

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

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## How anti-national is all this?

Madras Week enters its 13<sup>th</sup> edition this year. It looks as though it is all set to become yet another annual highlight of Chennai's social calendar, like the Music Festival and *The Hindu's* Lit for Life event. There is a sense of anticipation among people even as the event approaches and this is also reflected in the increasing levels of participation.

And yet there is a certain section that persists in dubbing Madras Week as elitist and being an apologist for the British Raj. One Tamil newspaper has even gone to the extent of claiming that by celebrating Madras Week, the organisers are indulging in anti-national activities! While it is gratifying to think that someone is writing about us for a change (and that means we are getting noticed), the grave nature of the charges forces us to reiterate what Madras Week stands for and what it hopes to achieve.

The article referred to stated that it saw no reason why Madras Week had to be celebrated given that several areas of the city are far older than the 376 years of Madras' existence. We have never denied the antiquity of some of the villages that eventually came to form Madras city. In fact, when the Gov-

ernment began setting about changing the official name of the city to Chennai, we had suggested that Mylapore would be a far better option given that it was one of the oldest parts of the city, far older than Madras or Chennai. And don't we already have a Mylapore festival that is older than Madras Week itself and is it not organised by one of the prime movers behind Madras Week? And have we

### • by The Editor

not been repeatedly highlighting the necessity to have local area festivals on the same lines?

Is Madras Week really an occasion that just celebrates the colonial past? Nothing can be further than the truth behind this charge. Is a Textile Tour of T'Nagar colonial? Or is a walk down Adyar Poonga to observe butterflies anti-national? How then can we explain the conduct of a heritage walk that traces the connection between Mylapore and the Freedom Movement? Is a talk on 11<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions in the Tiruvottriyur temple something that celebrates the British raj? Yes, we do have events that celebrate the city's architectural heritage, much of which has to

do with the colonial period. But as we have always maintained, while these buildings may have been designed by British architects, the construction – and much of the methodology and embellishments – were South Indian and done by local artisans. Sadly, we have lost those talents. So much for our ability to protect our heritage!

At a time when it is largely the negative news that hogs the limelight and there is despondency all around, festivals such as Madras Week play an important role in creating a feel-good factor. A city festival like Madras Week inculcates a sense of pride in the place where we live. It is that time when we learn to appreciate the positive attributes of our metro and also take cognisance of the areas that need improvement.

As responsible citizens, we take stock of the direction in which our city is moving and rejoice in its progress. "We do not take anyone's money to celebrate the event and neither do we thrust it down unwilling people's throats. We are mere facilitators and those who wish to celebrate join us. Those who do not wish to do so are not in any compelled to participate," say those who celebrate the city. What is wrong with this?

## Know your Fort better



Admiralty/Clive House.

• Parade Square, as we saw in the previous issue, stands more or less in the middle of the Fort. Radiating from it are streets in all directions. It must not be forgotten that the Fort was once very much a town with its residents. And these needed houses, all of which were placed along the various streets that crisscrossed the entire precinct of White Town, as the Fort was known. Interestingly, as H.D. Love points out, the residents of Madras referred to the Fort as the City and to what lay outside of it as Town. The East India Company reversed the nomenclature – according to it, Madras was the city and the Fort was the town!

It was Elihu Yale who, as Governor in 1688, decreed that the streets of Fort St George be given names. These names have survived till today. Thus, three streets emanate from Parade Square and the Assembly in the southern direction, these being St Thomas' Street, which is at the eastern end of the Fort, James Street, which lies behind it, St Mary's Church connecting the two,

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## It's back to renaming streets

Our Corporation is at it again. Having in its opinion solved all problems such as potholes, illegal constructions, and garbage clearance, it found time hanging heavy on its hands and decided to work on changing the names of several roads of the city. It is high time that the powers that be realised that such exercises are futile ones and the watching public is largely indifferent to such gimmickry. In fact, what the people want is delivery on several civic

issues and nothing other than that is going to be acceptable.

This is not the first time that our city's civic body has embarked on this name-changing spree. The previous instance was during the Tamil conference when the then Mayor, in a case of misplaced zeal, announced that all streets bearing the names of Englishmen would be renamed after Tamil scholars. This journal had then brought out a comprehensive list of such streets, explaining the history

behind each name. We had also pointed out that while we were not in any way against the honouring of Tamil scholars,

### • By The Editor

this could safely be done in new areas of the city where there are plenty of streets that are in the need of names. This way, we had argued, we can also save ourselves from the

monotony of all areas of the city having streets that bear the names of political leaders of the recent past and current provenance.

More importantly, we had said that while not all British names were worthy of commemoration, some – at least names of those who were had done worthwhile service to the city – needed to be retained. In this context we had argued for the continuation of the names of officers of the Corporation

such as J. Chartres Molony, J.R. Coats and J.W. Madeley. We had requested that the name of F.W. Ellis who had done such good work in the context of the Dravidian languages and on the *Tirukkural* be allowed to remain. We do not know if our entreaties had any impact but shortly after a list was published in these columns, the idea of renaming the streets was shelved. It has now resurfaced.

(Continued on page 11)

# The changing world of Tambrams

**Tamil Brahmins: The making of a middle-class caste** by C.J. Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan. Social Science Press/Orient BlackSwan. Price: Rs. 750.

As is evident from my name, or should be, I am a Tamil Brahman. But I have lived 97 per cent of my life in Delhi where I have gone to school with post-partition Punjabi children and, later on, mingled with Jats and other assorted North Indians throughout my working life.

It was only towards the end of my career that I worked in an utterly Tamil Brahman organisation, *The Hindu* group of publications. I realised then that being a Tamil Brahman was serious business. It certainly was not like the funny serials written about them in *The Times of India* in the early 1990s. That series had popularised the term Tambram, much to the anguish of my aged relatives.

That aside, had Fuller and Haripriya not written this book, I would probably have attempted one on the subject. It is, after all, a low-hanging and fascinating fruit. But they have spared me the labour and produced a very scholarly study which shows not only Tambrams their place, but also the world the place that Tambrams now occupy in Indian society: down from high-caste oppressors to middle-class survivors in a hostile environment in their own State.

The authors say the Tambram population of Tamil Nadu has declined hugely from 2.4 per cent in 1931 to just about 1.8 per cent now. A quarter of them live outside Tamil Nadu.

This is not a book for the frivolous reader looking for a quickie on a flight. It is a seri-

ous academic work that lays bare the mysteries of Tam-Brahmism because, as social groups go, Tambrams are as distinct in their practices, customs, shibboleths and prejudices as, say, the Hassidic Jews. They cling to a mixture of piety and practicality that survival under difficult circumstances teaches. In doing so, they often appear as ridiculous as the Jews who have been known to debate whether electricity is fire and, if so, whether it is all right to get into a lift on the Sabbath.

Similar eccentricities can be laid at the doors of Tambrams. They were obsessed with auspiciousness. Whether it was time – *rahukalam* and *yamagandam* – or food – no tubers, etc. – or oil baths and castor oil, the Tambrams are a class apart.

The authors ably demonstrate the emergence of a bunch of professionals who have done very well for themselves. Their recent history is that, for a hundred years from the 1870s, they took to liberal arts education and law, thus becoming prominent in the fields of education and governance. Then, when the Dravidian movement began to shove them aside in Tamil Nadu, they took to engineering and medicine, though less to the latter because of ritual purity reasons.

When in the 1990s the rest of India pushed on with affirmative action for the lower castes, they found themselves being edged out of both educational opportunities as well as government jobs in India. So they went big on the private sector. Many went off to the US and have done well there. Living outside their natural habitat, they have started marrying outside their fold too.

In consequence, old edifices are crumbling. There used to be a time when a Vadagalai Iyengar would not marry a Tenkalai Iyengar and vice versa. That line was breached in the 1950s. Next, the Iyers and Iyengars started marrying each other, which was a clear watershed. Now everyone else has become fair game. So, as endangered social groups go, Tamil Brahmins lead the way.

The book, however, fails to bring out adequately the gradual disappearance of a community that was always a curiosity. The end for the Tambram is in sight, but the book doesn't say so. Give it another 50 years and, as the Agatha Christie novel says, there will be none. (Courtesy: *Rotary News*)

– T.C.A. Srinivasa Raghavan

# To prohibit or not

Everyone has gotten on to the wagon. Or should *The Man from Madras Musings* say the bandwagon? He alludes to the recent snowballing support for declaring our beloved State and City completely dry. Nature, or what we did to it, has already made the region water-free and now the powers-that-once-were and the powers-that-want-to-be-in-power are building a groundswell of opinion in favour of completely abolishing the other fluid – the one that cheers. To Hell With TASMAL appears to be their motto. It is noteworthy, however, that the power-that-is is completely silent on the subject.

MMM, who is abstemious to a degree (his only weakness in the wine, women and song trio is the last named), could not care less either way but he does have a kind heart and would like to point out to the lobby that demands the ban on

IT metropolis that thinks it still is a garden city. MMM predicts that it won't be long before our tipplers begin planning visits to these cities on the slightest pretexts.

MMM has had experience of living in other cities that temporarily went dry for various politically correct reasons (these moves are never altruistic). Those who HAD to drink every day in these places were advised to get a medical certificate that stated that they needed to imbibe in order to stay alive. This in turn translated into what was called a permit, which rapidly became the most precious document possible, spawning a whole corruption industry in its procurement. The application form in the national language of the north was evidently created by a rabid dry. The first column asked the applicant to fill in 'The Alcoholic's Name' and the second one 'Name of Father of Alcoholic'. These

vanced age and could not be in an advanced stage of pregnancy. A still closer inspection showed that the reason for the embonpoint was a tube that was wound around the stomach and carried precious liquids. The ladies were let off after a strict warning which, MMM is sure, they obeyed. Not that there were no official outlets. These required the aforementioned permit and the vending contracts for these outlets were highly profitable. It is not as though nobody benefited from Prohibition.

Prohibition times were also when those manning air and seaports were much in demand as also were those who were fly out to the Emerald Isle just south. These men, known colloquially as sparrows because of the short flights they took at enormous risk, invariably returned with goodies that did you good. And given that those were days when electronic surveillance devices had not yet

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

brandy, the whisking away of whisky and abolition of arrack that without these essential commodities, our State may come to a complete halt. For, just as Napoleon (or was it Wellington?) said that an army marches on its stomach, our State and our City operate well only when considerably lubricated.

Take for instance that mega festival that happens once every five years – the general election. How can this be a spirited affair without the distribution of spirits? In the absence of this requisite, the cadre will be dispirited and newspapers cannot claim that the campaign ended on a high note. In short, the zigzag path to the hustings will be filled with hiccups.

The only option would then be to brew the stuff illegally. MMM has no personal experience but he is informed by those that are in the know that the formula for these home-remedies is taken directly from the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (fillet of a fenny snake, fingers of a strangled babe, etc.) and the end-result is invariably double double toil and trouble. The potion gives such a kick to those that imbibe it that they permanently move to a higher abode.

Another option would be to take a tip from the wildebeest of Africa that migrate in large numbers in search of watering holes. In this Madras that is Chennai is singularly blessed for it has well endowed neighbours on both sides – the French town that has pretensions of being a State, and the

terms alone, it was said, turned several hopefuls permanently away from the bottle. As they say, the pen is mightier than the sword.

### Dry tales

The possibility of Prohibition also brings to the mind of *The Man from Madras Musings* the several interesting happenings that took place when our State was last dry. That was during the time the Old Monk had a lot of influence – and by that MMM alludes to the venerable old sage (if you believed *Kalki* magazine) and wily old fox (if you trusted the Dravidian parties). It was during his tenure that State-wide Prohibition first came into effect and then it remained in force off and on till the early 1970s when the very Dravidian party that Old Monk helped bring to power and which had by then elevated him to the status of Teacher and gave him a Royal Salute, decided to wet the state with a vengeance. The Old Monk took it up as a Royal Challenge but he was told to drown his sorrows in a butt of malmsey, as Shakespeare would have said. The venerable sage retired in high dudgeon thereafter, his spirit corked and was ever bitter thereafter.

It was, however, when Prohibition was in force that it was noted that busloads of seemingly enormously pregnant women were coming in from neighbouring la Francaise town to our city. Closer inspection revealed that the ladies were all of an ad-

made their entry, it was easy to slip in a cask or two. Capture invariably meant the caging of the sparrow for a temporary period but then there were always plenty of others. As to the commodity they brought in, these were immediately confiscated and were supposed to be destroyed. But if that did happen, those manning air and seaports would not have been in demand, would they?

Foreigners were exempt from such laws. And they too found their popularity skyrocketing overnight. Given that we were just emerging from our post-independence xenophobia, this was surprising. But then alcohol, like the politics that is currently driving the demand for prohibition, makes strange bedfellows.

### Tailpiece

And while on the subject of Prohibition, what do you think of the picture reproduced below? The person who sent it to *The Man from Madras*



*Musings* says that it is on the banks of the Cooum but MMM has his doubts. In the meanwhile – cheersh as they say in Madras.

– MMM

### Dates for Your Diary

**August 19-23:** Onam festival (11.30 am, 12.30 pm, 3.30 pm & 4.30 pm at DakshinaChitra)

Paithrikakalalari, Kozhencherry, Kerala, performs *Padayani* – a ceremonial dance involving masks. The performance will include *Pulanirtham* and *Marutha Kolam*. The unique Padayani Kolam, *Pulanirtham* is an offering by the farmers to express their gratitude to the Goddess for paddy production while *Marutha Kolam* is performed to keep away epidemics and in honour of mother Goddess of the village, Marutha. As part of the festival there will be demonstrations on the making (and sale) of terracotta and bamboo jewellery.

# The City's second widows' home

The first shelter for destitute women in Madras was a home for Brahmin widows started by Sister Subbalakshmi. There was also in the city a hostel for non-Brahmin women and an orphanage for girls run by Christian missionaries.

On an evening in June 1930, three young girls from Namakkal turned up in Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy's house seeking shelter as they had nowhere to go and their relatives would not help them either. They belonged to the Devadasi community and had refused dedication, whereupon they had to leave their home. At the time, Dr. Muthulakshmi was living in Vepery. As she thought it was the right thing to do, she sent them to the non-Brahmin women's hostel, known to her as she was its medical officer. She thought the girls would be welcomed there. On the contrary, the warden of the hostel not only refused admission to them but also ill-treated the girls because of their background. Traumatized, they returned to Dr. Muthulakshmi.

Seeing their plight, Muthulakshmi and her husband Dr. Sundar Reddy took the girls in. But this made Muthulakshmi want to do something on a more permanent basis. It was then that she decided to start a home for the destitute as they needed not only protection but also a future. As, slowly but steadily, more girls trickled in from near Namakkal and Salem, a bigger place was required.



• This historic picture goes back to the start of the first widows' home in Madras. Sister Subbalakshmi started the Ice House widows' home, Sarada Illam, for Brahmin widows. In this picture are seen its first three child widow graduates from Queen Mary's College, now celebrating its centenary. Ammukutty, Lakshmi and Parvathy (from left to right) – all came from Sarada Illam – joined QMC in 1917. Ammukutty and Parvathy took up teaching jobs in Coimbatore and Salem. Lakshmi Ammal taught in QMC. Not long afterwards Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy started the second widows' home in the city for non-Brahmin widows, Avvai Home, the subject of this feature.

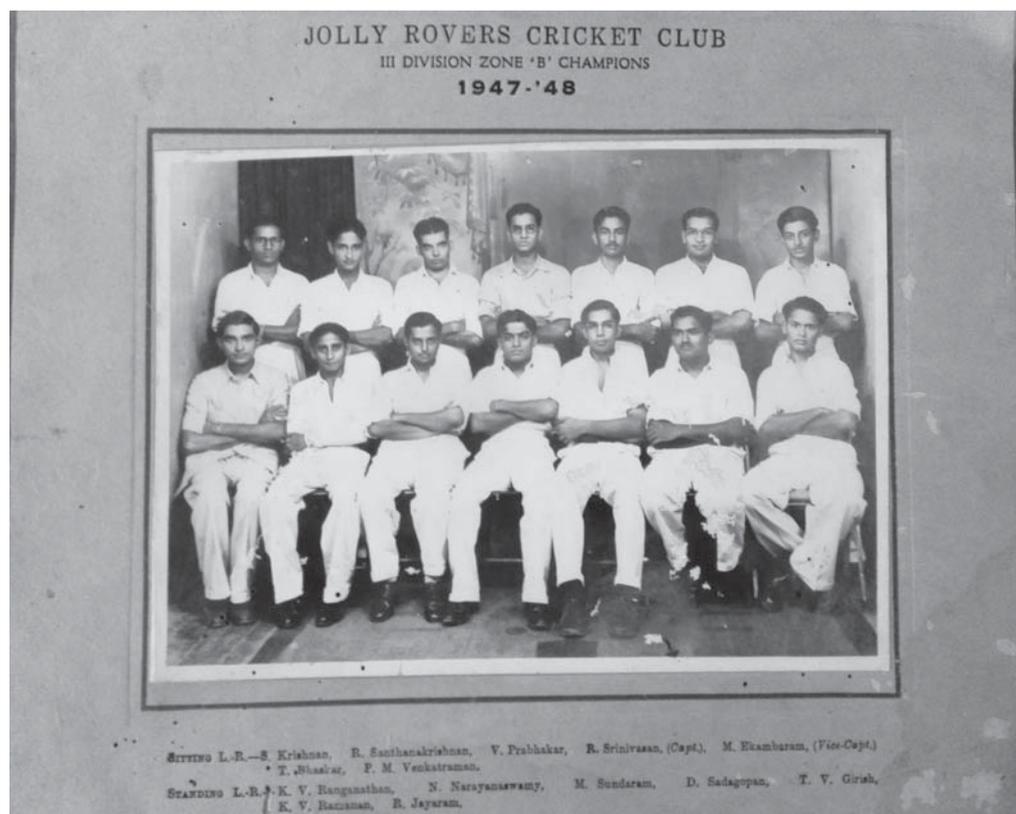
She registered *Avvai Home* under the Society's Registration Act. Her sister C.N. Nallamuthu, a lecturer in Queen Mary's College (later its Principal), was made the Warden with a mandate to set up the home. Dr. Muthulakshmi rented a house (No. 1, Kutcheri Road, Mylapore) where the girls could be housed. But soon something bigger was necessary. Dr. Muthulakshmi started looking for vacant land to build a new home.

Adjacent to the Theosophical Society, on its west, there was a vacant site that belonged to the Tiruvannamalai Sri Arunachaleswarar Devasthanam. The Devasthanam, when approached, agreed to help her with the land, but the rules did not permit sale of land gifted to a temple. Therefore, a lease was agreed upon at an unbelievably low cost: For a period of 50 years, 50 grounds at Rs. 10 a month! She also took another 27 grounds for her use at a slightly higher rate for 50 years. The lease included a clause by which it could be renewed after 50 years for a further period of 50 years.

Construction started in 1934 with artisans supervised by the contractor himself, a patient of hers. By the end of 1936, the girls were able to move into the orphanage.

Of the three girls who took asylum in Dr. Muthulakshmi's house and later shifted to *Avvai Home*, one became a doctor, another a nurse and the third a school teacher!

## Our Readers Write



Sitting: left to right: S. Krishnan, R. Santhanakrishnan, V. Prabhakar, R. Srinivasan (Capt.), M. Ekambaram (Vice-Captain), T. Bhaskar and P.M. Venkatraman. Standing left to right: K.V. Ranganathan, N. Narayanaswamy, M. Sundaram, D. Sadagopan, T.V. Girish, K.V. Ramanan and R. Jayaram.

### The beginnings

In the article (MM, August 1<sup>st</sup>) V. Ramnarayan has stated that Jolly Rovers was started by K. Balakrishna Rao. It was started during 1947-48 (as informed to *Madras Musings* in writing a couple of years ago) by my father, late M. Ekambaram and some of his friends.

The photo which appears above was taken during 1947-48. R. Jayaram is the surviving member of the club today. He resides in Chennai.

E. Krishnan

Krishnan\_e@hotmail.com

FOOTNOTE: What he had earlier written to MM stated the following:

"The club was started by a group of college

students in 1947 and it was helped to join the league by R. Srinivasan, who was with K.S. Ranga Rao, the then Secretary of Madras Cricket Association.

"The name 'Jolly Rovers Cricket Club' was suggested by K.K. Shanmuganathan who was one amongst us and the name was finalised. Shanmuganathan could not play for Jolly Rovers Cricket Club as he was successful in the All India Forest Services exams and had to leave Madras for the officers' training.

"The students had no sponsors to run the club and it was run with the pocket money of the students who started it.

"The club won the III Division 'B' Zone Championship in the very first year of entering the league."

As you walk into a sprawling area of lush green, *Avvai Home* premises, through a not very impressive gate that belies the space within, you feel as though you are travelling back in a Time Machine. Dr. Muthulakshmi lived there. A dilapidated old house to the far left was once her home. On the right is a temple to Goddess Saraswathi. When the campus was developed in 1936, next to the Theosophical Society, there were hardly any buildings in the vicinity.

The Home shifted to the present premises, where many girls were brought in by their widowed mothers who could not support them and where women and girl children discarded by society for various social reasons took refuge.

C.N. Nallamuthu, a sister of Dr. Muthulakshmi, was the first warden of the Home. When the home was in Kutcheri Road in Mylapore, Dr. Muthulakshmi, with the help of one Sesha Iyengar, got the girls admitted in the National Girls' High School. She was very particular that her girls should get quality education.

At the new Home in Adyar,

she made arrangements with the Olcott Memorial School and Besant Theosophical School (now The School, KFI) to educate the girls.

Dr. Muthulakshmi stated often enough that her aim in founding the Home was to provide orphan girls a safe place to live in, and education and, later, a training leading to a worthy profession in life. Then, ideally, the Home would assist them in getting married to suitable persons. With such aims, the number of people wishing to seek a roof in the Home only kept increasing.

The need to have its own school was acutely felt and an elementary school was started in 1950 within the *Avvai Home* premises. Then, in 1952, a teachers' training institute was established. The Teachers' Training Institute (TTI) had to close in June 2011 when it was found that it did not meet the infrastructure norms specified by the National Council for Teachers' Education, Research and Training (NCTERT) though almost all who passed out till its closure have done well for themselves. Many teachers appointed in the *Avvai*

Home School were trained in this Institute and one such person became the headmistress of *Avvai Home's* primary school.

The next step was a high school and, with a handsome donation from Mrs. Nallamuthu, this became a reality and, in 1969, as a natural progression the school was upgraded as a higher secondary school in 1978.

The school owes its growth to the untiring efforts of Mandakini Krishnamurthi, daughter-in-law of Dr. Muthulakshmi.

Mandakini Krishnamurthi, a member of the Madras Legislative Council from 1977 to 1983, was born in Madhya Pradesh (nee Mandakini Dattatreya Deshpande) and migrated to Tamil Nadu where she married S. Krishnamurthi, son of Dr. Muthulakshmi, in 1945. On the passing away of her mother-in-law in 1965, she took charge of the Home, its orphanage and associated institutions and built them up to the present stature. She passed away in 1980 – (Courtesy: *Adyar Times*).

– K.R.A. Narasiah

# Trying to cope with hostel food

In the summer of 1946 I joined the liberal arts and humanities department of one of the country's premier women's institutions for graduate studies, the Queen Mary's College in Madras.

I took the train from Poona to Madras Central Station, where my mother's cousin met me in the early hours of the morning, gave me an early breakfast and put me in a cycle rickshaw, handing me a sheet of paper with handwritten directions to the college. The two black trunks containing my personal belongings were loaded on to another rickshaw, and I left for my college and new 'home', the college hostel, with trepidation.

Soon, I was at the imposing gates of the college on Beach Road, overlooking the sandy Marina with the fishermen's boats setting out for the day towards the brilliant sun. The Bay of Bengal was shimmering calm that morning. Little did I know that with the onset of the torrential monsoons, the stormy waves would drive the sea into the college campus.

I liked what I saw when I entered the gates. A canopy of rain tree branches spread across the driveway and a well-laid-out rose garden on the lower terrace of the campus was in bloom.

\* \* \*

On arrival, every student had a brief interview with Miss Myers, the principal (and hostel warden, of the college). I was nervous about the interview but Miss Myers allayed my fears. She was the spitting image of Miss Levy, my English teacher whom I adored at the Christ Church School in Jubbulpore. She asked me a couple of questions about my parents and my family, and wished me well in my studies and for my stay in the hostel.

I was South Indian and Tamilian, and Madras should have been 'home' to me, but it was not. I generally found people, including many of my classmates in college, conservative and caste conscious. Poona, by comparison, was cool and liberal. Women had more freedom in Poona, where girls and women rode bicycles to school and work. Though I had brought my bike with me, I rarely felt comfortable riding it in Madras. To add to the feel-

ing of being an 'outsider'. I also missed the comfort of familiar home-cooked food.

Queen Mary's College had an excellent reputation for academics, but the hostel food was indifferent in quality and the atmosphere of the dining room uninviting. There were two divisions in the hostel mess: the crowded, noisy 'vegetarian mess' and the orderly 'non-vegetarian dining room'. A vegetarian by upbringing, I preferred to join the vegetarian mess. Soon I realised that more than two-thirds of the hostel inmates had joined the vegetarian mess even though many preferred non-vegetarian food. They had their reasons.

Many in the hostel referred to the food served in the non-vegetarian dining room as 'English food', which translates to



● As Queen Mary's College celebrates its Centenary, we came across this recollection of the College and its hostel food in the 1940s. This is in a memoir titled *Tiffin* (a recollection of her life as well of recipes of the tiffin items she had enjoyed) by RUKMINI SRINIVAS. These excerpts are published with her permission.

omelette and toast for breakfast instead of idli and dosai. They were also uncomfortable with the formality of the dining room and the conversation was mostly conducted in English. They decided they were not going to pay for the tables with table cloths, vases with flowers and uniformed bearers.

In comparison, the appearance and atmosphere of the large rectangular vegetarian dining hall was chaotic and unappealing. Six long rectangular wooden tables were arranged parallel to each other and students sat on wooden benches. The dining hall could seat only about forty students at a time, and there were several batches at every meal. There was an unwritten hierarchy among the students – our seniors dined before us. The first two batches of students dined at cleaner tables and the food was hot. The Malayali cooks and servers looked exhausted and overworked; thus,

order and cleanliness were very low priorities for them. One of the resident staff did try to improve matters, but the numbers were so large that it was a no-win situation.

The weekday lunch and dinner in the vegetarian mess was ill-planned. On most days, it was potatoes in one form or another. Green vegetables were a rarity.

After the third week of the first term, in my first year in college, Krishnan Nair, an avuncular man in his forties and the head cook in the vegetarian mess, noticing that I ate very little, came up to me and advised me on the importance of eating well – he meant more – in order to be able to study. I told him I did not like the food served for lunch and dinner and that I preferred the breakfast menu. I still remember the weekly breakfast menu – *idlis*, with coconut chutney and *sambar*, *dosai* with potato curry and chutney, *uthappam*, *rava dosai* with coconut chutney, semolina *upma*, wheat *polenta*, *appam* with vegetable *kurma* stew, and *poori* with potato curry. My favourite breakfast was the spongy, frilly edged *appam* that came with the creamy mixed vegetable *kurma*,

with the vegetables disintegrating in a thick, spicy, coconut milk sauce, and *pooris* with a potato curry. Krishnan Nair treated me to one more *appam* and two more *pooris* than was my share.

I would eat heartily at breakfast and deliberately miss lunch. I found no variation or variety in the menu for lunch and dinner. The staple was boiled rice with one dry vegetable curry, *sambar* with a few vegetables, *rasam*, buttermilk and, on some days, *appalam*. Dessert was served on Sundays and festival days – fruit salad and ice cream on Sundays and *payasam* on festivals. After the eclectic fare in my parents' home, I found the hostel menu boring and the food poorly cooked.

In my second year in college, Krishnan Nair suggested that I volunteer as a member of the vegetarian mess committee so that I could have some clout in suggesting changes in the menu. I was not reluctant to



Capper House, where Queen Mary's College had its beginning.

take on the extra work involved in the membership. In fact, I enjoyed going to Kotwal Chowadi market, the wholesale vegetable and fruit market, with Krishnan Nair once a week, wandering among the mountains of vegetable sacks and fruit baskets. I introduced more vegetables into the menu and started eating better. I also introduced a more substantial evening tiffin, of *appam* with *kurma* and *poori*, and with potato curry instead of the two biscuits or two *bajjis* that the then existing menu provided. The result was an increase in the mess bill, which made me unpopular with some of the students who protested, threatening to stage a one-day hunger strike. It was a delicate balancing act for me between good food and capping the mess bill at the end of the month. Fortunately, this was sorted out without compromising on the quality of the food, and I was re-elected to the student membership for the next few years of my stay in the College.

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Once I had settled down in my college, I started bonding with the nine other girls in the large dormitory. I learned that all, except one, came from small towns near Madras. Sushma Kutty, from Trissur in Kerala, and I were the only two from outside Madras Presidency. None of them had heard of Poona.

Four of the girls, in ankle-length skirts (*pavadai* in Tamil), and a short blouse with *melakku*, a length of material wrapped over the upper part of the body, looked in their early teens to me. The other five looked older and were dressed in sarees. They all looked disapprovingly at my clothes, a knee-high pleated maroon dress, and two of them even asked, 'Are you Christian?'

A couple of days later, I shifted to wearing a saree, which helped me blend with the student community in the college.

Ten days later at a hostel meeting, all the new entrants to the intermediate. BA and BSc courses were allotted tutors and

rooms. The tutors were responsible for the good behaviour and academic performance of their wards. They assumed the role of surrogate parents. My tutor, Mrs. Mandakini Bai, was the chairperson of the Hindi department. She was benignly firm and helpful. She was fond of me, maybe because of my fluency in speaking Hindi and, unsuccessful though, had tried to get me to transfer to Hindi from French.

I was allotted a room on the first floor in Stone House Block – a room for two – and my first room-mate was Juliet. I found, when I entered my room with two trunks and a hold-all, she had already unpacked and waiting to see who would share her room. I remember her as being short in stature, just about five feet tall, with a tanned complexion, curly-haired and stockily built. I was very impressed that she could lift my trunks without much effort.

As we got talking, I learnt that her parents lived in Tanjore, which was another reason to bond with her. Juliet and I shared a room for the first year after we joined college in the intermediate class. Over the first couple of weeks, we became good friends, and though the hostel room was small and cramped with two chests of drawers, two writing desks with straight-backed chairs, and two beds against each wall, and hardly any room to move, each one of us had managed a space of our own. Juliet was very adjusting and, as I realised soon, caring too. When my younger sister Sarasa also joined Queen Mary's College in 1947, Juliet helpfully moved to another room in the same block and on the same floor, and we continued to be friends. She left Queen Mary's College at the end of the second year when she joined the Vellore Medical College and, sadly, thereafter I lost all contact with her. I continued to stay in the students' hostel for the next three years till I completed the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) programme in Geography.

(To be concluded)

\* *Tiffin* by Rukmini Srinivas (Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2015)

**Till August 21**

- **Exhibition:** *History through Invitation* – from the collection of Sayeed Cassim family. Organised by the Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL). RMRL  
10 am-5 pm daily  
except Sunday

**Till August 23**

- **Exhibition:** A photographic exhibition on *60 years of Australian cricket history in the city*. The Australian Consulate-General presents a photographic exhibition which chronicles memorable and historic moments from the ten Test matches and four one-day internationals that Australia has played in Madras. Crowne Plaza  
Adyar Park lobby

**Till August 24**

- A special Burra Hazri breakfast will be available at the Vivanta by Taj at Connemara to start its 125<sup>th</sup> year celebrations. The sumptuous, priced breakfast brings to the table dishes from the menus out of the hotel's fabled past. A special High Tea is also being offered in the afternoons throughout the Week. Vivanta by Taj  
Connemara  
9-11 am

**Till August 31**

- Exhibition:** Display of books, old and new, on Madras. Madras Club  
Library  
For members and guests only.

**August 19**

- **Visit:** Visit to Heritage Centre, IIT Madras For details: Suresh: 9940421073 IIT Madras  
8.30 am-10.00 am
- **Panel Discussion:** IIT Madras: *The Chennai Links and their Evolution*. Panel Members: S. Muthiah and K.R. Narasiah. Moderator: Prof. Ajit Kolar, IIT Madras. For details: Suresh: 9940421073 IC & SR Auditorium  
IIT Madras  
3-4 pm
- **Illustrated Lecture:** From *Swadesamitran* to *Dina Thanthi* – *The remarkable journey of Tamil newspapers and journals*. A presentation by K.R.A. Narasiah. Organised by Press Institute of India. PII  
4.30-6.00 pm
- **Nature Walk:** IIT Madras. For details: Suresh: 9940421073 IIT Madras  
5.30-6.30 pm
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Dr. Uma Ram and Dr. Sharada Srinivas – *Being Women & Women Doctors in Chennai* GRT  
6-8 pm
- **Film:** Alliance Française of Madras, INTACH and PondyCAN screen a documentary: *India's Disappearing Beaches – A Wake Up Call*. A film produced by Shekar Dattatri for Pondy Citizens' Action Network (PondyCAN). In just 15 minutes you discover why India's beaches are eroding at an alarming rate, Edouard Michelin  
Auditorium, Alliance  
Française of  
Madras, 6.30 pm

and what needs to be done to stop this disaster from spreading further. This will be followed by a panel discussion on our beaches, featuring eminent personalities all connected with Chennai.

**August 19-24**

- **Exhibition:** Photographs selected from submissions to the Madras Photographic Society Contest. City Centre

**August 20**

- **Illustrated Lecture:** *Photography on Glass* – *When photography came to Madras*. Narrated by S. Muthiah, projected by D. Krishnan. Organised by the Press Institute of India PII  
4.30-6.00 pm
- **Talk:** *The Journalist who became a Consumer Activist: Recalling R. Desikan*, by R.V. Rajan. Organised by Roja Muthiah Research Library RMRL  
5.00-6.30 pm
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** *Singing in Chennai* – Sanjay Subrahmanyam in conversation with Sriram V. The Park Hyatt  
6-8 pm
- **Quiz:** An inter-school quiz competition for students from Classes IX to XII on *Places of worship and religious monuments in Madras* to highlight the rich culture of the city. Quizmaster: S. Ram. Each team to comprise three participants; and a school can send more than one team. Organised by Thejus, T.Nagar. For details, call 2815 6370 / 94440 00060 Preliminaries:  
1.30-4.00 pm  
Finals: 4 pm
- **Knowledge Hunt:** Visit British Council to explore knowledge by taking part in a Knowledge Hunt. For information contact British Council at [chennai.enquiry@in.britishcouncil.org](mailto:chennai.enquiry@in.britishcouncil.org) For details:  
1800-102-4353

**August 21-22**

- **Madras quotient:** Visit British Council and participate in a trivia quiz For details:  
1800-102-4353  
For information contact British Council at [chennai.enquiry@in.britishcouncil.org](mailto:chennai.enquiry@in.britishcouncil.org)

**August 21-31**

- **Exhibition:** Rare and known photographs and paintings of Madras. Vennirul Art Gallery,  
C.P. Art Centre  
Inauguration:  
August 21, 5.00 pm

**August 21**

- **Illustrated Lecture :** *Media and Advertising in Chennai* – *A fascinating history*. A presentation by R.V. Rajan. Organised by Press Institute of India. PII  
4.30-6.00 pm

**NOTE:** ● Open to all, but terms apply. Limited seating at all venues on first-come, first-served basis.

\* All Chennai Heritage walks require booking and payment in advance. Please make your bookings through email ([editor@madrasmusings.com](mailto:editor@madrasmusings.com)) and you will be informed on where to make the payment and get further details.

Check [www.themadrasday.in](http://www.themadrasday.in) and Madras Week App for up-to-date programmes.

Promotion and Publicity:  
PRISM Public Relations.

- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture: Emergency in Madras**, R. Swaminathan and S. Murari. Chamiers, 6-8 pm
- **Talk: Humour in Madras** by Major V.V. Narayanan followed by a hilarious session with Swami Siripananda. Organised by Transactional Analysis Nahar Hall, White's Road Royapettah 6.30-8.30 pm
- Madras Week Celebrations at Phoenix Market City Mall. Stand up comedy show by Evam followed by a fashion show, choreographed by Sunil Menon Phoenix Market City For details contact: 044 30083389
- **Film: Madras-based Artists.** DakshinaChitra will also showcase photographs of old Madras DakshinaChitra 11 am-1pm onwards and 3 pm-5 pm.
- **Exhibition:** Display of photos of the great cricketing family of Buchi Babu. Luz House, Mylapore
- **Exhibition: Twin Art Show.** The event will showcase the works of two special persons: artist Narasimhalu, who is suffering from Cerebral Palsy, a gifted person adept at embroidery and painting with his foot. The other artist is R. Udhaykumar, who has Spinal Muscular Atrophy and whose right thumb and index finger are all that moves in his whole body. Using them, he paints. Organised by HeART BEAT Foundation, Gallery Sri Parvathi and Nina Reddy of Savera Hotel. PINE Banquet Hall Savera Hotel (Inauguration: 6.30 pm, August 21, by invitation only)
- **Exhibition: Madras – A Reflection.** An exhibition of watercolour paintings of Madras by S. Potrarasan. Forum Art Gallery 10.30 am-6.30 pm Monday to Saturday (Inauguration: 11.30 am, Aug. 22)
- **Photowalk for kids: Bylanes off Bhageeratha's place.** Walk and click from the Purasawalkam High Road to the once quiet bylane, Vellala Street. Get to know the history of the street where famous personalities like R.K. Narayan, R.K. Laxman, writers 'Marina' and SaVi lived. Visit the 2000 year old Gangadeeswarar & Pankajakshi temple, the Srinivasa Perumal temple and the Bhajanai Koil. Walk led by Ramaswamy N of The Chennai Photowalk. Organised by YOSee. Contact Revathi: 9840544629 Starting Point: Vasanth & Co, Purasawalkam High Road, Opp. BSNL Reporting Time: 6.45 a.m. 1 hour
- Heritage cum Flora Walk inside the QMC campus. Heritage Walk led by Dr. Utra Prabhu and V. Vasantha (both Alumnae) and the Flora Walk by A. Thilagavathy, Asst. Prof. of Botany QMC. Dr. Utra Prabhu 9840447830, V.Vasantha 9940140302, A. Thilagavathy 9486888849 Starts at 7.15 a.m. Assemble in front of Kalai Maligai facing Marina.
- **Heritage Walk: 3rd Annual Trace Origin of Madras** to Pazhaverkadu (Pulicat). 6.10 am: Starts Loyola College ICAM gate 8.30 am: Breakfast and A/V Presentation 9.00 am: Heritage Walk 12.30 pm: Lunch and depart for Chennai. Trip fee: Rs. 940 Inclusive of AC bus transport, breakfast, lunch, snacks, coffee and water. For details: 42139961 www.aarde.in info@aarde.in
- **Heritage Walk: Chennai Heritage Walk: The Islamic Heritage of Triplicane** led by S. Anwar. Walk ends with breakfast. 6-8 am Rs 500 per head To register send email to editor@madrasmusings.com
- **Heritage Walk: Fort St George.** Assemble at parking lot opp. Fort's main gate. No registration required. Walk led by Vincent D' Souza. Free. No registration required. Starts at 6.45 am 2 hours
- **Walk:** A tour of two temples in Chintadripet built by Dubash Adiappa Narayan. You will see fascinating relics from the 18th Century and relish temple food from the 21st Century! Dress code: Men - preferably shirt/t-shirt. Trousers are OK. Women: Sarees/Salwars. Either way no shorts please! 7am-8am Walk led by Pradeep Chakravarthy veshti/dhoti with a
- **Seminar: On Architecture in Colonial Madras** with the following speakers: Inaugural address by S. Muthiah, followed by Dr. Nanditha Krishna: *The New Architecture of Colonial Madras*; Sriram V.: *Architects and Contractors in Colonial Madras*; Dr. Razia Tony: *Churches of Colonial Madras*; Dr. Chithra Madhavan: *Temples of Colonial Madras*; and S. Anwar: *Mosques of Colonial Madras* C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation 10 am-1 pm
- **Quiz: The Murugappa Madras Quotient Quiz 2015.** Quizmaster: Dr. Navin Jayakumar. St. Bede's Auditorium San Thomé. 1 pm onwards.
- **Quiz:** Quiz on Madras. For Tamil medium schools. No registration required. Organised by Mylapore Times. P.S. School Campus Hall. 1.30 pm onwards. Teams of 2
- **Workshop: Terracotta tile making and designing** for adults. The participants will learn the process of making terracotta tile and the making of traditional design on the tiles. For details: 98412 66149 DakshinaChitra 10 am-5 pm
- **Walk:** Chennai Heritage Walk: *Textile tour of T. Nagar.* Starts at Co-optex, Theagorayanagar where T.N. Venkatesh, IAS will flag-off the walk and will conclude at Nalli's. It will be led by Sreemathy Mohan. 2.30-4.30 pm 2.30 pm assemble Co-optex, Theagoraya Nagar Rs. 350 per head To register send email to editor@madrasmusings.com
- **Food Trail:** Visits to some North Indian snack outlets in and around Mint Street to give you a taste of the rich food in this part of our city. Prema: 24986651. No registration charges. Starts at 4.30 pm ends at 6.00 pm Start point: Kakada Sweets (Near Jain Temple), Sowcarpet
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture: The River in the City – D.H. Rao** speaks on the Buckingham Canal Amethyst 6-8 pm
- **Illustrated lecture: Dabba Chetty Kadai** by Badri. Organised by Kalpakalakshmi Charitable Trust. Gallery Sri Parvati 6.30 p.m.
- An opportunity for 8-15 year old budding journalists to explore their interviewing skills. Register with British Council and win a chance to interview cricketer Krishnamachari Srikanth and Nikhil Whitaker, curator of the Madras Crocodile Bank about their memories and views about Madras. For information chennai.enquiry@in.britishcouncil.org For details: 1800-102-4353 6.30-7.30 pm
- **Talk:** Sriram V on *Street Names of Chennai.* Followed by a special Madras Day dinner. For members and their guests only. Madras Club 7 pm
- **Talk:** *Madras – Past, Present and Future* by Sujatha Shankar. For members and their guests only. Rotary Club of Madras Southwest.
- **Dance:** Madras Week Celebrations at Phoenix Market City Mall. Dance performance by Padmashree Shobhana Phoenix Market City For details contact: 044 30083389

### August 23

- **Nature Walk: Bird Walk** at Perumbakkam Tank. Organised by Madras Naturalists' Society. Reporting Place: Bus Stand opp Reporting time 6.30 am Group Size: 25

IT Park near Toll Plaza in Perumbakkam. Please bring along Binoculars & Cameras. Please email Vijay at gopivkumar58@gmail.com to confirm your participation. Confirmation strictly on first-come basis.

- **Heritage Walk:** From Ireland to Madras shores – Story of the first Presentation nuns of BVM. Starting point: VOC statue, outside Madras Port, opp. Customs House, Rajaji Salai, George Town. Walk through George Town, ends at St. Mary's Cathedral, Armenian Street. Led by Vincent de Souza  
6.45 am  
2 hours  
Open to all. No registration reqd.
- Heritage Walk:** Chennai Heritage Walk: Fort St. George. Led by Sriram V.  
7-9 am  
Rs 350 per head  
To register send email to editor@madrasmusings.com
- **Walking Tour:** The 8th Annual Living Statues of Marina Beach. Brief dramatic enactments of the stories of six historical figures (Kannagi, NSC Bose, Thiruvalluvar, GU Pope, Bharathidasan, and Avvaiyar) in Tamil and English. Please contact the World Storytelling Institute if you might like to perform one or more of the figures, or read aloud anything written by them. Organised by World Storytelling Institute. For details: 98403 94282 or www.storytellinginstitute.org  
7.30 am Meet at the Kannagi Statue, Marina Beach (Bharathi Salai).
- **Tree Walk:** NIZHAL's Landmark Tree Series of Tree Walks. *Vriksha Paryatan* – A tree walk (commentary in Hindi). Admire the rare Asoka and other heritage trees. Meeting point: The gate on Sydenham's Road.  
My Ladye's Garden, Periamet.  
4.30 pm  
For registration 9791029568 / 8870005455 / 9840604912
- **Dance:** *Dancing in the Parlour*. An evening of Madras Presidency's Sadir, Music, History and Storytelling. With Sundari, Ranganayaki, Sivaramaiyya, Pilli Narasimha Rao Naidu and others. Concept and performance: Dr. Swarnamalya Ganesh and Ranga Mandira ensemble  
6.15 p.m.  
Luz House  
Mylapore  
Contact: Ranga Mandira: 9840424703
- **Talk:** *The Madras Mag* and *Luz House* invite you to an evening of conversations with writers/translators Padma Narayanan and Kalyan Raman, on transporting the nuances of Tamil words to an English-speaking world.  
Luz House,  
Mylapore  
4.45 pm
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Chandu Nair chats with three tech professionals who have created Metro Utility Apps. (**Note:** This replaces Dr. Chitra Madhavan's talk announced earlier.)  
Westin, Velachery  
6-8 pm
- **Illustrated lecture:** *Bleeding Madras (Mystery textile)* by Sabitha Radhakrishna. Organised by Kalpakalakshmi Charitable Trust.  
Gallery Sri Parvati  
6.30 p.m.
- **Interaction:** Third Chennai Authors' and Publishers' get-together to meet and chat with readers  
Odyssey, Adyar  
6.30-8.00 pm
- **Vocal:** Madras Week Celebrations at Phoenix Market City Mall. Vocal performance by Sudha Raghunathan  
Phoenix Market City  
For details contact: 044 30083389

### August 24

**Play:** *Madras nalla Madras*: A street play performance led by Arun Krishnamurthy (Environmental Foundation of India) on the topic *Madras nalla Madras*. Followed by interaction between the British Council's Regional Director, South Asia, Stephan Roman, S. Muthiah, Chronicler of Madras, and Krishnamurthy on the heritage and culture of Madras.  
At British Council  
5.30 pm

### August 25

**Talk:** Ram Ramakrishnan, entrepreneur, will pay tribute to the undying music of M.S. Viswanathan. Organised by the Rotary Club of Madras South. For members & guests only.  
Hotel Savera  
6.30 pm

### August 29

- **Talk and Walk:** *The City and its Cinema*. An introduction to the fascinating history of cinema in Chennai followed by a walk through Prasad Studios and Prasad Labs. The walk will offer a unique opportunity to see what an actual studio floor looks like. The walk will be led by Venkatesh Chakravarthy, Regional Director of L.V. Prasad Film & TV Academy. Free For registration: rajith.bala@gmail.com  
Starting Point: Entrance gate of L.V. Prasad Academy, Saligramam.  
9:30 am-12 noon

### August 30

- **Quiz:** The Madras Open Quiz organised by the Murugappa Group in association with the Quiz Foundation of India. Quizmaster: Dr. Sumanth C Raman. Open to all quizzing enthusiasts in and around Madras. Exciting prizes for the winning teams  
Details at www.murugappa.com

### August 31

**Talk:** *Meet Supdt. Christian Le Fanu, IPS, Madras Police*. S. Muthiah speaks of the exploits of a new detective hero, one based in Madras. Organised by Madras Book Club. For members and guests only.  
Vivanta by Taj Connemara  
6.30 pm

### September 1

**Talk:** *The American Contribution to Madras*. A talk by S. Muthiah. Organised by Rotary Club of Madras South with seven other Rotary Clubs participating. Members and guests only.  
TAG Centre  
6.30 pm

### September 2

- **Reading:** Readings on Madras by Madras Players  
Chamiers, 6.30 pm

## \* \* \* Contests

- The Madras Song was launched by the Murugappa Group last year as a music video and went viral with over 3 lakh views on YouTube. This year they are asking people to come up with their own versions of the song. It could be in any genre of music, sung solo or performed as a band. Both audio and video entries are welcome. The video along with the lyrics of the song, rules of the contest, ways to submit etc are all available on www.murugappamadras song.com  
The bumper prize is Rs1 lakh. A whole host of other prizes for:  
*Voice with an edge* award from CUMI Abrasives  
*The voice that will go places* award from Parry Travels  
*The Super Band Award* from TI Cycles  
*The Voice Worth Insuring* award from Chola MS General Insurance  
*The most refreshing cover version* award from Parry's 'Fresh Tea'  
*The sweetest voice* award from Parry's Sugar
- **Contest:** *INTACH-Chennai Photo contest* for college students. Identify heritage structures other than listed structures for your pictures.  
For details: youngintachennai@gmail.com

### August 20

**Contest:** *Baking MADras* – The baking contest with a Twist organised by The Murugappa Group in association with the Old Madras Baking Company and Hospitality partner: Raintree Anna Salai. The event will consist of three rounds – the last of which will be a live cook off. Cash prize of Rs.60,000, gift hampers and vouchers to be won. **Last date to participate – 20th August 2015**. For details: Log on to the official Murugappa Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/murugappagroup

**August 24**

- **Contest: Competition on Folk Performance** for Chennai college students. Colleges can send groups of six to ten students. The theme would revolve around traditional folk performances. The best three folk performing teams will be given prizes and certificates.

DakshinaChitra  
No participation fee  
For details:  
98412 66149

\* \* \*

**August 25**

- **Competition: Identify...** a competition for children based on buildings, builders and architectural styles. For details: cprafoundation@gmail.com

C.P. Arts Centre

\* \* \*

**Other Programmes**

- **AWARDS:** The Senior Citizens Group of Besant Nagar plans to present 'Pride of Madras' awards to senior citizens during Madras Week. The awards will be given to senior citizens in the city who have made a difference to the city or who have gone beyond the call of duty to bring pride to Chennai.

For details  
98842 24480

\* \* \*

**Madras Youth Choir**

- Madras Youth Choir plans to perform at three or four public parks in the city during Madras Week. It would like to have partners who can organise their own events in the park space. So you can host a Madras drawing show and a Tree Walk that runs with the choir singing, mostly songs on city/nation. Parks in T Nagar, Anna Nagar and Nageswara Rao Park, Luz are being considered. If you are part of a youth/community group keen to link up, please contact us at themadrasday@gmail.com

\* \* \*

- Trying to recreate San Thomé of the 17th and 18th Centuries with a map a scholar shared. If you are keen to help this project, mail to: themadrasday@gmail.com. We need volunteers who can help collect old photos of places in San Thomé which are 50/75/100 years old.

Organised by  
Mylapore Times

\* \* \*

**Till August 23**

- **Chettinad Food Festival** at the Marina. Sivagami will demonstrate Chettinad cuisine preparations during this week. To attend the classes you may contact: The Marina, Nazim, Manager -9884396213, 044-42035265

\* \* \*

**August 22**

- **Release of Special Postal Cover:** D. Hemachandra Rao, philatelist, collector, heritage enthusiast and civil engineer has chosen as his theme for his Special Postal Cover – *Coins of the Madras Presidency*. Visuals of the pagoda, panam and kaasu will be featured on the cover. Thanks to a collector of coins, Rao has sourced some nice pictures of the coins. For details: themadrasday@gmail.com

\* \* \*

**Film**

- A docufilm to screen at your Campus. The Gudiyam rock shelters located near Chennai where Stone Age people and their culture thrived many thousands of years ago. This documentary reveals some surprising facts about the archaeological findings and geological formation of these rock shelters. Uniform view and appeal of all the experts strengthens the need for urgent call to protect, popularise and conserve this unique prehistoric heritage site

33 minutes  
www.gudiyamcaves.in

**Young INTACH-Chennai suggests...**

- **Film:** Screen 50-minute film *History of Chennai* by S. Muthiah (given free to schools by INTACH till August 22nd and Rs.150 a copy thereafter) during Madras Week for students in the Middle and High School.  
(SCHOOLS: please contact youngintachchennai@gmail.com)
- **Design:** Design a Madras Day Flag and carry it along with placards on Madras Day in a walk inside your school premises during breaks and outside school. Stop at points and talk to people about Madras Day's significance. Please send us the route decided by your school. (Middle and Higher)
- During Madras Week many exhibitions and talks are being conducted in the city. Organise a trip to an exhibition and have the children write about it. (Middle and Higher).
- Ask students to bring old photographs of their neighbourhood and Chennai and display them. (Middle and Higher)
- Organise a display of landmarks of Chennai by Middle School students and get Primary school children to view them.
- Get children to write a story based on the history of Madras and read it out in class.  
For assistance: youngintachchenai@gmail.com

\* \* \*

**Madras Week Celebrations by City Schools**

We have been informed by the following schools that they have organised activities to celebrate Madras Day/Week/Month from the first week of August: **Alpha School**, CIT Nagar; **Chettinad Vidyashram**, Rajah Annamalaipuram; **Hussain Memorial Matric. Hr. Sec. School**, Ambattur; **Kids Central**, Kotturpuram; **KRM Public School**, Perambur; **Mary Clubwala Jadhav Girls Higher School**, Egmore; **Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan Sr. Sec. School**, K.K. Nagar; **PSBB**, KK Nagar; **PSBB Millennium**, Gerugambakkam; **Sri Sankara Vidyashramam**, Tiruvanmiyur and **Vidya Mandir**, Mylapore.

These activities have included screening INTACH'S *History of Madras* film, those suggested by Young INTACH, Chennai, and a variety of competitions. Of special note were:

- KRM Public School, Perambur cycling along the Cooum's course with the Cycling Yogis.
  - Sri Sankara Vidyashramam's visit to Lathur Panchayat Union Middle School near Kancheepuram,
  - Kids Central, Kotturpuram, helping out at the Madras Literary Society and exploring its campus, and
  - Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan Sr. Sec. School, conducting over four days a dozen competitions in which several other schools participate.
- Events still ahead:

**Alpha School, CIT Nagar (August 22nd)**

- Screening of INTACH movie – *History of Chennai*

**Chettinad Vidyashram (August 22nd)**

- Students to bring old photographs of their neighbourhood and Chennai and display them (Middle School).

**Hussain Memorial Matric. Hr. Sec. School, Ambattur (August 22nd)**

- Preparation and display of placards, photos and cut outs on Madras Day.

\* \* \*

**KRM Public School, Perambur (August 21st)**

- Exhibition: Yukai Tanjoubi (Happy Birthday to Madras) 10 am-2.30 pm  
School premises

\* \* \*

**Mary Clubwala Jadhav Girls Higher School, Egmore (August 22nd)**

- Quiz and painting competition for deaf children about Colours of silence ... general monuments, festivals and visits to places where children went on excursion (Vedanthangal etc)

**Addresses for the venues**

**Alliance Francaise:** No.24, College Road, Nungambakkam; **Amethyst:** Next to Corporation Bank, White's Road, Royapettah; **Chamiers Anokhe:** 106 Chamier's Road, R.A. Puram, (diagonally opposite Sheraton Park); **City Centre:** Dr Radhakrishnan Salai; **C.P. Arts Centre:** 1, Eldam's Road, Alwarpet; **DakshinaChitra:** East Coast Road, Muttukadu. **Forum Art Gallery:** 57, 5th Street, Padmanabha Nagar, Adyar. **Gallery Sri Parvati:** 28/160, Eldam's Road, Alwarpet. **The Marina:** 39, College Road, Nungambakkam. **Luz House:** 176, Luz Church Road, Luz, Mylapore; **Observer Research Foundation (ORF):** 5th Floor, A-1 Tower (Rear Wing), 89, Dr. Radhakrishnan Road; **Odyssey:** 45 & 47, 1st Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar. **Nahar Hall:** Deshbandhu Plaza, 47, Whites Road, Royapettah; **Phoenix Market City:** 142, Velachery Main Road, Near Gurunanak College, Velachery; **Press Institute of India:** Second Main Road, Taramani, CPT Campus, (behind M.S. Swaminathan Foundation); **Roja Muthiah Research Library:** 3rd Cross Road, Rajiv Gandhi IT Expressway, CPT Campus, Taramani, (opposite Indira Nagar MRTS Station); **Westin, Velachery:** No. 154, Velachery Main Road, Velachery.

# From journalist...

Rajalakshmi (Rajamma, to most) Parthasarathy is a woman with many talents. She has left her mark on journalism, theatre, social causes and restoration of temples, besides playing a major role in education. The school she started, Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan (PSBB), has grown into a group of institutions of higher secondary education of high repute in Chennai today. Her life, however, goes beyond education, and her contribution to art and culture equals her promotion of the cause of education.

In the field of arts, Rajalakshmi chose to bask in the shadow of her late husband Y.G. Parthasarathy, a passionate player in Tamil theatre, popularly known as YGP. Many know her, therefore, as Mrs. YGP without the least idea of her given name.

She was the first woman journalist to enter the portals of *The Hindu*, "the staid and sedate newspaper", as her biographer Lakshmi Devnath puts it in *A Class Apart*. She was just 25 when, as Rashmi, she provided comfort to anxious women in an 'agony aunt' column *What Should I Do?* in *Sport & Pastime* (1948 - 1967), a weekly of *The Hindu*. Donning another pseudonym, 'Jalak', she wrote in Tamil for *Kumudam* and as 'Sumangali' for *Swadesamitran*. *Women's Corner* was her column providing a rational slant to women's issues. She also wrote on fashion trends in *Sport & Pastime*. A compilation of her columns has been published as a book, *Stree*. "I was a rebel. I didn't like old-fashioned ideas," she says. In one of her columns, she wrote tips for career girls as early as



Young Rajamma, the journalist.

## ... to theatre personality...



The UAA troupe – Cho Ramaswamy, Mrs. YGP, A.R. Srinivasan, Y.G. Mahendra and others – with the then Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran.

## ... to educationist

dox woman steeped in our culture." Absorbed in books, Rajamma developed a sharp mind, and went on to become the first woman graduate in the family.

Yechan Gunja Parthasarathy (YGP) entered her life by

mid-sentence countered by another – was another highlight of UAA's plays. Critics slammed it, but audiences loved it. Every UAA script was vetted by Rajamma: YGP would never finalise one without her feedback. *It Happened at Midnight* was UAA's first production. *Yaman Emaandan*, *Never Say Die* and *Pavam Balaraman* are some of the group's social comedies, a genre that UAA had developed a niche for.

In the 1950s, Rajalakshmi also became the secretary of the Madras Natya Sangh, a branch of Bharatiya Natya Sangh. Initially, Rukmini Devi Arundale was the Sangh's president. Later Dr. V. Raghavan, renowned Sanskrit scholar and Indologist, took over the reins. Natya Sangh was a national organisation with international prominence. It often invited popular productions in theatre and dance from abroad to perform in Madras. When Raghavan was President, the Sangh also adapted Sanskrit plays into English and Tamil. It was Rajamma who persuaded a fourth form student then, J. Jayalalithaa, to act in one of



Rajamma, the educationist.

mother) and Vidyavati (her aunt), the troupe also featured Nagesh and Lakshmi, both of whom blazed the silver screen later. Veteran actor ARS (A.R. Srinivasan) and Cho Ramaswamy began stage acting with UAA. Cho more or less became part of the YGP household. In his memoirs written recently in *Kumudam*, he recalled his favourite activity – raiding her refrigerator for food – and his affectionate bond that still continues with Rajamma.

Not only actors, but also scriptwriters like 'Vietnam Veedu' Sundaram, Venkat, Visu, Mouli – all made their debut at UAA. When Archibald McLeod, a famous director from the USA came for a year to train actors at the Natya Sangh,

almost the entire troupe consisting of ARS, Jayalalithaa, Nagesh, Lakshmi, and others made use of the opportunity. One memorable play of the time was *Tea House of the August Moon* (John Patrick) in which Rajamma acted and spoke in Japanese.

Rajamma had developed a flair for props, acting, story and dialogues. She was part of every story discussion as she had a strong sense of the story. Her twist to the story line in *Kurukshetram*, in which ARS was the lead actor, made the play a roaring hit. Her involvement did have some comical interludes. In his typical punchy

satirical style with a touch of impishness, Cho says that all her suggestions were usually "rejected". Scriptwriter 'Vietnam Veedu' Sundaram attributes whatever English he knows to Rajamma. Mouli says her suggestions had an underlying logic. Rajamma recalls, "YGP used to say, I was their best friend and worst critic. At times, I used to come up with absurd suggestions, which would make people laugh." A drawback, she says, was her penchant for 'mile-long' titles, which would be shortened eventually.

Popular actor and stage veteran Y.G. Mahendra, Rajamma's elder son, who also made his stage debut at UAA, recalls a funny incident. YGP was in the habit of awarding Rs. 50 to the best title for a play whose script was ready. For one such play, an engrossing thriller by Mouli, Rajamma suggested the title *Adi Mel Adi Vaithaal Ammiyum Nagarum*. In a jest, YGP announced, "I will have to part with a part of my wealth for advertising this title in

(Continued on page 11)

● by Venkatesh Krishnamoorthi

1950 when very few women were part of the workforce. In it, she cautioned the secretary to be firm with the 'flirtatious boss', advised the receptionist to be tactful and told the teacher 'not to be frightened'. At the same time she asked the teacher not to be 'carried away by your colleague's charms'.

She built impressive credentials as a journalist before moving on to other spheres of activity.

Rajamma's childhood was shaped by her mother Alamelu from whom she drew inspiration and imbibed a host of qualities, the most prominent being the ability to take control of any situation. She says, "My mother was broadminded, but an ortho-

accident while she was in college. She was a source of solace and strength for Vaidehi, her close friend at college and YGP's sister, who was undergoing problems as a result of her love marriage that had displeased her in-laws. An innocuous letter of gratitude from YGP kicked off what was to become a lifelong association. Not long afterwards, the book-loving introvert. Rajalakshmi, became the life partner of the witty and ebullient extrovert YGP. As a result of the association, she too became a connoisseur of the arts.

\* \* \*

Back from Delhi, YGP was acting at Suguna Vilasa Sabha (SVS) in 1948, where he spot-

## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period July 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Which new OS was globally launched in Kenya on July 30th by its India-born CEO?
2. Sanjiv Chaturvedi and Anshu Gupta are the two latest Indians to be conferred with which prestigious Asian award?
3. Chris Froome won which prestigious annual sporting event for the second time recently?
4. How did Professor Richard Hay and George Baker make Parliament news recently?
5. Name the two Indian companies in the latest '2015 Fortune 500 Global Companies list' at 119th and 158th rank.
6. Name the eminent banker who is the President of the new BRICS Bank that formally started its operations from its headquarters in Shanghai on July 21st.
7. The fragments of, reportedly, the oldest version of which book were found recently in the University of Birmingham?
8. Name the first post-apartheid captain of the South African cricket team and a world-class all-rounder who passed away recently.
9. Name the Nobel Laureate, after whom a sub-atomic particle is named, who was recently awarded the Copley Medal, the world's oldest science prize.
10. Name the work, considered a sequel to Harper Lee's celebrated *To Kill A Mockingbird*, that was published recently.

\* \* \*

11. Which popular sporting outfit is celebrating 50 years of being managed by one organisation?
12. What happened to Madras on July 17, 1996?
13. By what name is Lock Cheri, near the Kilpauk-Purasawalakam area, now known?
14. Who or what was *Chengam sarakku*?
15. Name the regular ship that connects Port Blair and Chennai?
16. What do the initials in the name of the well-known company A V Thomas & Co. stand for?
17. Which century-old institution in Chennai has the motto 'Lighted to Lighten' and a crest made up of sunflowers, a lit lamp and its motto?
18. Where in the metro is a new Ciclo Café with a cycling theme?
19. Which respected Chennai business house was founded by M. Rajagopala Naidu?
20. Which institution came up because of a schoolgirl Nallamuthu Ramamurthy's prize-winning essay?

(Answers on page 12)

# The pioneers of the King Institute

The King Institute of Preventive Medicine (KIPM) in Guindy was formally opened by Governor Lord Amthill in November 1905. KIPM was already functioning as a vaccine depot supplying smallpox vaccine lymph to people in the Madras Presidency, supervised by Lt. Col. Walter Gaven King from the 1890s. By 1905, he had grown it into a large provincial facility, housing a well-



The vaccine depot, the precursor of the King Institute of Preventive Medicine.

equipped bacteriological laboratory and a public health laboratory in addition to the original vaccine depot. It was named after King to celebrate his contribution in making it an institute of excellence.

The vaccine lymph section manufactured more than two million doses annually for supply within the Madras Presidency through the Civil Department. Some quantities were also supplied to the British and French armies within India and to Ceylon. During World War I, large quantities of lymph were sent to the allied army personnel in the East African theatre. The microbiological section manufactured both curative and prophylactic bacterial vaccines to meet the requirements of hospitals in Madras Presidency.

In 1919, at the behest of the British Government, KIPM manufactured the anti-influenza vaccine on a large scale for the first time in India, meeting the civil and military needs in the Presidency. Similar efforts were also made to mass-produce vaccines to combat outbreaks of cholera, typhoid and paratyphoid, and issue them to the general public at a nominal cost.

Given below are some notes below on the pioneers of KIPM.

**Walter Gaven King** entered the Indian Medical Service as a surgeon in 1874. He became a Lt. Colonel in 1905 and retired in 1910. Among the posts he held were: Professor of Physics (Presidency College, Madras) and Hygiene (Madras Medical College), Special Sanitary Officer for Madras City, Central

Jail Superintendent of Mandalay, Burma, Superintendent of the Government Lunatic Asylum, Madras, and Sanitary Commissioner of the Madras Presidency in 1894. Later he was a consultant at the Tropical Diseases Clinic and Lecturer in Tropical Hygiene at King's College, London. He wrote the *Cultivation of Animal Vaccine* (1891), *Plague Inspector's Manual* (1902), *Sanitary Rules for the Prevention of Plague in Municipalities* (1903), and *Simple Sanitary Rules during Cholera Epidemics*. KIPM published periodical reports on vaccination in the Madras Presidency for 1902-03, 1903-04 (Government Press, 42 pages each).

Sacrificion method was pioneered by King, who based his words from a translation of a text on variolation with both cow and human pox attributed to the *Danwantri Nikandu* (supposedly written 2000 years before Edward Jenner). Lord Amthill reiterated this point while inaugurating KIPM in



W.G. King.

1905. King broke new ground by introducing trained sanitary inspectors in the Madras Presidency. In the *British Medical Journal* (1922), he says: "The Madras Government was thus the first in the tropics to require compulsory technical training of sanitary inspectors. Assistant Sanitary inspectors attend courses in physiology, bacteriological demonstrations, and theoretical hygiene, under the professors of the Madras Medical College, and practical hygiene under selected sanitary officers."

*The Madras Plague Regulations and Rules for the City of Madras* (1902) and *The Plague Inspector's Manual* (1902) were issued during King's administration of sanitation management in Madras. These include facsimiles of a 'passport' system that was operational in Madras to regulate the spread of epidemics (e.g. cholera and



The King Institute of Preventive Medicine.

plague). The issue of a passport was not new at that point of time, since this procedure was operational in the Madras Presidency at least before 1869. For example:

"The Madras Sanitary Regulations made elaborate provisions for the prevention of cholera during native festivals. Native migrants to Madras from infected areas were excessively

### • Ramya Raman & Anantanarayanan Raman

policed, put under close police surveillance, and issued with 'passports' and emergency powers were introduced to summarily punish both male and female offenders. By 1869, every conceivable agglomeration was brought under systematic sanitary control."

\* \* \*

Lieutenant Samuel Rickard Christophers will be remembered for his monumental contributions to medical entomology in general and to the science of mosquitoes in particular. Christophers was the first formal director of KIPM, being appointed in 1904. While working at KIPM, he confirmed Charles Donovan's discovery of the Leishman bodies in the spleen of patients suffering from *visceral leishmaniasis (kala azar)*. Christophers was later posted as the Director of Central Malaria Bureau, where he made impressive contributions to Malariology research and to the knowledge of mosquitoes. While at the London School of Tropical Medicine, after his return to England, a revised edition of the *Indian Anophelini* was published in 1933 and it remains a milestone in the science of Indian anophelines even today.

\* \* \*

Captain Walter Scott Patton, while serving on the scientific staff at KIPM, made great strides in medical entomology within the wider context of public health. Because Donovan, Professor of Physiology at the Madras Medical College, was blazing new trails studying *kala azar*, interest in knowing more about the *kala-*

*azar* inducing protozoan and the transmitting agents was naturally strong at this time. Patton published a series of papers on this while working at KIPM.

For a period, Patton also officiated as the Superintendent of KIPM. In 1913, he published the *Textbook of Medical Entomology* along with Francis Cragg, who earlier worked at the Central Research Institute, Kasauli (Punjab), and later was an assistant to the Director of KIPM. Patton will be remembered for his monumental book *Insects, Ticks, Mites and Venomous Animals of Medical and Veterinary Importance* (1929-31), published after his return to UK.

Kandadai Venkatasubramanian Venkatraman was the Director of KIPM in 1948-49 and will be remembered for his contributions to the biology, epidemiology and management of cholera.

Clinical specimens need to be rapidly transported to the laboratory to prevent growth of any other contaminating microbes. This can be achieved using 'transport' media. Such media prevent drying of specimen, maintain the pathogen to commensal ratio, and inhibit growth of any contaminating microbes. Venkatraman, collaborating with C.S. Ramakrishnan (Water Analyst, King Institute), developed the Venkatraman-Ramakrishnan medium which efficiently anchored *V. cholerae* in the faecal sample obtained from the sick for more than six weeks at room temperature. This medium enabled the transport of the bacteria from outbreaks in remote areas to laboratories to study the epidemiology.

\* \* \*

KIPM in Madras, along with the Central Research Institute, Kasauli, and also Pasteur Institute of Southern India, Coonoor, have been serving India's public health management needs over the last 110 years. Starting as a vaccine depot in a tiny shed, KIPM today provides state-of-the-art medical research involving serology and immunology and manufactures vaccines for use not only within India, but outside as well.

● An occasional column by a British freelance writer on her eight years in Madras

The black train pulls in at the platform  
Hissing into silence like hot steel in water  
Tell the porters not to be so precipitate.  
It is good, after a desperate journey  
To rest a moment with your  
Perils upon you.

– Vijay Nambisan 'Madras Central'



In the early dawn, the long deep horn of the Shatabdi Express to Bangalore reverberates through the city and pulls me from peaceful dreams. I lie in the tranquillity of my sleeping house in Kotturpuram and imagine the scene at Chennai Central station.

People are queuing to get past the ticket barrier. Women clutching semi-conscious babies nervously try to find the right coach number and seat, asking to move or change with others so they can be close to relatives. The floor of the station littered with bodies sleeping, eating, and defecating. Boxes piled high with elaborate caging of string. A weighing machine with flashing neon light standing unused as porters hurry past through the sea of coloured sarees with suitcases balanced on their heads.

For the privileged few in the calm and comfort of the first class A/C compartments, metal flasks will be doled out with a tea bag, two packets of biscuits, white and crisp inside the bright yellow packaging. "A newspaper, madam?"

I lie in my bed and imagine the smell of jasmine that frequently adorns the traveller, the hair oil, the sweat, and the soot. This is the great Indian railway station.

I remember with shame how when I first travelled to Coimbatore on the Shatabdi Express we contrived to get a compartment to ourselves by buying up a four-berth sleeper. We placed pillows in the bunks to make them seem occupied, a childish schoolboy prank that can only be excused by the English obsession with solitude and my hatred of other people's snoring. This is, after all, a moving residence with all the romance associated with extreme privacy.

Suddenly a woman appeared in the compartment with an entourage of relations and a tiny screaming baby. Her family, seeing her off, was eager for her to share with foreigners rather than potentially lecherous single men. She took one look at my horror-stricken face and fled.

One day, our family boarded this same train to go

# The Great Indian Railways

on holiday to Ooty. We took our driver with us in order for him to drive us on arrival, but he emerged the next morning from his second class compartment with his suitcase and newly acquired hat to enjoy a holiday himself! He had employed a driver from Coimbatore to show all of us the sights, but it was not till he climbed into the passenger seat next to the driver that we realised he was taking a self-imposed vacation!

In *Ordered South*, Robert Louis Stevenson writes,

*"Herein, I think, is the chief attraction of railway travel. The speed is so easy, and the train disturbs so little the scenes through which it takes us, that our heart becomes full of the placidity and stillness of the country; and while the body is being borne forward in the flying chain of carriages, the thoughts alight, as the humour moves them, at unfrequented stations. . ."*

One of the world's largest railway networks, the Indian Railways was the brainchild of (you guessed it) the British. 23 million passengers a day travel from 7,172 stations along 65,000 km of track, which begs the question why are the roads still so busy!

Madras Central was designed by George Harding, a British architect, in the Gothic revival style, with the later addition of the bell tower by Robert Chisholm. The original land on which it was constructed was

called John Pereira's garden after the Portuguese merchant who built a house here for recreation, but by falling into disrepair it became a gaming den and cock-fighting venue before it was purchased by the railways (debatably it still is!).

This splendid station served as the main gateway for all people who travelled to South India during the British Raj and although the station now has bookshops, restaurants, Internet browsing and a shopping mall it would seem that the hygiene standards remain much the same as they were 138 years ago when it was built. The station lacks several facilities, including drinking water, and has only ten toilets to accommodate the 350,000 passengers that pass through it daily. These are not worth a visit. Despite this, Chennai Central still retains the excitement and bustle that makes large stations so intriguing. The sense of mystery that train travel engenders for many of us is stark contrast to the stationary monotony and dangers of Indian roads.

One of my greatest disappointments is the way in which many Indians draw the blinds and settle down to sleep as soon as they board a train. I risk extreme displeasure from my travelling companions as I politely request to flood the compartment with sunlight, although they think nothing of subjecting me to six hours' snoring!

Surely the best thing about travelling by train is the moving landscape passing the window? For me, looking out of the window is about living other people's lives vicariously, a succession of memorable images like the sudden swell of hills, or the emergence of giant boulders on the way to Bangalore.

Weary, wiry men with bullock carts ploughing through red earth, the fleeting view of a girl washing long tresses of raven wing hair beneath a water pipe, the glimpse of a heron on a lotus pool, the shanty towns by the railway tracks where I can only guess at the misery of daily life. All these images are what make up life in India.

It has been on train journeys that I have had some of my most memorable conversations. The journalist lurking within me is nose-y about other people's lives. On one occasion I was eating a hard-boiled egg that distressed my vegan neighbour. This led to a discussion about vegetarianism and the caste system, which was highly educational. Indian train journeys and humour go hand in hand, which is fortunate because, generally, it is better to laugh at the chaos than be enveloped by it.

## Back to renaming streets

(Continued from page 1)

Recently, it was announced that Halls Road would henceforth be known as Tamil Salai. We do not know what the connection between the mother tongue and this road is. And while we do not wish to criticise what must be a decision arrived at after due deliberation, we cannot help wonder if any other State in India has a road named after its official language. Is this strictly necessary or is it even relevant? And does the language benefit in any way by this street renaming?

Our Corporation has admitted rather openly that more than half of its 132 announced promises are yet to be fulfilled. It is in the throes of a severe financial crisis partly owing to stagnation in revenues. Several

infrastructural projects stand incomplete. Is this an appropriate time to start off on such cosmetic activities as name changes? Or is this just to divert public attention from non-delivery on key parameters?

What is interesting is also the number of enquiries that we as a publication have received asking if we propose to do anything about this name change. To this we can only say that apart from expressing our opinion we have no other intention to intervene. It is up to the residents of the roads that are to be renamed to protest or accept the change, for they are the real stakeholders. Only if that is forthcoming will our civic body stop such superficial activities and get down to grapple with its real problems.

## From journalist to educationist

(Continued from page 9)

*The Hindu*! That play, titled *Padmavyuham* became an all-time hit of UAA.

Rajamma was a hard taskmaster. She would not hesitate to pull up Pattu for an ordinary script. When he produced one for *Pettraaldhan Pillaya* she told him, "You usually pour gold into your writing. In this script, you have just poured ink." Needless to say Pattu converted that script into a masterpiece.

\*\*\*

Serious differences arose between YGP and Pattu and the duo had to part ways in 1962 much to YGP's agony; he did not stage a play for two years. (Courtesy: Sruti).

(To be concluded)

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# KNOW YOUR FORT BETTER

(Continued from page 1)

and Charles Street which lies at the rear. St George's Street radiates in a westerly direction from Parade Square and eventually connects with St. George's Gate, the principal entrance to the Fort on the western side. Three streets link the Parade Square and the Assembly to the northern end of the Fort. The easternmost, corresponding to St. Thomas' Street on the southern side, is Gloucester Alley. Behind it is York Street, which is also known as the Middle Gate or North Gate Street as it connects to the North Gate of the Fort. To the rear of this is Choultry Gate Street, which once led to the Choultry Courts that were just outside the Fort. This entrance is now blocked. At the extreme western end of the Fort is a thoroughfare that runs south to north. This is known as Palace Street and it has an interesting history of its own, of which more later.

Charles Street must have been an important thoroughfare, for it houses some very stately buildings. The most striking, and indeed the best-maintained building in the whole Fort today, is the headquarters of the Archaeological Survey of India. It goes by the names of *Clive House* and *Admiralty House*. The residence dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, a time when, apart from the British, some Portuguese, Armenians and Indians also owned property within the Fort. One among these was Coja Nazar Jan, a rich Armenian who settled in Madras in 1702. It was he who built this residence and, on his death in 1740, it passed on to Coja Sultan David and from him to his son, Aga Shawmier Sultan. It was during David's time that the residence first began to be called the Great House. Several covetous eyes were cast on the building and when in 1749 the British moved back to the Fort after the French had vacated it, this became the residence of Richard Prince, the Deputy Governor of Madras – he was the administrative head till 1752 when the Governor officially moved his headquarters back to Madras from Fort St David in Cuddalore. The house was restored to Shawmier who then let it out to its most important occupant – Robert Clive.

Among the few marble plaques that commemorate heritage structures in Madras, one is to be found on this building. It reads that "Robert 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Clive lived in this building in the year 1753. Truly great in arms and in council, he founded an Empire." By then Clive was no longer a depressed writer or lowly clerk. He had emerged as the hero of the sieges of Arcot and Trichinopoly and was now back in the Fort as its Stew-

ard. Moreover, he was in love with Margaret, the sister of his close friend Edmund Maskylene. She arrived in Madras in 1753 and Clive, ever the determined soul, doggedly wooed her till she consented. The wedding was conducted on February 18, 1753 in St Mary's Church in the Fort, the Rev Fabricius, who did much for Tamil and for printing in India, officiating. Clive's married life was one of bliss and he lived the first year of it at the 'Great House'. But he was in ill-health and had applied for home leave. This was granted in 1753 and he left for England where he fought battles of a political nature before returning once again to India, this time to conquer Bengal. His second tenure had very little to do with Madras.

After Clive's departure, Shawmier sold the house to de Castro, a Portuguese, who in turn sold it to the Company for 6,000 pagodas. It became the guest house for accommodating important visitors and it was in that capacity that it hosted Admiral Charles Watson, who in 1754 sailed from England with a large squadron fitted exclusively for the protection of the "possessions in the East Indies". He appears to have stayed here for just a year. In 1755, the building was assigned to the then recently set up Court of Admiralty to try naval mutineers. The name *Admiralty House* stuck, though the court vacated the premises by 1762 when it once again became a guest house. That year the Company supplied at its expense "Furniture, Cotts, Linen and all other necessaries for the reception and Accommodation of Strangers", a housekeeper being appointed to take care of the establishment. By the late 1700s, *Admiralty House* became the Governor's residence in the Fort. With Robert's son, Edward, the second Lord Clive preferring to live outside the Fort when he was Governor, the 'Great House' served briefly as the Banqueting Hall. With a new building being erected in 1802 for that purpose on Mount Road (the present day *Rajaji Hall*), the 'Great House' became the office of the Accountant General, in which capacity it was used till the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century when the ASI took it over.

An interesting aside is that the East India Company consistently defaulted on the rent to Shawmier between 1749 and 1752, the arrear amounting to 1,866 pagodas. He appealed repeatedly and it was only in 1773 that Governor Alexander Wynch forwarded his request to the Court of Directors in England. There his prayer bore fruit with compensation being paid in 1775. Landlord travails evidently have a long history in Madras!

INTACH's publication *Madras, the Architectural Heritage* by K. Kalpana and Frank Schiffer gives details

about the architectural magnificence of the house. "The house is truly great both in its external and internal appearance. Squarish in plan, the upper floors of this three-storeyed building are the most spacious, consisting of huge halls with extremely high ceilings, and were most probably living spaces with other service facilities located on the ground floor. The focus is a large centrally placed hall on all floors, the one on the first floor designed with a tall, two-floor high ceiling. Lined with a series of circular columns along the inner edges and wonderful fenestrations facing the street, the ambience of this space is certainly fit for a king. Fronted by a small verandah-like ante space that faces the street, it is the expression of this face with strong architectural details that is the capturing feature of the exterior and distinctly different from all other buildings within the Fort. Raised in the centre due to the increased height of the first floor, an ensemble of tall Ionic columns in the upper floor rests on a series of semicircular arched openings on the ground floor, with deep sloping wooden shades sprinkled on either side. Bridging the gap between the columns is a combination of louvred and glazed windows that catch the morning sun in a most dramatic manner."

The write-up does not mention it but one of the exquisite features of this building is a staircase that rises from the ground floor to the top-most storey. In recent years, the ASI has created a 'Clive's Corner' in one part of this building. This has a reasonably aesthetic display of various portraits and copies of documents pertaining to Robert Clive's life. It is clear that, no matter who the occupants of the building before and after him were, it was he who gave it its place in history.

– Sriram V.

## Answers to Quiz

1. Windows 10; 2. Ramon Magsaysay Award; 3. Tour de France; 4. They are the two latest nominated Anglo-Indian members of the Lok Sabha; 5. Indian Oil Corporation and Reliance Industries; 6. K.V. Kamath; 7. Holy *Koran*; 8. Clive Rice; 9. Prof. Peter Higgs; 10. *Go Set a Watchman*.

\* \* \*

11. Jolly Rovers; 12. It officially became Chennai; 13. Lockma Nagar; 14. A woman of dubious repute, deriving the name from an area in George Town; 15. m.v. *Nancowry*; 16. Alfred Vedam; 17. Women's Christian College; 18. Gandhi Mandapam Road in Kotturpuram; 19. Rayala Corporation; 20. Queen Mary's College.

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