

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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The black coast...



...choking with oil

Disaster struck two nautical miles off Ennore's Kamarajar port just before dawn on January 28 when two cargo ships – LPG-filled *BW Maple* bearing the flag of the UK's Isle of Man and *MT Dawn Kanchipuram* loaded to the brim with petroleum oil and lubricants collided. The LPG tanker suffered a major dent and *Dawn Kanchipuram* was left with two holes that torn through it. Pregnant with oil and lubricants, the cargo ship released a considerable amount of the stored oil into the surrounding sea.

The Kamarajar Port Limited (KPL) downplayed the issue initially but the aftermath was hard to be concealed from the public eye. Even as the Port authorities were denying the damage done to the environment, fishermen spotted slick floating on the water surface while a good amount of dense oil had begun to beach by the next day. The Indian Coast Guard sprang into action, removing tonnes of thick oil sludge from the beaches around Ennore. Armed with buckets and mugs, the local administration and volunteers pitched in and helped clean up the coast around Ennore. Thanks to the sluggish response of the administration, by the third day, the spill had already travelled on the waves for over 30 km south of the spill site leaving the port authorities and the coast guard neck deep in muck. (Editor's Note: As we go to print, it is reported that remnants of the spill have reached Mamallapuram.)

The Environment Impact Assessment for the modifica-

tion of the iron ore terminal at Kamarajar Port recognises the increased threat of oil spill the Tamil Nadu coast faces from the passing ships and lays down a three-tier oil contingency plan, identifying organisations and fixing responsibility. According to the plan, a Tier-I spill which happens within the limits of the Kamarajar Port will be the responsibility of the ship,

● by **Seetha Gopalakrishnan**

the Port authorities and the mutual aid agencies. Outside the Port limits, a Tier-II spill, similar to the one at hand is the responsibility of the ship, the Port authorities, the State Government of Tamil Nadu and the Indian Coast Guard.

Media reports suggest that the Port authorities were reluctant to acknowledge the spill and had initially informed the Coast Guard only about the collision with no mention of the oil spill. Though a contingency

and disaster management plan is available on paper, the extremely sluggish response of Port authorities has brought to question the efficacy and seriousness of the actual preparedness plan.

The post-collision response is marked by a variety of lapses by different agencies from KPL, the district administration, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) and the State coastal zone management authority.

"The district administration is the coordinating agency responsible for executing the disaster management plan with the help of the Indian Coast Guard while TNPCB is the expert agency responsible for informing the administration and also taking action against the violators. Reliable first information was not available, with top officials of the KPL admitting that they solely relied on the information received from the ship, says environmentalist Nityanand Jayaraman.

(Continued on page 7)

Keeping heritage in the hands of Government

It has taken the Government of Tamil Nadu four years to get going on the Heritage Act that it passed. At long last, a Heritage Conservation Commission (HCC) was formed – the second of its kind and on the fate of the first there is no clarity. The composition of the proposed new HCC is at present disappointingly full of Government representatives and nominees from State institutions and undertakings. And not surprisingly, after the initial inclusion, the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)/Tamil Nadu has now decided to withdraw the

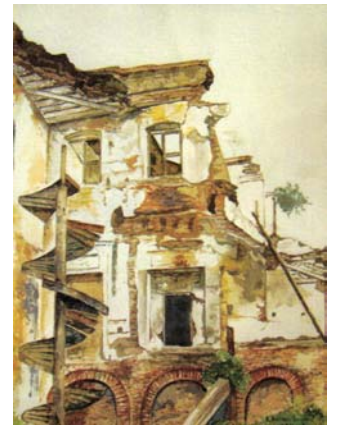
● by **The Editor**

invitation. This is an imbalance that needs to be set right if the HCC is to be a meaningful organisation.

The Government's dislike of INTACH, Chennai/Tamil Nadu, has a long history. Each time one of our public buildings has been threatened with demolition, with an eager administration clearing the decks for it, it is INTACH that has stood in the way. It has been the lone voice for heritage, pointing out that the structures declared to be weak are not really so and pointing out that these edifices possess historical significance and architectural features that make them worthy of preservation. More often than not, INTACH has had to seek the intervention of the Courts, and though in many cases it has lost, it cannot be denied that it has won a few. More importantly, it has ensured that the argument for preservation of heritage has been heard.

It was also litigation concerning heritage structures such as *Bharat Insurance Building* and *Gokhale Hall* initiated by INTACH that brought about the first judgement, in 2010,

(Continued on page 2)



Wellesley House.

Disappearing dwellings

Disappearing Dwellings was an exhibition of water colours that was held from February 14-19, 2017. Explaining his theme, the artist, K. Vikram Varghese, wrote in his invitation:

There is something strange and unique about these disappearing dwellings. One gets a strange feeling that actually people once lived here from generation to generation.

You develop a strange feeling as if you were taken back in time and drawn to these places, as if you were stepping into a different age. These dwellings have aged with time and I have painted them in realistic style in water-colours, so that I could best express my sentiments in the best quality and mood as possible.

I was completely captivated while painting these compositions: Some of the compositions are in earthly colours. Each of these compositions resembles a unique architectural design element and perspective, especially the Mangalore tiled slanting roofs, the ruggedness of exposed brick walls of open court yards, and the worn-out and crumbling walls which are done in great detail. The

(Continued on page 2)

HERITAGE IN HANDS OF GOVERNMENT

(Continued from page 1)

ordering a listing of heritage buildings in the city and taking steps by way of a Heritage Conservation Committee to protect them. The CMDA set about forming such an HCC, which peopled as it was with a majority of Government appointees, moved very slowly. Here again, it was INTACH that was the sole voice of independent thought and this was not in line with the views of officialdom's members.

The eviction of the INTACH member from the HCC became a simple task following the case against the

demolition of the P. Orr & Sons building annexe to make way for Metro Rail. We do agree that INTACH's initiation of such a litigation was not perhaps the best decision, especially as it was neither the owner of the property and nor was it fully aware of the background history concerning possession of the space. INTACH lost the case, but there is no denying, with all due respect to the Court, that the judgement was unduly harsh. Not only did it impose a huge fine on INTACH, which was subsequently reduced by the Supreme Court, it also ordered the removal of INTACH from all Government projects of conservation/restoration. Thereafter, with INTACH having gone, the HCC became a somnambulant organisation, hardly ever convening meetings and doing precious little to protect the city's heritage.

The TN Heritage Act of 2012 mandated the formation of a second HCC, but now an amendment to the Act seeks to withdraw the invitation on the grants that Art and Culture are already represented. This is a pity as all restoration work ongoing in the State has just the Public Works Department in charge of them. That is a body not known for its expertise in conservation and even the High Court, whose restoration after consultations with INTACH, is being done by the PWD, has expressed unhappiness over the way matters have progressed there.

Perhaps it is time for INTACH to approach the High Court and seek a of some kind. Any reasonable judge will see merit in the case and allow for leniency. After all, INTACH has been allowed to conduct heritage walks in the High Court premises for over two years now and that should be a good beginning to establish a working relationship.

Disappearing dwellings

(Continued from page 1)

worn-out and dilapidated windows, doors, houses, and walls are a real delight and visually appealing.

The pictures I exhibited included many from Chennai and its outskirts.

Adding footnote in verse, Geeta Doctor wrote:

MEDITATIONS IN WATER COLOURS

*Touch me,
Murmur the bricks,
baked by the sun,
the memories flaking
like the paint of time.*

*Caress me.
Whisper the glass panes
clouded by cataracts
of rainbow colours
trapped by grime*

*Heal me.
enfold me in your
dreams and make
me whole again
Artist Redeemer
Maker of water colours.*

CHENNAI HERITAGE

No. 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.....) / I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

• I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to **CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS**, as **subscription to *Madras Musings*** for the year 2016-17.

• As token of my support for the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that *Madras Musings* espouses, I send Chennai Heritage an additional Rs. (Rupees). Please keep/put me on your mailing list.

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Elections, the heritage way

Several years ago, when *The Man from Madras Musings* was new to this city, he depended a good deal on people like the Chief to show him the ropes. And the Chief's idea of showing the ropes was to get MMM, then a mere mm (man in Madras), to become a member of various organisations – a book club that has no premises or office-bearers but manages several interesting meetings in a year; a stately social club where you need to be somebody, one way or the other, to get in; and a national organisation that was into protection of culture, arts, heritage and much else. And so it was that MMM paid up and became a member and has remained a member ever since.

Of the first two organisations MMM will not say much beyond stating that he enjoys his membership. Of the third he is not so sure for he does not have much to do with its doings beyond reading a monthly magazine that is sent out and getting much mirth from the spelling mistakes that appear in it. The latest issue for instance speaks of a Gerald Velsli and it took quite a while

campaigners. All of them profess to be the true torchbearers of culture, heritage and what have you. As to what they do for the rest of the year, when they are not campaigning, MMM has no idea.

At best, from what MMM can see, these people, if elected, will get to attend a certain number of meetings in Delhi. They also get to have their photographs in the magazine referred to above. A casual perusal would give you the impression that these elected representatives did little other than hold up vinyl banners along with several others, walk around school buildings being kind to children and posturing in front of structures in various stages of ruin. They also do have a tendency to be seen in the company of district-level Government administrators, members of erstwhile royal families and sometimes, ministers. MMM also wonders as to what happens after many of the projects that are announced in the magazine are launched with much fanfare. Most appear to be photo-ops at best. The real work is done by the conservators at the local level and MMM supposes that that is what real

end of the wick has become quite a challenge, especially if there is a burning flame upfront.

And so it was last week that MMM was slated to give a talk at an event that was meant to promote our culture. After all the hype about it, the planning had been going on for over a year, MMM was rather surprised to see a mere handful (one hand) of people at the inauguration. The programme had it that a lamp was to be lit following which there would be a 'traditional' music performance lasting twenty minutes. What transpired, however, was that the 'traditional' musicians were already seated but there was no sign of the lamp. And so, the 'traditional' musicians were asked to sing traditionally and as it progressed, a rather large brass lamp made itself manifest and diverse helpers (there were more helpers than audience anyway) began draping floral strands all over it. In all this activity, nobody bothered telling the 'traditional' musicians as to when they had to stop and so they sang on traditionally and overshot the time limit, which is also our

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

for MMM to figure out that they meant Wellesley. Also there are words such as 'convernor' (a convenor who converts?) and 'liquour'. Besides you must have heard of Athangidi tiles Chief. And what about a message to a new lady member that she must have a 'productive association' with other members?

Anyway, all that is besides the point. MMM may also be biased against this organisation for he was the local convernor for a year and did not enjoy his tenure. Plenty of paper-pushing and a man in Delhi who kept asking for forms numbered in Roman numerals more or less blighted MMM's governorship. And so, MMM's affection for this national body is but tepid. MMM assumes that this feeling is reciprocated in full measure by the body itself for MMM rather misguidedly led the body into a court case with rather unfortunate results. But every once in a while, the all-India members of this body spring to life. And that is when they elect office-bearers for the national governing council or whatever it is that heads the bureaucracy there. Emails, text messages, letters, phone calls (and these in the colourful accents of various regional variations of English – MMM has been referred to as yum yum yum, Emma Emma Emma, aim aim aim and many more) all of these are put to good use by the

passion is all about – not jockeying for some kind of office in Delhi.

In the light of the recent happenings in Chennai, MMM has taken to answering all calls from hopeful candidates with the statement that MMM's vote is only for whoever sponsors MMM's stay at a resort outside the city. So far he has had no takers.

Lighting of a lamp

These are days, when *The Man from Madras Musings* gets invited to all kinds of dos. This is also that time of the year when the cultural fever is at its height. It was previously a malaise that lasted for a month, but now it is fairly immune to medication of any kind and lasts a full three months. It is therefore no wonder that MMM is forever on the move, now speaking on culture, now being shawled, now shawling, now lighting lamps and now shaking hands. It is all rather extraordinarily like the life of a member of the British Royal Family, only in rather less exalted circumstances. In fact, any time, any of them needs a stand-in, MMM is willing to step in. He knows the routine by heart and he could do with a holiday in England. And in old Blighty there would be no requirement to light lamps either - MMM, ever since he has had to wear bifocals has become a little less adept in this task; finding the

tradition anyway. It was a good half-an-hour before the lamp was decorated, five wicks placed and oil poured into it.

The 'traditional' then ceased and five selected people – a sponsor, three organisers and MMM were asked to step forward and light the lamp. Only there was no previously lit lamp/candle to light the large lamp with. A scramble ensued among the helpers for locating a lamp and after a stage wait it arrived. Then came the discovery that it did not have oil and so someone set off for it. This was duly procured and then someone pointed out that the lamp (the small one, not the large) did not have a wick. That necessitated another wait and then, you guessed, there was no matchbox. That took quite a while. In all this, the sponsor clearly lost his nerve and began to babble freely about solar panels in which activity he apparently had made his fortune. The lamps were eventually lit, not amidst prayer or music but an animated discussion on silicon, wafers, panels and the usage of solar energy in sickness and in health.

The delay actually helped – when the programme began a half hour after scheduled time, there were enough people to count with fingers of both hands, and by people MMM means real attendees and not diverse helpers.

– MMM

• CHENNAI NEWSREEL

A bookshop, writers, and a café

It would seem that the Biblical saying 'Man shall not live by bread alone' motivated two of the city's very own business enterprises to come up with a recipe called the Writer's Café. Opened before three months ago, the coffeehouse meets bookstore is a collaboration between restaurateur M. Mahadevan better known as 'Hot Breads' Mahadevan, and the iconic 172 years old bookstore Higginbothams.

● by
T.K. Srinivasa Chari

Corporate Chef Karan Manavalan says that Writer's Café is part of the corporate social responsibility effort of CC Fine Foods South India. Not only are seven burn survivors among the 30 people employed, but the profits of the café go to the NGO, International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care.

The two-storied Writer's Café sits prettily on the corner of Peter's Road and Peter's Lane. Step into the Cafe and a glance to one side, reveals you guessed right coffee table books. One of them is about M.S. Subbulakshmi. Even though the ground floor is predominantly the dining area, bookshelves line the walls on either side with reads for both the young, adult and foodies. It is said that Mahadevan was enthused by the Arthur Hailey's *The Hotel* more than two decades ago to get into the food industry after being an academic at Madras University.

The 50-seater café's menu is Swiss-inspired and put together by Chef Silke Stadler. It consists of soups, salads, appetisers, flammkuchen, a pizza-like dish, pasta, sandwiches, juices and desserts, priced between Rs 30 and 290.

Upstairs, Higginbothams has the stock of 1,000 titles with around 13,000 books spread across the genres. Separate spaces exist for Tamil and children's sections, magazines and stationery. The bookstore seats upto a dozen people who

could work on their writing, reading, art or just meet with fellow book-lovers. Free wi-fi on the premises encourages visitors in their creative pursuits.

Sharadha, the Business Development Manager and Book-incharge, is pleased with the enthusiasm of the literati since the opening. Recently, the city's youth gobbled up titles of Markus Zusak, especially *Book Thief* to have them autographed by the author at The Hindu Lit for Life festival. Popular Tamil titles like *Ponniyin Selvan* are a sell-out and first-time authors yearn to have their books on display here. The Café will also order titles for you.

Writer's Café has hosted book launches, book clubs, the writer's workshop 'Thirsty Pens' and birthday parties.

AVIS Viswanathan, Happiness curator, who wrote his book *Fall Like A Rose Petal* at the Chamiers store and café, says, "Writing in this space is an immersive experience. It gives you a great opportunity to be present in the moment, even as life goes by. People come, go...they're happy, sad, animated, quiet...you witness it, yet you stay immersed in your writing...each word speaks to you and the images you create come alive!"

On the perceived threat from technology to books, let's recall writer Stephen Fry's last word: "Books are no more threatened by Kindle than stairs by elevators". Here's to many more book cafes.



Art in the park

Illustrator and social activist Nithya Balaji liked what she had bought at Art Mart on a Sunday afternoon. A water colour of a temple in South Tamil Nadu.

She had stopped at one of the 69 stalls put up by artists taking part in this annual event held recently at Nageswara Rao Park in Luz. And she was impressed with the young artist from Kumbakonam.

"I asked him to select for me the work he had done at the spot," Nithya said later.

"We must buy for that is the best way to encourage artists."

Which is the sole intention of Art Mart, and an idea that germinated to follow the annual Pongal Mylapore Festival.

Added that evening, the Rajkumars (Lathamani runs a art school in CIT Nagar and her husband markets Camlin from Mumbai), who has a bought a couple of paintings, "This encourages artists. It lights them up".

For many a artist, some from Pondicherry and Kumbakonam and Neyveli, Art Mart was a fair they welcomed.

Yes, the sun beat down on a bald park, shorn of its green by Cyclone Vardah, but as lunch of puliyogare and vadais supplied by Shantha of Mylapore was served, the artists crowded under the shade of bamboo and palms.

It was family and friends bonding.

● by Vincent
D'Souza

Artist Aarthi Rao, a full-time doctor brought along her husband, father, in-laws and more to her stall; they helped to set up her works, pass the tiffin of idli-s and spicy podi around and entertain their guests.

Said medical volunteer and trainer Preetha Rengaswamy, pausing during her morning walk in the park, "Its good to see family and friends deeply involved in many stalls. Says a lot for the spirit around."

At 4 that evening, Luz Buzz, that creative nook carved near the Marrybrown restaurant on Luz Church Road got abuzzed, 23 children sat down to take part in a painting contest. Eight

of them has come from Ponneri with their teachers.

The art works were then hung along the wall of a bungalow nearby for a snappy exhibition.

For Akshay Sreekrishna, studying in Standard IX in Nagapattinam, this was a beginning of sorts. Encouraged by his parents, he displayed his artworks; he even sold a few. He said he didn't know how to react to this, since he had to part with his work.

Another school student from Kovilpatti, Mukilan S., and his parents were overwhelmed with the interaction of senior artists with him. He too sold a few.

Two senior alumni from the 1970s of the College of Fine Arts, Jothi and Venkat, displayed their 'realistic' works side by side. It was a warm reunion for them as well as their many friends who visited the fair.

Well-known artist and illustrator Maruthi visited the fair, interacted with each and every artist. "This is like my own family function and I cannot miss it," he said. (Courtesy Mylapore Times).



MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

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

– THE EDITOR

On the trail of Albert Penn

My great grandfather, A.T.W. Penn had worked from 1865 to 75 for Nicholas Brothers studio which was the most important commercial photographer in the Madras Presidency in the second half of the 19th Century with studios in Madras and Ootacamund.

John and James Perratt Nicholas, the founders of the studio, were the sons of Llewellyn Nicholas, a ship's master. Their sister Emma married a clock-maker and photographer called John Parting, who left England for Ceylon, where he set up a daguerreotype studio. John and James Perratt Nicholas followed them, but John went on to Madras where he opened a photographic studio in 1857. James Perratt joined him four years later and in 1863 married Ellen Isabella Higginbotham, the daughter of Abel Joshua Higginbotham.

Higginbotham has been orphaned when very young and spent a few years as a seaman before joining an unprofitable printer and publisher in Madras owned by the Wesleyan missionaries. He acquired the business in 1844 and relaunched it under his own name. It quickly became the leading bookshop in the Madras Presidency. It held an unequalled range of books for sale or for reading from its library, which attracted both the general public and those in high office. In March 1859, in a letter to the historian Lord Macaulay, Lord Trevelyan, then Governor of Madras, wrote "Among the many elusive and indescribable charms of life in Madras city, is the existence of my favourite

book shop Higginbotham's on Mount Road. In this bookshop I can see beautiful editions of the works of Socrates, Plato, Euripides, Aristophanes, Pindar, Horace, Petrarch, Tasso, Camoyens, Calderon and Racine. I can get the latest editions of Victor Hugo, the great French novelist. Amongst the German writers, I can have Schiller and Goethe. Altogether a delightful place for the casual browser and a serious book lover."

By 1865, the brothers had studios in Madras and Ootacamund and, for two years, one in England to which James Perratt and

anthropology was intense at the time and photographers, to quote John Falconer, the curator of photographs at the British Library, "felt the need to capture images of cultures rapidly changing and often disintegrating before the impact of an alien civilisation and technology."

Penn is now best known as an ethnographic photographer. The immediacy of the image in his photographs of the Toda people is remarkable; and this is combined in pictures such as 'Toda Mund' and 'A wayside view' with a description of the way people lived and worked. The former shows a Toda girl greeting an el-

● by Christopher Penn

his wife established, when they took a break there. It was at that time that he probably met Albert Penn.

Penn was born in 1849 in Street in Somerset. He left home before he was 12 and the next thing we know for certain is that he landed in Madras in 1864 when he was just 15 years old. He was already a competent photographer and one assumes that after leaving home he had found work in a photographic studio in London, had met James Perratt Nicholas and been employed by Nicholas Brothers, who paid his passage out to India, to work for them for at least 10 years.

In 1865 he was sent up to run the Nicholas Brothers' studio in Ooty, where he was to live for almost half a century. Interest in ethnology and the wider field of

der by lifting his foot to her forehead in obeisance. It has the detail and feeling of repose that one finds in a Dutch interior painting of the 18th Century. The latter, at first glance no more than that a scenic view, but closer observation shows that Penn has composed a picture which shows the steps in manufacture of a wicker basket and, on the upper right hand side, the way that rattan mats were made.

In 1875 Penn acquired the Ootacamund branch of Nicholas & Company, as Nicholas Brothers had become, and started under his own name. By that time the Nicholas' Studios had built a large stock of photographs of South India. The sea face at Fort St. George, a catamaran being launched off the beach in Madras and another picture or a



Toda's village, Ootacamund, c.1870. (A.T.W. Penn)

masula boat in the same spot; photographs of the bathing place in Coutallam and of the second Fall, and so on.

1875 was a bad time for Penn to acquire the business because 1876-78 were years of one of the greatest famines the sub-continent had experienced. Unlike other Viceroy's before or after him, Lord Lytton corresponded personally with the Queen Victoria. On August 6, 1877 he wrote: Madam, I grieve to say that, as regards southern India, our prospects have unexpectedly become very serious since I had last the honour of writing to Your Majesty. The situation in Madras is most alarming and critical. In Mysore, it is even worse. The failure of the monsoon has been almost universal throughout the distressed districts ... (and still), the famine spreads, and increases daily, with all its concomitant horrors of cholera and other diseases, threatening to assume the most terrible and as yet unheard of proportions."

There was no business in Ooty that year. The Governor and Council stayed in Madras. So Penn travelled to Bangalore to photograph the army and he took his camera to the famine relief kitchens, publishing a series of photographs which, he said "will give a more vivid idea of the severity of the famine in South India than the most elaborate official report or newspaper article."

In 1878 Penn returned to England after 14 years to introduce his wife to his family and update himself on photographic techniques. He was not to travel back to England again for 35 years.

Back in Ootacamund from 1878, Penn became known both for landscapes, views of the skies of the Nilgiris, cloudscapes, as he called them, and portraiture. The 1890s saw the rise of the amateur as new equipment and materials made the whole process much easier and swept away the mystique of photography. The KODAK was introduced. A system it seems (that) is learnt by amateurs in ten minutes.

It was a change as great as the introduction of digital photogra-

phy and the effects on the industry were similar. Both the Nicholas and the Penn businesses were seriously affected but, in the case of the former, fate played its part. In May 1895, James Perratt's wife Ellen Isabella died and two months later he was also dead. They had no children and it sounds as if they were inseparable.

Meanwhile, throughout the 1890s Penn had been getting deeper and deeper in debt and on December 1, 1899 he closed his business. His home, studio and all the contents were sold with the sole exception of his photographic equipment.

With no studio he had to reinvent himself. He had a good voice and natural authority. He became an auctioneer, a retail merchant and a property agent. But at the same time, over the next ten years he rebuilt his photographic business helped by two technological advances: the introduction of photography for postcards and for illustrations in books.

Of his photographs in *Lotus Buds* by the missionary and author Amy Wilson Carmichael, a review in *The Westminster Gazette* reads: "The feature of the book is fifty photogravure illustrations from photographs specially taken of the children. Many of these – indeed all of them – are very charming. Some of them are mere babies, others of larger growth, but in each case the photographer, Mr. Penn, of Ootacamund, has succeeded in presenting pictures, which will elicit high admiration. The laughing faces, curly hair, and fine physical development of the little Indians make photographs exceedingly attractive. Indeed, we have never seen a more 'taking' series of children of the Orient."

Albert retired in 1911 and went back to England with his wife and unmarried daughter, but the call of the Nilgiris was too strong. India was now his home. He returned to live his last days in Coonoor where he died on October 19, 1924 and was buried in Tiger Hill cemetery where his tombstone still exists.

Rambling in West Mambalam (4) ... with Janaki Venkataraman

Helping out, the local motto

For many years Ayodhya Mandapam used to be a meeting place for the priests of West Mambalam. They usually congregated here in the evenings exchanged notes, made appointments and traded priestly engagements for the next day. That has, however more or less stopped now, because of the advent of the mobile phone. Now priests make all their professional calls from home. Priesthood is a significant profession in West Mambalam. Priests from here are invited to perform *poojas*, *homam-s* and rites all over Chennai. Although, till the 1990s priests were not very well recompensed and were looked upon with a certain amount of pity (for having to live off the raw bananas, betel leaves and minor change that were usually given to them by their clients), things have become far more lucrative now. Take S.S. Manikandan for instance.

Fortyish, well dressed and with neatly cropped hair, Manikandan flashes his card to new clients. The card advertises that he is capable of organising all *poojas* and *homam-s*. He also has a cache of regular clients and the fees are no longer anything to sneer about. Manikandan drives a car and a two wheeler, has firm political views and is as savvy and with-it as any priest of these times can be. I ask him if other priests of his age and status are sending their sons to *Veda patasalas* in order to become priests. He replies carelessly, "They do. Nowadays many *Veda patasalas* have CBSE schools attached to them. So the boys get the best of both kinds of education. They can later choose to take up a secular job, but the option of priesthood will always be there. Actually, many young men are opting for priesthood because of the lucrative fees and

the increased interest in performing *poojas* and *homam-s* from all strata of society."

Manikandan's father, Subramaniam, for some reason known popularly as Dandapani, is, however, of the old school. For long he was a priest. Now, after retirement, he has taken on the small business that his father-in-law left him, that of selling *pooja* articles on the pavement outside Ayodhya Mandapam. Every afternoon at exactly two, he arrives at the spot on his two-wheeler bringing with him two

West Mambalam is also the hub for professional Brahmin cooks. Pushpavati Ammal Street that branches off from Lake View Road is unique in that ninety per cent of its residents are professional cooks. It is an unassuming, rather poor looking street but a boon for anyone looking for cooks to turn out meals for a function. It is also a street where even today you can get a room for Rs 1000/- a month. And, it is safe. Destitute Brahmin women from the districts often come to Mambalam in search of liveli-



The Public Health Centre.

polythene sacks full of *dharbha* grass, bundles of twigs, for *homam-s*, bunches of sacred threads, strands of turmeric-stained *thali* threads, vermilion powder, turmeric and stacks of almanacs and prayer books. "Why do you open your shop in the hottest part of the day?" I ask him.

"That's when all my customers arrive, the housewives who are free only then. In the evening the men returning from office or those coming to the Mandapam buy things from me." The shop remains open till about 6.30 and then Dandapani gathers his stuff in his sacks and heads home. An exasperated Manikandan says, "I have told him not to do this. We are quite comfortably off now; there is no need for him to be a vendor. But he will not listen!"

His father retorts, "I like doing this. A lot of my customers are my friends. And there are people who depend on my shop when they need to buy something in a hurry. I earn some money doing something worthwhile. Why should I give it up?"

hood and, as they are usually well versed in Brahmanical cooking, they rent a room in Pushpavati Ammal Street and then take up cooking assignments. Within a few years they are usually able to move to bigger homes.

Do the offspring of priests and cooks really follow their parents' profession? Some do. Many do not. Most study well and get into software or bank jobs and move out of West Mambalam. They may shift to Ashok Nagar or K.K Nagar, or they might leave town altogether. Similarly the children of the bank executives, government officers, chartered accountants (this is a favoured profession in this area) and such, also often leave for other cities or other countries. This exodus has definitely led to the greying of West Mambalam.

And what does the grey-haired generation of West Mambalam do?

Good things. All right, the women watch TV serials and the men watch cricket. And, of course, they are all seriously into religion and rituals. And they all



Dandapani, the retired priest keeps himself busy selling pooja requisites on the pavement. (Photographs: S. Anwar.)

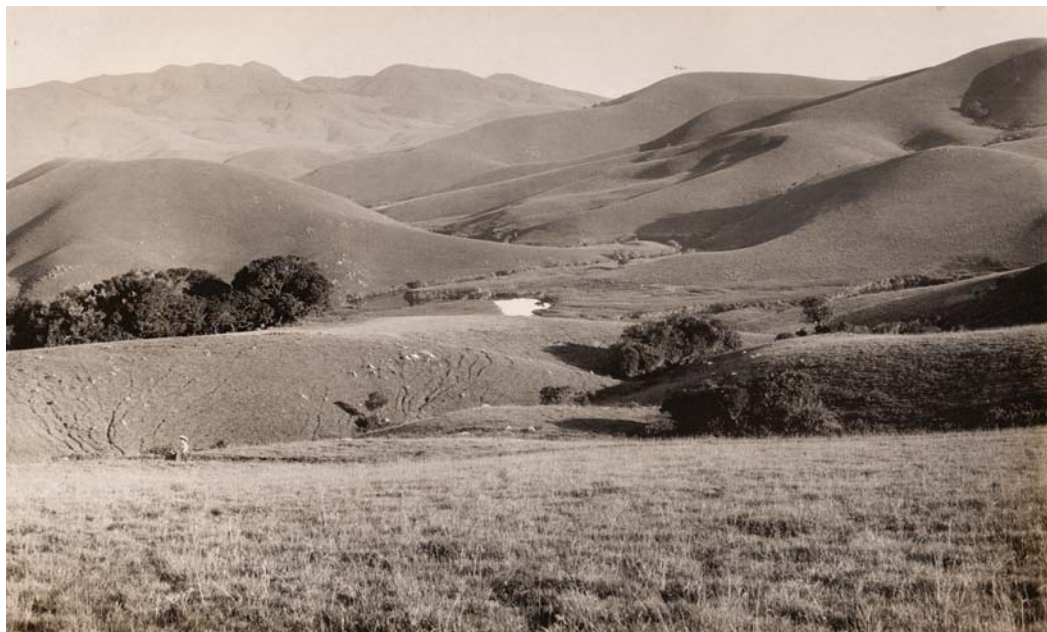
love Carnatic Music. But apart from that they exhibit a real tendency to volunteer and help out. During the 2015 floods, when West Mambalam practically drowned, groups of local volunteers worked tirelessly to evacu-

small hospital in a thatch roofed building to begin with. Rajaji inaugurated the hospital. K. Kamaraj, the then Chief Minister, granted them 16 grounds of land. From the first it was decided that the hospital would be run on a no-profit basis. Dr. Lakshmi Chaturvedi, well-known Chennai gynaecologist, was their first doctor. She lived in Nungambakkam and whenever her services were required, she would take a rickshaw to the hospital. The cost for the ride was Rs. Five! "In all these years not a single mother who has delivered here has died," the hospital authorities tell proudly. Since then, the hospital has grown into a multi-disciplinary one, the latest addition being a wing for heart ailments and surgery.

The hospital has been managed by three generations of volunteers from West Mambalam and its capital expenditure is still taken care of by public donations. Running expenses are met by the small fees charged to the patients. A consultation here still costs only Rs.100. All surgeries cost only half what they would cost elsewhere. Doctors from all over Chennai volunteer a few hours of their time every week for consultations. There is also a team of resident doctors. Free treatment is given to the poor to the tune of Rs. 24 lakh annually.

All though, the hospital shows signs of wear and tear, and it could look tidier, but it has a huge bank of trust among West Mambalam residents and the waiting hall is always crowded with patients. Apart from the hospital, the Centre runs a crèche, sells hygienically prepared baby food, and also runs a centre for training and rehabilitating differently abled children. "The fee per child is Rs.350 a month, but of the 63 children only 13 are able to pay. The others are supported by annual donations by kind people around here," a volunteer informs me.

(To be concluded)



The Wenlock Downs, Krurmond Valley, Nilgiris, c.1890. (A.T.W. Penn)

(Continued from
last fortnight)

From ministers in Delhi to Marwari businessmen in Calcutta to senior counsels in Mumbai, their offices were guarded by south Indian stenotypists turned personal assistants (PAs), as assiduously as they might be the inner sanctums of temples. Tandon realised their power once he became chairman of Unilever India. As was imperative in those Licence-Raj days, he had to spend much time doing rounds of the Delhi ministries. As soon as he reached Delhi, he recalled, his manager would debrief him on the latest intelligence regarding their file: "Ramachandran, his personal assistant, had his antennae out and had learned from 'Ramaswamy', the personal assistant of a minister's secretary, that according to the information he had received from 'Ramadurai', the personal assistant of the secretary in another ministry, that was where the file was now taking rest". The cartoonist, Mario Miranda, would give the south Indian steno-

• The South Indian typist

The power in an office

typist-PA visual form in Moonswamy, PA to the politician Shri Bundaldass.

Not all south Indian typists were Brahmin, of course. In Kerala, for example, the trend towards taking typing-related jobs cut across communities, so much so that Shashi Tharoor noted in *India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond* (1997), the joke was that "so many Keralite typists flocked to stenographic work in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi that 'Remington' became the name of a new Malayali subcaste". Even Malayalis who went to the Gulf would send back pictures of themselves posing with type-

writers to prove that they had office jobs, rather than the reality of construction sites (noted in Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*, 2006).

• by
Vikram Doctor

Given this use of typewriters to convey status, it should come as no surprise that the Stenographer's Guild has adapted to today's requirements for status. Dr. Sekar explains that the Ministry of Labour gives SC/ST candidates Rs 500 a month for 11 months, to learn stenography and typing. "All of them get 100 per cent job placements after that," he says. The

Guild is allowed 100 students under this scheme-it is evidently a sought after source of steady revenue for the few remaining typing institutes. The skills of these students will presumably be exercised on computers, to which most steno-typists transitioned easily (as compared to their bosses, most of whom still remain unsure of the Internet, simply because they are not used to typing), but it is notable that the means of professional entry remains a typewriter.

Not long after he retired, I met Shetty in my office again. He had come to clear up some personal paperwork, and we started talking about typewriters. Suddenly he stopped. "I have to show you something," he said with a surreptitious smile. He took me to a bank of

cupboards in one corner of the office and started rummaging in their depth: "It was here somewhere ... where is it now ... I hope they didn't get rid of it ..." Finally, he found what he was looking for, tucked away behind a stash of printer cartridges-a Godrej Prima typewriter in near perfect condition, down to the ribbon tucked in for use.

"When the office started replacing its typewriters, I kept this one," Shetty told me. "It was useful sometimes for typing legal documents that were hard to print from the printer. And I also thought if there was ever a bad power failure, it might be useful." But after a while he prudently decided it was best to keep the machine out of sight, well away from all implacably modernising forces, especially when he would no longer be there to defend it. Now, Shetty lovingly brushed the keys and tweaked the ribbon: You can use it straightaway," he said. Then he picked it up, bent and carefully concealed it again, saying, "An office should have a typewriter."

From: *With Great Truth & Regards* by Sidharth Bhatia and published by Roli Books for Godrej.

(Concluded)



A help with the computer

•MRS. VATSALA KRISHNAKUMAR interviewed at The Stenographers' Guild.

Swapna Siva Kumar, 25, has just started out on a career as a Chartered Accountant in Chennai. She doesn't like her mother, Mrs. Vatsala Krishna Kumar, a housewife, to sit idle and so it was decided that the mother would lend a hand and help out with her daughter's work. "She has a lot of work of typing things into her computer and so I decided that I could help her out with that sometimes," says Vatsala, 50, who has recently enrolled for typing lessons at The Stenographers' Guild in Chennai.

After completing her BSc and finding a lot of time on her hand, Mrs. Kumar had learnt typing and shorthand "because that was what everyone did in those days". But that was nearly three decades ago and since her daughter now cannot spend enough time to teach and oversee her, she felt it was best if she joined classes for regular lessons and to refresh her skills. "I am discovering now that I lack speed. I have forgotten the fingering. Certain fingers are still difficult for me. For 'A' we have to use this finger," she says showing the little finger on her left hand. "I am finding that now it is no longer as flexible as before," she says with an embarrassed smile.

Vatsala has also enrolled for the computer courses offered by the Stenographer's Guild. "I am learning the basics - MS Word, Excel sheets, sending email...", she says. I ask her whether having the skill to work a typewriter improved her speed on the computer keyboard as has been regularly told to me by typing instructors. She mulls over this for very long. "The computer is easier. On the typewriter you can't afford to make mistakes and so I am more careful...on the computer, I think my mind wanders a bit," she says thoughtfully.

Our Quiz Master V.V. Ramanan is on tour. His column will resume on his return.

Dates for Your Diary

Till February 26: *Recurrence* - painting exhibition by Akhilesh. Akhilesh is a painter, writer and curator from Bhopal. He has had 45 one-man shows in major metros in India and abroad (at DakshinaChitra.)

Till February 26: *Small formats* by JK, an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Jayakumar (JK). Jayakumar is known for his surrealistic paintings. He is also known for Art direction in films. Women and horses are recurring themes. This show is a selection from his small format paintings (at DakshinaChitra.)

February 25-March 5: Uttarkhand Festival: Folk dance forms by Sansak Sanskrutik and Paryavaran Sanrakshan Samiti from Almora. As a part of the festival, there will be display and sale of crafts (at DakshinaChitra.)

February 26: Classical Music Concert: The performing artists are Ganesh Kumar on *kanjira*, Balaji Raman on *mandolin* and S. Hari Krishnan on keyboard (at DakshinaChitra.)

Till March 6: Celebrating its 50th year of inception, Cholamandal Artists' Village is exhibiting the art collection of the Museum of the Madras Movement (at the Cholamandal Centre for Contemporary Art.)

WORKSHOPS

For children

February 18: Paper Craft:

For adults

February 25-26: Water Colour Painting



For limited use

•S.K. BALASUBRAMANIAN interviewed at ESKEBY & CO.

The room is poorly lit with two of the three tubelights lighting up as per their whims. Even the chairs protest their use by creaking when one shifts even slightly. It would seem that technology does not have it so good here. In the tiny office of Eskeby & Company, one of Chennai's wholesale paper merchants, sits a Facit typewriter which looks as though it has almost been forgotten. We talk about the typewriter. "I use it perhaps to type two or three letters per month... to reply to correspondence concerning my quotations," says S.K. Balasubramanian, the octogenarian proprietor of the firm, about his 20-year old Facit. "My business, unlike the others in this market, is not a daily business ... I deal in bulk... with universities and government agencies like the Southern railways," he justifies not having a computer in his office. "I have a computer at home and I use it for the internet and spend time on Facebook. This typewriter I have simply kept," he says. "It is very old, you see, and gives trouble from time to time. Sometimes the ribbon gets stuck. Sometime something else will be wrong. Then I call the repairer and if he has to change the ribbon then I give him 20 or 50 rupees or so and he goes away. But I have decided I will never spend more money than that, say 700 or 800 rupees on any major overhaul," he says. "For me the machine has absolutely no use," he says dramatically as he digresses once again lapsing into another monologue about life and death.

View from the high chair

This is nice.

Being able to sit up after all that lying around.

Seeing all you guys in Big-Folk's Land right side up, so to speak.

Thanks for listening, by the way.

Us Little-Folkwe don't get too much of that.

We get a lot of Talking-At, though.

Let you in on a little-known Little-Folk secret?

Being baby-talked at can get a tad tedious after a while....sometimes downright dreadful.

See – baby-talk is a skill. If you don't have it, don't try it.

The other day, at one of those let's-get-all-the-babies-together gatherings Big-Folk seem to love (don't understand why, because the super-high levels of tension and exhaustion on all adult faces are so obvious)....anyway, at one of said gatherings, a misguided few insisted on baby-talk.

One lady, with absolutely no prior warning, hit such a high falsetto with a little one in pink, she nearly shattered my sippy cup; while a venerable old gentleman endowed with large grey whiskers, and a gravelly

voice best suited for barking orders at the armed forces, dissolved into a shuddering mess of sputtering and wheezing noises, forcing three Little-Folk to burst into tears. Upon which he, after being physically restrained first, was led away gently by his daughter.

Painful.

You Big-Folk don't pick up on signals very easily.

If one of you is going: "Da-da-googoo-choochoo-chee-chee...", and your target is giving you our signature 'Won't-Respond Response', while sucking on a forefinger in a distinctly distant manner, it probably means you need to stop – like right now.

And then there's the singing.

Oh, my God, the singing.

Again – some can.....and some, well, they just shouldn't. Mere good intentions do not a songbird make.

Ok – that's a bit harsh. No one's looking for award-winning performances in a rocking chair, but may I just point out that being gargled at doesn't get us to sleep any quicker?

Like, last night, Old-Means-Well was in charge of making me go to sleep. Now she fits into the can-manage-the-Alphabet-song-decently school of singing

– which is fine. (Incidentally, these former convent-educated types who've morphed into grandparental roles are the funniest.)

For some strange reason, she chose the brisk 'Sing a song of sixpence'starting on an impossibly high scale, which merely meant she came to grief when she got to '....set before the KING!'

No – didn't quite reach the King at all.

(You just tried that in your head, didn't you??!!)

● by
Ranjitha Ashok

So, after a bit of choking and coughing, she starts, again, for some unfathomable reason, with 'Old King Cole'....on such a low, deep note, she sounds like a Pit bull with the worst intentions, at which point, having scared both me and herself into shocked silence, she abandons the notion of singing altogether, and chooses to intone simple little nonsense sounds instead.

Which brings up another point.

Words.

Very important you remember them.

You can't expect the little one in question to lie still with eyes closed while you argue with yourself what the next line should be, stopping halfway, and starting again at some other point in the song.

Speaking of grandparents, we've been hearing a lot of chatter about how this role appears to have been re-defined over the years....look-attitude-expectation-wise.

And why not? No need to go into some sort of pre-conceived 'costume'. But this does throw up some issues that were non-existent a few decades ago.

Like – the slinky look paired with carrying one of us just doesn't work.

We slither all over; you guys are all over the place....whole lot of slip-sliding going on.

Please note: If you wear glossy, chunky, swingy long earrings – we will attack.

So, when on baby-duty – 'practical' is a good way to go, even in these organic-diet/bonded-hair/daily-work-out/young-forever times.

Which have changed, yes – but some things haven't.

Like – never underestimate us Little Folk. Trying to cunningly slip tiny bits of Baby-Food-21st-Century into open



mouths by 'hiding' them in a spoonful of acceptable mush will be seen as an open declaration of hostilities, and will be treated as such.

Which really means you'll end up wearing the food in your hair.

If you feel cold, get a shawl. Putting three layers on us instead merely leads to confrontation, and regrettable bumps on communication highways... more red, sleep-deprived eyes, and general irritability.

Dressing us up, changing us, or dressing us down for bed needn't be a frantic battle, you know. Look, if you pull an outfit over our heads, trap our faces inside, and then start looking for the sleeve – and our arms – there will be repercussions.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 1)

Due to lack of adequate information, first response suffered drastically. Kamarajar port is responsible for mobilising immediate response teams. It claims to have the necessary equipment such as skimmers, booms and dispersants to deal with an oil spill. But booms and skimmers offer little help along rocky shores. "Skimmers and booms help if the spill had occurred in mid or deep-sea, not in near shore waters and rocky beaches. Even a suction pump will not do. High-pressure hoses and the likes are required to deal with the situation at hand. While the Marina and Besant Nagar stretches might be relatively easier to clean, the rocky shores along Ennore present a very tricky situation," adds Nityanand.

Due to the uncertainty around the actual quantity of the oil spill, the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has drawn up a scenario for a 20-tonne spill and has predicted damage to over 29.52 km of the coastline. Out of the 20 tonnes, close to 12.6 tonne is expected to be beached while 6.5 tonne is likely to have gotten evaporated

The black coast

and one tonne would still be floating on the surface.

Irrespective of the scale of the spill, petrochemical oils contain paraffins, aromatic and polycyclic hydrocarbons in addition to trace elements such as copper, nickel and vanadium which are toxic to fish and humans alike. As the spill occurred close to the coast, the biggest impact would be on the pelagic fish which thrive in shallow waters. Ecologist Sultan Ismail explains that it is not necessary for dead fish to wash ashore to ascertain contamination; in many cases, the fish may have ingested toxic chemicals but would not have died from it. The contaminants tend to bioaccumulate, with chances of them getting transferred to humans when consumed.

Professor Ismail expresses deep anguish about the manner in which the government departments and the research institutes have responded. "The Fisheries Department and the many research institutions in the city should have taken the

initiative to collect fish samples and conduct toxicity studies to quell rumours about how safe the fish are," he says. Similar concerns have been raised regarding the safety of desalination plants which function along the Chennai coast. High-pressure suction pumps are used to draw water into the plants which use reverse osmosis technology to convert seawater into drinking quality water. "Are these membranes capable of separating hydrocarbons mixed in the water? Government should come out with a comprehensive safety report regarding fish as well as water resources around affected areas," he says.

The extent of the massive ecological damage wreaked on the coast will reveal itself gradually over the coming months. Though it may be impossible to predict precise impacts, there is no denying that the ocean will be burdened by this incident. When the deposits reach the seabed slowly, the bottom-feeding organisms, such as crabs and prawns, are likely to be affected.

"By the look of it, the oil appears very dense and may contain several trace elements. Even crude oil has traces of vanadium, iron and copper; and if the oil has been previously used, the impurities will be more and the impacts will be greater. Studies should be conducted to ascertain the nature, the composition and the possible impacts of the spilt material," insists Ismail.

The thick film of oil which covers long stretches of the coast worries Saravanan Kasi, a fisherman from Urur Kuppam. "The past week has been challenging for fishermen all along the Chennai coast. Prices have dipped drastically as people are not ready to come out and buy fish yet. A basket of fish which usually sells for Rs 300 is now being auctioned at the market for Rs 120. Government has to conduct studies and come out with a categorical statement regarding fish safety. More importantly, we need Government to be transparent and tell us what's happening," says Kasi.

R. Srinivasan from Kattukuppam in Ennore voices similar concerns. "People are reluctant to even buy dried fish, let alone fresh catch. Small and medium-scale fishers have been hit very hard. Most have kept away from going into the sea as the cost of catching far exceeds returns. The Ennore Creek is seriously polluted as it is with effluents from thermal power plants being let into the water brazenly for years together. Such a disaster puts further strain on an already struggling ecosystem and livelihoods associated with it. No catch, no income," he says.

From fishermen to environmentalists, everyone believes there is a lack of preparedness that has resulted in such a disaster. Despite possessing the technical knowhow and the necessary infrastructure, the agencies across the board have been found to be seriously lacking in preparedness, coordination and execution. Unless this critical lacuna is fixed, the chances of a preventable incident escalating into a disastrous tragedy cannot be ruled out in the future. (Courtesy: indiawaterportal.org)

• Partab Ramchand recalls...

The scholarly sportswriter

There is this first meeting with Nirmal Shekar of which I still have vivid recollections. And then there is this last meeting with him which will also live in memory for long.

We first met at the old indoor stadium near the Nehru Stadium in 1980, shortly after he had joined *The Hindu* as a sports reporter. I was with the *Indian Express* and it was a local table tennis tournament. One of the players, R Ramachandran, came up to me and asked whether I had met the new reporter from *The Hindu*. I said I hadn't. Ramachandran excitedly said, "He is very tall, and has a lot of hair on his head and so he stands out in a crowd". Minutes later I was introduced to him and thus started a friendship that was to last 36 years.

By the mid-1980s Nirmal had succeeded T Govindarajan, popularly known as 'TG', as football and tennis writer for the newspaper. This was no easy task, for 'TG' was one of the finest sportswriters of his time. A guru to many youngsters, including me, TG, who was on the verge of retirement, was at first unsure whether this scholarly "young upstart" was up to the task, a view shared by many in the profession. But Nirmal worked his way up through the age-old qualities of hard work, natural talent and being a knowledgeable writer. His considerable and eclectic reading made his writing different.

By the time TG retired in the late 1980s, Nirmal had firmly established himself as one of the leading young sportswriters with his ability to write on al-

most every sport, though tennis was always his first love. Recognising his talent, even a conservative newspaper like *The Hindu* gave him the big breaks early and, in 1986 Nirmal covered his first Wimbledon, the Mecca of Tennis. He was to do this for more than 25 years in a row.

In 2003 Nirmal became the Sports Editor of *The Hindu* and questions were raised as to his ability to be in charge of a high profile department, fulfill his manifold administrative duties and still churn out good copy. He did manage the dual role but at heart he was first and foremost a writer. His new duties meant that his columns became fewer, though readers still looked forward to his reports from Wimbledon. Of course, he regularly covered the Davis Cup matches and could give full rein to his colourful and knowledgeable writing, for India was

then in the prestigious World Group and Nirmal described in glowing terms the performances of Vijay Amritraj, Ramesh Krishnan and Leander Paes, notably in the 1987 semi-final against Australia in Sydney, the final the same year against Sweden in Goteborg, and the sensational upset registered by India against France in Frejus in 1993.

Nirmal had his detractors who described his language as "too flowery and pedantic" showing off with words and quoting from writers, few of his readers knew. There were also times when he seemed to have hit a plateau and some of his phrases were repetitive. But there is no denying the fact that he touched a chord with his readers and was widely followed in the country. He was exceptionally well read. Quite often he would be seen seriously reading material about philosophy,

literature or economics. Now and then he would quote from these books to drive home a sporting point when it came to writing of the greatness of Ali and Pele, Federer and Bradman. His approach to writing was spelt out in an interview some years ago when he said "I don't restrict myself to sports but try and bring in a life's perspective; try understanding the psychology of sports and fit sports into the wider context rather than stick to the backhands and the cover drives alone."

Nirmal retired from *The Hindu* in September 2015 but retained his ties with the newspaper as a columnist besides being part of the visiting faculty at the Asian College of Journalism. I had in the meanwhile retired from the profession, but we remained in touch through phone and the occasional get-together at the Madras Cricket Club.



Nirmal Shekar.

And now to the last meeting, though at the time how could I know that it would be the last? It was at the K S Narayanan Oration at the Taj Coromandel. We were meeting after a long time. Naturally the talk was mostly about the Federer-Nadal duel at the Australian Open the previous day. At 60 he had lost none of his enthusiasm for the sport which was his favourite. Forty-eight hours later he was no more and that is the main reason why that last meeting will live in memory for as long as I live.

The view from the high chair

(Continued from page 7)

Ear-shattering ones.

Socks..... actually, we can keep both on, you know. We just get a kick out of the expression on your faces, when you think you've got us dressed and ready, only to find we've managed to get ourselves de-socked again.

Priceless!

It's even funnier if our target is from the grandparent-zone – especially since they are a few

decades out of practice, and having forgotten to put on their glasses, have only a vague idea where our limbs are.

One more secret?

We do recognise authority; just as we know whom we can bully.

One timorous tremble when you pick us up – and we know we have you where we want you.

Remember - never show fear.

But you know what?

We Little-Folk, we realise you guys, (well, most of you, anyway), come from a good place.

That's why we accept your theories. (The Really-Really-Older-Big-Folk still around are pretty scathing about those, by the way.) Your clumsiness, your hesitations, and general air of genuine cluelessness, with well-deserved compassion.

We just need to put our pudgy feet down firmly some-

times, just to maintain discipline in the home.

Could you pick up Teddy Teething Ring for me, please?

Yes, I know I'll merely fling it down again – but hey, look at it this way.

All that stooping and straightening keeps you supple.

So don't worry.

We'll be gentle.

And we'll aim for mutual harmony – till we get our words in place.

After that.....!!!!

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