

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- Tackling a shrub
- On the Ramzan trail
- MGR remembered
- From Dewanic heights

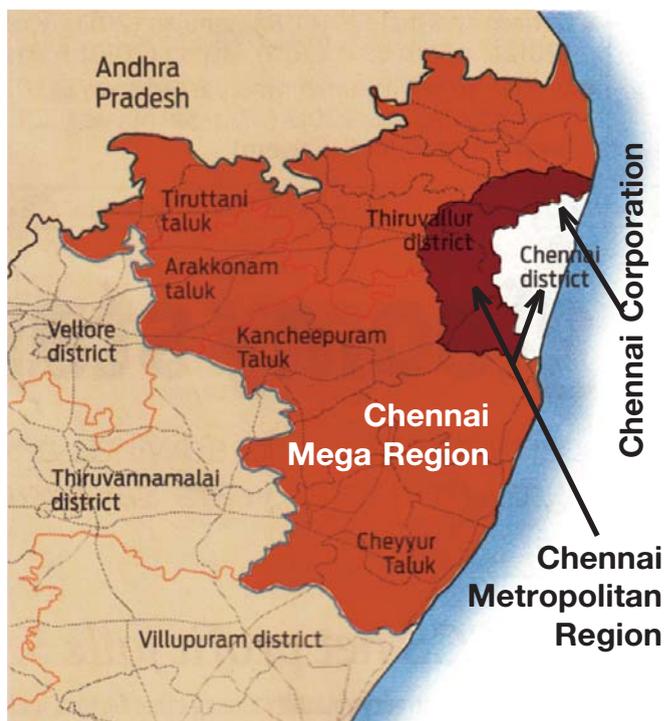
How will expanding the city pan out?

Our city is all set to expand, yet again. In 2007, we saw Metropolitan Chennai grow to span Minjur to Sholinganallur, an area of 1,177 sq.km. with a population of 7 million. Then, in 2011, the Corporation of Chennai expanded, within the above area, taking unto itself 42 small local bodies, including nine municipalities, eight town panchayats and 25 village panchayats, increasing the area under its jurisdiction by 140 per cent to 426 sq.km. from the earlier 176 sq.km. Now we have Metropolitan Chennai expanding again, to become a mammoth 8,878 sq.km. in area. It will, in effect, encompass all of the Tiruvallur and Kanchipuram Districts apart from Arakonam Taluk. All this is ostensibly with a view to "boosting infrastructure and maintaining uniformity in development to counter the effect of ever-increasing population in the city." How this will pan out on paper is anybody's guess.

As a plan it is all very grand. The Government, it is announced, will prepare a plan (we assume based on inputs from the usual con-

● by The Editor

sultants who appear to have a monopoly on all urban planning), which will take a year to be finalised. Thereafter, it will be put into action as a master plan "taking into account transport, basic infrastructure, environment protection and protection of fertile agricultural lands." Each of those words merit attention and we need to see what has been done by way of handling them in the existing areas of the city.



(Continued on page 10)



A striking picture taken during the Ramzan Walk led by Kombai S. Anwar (see page 5). Pictures by G.V. Balasubramanian.

Nearly 75 talks, walks, for Madras Week

Come join the celebration

Madras Week will be celebrating Madras and its achievements from the 20th to the 27th of August this year. Last year saw enthusiastic city-wide celebrations with excellent support from the media, old and new. This year is expected to be no different, The Week, becoming virtually a Madras Month. These voluntary celebrations of our city will include art and photographic exhibitions, food festivals in hotels with Madras cuisine as their theme, a plethora of walks and talks, quiz contests and other events.

Chennai Heritage, publishers of *Madras Musings*, will again host eight talks teaming with hotels and restaurants in the city. It will also lead several heritage walks during The

Week, as will several individuals in different parts of Madras. Nizhal and the Madras Naturalists' Society have already announced their walks.

● by A Staff Reporter

INTACH's Chennai Chapter hopes schools and colleges wishing to organise celebratory activities will get in touch with it (e-mail: Sujatha Shankar at shankarsujatha@gmail.com). Also reaching out to children will be Yocee in Kilpauk, and Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai in Anna Nagar.

A newcomer this year and planning a hectic and colourful

programme is the Colours of Glory Foundation which will involve Services units in the city in its programmes that are being planned with the C.P. Ramaswami Centre.

Leading college interest will be Stella Maris with several programmes, including some reaching out to children.

Others whose programmes we have already heard about it include *Mylapore Times*, the Press Institute of India, the Roja Muthiah Research Library, the Observer Research Foundation, the Madras Literary Society, Rotary and a couple of clubs. About 75 talks and walks have already been scheduled. It is understood that the Madras Bar Association, which

(Continued on page 6)

Tackling a proliferating shrub

Prosopis juliflora (a mesquite, T.: *Seemai Karuvel* or *Veli kaathaana*) is being destroyed indiscriminately in the State, according to environmentalists. The High Court directed the Forest Department to constitute a Committee and to advise it on the scientific method to be followed to eradicate this plant. The Madras Naturalists' Society submitted a representation to the Committee. Summarised and with its recommendations, it states the following:

The plant *Prosopis juliflora* is widespread in the plains and, possibly, in the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu but is not native to Tamil Nadu. It is a New World species. *Prosopis juliflora* is understood to have been introduced deliberately by human agency in parts of India in the 20th Century.

A large variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and insects benefit from the species in numerous ways. Obtaining food, protection and nesting sites are among the uses. Just like any other vegetation, *Prosopis juliflora* serves as a carbon sink and performs various ecological services. Villagers use the thorns and branches for their fuel requirements and for charcoal production. *Prosopis juliflora* is also used as a live fence in places.

The plant has come up and proliferated mainly in areas that have been cleared of vegetation and left undisturbed subsequently. Apart from these areas, *Prosopis juliflora* grows in large stands only where it is exploited by humans. *Prosopis juliflora* has not come up in other areas that are under intense human management (areas such as agricultural fields, where there is constant maintenance of the vegetation). It has also not invaded vegetation-covered areas in forests. On the one hand, when cleared land is left fallow, a situation is created where *Prosopis juliflora* may occupy the entire

● The MNS recommends

land quickly. On the other hand, the dominance or survival of *Prosopis juliflora* may only be temporary. Madras Naturalists' Society members have recorded instances of significant mortality of *Prosopis* trees growing in water-logged conditions.

Wholesale removal of the plant from the State in a short time span is not feasible. The calls for removal of *Prosopis juliflora* are based on certain assumptions that may not be valid:

- (1) That removal will result in re-occupation by native plants and animals;
- (2) That the water table will recover once *Prosopis juliflora* is removed; and
- (3) That threats to human health will cease upon eradication.

The observations of the members of the Madras Naturalists' Society indicate that *Prosopis juliflora* is so resilient that any success achieved by extensive removal will be purely temporary as it will bounce back quickly, rendering the efforts futile.

However, if *Prosopis juliflora* is removed under a restoration initiative carried out in a well-planned, phased manner, using ecologically friendly techniques, it will be successful and give long-term benefits.

Recommendations

Restoration of the original native vegetation in any part of the State is desirable in that this will relieve anthropogenic stresses on the environment and biota. *Prosopis* may be removed under a restoration initiative carried out in a well-planned, phased manner, using ecologically friendly techniques. The Madras Naturalists' Society recommends that any *Prosopis* removal adhere to the following guidelines and prescriptions:

- Stretches of *Prosopis* should be allowed to stand and natural succession processes allowed to take place so that the *Prosopis* is replaced by local species over time without human interference.
- Fresh growth of *Prosopis* must be discouraged. The strategy should be to encourage native vegetation and species that originally occupied the site in question. Thus, removal of young *Prosopis* plants should be achieved by introducing native species that will displace the *Prosopis* and not by directly killing the introduced species.
- The use of manure that may contain *Prosopis* seeds should be discouraged. This will encourage the introduced species to spread.

(Continued on page 9)

When Govt. lists heritage buildings

There was a time when if a voice, and in particular a female, one had called *The Man from Madras Musings* over the phone he would have been at his best, all courtesy, charm and what have you. Call it age, or whatever, but nowadays it is more with a sense of weariness that MMM responds, for his gut feel is that the caller, no matter of which sex, is yet another reporter, or so-called researcher, who is seeking the obvious and by that MMM means readily available information that a good Google search should provide. And in most cases MMM's hunch has proved correct.

Such was indeed the case last week. A voice, female, called and laid on the flattery rather thick. It declared that it read everything that MMM wrote. Hearing it, MMM had a strange Othello like sensation for had not Desdemona on hearing his tales given for his pains a world of sighs and sworn in faith that 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange, 'twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful? Only in this case it did not invoke in MMM any divine passion. He merely asked rather brusquely as to what the voice wanted. And to this the voice had a tale that made MMM wonder as to whether he ought to laugh or weep.

It transpires that ten years after the Hon'ble High Court of Madras passed judgement that the Government ought to get serious about heritage conservation, there is finally some action. Only it is not of a progressive nature. The High Court relied on the report of a Committee which included the Chief and which had listed four hundred and odd heritage buildings of the city. The team, as MMM recalls correctly, burnt the midnight oil by way of putting together that report, neatly dividing the buildings by area, category, heritage value and appending a brief note on the history and architecture importance of each structure. This was the report the Court threw at the Government and asked it to follow the same.

The Government it transpires felt that the report was not good enough and no doubt not put together by a team that had good credentials. It has therefore commissioned a set of architecture colleges in the State and entrusted the task of a fresh listing to their students. They have been mandated to come up with a list of 100 buildings, "neatly dividing the buildings by area, category, heritage value and appending a brief note on the history and architecture importance of each structure" which as you can see was the exact basis on which the earlier report was done. And the students are on the hunt for experts to assist them.

It was one of these that called MMM and cooed to him. In response MMM asked the voice as to what help it needed. It said it required information on the history and heritage value of each building, neatly divided by area and category. To this MMM asked if the voice was aware of the existence of the earlier report, which was available as a free download on the internet, which provided information on the history and heritage value of each building, neatly divided by area and category. The voice said 'yes', it was aware and was using it but was wondering if MMM had any more info to be added. It also said that a couple of (in MMM's view) wannabe historians who chiefly rely on Google for their research had been of immense help. To this MMM regretted that he would not be able to add anything more by way of info after such experts had been signed up. The voice was not willing to take no for an answer. There was a hint of a purse of gold. MMM then came up with what is always a sure shot exit – he asked the voice to send him an email giving details of which

ing to attention all the time, making for an impressive display like the guards outside the palace of another and living queen in a distant rain-soaked island. There people pay money to go and stand up close to the guards and take photos as well and that is one of the ways that erstwhile world power shores up its economy and keeps it queen in comfort. Here, in Chennai, on the other hand, these policemen just lounge around and given that they have no shelter from the heat or the (occasional) rain, present a far from impressive spectacle. In any case, MMM wonders as to why the State is paying for what is essentially the guarding of an empty private residence. Surely it is up to those who inherited it/claim to have inherited it/dispute the claims of others to inherit it/fighting to convert it into a memorial so that the people inherit it, to pay and provide that security? In any case, most of those guarding the place appear to be busy sending out phone messages or browsing on their smart phones.

The same applies to guarding the consulate. Imagine spending your entire day perched on a flyover with nothing overhead but a metal sheet and nothing to see but a fairly ordinary-looking consulate and nothing to hear but the roar of traffic. It must be a dead job. It is no wonder that most of the guards on duty are found seated on parapets under the flyover, either looking into their phones or gazing enviously at people who are gadding about in cars/buses/two-wheelers or on foot. There is just one difference between guarding the house and the consulate. MMM is fairly certain that the latter is not protected gratis and so it does generate some revenue for the State.

Either way, MMM wonders if in this era of hi-tech security, standing a posse of not-very-attentive policemen outside a premises is the best way of providing protection.

Tailpiece

The Man from Madras Musings notices that the Corporation or someone else has put up signboards as shown alongside that the footpath is for the feet only ('*Natay-paathay nadapatharkkay*'). Only MMM wonders where the referred to footpath is.

– MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

buildings it wanted information on, neatly dividing them by area and category. The voice hung up.

If this is the way the Government proposes to go about heritage conservation, God save our heritage buildings.

Pains of policing

The Man from Madras Musings has certain fixed routes by which he goes every day and while doing so he never fails to observe what are often referred to as posses of policemen at two locations – one at a garden that contains the residence of a dead Chief Minister and the other a consulate belonging to the country that is considered by many to be the Ultimate Stupendous Abode, at least to judge by the number of people queuing up for visas every day.

It is the first that perturbs MMM more. Guarding a living and functioning Chief Minister is understandable.

To what purpose is making so many policemen hang around what was the private residence of a late Chief Minister? And it is not as though these policemen and women are stand-





The true picture?

The back story which appeared in MM, June 16th doesn't match with happenings.

The 70th session of the Indian National Congress was held at Avadi in the second week of January 1955 under the presidency of Dhebar. Prior to this, a Reception Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Ambujammal, a noted freedom fighter and the daughter of Seeman Sreenivasa Iyengar who presided over the 58th Congress Session at Gauhati in 1928.

The well-known landlord of Vadapathimangalam, S. Thiagarajan, Indian Express Ramnath Goenka, then Chief Minister Kamaraj's Prithvi Insurance partner S. Parthasarathy were other important members of the Reception Committee. After the Session was completed, Parthasarathy got a part of the land and built a Vaishnavi shrine and become Sadhu Parthasarathy.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed and the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal Tito, attended the Session as special invitees. Khrushchev and Bulganin did not attend the conference. In June that year Prime Minister Nehru visited the USSR and invited them to India and asked them to develop heavy industries in the public sector. It was only in August-September 1955 that Khrushchev and Bulganin visited India.

Around 1950, when N. Gopalaswamy Iyengar was Railway Minister, a plan was conceived to build a coach factory in Madras. In 1952, Lal Bahadur Shastri became Railway Minister and he continued to support the venture, allotting more funds and deputing his deputy O.V. Alagesan to monitor the progress of the construction. In 1955, on Gandhi Jayanthi Day, the Shell Division of the Integral Coach Factory was inaugurated by Prime Minister Nehru in the presence of Lal Bahadur Shastri, O.V. Alagesan, Chief Minister Kamaraj, R. Venkatraman and other dignitaries.

The temporary Furnishing Sheds were constructed between the southern bank of the ICF Tank and the northern side of Konnur High Road. A feeder line was also constructed from the Shell factory along the western bank of the same tank. In 1962, on Gandhi Jayanthi Day, the Furnishing Division was inaugurated by the then Railway Deputy Minister, Ramaswami. A new feeder line was constructed linking Villivakkam Rly Station, Villivakkam Lake, and Otteri Nullah. When Moorthy was Railway Minister

in the 1990s, Anna Nagar Station was opened on this feeder line.

Gopalaswami Iyengar and Venakataraman may have played major roles in industrial development after the Congress session and enabled utilisation of a vast stretch of land. But in the construction of the Furnishing and Feeder Line, they were not in the picture.

As for the mention of a siding from Perambur Railway Station to take the guests directly to their place of stay, there was no need for this, because exactly 100 years ago, when the first train started on August 11, 1855 from Royapuram to Wallajah, a station at Avadi was constructed.

Konerirajapuram

K.Ko. Sastrigal
7A Ambedkar II Street
Villivakkam, Chennai 600 049

Singapore example

Visiting Singapore and frequently travelling on the Metro, I cannot help comparing the CMRL with the MRT here. As Tamil is one of the official languages in Singapore, others being Mandarin, Malay and English, announcements on the Metro are also made in Tamil.

Though Chennai Metro Rail is far newer than the Metro in Singapore, the trains and the stations here are still spic and span 30 years after the services opened. The MRT is the backbone of the transport system. The metro card is also accepted in the city's bus network.

There are some lessons for Chennai vaasis, especially metro users, to learn from the system in Singapore. The first being giving way to those getting off, not leaning against the door while riding the Metro, giving older people, pregnant women, those travelling with children and those nursing injuries a seat to show you care, and while taking the escalator standing on the left to allow those who climb the stairs a clear path on the right.

Little India is one of the stations on the Blue line and needless to say that walking around there you get a sense of being in India with lots of Indians, especially Tamils living and working there. Incidentally, Tamilians make up more than 50 per cent of Indians in Singapore. Tamil-speaking people includes those from Sri Lanka.

T.K. Srinivas Chari

20, Oxford Road
#01-22, Singapore 218815

The authors

The article *Tamil across the oceans*, that appeared in MM, July 1st, was by K.R.A. Narasiah and the Charivari series, which will now appear every other fortnight, is by Sriram V. We regret the omission.

— The Editor

A rich *māmūl* heritage

As I was looking for details on the evolution of the 'Land Customs' Department, which in principle controlled salt movement and sale in colonial Madras, the term 'bribe', also referred as *māmūl*, kept repeatedly appearing in the documents I was looking at. That prompted me to write this short note on one 'fascinating' and 'fabulous' practice of ours, which richly deserves to be formalised and legalised today, so that our present governments need not change the designs of currency notes and, thus, shock the ordinary and less-than ordinary people.

I looked for the etymology of this term. I gathered it arose from the Arabic term *ar-h-mā'mūl*, intended to mean 'custom', 'customary'. I believe that this term should have entered into our vocabulary via Urdu (Hindustani), similar to many other 'classical' and oft-used terms, such as *nāstā*, and should have prospered in our culture more as a demand-based ritual than as a practice. The other curious element I tripped on was a suggested entry in the Collins Dictionary website in recent years (i.e., pending approval) of a definition to *māmūl* as the "unofficial collection of money from petty vendors or shop keepers by Police, Revenue, Municipal, Excise officials or non-officials or politicians on weekly or monthly basis". I recalled the chaste Tamil word *kai-ūtū* and the day-to-day use of *kai-k-kooli* in Malayalam, which too has a strong chaste Tamil shade. I have never heard Malayalees using *māmūl* as much as we do. I am not sure how much *māmūl* is used in interior Tamil Nadu; but my gut feeling is that it is a unique word accepted by those living in Madras city!

A couple of points on *māmūl* as a practice in the early decades of 19th Century Madras. The Government of Madras dismissed one Audenarrain, a manager in the Sea-Customs Department, from service for bribery in 1810. A British senior official and many Indian staff too were dismissed for similar behaviour at this time (see pages 150-151 in Neil Brimnes, 1999, *Constructing the Colonial Encounter*, Curzon, Surrey). In the same pages, a specific example occurs: one Seeringa, an appraiser in the Land Customs House, was accused of receiving bribes from textile merchants in 1819. In return for the bribes he would tax the cloth coming to Madras at a lower rate. The narratives of the prosperous dubashes, I need not recount here, I imagine.

To know more about this 'fascinating' heritage of ours, read Aparna Balachandran's chapter in *Time, History and the Religious Imagery in South Asia*, 2011, edited by Anne Murphy, Routledge, Oxford, UK.

Madras Musings (MM) strives hard to preserve Madras's heritage, considering mostly buildings and other immovable edifices of Madras. Here is one practice, which we the readers and supporters of MM, do not need to strain ourselves to preserve at all! It preserves itself and will perpetuate perennially, similar to the H1 virus. We have been fighting for the preservation of the bullfight as a heritage element; here is one more for us to think about as a glorious dimension of our rich culture. Viva *māmūl* and our rich *māmūl* heritage!

Dr. A. Raman
araman@csu.edu.au

Thank you Donors

• We regret that due to staff turnover we were not able to publish the donors' list from 1.07.16. The omission is being made good today and next fortnight. — The Editor

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(To be continued)

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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

From India's Digital Archives – 1

– Karthik Bhatt

A college's genesis in a last will

● The Digital Library of India (DLI) project, an initiative of the Central Government, aims at digitising significant artistic, literary and scientific works and making them available over the Internet for education and research. Begun in 2000 by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India and later taken over by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, it has to date scanned nearly 5.5 lakh books, predominantly in Indian languages.

The archives of the DLI contain a huge collection of books on old Madras and various institutions that were/are part of its landscape. While these include the more famous ones, such as the *Madras Tercentenary Commemoration Volume*, *Story of Madras* by Glyn Barlow, and *Madras in the Olden Times* by James Tallboys Wheeler, several out-of-print publications too are part of the collection. This column will profile some of these.

The Pachaiyappa's College Centenary Souvenir

The Pachaiyappa's College had its genesis in the Last Will and Testament of Pachaiyappa Mudaliar, a legendary merchant and philanthropist who died in 1794. A long and protracted legal battle broke out between his heirs over his estate in which he had left about a lakh of pagodas towards charitable and religious purposes. With a large part of the estate having been squandered away due to mismanagement, it was left to the Government to step in and salvage what was left. George Norton, the Advocate General of Madras, played a vital role in the recovery of funds, which amounted to around Rs. 7.25 lakh. This formed the nucleus of the Pachaiyappa's Trust.

The commemoration volume records that a school was established in 1842 under the name of *Patcheappa's Preparatory School* in the house of a Waddell in Popham's Broadway for the education of poor students in the "elementary branches of English Literature and Science". It moved to the Esplanade in 1850, when the historic building modelled on the Temple of Theseus, was inaugurated. Over the years, it grew to be one of the best known schools in South India and was the main feeder for those graduating from Presidency College and Madras University. It was raised to the status of a Second Grade college in 1880 and, in 1889, it became a First Grade college.

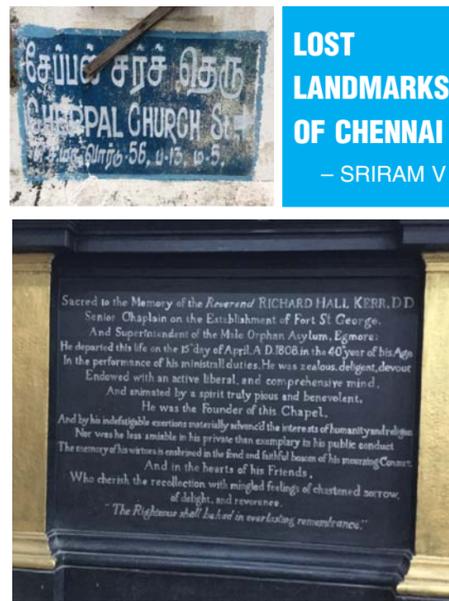
A small hostel for students was opened in 1899. Over the years, it grew in size and a site was purchased at Chetpet in 1914 to accommodate the growing numbers of hostellers. On April 1, the Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland, laid the foundation stone for the new buildings. The construction was completed in 1921. During the time of construction, the hostel was moved from George Town to *Doveton House* in Nungambakkam (the rentals being borne by Annie Besant and Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar) and subsequently, in 1915, to *Dare's Gardens* adjoining the new hostel site.

By the 1930s, the College had outgrown its Esplanade campus. When the University Commission reduced the strength of the institution to 800 due to the space crunch, it was decided to shift the entire College to the hostel campus, an idea that had originated at the time the site was bought. In 1935, the Residential College Scheme was drawn up and an appeal made to the public and alumni of the institution for funds. A raffle conducted at the College raised a sum of Rs. 50,000 towards the Building Fund. In 1939, the Governor of Madras Lord Erskine laid the foundation stone for the College buildings, which were declared open in 1940 by his successor Sir Arthur Hope.

(Continued on page 8)



Dr. Kerr remembered inside the 'Cheppal'.



On the trail of Kerr, Church-builder

Strictly speaking, this structure is not lost for it still stands. But figuratively it is, for chances are that nobody in the George (formerly Black) Town area will have any idea as to where it is. That is so even if you enquire about it with the name that is current – St. Mark's Church. But be of good cheer – for you now have it – to reach the place you need to go the northern end of Broadway, look out for the last cutting on the left, which was once known as George Town Chapel Church Street and is now known as Cheppal Church Street. To make it plainer, this is the street that divides the properties of the Bharathi Women's College and Bishop Corrie Higher Secondary School. The whole area is also known as B.R. Thottam, which originally stood for Bundar Rama Garden. As to who Bundar Rama was, I have no clue.

Reaching the end of Chapel Church Street, you take a right and look to your right and that is where the Church is, set in the middle of a fairly large compound. Hemming it in on all sides are later constructions – a kindergarten school on the left and the house of the pastor on the right. The church's façade and much of its interiors have been modernised, but then it is still standing, which is something.

The Chapel owes its existence to Dr. Richard Hall Kerr. Born in Dublin, on February 3, 1769

as the elder son of the Rev. Lewis Kerr, he came from a family that had a long ecclesiastical connection. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1788 and after a brief but unsuccessful journey to America, he returned home to be ordained as a Deacon in 1789. He then embarked on June 5, 1790. A couple of years later, he desired to return to Ireland, in particular to obtain priestly ordination, for which he was under age when he had originally left home. Having embarked on board the ship *Perseverance*, he found himself offloaded in Madras owing to his having contracted a fever. Recuperating at St. Thomas' Mount, he befriended the Hon. Basil Cochrane (he of Cochrane's Canal fame) and at the latter's advice began work on establishing a seminary "on a respectable and extensive scale" in Black Town. This was successful and he came to the notice of Sir Charles Oakley, Governor, who appointed him a chaplain of the East India Company, to be stationed with the 4th battalion of European Infantry at Ellore.

Arriving in Ellore, Kerr was to discover that the residents of the place did not have a building for worship and set about collecting money for the same. Within a short while, a considerable sum was collected and to this the Government assured him an addition of 1,000 pagodas. Buoyed by this, Kerr set about the con-

struction of a church. In the interim, he married Miss Eliza Falconer of Madras, on August 16, 1794. The next year brought several difficulties – the Board of Directors in London suspended his appointment, chiefly on the grounds that a Governor of Madras did not have the powers to issue such orders. This was, however, appealed against by the then incumbent, Lord Hobart. In the meanwhile, Mrs Kerr fell seriously ill and even while she was recuperating came orders that the troops were to leave Ellore and so work on the church was to be stopped immediately. This was to leave Kerr considerably embarrassed financially. But he was saved by an anonymous letter that contained a gift of 500 pagodas together with the instruction that he ought not to search for the donor but acknowledge receipt by means of thanks published in the *Madras Courier*!

That almost Dumas-esque episode was to be a turning point. In 1796 came the gratifying news that Dr. Andrew Bell was leaving Madras and the Government had appointed Kerr to succeed him as the Superintendent of the Male Orphan Asylum in Egmore. Shortly thereafter came the news that the Board of Directors in London had relented and agreed to confirming his chaplaincy. In September 1796, Kerr was appointed Junior Chaplain of Fort

(Continued on page 8)

Following the Ramzan trail

● by Kombai S. Anwar

Triplicane is the part of Madras that offers the best festive feel during Ramzan. To experience and soak in a bit of history, around 60 heritage enthusiasts assembled at the Muhammadan Public Library to participate in a Ramzan Walk I led. The library, at the junction of Wallajah Road and Triplicane High Road, was the ideal starting point to introduce the participants to the history of the Muslim community in Madras. Though Islam came to Tamizhagam even as it was spreading across Arabia in the 7th Century and over a period of time resulted in the evolution of the Tamil Muslim community (which is spread across the State), it was the Nawab of Arcot moving residence to Madras in the 1760s that brought in a large Urdu-speaking Muslim community to the city.

Though the Arcot Nawab's history began with the Mughal conquest of much of this region in the late 17th Century, Muhammad Ali belonging to the Wallajah clan, which was founded by Nawab Anwar-ud-Din in

1744, is the person who is most connected with Madras. 'Wallajah' was a title conferred by the Mughal emperor on Anwar-ud-Din's son Muhammad Ali, upon the

palace at Chepauk, the neighbouring area, adjoining the story of the next important landmark in our itinerary at the

Walk – to get to know your city's people

What is *rumani semiya* and what do you make out of it?

Is there a recipe for this *semiya*?

Some sixty people recently learnt the answers on Triplicane High Road.

They had joined researcher-film maker Kombai Anwar on a trip around Triplicane to get a feel of the mood of Ramzan which ended with the celebration of Eid on Monday.

Organising Walks in a chaotic world isn't easy. No wonder two policemen on patrol stopped when they noticed a large crowd in the campus of the Mohammedan Public Library and wanted to know why we were here. They appreciated the intent and suggested we avoid causing traffic jams as we walked down.

The jams did occur as people who were new to this part of our city stopped and stared, asked questions, listened to anecdotes from Anwar's

latter's capture of Pondicherry along with the English. When Wallajah moved from Arcot to Madras in the 1760s and built his

Triplicane Parthasarathy temple, developed into the residences of the nobility and others working for the Nawab.

The East India Company in honour of their trusted ally had named the Fort St. George gate leading to Chepauk palace as the Wallajah Gate and the road that leads to the Chepauk Palace is still known as Wallajah Road. It was on this road that we assembled and the group was told about the Tamil Muslim community, the Urdu Muslim community as well as other communities in the city, such as the Gujarati Bohras, Kutchi Memons, Malayalam-speaking Mapilas, Konkani-speaking Nawayats and Telugu Muslims.

The Muhammadan Public Library itself is more than 150 years old and owes its beginnings to Edward Balfour, an East India Company surgeon who was instrumental in setting it up. The library has books gifted by the King of Egypt and contributions from the Nawabs, the Governor General, the Governor and others.

As it was evening, a time when traffic on Triplicane High Road becomes unmanageable, making it difficult to be heard amidst all the din, I narrated the



At the Wallajah Mosque during the Ramzan Walk.

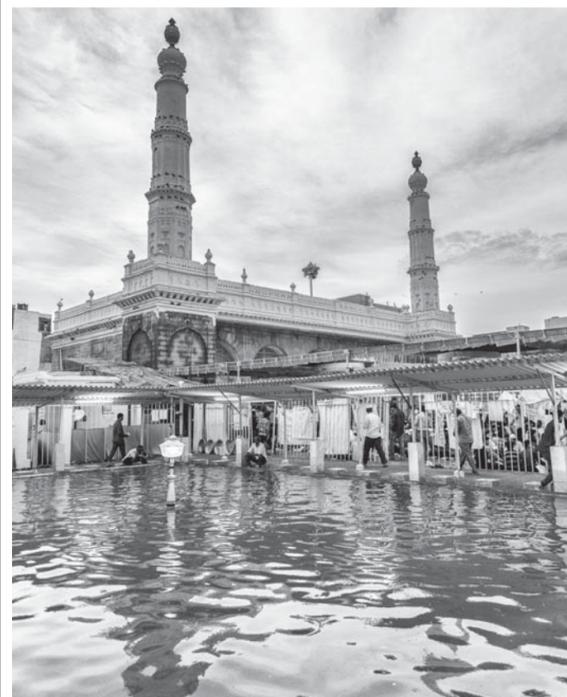
pass in front of the *Kaman Darwaza*. Today, the *Kaman Darwaza* still stands with 'Azeempet' emblazoned on it.

Story heard, the Group made its way down Triplicane High Road, past an old publishing firm, Sahul Hameed & Sons, and Adam Market, before it briefly stopped to take a look at the *Kaman Darwaza*. Then it made its way through shops selling *attar* (perfumes), books and other essential items required in a Muslim's religious life, till it came to the *Rumani semiya* sellers on the pavement. *Rumani semiya* is mostly handmade in Muslim homes and goes into the making of *Sheer Kurma*. Towards the last week of the month of Ramadan, the pavements of Triplicane High Road, adjacent to the Big Mosque, are crowded with the *Rumani semiya*-sellers.

The next stop was the *Masjid-e-Anwari* on Big Street. This simple mosque that opens into a courtyard is named after Nawab Anwar-ud-Din and is believed to have been built by him. Then it was on to our final destination, the Wallajah Mosque compound. As you enter the compound it is difficult to miss the large beautiful white building that appears on the left. Today a lodge for weary travelers, it was the Ottoman Turkish consulate in the early 20th Century, when members of the Badsha family were the Turkish Consuls. The Badsha family helped in the building of the Hamede-Hedjaz railway line by the Ottomans, which would later become the target of Lawrence of Arabia.

The Wallajah mosque, a very Muslim religious edifice, is a fine example of the secular traditions of this country. Inside the mosque, above the *mihrab* where the priest stands and conducts the prayer, is a chronogram composed by Raja Makhhan Lal Kherad, a Hindu officer who served Wallajah. It was constructed in 1794. As the mosque was getting filled with Muslims

(Continued on page 10)



The tank by the Wallajah Mosque.



(Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's questions are from June 16th to 30th. Questions 11 to 20 relate to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. On June 29th, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the centenary celebrations of which iconic place in Gujarat associated with Mahatma Gandhi?
2. The Golden Jubilee of the inauguration by Barclays Bank at Enfield of this feature, that is a part of everyone's life now, was celebrated on June 27th. What?
3. The European Union's competition watchdog recently slapped a 2.42 billion Euro fine, the largest-ever fine in an EU anti-trust case, on a tech giant. Name the company.
4. Champion shuttler Kidambi Srikanth became the first Indian to win back-to-back Superseries titles. Name the two tournaments.
5. Which former ISRO chairman is to head the new nine-member panel set up by the HRD Ministry to frame a new National Education Policy (NEP)?
6. Singapore's Imran Khawaja is the first deputy chairman of which powerful sports body that is headed by an Indian?
7. According to the 2017 Revision of World Population Prospects released by the United Nations recently, India would surpass China to become the world's most populous country by which year?
8. Which iconic edifice in Mumbai has acquired an 'image trademark', under the Trademark Act of 1999, making it is the first building in the country to acquire IP rights protection for its architectural design?
9. With which Indian company has Lockheed Martin signed a pact to produce its famous F-16 fighters in India?
10. Which bustling South Indian city became the latest to have a metro rail on June 17th?

* * *

11. How did 18-year old Md. Rifath Shaarook of Pallapatti, Karur District, make news in Space exploration on June 22nd?
12. Name the four cities from the State that were added to the Centre's Smart Cities Mission on June 25th.
13. Where in Chennai did Larsen & Toubro launch its first indigenously built Floating Dock (FDN-2) to repair Indian Navy ships?
14. Which educational institution now stands on what was once the Elphinstone Park, Adyar?
15. What first did Krishna Kumar-sinhji Bhavsinhji, the last Maharaja of the Gohil dynasty, record in post-independence Madras State?
16. Which church has the higher steeple: St. Andrew's Kirk or St. George's Cathedral?
17. Apart from the Vishnu *theertham*, which are the other four holy *theerthams* in the Kairavini Pushkarini at Parthasarathy Temple in Triplicane?
18. According to Company records from 1721, what was the general name given to the sandy area bounded by the sea (east), the winding course of the Cooum and the Long or Mylapore Tank (west), Government House bridge (north) and Cenotaph Road corner (south)?
19. What was the name of the company that John Binny founded in 1903 that later became Binny & Co.?
20. Who built the 'Ayiravilakku' building near Peter's Road for the assemblage of the Shias during the Muharram mournings?

(Answers on page 10)

● S. Viswanathan looks at the two long-standing 'Make in Tamil Nadu' units that recently celebrated golden jubilee.

Growing to a billion dollars



N. Sankar.

Sanmar Chairman Sankar's grandfather Sankaralinga Iyer promoted India Cements and the Indo-Commercial Bank. His son K.S. Narayanan and that brilliant find of Sankaralinga Iyer, T.S. Narayanaswamy, launched spectacular expansion of the Group's activities. In the 1960s, Chemicals and Plastics India Ltd. (Chemplast) pioneered the production of PVC from the renewable agriculture resources of molasses, a by-product of sugar mills. Sankar joined Chemplast on his return to India after doing an MS in chemical technology at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago. He pithily describes the transformation from the day he joined Chemplast on May 4, 1967 to its Golden Jubilee celebrations on May 4, 2017: "It has sustained its growth while being true to its culture of a fair deal for all, innovation and excellence in implementation. If its first year of operation was among the toughest, the Company's 50th year performance is the best in its history, with record production and sales. The Company which started with an annual capacity of 6,000 tonnes of PVC now has an aggregate capacity of 3.66 lakh tonnes."

The demise of Narayanaswamy in March 1968 put a lot of load on the young shoulders of Sankar who thereafter steered the Company through the tough, uncertain, controlled years and the more challenging, competitive, liberalised era after 1991.

A major decision was the acquisition of Mettur Chemicals and Industrial Corporation from the Seshasayee Group that was supplying the vital chlor-alkali chemicals needed by Chemplast and also Metchem that pioneered production of silicon wafers in the country. Sanmar Group contributed richly to the prosperity of the Mettur-Salem region with its cluster of factories, constantly expanding capacities and focus on technology. Production activities in diverse fields extended to Cuddalore and Madras.

A special feature of the Group has been the focus on zero liquid discharge. This focus has sharpened and expanded through the decades. As part of its Golden Jubilee celebration, the Company donated a crore of rupees to IIT-Madras to set up a zero liquid discharge laboratory and for research on the vital concept.

M.P. Taparia of Supreme Industries, a large consumer of PVC, said that the present consumption of PVC in India is 3 million tonnes and local production is just 1.3 million tonnes. The industry has been registering a 12 to 15 per cent growth annually and, thus, Chemplast Sanmar has the potential to expand capacity to a million tonnes in quick time.

For 2016-17 Chemplast Sanmar group had a turnover of a billion dollars with the flagship Company clocking nearly half of this. The group is well-poised for quantum growth. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*).

Nearly 75 talks, walks, for Madras Week

(Continued from page 1)

recently celebrated the 125th anniversary of the High Court building, will be organising several events in August.

Perhaps indicative of the success of Madras Week as a means of creating an awareness about the City and its heritage is the number of institutions that come forward each year to celebrate the city. The celebrations have also spread to the suburbs such as Tiruvanmiyur, Nanganallur and Tambaram. Private apartment blocks and various societies plan their own events.

Those who are planning events are requested to send in details by email to the following IDs:

editor@madrasmusings.com
and

themadrasday@gmail.com
by July 22nd (first call) and August 10th (second call). Details so received will be put up on the web site www.themadrasday.in and also the mobile app Madras Week. In addition, a multi-page booklet with programmes will also be published and distributed closer to the date of the event by *Madras Musings*, whose website is www.madrasmusings.com

From Lit. to nuts and bolts



Suresh Krishna.

My association with Suresh Krishna goes back to the 1960s when I entered journalism. We used to meet at the office of S.N. Ramasami, the brilliant advertising manager of the TVS Group – a freedom fighter in white *khadi*, a four cubit *dhoti* and *jibba*, extremely knowledgeable and with a blunt exterior and a soft heart. Suresh was just back after studying literature (not the traditional Engineering or Accounts common for scions of business families) in Germany.

He describes his entry into business: "Uncle T.S. Srinivasan asked me to take charge of bolts and nuts manufacturing in the small-scale sector at the Ambattur Industrial Estate. I hadn't the least idea then on the technology or process, but the machinery supplier provided inputs on these. I went into the details, and learned the techniques of cold forging and extrusion by experience and close involvement."

In those years, the field was dominated by Fit Tight Nuts and Bolts P. Ltd., Bombay, and the British company Guest, Keen, Williams that was supplying bolts and nuts for the Railways and other large customers in the engineering sector. When Fits Tight Nuts and Bolts had a labour problem which led the management to close down the shop, there was a windfall opportunity for Sundaram Fasteners Ltd. (SFL). The Company was alert enough to grab it. SFL built its own plant in the huge Padi complex, thoughtfully conceived and developed by T.S. Srinivasan and in quick time became a dominant supplier of bolts and nuts.

Suresh expanded his horizons, initially as the Chairman of CII Southern Region and, subsequently, as the President of CII at the national level. This provided rich opportunities to interact with policy-makers and also observe business organisations at the national and global level. I remember the punishing schedule of his travelling thousands of miles for almost 24 days a month on CII business. This exposure gave him his credentials as a reliable and effective business leader. Opportunities for expansion increased. General Motors offered him the opportunity to supply radiator caps as original equipment. Suresh transplanted a British plant to Padi and in quick time emerged a prized vendor for GM.

Suresh constantly focused on systems and quality. I remember the passion with which he pursued the Japanese concept of total productivity management (TPM). He invited the TPM guru Yamaguchi from Japan and passionately pursued the TPM concept. I remember his success in taking productivity of machines from around 35 per cent to over 80 per cent, resulting in savings on capital investment and surging profits.

Yet another pioneering contribution of SFL relates to his foray into manufacturing of fasteners in China. SFL was the earliest to make bold to set up a plant in China despite issues relating to language, distance etc. Later, SFL acquired a precision forge unit in the UK. These exposures further helped in the cross-fertilisation of manufacturing practices.

The most notable factor of SFL relates to its man-management. Articulate Suresh spends time liberally addressing his workers in all his plants and establishes close rapport with them. The liberal pay packages and other benefits have built loyalty. Suresh refers with satisfaction to the hundreds of SFL workers providing quality education to their children who are employed today across the globe. The focus on human relations and the paternalistic concerns explain the unit not losing a single day of production due to industrial relations' issues.

Wife Usha headed with distinction Upasana Finance and has been richly contributing to the growth of SFL and Suresh. Daughters Arathi and Arundathi are now at the helm managing SFL.

During 2016-17 SFL had a turnover of Rs. 3,000 crore with a third of it coming from exports. It has 27 plants employing over 9,000 persons. Suresh and his team certainly know the nuts and bolts of successful entrepreneurship – (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*).

● MGR's Birth Centenary was remembered with a book release in...

A new landmark in Chennai

To many old Chennai residents, the building constructed for the Secretariat in *Government Estate*, and later converted into a multi-speciality hospital, has been a disappointment – its monstrous proportions certainly devoid of art and grace in design. The new *Kalaivaanar Arangam* in the *Estate* is some compensation – beautifully executed as it is and sporting a commanding presence at a vantage point on Wallajah Road. Commissioned earlier this year, it has the potential to host prestigious national and international conferences when the requisite



support facilities and equipment are furnished. The *Arangam*, meant to celebrate the memory of N.S. Krishnan (NSK), that highly popular artiste of Tamil cinema, has turned out to be probably the best among all the memorials in the City for public personalities.

The new *Arangam* has been raised on the site of the original building which was built as a New Assembly Hall in the early 1950s at a cost of Rs. 10 lakh when it was found that the one in Fort St. George was not able to seat the 375 legislators expected to be elected in 1952. It was declared open in 1952 and,



Kalaivaanar Arangam.

on the very next day, the Assembly met in it with C. Rajagopalachari as Chief Minister. With the creation of Andhra Pradesh in 1953, Assembly strength fell to 205 and it was decided to move back to Fort St George. The building was converted into a children's theatre, *Balar Arangam*. In 1974, it was named after *Kalaivaanar* N.S. Krishnan. In

2009, as part of the development of the new Secretariat complex project, the building was demolished and a new *Arangam* with all modern facilities promised. This has been done at a cost of Rs. 63 crore and the building was inaugurated in 2016, but was not available for use till earlier this year.

The fully air-conditioned facility has seats for 1,100 persons in the second-floor auditorium and about 1,300 persons in the third-floor multi-purpose hall, each with its own lobby. The structure has about 50,000 square feet of space on each of its four floors – with the ground floor housing administration offices, utility rooms, store room, tool room and other service facilities, and the first floor serving as a large lobby.



A museum in memory of MGR



Are you (a) an MGR fan? (b) curious about movie memorabilia? (c) care about politics? (d) a history buff? (e) All or none of the above but have time on your hands? If you answer (e), then head for Arcot Road in T'Nagar to the MGR Memorial House.

There are a number of personal effects of the actor-political leader that you can see. Primly parked in the centre of the ground floor hall is a green Ambassador TMX 4777. Also on display in the 17-room house are his distinct dark glasses, fez cap, a set of his *dhoti* and shirt along with the robe he wore when he was awarded a doctorate. Among other personal belongings are his wrist watch with a metal band, weights and *karalakattais* he lifted for body-building, English and Tamil books on a dozen shelves, a pair of his slippers and shoes, a visiting card and the bat presented by Kris Srikanth. There's even the admission card issued to

him by Apollo Hospitals in October 1986, mentioning the name of Dr B.R. Subramanian. And the cast and bandage that he wore around his neck after he was shot in 1967.

It is common knowledge that he had the highest regard for his mother because his father had died young. So it's a revelation to see a picture of MGR's father Maruthur Gopalan.

In a room under lock and key are copies of the Tamil papers *Kudiyarasu*, *Nam Nadu*, *Dravida Nadu*, *Mandram* and, in English,

the movie that also made Jayalalithaa famous, a couple of his fencing swords and, what is startling, is the stuffed lion that appeared in the 1968 movie *Adimai Pen*. Any number of film mementos among the 136 MGR films (1936-77) that ran for 100 days and a whole lot of pictures of his movie scenes are to be seen here.

There are enough exhibits for students of political history too. MGR's Tamil Nadu Assembly ID card in his first tenure as an MLA (1967-71),

nidhi, the mammoth crowds at his meetings, swearing-in as Chief Minister three times, holding the hand of a little boy at the inauguration of the noon meal scheme, with Mother Teresa and Farooq Abdullah, garlanding Pope John Paul, with the first Indian cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma, Prince Charles, and with his associate K.K. Selvam, the sitting DMK MLA representing the Thousand Lights constituency, with doctors after his kidney transplant in the U.S. and many more.

Open from 9 am to 5 pm on all days except Tuesdays, the house is nondescript but for the signage outside and a bust of MGR under a *mandapam* within the compound alongside the road. It was bought by the matinee idol in 1970 and served as his political office, MGR Productions office, and, later, as an official residence of the Chief Minister. After his passing away in 1987, more built-up area was added and the house became a memorial. It was opened in 1990. Managed for a long time by MGR Charities, first headed by N.C. Raghavachari and later M. Rajendran, a High Court Judge now administers it. There are ten well-informed staff working there on a daily basis. Entry is free.

● by T.K. Srinivasa Chari

The Hindu and *Homeland* dating back to the 1930s.

Among the movie memorabilia are a camera trolley and a picture of MGR wielding it, the monocular we saw in the blockbuster *Aayarathil Oruvan* used by MGR, M.N. Nambiar and Nagesh who played seafarers,

representing the DMK from the St. Thomas' Mount constituency, his Bharat Ratna citation, 1-1000 rupee notes bearing his date of birth, pictures of him without specs along with Periyar E.V.R., with Kamaraj, having a hearty laugh with his one-time associate M. Karuna-



(Continued on page 8)

90+ and still going strong

The Genial Doctor Dr. H.V. Hande

The only Minister to receive the B.C. Roy Award has been Dr. H.V. Hande, former Tamil Nadu Health Minister, and better known as 'The Genial Doctor'. He has been serving the underprivileged for over six decades. Three times MLA, twice MP and twice Health Minister, he has had a long innings in politics too.

Straddling many eras in politics and medicine, has been a remarkably memorable experience. "Politics in the early years post-Independence meant doing something constructive for the people. We even conducted study circles where MLAs would learn how to ask the right questions, optimise their time in Parliament and so on. It is disappointing to see today, the acute regression in politics and politicians! And in medical practice, while earlier, among 100 patients, I would find one with Diabetes, now I find four in ten!! People spent less than five per cent of their total income on medicine then. Nowadays, people live longer, but with poorer quality of lives. It's saddening," rues Dr. Hande.

"Normally, I wake up at 5.45 am, and the first thing I do is hurry to the eastern side of my

terrace to watch the sun rise! I do this every day, almost... about 200 days out of 365 maybe!" he reveals, with a disarming smile. "Between 8.30 and 9 am, I do my rounds of the in-patients at my hospital. Often, listening to their troubles or sharing an interesting anecdote that they relate to, improves their mood greatly. From 9.30 am to 12.30 I see my out-patients. I see to it that no patient is denied medical treatment in my clinic because they

● by
Shobha Menon

are short of money. Happy patients make me happier!

"I remember many years ago, around midnight, a baby was brought to our hospital with epileptic fits. My wife gave the medicine in a *paladai*. Two decades afterward, the child's father became DMK secretary of the area and invited me for his son's wedding and I shared the dais with M.K. Karunanidhi, my political opponent then! There was more camaraderie in the politics of those times.

"Following lunch and a little rest, I spend an hour or so reading and writing, on political his-

tory. I am fascinated by the nuggets that I chance upon all the time." A popular speaker, Dr. Hande's topics are diverse. "Making my speech relevant to different audiences is a challenge I enjoy. I still remember my first speech in my late 20s when I had to be pushed onto the stage because I was so nervous. Conveying my thoughts on different issues to diverse groups is motivating. It also helps to make meaningful connections."

Dr. Hande enjoys all kinds of Classical music – Amjad Ali Khan, Ravi Shankar, Bhimsen Joshi, Madurai Mani Iyer or Mozart! And, he says, he is always excited when he chances upon interesting books from friends and lawyers that help with his writing on political history. On his book on Ambedkar and the Constitution, an analysis of the thought process behind Constitution makers, Dr. A.P.J. Kalam has recorded, "This book should become an important guide for the legal and political community." In spite of his mother tongue being Kannada, and his schooling in Telugu medium schools, Dr. Hande has translated the voluminous *Tamil Kamba Ramayanam* from Tamil into English prose!

"Challenges as you grow older are normal, in terms of health and reflexes. Just be careful with your diet and try to be mentally alert, so you can keep physiologically going. I am on top of the world when patients go in peace and good health from my hospital. Literary work keeps me mentally active too. And when I feel down, I just have to take rest for a day, and I'm back fighting fit!



Dr. H.V. Hande.

"What you experience at the peak of your active life, you cannot expect as the years go by. As you grow older there may be many instances where you can feel 'marginalised', but just ignore it and do what you love, usefully. As Shakespeare said, 'Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more!' I have no regrets."

However, he adds, "When I think of the sort of world we are leaving our children and grandchildren, I do feel concerned. I also realise I cannot stop what is happening, and have to practise acceptance. I am hopeful that the younger generation will be

able to stand up more for what is right!"

Winding down, Dr. Hande says, "After my evening clinic from 6 pm to 8 pm, and a light dinner, I settle down reading my many newspapers and catch up with the happenings in and around the country. I still write long-hand, and manage to write at least four days a week. Those Sundays when I have a 'clinic holiday', and there are no speaking engagements, are as enjoyable as a sweet *laddoo*... so much time to spend reading and writing!! And yes, I do enjoy the occasional wedding get-togethers where I am able to catch up with old friends. Life is good!" he smiles.

The Church-builder

(Continued from page 4)

St. George. But the Asylum remained his first love and there, in 1798, he introduced at his expense, a printing press complete with types and other equipment. The orphans were trained in this technology and, by 1799, the Orphan Asylum Press was sufficiently well established for the Government to begin using it. By 1812, long after Kerr was dead, it was estimated that the Government saved 4,000 pounds annually by contracting its printing requirements to the Press. A better known product of the press was the *Madras Almanac*, a veritable compendium on the Presidency that it brought out for

years. Many years later the Government acquired the press which moved to Mount Road, where it functioned for a long time. The Department of Industries put up its offices on land fronting the press and that is today the Poompuhar building. The premises of the erstwhile press were demolished recently to make way for Metro Rail development.

To get back to Kerr, it was in 1796 that he first mooted the idea that a chapel ought to be built in Black Town. This coincided with a petition sent in by 100 Christian residents of the area asking for a Protestant Chapel to be built in the area. Kerr volunteered his assistance and further requested the Government that its 1,000 pagodas, committed to the Ellore Church but lying unspent, together with construction materials that he had collected, be utilised for the proposed chapel in Black Town. The Government was more than willing and there remained the matter of selecting a suitable site for the construction. It was Kerr who went about scouting for land and it was he who eventually zeroed in on the spot where the chapel now stands.

(To be continued)

A new landmark

(Continued from page 7)

The auditorium and the multi-purpose hall are about 12,000 square feet each and the two mini-halls together account for 6,000 square feet. Thus, the core usage area is 30,000 square feet out of the total floor space of the entire structure of 2,00,000 square feet. The core-to-total area is only 15 per cent, which leaves you with the impression that overall space usage efficiency and balance could have been better. Vast areas available in the lobbies give a bare impression; parts of them could be usefully converted for office and back-up facilities like computers, printers, copying machines to support conferences. At present, users have no support facilities other than the bare auditorium and hall space and related

equipment like microphones and projection-ware. The absence of free wi-fi is also another negative feature for a conference facility of this size and prestige.

The magnificent Corinthian columns on the frontage and the imposing sheet glass covering the combined height of three floors form a graceful totality that adorns this part of Chennai. There is flood lighting of the elevation but is not used except on special occasions. The writer requested the authorities to consider illumination for about three hours in the evenings to highlight this grand new showpiece. But he also expressed his concern that this beautiful facility should not go the way of *Valluvar Kottam* because of the divided responsibility for upkeep and maintenance.

A COLLEGE'S GENESIS

(Continued from page 4)

The section dealing with the origin and growth of the institution compiled by the renowned Sanskrit scholar, T.M.P. Mahadevan, Head of the Department of Philosophy, is a comprehensive account of its journey. The book also contains a profile of Pachaiyappa Mudaliar and an account of the legal battle following his death, written by the noted historian Rao Sahib C.S. Srinivasachari, an alumnus. The section on endowments and scholarships acknowledges the contributions made over the years by several well-known names of the times, such as Gazulu Lakshminarasu Chetti, Raja Goday Narayana Gajapati Raju, Dewan V. Ramiengar (an alumnus), T. Subbaroya Mehta and Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar.

NOSTALGIA AS HISTORY – 4

From Dewanic heights to tragic collapse

The last book in this selection is also the best produced. It is *A Dewan's Diary*, the biography of Nemmal Pattabhirama Rao, civil servant, Dewan at the court of the Raja of Cochin, and Madras entrepreneur.

Pattabhirama Rao kept a meticulous journal. His daughter writes, "the little red book that my father carried with him to every place he moved for his transfers... had a small lock and a miniature key which was carefully guarded." Although while he was alive the journal was kept private, it was also addressed to 'My dear children...' and meant to be read by them after his death. It is full of detail regarding his life and times, but much historical research has obviously been done by Pattabhirama Rao's descendants to flesh out the history of his family.

In the combined Madras Presidency, there were many individuals from Andhra who contributed to the development of Madras, either through government service or through private business. Pattabhirama Rao did both. Born in 1862 in a Golconda Vyapari community (it was a Vaishnavite Brahmin community of traders – *vyaparis* – in diamonds from the Golconda mines), Pattabhirama did his Bachelor's degree and joined the Revenue Department. From 1902 to 1907 he was Dewan to the Raja of Cochin, where he is said to have excelled in effecting the financial turn-around of the

kingdom. He retired in 1907 due to ill-health and returned to Madras where he started life again as an entrepreneur. He became a contractor supplying bricks for several governmental buildings in Madras that were being built by T. Namperumal Chetty, the master builder of the time. The bricks made at his

• by
Janaki Venkataraman

kiln were used to build the National Art Gallery and *Ripon Building*. As his brick kilns were in Aminjikarai, he built a house for himself close to them called *Sree Ram Bagh*. The grounds of the house extended from the old level crossing near Loyola College upto Poonamallee High Road. The present day Nelson Manickam Road which connects these two was his private driveway!

Pattabhirama Rao later closed his kilns and entered the business of car dealership. Motor cars were new to Madras. The first motor car had made its appearance in the city in 1901. Namperumal Chetty was the first Indian to own a car in the city. Later, the business of car distribution sprouted in the city. The Madras Motor Company that Pattabhirama Rao acquired had originally been a cycle import company and had its offices in Broadway which, even today, continues to be the cycle hub of Madras. It was the principal distributor for Hercules cycles. When it went into

motor trading, had set up office in the *Kardyl Building*, now known as the *Bharat Insurance Building*. It later moved to Madurai, but before that the owners sold the company to Pattabhirama Rao. It was said to be a sinking company and there were not many potential buyers. But Rao roped in other family members and made his two sons, Krishnamurthy and Ramamurthy, the directors of the Company. The Company then took up the dealership for Citroen cars in South India.

Things went well until 1929 when the Great Depression and foreign exchange fluctuations led to the collapse of the Company. The Company was also unable to collect its outstanding from members of royal families who had bought cars on credit and found themselves unable to pay up. Debt mounted and the Company went into liquidation. *Sree Ram Bagh*, the family home, along with the assets of the entire extended family was attached. The receivers allowed Rao to stay on in his house during his lifetime. He lived there till his death in 1937. The house was later converted into an industrial estate and this too has now given way to the Ampa Skywalk building.

Rao died a broken man because of his financial losses. In the pages of his journal, he writes to his children detailing whatever assets he still had left to leave them and how they should carefully invest and multiply that money. Rao also had a large house in Madanapalle in



Standing: Nemmal Pattabhirama Rao. Seated (left to right): his wife Kanakamma, daughter Padmasini, his niece Rukmini Lakshmi pathy and baby Krishnamurthy – 1905.

Andhra where many of the Nemmal family lived and where he himself chose to live for many years. This house has now been turned into a travellers' bungalow.

Pattabhirama Rao's journal prominently displays the letter that Raja Rama Verma, the king of Cochin wrote to him on the eve of Rao's departure from his service. It is a touching letter full of appreciation for the many measures that Rao took to turn around the financial situation Cochin was in then. "In loyalty and faithfulness to me and my people, you are second to none," the Raja wrote. "I am sure that several of your good intentions will be remem-

bered by the people of Cochin with gratitude and thankfulness for centuries to come." The Raja and Rao continued to correspond for many years later out of friendship on the former's part and respect on the latter's.

The children and grandchildren of Nemmal Pattabhirama Rao have brought out this biography out of affection and respect for their ancestor. For the ordinary reader, this book offers something valuable, a peek into a world long gone, high values that have long since been eroded, and a closeness of familial relationships that seem to be fast vanishing.

(Concluded)

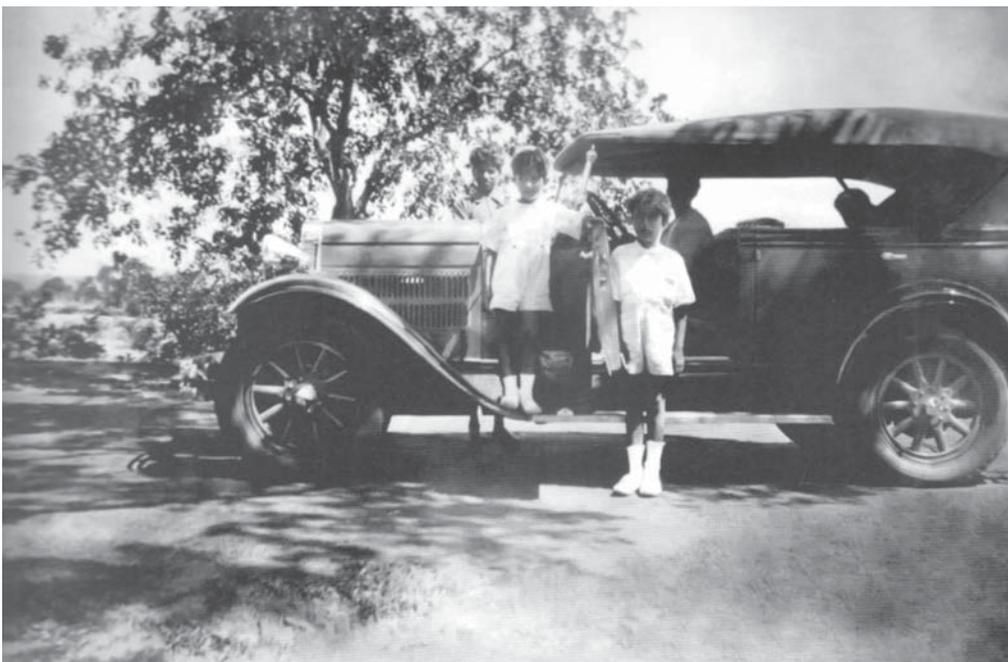
Tackling a shrub

(Continued from page 2)

- Clearing of native vegetation of any kind should be stopped. Such cutting may create conditions conducive for colonisation by *Prosopis*, apart from destroying habitats.
- Old, standing *Prosopis* trees surrounded by local plants or intertwined with climbers should not be removed. Together, the plants form little ecosystems. Clearing will damage these living systems.
- If any *Prosopis juliflora* plants are identified for removal, a study should be conducted to determine if any animal species are deriving any benefit from them. *Prosopis* should not be removed if the survival of

any plants or animals is affected.

- The reasons for water scarcity should be identified systematically and scientifically. Changes in the irrigation pattern or water usage in the area may have changed. *Prosopis juliflora* should also be studied scientifically to determine whether it affects the water table.
- Research should be conducted to verify whether any part of *Prosopis juliflora* or any vapours discharged by it are toxic.
- *Prosopis* growth that is being continuously managed for fodder and fuel (wood, charcoal) should not be removed. Removal will affect local economies and livelihoods. ♪



Getting ready for school.

EXPANDING THE CITY

(Continued from page 1)

A report card would show that all the civic agencies – the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), the Corporation, and Metrowater have fared poorly. The core areas, developed more than a century ago, get by on the basis of age-old infrastructure, all of it perpetually on the verge of collapse. The newer ones have next to nothing. Several of the latter still have open drains, septic tanks and no piped water supply. And this includes the so-called state-of-the-art IT corridor. As for transport, people in the periphery still struggle to get to the core areas and vice versa, which accounts for the horrendous bottlenecks in places such as the OMR. As a consequence, demand for housing in the inner city continues unabated. As for agricultural land, when did you last see it holding its own against real estate?

It is the same team of civic agencies that are going to take forward the task of urbanising the 7,000 odd sq.km. that will now become a part of the Chennai Metropolitan Area. With such a track record, can we hope for anything different from them? The futility of expanding territory under an existing civic agency has already been amply demonstrated by the expansion, as referred to above, of the Corporation of Chennai in 2011. It subsequently changed its name to the Corporation of Greater Chennai but on paper it has remained the same old bumbling behemoth, forever years behind on any development project. The floods of 2015 saw it struggling to maintain a semblance of service and it was only the presence of a very dynamic commissioner that saved the day.

The present expansion should also be viewed in conjunction with the High Court of Madras coming down hard on the sale of unauthorised lay-outs outside Chennai city limits. That has hit the real estate sector very hard. With legislation in place to bring all of these places within the Chennai Metropolitan Area, all such matters will be dealt with by the CMDA, thereby taking the question out of the purview of the Courts. Could there, after all, be more to this expansion than meets the eye? Time alone will tell.

Answers to Quiz

1. Sabarmati Ashram, 2. ATM, 3. Google, 4. Indonesia and Australian Opens, 5. K. Kasturirangan, 6. ICC, 7. 2024, 8. The Taj Mahal Hotel, 9. Tata Advanced Systems, 10. Kochi.

* * *

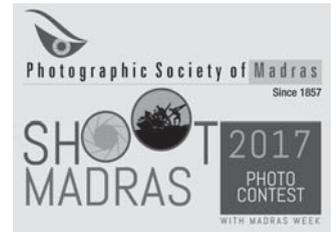
11. His KalamSat, launched by NASA, is the world's lightest satellite at 64 grams, 12. Tirupur, Tirunelveli, Thoothukkudi and Tiruchirappalli, 13. Kattupalli, north of Chennai, 14. St. Patrick's, 15. He was the first Indian Governor of Madras, 16. St. Andrew's Kirk (166½ feet, which is 27½ feet higher than that of St. George's), 17. Indra, Soma, Meena and Agni, 18. Choultry Plain, 19. Binny and Dennison, 20. Nawab Umdat-ul-Umara (1795-1801).



Till September 15: Drama of Turmoil – an exhibition by P.R. Sathish, C. Douglas, John Douglas, Gurunathan, Eleena Banik, Sundar Raju, Abul Kalam Azad. The exhibition has been curated exploring the beautiful and creative agony of turmoil in art in paintings and photographs (at Apparao Galleries, at Sandy's, Cenotaph Road and at Sandy's, Nungambakkam.)

Till July 27: The Magic Language of a Garden – by Sophie Jo, John Tun Sein, Agathe Patil, Diane De Valou, G. Subramaniam, Ganga Singh, Rajesh Patil and Sanjeeva Rao. A specially curated collection of artworks (at Apparao Galleries, The Leela Palace).

Till July 30: A group show by A. Rajmohan, N. Jagadeesan, N. Gopalakrishnan, V. Ravichandran and T.G. Thayumanavan (at DakshinaChitra).



The Photographic Society of Madras, sharing 158 years of its history with the City, is holding a photography contest for an exhibition during Madras Week. For contest details, visit: www.photomadras.org. Last date of submission: Monday, 7th August 2017 (Before 12.00 noon)

On the Ramzan trail

(Continued from page 5)

about to break their fast, the group was not able to go in and see the chronogram, but it did see another secular tradition of contemporary times, that of the volunteers of the Sufidar trust, mostly Hindu Sindhi volunteers, men and women, serving *Nonbu Kanji* (a sort of rice porridge with lentils) to those fasting.

The concept of *Nonbu Kanji* is a very Tamil Muslim tradition, something similar to the *Koozh* served in the Tamil month of Aadi by a section of Tamil Hindus. As the men in the group entered the mosque, the women took their place by the *dargah* along with other fasting Muslim women and were served the *Kanji* and dates with a few other accompaniments. When the time to break the fast came, the group, mainly non-Muslims, happily enjoyed the *Kanji*. Some of them, like Priya,

had gone light on their lunch, just to experience the hunger pangs that a fasting Muslim would feel. Sitting with thousands of fasting Muslims and experiencing the breaking of the fast was a moment to cherish for the group.

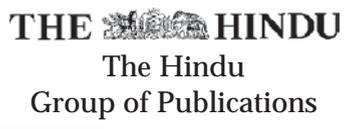
Once the fast was broken, the group assembled again to hear the story of Bahrul Uloom who is buried next to the mosque in the *dargah* by which the women had sat and broken the fast. Bahrul Uloom was a revered religious scholar, who was invited by Muhammad Ali Wallajah to settle in Madras. It is said that when the scholar reached Madras, Wallajah himself came out of the palace to carry him in a palanquin. Bahrul Uloom was paid one thousand rupees, a princely sum in the late 18th Century.

We discussed the Shia-Sunni divide, *Sharia*, and a whole lot of other issues facing

Muslims, while walking to the tomb of Quaid-e-Millat. Then it was time to talk about Muhammad Ismail Sahib, a Tamil Muslim from Tirunelveli, who became known as Quaid-e-Millat, the leader. He was the founder of the Indian Union Muslim League. After independence, even as Muhammad Ismail Sahib struggled for the Muslim cause, he also argued in the Constituent Assembly debates for Tamil to be made a national language. After his death in 1972, he was buried where Nawabs had been buried. From Wallajah to Muhammad Ismail, from monarchy to democracy, the heritage walk gave the group an understanding of the history as well as diversity of the Muslim community in Madras.

P.S: It was Vincent D'Souza who suggested this walk for the city since last year.

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