

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Govt. trying to kill our waterways?

(By The Editor)

On paper it is all there – our State is committed to protecting its waterways. It is forever in river-cleaning mode, spending billions of taxpayers' money for this and all the while its own agencies, departments and undertakings continue to pollute and impede the rivers as much as they can. This is the feeling that you get when you read the recent orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) when it came down heavily on State-owned power utilities for continuing to pollute the city's waterways.

It was in June that the NGT had first taken note of the continued pollution of the Buckingham Canal and the Kosasthalayar River, chiefly by the indiscriminate dumping of fly ash by the TANGEDCO-controlled North Chennai Thermal Power Station (NCTPS). The offending Government department had been asked to dredge the rivers and remove all the debris. This was duly done. But immediately thereafter, the NCTPS resumed discharging of fly ash into the rivers. According to environmental activists, over 300 acres of the Ennore Creek area are now covered by fly ash and other debris. Incensed at this, the NGT has asked the NCTPS to stop the discharge of ash within a week or face closure of the plant in entirety.

We are sure that in keeping with our tradition of being best while in fire-fighting mode, the plant officials will scramble and claim to have plugged the leaks at the end of the week. But what of the long term? There is every likelihood that the dumping will resume within a few months once the NGT has its attention diverted to other issues. It is a well-known fact that most of the pipelines that carry effluents and waste from the NCTPS are more than 25 years old and so cannot be in any way leak-proof on a long-term basis.

(Continued on page 2)



The new State VIP Guest House mimicking the Sydney Opera House.

Tasteless mimicry in heritage area

An addition to the architectural landscape of Chennai is a structure that has emerged in Government (Omandurar) Estate, next to the new *Kalaivanar Arangam*, to serve as State VIP Guest House. The elevation is touted as having been modelled on the world renowned Sydney Opera House, abutting the Sydney harbour in Australia!

The entire erstwhile Government Estate, called the Omandurar Estate, now has many new structures, of course, dominated by the mammoth fortress-like structure originally meant to house the Secretariat but subsequently made by a successor government into a multi-speciality hospital.

To heritage lovers and nostalgic Chennai residents, the

Secretariat-now-hospital building has been cause for disappointment – not over the public purpose that it serves but over the insensitivity of putting up a building of such monstrous proportions in a historical spot, a prime location in South India. It is of a design devoid of art and grace and totally at variance with colonial style buildings and historical structures of Indo-Saracenic architecture in the neighbourhood. To some extent, the new *Kalaivanar Arangam* has attempted to incorporate ancient temple style and Dravidian architectural features to keep up with the cultural character of this area.

The latest addition is a purposeless, swanky, pathetic imitation of the Sydney Opera House. Imitations never

become the equivalent of the original. They only invite derisive comparisons. Why this incongruous imitation in an area where enough architectural inspiration is available from the *Khalsa Mahal*, the *Humayun Mahal*, and the old colonial buildings in the neighbourhood?

● by A Special Correspondent

Heritage conservation through restoration and protection of ancient structures and their sites is only one aspect. When several major heritage structures and styles are predominant in an area – as in the Estate area – the neighbourhood is endowed with a heritage atmosphere and character acquired over several generations through history. As such, heritage neighbourhoods need to be defended as much as specific structures and sites. Ideally, private and public agencies should voluntarily desist from designing new structures that are out of character with the surrounding atmosphere. But voluntary restraint to avoid violation of a heritage atmosphere cannot be depended upon. Responsibility for

decisions on designs of new public buildings may often lie with a relatively lower level of the bureaucracy and, as such, it is too much to expect heritage sensitivity. Some broad regulation for surroundings of listed clusters of heritage structures and monuments and prior clearance of the design of new structures seems necessary.

When a building or cluster of buildings is listed as heritage, as part of a heritage code, and is incorporated into the local zoning plan, compliance should automatically apply to surrounding buildings and spaces within a specified radius of the declared site.

The *Handbook of Conservation of Heritage Buildings* published by the CPWD in fact recognises this principle of heritage atmosphere. "The Heritage comprises archaeological sites, remains, ruins, and monuments protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and their counterparts in the States, and also a large number of unprotected buildings, groups of buildings, neighbourhoods, and public spaces including landscapes and natural features which provide character and distinctive identity to cities", (emphasis added).

(Continued on page 2)



Sydney Opera House, a 'model' for our PWD?

Government trying to kill our waterways?

(Continued from page 1)

If this is the way a Government agency responds to a court order and if this is the way it treats national resources such as rivers, then what kind of an example is it setting to private agencies? India is a signatory to the Ramsar Agreement that aims to protect water bodies. This is "an intergovernmental treaty that embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the wise use, or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories," to quote from its website. To what purpose such agreements if they are not to be implemented at ground level? It is also worth recalling here that the part of Buckingham Canal that runs through our city is as good as lost chiefly because of the way the MRTS has been constructed over it, the pillars in the river beds and giant station

buildings cutting off entire sections of the waterway.

We also have repeated announcements of restoration of the Canal to "its former glory". We are not aware of what that means exactly but the latest announcement, made in 2016, was for a restoration plan costing Rs. 3,000 crore, to be taken up at the national level and spent across all the States through which the Canal flows. If organisations such as TANGEDCO continue to pollute the waterway, then how can such enormous projects for improvement make any impact?

There is a strong feeling among environmental activists that Government agencies view laws protecting rivers and lakes to be mere impediments in the way they continue to operate. Instances like this only go to strengthen such a view. It is high time penalties for pollution of water bodies are raised to punitive levels. Mere strictures will not do.

Tasteless mimicry in a heritage area

(Continued from page 1)

The Tamil Nadu Heritage Commission Act, 2012, could be suitably amended to widen the definition of heritage and archaeological monuments to ensure that the character and distinctive identity of the surrounding are undisturbed. It may also need widening the scope of powers to the Commission under section 11 (2) (k) which now deals with only regulating advertisement structures in heritage buildings.

Preservation confined to specific structures and sites can defeat itself if the protected structure is overwhelmed by culturally insensitive and socially irresponsible constructions in the immediate surrounding. It is even sadder if the offending party is a government agency that decides to mimic some unconnected tourist spot in a foreign country, mindless of

the damage it inflicts on our own heritage environment.

It might be argued that regulating the heritage environment is too far a cry when we are still trying to activate the government to restore hundreds of heritage structures all over the State. The suggestion may be ambitious but it is no sin to aspire.

As for the new building, it has about 20,000 sq.ft. of built area on the ground floor, 18,000 sq.ft. on the first floor and 16,000 sq.ft. on the second floor. In the building – yet to be electrified, furnished and landscaped – there are 40 guest rooms, two conference rooms and four meeting rooms besides a large dining area on the second floor, all of them air conditioned. It might take 3-4 more months for the building to be ready for use. The building is in about one lakh square feet of ground area.

From walkers' paradise to battlefield

Have you heard of the Boat Club area, Chief? Like Hamelin Town in Brunswick, to quote from the poem on the Pied Piper from the same city, the Boat Club area has the river Adyar on the southern side and a pleasanter spot you never spied. You know the place – where in summer the river lies at the bottom of the road and there is a boat club at the end of it. En route are homes of several of 'em toffs. And then in winter the river rises until the road is at the bottom of the river and the toffs referred to above club together, procure boats, and nimbly row away to safety.

During the days when the river resumes being its placid self, this area is what is known as a walkers' paradise. You will find people walking briskly around the main thoroughfares and the quiet side streets disturbed by nothing except the passing of a high-end car or two, the refined barking of a pure bred pedigreed dog or two and then sometimes the running in large numbers of black-cat commandos, who in the manner of all things government, have commandeered the best possible residence in the area, just on the edge of the river. Such is the sylvan peace of this neighbourhood that people from all over Chennai that was Madras and is now all set to become Greater Chennai, flock here to walk. The Man from Madras Musings is informed that even those living as far away as Anna Nagar, which if it had been in Europe would have been an independent nation, come here to walk. Being seen walking in Boat Club is said to be an indication of status, so MMM is told. As someone said to MMM the other day, if you are streetwalking in Chennai, it is best done in the Boat Club area. MMM is quite sure that by streetwalking the person had only exercise in mind and nothing else.

The Government, which as you know has only one agenda – namely to make life difficult for people – has evidently not liked the fact that too many people are walking in the Boat Club area. It therefore decided to break up such congregation, perhaps fearing another outbreak of a Jallikattu-like protest. MMM could have with confidence advised the powers-that-be that most of the likes who walk in that area cannot differentiate a Jallikattu from a jelly cat. Lacking a wise adviser like MMM, the Government got all jittery and decided to dig the place up, no doubt to prevent people from foregathering. This can be the only reason, for of real work there is none. Giant bobbins with cables have been rolled into position and deep trenches have been dug. In

short, the whole place looks like a battleground.

But, as MMM, noticed, the walkers are a hardy lot. They have decided to continue walking on whatever little road is left. The numbers have not reduced one bit and even those from Anna Nagar are still commuting on a daily basis, rather in the manner of wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings. And all these immigrants to the area bring their cars, which have to be parked on the few flat spaces still left, between the trenches and the bobbins. The space left for walking is down to a bare minimum, but that has not prevented the walkers from walking, the commandoes from commandeering the place for running, and vehicular life from hogging entire roads. The end result is that tempers are frayed and road rage is on the rise. It appears to MMM that only the Government is happy.

Madras Week again

Can you do a serious talk without your usual comedy, asked the Chief of The

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

Man from Madras Musings. To this MMM demurely dropped his eyelids and whispered that he would try. This being Madras Week time, the Chief scatters the seed of celebration high, wide and plentiful and, occasionally, when he falls short of a victim or two, ropes in MMM for sacrifices. The topic this time is on the socio-political perspective of Madras that became Chennai and Greater Chennai thereafter. As to how MMM is to go about this MMM has no idea and the Chief is not exactly helpful, what with his being busy rousing everyone to festive pitch.

MMM is therefore left to his devices and these, such as they are, are hampered by the diktat to avoid humour. One of the points that MMM has come up with is the complete absence of the local populace when it comes to work. Where have all the Tamils, once so many in the professions of construction, nursing, hair dressing, waiting at restaurants, driving and other such services, gone? There is a theory that the State has engineered a social revolution and all of our people are upwardly mobile and therefore look down on such activities. As a consequence, people from other States have come and filled the gaps. MMM has his doubts. He is of the view

that the good local is at the local bar, so kindly provided by the Government. There he has elevated himself and is now musing from on high, about life.

There is also another arena that has apparently consumed Tamilian time – a reality show. Titled Bigg Boss (yes, with two g's), it is a hand me down from the developed countries of the world, and having done its time in various Indian languages has now come to Tamil. World Star, he of Lotus Smile, is hosting it. And by way of gathering viewership has made some remarks about the Ministers in Government. The public servants referred to (at least that is what they said they were wanting to be when they came campaigning) have got riled no end and retaliated with accusations about World Star. Result? Many Tamils hooked on to the show. Then came World Star Lotus Smile's announcement that he was ruminating in the recesses of his *medulla oblongata* about the odds if he were to try his fortunes in the turnstiles which was his way of stating that he was thinking about entering politics. He can never state anything without using words of many syllables, several of which MMM suspects are yet to make it to a dictionary. Lotus Smile's ambitions, when duly translated to plain speak, riled the followers of Super Star who has forever kept us all guessing about whether he would enter politics, though MMM thinks that that bus has long gone. Result? Still more Tamils hooked on to the show.

Then came the piece-de-resistance. One of the stars in the reality show, who rejoices in the name of Painting, made a few sensible statements for a change. Result? Yet more Tamils hooked on to the show – many crores of them at last count. These right-thinking individuals began a campaign that Painting be made Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. It is that easy apparently. This riled every politician with similar ambitions in the State. Result? Far too many Tamils hooked on to the show. Social media exploded. Programme producer delighted. Advertisers laughed all the way to the bank. The channel broadcasting it is truly victorious. Lotus Smile is no doubt beaming from ear to ear so much that it is a wonder his lips are not meeting up at the back of his head. Painting's career, non-existent for long, has boomed. And it has not occurred to our brethren that they are being manipulated just to bump up viewership ratings.

With our people off tilting at such windmills who has the time to work? It is time to observe Madras Week.

– MMM

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

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Another reason

This has reference to the article that appeared on Chennai expanding its area, (MM, July 16th). This should also be viewed in the light of the ongoing water crisis.

The last time the CMA expanded its territory was chiefly to ensure that it had access to groundwater in the surrounding areas. The city was reeling under a drought then, as it is doing now and those whose water was being tapped were protesting, as they are now. Expanding the CMA will mean water can be drawn at will from villages within its jurisdiction. In effect, it is all being done to tide over something that better management and planning could have resolved otherwise. Just think, we had floods two years ago!

– Sriram V.

Unsafe pavements

Walkers and pedestrians in Kotturpuram are faced with several problems. It is probably the same all over Chennai. The pavement slabs are uneven, and with deep holes, coconut vendors, tea shops, destitutes snoozing, liquor bottles and other such obstacles on some of them, walking on the pavement is becoming a high risk adventure, rather than a healthy pleasure.

During traffic jams or peak hours on Gandhi Mandapam Road, some crazy motorbike riders overtake physically on the slabs of the pedestrian walkway. Due to this, and other reasons, a civilian, non-motor vehicle owner like me is forced to walk on the main Gandhi Mandapam Road itself. This is hazardous, with vehicles whizzing by.

Good, clean and safe pedestrian walks are the responsibility of the Corporation of Chennai. They can do much, much better than this for a basic aspect of civilian life.

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Accepting socialism

Nehru made a public call to JP and other Socialists to join his government so that he could usher in Socialism. At that time, Acharya Narendra Dev was convalescing in Perundurai Sanatorium. Governor Sri Prakasa asked me to render whatever help Dev wanted. I used to go in the evening, read the letters received and take dictation. On reading Nehru's call, Dev wrote a letter to Nehru stating that socialistic policies could not be imple-

mented unless the Congress Party accepted Socialism as its policy. A few Socialists joining the Government would not be helpful. Avadi Congress (MM, June 16th), which was held later, accepted a socialistic pattern of society as its policy. I was privileged to take down the dictation on this subject.

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Award to Dr. M.S.

I read with great awe that Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, at the ripe old age of 92+, is doing excellent work through the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation. He has invested all his earnings in a venture which continues to do great work for the improvement of our agricultural economy and in giving training to farmers in various fields.

Unfortunately he has not got due recognition from the Governmental authorities and an apt recognition of his work deserves a Bharat Ratna (long overdue).

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First tombstone

In the Quiz column (MM, July 1st), it is stated that the epitaph on the tombstone of Elizabeth Baker in St. Mary's churchyard in Fort St. George is the oldest (1652) British inscription (although in Portuguese) in India. But it is not so. The actual credit should go to that of John Mildenhall, who was buried in Agra.

Mildenhall, an English merchant, left London in 1599 and after a short sojourn in Persia made his debut at the Mughal court in 1603 (to be succeeded by William Hawkins, 1609 and Thomas Roe, 1616). In 1614, Mildenhall decamped with goods assigned for the Levant. Two of his countrymen hotly pursued him between Agra and Lahore. Tragically, Mildenhall took by mistake poisoned food originally intended for his pursuers and died. Another friend of his, Thomas Kerridge, used his influence with the Roman Catholics and got Mildenhall buried at the Catholic cemetery in Agra. The inscription in Agra (1614) is probably the oldest one for an Englishman in India.

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Even in the 1700s, book clubs were really about drinking and socialising

• A Madras Book Club member who regularly scans the web, sends us this feature saying, "It could well apply to our Club too".

In theory, book clubs are supposed to be about reading and discussing books. In practice, they are often more about hanging out with a group of people, drinking, gossiping, and generally having a nice evening. Depending on the percentage of the group that has actually read the book, it may be discussed, or it may not. The book is the excuse, not necessarily the point. It turns out it's always been this way.

Ever since the advent of book clubs in 18th Century England, when books were scarce and expensive, these organisations have been about more than reading. Book clubs were organised to help members gain access to reading material and to provide a forum for discussion of books the clubs held. But they were also about gossip and drinking. As the University of St. Andrews' David Allan writes in *A Nation of Readers*, "In most cases, food and alcohol in copious quantities, accompanied we may suspect by a considerable element of boisterous good humour, played an important part in the life of the book clubs."

In 18th Century England, book culture was blooming as ever more volumes were printed. As more books appeared, people invented new ways of accessing them. Libraries began to open, many of which were commercial circulating libraries that required a fee to join. As Abigail Williams reports in *The Social Life of Books*, recently published, these libraries had become fixtures by the 1740s. As urban literary culture spread through England's more provincial places, there may have been two hundred of them – or a thousand. (Estimates vary.)

These libraries weren't just places to find books, but social institutions as well. One famous library also had a billiard room, a public exhibition room, and a music library. "They were not the hushed environments that we now associate with libraries, but, at their best, elegant spaces



Parties where playwrights like Moliere read aloud were precursors to rowdy book clubs. ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY

full of people to converse with," Williams writes. Libraries even had a touch of controversy, as they gave people of different so-

• by
Sarah Laskow

cial classes access to books and offered women a place to congregate outside the home.

Book clubs were part of this literary culture. In book clubs today every member might buy his or her own copy of a book, but in the 18th Century, part of the point of the clubs was to pool resources in order to buy more books. Belonging to a book club meant having a larger personal library than you might otherwise have access to – you just had to share. There are few records of the activities of these early book clubs, but those that survive indicate that, as with today's book clubs, members intended to get together and talk about books, but social aspects were key selling points. As Williams writes, "Members often met in inns or public houses or coffeehouses, and the clubs were clearly perceived to offer more than merely access to

texts, because even readers with substantial book collections joined them."

In fact, in some cases, the social side may have been the primary attraction. In the 1960s, Paul Kaufman, a retired professor who became a bibliography consultant for the University of Washington, made an extensive study of 18th Century English libraries and book clubs, and found that, in at least a few cases, monthly dinners were a key feature and a factor that distinguished them from other libraries or subscription societies.

One club, for instance, had 22 members (including Bran-

well Brontë, the sole brother of the literary siblings) and met for monthly dinners. "A broad hint of conviviality is given in the rules," writes Kaufman, "which imposed fines for swearing, for being drunk 'so that a member be offensive to the company,' and for unseemly scrambling for books to borrow!" Another society, founded in 1742, lasted for decades, and the dinners were a key feature for it as well. "Article XV of the Regulations emphasises in detail the monthly dinners, specifying – with elaborate exceptions – the Tuesday before the full moon," Kaufman reports. A member who missed the dinner had to pay a shilling. For other misdemeanours, which included letting a dog into the club room or revealing his vote for or against a potential new member, members had to contribute a bottle of wine.

The reputation of these clubs was such that, in 1788, Charles Shillito wrote a satirical poem depicting "The Country-Book Club" where members gathered to "taste the sweets of lit'rature – and wine." Shillito took a dim view of the country doctor, squire, and vicar who gathered to drink and gossip at a meeting "that leaves no vacant time to think, or read." The meeting of the fictional club gets more and more rowdy, until, finally:

*Thus, meeting to dispute, to fight,
to plead,
To smoke, to drink – do anything
but read –
The club – with stagg'ring steps,
yet light of heart,
Their taste for learning shown,
and punch – depart.*

(Continued on page 6)



This 18th Century book club was known for its radical politics (Note: Beer, no books). John Eckstein

CHARIVARI – 4

THREE TIMES A DEWAN



The Indian Charivari series does not include many Indians, its attention being largely on colonial administrators. Among the few who made it is Tanjore Madhav Rao. He could clearly not be overlooked, for his record, when the Charivari was under preparation, was nothing short of trailblazing. He had just then completed his tenures as Dewan of two princely states – Travancore and Indore – and was embarking on the third – Baroda. And none of these was placid tenure. In each case, he took over a State that was in a shambles and by the time he left, they were upheld as models of administration.

Madhav Rao was born in 1828 in Kumbakonam in an aristocratic Maratha family. His ancestors had been of service to various rulers and the East India Company. Uncle Rai Raya Rai Venkata Rao and father Ranga Rao had been Dewans of Travancore. Madhav Rao studied at the Madras High School headed by E.B. Powell, which would later become the Presidency College. Having graduated as a Proficient, he taught Maths for some time in the school before joining government service and being posted to Tanjore. He later became the tutor of the young prince, Ayilyam Tirunal, in Travancore. The ruler, Uthram Tirunal, however, was quick to notice his talents and he was given appointments in the Treasury. In 1858, at the age of 30, Madhav Rao became Dewan and addressed himself to the task of reducing Travancore's public debt. It helped that the orthodox Uthram Tirunal passed away in 1860, and was succeeded by the liberal-minded Ayilyam, Madhav Rao's ward. Several enlightened policies were implemented and, by 1863, the State's revenues were in surplus.

Differences of opinion cropped up between the ruler and the prime minister and, in 1872, Madhav Rao resigned and settled in Mylapore, building the palatial *Madhav Bhavan* on Luz Church Road, now a part of the MCTM School. But he was not to spend his remaining years in idleness. He was invited to Indore as Dewan and there too he worked wonders, overcoming the ruler's reluctance to introduce railways. He also put Indore on the industrial map, setting up mills.

In 1875, the Government of India requested that he take over as Dewan of Baroda. The ruler, Malhar Rao had been deposed on grounds of maladministration and brought to Madras. Jamna Bai, the wife of the previous ruler, Khande Rao, had just adopted a young boy who was a minor. Madhav Rao moved there and, as the Charivari puts it, worked to "bring order out of chaos." Under his guidance, the State prospered and the boy, Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III, would blossom as an enlightened prince. Madhav Rao was instrumental in the ruler marrying Chinnabai, a princess of Tanjore. A part of the dowry was a family of dancers and musicians, all of whom would settle in Baroda and give rise to the Tanjorekar School of South Indian music and dance. The marriage was a happy one but short-lived as Chinnabai died in childbirth. Sayaji Rao married again, this time a local chieftain's daughter, who took on the name of Chinnabai II. But it was the line from the Tanjore princess that would eventually succeed Sayaji Rao.

The Charivari account ends in 1875. But we do know of Madhav Rao's later years. By 1882 the ruler and Dewan would fall out with

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Julius Gantz's engraving of the church Goldingham built.

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI – SRIRAM V.

Kerr's Church that Goldingham built

(Continued from last fortnight)

Even though the Government had readily agreed to part funding a chapel in Black Town, there were some murmurs that the salary of a regular pastor would be a continuing charge. Kerr allayed these fears stating that he would minister to the parish free of cost and that this would be in addition to the time he spent in the Church of St. Mary's in the Fort. John Goldingham, Government Astronomer, who would later design the *Banqueting (Rajaji) Hall*, planned the church and work began in 1798. It was completed a year later and on the first Sunday of 1800, the Rev. Kerr delivered the first sermon there. He would minister to the devout here every evening thereafter until his passing, except when he was away from the city or was unwell.

In 1802, Kerr proceeded to England to formally receive priest's orders from the Archbishop. Returning to Madras in 1803 with a doctorate that he received from his alma mater in Dublin, Dr. Kerr, as he now was to be known, formally consecrated the Black Town chapel on February 5, 1804. He had received a special sanction from



The church today.

the Archbishop of Canterbury for this. It is interesting to note that there is a black stone plaque on the church's gate post today that claims consecration to have been done in 1805!

Dr. Kerr became the senior chaplain of Madras in 1805 and from then on was a pillar of the church, with his influence being felt in Mysore, Malabar and elsewhere in Madras Presidency. He repeatedly petitioned the Government on matters ecclesiastical and also busied himself printing several Christian tracts, all of which were churned out by the press in the Asylum. He also in-

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Strolling down OUR 'Bond Street'

A great street, but what a road!

When Calvin Klein meets Kala Niketan across a much dug-up road, Chennai fashionistas feel they have arrived at the right place for their spot of exclusive shopping. Khader Nawaz Khan Road is a typical and perhaps sad example of a shopping avenue that could have been world class but, like so many places in Chennai, has fallen far below those expectations over the years.

It's eleven o' clock on a Saturday morning when I turn left from Nungambakkam High Road into Khader Nawaz Khan Road, Chennai's only fashion street, and practically bumping one of the two roadside tea shops that welcome you to the avenue of haute couture and fine dining. Not a great introduction, I think, as I look at the two tea-on-wheels carts with their attendant garbage and scattering of hangers on. The soil around the tea carts is slushy with utensil washing and there is the growing litter of plastic cups and plates strewn around. The carts must serve good tea, because they have a good clientele of construction workers and office goers.

It is a small street, easy to walk through if it weren't for the dreadful pitfalls of the road. It's shaded too, not so much by trees as by the shadows of the high rise buildings on both sides. It's difficult to imagine that just 25 years ago, this was one of the prettiest avenues in Chennai, flanked on both sides by sprawling bungalows with lovely gardens. "In fact, it was such a handsome residential street that the Madras Corporation added to its beauty by erecting a row of hedges along one side of the road," recalls Robin Mehra, a long-time resident. I can still see the hedges, now boxed in by steel railings, but they are not as lush as they once doubtless were. Some of the boxed in spaces are barren, while others are overgrown. "Nobody even wants them any more," remarks a store manager in the avenue. "We'd much rather they were removed and more space provided for parking, something this road badly needs. Come by in the evening and you can see

cars parked bumper to bumper, creating traffic snarls and making it impossible for residents to drive their cars onto the main road."

Most residents of the street as well as the store personnel are vague about whom the street is named after. "Must have been some courtier of the Nawab of Arcot," is the standard response. In fact, Khader Nawaz Khan was a civil servant in the British government in India. He came from a line of soldiers and statesmen who served the British East India Company. He himself retired as a Collector in the Revenue Department. After retirement, he set up a business venture that proved to be very successful and he became a wealthy man known for his philanthropic activities. It is possible that he bought tracts of land in this particular area and even lived here. Nungam-



Tea shops on OUR 'Bond Street'.

THE NAME

Khader Nawaz Khan was a Deputy Collector in the Revenue Department at the age of 25, which should be around 1881. He became a District Collector eventually.

I don't think he was from the Carnatic family, but he is a descendant of Muhammad Abrar Khan who was one of Muhammad Ali Wallajah's able commanders. Abrar Khan was made Governor of Madurai by Wallajah.

– S. Anwar

bakkam, in general, was a place where many Europeans and civil servants lived, in large colonial bungalows. Parallel to Khader Nawaz Khan Road are other streets with Muslim names, Aziz Mulk Road, Shafi Mohammed Road and so on, indicating that this part of Nungambakkam was favoured by Muslim families. S. Anwar, researcher of Muslim roots and culture in Tamil Nadu, says this trend continued and even at present there are many families of Keezhakkarai Muslims living in this area. Khader Nawaz Khan Road has always been known for its wealthy residents and exclusivity. That aura stayed with the street even after

many of its residents decided that their bungalows were too difficult to maintain and that it would be more convenient to knock them down and build high-rise apartments in their place.

"That was in the 1980s and 90s," recalls Mehra. "The ground floors of the new apartment blocks were leased out to shops while the residents lived in the upper floors. What none of us bargained for was how crowded this street would become after the opening of the shops! Imagine, there was a time when no car would turn into this street unless it belonged to someone living here. Now, the traffic is a nightmare!"

I look down the street and see the big ditches that have been dug to set right clogged and overflowing drains. Elsewhere, the road is in distress because of either construction activity, or because some agency or the other has dug it up to provide some urban convenience.

Anywhere else in the world, a street like this would have been carefully showcased. The road would have been neatly laid and kept spanking clean; the sidewalks would have been broad enough to allow for browsing shoppers and the odd café. It

would have been a street on which you could shop, eat, have coffee with a friend, with a lot of pleasure and comfort. You can, of course, do all these things in Khader Nawaz Khan Road even now, but it will entail hopping over the potholes or keeping a sharp look out underfoot when strolling on the pavement.

Still, there is something about this place that entices, gives you a frisson of anticipation. Glamour beckons from the stores beyond the sidewalk. These are great boutiques, Evoluzione, Silkworm, Bhandej, Amrapali, Kala Niketan, Tina Vincent, Shilpa Vummutti, OMG the Label, Kilol, Atmosphere, the

exclusive outlets for popular brands like Zodiac and Willis Lifestyle, Cotton World, Gaitonde, Biba... Not so long ago, the road had several stores for international brands, Louis Vuitton, Armani, Hugo Boss, Versace. These have all downed shutters and moved shop, perhaps to Delhi or Bangalore (where people actually buy stuff from these stores; in conservative Chennai, we look, gawp, and move on wondering who would buy such overpriced goods). There's Calvin Klein, of course, and also a Tommy Hilfiger, but Burberry has found a saner location just a little beyond where the street curves right. Similarly, two delightful stores in the area, The Good Earth (where the sheer beauty of handmade linen and handicrafts as well as their pricing makes your jaw drop) and the Ritu Kumar boutique are situated on the quieter Rutland Gate Road, parallel to Khader Nawaz Khan.

At the very edge of the street where it leads into Wallace Garden Road, is Apparao Galleries, one of Chennai's oldest art galleries and a place you could spend several happy hours browsing. These are quiet avenues that are wonderful to roam in, for soaking in the atmosphere

and for being surprised by tiny boutiques.

Back on Khader Nawaz Khan Road, Jean Francois of Naturally Auroville, one of the street's most popular shops, is fuming, from the heat as well as frustration. "This street has been destroyed!" he exclaims, waving at the road outside the shop. He is dressed in khakis and a blue shirt that is soaked in perspiration. "We were one of the first to open shop here," he recalls. "People loved coming here. Now more people visit our branch in Besant Nagar because the environment there is so much better." While he is bending down to push aside a couple of crates of stock that have just arrived from Pudukkottai, I wander into the well-stocked shop. The shelves bulge with products from Auroville – leather goods, wooden artefacts, jewellery, toys and books, toiletries, jams, preserves and bakery products. You could spend a lot of time and money in this shop.

At the other end of the street, the Calvin Klein show room that overlooks the tea carts from a considerable height, seems well insulated against the mess outside. The air-conditioning is heavenly, the flooring smooth and spotless and the salesmen young and bland-faced, as well they should be as ordinary shoppers are likely to display extreme distress upon hearing the prices of the jeans and might need to be comforted and sent on their way smoothly. Imagine, denim was invented for the working class, members of which can certainly not afford the low slung, pencil thin leg coverings that the brand sells. Next, they will over price sack cloth. Wait a second. They have already. It's called jute, the finer versions of which cost the earth. But that's all right, really. It's nice to be in this cool shop and enjoy the posters of supremely fit young men in tight fitting jeans and listen to the salesmen tell you that the place gets crowded after sundown by VIPs (read film and television stars). "Dhanush shops here, so does Shantanu," the salesman

(Continued on page 10)



The mess on OUR 'Bond Street'. (Pictures by S. Anwar.)



(Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's questions are from July 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 relate to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. What Indian first did a new train launched between Sarai Rohilla in Delhi and Farukh Nagar in Haryana achieve recently?
2. What name has been given to the large super cluster of galaxies located in the direction of constellation Pisces, at 4 billion light years away, that a team of Indian astronomers identified recently?
3. Name China's most famous political prisoner and a Nobel Peace Laureate who passed away in custody following a battle with cancer.
4. Which 600-year-old walled city has become the first city to be declared a World Heritage City by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO?
5. Name the digital initiative, launched by the former President Pranab Mukherjee, which is an indigenously designed massive open online course that will host all the courses, taught in classrooms from 9th till post-graduation, and can be accessed by anyone.
6. Achal Kumar Jyoti is the new...?
7. A coffee table book *Narendra Modi: The Making of a Legend* authored by Bindeshwar Pathak was launched recently. For what social initiative is Pathak famous?
8. Which country has renamed part of the South China Sea as the North Natuna Sea?
9. Who on July 15 became the second Spanish player to win the Wimbledon Ladies Singles title?
10. How did 'Xi-cc++' make news in the world of science?
- * * *
11. Which famous entity's corporate office is now situated on a place still called 'Halda Junction'?
12. Who was the first woman to hold the post of Deputy Speaker of the State Legislative Assembly?
13. How does one better know the peer George Frederick Samuel Robinson?
14. After whom is the pavilion at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium at Chepauk named?
15. Which iconic institution in the metropolis has the motto 'To make the unseen – seen'?
16. Which educational institution owes its existence to the sale of 'India House'?
17. Name the dish named after a location in Chennai whose main ingredients include 'pork, mango, brinjal and drumstick'?
18. Which was the first 'sister city' of Madras?
19. Which school was established in the house of a Waddell in Popham's Broadway in 1842?
20. What title was conferred by the Mughal emperor on Nawab Muhammad Ali of Arcot after the latter's capture of Pondicherry along with the English?

(Answers on page 10)

Nostalgia on the eve of Independence Day

Madras' tryst with destiny

The country's freedom struggle was already in full swing in the 1930s amidst world events foretelling War. In India, the freedom fight and World War involvement combined into a potent force that shook every walk of life, household and individual.

People were so overwhelmed by sensational news of defeats and victories in battle and of strikes and *satyagrahas* nearer home that even children could not remain unaware of these happenings. We went to Gandhiji's public meeting in T'Nagar near Hindi Prachar Sabha where he was staying. As part of a huge but orderly crowd, we waited in the sun for hours to get a glimpse of him. The entire gathering sang *Ram Dhun* with one voice at the start of the meeting and got ready to listen to the Mahatma. When he appeared, there seemed to be an aura about him that was magnetic and inexplicable. (Incidentally, note that boys of those days wandered about and went on outdoor escapades without undue restriction. We had no money, only legs. This freedom carried no risk, nor was it abused.)

In 1942, answering the Quit India call, we struck classes. These were flash strikes called at short notice responding to signals from apex student bodies affiliated to the local leadership. Children up to the third form were exempt from participation; fourth form and above and university students were free to participate. Teachers were also keen to express their patriotism but were bound by directions from the Education Department to discourage student movements in every possible way. When we went to school in the morning with books and tiffin boxes we were not sure whether or not we would be attending classes.

V.V. Subramania Iyer – VVS to us – of P.S. High School was a kind of hero for students. They had a healthy fear and respect for him. His personality had something to do with his popularity. He was tall, well built, head held high, hair cropped – no tuft – and dressed immaculately in a well pressed Tussore (a fabric made by Binny's) suit, complete with neck tie. The traditional suffix to his name belied his commanding Western personality to the point of pleasant incongruence. VVS would stand tall among us at the entrance gate and tell us in his firm voice to 'Get In'. We defied reluctantly. There was something in him

that seemed to signal, without words, that he empathised with our aspiration.

We went in procession to the Triplicane beach, carrying flags and shouting *Vande Mataram*, to join similar processions converging there from several city schools and colleges for a public meeting to hear fiery speeches from local leaders. By then, because of the promise of cooperation in the war effort, perhaps, peaceful demonstrations were not disturbed by the Police unless provoked by over-exuberant demonstrators. The more adventurous amongst us did not mind getting involved in scuffles with the Police and getting back home in torn clothes nursing a *lathi* bruise or two.

● by N.S. Parthasarathy

In college students union elections, contestants imitated national leaders. My friend M.V. Krishnan, who became a senior lawyer later in life, dressed in *achkan* and waistcoat like Nehru and made speeches in the college campus exhorting students to vote for him. He was a good speaker too. I do not know why he did not take to politics in later life.

Talking of local leaders, there was one Mr. Subramaniam. He came home seeking collections to fund freedom activity expenses; he would enjoy mother's filtered coffee, home-roasted and ground peaberry, served in a silver tumbler, and would update father on the latest moves on the freedom front. He wore a *khadi* shirt and *veshti*, the heavy coarse fabric hanging baggily on his dark rotund frame. He was always chewing betel and always smiling. His large shirt pocket was stuffed with papers and a leaky fountain pen. Wearing *khadi* was a matter of pride to express commitment to Gandhi's movement. He led large processions from the front, shouting *Kottada, Kottada, Jaya Berigai, Kottada!* – in Tamil, meaning *Beat the drum, Beat the drum, Beat for Victory!* He was known to us as *Kottada* Subramaniam.

Another personality that our household came across at that time was a Madhava Rao who would easily qualify for *Reader's*

Digest's The Most Unforgettable Character I Have Ever Met. He was working in Willingdon Estate as a clerk. That modest position of his might lead you to infer that he would not have been highly educated. Appearance was truly deceptive. He was widely read in English literature and Sanskrit. He could recite Chaucer and Shakespeare and the *Upanishads* with equal ease. He was a Maratha settled in Madras. A bachelor at 50 or so when we came across him, he was a little over 5', fair, paunchy, wrinkled face, wearing a shirt, cotton jacket, *dhoti* wrapped high above the ankles, sporting a typical Marathi brown *topi*, and walked with a heavy limp.

R.K. Laxman must have modelled his *Common Man* on Madhava Rao. He came home every day in the morning to read our newspaper and seated himself under the portico type of covering at the entrance to our house of several rooms but only one latrine and bathroom – incidentally, the rent for this was Rs. 25 a month! He would tell us stories of the Independence struggle, interesting bits of history and spoke of great patriots like Ranade, Gokhale and Veer Savarkar. Madhava Rao's story of Savarkar held us spell bound – how he escaped arrest by jumping off the ship in the Mediterranean, how he was subsequently incarcerated in the Andamans Jail and so on. Madhava Rao was a good counsellor for young minds. He exhorted us to work hard and remember always the *mantra* – *Mathru Devo Bhava, Pithru Devo Bhava, Atithi Devo Bhava*. After 1943 he disappeared from our lives – his role was over.

The Press played a big role. The Tamil daily, *Swadesamitran* – meaning, *Friend of the Country* and established in the 1870s was amongst the oldest newspapers of India, and was perhaps the oldest vernacular daily in Asia. It was owned, at the time of this story, by C.R. Srinivasan. Under him the paper continued the tradition, set by illustrious earlier editors, of espousing the cause of total freedom from British rule. Language papers,

he said, were the most powerful means of reaching the masses. He introduced modern printing technology to enable the paper to save enormous time and come out with the most up-to-date news and events.

The paper spread the aspiration for freedom to the Tamil people of Ceylon, Malaya and Burma. The celebrated poet Subramania Bharathiar was a sub-editor with *Swadesamitran* not once but twice and wrote fiery articles in the quest for India's freedom.

The patriotic songs of D.K. Pattammal and K.B. Sundarambal were very popular. At the height of the freedom struggle, the Press was gagged and free expression was not easy; graphite records of their patriotic songs were played within the walls of private homes.

Sundarambal won popular appreciation for her courage. Clad in white *khadi* saree, she sang with a powerful voice that carried, unsupported by microphone. She would sing songs with lyrics that carried latent meanings concerning the freedom struggle and evoked thunderous applause from the audience. Once she sang, impromptu, a song the lead line of which ran like this – *Siraichaalai enna seyyum?* – meaning, *What can imprisonment do?* She taunted the rulers with that song.

The day Independence was declared – August 15, 1947 – All India Radio at 4.30 a.m. broadcast D.K. Pattammal singing *Aaduwoomey Pallu Paaduwoomey, Ananda Sudhandhiram Adaidhuvittomenru*. We had tears of joy, not knowing why freedom should have moved us children so much. Outside, the city was a mass of moving people expressing their joy in public.

BOOK CLUB CULTURE

(Continued from page 3)

There is a certain snobbery to this poem – what's so great about you and your literary friends, Charles Shillito? – and it shouldn't be taken as an accurate report on 18th Century book clubs. But it does have a ring of truth: Even today, as *The New York Times* once reported, this is the "great divide" in book club culture. Are these meetings meant for discussion of literature, or are they social events? It is, apparently, a distinction as old as book clubs themselves. (From *Atlas Obscura*, a travel guide).

**August 1**

- Talk:** Vivek Karunakaran speaks on *Style and fashion in Chennai*. Organised by Rotary Club of Madras South 6.30 p.m. Saveria Only for Rotarians

August 5

- Talk:** Sriram V. speaks on *Madras to Chennai to Greater Chennai: Socio-political evolution and changes*. Organised by Observer Research Foundation (ORF) (Chennai Chapter). By invitation only 11 a.m.-1 p.m. ORF Conference Hall Reliance Building Radha Krishnan Salai
- **Walk:** *Experience the community dwellings of Triplicane*. Organised by Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai. Thirupurasundari Sevel: +91 9444253532 4-5 p.m. Anna Nagar Starts at Peyazhwar St. & Parthasarathy temple junctions

August 8

- Talk:** Venkatesh Chakravarthy speaks on *Chennai in Tamil Cinema*. Organised by Rotary Club of Madras South 6.30 p.m. Saveria Only for Rotarians

August 11

- **Play session:** Launch of Kimberly House and a play session with traditional games from Chennai. For info: info@kreedagames.com 6.30 p.m. Kimberly House Harrington Road

August 12

- **Walk:** *Lanes of Aminjikarai*. Organised by Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai. Thirupurasundari Sevel: +91 9444253532 6.30-7.30 a.m. Starting point: Opp. Lakshmi Theatre
- Talk:** Dr. S. Janakarajan, MIDS, speaks on *Drinking water crisis and related issues*. Organised by ORF, Chennai Chapter. By invitation only 11 a.m.-1 p.m. ORF Conference Hall Reliance Building Radha Krishnan Salai
- **Quiz:** *Know your Madras* quiz and lecture by S. Muthiah 3-5 p.m. Madras Literary Society, College Rd

August 13

- Talk:** Venkatesh Ramakrishnan speaks on *Cultural mapping of the Cooum and Adyar rivers*. South India Heritage Programme organised by Tag Centre 8.30 a.m.-10.45 a.m. Tag Centre By invitation only

- Talk:** Kombai S. Anwar, speaks on *Understanding Ethnic Relationships thro History*, by Hypnotique Circle (Madras) Admission free for Members. For invites, contact 9150000615 2.29 - 6.30 p.m. Hotel Palmgrove

- Talk:** Major V.V. Narayanan, speaks on *Interesting psychological undercurrents of Madras* by Hypnotique Circle (Madras) Admission free for Members. For invites, contact 9150000615 2.29 - 6.30 p.m. Hotel Palmgrove

- Talk:** Muthiah Ramanathan, speaks on *Trance actions in Madras Presidency* by Hypnotique Circle (Madras) Admission free for Members. For invites, contact 9150000615 2.29 - 6.30 p.m. Hotel Palmgrove

- Talk:** Dr Rajarajan, speaks on *Manadhodu pesalam* by Hypnotique Circle (Madras) Admission free for Members. For invites, contact 9150000615 2.29 - 6.30 p.m. Hotel Palmgrove

August 15

- **Tree Walk:** Kotturpuram Tree Park. Organised by Nizhal. Registrations: nizhal.shade@gmail.com or by calling 97910 29568, 9840627376, 98404 44010, 99410 04642 5-6 p.m. River View Road, Kotturpuram

August 16

- **Talk:** Kombai Anwar speaks on *Madras under Golconda*. Organised by Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL) Tharamani 5.30 p.m. RMRL Tharamani

August 18

- **Talk:** R. Kannan speaks on *Anna* a.k.a. *C.N. Annadurai*. Organised by RMRL 5.30 p.m. RMRL, Tharamani

August 19-20

- **Competiton:** Drawing Competition: For children in junior and senior categories. Topic will be given on the spot. Register before Aug. 10, 2017. Organised by Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai. Thirupurasundari Sevel, +91 9444253532 Venue and other details will be provided on reg.

August 19-31

- **Exhibition:** The **ART** of traditional GAMES – an exhibition of artwork and the traditional games of Chennai. The exhibition will open with a short talk on the traditional games of Chennai by Kreedaa and will be followed by an informal play session. Available for play at the gallery during the duration of the exhibition. Organised by Kreedaa in association with Forum Art Gallery 10.30 a.m.-6.30 p.m. Forum Art Gallery info@kreedagames.com

August 19

- **Walk:** *Trace the history of Anna Nagar by walking down the Naduvakkara-Anna Nagar route*. Organised by Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai. Thirupurasundari +91 9444253532 7-8 a.m. Starting point: Tower Park. Ayappan temple side

- Talk:** Sriram V. speaks on *Down Memory Lane – Madras and Madras Chamber*. Organised by MCC. By invitation only 8.30-10.30 a.m. Hotel Raintree, Anna Salai

- Talk:** K.S. Sripathi, former Chief Secretary speaks on *Expanding Chennai: including the whole of Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts in Metropolitan area, the infrastructure and other demands and requirements*. Organised by ORF, Chennai Chapter 11 a.m.-1 p.m. ORF Conference Hall Reliance Building Radha Krishnan Salai By invitation only

- **Nature Walk:** Butterfly Walk. Organised by Madras Naturalists' Society. Please bring along Binoculars & Cameras. Car parking, entrance and camera fees payable as per Poonga Rules. Please email Umesh at umeshmani1@gmail.com to confirm your participation. Confirmation strictly on first-come basis. Reporting Time: 2.15 p.m. Adyar Poonga Group size: 20

- **Competition:** Make your own Social History Album/Scrap Book. Start with a 4 generation family tree (minimum), add pictures, plan of your house (before and now), write stories, add function invitations, postcards, sketches etc. – and how your family moved to Anna Nagar. When? How? Why? For 8 to 16 years. Organised by Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai. Thirupurasundari Sevel +91 9444253532 5-6 p.m. Anna Nagar

- **Play session:** Launching a traditional game from Chennai. Talk about the game followed by an informal play session. Organised by Kreedaa. For info: info@kreedagames.com 6.30 p.m. Odyssey, Adyar

August 20

- **Nature Walk:** Kelambakkam Backwaters. Organised by Madras Naturalists' Society. Please email Umesh at umeshmani1@gmail.com to confirm your participation. Confirmation strictly on first-come basis. Reporting Time: 6.30 a.m. Group size: 25 Reporting place Bridge on OMR-ECR Link Road at Kelambakkam

- **Talk:** Pradeep Chakravarthy speaks on *Thiruvottriyur Temple – History, Inscriptions and Games*. Organised by Kreedaa. For info: info@kreedagames.com 7 a.m. Thiagaraja Swamy and Vadivudiamman Temple, Thiruvottriyur

- **Exhibition:** Exhibition/play session on games from Chennai. Organised by Kreedaa. For info: info@kreedagames.com 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Hanu Reddy Res. 41/19 Poes Garden

- **Tree Walk:** Natesan Park. Organised by Nizhal. Registrations: nizhal.shade@gmail.com or by calling 97910 29568, 9840627376, 98404 44010, 99410 04642 5-6 p.m. Venkatnarayana Road, T. Nagar

- **Tree Walk:** Tower Park Organised by Nizhal. Registrations: nizhal.shade@gmail.com or by calling 97910 29568, 9840627376, 98404 44010, 99410 04642 5-6 p.m. Anna Nagar

- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Sriram Ayer speaks on *The magic of Nalandaway and The Chennai Children's Choir*. Organised by Madras Musings 6-8 p.m. Hyatt Regency

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

Check www.themadrasday.in and Madras Week App for up-to-date programmes. Promotion and Publicity: PRISM Public Relations. Email: info@prism-india.com

- **Book Launch:** Launch of book *Madras on My Mind* – a city in stories, by Chitra Viraraghavan and Krishna Devulapalli, followed by an interaction with some of the contributing authors featured in the book
6.30 p.m.
Odyssey, Adyar
- **Quiz:** Madras Quiz. (Open Quiz)
Organised by the Murugappa Group
2.00 p.m. onwards
A.M.M. Higher Sec. School, Kotturpuram

August 21

- **Talk:** S. Muthiah speaks on *Madras – the American Connection*. Organised by the Press Institute of India (PII)
5 p.m.
CPT Campus
Tharamani
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Samyog Wedding Planners on *The evolving role of wedding planners*. Organised by Madras Musings
6-8 p.m.
The Folly,
Amethyst

August 22

- **Workshop:** Workshop on traditional games and the Maths behind them. Organised by Kreedaa in association with Ramanujan Maths Education Centre. Info: info@kreedagames.com
10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Ramanujan Museum and Math Education Centre, Royapuram
- **Presentation:** Audio visual presentation on Madras, that is Chennai, to children of class 5, sharing the story of this historic city, followed by a painting session where the young children will have an opportunity to unleash their creativity onto canvas, by adding colour to images of Madras. Organised by the Dept. of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College
11.30 a.m.
Open Air
Theatre
Stella Maris College
- **Talk:** Partab Ramchand speaks on *Covering Sport in Madras – A senior journalist recalls his experiences over fifty years*. Organised by PII
5 p.m.
CPT Campus
Tharamani
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Arun Krishnamurthy speaks on *Vanishing Science when it comes to Chennai's Waterbodies*. Organised by Madras Musings
6-8 p.m.
Hanu Reddy Residences
4/19, Poes Garden
- **Talk:** Anuradha Uberoi speaks on *The making of a book on communities in Chennai*. Organised by Rotary Club of Madras South
6.30 p.m.
Savera
Only for Rotarians

August 23

- **Talk:** Swapna Satish speaks on *Value, Nostalgia or Showmanship – How the Nabobs took a part of empire back home*. Organised by PII
5 p.m.
CPT Campus
Tharamani
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Vinita Siddhartha speaks on *Chennai – A Storehouse of Traditional Games*. Organised by Madras Musings
6-8 p.m.
Hotel Savera

August 24

- **Talk:** D. Hemachandra Rao speaks on *Rediscovering the Buckingham Canal – 1782-1806*. Organised by PII
5 p.m.
CPT Campus
Tharamani
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Ishwar Achanta speaks on *The Madras Golf Club*. Organised by Madras Musings
6-8 p.m.
Chamiers

August 25

- **Talk:** Sreemathy Mohan speaks on *The magic of textiles of the Madras Presidency*. Organised by PII
5 p.m.
CPT Campus
Tharamani
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Dr. Sunil Shroff speaks on *Why Chennai is the Organ Transplant Capital*. Organised by Madras Musings
6-8 p.m.
Raintree
Anna Salai
- **Walk:** *Walk around Shenoy Nagar*. Organised by Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai. Thirupurasundari Sevvil: +91 9444253532
10-11 a.m.
Starting point: Shenoy Nagar Metro Station
- **Talk:** Dr. Shobha Varthaman speaks on *Tamil Jains*. Organised by ORF, Chennai Chapter. By invitation only
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
ORF Conference Hall
Reliance Building
Radha Krishnan Salai
- **Quiz:** Madras Week sports quiz by Partab Ramchand. Rs. 6,000 worth Odyssey book vouchers to be won as prizes
5 p.m.
Odyssey, Adyar
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Mahesh Ramakrishnan speaks on *Bespoke Suited*. Organised by Madras Musings
6-8 p.m.
Crowne Plaza

August 27

- **Nature Walk:** Perumbakkam Tank. Organised by Madras Naturalists' Society. Please email Umesh at umeshmani1@gmail.com to confirm your participation. Confirmation strictly on first-come basis.
Reporting Time: 6.30 a.m.
Group size: 25
Reporting place: Bus stand opp. IT park near Toll Plaza in Perumbakkam
- **Tree Walk:** Harrington Road Park. Organised by Nizhal. Registrations: nizhal.shade@gmail.com or by calling 97910 29568, 9840627376, 98404 44010, 99410 04642
5-6 p.m.
Chetput
- **Talk: Chennai Heritage Lecture:** Vallabha Srinivasan speaks on *The beauty of Tamil Literature in Sculptures*. Organised by Madras Musings
6-8 p.m.
Hotel Maris

August 28 and 29

- **Exhibitions:** Fort St. George, traditional food stall, philately, traditional games, photo booth, What's in a name! (streets of Madras) bioscope and cinematic Madras, merchandise
Dept. of History and Tourism
Stella Maris College

August 29

- **Talk:** Dr. G. Santhanam (Retd. IAS officer) speaks on *Administering Chennai and Tamil Nadu: My Experiences*. Organised by Rotary Club of Madras South
6.30 p.m.
Savera
Only for Rotarians

Till August 30

- **Exhibition:** Photo exhibition by Sujatha Shankar Kumar titled *Lands through My Lenses: Journeys from Chicago to Chennai*. Organised by DakshinaChitra
10 a.m.-6 p.m.
DakshinaChitra Museum

August 30

- **Talk:** Nina John (Toastmasters Club). Organised by Dept. of History & Tourism
Stella Maris College

September 1

- **Talk:** Storytelling session by Dr. Eric Miller (Director, World Storytelling Institute)
Dept. of History & Tourism
Stella Maris College

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- **Video/PPT Presentation:** *How your family moved to Anna Nagar, When? How? Why?* How is your family history related to Anna Nagar? Open to individuals of age 15 years and above. Submission of video/PPT to Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai **before August 15, 2017**. Thirupurasundari Sevvil, +91 9444253532
- Cycling Yogis will mark Madras Week with a booklet called *Cycling Trails*. It includes 40 trails with details about what to see on them. Every trail in the booklet has been cycled on by the compilers over the last year. Some of the noteworthy trails were called *Madras the First, Madras the Oldest, Historic Residences, Mahatma Gandhi* and *Police Heritage*. For booklets, contact ramanujar4u@gmail.com, then make use of them during 'Madras Month'.
- **Tamil Short Story Contest:** Kizhakkupathippagam is hosting a Short Story contest. Stories must have Chennai/Madras as its character/landscape or be set in Chennai and should be in Tamil only. Stories should be fresh ones and should not have been published elsewhere. The results will be announced during the 4th week of August. Shortlisted stories will be published as a book by Kizhakkupathippagam. For more details: kizhakkupathippagam@gmail.com
- **Essay Competition for Senior Citizens:** The Senior Citizens Group of Besant Nagar (SCGOBN) announces an essay competition for Senior Citizens. The topic is – *What relevance does Madras Day have for me in my twilight years?* Ten best entries will be selected for ten prizes. Prizes would be awarded at a public function during Madras Week. Corporate Houses/NGOs interested in either sponsoring the function or prizes may contact Prof. V. Chandrasekhar 9884224480 scgobn@gmail.com. SCGOBN does not accept monetary donations.
- An extensive display of books of over 150 Chennai authors will be held at **Odyssey, Adyar**. Special offer of exclusive 'Celebrating Madras' merchandise free on purchase of these books. Display-cum-sale of specially created merchandise celebrating MADRAS.
- **Shoot Madras 2017 Photo Contest:** Photographic Society of Madras (PSM), is holding a photography contest marking Madras Week. There are two sections – open to all and open to students. There will be three themes: **My Madras:** The photographer's personal tribute to Chennai, depicting what it means personally. **Only in Madras:** Scenes which are unique to Madras, be it a modern woman in jeans and tops with jasmine flowers in her hair or the *thenga maanga pattani sundal* on the beaches and **Evolving Madras:** Shift from the ancient to the old to the modern. Buildings with modern facades, yet vintage structures at the rear. Brand new bridges, flyovers and metro lines. Evolving roads, markets in parallel with structures of yesteryears. **Entries may be sent to shootmadras@gmail.com before Monday, August 7, 2017 (12.00 noon)** Exciting prizes are to be won. An exhibition of prize-winning and other striking entries will be held later.

125-year-old home of a 155-year-old Court

Why must we celebrate this building? I would say for four main reasons. First, the unique architecture of the building; second, its role as a witness to some momentous events in this country's history; third, its status as the edifice in which some of the greatest cases of the Indian legal history have been decided; and, lastly, as the monument which has nurtured the development of some towering stalwarts who have contributed immensely to the public life of this country of ours.

The building

Our building is of Indo-Saracenic architectural style. It was inaugurated on July 12, 1892. Three other buildings that came up around that time, the High Courts of Bombay, Calcutta and Allahabad, followed the Western Gothic style of architecture reminiscent of the castles, churches and cathedrals of Europe.

'Indo' in Indo-Saracenic refers to the Hindu type of architecture and 'Saracen' to the Muslim form, Saracen being a name the British gave to Muslims. But, its execution did not stop with merely integrating just these two forms of architecture, it went on to integrate the stained glass panels, typical of Christian places of worship, and Moroccan arches of varied styles.

In governance, making a political statement through a public building is commonplace. For example, when the first regional party to come to power in a State in India, namely the DMK, formed the government in Tamil Nadu, one of the first monuments to be constructed by it was *Valluvar Kottam* thus strongly affirming the Dravidian identity. Likewise, the British had built this building in an attempt to make a political statement that they aspired to be a binding force bringing together India's countless creeds, faiths and cultures under some common principles of non-intrusive governance. That accounts for the merger of several styles of architecture.

The birthplace of Indo-Saracenic architecture was Madras. It was here that an eccentric architect Paul Benfield designed Chempauk Palace which style was to be replicated later in many parts of the country and even today you will find evidence of it in Pakistan and in Malaysia and Singapore. This crafty architect also kept increasing his bills for raising the palace and made the Nawab borrow heavily. When the

creditors came calling, the poor Nawab was unable to pay up. The East India Company intervened and agreed to take over the debts which in the early 19th Century stood at a staggering figure – running to crores of rupees at the time. The Carnatic Nawab's debts became a subject of heated discussion in the British Parliament with that famous orator Edmund Burke leading the charge. Ultimately a deal was struck by which the British agreed to take over the debts, and the Nawab surrendered his sovereignty over virtually the whole of South India, stretching from South Orissa to Kanniyakumari. All of this time in became the Madras Presidency and then Madras Province.

To design the Madras High Court building, the English architect Henry Irwin followed in Benfield's footsteps, and the work was executed by a very successful Indian contractor Namberumal Chetty. He was so

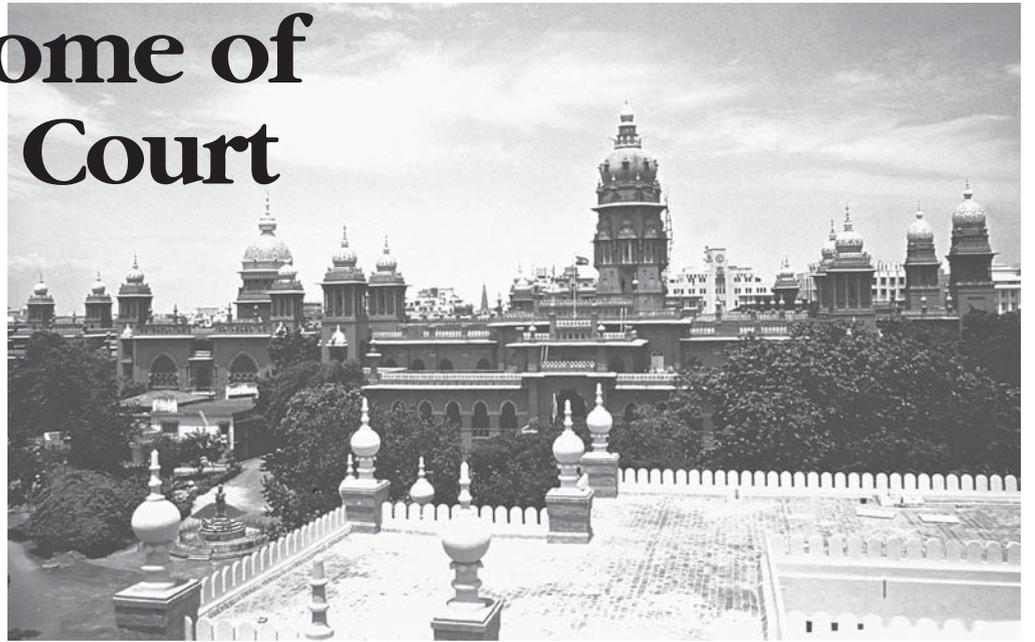
● Excerpts from a talk given by N.L. Rajah, Senior Advocate, at a function organised by the Madras Bar Association on 12.7.17 to "celebrate the 125th anniversary of this epic building".

successful that he owned a train. A large expanse of land all along Spur Tank Road and Harrington Road till the Museum at Egmore belonged to him. This is why the area came to be called Chetti Pettai and, later, Chetput.

There are some very important elements of symbolism in this building. Right behind the Chief Justice's chair, on the stained glass are images of an elephant in the centre with two owls on both sides. The elephant is supposed to symbolise strength and the owls wisdom. Two recurring motifs on the outer walls of the High Court are swans and snakes. The swan symbolises 'Anna Patchi' which has the capacity to separate milk from water, thus a reassurance to the thousands who seek justice in these courts that these courts will separate truth from falsehood and make truth alone the basis of its judgments; the snake is emblematic of the concept of *karma* in Hindu belief. Indeed, symbolism has been lavishly used while designing this building.

Statues

The High Court has two statues outside, a bust and three statues inside. The first statue to be installed inside the court premises was that of Muthusamy Iyer. On the demise of Sir



Muthuswami Iyer, there was a proposal to erect a marble statue for him in the High Court. The proposal was opposed by many, chief among whom was V. Krishnaswami Aiyer, a legal luminary whose opinion carried much weight with the *vakils* of Madras. He was, without doubt, a great admirer of Muthuswami Iyer but felt it was against the principles of the two great faiths of India

Momentous events

Many momentous events have happened inside the High Court or close by but with the limitation of space, I will mention just one. When the Simon Commission came to discuss Indian independence in Madras, there was a huge protest at Parry's Corner near the High Court buildings. The then British Police Commissioner, Trevor Philips, wanted to open

Justice Pandalai gave orders to shoot but with the condition that shots must be fired below the knees. Notwithstanding this, these shots unfortunately killed a youth from Triplicane called Parthasarathy.

T. Prakasam, a leading *vakil* of the High Court, who was one of those leading the crowd roared in anger, moved between the Police and the crowd and, baring his chest to the Police, asked them to shoot him before firing a single shot on the crowd. The Police backed down and Prakasam then, carrying the body of Parthasarathy over his shoulder, managed to pacify the crowd. The crowd cried "Andhra Kesari ki jai" in appreciation. That is how he got the title of Andhra Kesari. If it had not been for Prakasam, we would possibly have had a Jallianwala Bagh right outside the High Court. It is in memory of his contribution in nipping a catastrophe in the bud that the road leading to N.S.C. Bose from Raja Annamalai Mandram has been named Prakasam Salai and a statue of Prakasam installed there.

(To be concluded)

to have statues put up for people. The British judges of the High Court brushed aside his objections and went ahead with their plan and the statue was installed.

By a strange turn of events, after Krishnaswami Aiyer's death, a statue in his honour came up for consideration. When a public meeting was held on January 16, 1912, at the *Banqueting* (now *Rajaji*) *Hall* to consider the matter of a suitable memorial for Krishnaswami Aiyer, the opposition nearly managed to turn down the proposal for a statue in his honour. Their chief argument was that Krishnaswami Aiyer had been opposed to statues. But they had not contended with Sir S. Subramania Iyer, then a Judge of the High Court and a mentor to Aiyer. His emotional speech carried the day and swung opinion in favour of a statue. The next day, *The Hindu* expressed distress that a man of Sir Subramania Iyer's stature had displayed emotion in public to win an argument.

The statue, the first on the beach for an Indian, came up in due course outside *Senate House* in recognition of his services to the Madras University. In 1935, Sir S. Subramania Iyer's statue was located alongside and there the two remain till date gazing at the sea.

fire into the crowd, but going by the law he had to get permission from the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Justice Pandalai, who was then the CPM on duty in the area. Justice Pandalai refused to give permission to shoot, although two British judges, Justices Beasley and Wallers, who were senior to him, came out of the High Court and urged him to do so. "They are my countrymen, not yours and I will decide," was his reply. Sadly, the crowds got more restless and violent and

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LOST LANDMARKS

(Continued from page 4)

generously to the Male Orphan Asylum. Long after his death, the Masons of Madras in 1823 would contribute to a building for the Asylum in Egmore. They also kept up the practice of awarding scholarships to deserving students from the Asylum and continued with it long after the institution was absorbed into the St. George's School and Orphanage on Poonamallee High Road. It is noteworthy that plaques commemorating various donations by the Freemasons still survive within the school premises.

Masonic interest in St. George's would cease only in the 1980s.

Reverting to Dr. Kerr, he was laid low by a fever in 1808 and died the same year, on April 15, which happened to be Good Friday. He was laid to rest in the Black Town chapel.

And so we come to the present. Of parishioners, the Church has very few and services are conducted only on Sunday mornings. Its best years were clearly in the 19th Century. John Gantz, who left behind many views of Madras and who ran his famed lithographic press in Vyasarpadi, was one of the members of this church and also served as its trustee. Julius Walter Gantz of the same family did an engraving of the shrine in the 19th Century – it is featured here. When we compare it with the photograph taken recently we can see that the front of the chapel has changed for the worse.

The chapel appears to have had a wall with a window upfront with access from a door on the side. This is no longer the case, for the entrance has a flight of steps via which you access a pillared verandah and then the church. Closer inspection reveals that the present portico with the pillars is a later and most unfortunate addition. The original pilastered front is still there but now hidden by

the portico. The window that was in the front has now made way for the main access.

It is also evident that the bell-tower, which in Gantz's time appears to have been taller than the church, has somehow shrunk. Has it perhaps lost a storey? But it appears to be survivor from Goldingham's design.

The chapel is very well maintained inside. The Rev. Dr. Kerr's last resting place is right in the middle of the aisle and cannot be missed. Of considerable beauty is a monument to him on one of the walls of the church. This features a black obelisk on which some books are resting. The records of St. Mary's Church in the Fort state that an organ was sent from there to this chapel sometime in the 1890s. That is nowhere to be seen now.

If the Rev. Kerr's monument is majestic because of its size, that of the Rev. Morgan Davis, which adorns the opposite wall, is of white marble, small and very elegant. He became the pastor of St. Mark's in 1810 and died at the Cape of Good Hope. The parishioners of St. Mark's then erected this memorial to him. There are a couple of other plaques within the church. Reading some of them you realise that being chaplain of St. Mark's also meant being Superintendent of the Civil Male Orphan Asylum, at least until 1880 or so, when it merged with its military counterpart and migrated elsewhere.

St. Mark's is a church well worth a visit. The pastor is extremely friendly and is quite happy to get the caretaker to open the normally locked building and allow people to take a look around.

(Concluded)

A great street

(Continued from page 5)

tells me. At the moment, however, I cannot see a single customer. The salesman sounds a little sheepish as he agrees, "We have much less footfall than earlier. Sometimes it's just three or four customers a day."

One store that has no dearth of customers is the Haagen-Daaz ice cream parlour next door. Families crowd the tables as children scream for one more scoop of something. The least scoop is priced at Rs. 250. But then there is a fondue that costs Rs. 2,500. The store manager

complains about the chaos of the road outside, but agrees that he gets a lot of VIP customers who bring their children. Actor Surya brings his, Trisha brings her friends, politicians Mu.Ka. Alagiri and Dayanidhi Maran bring their entire families.

It's a happy store, full of the flavours of warm chocolate and ice cream. Have a scoop of their Belgian chocolate ice cream. The rich, creamy chocolate slides coolly down your throat, releasing the happiest of flavours and taste.

(To be concluded)

Dates for Your Diary

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).

August 6: Concert by Saptarshi Hazra, Sitar and Jain Painadathe, Tabla (at DakshinaChitra).

Answers to Quiz

1. It is India's first solar powered diesel multiple unit (DEMU) broad gauge train, 2. Saraswati, 3. Liu Xiaobo, 4. Ahmedabad, 5. 'Swayam', 6. Chief Election Commissioner, 7. The Padma Bhushan awardee started Sulabh International, 8. Indonesia, 9. Garbine Muguruza, 10. It is a new sub-atomic particle that has been discovered in the LHC at CERN.

* * *

11. Ashok Leyland, 12. Rukmini Lakshmi pathy, 13. First Marquess of Ripon, 14. C.P. Johnstone, 15. Regional Institute of Ophthalmology and Government Ophthalmic Hospital, 16. Madras Institute of Technology, 17. Chinnamalai Pork Curry, 18. Stalingrad (now Volgograd), 19. The Patcheappa's Preparatory School, the first educational institution from the Pachaiyappa's trust, 20. Wallajah.

CHARIVARI – 4

(Continued from page 4)

each other and Madhav Rao returned to his Mylapore home. He passed away there in 1891.

During the course of such a successful life, Madhav Rao received many honours. Chief of these was his individual title of Rajah, and his being made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India. His portrait was executed by Raja Ravi Varma and now hangs in Laxmi Vilas Palace, Baroda. Trivandrum's famed Statue Junction gets its name from a statue of Madhav Rao, long in planning but erected only in 1891, the year he died.

– Sriram V.

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