we had a great view of the Theosophical Society, and, standing there, Sriram told us of the history of that verdant campus from its Huddleston Garden days. The great personalities who lived there – Col. Olcott, Mme Blavatsky, Annie Besant – and the famed Adyar Alumam, which still survives in part, were brought to life. The Theosophical Society was also the birthplace of Kalakshetra. The green cover prompted Sriram to also tell us of how activists successfully fought and saved the Adyar Creek, making it the Adyar Pongal now.

Our final stop was outside Ramayam, the Travancore Maharaja’s palace in the city. The Sishya School and several eastern colonies of this area came up on its land. Diagonally opposite stands the Avvai Home started by Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy for destitute women. We wound up with breakfast at (where else?) Adyar Ananda Bhavan.

Did you know that Chennai has two sister cities in the United States? The American Library at the U.S. Consulate-General, Chennai, celebrated MadrasWeek with a poster display featuring the two cities, Denver and San Antonio.

In the US Consulate-General

The participants seen with Sriram at Brodie’s Castle.

With the Cycling Yogis

The Cycling Yogis heritage bicycle ride seen at National Poet Subramania Bharathi’s house.
The nawabs on Mount Road

(By A Special Correspondent)

Anwar tour – underplayed, factual and engaging. Mount Road, now being a maze of one always, Anwar took pains to go over the route several times, meticulously planning the destinations. A morning of great fun, and learning, was the result.

With the conquest of the South by the Mughals, Emperor Aurangzeb appointed the Nawab of Arcot to oversee the newly added territories. The decline of the Mughal Empire enabled the rise of the various powers who aspired to rule over the Carnatic, including the Marathas, the Mysore rulers, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the British and the French. The then Nawab, Muhammad Ali, was beholden to the British. They offered him protection within the walls of Fort St. George. Palace Street recall plans for his residence. The Nawab, being the overlord of the Carnatic, preferred to build his own palace a little further from the Fort, at Chepauk. A road connecting the Fort and the Chepauk Palace is named Nawab Muhammad Ali, who was given the title Wallajah by the Mughal Emperor (Wallajah Road). He engaged Paul Benfield to build the Chepauk Palace, which is considered to be the beginning of the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture in India. The palace extended up to the Cooum River in the north and Presidency College towards the south. The site of the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium was part of the Chepauk Palace, where Nawab Muhammad Ali, who was the western boundary. A clean Cooum River was where the Nawab bathed. One of the entry points to the Fort, where it meets Mount Road, was used by the Nawab when he moved and is known as the Wallajah Gate.

After the death of Wallajah’s successor Nawab Umdat-ul-Umrah, the Company took over the entire administration of the Carnatic and the subsequent Nawabs were titular. After the 1860s, they were moved to their Mahal, with the new title Prince of Arcot.

On August 18th, we as-

All about the Nawabs

Namma Arcot celebrated Madras Day with a talk by S.Anwar on the significant social and cultural contributions of the Nawabs of Arcot to Madras. Anwar spoke at Vadapalani on the secular practices of the Nawabs and the influences they had on architecture, education and British rule.

Old Churches of San Thomé

A short tour of the old churches of San Thomé was organised by themadrasday.in. (Pictures by Arun Christopher.)
Madras – fifty years ago

This is the story of Chitra alias Madhurambal, born and brought up in the heritage city of Madras.

My father was truly Middle Class in those days - but I was raised as a Princess of Mylapore!

My grandma adorned Karpagambal with a nine yards saree to celebrate the birth of her first daughter. We roamed the streets of Mylapore with our jumkias and kalanjums tangling and silver anklets tingling.

Our toys and trinkets came from Mada Veedu shops.

Our first novel came from Nallikai and Rasi.

My first geometry box from Vijaya Stores.

Our first roof garden restaurant in Madras!

How I relished the Sunday outings to Marina beach, with pandal to follow, and shells to collect. And dinner outings at Gupta’s, the first roof garden restaurant in Madras!

The milky taste of Rita ice cream, gave way to ‘Joy’ with chocobar! With the monsoon rains came the cyclones, flooding the coconut grooves enroute to school.

How we enjoyed wading through!

School days are still vivid in my memories, I was the Bharathatu, shackled with a cycle-chain, with my long hair billowing out in curls! And Lord Indira in Thalapakottai drama, prompting everyone’s lines throughout! And the Kush of the Lau-Kush twins dance drama, I wonder where is my twin brother now, rather sister?

‘King Maker’ Kamaraj inaugurated the Mandaveli New Bus Stand, So proud to see a humble politician! Route No. 21 was our favourite, to go to Luz, Tank or a doc’s visit. Enjoyed the long rides in 1B buses, to Guindy and T’Nagar.

Over the last five decades, Madras, nay, its Chennai now, has grown more beautiful, very elegant, and all powerful!

It has stood the testimony of time!

Chennai is now home to (abobe) chirpy young IT professionals, middle-aged business magnets, and elderly NRI parents.

How we enjoyed wading through!

Kripal Singh and Mohan Rai played for the team in the match at the Vaniamibadi Islamiah College grounds.

Klinga met with a nine yards saree.

With the monsoon rains came the cyclones, flooding the coconut grooves enroute to school.

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Change is the rule of nature, Chennai is now rising high.

No stopping you, my dearest Chennai, celebrations are coming (y)our way!

Chitra Sundar
A 57 year old, homemaker, caregiver, social worker, lover of arts & crafts, science and cinema.

September 7

Recharging tanks

With reference to the article about ‘Temple Tanks’ (MM, August 16th), the Rotary Club of Madras launched “Project Thanneer Tanks” (Water Project) (2000-02). The project recharged the fresh water aquifer in nine temple tanks by cleaning the surrounding areas, providing collection pits around them to guide rainwater and thereby raising the groundwater level. The project was financed by Rotary Club of Madras, Rotary Club of Whitby, Canada, Matching Grant and CRCID to the time of $60,000.

Of 36 tanks in Madras, these nine tanks were renovated under this scheme.

S.L. Chitale
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**Random thoughts on local flavour at Fest**

**by Ranjitha Ashok**

How many ways are there to deal with that one all-encompassing situation – the life that’s been wished upon you? A little like asking...how to skin a giraffe?

CIRCUS (adapted from Charlie Chaplin’s film, The Circus, directed by Victor Jaya-M, presented by MacTrics of Chennai.)

Imagine this. Charlie Chaplin runs into career difficulties back home, and decides to seek his fortune elsewhere on advice that he was born for entertaining, and that Man is pretty much a victim of his own social status, he is willing to make a “BA in Idleness”, he would have to do. A useful bit of advice – for trying. A life, dreams even though something they cling desperately to day-to-day dreams even though something within warns otherwise. A life, dreams and illusions.

In the end, happily-ever-after comes with a question mark, as these two idealists (whose names, incidentally, are basic body parts and/or functions) ultimately surrender, become boxed-in, like their parents, down to the mannerisms.

The tragedy lies in this process being declared a success – just like the packaged prawns. And yet, what choice did they have – or do you – for that matter?

Those on stage are perhaps too young to remember Pete Seeger’s song, “Little boxes”, but you find traces of the lyrics floating through your mind at this point.

Is it better to be an idealist than succumb to the practical, better for having known a few moments of dreamy madness...or should you be firmly practical materials like Vaal, or dear Memosa, from Day One?

How to Skin a Giraffe.

There’s Prince Popo, again Fawned over by his coterie of admirers, King Labadub is blissfully unaware that he is basically walking the same road always...getting nowhere quickly, in exorbitant, with their help. A victim of his own social status, he is willing to stoop to lies when it suits him.

Then you have Heroine Pipi in – what else! – a tower filled with that wistful longing so typical of heroines everywhere, as they cling desperately to daydreams even though something within warns otherwise. A life, dreams, even heart-breaking, part of any commonplace....that soul-deadly banality will come. Life will turn mediocre by its descent into the commonplace....that soul-deadly ‘someness’ which kills dreams and illusions.

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* * *

And now – since both plays dealt with Humour...another small point. Editing.

Yes, this is always the tough, even heart-breaking, part of any creative process. But an essential one, especially when you are dealing with something as delicate, as capricious and touchy a creature as Humour. Treated gently, with the lightest of touches, Humour sparkles, soars, transforms magically in an instant into the sharpest of arrows, or offers a smile that floats softly, yet devastatingly, on pathos. But, handled roughly, clumsily or worse, stretched too long, it collapses, turns leaden, and falls flat. Like they say, ‘taking a shovel to a soufflé’ is always a bad idea.

So learning to recognise that moment when a story is done is the difference between a tale well told, and one that grows tedious.

Remember Hamlet’s words? “...in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness...” “for anything so o’erdone is from the purpose of playing...”

A useful bit of advice – for all occasions.
The Race of My Life: An Autobiography – Milkha Singh – Sonia Sanwalka (Rupa, Rs. 250)

Watching the recently released film Bhaag Milkha Bhaag with my 8-year-old proved to be a rather unique experience. After the film, my little one was very curious to 'see the real' Milkha Singh. Thankfully, Google and Wikipedia came in handy, and he was fascinated to 'see how the real' Milkha Singh looked and ran.

Thanks to Rakesh Omprakash Mehra's bio-pic, a new generation of people has got an opportunity to 'meet' and understand a legend whose success generation of people has got an experience. After the film, my 8-year-old Bhaag Milkha Singh.

In this candid autobiography, Milkha Singh talks about his personal life which are beautifully intertwined with his love for sport. Especially his wooing and marrying his lady love, Nimmi, against all odds. In fact, he reserved high praise for his wife who has “stood by me” at every turn of life. Yet, for a man whose life was dominated by sports, he remains disinterested with the way sports events are run today.

A turning point is the film Bhaag Milkha Singh, who was inspired by this book to make the film, as well as a moving tribute by way of introduction to his father by international golfer Jeev Milkha Singh, adds plenty of emotional quotient.

As a reader, you join in his anguish, you laugh with him, you cry for him and cheer when he needs it. That’s what makes this book a compelling read.

Land of the Seven Rivers: A Brief History of India’s Geography – Sanjeev Sanyal (Penguin, Rs. 399)

When this book was suggested to me, I was intrigued to read it. But once I began to read, I could not put it down. For the simple reason that though Sanyal’s work is all about history and geography, all right, it’s the way he has put down facts and figures (and plenty of speculation, of course) that makes this a fascinating read.

The history of any country begins with its geography. From the raw and Stone Age to present-day multiplex and skyscraper-infested India, Sanyal’s is a riveting journey. He begins at the beginning with the theory about how one huge land mass, following various geographical occurrences such as earthquakes and volcanoes, split and continents took shape. Did you know that the San tribe in Africa is perhaps the oldest in the world! Man migrated from there to other parts, including India.

Sanyal takes on questions such as: Where did the river Saraswathi originate and how did it disappear? Did the Great Flood of Indian legend actually happen? Why did the Buddha walk to Sarnath to give his first sermon? How did the Europeans map India? With sparkling wit and intelligence, he explores various theories and facts to try and understand the India we inhabit today.

Traversing remote mountain passes, visiting archaeological sites, crossing rivers in shaky boats and delving deep into old records and manuscripts, Sanyal tries to paint a picture of India that is, but why was it called Bharat? And why was the world’s highest mountain named after George Everest? Pick up the book to discover some interesting stories that provide answers.


Nobody has captured India in all her glory and grim, horror and glamour, like The Common Man, that little guy created by R.K. Laxman, who brought a smile on people’s faces every morning when they picked up The Times of India. Similar is every cartoon that occupies a pride of place in newspapers across the world. In fact, if India did not exist, cartoonists may have had to invent it.

True, for there’s no other country in the world, which presents such rich and varied material for the depiction of humour as we do here. Humour is the harmonious reconciliation of opposites and India abounds in opposites: the corrupt and overweight VIP vs. the skinny and honest aam admi, the pompous politico vs. the skeptical voter, and so on.

This book is a pageant of cartoons culled out of The Times of India archives which portrays, colours, the emotions, the trials and the travails, the triumphs and the zest for life that make up the never-say-die spirit of India. Take a peek and laugh out loud!

– Savitha Gautam

On the marks... geography and a laugh!

BEGINNINGS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

(Continued from page 3)

Justice, Navasakshi, India Thiru-ilai and Swadharma (the first exclusive labour journal in English), and interviews with labour and shop-floor leaders of different eras like G. Selvamurthy, Birendra Kuppusamy, P. Ramaranurthi, Arquinian and K. Murugesan, to name a few.

The publishers, Leftword, feel the book will become a standard reference work not only in labour history, but the history of Madras and the Left movement owing to the exhaustive research that has gone into it. The inclusion of biographical notes on leaders like V. Chakkarkari Chettiar (1937-1958), R.V. Giri (1894-1980), Hari Haranathan and Sundara Venkata Reddy (1897-1960), A.S.K. Iyengar (1907-1970), E. L. Iyer (1885-1941), P. K. Venkitaswamy (1898-1979), V. Kalayansundara Mudaliar (1883-1953), G. Krishnamurti (1903-1970), G.T. Ramanujulu Naidu (1866-1939), P. R. K. Srinivasulu (1933-1951), V.L. Sastri (1900-1962), G. Selvapathi Chettiar (1902-1982), B. Shiva Rao (1891-1975), M. Singaravelu (1860-1946) and B.P. Wadia (1851-1958) after the conclusion with cross references on their roles in the evolution of the labour movement is a bonus read. The observance of the May Day in 1923 was initially initiated in Madras at Napier Park, Chintadripet, by Singaravelu, hailed as the first Communist of South India. He also promoted the Maha Bodhi Society in the city.

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Answers to Quiz

1. Edward Snowden; 2. Iran; 3. Jeff Bezos; 4. INS Vikrant and INS Sindhurakshak; 5. It is a newly discovered mammal and the first new species of carnivore to be identified in the Western hemisphere in 35 years; 6. Marion Bartoli, the 2013 Wimbledon Ladies Singles champion; 7. P.V. Sindhu, by winning a bronze at a World Badminton Championships; 8. MAVEN; 9. Ravindra Jadeja; 10. Dadra and Nagar Haveli.


MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition. Madras Musing is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

THE EDITOR
V. Sivaramakrishnan, the tall, left handed opening batsman, who played first class cricket between 1973 and 1988, had the highest Ranji Trophy aggregate for a Tamil Nadu batsman for a long time, before another left-hander, S Shashik, went past him. My younger brother, Sivaramakrishnan was, however, my senior in first class cricket, making his debut for Tamil Nadu three seasons before I made mine for Hyderabad. As he was playing for Bihar during my first season, I had to wait another season before I bowled to him for the first time. Fittingly, as his elder brother, I got him out in that game at Lal Bahadur Stadium, Hyderabad, but only after he had made a bright 61. Thereafter, we shared the honours more or less equally in Hyderabad-Tamil Nadu matches.

Sivaramakrishnan represented the beginning of a batting revival in Tamil Nadu cricket in the 1970s. He was an important member of the Madras University team that won the Rothinton Bata trophy for the first time in its history. That was in 1971 and, under the captaincy of R. Ravichandran, Madras discovered a galaxy of young stars in Sivaramakrishnan, Krishnaswami, Mukund, Sushil Haridas, Victor Fernandes, Daljit Singh. His consistent performances won him a place in the East Zone team, and he scored runs in the Duleep and Deodhar Trophy matches against North Zone, dancing down the wicket to Bishan Bedi and the like.

Sivaramakrishnan returned to Madras in the very next season, with his reputation enhanced by his Bihar sojourn and an earlier stint in Calcutta where he had proved his competence against the moving ball, playing quality swing bowlers with consummate ease. Back in Madras for the Ranji Trophy, the left-hander batted in the middle order against Karnataka and scored an impressive 169 against Prasanna, Chandrasekhar, Vijayakrishna and Co.

Sivaramakrishnan went from strength to strength from that point, to become Tamil Nadu's most reliable batsman. He was a strong driver of the ball and revelled in the cut. He was particularly good when the chips were down and when there was something in the wicket for the bowlers. One of the most brilliant close-in fielders Tamil Nadu has produced, he held more than a hundred catches in the national championship, besides occasionally turning his arm over usefully with gentle in-swingers.

Sivaramakrishnan came close to being picked to tour Australia in 1977-1978, when he made 74 for South Zone against North at Bangalore. His rival to the second opener's slot Chetan Chauhan failed in that game, but North piled up a large total after debutant Yashpal Sharma made an impressive 173. The only way South could have gained the first innings lead and, by virtue of it, the match, after being down at 50 plus for 3 was for Siva and T. E. Srinivasan (who scored a brilliant hundred) to put on a massive partnership, but Siva virtually threw his wicket away just when the attack was tiring. South Zone yielded a lead of over 100, North went on to win the match and Chetan Chauhan made a hundred in the final at Bombay, to clinch a place in the squad. The coach Peter Philpott advised the captain not to enforce the follow on so that the Lankan bowlers gained more practice bowling to a quality left hander, ahead of the then forthcoming tour of Australia, which had a few southpaws. In Australia in 1988, playing for the Ranji Trophy champion Tamil Nadu, he blunted a pace attack which had three Test fast bowlers on the Perth wicket nortorious for its pace and bounce. It was a brave counterattack amidst a general batting collapse.

Winning the Ranji Trophy that season had been a personal triumph for Sivaramakrishnan. He had come back into the side for the knockout stage of the championship after announcing his retirement at the start of the season and scored heavily in all three matches he played, including a hundred in the semifinal and 94 in the final. He continued to play league cricket in Chennai for many more seasons, regularly amassing runs.

Madras Province/State/Tamil Nadu.