

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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NEET

A wake-up call for the State

(By The Editor)

The vexed issue of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate medical and dental degree courses just refuses to go away, as we write. At the heart of the issue is the state of Tamil Nadu's unpreparedness to cope with such a blanket examination set for the entire country. The political parties of Tamil Nadu are protesting and the State Government has seen its attempts at approaching the Courts on the matter sternly rebuffed. The Centre, with its present attitude of fishing in the troubled waters of the State, has been playing a double game, now seemingly supporting the State and then backing off when action is needed. In all this chaos, a student's life has been lost. And that was an avoidable tragedy.

The final year of school is a stressful period for most children, what with the pressure to perform being intense. The marks of the public exam are interpreted to be life-changing and at that vulnerable age students tend to take extreme steps in the light of a failure. This is well known to the State Government, which for a few years has been taking steps to counsel students. In such a scenario, how is it that the girl who had imploded herself in the case that the State Government had filed against NEET was not paid special attention? Surely this was a high profile piece of litigation and merited some close watching? The death has now become a political tool, with every party freely using the girl's photograph and claiming that it will see that justice is done. This open attempt at seeking publicity from a gross tragedy is lamentable.

Do the political parties have any chance of ensuring that our State will get favoured treatment? This is highly unlikely. The only way out is for the Government to ensure that its Education Department gets cracking on setting up counselling and coaching centres where students can get familiar with the NEET process and its methods of examination. Time and money would be spent usefully if this was done.

It is also high time the State woke up to the reality that its education standards are way below par. We had earlier commented on NEET in our May

(Continued on page 2)



Making 'stars' of poochies is PoochiVenkat. Here she's a Ladybird Beetle. (See page 5.)

Riding the Metro, finding it costly

In Chennai, the Metro project is in progress. The city's landscape is changing. The first of the proposed four corridors of 16 km from Alandur to Central Station having been completed and made operational, there is expectation of tangible and visible beneficial effects from the First Phase itself, as it is a forerunner of the full project.

The stations are beautifully laid out with clear directions. The service was available every 20 minutes at 11.15 am on a Monday. The frequency is 10 minutes during the rush hour from 8.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. and between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. and it was 20 minutes during non-peak hours, although the latter is advertised as 15 minutes. Frequency of 15 or 20 minutes during non-peak periods is not material so long as they are predictable and punctual so that people can plan their movement to be able to arrive just in time to catch the train.

Before the check-in barricade is the automatic touch-screen ticketing machine to buy tickets for casual travel from

validity and at 20 per cent discount for 60 trips. This covers a month's need to go to work and get back. Parking areas are available for cars and motor cycles. The charges are Rs. 10 and Rs. 5 per three hours respectively. For a working day, it

● by A Special Correspondent

any point to any other point on the line. Soon, we are told, it would be possible to buy the charge card from the machine and periodically re-charge it also by the machine. Till then, it can be bought in the booth situated at the entrance barricade. The booth staff are helpful and proactive. Smart card for travel to and from work-point, as nominated by the customer, is sold with six-month

amounts to Rs. 30 and Rs. 15 respectively – working out to Rs. 780 and Rs. 390 per 26-working day month. No pamphlets containing details of fare charts and time schedule were available, as advertised. It was reported that Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) had brought out maps to help passengers identify routes faster. They were not available at the Alandur station.

The ride itself was smooth and comfortable, but noise level of the wheels was rather high making even light, short conversation difficult; but this is not a major flaw and as such does not diminish the value of the service otherwise provided. The route signs were in Tamil and English, but types were not large enough to be read from the seats without having to strain the eyes. The stations were marked on the route map by tiny bulbs each switching off when that station was reached. That is quite imaginative. This electrified sign was not functioning on some of the boards but, again, it did not matter as there were announcements in Tamil and English just before reaching each station.

From Alandur to Koyambedu it took only 13 minutes, (Continued on page 2)

NEET – a wake-up call

(Continued from page 1)

16th issue and expressed our view that the fault for this present impasse lies solely with successive State Governments that have consistently aimed at lowering educational standards. This made them popular, for it ensured that most students got extraordinarily high marks. The entrance tests to medical and engineering colleges also being under the control of the State meant the system there was an extension of what was happening at school level. Everyone was happy – the parents, the children, the politicians, the teachers and the bureaucrats. It was one big happy closed world where no external benchmarks existed.

Unfortunately for everyone, Tamil Nadu is part of a larger country. The engineering discipline was impacted first when slowly but steadily parents be-

gan to opt for colleges outside the State and gave the go-by to the mushrooming private colleges here, all ostensibly governed by Anna University. The result is that most of these institutions are facing empty seats and several have applied for closure. The medical colleges are now threatened by NEET and the consequence is likely to be similar.

At a time when the world is linked and standards are no longer national, forget local, it is laughable that Tamil Nadu thinks it can continue to fix its own levels of competence. Is this the State that once showed the world that when it came to scholarship, leave alone manufacturing and IT, it was second to none globally? Sadly that would appear to be the case when it comes to education. It is high time the State woke up to raising its educational standards.

Riding a costly Metro

(Continued from page 1)

including intermediate stops. The same journey could take nearly an hour by bus, according to regular bus-users, and that does not include the waiting time. This is an important feature that should make for Metro's eventual future popularity. There was a separate compartment for higher class and one exclusively for ladies. Both were practically empty at about 11.15 a.m. on a week day and quite a few ladies were found travelling in the general compartment. Special compartment for a higher class seems unnecessary as it is running practically empty and the chances of attracting car-using commuters to the Metro does not appear to be high for quite some time.

Chennai's much-delayed project has set its fares much beyond the reach of the segment of commuters who constitute the most potential of Metro users. With a fare of Rs. 30 for 8 km between Alandur and Koyambedu, Chennai Metro Rail is costly. On the suburban route in Chennai, a ticket between Chennai Beach and Guindy costs just Rs. 5. On the MRTS, between Velachery and Chennai Beach for 19 km the fare is Rs. 10. Of course, the comfort and speed of the older services are not as good as those

of the Metro but the lower income groups having to cope with a tight monthly budget and high housing rentals do not care for the frills.

There are, broadly, three types of transport that account for the bulk of the movement of people outside their localities – motor cycle, bus and motor car, without counting suburban trains and autos. Autos cater to movements over short localised distances. Motor cycles constitute the bulk of the transport modes on Chennai roads. The number of vehicles is growing rapidly in Chennai and of this the fastest growing is the two-wheeler segment. It is symptomatic of the motor cycle commuters declaring their independence from inadequate public services. The Metro should focus on the large motor cycle segment as its potential market if any impact is to be made on congestion and pollution levels. If Metro fares, parking charge and last mile connectivity cost, together, are significantly more than the present monthly cost for going to work by motor cycle, the Metro may remain a week-end novelty for pleasure rides. A substantial fare reduction seems necessary to reach 60-70% capacity utilisation and its feasibility is an issue for further study. (A cost study will appear next fortnight).

Moving statues of Chennai

Chennai that was Madras is a very dynamic city. The local male population (and in this *the Man from Madras Musings* does not include himself) may have a partiality to be supine especially after imbibing the libations of the local TASMAL outlet, but the statues are forever on the prowl. Take for instance Cornwallis – what a story his statue could relate if only it could speak. From Fort to First Line Beach to Connemara Public Library to Fort is quite a journey. Similarly, Lords Willingdon, Ripon and Amphill have all moved, as have Kings Edward VII and George V. Here today, gone tomorrow is the motto by which they have all stood around. Even old Neil, not the most popular among the locals, went walkabout and finally rests, like the men of Madras (not including MMM of course), horizontally.

The statues of Indians have not been exceptions to the rule. Swami Sivananda played hide-and-seek at the University, now vanishing, now appearing, rather befitting his mystic status and it is only in recent years that he has cho-

among actors, after one of his hit songs, when he was bundled unceremoniously on to a truck and carted off to distant Adyar.

MMM, not that his opinion matters in anyway, is quite happy that this has happened. The statue was hardly a tribute to the old man. Its gold paint was tacky and, as for the posture, it was quite ridiculous, making the actor look like the average Madras resident, out enjoying the evening breeze. It could be a statue to any uncle. And, moreover, it was a distraction at an important traffic junction. Kudos to whoever removed it – the Corporation or the PWD. You guys rarely work, but when you do you make sure you leave your impress.

Not so happy are various political outfits that threaten to raise a ruckus demanding return of the statue. No matter that it now stands under a roof, in a secluded garden and so is probably better off than where it was, inhaling the fumes from millions of vehicles and being a toilet for the birds of the area. The shift was a blow to Tamil pride, argue the politicians, rather like the ban on bull-

MMM chose to shut his eyes, it being one of those warm afternoons when a siesta manages to insidiously creep up. He awoke with a start on hearing applause and realised that the lugubrious introduction was done. Assuming that it was his turn to speak MMM got up and made for the lectern only to see another of the elders was hotfooting it to the same spot. He, the elder, displaying an alacrity that none would have suspected him of, managed to beat MMM to the lectern by a short head and then having grabbed the mike in a manner that could have taught a thing or two to barnacles said that it was now his duty to say a few words about MMM.

The few words extended into many, all delivered in a soothing monotone that had the audience dozing gently. Halfway through the few words, the speaker turned round, beamed at MMM and said that it was his pleasant task to touch on yet another aspect of MMM's multi-faceted achievements. He then proceeded to describe the career of a First class cricketer-

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

sen to remain, relatively unmoved so to speak. Nehru moved too at Kathipara, wandering in a confused fashion under the four-leaf clover flyover before coming to roost in a corner. Periyar grew taller, or at least his pedestal did, until he could get a good view of traffic as it rolled on top of Gemini Flyover. That was presumably to enable him to duck in time whenever a bus went out of control on top of the grade separator, which so MMM understands, is Corporation-speak for flyover. Kannagi was another mover and shaker. She vanished overnight, no doubt tired of standing with one arm raised, aiming her anklet at Triplicane. A doppelganger surfaced on Mount Road where it still stands. In the meantime, the original Kannagi came back, now on a new pedestal that bears the legend 'Perfection of Chastity'. In the interim she rested horizontally in the Museum's vault, maintaining a safe distance from Neil.

Anyway, given that so many of these statues have moved, it is no surprise that old Sivaji Ganesan too had to make a journey. There came a dark moonless night when the Corporation or the PWD sent men over to have the great thespian shifted. In the witching hours of midnight, they worked with crowbars and chisels no doubt, uprooting the great local Garrick and taking him away. "Is this gait? Is this the gait? Is it not a play being staged?" no doubt hummed the great aigrette

sports. One of them, who specialises in posters of himself, all showing him with arms crossed and a grim expression, immediately put out posters featuring the statue, and himself by its side, arms crossed and face in a grim expression. He, the poster said, would not rest till the statue was back on the beach. The man clearly has a busy life ahead.

More Madras Week

The Man from Madras Musings, rather like the politician in the story above, has had a busy August going hither and thither, being the life and soul of countless Madras Week events. He has therefore become weakened by Madras. During his well-earned repose he has taken to reminiscing about some of the events of ye olde monthe. And one of them brings much mirth each time he thinks about it.

This was one of those where the elderly met the very young, the latter thankfully being in much larger numbers. The old guard was, however, quite jealous of its prerogatives and one that it clung on to was the introduction of MMM to the audience. And so it was that MMM found himself on stage amidst a considerable geriatric presence. One of these rose to introduce MMM and proceeded to read out from a paper in such sepulchral tones that MMM began to have the feeling that he was present on stage in a framed photograph with incense wafting all over him. Halfway through the intro

turned author and editor, whom MMM counts among his closest friends. It was quite clear that somewhere in the cloudy confines of the speaker's mind, MMM and his friend the cricketer had coalesced into one. It was in vain that MMM tried to catch the speaker's eye to tell him that he was making a mistake. After a while MMM gave up. The audience was fast asleep and the few that were awake were busily looking into their mobile phones. MMM cannot deny that he was flattered, and mightily amused, for in his life he has never grasped a cricket bat nor ever bowled a ball.

Tailpiece

The Man from Madras Musings was quite intrigued to see this signboard with no fire extinguisher in sight. He then came to realise that in the event of a fire, this board was to be used to beat it out.



– MMM

Cleaning lakes – his passion



Arun Krishnamurthy.

Environmental conservation has been a much-discussed subject of vast scope and has naturally meant many things to many people. To Arun Krishnamurthy, it is cleaning lakes. He has not only chosen this specific aspect of environmental conservation, but has engaged in direct action on this aspect over the last ten years with dedication and tenacity.

Krishnamurthy, in his early thirties, graduated in microbiology, but had dreamed from his boyhood of saving lakes and ponds in his neighbourhood in the outskirts of Chennai where he was brought up. In his time, boys of his age entertained more exciting aspirations and interests, but Arun was obsessed with the state of unclean lakes and ponds in his neighbourhood. He started – over-ambitiously as it may have seemed then – the Environmentalist Foundation of India (EFI), an NGO, in 2007 to mobilise support for conserving environment.

EFI's web-site refers to several programmes, each of which is as important as the other. The holistic village development programme which involves large scale sensitisation and environment volunteering efforts is *Green Gramam*. Through this project EFI adopts villages and converts them into eco hubs. *Green Gramam* is executed through volunteers from the village.

Cities generate enormous quantities of waste every day, and with no appropriate waste management system in place, our landfills are mounting in size. Through their waste management programme, EFI aims at sensitising people to segregate their waste. Post-segregation, the waste is recycled and not sent to the landfill.

Waste generated at home is a big challenge. EFI teaches households how to convert this waste into nourishing manure. Herbs and saplings can be treated with the compost nutrition. From as little as kitchen waste to something as big as collection of apartment complex waste, EFI offers help in these tasks.

The most impactful of all programmes seems to be EFI's water-body clean-up campaign. Under this programme the

organisation adopts a beach, lake or any water body on a voluntary basis. The water body or beach with its periphery are cleaned, strengthened and restored to its original capacity and beauty. The cleaning process involves massive removal

● by
N.S. Parthasarathy

of physical garbage followed by scientific lab testing of the water samples repeatedly to check contaminant and pollutant lev-



Volunteers at work with Arun.

els. The lake bed is de-silted and the silt is deposited on the bunds followed by a major bund-strengthening programme. The levelled bund is planted with native species of saplings which offer extra support to the bund. A small wetland is created at one corner of the lake to filter out the incoming waste. The wetlands act as substrate filters; plants like water hyacinth are grown in this part alone to ensure filtration.

I met Arun Krishnamurthy in his office in Besant Nagar. It is a modest space with a dedicated team of young qualified professionals who seemed fired by the importance of their mission. EFI does not get foreign funds but operates with domestic institutional philanthropy. A lean organisation with a vast army of ground level volunteers at hundreds of select sites all over India ensures a low cost of delivery of services. And there can be no greater assurance to donors than what EFI has done.

By dint of the results seen on the ground and by the low cost of accomplishing them, Arun shows no sign of worry about monetary resources needed for the vast operations that EFI is tackling today. It strategises, guides, supervises and monitors hundreds of sites all over the country – Chennai, Pondy, Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Delhi and more. At present, there are 83 water bodies in these areas that are

being cleaned up and renewed by about 70,000 volunteers. Cleaning cannot go on endlessly; the objective is to make cleaning unnecessary. Considering that it is a difficult, long process needing persistent effort, it takes about ten years to restore the water body and make it sustain itself with minimal maintenance and cleaning. Such a self-sustaining state is the aim and that mark has been attained in 26 out of the 83 sites in the country over the last ten years, says Arun. In these sites



The sculpture of Bharat Matha in the Kapali Temple.

Bharat Matha in Kapali Temple

(by Nivedita Louis)

Have you taken a close look at some of the sculptures at the Kapali Temple?

Here is one that may surprise you, a beautiful sculpture of Bharat matha.

It is seen in the *dhwajarahana mandapam* of this temple.

On a Mylapore temple walk with Venkatesh Ramakrishnan,

we came across this wonderful sculpture. It is an exact replica of a wall poster printed by Nagpur City Press – the Bharat Matha with a crown on her flowing hair, clad in a saree, resting her left hand on a seated, decorated elephant, her right hand holding a *trishul*, tied to which is the tricolour flag.



The *mandapam* was a later addition to the temple, built in 1939, by Kaatupalli Paiyur K.N. Shanmuga Mudaliar.

That was when India's freedom struggle was at its peak and the world was at the threshold or probably had entered World War II. The sculptor who did the work proved his love for the motherland, undetected under the watchful eyes of the British, with this sculpture. (Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*)

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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From India's Digital Archives – 3 – Karthik Bhatt

Thomas Parry, Free Merchant

Thomas Parry was one of the most prominent merchants in the annals of the business history of the Madras Presidency. Arriving in Madras in 1788, he made the city and, by extension, the Presidency his home for the next three and a half decades before passing away in harness in Porto-Novo in 1824. The subject of this column is a book written in 1938, commemorating the 150th year of his arrival in Madras.

Born in 1768 in *Leighton Hall*, Welshpool, Thomas Parry arrived in Madras aged twenty and registered himself as a Free Merchant. His first business enterprise was in 1789, in partnership with Thomas Chase, a civil servant, who, besides his official duties, carried on a general banking and agency business. The partnership lasted for three years, before Parry quit in 1792 to strike out on his own. By 1795, he had become a known



Thomas Parry.

name in commercial circles, thanks to the success of his shipping business that he had begun in a small way during his partnership with Chase. His reputation led him to being appointed the Secretary of the Carnatic Insurance Co. and Examiner to the Mayor's Court, positions that he described as "situations of respectability and emolument". These, however, were short-lived ventures, as he entered the service of the Nawab of Carnatic as Captain in 1796. His job was in the Treasury, where he was in charge of collecting the duties. His private ventures, however, remained unaffected and moved from strength and strength, under several partnerships. His relationship with the East India Company was one that blew hot and cold, and he found himself perilously close to being deported to England in 1800.

Over the course of the next two decades, Parry's businesses spread across South India. In 1805, he founded the first tannery in Madras, in San Thomé and, four years later, took over sugar and indigo manufacturing units in Chidambaram. He also established a shipbuilding business in Cochin, which by 1820 was building King's Ships for the Royal Navy.

His commercial success meant that he owned substantial property in Madras. By 1819, he owned seven houses in Madras, one at San Thomé (*Leith Castle*), two in Nungambakkam (*Wallace Gardens* and *Mackay's Gardens*) and four in Purasawalkam. The business was headquartered at the south corner of First Line Beach, a location which came to be known as Parry's Corner. His most significant partnership was with John William Dare in 1819, one which would expand the empire substantially long after his death in 1824.

The book, written by G.H. Hodgson, a director in Parry and Co., is compiled from private letters written by Thomas Parry between 1806 and 1809 and ledgers and other records in the possession of the Company.

The first part of the book deals with Thomas Parry's life, while extracts from the letters form the second part. These letters are of considerable interest, recording Thomas Parry's views of various events and his business correspondence. Richly illustrated with drawings and photographs from the collection of the Company (including a perspective drawing of the new buildings that would come up in 1940), this book is a delightful account of the eventful and colourful life of Thomas Parry, Free Merchant.

Satyamurti's 'Sundara'

For years it was a sight for sore eyes in increasingly cluttered and congested T'Nagar. Located in a broad section of Thanigachalam Chetty Road, this was a bungalow of the old variety. A garden with a statue, a curving verandah and, if memory serves me right, a central courtyard with a swing. Last month I passed by the house and it was with some shock that I realised it was no longer there. I could have been the central character in Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, going back to look at *Manderley*. The doors and windows were stacked for sale and a vast empty space had taken over where *Sundara* once was. The marble plaques in the gateposts proudly gave out the name of the house and of its famed occupant – S. Satyamurti. In one fell swoop, the wreckers had done away with a significant part of Chennai's history.

S. Satyamurti (1887-1943) was a man of many parts. A lawyer by profession, he was an active member of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha, a founder secretary of the Music Academy and a member of the University Senate. A brilliant orator, he was one of prime movers of the Congress Party in Madras Presidency. In that capacity, it was he who first thought of roping in theatre personalities for public meetings. S.G. Kittappa and K.B. Sundarambal, the two stars of the Tamil theatre in the 1920s, were his first choices. That in turn led to film personalities being invited to speak at political meetings, which got them involved with various parties and culminated in the present scenario of Tamil Nadu



S. Satyamurti.



K.B. Sundarambal.

where every film star aspires for a stint in power.

Satyamurti served as Mayor of Madras in 1939-40. During his tenure he successfully exhorted citizens to voluntarily clean their neighbourhoods. Batches of residents with brooms were a familiar sight long before Swacch Bharath made its appearance. It was also Satyamurti who augmented the water supply of the city, getting the foundation stone laid for the Poondi Reservoir, which would one day bear his name as Satyamurti Sagar.

Many felt that the Congress victory in the polls to the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1937 was due to his efforts and

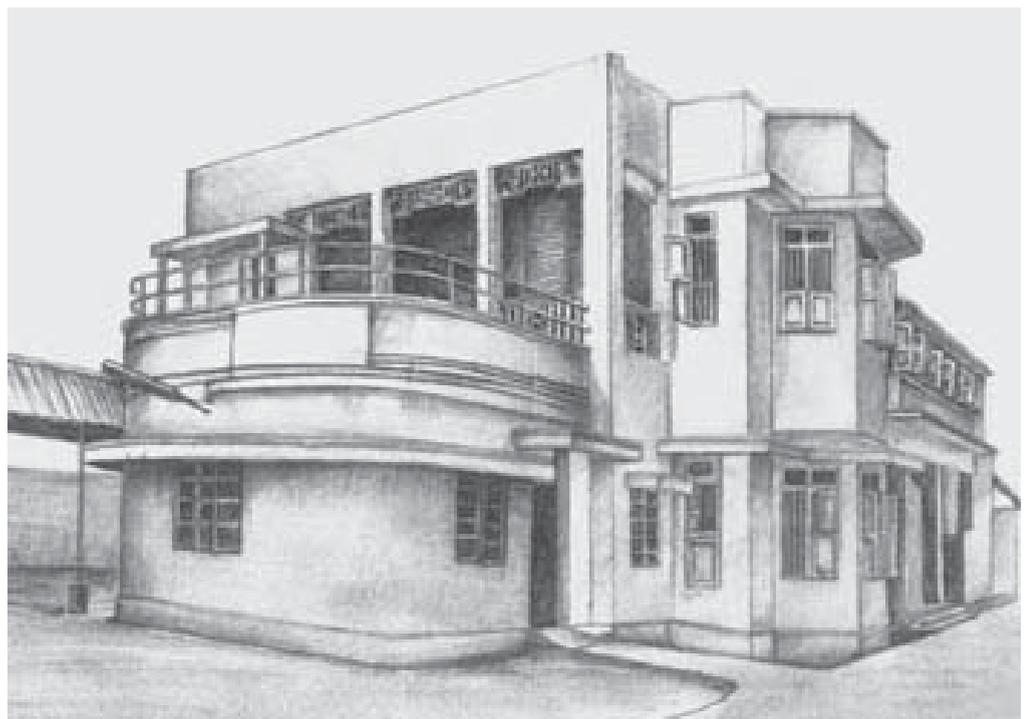
LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

– SRIRAM V

expected him to become the Prime Minister of Madras. But that was not to be. He was, however, elected to the Central Legislature in 1935 and his speeches there livened up many a debate. A brilliant career in public service was cut short following the rigours of Amravati prison where he was interned in 1942 for his participation in the Quit India Movement. Released when his health was beyond recovery, Satyamurti died in the Lansdowne Ward of the General Hospital, Madras.

A life of burning the candle at both ends meant Satyamurti had hardly any time for family, comprising his wife and daughter Lakshmi. It was left to well-wishers to make good. Worried that her honorary brother did not have a house to call his own, K.B. Sundarambal, by then a very well-to-do theatre and film personality, bought and gifted this plot of land on Thanigachalam Road to Satyamurti. The house was completed in the late 1930s and was named *Sundara*. It was however always a matter of debate on whether it was named after the benefactress or after Satyamurti's father Sundara Sastri. Does it matter now that the house itself has gone?

After Satyamurti's time, his daughter lived here with her husband. With the couple also having passed away, the demolition of the house was the only way out for the sons. In a city where the Government does not reward or recognise in any way people who protect heritage, what else can private owners do?



Sundara.



Gram Blue.



Robber Fly.



Ant.



Red Cotton Bug.



Milkweed Grasshopper.



Paper Wasp.

In chapter-2, verse-47, the Bhagavad Gita says, *Do your duty without expecting anything in return. Results will follow automatically.*

These lines perfectly describe what insects (Poochi, in Tamil) are doing all the time.

Insects are not for the faint-of-heart! Their strange shapes and buzzing and colouring and stinging and creeping can make you a phobic.... or a lover... of these beautiful creatures that have been around from millions of years before us and will live long after all of us have disappeared.

Being in the tropics, our country has an immense variety of insects. New species are being discovered almost every day. The very fact we are alive on this planet is because of them. From pollinating flowers to decomposing detritus to consuming carrion, they are absolutely essential to life cycles and processes on Earth.

Humans regard insects as pests. From using pesticides to destroying habitats to outright elimination, they're continuously inventing ways to exterminate them! Our actions on this planet are causing a worrisome climate change which is seriously affecting pollinator insects.

Many insects like silkworms and bees are economically beneficial to us as they are used extensively for producing silk and honey. It is vital for us to take a multi-

PoochiVenkat introduces his book on insects

pronged approach in our conservation effort by increasing insect populations and raising native plants primarily for pollination.

Insects are always hovering around me, and the occasional mosquito or cockroach is my favorite target to wipe out! But the insane interest in these creepies began with a delicious mix of photography and curiosity, which led to a word filled with amazement and wonder. My aim was to capture the infinite forms and colours of these innocuous creatures and maybe later – maybe never – understand their complex names and biology.

This endeavour started 25 years ago in the analogue age, where we had only films and only 36 frames in each roll and no way to 'preview' any shot and absolutely no internet! This combination made each click priceless and each breath held, a lifetime of stillness. This also made me study the behaviour of insects, their movements, their habitats, their likes and their dislikes.

One thing became clear: to get that elusive valuable shot, I had to become an insect myself – creeping on the ground,

approaching stealthily from behind, distracting by waving from one angle while "attacking" from another angle – The 'attack' here refers to the clicking of the shutter! In my relationship with these creatures, I've been bitten, stung, and infected, and I'm happy and content to follow their philosophy of duty!

I included arachnids in my book for several reasons. In Tamil, they're also called "poochi", they play a very important role in the life of insects, and I've done specific research on spiders.

Though Darwin and Linnaeus divided and classi-

fied all living organisms on Earth, modern digital technology and genome-level research is changing everything. All divisions are being re-divided and all names are being re-named. Quite soon we may have to identify humans by some other name! I've therefore kept scientific jargon and information to a minimum and, in most places, given a transliteration of names and terms.

The pictures in my book are from early negatives (and slides) as well as from modern digital images. Digital image processing has helped me render colours accurately. I

started off with a Pentax film SLR camera and worked my way through Nikon and Canon. Today, even compact cameras produce professional-quality macro photographs. At present, I use DSLR cameras from Nikon and Canon, specialised macro lenses from Tamron and Zeiss, dedicated flash units from Nissin, and macro accessories from Kenko. I occasionally take along my compact camera (Lumix LX5) with Leica optics) and some of the pictures in this book are from that small unit!

The purpose of the book is to start you, the unsuspecting reader, on a curious interesting journey into the amazing world of insects just by appreciating the beauty of their shape and colour. I want you to marvel at the variety these creatures display and the fact that all these pictures are from India.

If we go beyond the creepiness, the aversion and all those scary insect movies, to conserve and support insects, then we can live safe, secure and healthy.

If, after reading everything, you want to go further in entomology, research, conservation or photography, I would be proud and happy that this book has done its work.

I apply John Keats's lines here: *A thing of beauty is a joy forever!* (Published by Kalamkriya of the Sanmar Group.)



PoochiVenkat at work.



(Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's questions are from August 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 relate to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Name the two sportspersons conferred the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award by President Ram Nath Kovind on August 29th.
2. Dipak Misra became the 45th occupant of which prestigious post on August 28th.
3. Which UNESCO WHS site features as a motif on the reverse of the new Rs. 200 note.
4. On August 21st, which iconic landmark in London 'fell silent' so that repairs could be carried out.
5. What Islamic practice was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India on August 22nd?
6. Name the hurricane that smashed the US end-August, causing major loss of life and property.
7. Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, whose arrest and imprisonment recently, led to riots and deaths in Haryana, was the leader of which religious cult group?
8. In possibly the richest fight of all time, whom did Floyd Mayweather Jr. defeat to improve his record to 50-0 and break Rocky Marciano's 61-year-old record.
9. In its recent report, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture has observed that extreme weather events is costing India how much annually?
10. From which common plant have scientists in the US developed the world's first plant-based Zika vaccine that may be more effective, safer and cheaper?
11. If you wanted to buy food essence in bulk, then which road should you go to in Chennai?
12. On which iconic product have the Kumar brothers been doing the Madras Stripes for decades now?
13. According to the Chennai Corporation website, what is the name of the bridge on Pallavan Salai leading to the old jail? It's commonly called the St. Mary's bridge?
14. Who was the Governor at Fort St. George in September 1746 when Admiral Bertrand-François Mahé, Comte de La Bourdonnais, 'seized' Madras?
15. What is the name of the church (built in 1551) over the cave where St. Thomas is said to have lived?
16. The name of which famous Madras institution founded in 1936 was suggested by Pandit Subramania Sastri?
17. Where in Chennai would you find the Satyagraha movement commemorated?
18. What was imported to Madras for the first time in 1877, by a Major Charles Boswen of the Royal Engineers, from a Paris firm, Michaux?
19. Name the legendary hockey goalkeeper from Madras who won three Olympic gold medals between 1948 and 1956.
20. In June 1788, Josiah du Pre Porcher and Thomas Redhead set up the first formal bank in Madras with its HQ in the Fort. What was it named?

(Answers on page 10)

Kripal, Venkat, Ashwin and others

Tamil Nadu has perhaps contributed the most number of off-spinners to Indian teams in the past five decades – A.G. Kripal Singh, S. Venkataraghavan, M. Venkatramana, Ashish Kapoor and Ravichandran Ashwin. Of course, there were splendid bowlers possessing the same trade from outside the State, like Jasu Patel, V.M. Muddiah, Erapalli Prasanna, Shivlal Yadav, Rajesh Chauhan and the inimitable Harbhajan Singh. Not to forget the giant of Indian cricket, the great Polly Umrigar who served the country most nobly when captains threw the ball to him.

In view of the extraordinary success of Ashwin in recent series, I was tempted to have a look at the prominent off-spinners that I had faced during my playing days. Undoubtedly, Ashwin is an extraordinary spinner in that he has become the second bowler after the eminent Australian offie Clarrie Grimmett to complete 200 wickets in international cricket in the shortest time – 37 tests. Of course, Test matches were far apart in those days, and players did not play continuously as Ashwin does these days. For instance, Venkataraghavan and Prassanna, despite being in the team squad played few Tests together.

Kripal had started off primarily as a batsman when he made his First Class debut in the 1950-51 season. There was no zonal system in that season and he got to play just one match against Hyderabad. However, he soon emerged as a worthy all-rounder becoming the batting lynchpin of the Madras Ranji team and an off-spinner. He gave splendid all-round performances in the game against Holkar, who Madras defeated to win its maiden Ranji Trophy in the 1954-55 season.

His splendid displays in the Ranji Trophy earned him an India cap in 1955 against New Zealand and he celebrated it with a 100. He hardly got a couple of overs to bowl in the Tests that he played in. However, he earned more recognition as a full time off-spinner when he was selected to play in the First Test at the Brabourne Stadium in Bombay during the series against the Ted Dexter-led England side in 1961-62. That was largely due to his role as a match-winner for the then Madras and South Zone teams, runner-up in the inaugural Duleep Trophy Tournament.

I played Kripal in the Madras First Division League as a member of the State Bank of India team while he represented Parry's. I found him to be a steady bowler who soon read a batsman's technique. I was overwhelmed when he picked me for the Ranji squad probables and advised me that I was one of the best backfoot players around. He gave me lots of advice and guidance and his blessings enabled me to score 86 in the Buchi Babu Memorial



Kripal Singh.



Venkat.



Ashwin.

Trophy against a Ramesh Saxena-led Rusi Modi team.

Kripal was tall and his height enabled him to pick the right length early in an innings. I saw one of his best spells in the First Test against Bobby Simpson's Australia in early October 1964. It was a sultry morning as he bowled cleverly to take three wickets for 43 on a bouncy track at the Madras Corpora-

tion Stadium. It's still vivid in my mind how he teased and tormented batsmen of the calibre of Bill Lawry and Norman O'Neill. He hardly experimented and with a lovely action changed the line now and then and bamboozled the batsman.

Both bowlers used the crease so well and that helped them bowl with a lot of variety. They did not depend on turning wickets as available these days and if they had bowled on stark stumped or caught behind. It was a lesson to watch how he used the crease while bowling in tandem with another great leg spinner from Madras, V.V. Kumar.

Both bowlers used the crease so well and that helped them bowl with a lot of variety. They did not depend on turning wickets as available these days and if they had bowled on stark

● by S. Kedarnath

tion Stadium. It's still vivid in my mind how he teased and tormented batsmen of the calibre of Bill Lawry and Norman O'Neill. He hardly experimented and with a lovely action changed the line now and then and bamboozled the batsman.

Kripal was also a very shrewd leader and made both Madras and South Zone forces to reckon with in the tournaments they played.

Venky was very much in the Anil Kumble mould, bowling quicker, but was not a leggie like the latter. He had shot into prominence when he played for Madras University in the Rohinton Baria Trophy and earned a place in the Madras Ranji team when he was around 18. In another year, he was play-

ing against the John Reid-led New Zealand team in February 1965 on his home ground.

Venky would never allow a batsman to settle down and did not flight the ball as often as other bowlers plying his trade. He never liked a batsman dominating his line or length of attack. He would make the ball bounce and his clean, lovely action was a treat to watch. He would jump before the umpire and bowled several wonderful deliveries that had batsmen

Later, I remember a memorable dismissal Prasanna plotted against the West Indian all-rounder Bernard Julien in the first innings of the Fourth Test

at Chepauk in January 1975. When Prasanna bowled to Julien, the batsman drove the ball all along the carpet to the extra-cover fence twice in succession. Then Prasanna went around the wicket and before the ball reached the batsman, he came to the right side of the straight umpire crossing the runner. Julien drove the ball in the air and Prasanna had him caught-and-bowled brilliantly. It was a superbly flighted delivery and Julien just couldn't control his push to the inside. Even today, I wonder whether there is any off-spinner who could trap a batsman in that fashion.

As for Venkatramana, he was a very good off-spinner who was unlucky in not getting many chances to play. He was also a good bat. His stock delivery used to be the angular one, because he used to bowl a little diagonally with variations as well. He played just one Test in the West Indies and was very unfortunate like Padmakar Shivalkar and, now, Jayant Yadav, where the selectors stumbled very much.

Ashwin, with his performances, we have to accept as a great bowler. But he's bowled and got the maximum number of wickets on turning tracks against weaker sides. In my view, however, no spinner is bowling on a wicket where there is a 50-50 chance for bat and ball. Hence, there is no point in comparing each of these guys with one another. Secondly, nobody will accept Ravindra Jadeja as a great bowler, but he's taking wickets in heaps. That's the order of the day.

Take Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh and how they gave their best when pitches were prepared for batsmen, yet they proved they were great by getting victories for India. There is a lot of difference between good and great. If a bowler bowls correctly, on a wicket that gives 70 per cent assistance, he should produce good results.

We should not compare the bowlers of the past with the present. They bowled in different conditions and there was no help like what's offered at present. If the BCCI plays matches at neutral venues then perhaps we can say something in comparison. (Courtesy: *Straight Bat*).

Two pages celebrating Madras Week



A houseful of teachers listen to Vinita.

A traditional way of learning maths

A strategy game and geometry. Cowrie shells and Probability. Tamarind seeds and mathematical concepts. So many varied thoughts, yet they all came together in a high energy workshop conducted by Kreedha and the Ramanujan Museum and Math Education Centre at the Museum premises in Royapuram as part of the Madras Week celebrations.

Aimed at primary and secondary math teachers from schools around Chennai, the

in-a-row game – Kattam Vilayattu, the pallanguzhi, and the challenging puzzle game – Nakshatra Vilayattu, among others.

Each game was played and then presented through varied mathematical concepts that are required for primary and middle school students. Participants were also introduced to various traditional elements of play, such as long dice, cowrie shells and the math lessons they can teach.

Studying a transit corridor...

Madras Week events organised by Xavier Benedict of (AARDE) included an exhibition organised by MIDAS Architecture College and a whole day event in Pulicat.

The MIDAS Urban Initiative (MUI) featured exhibitions organised in two locations where Urban Design Studio sheets by the final year B.Arch students of the College were displayed. The sheets were

based on the students' study of Grand South Trunk (GST) Road transit corridor from Pallavaram to Tambaram done in July-August/2017. The study on which 110 students worked, was based on various parameters – socioeconomic, history, built-form, transportation, physical-study, vegetation, urban-elements, etc. The study was analysed and few proposals were made by the students.

The whole-day exhibitions were organised at the Pallavaram Santhai one day and at the Tambaram Railway Station on the next. The public was asked to review the study and proposals. The students plan to submit the final outcome of the studio-work to the Corporation of Chennai in October.



The MIDAS Architecture College students' exhibition site at the Pallavaram santhai.

... & exploring Pazhaverkadu

Trace Origin of Madras @ Pulicat was an all-day event in Pazhaverkadu organised by the AARDE Foundation. 39 participants from Chennai spent the whole day in Pulicat. The tour started with a one-hour presentation by Xavier Benedict on the Natu-

ral-Built-Cultural Heritage of Pulicat which was followed by a walk around Pulicat visiting the Dutch Cemetery, a church, the Adinarayana Perumal Temple, a Mosque, the Light-house (which they climbed for a 360° view of the lagoon and the sea), the 25th Canal mile-

stone, and Dutch Street. The participants further learnt about Pulicat history from the exhibits displayed at the Pulicat Interpretation Centre (AARDE Pulicat Museum). A demonstration of palm-leaf craft was what attracted the participants most.



The Pulicat 'explorers' with the 25th milestone of the Buckingham Canal. The zero milestone is at Basin Bridge.



Play a game and learn your Maths.

workshop had a record attendance of 56 teachers and the hall was literally bursting at the seams. Surprising that the energy and enthusiasm of the teachers and the sheer joy of playing traditional games from Chennai did not explode those seams!

Conducted by Vinita Sidhartha of Kreedha and Meena Suresh of the Ramanujan Math Centre, the aim of the workshop was to explore how traditional games can be used to teach mathematical concepts and the critical thinking that the games develop in students.

The workshop explored games played with tamarind seeds, the traditional Indian Snakes and Ladders – Parama Padam, the popular local three-

All the games were drawn from those popular around Madras through the years and teachers were introduced to the background of the games too. The session culminated with the ever popular Aadu Puli Aatam, a game that Ramanujan is reported to have played with his mother. This is a strategy game that develops critical thinking skills and was very popular in and around Madras, as is evident from the numerous inscriptions in the temples around here.

The noise level was palpable, the laughter was riotous and the learning was tremendous. All elements for a wonderful session – and perhaps one of the most interesting ways of learning mathematics!



Thirupurasundari (third from right) explaining to participants how to explore Triplicane.

Following the clues to 'find' Triplicane



One of the 'explorers' of Triplicane receives a clue from a volunteer.

'Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai' organised an exhibition of Triplicane, getting participants to follow clues.

Drizzles of the previous night did not hinder the spirit of participants or the volunteers. The task was to decipher the clue given to team with the help of local people, reach the spot and get the next clue from volunteers there. Each team of three consisted of at least one child who was differently abled. The task ended with teams collecting all the clues from different places and reaching the start. The event was a collaborative effort with Akarmaa foundation and 'Explore Differently'.

• A point of view

Are we celebrating Madras Week in a vacuum?

I appreciate Madrasis (Chennaiites?) who celebrate the Madras Week with enthusiasm.

I have been following the celebration for the last few years. I have felt that it is being done in vacuum. I got the same feeling this year too.

Obviously, we are celebrating past Madras and its heritage and tradition and not present Chennai or possible future Chennai.

One thing that is very clear is that Madras Week is celebrated by a selected few who belong to upper and middle income group. Those who celebrate are not representative of the present day Chennaiites, whom we call the 'Common Man'.

The celebration is not creating enthusiasm amongst vast section of Chennaiites, since there is nothing to celebrate as far as the present Chennai is concerned. As you walk on the road, you cannot but see overflowing sewage, people urinating on the road and half naked drunkards lying on the road. Are we to celebrate this?

Should we confine ourselves just to be proud of the past? Does such celebration of the past glory have any significance for the present and the future?

It has been lamented that the Government of Tamil Nadu is not supporting the Madras Week celebrations. Obviously, recognition is sought for the celebration from the Government in principle and some fund support too. The Government does not have the face to celebrate the happenings in present Chennai and, therefore, it is reluctant to play its role in celebrating the past, which would reveal the difference between the past and the present in a glaring manner. Would any government of the day subject itself to such humiliation?

It is high time that we not confine ourselves to celebrating the glory of the past Madras for a week and then wait for the next twelve months for the next year's Madras Week celebration. The enthusiasts should fix targets to improve

conditions to the level of their ability for the next twelve months, before celebrating the next Madras Week, so that they can celebrate the past and also the present to some extent next year.

Have we planned any purposive programmes for the next twelve months, particularly involving the youth and poor and deprived section of society, who are as much residents of Chennai as those presently celebrating Madras Week?

N.S.Venkataraman

Nandini Voice For The Deprived
nandinivoice.com

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Venkataraman obviously does not follow the variety of programmes being offered during Madras Week celebrations. They include both the past and the present (this year much more of the latter). These programmes range from looking at Madras's problems by think-tanks to programmes in schools of all levels all around the city, certainly in no vacuum.

Madras Day/Week/Month has from the first never sought government support nor any kind of funds from anyone. It has only called for VOLUNTEER activity and perhaps Mr. Venkataraman should next year initiate some such activities of his own with discussions on the problems he lists and have the voices of the 'common man' he wants to be heard, heard? As for Government participation, it has never been sought by any of the participants, but that is no reason why any celebrations organised by it should not be welcomed.

As for the problems Mr. Venkataraman mentions, every city in India has them; doesn't Mr. Venkataraman see any positives in our city? Does he only see the deprived? Don't they see this city as their home, a place of opportunity, a place they migrated to in search of a better life?

Discovering the City's markets

City Markets. This was the theme for this year's edition of the Annual Heritage of Chennai power-point project contest for city schools, organised by Mylapore Times.

Twelve schools came up with fascinating stories. And the winner, AMM School of Kotturpuram, bagged the rolling trophy for the team's research on the markets of Saidapet.

The trio had gone to the bustling market at 7 a.m. and stayed on for a few hours to capture life at that early hour. They learnt how fish at this famed fish market was brought here from different parts of the State and outside. How it was transported, auctioned and sold to big and small retailers. They learnt how land belonging to a temple came to be a market of the city. They located foundation stones that helped them highlight a slice of history. And they spoke to shop-owners and the man who has leased the space to learn more about this market.

Other teams explored other markets.

Automobile spares and accessories on General Patters Road.

Textiles on Mint Street. The potters of Kosapet and the tiled Kalmandapam Market.

Zam Bazaar and the notorious Pudupet auto spares market.

Thaneerthurai Market and Chintadripet Fish Market.

Ambattur's Fish Market and Burma Bazaar.

Each with fascinating histories and character.

The contest had allowed the children to explore and learn and appreciate. But given the limited scope and time that our schools provide for such highly educative projects, most presentations skimmed the surface.

The children liked the experience though.

Now they know a little more about their area. And of the city.



Winning at the Murugappa's quizzes

The Madras (Open) Quiz 2017 was organised by the Murugappa Group jointly with AMM Matriculation Higher Secondary School. Dr Sumanth C. Raman was the quiz master. Around 250 people of all ages participated. A significant proportion of students were from the younger age groups. Ramaswamy and Sylvian Patrick were the winners for the 2nd consecutive year. Sankhya and Jayakanthan were first runners-

up and were followed by Vidya Swaminathan and Aravind Subramanian.

* * *

Murugappa Madras Quotient Quiz 2017, which was held at St. Bede's Auditorium, San Thomé, with Quizmaster Dr. Navin Jayakumar, had a record turnout of 385 teams from over 100 schools in Chennai! 1200 students and 200 parents and teachers were part of the event. The winners were the team

from PSBB Senior Secondary School, Nungambakkam (Sudharshan M., Akshaya Mohan and Akash Kishore) and they were followed by P.S. Senior Secondary School, Mylapore (Guhan, K.K.S. Abhishek and N. Dhanush) and PSBB Senior Secondary School, KK Nagar (Nithin Karthic, R. Visveswaran and Sashee Kiran Raman). The Padma Seshadri teams appear to have taken to quizzing in a big way.



Bharati's treasury of poetry

The renaissance in Tamil letters came to full bloom with Subramania Bharati (1882-1921). Though his father desired that Bharati should pursue 'English education', the boy's heart was with Tamil. It was while working as a Tamil pundit in Madurai in the Setupati High School that he met G. Subramania Iyer, the legendary editor of *Swadesamitran*. He was appointed a sub-editor, which meant translating the speeches of great leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Simplified by his genius, Tamil prose glowed with a new strength. At the same time, the patriot poet was also born. It was the time of the Bande Mataram Movement and Bharati's fiery political articles roused the Tamil Nation with immediate effect. In fact, later, he became the full-fledged editor of the Nationalist paper, *India*. With the help of friends, he floated other papers. Swami Vivekananda's *Prabuddha Bharata* inspired him to start the magazine, *Bala Bharata* in 1907, as a mouthpiece of the Nationalist ideals in South India.

The influence of Swami Vivekananda is very clear in what Bharati wrote in the pages of this magazine:

"Let us dream of a service so pure, so vast, so daring that in all our life, from the first moment to the last, there shall not be found a single thread of self!

"In every question that comes before you, make it your rule to assume that India has the essential. She has only to learn how to use it.

"She has unity: must organise and direct it. Has passionate love of country – must avail herself of it. Has abundance of democratic sense and method, must discover how to make use of it."

– (Bala Bharata, November 1907)

When Bharati went to the Calcutta Session of the Congress in 1906, he made it a point to meet Swami Vivekananda's disciple, Sister Nivedita. As soon as he met her, he realised that this was certainly an emanation of Mother Shakti. In the course of their conversation, the Sister impressed upon him the need to overcome caste and creedal prejudices and the imperative work an educated Indian had to take upon himself, women's emancipation. He promised to do so and was as good as his word. Considering her as his guru, he dedicated the first two volumes of his patriotic poems, *Swadesa Gitangal*, to Sister Nivedita: "I place this slim volume at the Teacher's Feet who showed me the vision of Mother Bharat and instilled in me patriotism, even as Krishna revealed to Arjuna His viswarupa and taught him the true nature of the Self."

Bharati's fiery and caustic editorials, poems and speeches soon drew the wrathful attention of the British Government. The paper *India* which he edited was an eyecore for the authorities and an opportunity was sought to arrest him. On the advice of friends, Bharati preferred self-exile in Pondicherry. He was there in 1909; Sri Aurobindo reached the sea-side French enclave in 1910. Another well-known nationalist leader, V.V.S. Aiyar, also preferred self-exile. Bharati was in Pondicherry for a decade. These years were the richest in his career as a writer; he had great friends with whom he could study sublime works like the *Vedas*; but he was also to suffer intense poverty during this decade.

In 1918, he decided to return to India and was arrested at the Indo-French border and lodged in Cuddalore Jail for 25 days. He was freed later and spent some time in the village, Kadayam. Bharati was invited by *Swadesamitran* again, and a new and happy chapter seemed to open for the poet-journalist. Unfortunately, he passed away on September 12, 1921.

The Bharati canon is sumptuous and comprises prose and poetry. Subramania Bharati's poems deal with various subjects: patriotism, devotion, ethics, autobiography. His prose includes journalism, short fiction and an unfinished novel. Bharati's genius transformed all that he touched into good literature, and often reached the heights of the sublime. Ninety years and more after his passing, Tamil literature still swears by the Bharati canon.

The world outside Tamil Nadu has generally known Bharati only as a poet of freedom and patriotism. Many of the songs were immediately effective when they were sung and continue to evoke national pride in the hearer. These poems were children of the Bande Mataram Movement. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's song was translated by Bharati twice; and each translation is literal and poetic at the same time.

Subramania Bharati loved his mother tongue and Tamil Nadu deeply and found no contradiction in praising the Tamil land even as he praised Mother India.

Subramania Bharati's message of such an integral unity in meaningful diversity remains very relevant even today.

● Prema Nandakumar remembering Subramania Bharati on his 96th death anniversary, September 12th.

Ganesa was a favourite deity of Bharati as he was a regular visitor at Manakkula Vinayaka temple which is not far from the beach in Pondicherry. His *Vinayakar Nan Mani Malai* lists out the good that accrues to devotees of Ganapati:

"The inner ear will open to sounds; the inward eye Will glow; It will blaze forth; manliness will be his gift; One can issue forth in the directions And plant the flag of victory; why, one can Hold the venomous serpent in hand; One can live for all time, never cowed down By poison, illness or dire enmity."

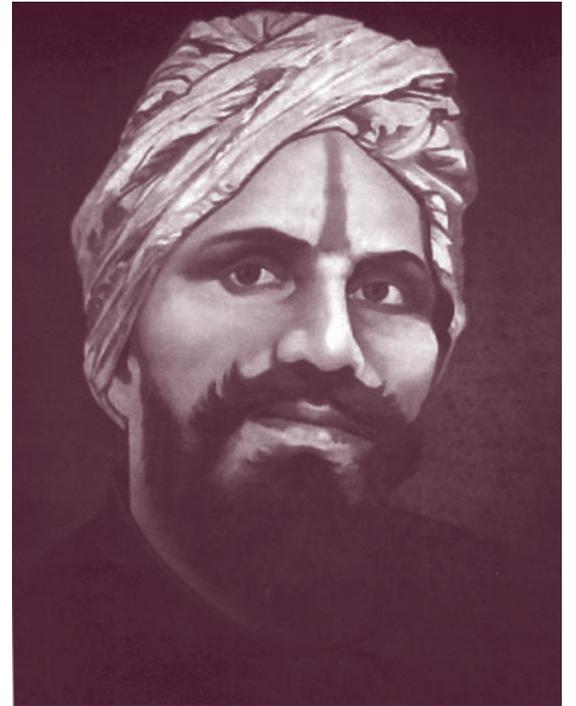
His immersion in the Krishna experience was due to the poetry of the Alvars. Thus, Nammalvar's decad, 'Kannan kazhaladi' inspired him in an identical rhythm:

"O mind, remember Kannan's holy feet; It will give definitely An indestructible form.

The Lord who sports A darkling Form, Will give us riches, Gratification and fame."

Bharati's *Kannan Pattu* (Krishna Songs) has twenty-three lyrics composed in lilting musical modes. The approaches to Krishna chosen by Bharati includes the Lord as a servant. Krishna as a servant? The manner in which Bharati projects Krishna as a domestic servant is amazing. The poet has had troubles a-plenty with servants always asking for higher salaries and giving lame excuses for their absence. And then comes Krishna to him as a servant, introducing himself as of the cowherd clan. And as the days go by with this perfect servant, Krishna has also become Bharati's friend, counselor, teacher and even god himself! The poems, 'Kannamma – my child' and 'Krishna – my mischievous boy' are justly famous. It is pure Perialvar, cast in the Bharatian mould.

The Sufi inspiration is clear in Bharati's songs to Kannamma. Here the poet-devotee is in search of the divine beauty and personifies the same as Kannamma



Subramania Bharati.

and seeks in Nature without and the imagination within by inditing six songs titled, 'Kannamma – my Lady Love':

"Are those flame-bright eyes, Kannamma!
The Sun and the Moon?
Does the dark eye-ball, Kannamma!
Reflect the inky skies?
Are those woven diamonds gleaming
On the raven-like silken robe
The star-clusters above
In the middle of the night?"

Kuyil Pattu is a narrative poem of 750 lines. It is a fable where we have a *kuyil* (koel), a monkey and a bull. It is Bharati's dream-vision of the spirit of beauty and is pure romance. We cannot dismiss it as mere fancy, for the poet concludes with a challenge thrown at the reader:

"How be it a fictional tale, O wise old poets,
Could my story yield on closer study
A deep philosophical meaning,
Won't you explain what it is indeed?"

If there is God's plenty in Bharati's poetic canon, his prose writings yield an equally rich treasure. The unfinished novel, *Chandrikayin Kathai* deals with widow-re-marriage. *One-Sixth* is about the tragedy of untouchability in India. *Jana Ratham* is an account of the imaginary travels of the author in "the chariot of knowledge". He goes to Gandharva, Satya and Dharma worlds. Dharmaraja reminds him of Bal Gangadhar Tilak! Soon the author's Mind grows restless and he is back in this world of human affairs with a thud.

Always tuned to the future, Bharati did not have time for regrets. His philosophical poems underline this aspect very well. We must build for the future generations, not keep raking the past, he said and issued a command:

"Stumble not, fools, into the pit –
The preying, destroying recapitulation
Of things past and done with –
Nor with the agony of vain regrets.
The Past will not return!
Rather grapple to your heart the thought
That you have today achieved
Another birth."

There have been innumerable books written about his priceless contribution to Tamil literature. The best tribute to Subramania Bharati comes from the legendary scholar-administrator Navaratna Rama Rao:

"So long as men love motherland and goodness, so long will Bharati continue to be read. Even if he lives only as long as the glorious Tamil language, it would not be incorrect to call him immortal." – (Courtesy: Sri Aurobindo's Action).

The translations from Subramania Bharati quoted in the article are by Prema Nandakumar.

RR Sabha opens its new hall

On July 16th morning, to the strains of the *nagaswaram*, the chant of religious texts and to the sounds of classical music, the 89-year-old Rasika Ranjani Sabha, a Mylapore icon, opened its doors to guests and *rasika*-s. It now offers a well-equipped performing arts complex located on Sundareswarar Street, off East Mada Street, Mylapore. Senior Mylaporean guests will not be able to linger at that iconic statue of Lord Krishna that greeted you in the past, behind the box-office counters. The *sabha* team says a new marble statue will be installed in that spot.

There are three auditoriums here – the main one is a 700-seater and spread across two levels. There is a mechanical lift for seniors in wheel-chairs. There are two smaller auditoriums on the second floor; a 270-seater for concerts, talks and discourses and an 80-seater which is best suited for social functions and informal events. All of them are fitted with smart-designed stages, comfortable seating and state-of-the-art audio equipment which promise the best acoustics. Says R. Nagarajan, senior chartered accountant and *sabha* secretary, "If we hold mike-less concerts in any of our halls they will sound great and can be heard by anybody sitting anywhere in the hall."

The *sabha* hired an Australian expert to fit the halls here. About Rs.1.5 crore has been spent on the sound and acoustics plans here. The earlier plan to have an art gallery was dropped.

Soon, the R.R. Sabha complex will also have a music listening room where you can put on the ear phones and listen to the music of the masters, which has been digitally restored from spool and tapes.

There is also a small cafeteria counter for now; a bigger one will be in place in the year ahead.

The re-constructed R.R. Sabha is a Rs. 16 crore project, with Rs. 2 crore given by donors and Rs. 11 crore borrowed from a private bank.

To raise revenues, the *sabha* is planning to skip being part of the famed December Season and instead curate theme festivals round the year. Says Nagarajan, "Our focus is on young talent. And we will have unique, themed music and dance fests."

Work is still going on at this campus where, some eight years ago, the JCBs brought down that iconic auditorium where famed actors, musicians and dancers had performed to packed houses. Controversies dogged the *sabha* when new plans were drawn. We are told that the idea of a Trust was dropped and there is only one *sabha* team now that will manage the affairs and that there are no legal cases to address any more. (Courtesy: Mylapore Times)

Cleaning lakes – his passion

(Continued from page 3)

locations without difficulty and loss of effectiveness. It still seems debatable whether a large spread is desirable over compactness and completeness area by area, but Arun and his colleagues are shrewd enough to be aware of the probability and need for such a strategic course correction in the future.

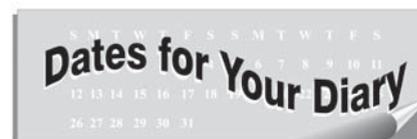
EFI's programmes are so wide and comprehensive that you wonder if meaningful and sustained attention is feasible on so wide a range of objectives. Their conservation efforts include the following: lake conservation, herb restoration/native species plantation, creating urban eco-responsibility, composting, setting up bio-diversity parks in schools, animal care, sparrow reintroduction, youth camps and mass awareness through media. Would EFI be better off devoting its energies and resources on select critical programmes instead of trying to do too many things all at once?

Even with a fine working model backed by sound organisation it takes many years to restore a waterbody to its natural state of life-giving cleanliness when it does not need any more massive cleansing attention. And there are thousands of such water bodies in every State. As such, cleaning as a post-event correction would be endless, with no closure in sight. While cleaning as a corrective measure is necessary, simultaneous massive efforts to educate people to generate less waste and to dispose of them in a responsible manner would, ideally, reduce the need for cleansing itself, making it eventually even unnecessary.

EFI's campaign should shift gradually to utilise its model and expertise to bring about a behavioural transformation among waste generators. Arun's present effort is, no doubt, having the incidental effect of sensitising a vast army of volunteers in the country to the need for protecting natural resources and to more responsible habits in generating and disposing waste. Their example would

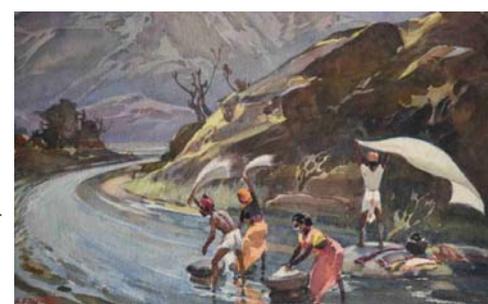
have a contagious influence on their fellow citizens.

Philanthropic institutions are looking for good causes and committed implementation. And EFI under Arun Krishnamurthy has a worthy cause, a working model that lends itself to easy replication, low delivery costs and a team of young men and women charged with missionary zeal. That should make for a synergistic partnership.



Till September

30: *Hour of the Cowdust*, an exhibition of water colours by G.D. Paulraj. His paintings were quintessential images of rural Tamil Nadu between 1950 and 1980.



The importance of Paul Raji's art thus lies not only in their technical prowess but also in their importance as documents of a bygone era. When Queen Elizabeth came to Chennai in the 1950s, he was asked to paint at the Boat Club. That painting is among the Queen's collection now and another painting of his is in the Pope's collection.

Till September 30: *Folk Rhythms*, an exhibition of paintings by S. Govindarajan at DakshinaChitra.

Answers to Quiz

- Former Indian hockey team captain Sardar Singh and Paralympics double gold medallist Devendra Jhajharia, 2. Chief Justice of India, 3. Sanchi Stupa, 4. Big Ben, 5. 'Triple Talaq', 6. Harvey, 7. Dera Sacha Sauda, 8. Mixed martial artist Conor McGregor, 9. \$9-10 billion, 10. Tobacco, 11. Wall Tax Road, 12. Royal Enfield motorbikes, 13. Hutton Bridge, 14. Nicholas Morse, a grandson of Oliver Cromwell, 15. Shrine of Our Lady of Health, 16. Kalakshetra, 17. Fortune Hotel, Cathedral Road (former Chola Sheraton), 18. Bicycle, 19. Ranganathan Francis, 20. Carnatic Bank.

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– THE EDITOR

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