

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XXVII No. 12

October 1-15, 2017

INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- Where the Masons were
- Madras aviation
- Requiem for a telegram
- Go-getter from Chennai

Giant tower to disfigure a heritage skyline?

(By The Editor)

For years, Central Station, along with its neighbours, the South ern Railway headquarters, the VP Hall and *Ripon Building*, was a landmark of our city, a part of a handsome skyline, visible all along that stretch of Poonamallee High Road. But that joy may not be ours for much longer. Chennai Metrorail Limited (CMRL) now plans a 33-storey commercial structure just opposite, on land that it acquired from the Raja Sir Savalai Ramaswami Mudaliar Choultry. With this what ought to qualify as a heritage area will have a monstrosity sticking out like a sore thumb. Not that such considerations are going to weigh much with the CMRL.

For the past few years, Chennai Metrorail has paid scant attention to damage that it has caused to heritage structures in the city. The list is long and has been carried so many times in *Madras Musings* it does not bear repetition. Suffice it to say that in most cases, CMRL has chosen to undertake drilling activities in close proximity to heritage structures despite warnings from experts. And there have been significant damages. Each time such damages have been reported, these have been brushed aside stating that such occurrences need to be borne with resignation for the sake of development. That is strictly not an argument that can hold water. Development necessarily has to carry with it the interests of all stakeholders and heritage too happens to be one.

CMRL will now have to embark on getting approvals from many agencies and that includes the Airports Authority as a building of such a height does not exist in the city. More

(Continued on page 8)



The recent rains have brought life back to the Mylapore tank. (Picture courtesy: Mylapore Times.)

Speedy completion of Metro necessary for benefits to be seen

Experience across the world has shown that introduction of a mass rapid transit system can relieve traffic congestion, discourage residential crowding, lessen pollution and widen work opportunities. Chennai too naturally hopes that the Metro would not only make our City look modern, but also more liveable.

For now, just 28 km of Phase One's 45 km is in use. The experience of this stretch is not enough to estimate the Metro's impact on completion of the full project. But it is useful as a pilot model to test fare structure and related strategies to achieve high capacity utilisation.

The uppermost aim must be to encourage mass usage. High capacity utilisation is necessary for financial viability and for reaping larger socioeconomic benefits. The absence of an initial surge of commuters taking this mode of travel is disappointing. A 4-bogie train had less than 20 per cent occupancy at about 11:15 hours on a Monday when there was heavy traffic on the roads. Enquiries indicated peak traffic was not substantially larger. Looking down

from this elevated train showed that there was, right under the Metro line, a seething traffic of cars, autos and two-wheelers. Erroneous understanding of "off-peak" hours obscures recognition of real factors that impede higher occupancy and leads to meek acceptance of unsatisfactory situations as being inevitable.

the Metro to expect mass adoption.

Further, the largest segment of present commuting modes should be matched for cost by Metro with some allowance for better values offered in terms of comfort, speed and dependability. This is necessary, to establish user addiction. To examine this further, as a ready method,

hours for 26 days, i.e., Rs. 390, and the cost of four connections at boarding and destination points, say, a total of Rs. 20 per day for 26 days which is Rs. 520. Thus, the cost door-to-door for office is Rs. 2158 per month.

Cost for a car owner going to work would be fuel at 12 km/litre, for a return distance of 20 km, Rs. 120 per day or Rs. 3120 per month of 26 working days plus parking charge of Rs. 780. To him, the Metro, is a substantial saving. However, car owners are of different categories – the elite would never switch to the Metro and the nouveau executive class may consider the car as a status symbol. It is the junior and middle level executives and business persons who are likely to take to the Metro. Among them, couples working in the same office or nearby locations would find the car more economical. Allowing for these factors, only about 10-15 per cent of car users seem to constitute a potential segment for the Metro.

The auto fare by meter is Rs. 100 for the same journey, but the auto drivers I spoke to, said

(Continued on page 8)

● by A Cost Analyst

Currently, owning a motorised vehicle or taking an auto is necessary, with its consequent cost and inconvenience, to access a Metro station. There is need for mini-bus feeder circuits, on a hop-on-hop-off basis, covering the hinterland of each station, ensuring that a short walk is enough to hop on to a mini. Ideally, such a facility should be at a single standard charge, preferably as a part of an integrated Metro rate and ticket. Circuit operators on contract with Metro could get compensated by a sum per circuit. If connectivity is available, the parking facility at each station need not be large. Hinterland connectivity is critical for

informed guesses of comparative costs are used. Within the short span of an article, they are good enough for appreciating the problem and suggesting possible solutions.

At present, the effective cost by Metro from Alandur for about 8 km away (assumed as the average distance a commuter makes to reach the work spot) works out to Rs. 24 per trip (Rs. 3 per km compared to Rs. 0.5-1.5 range in Delhi) after a 20 per cent discount for a monthly pass. Including return trip for 26 days, this comes to Rs. 1248 per month. To the cost of the pass must be added the cost of parking a motor cycle Rs. 15 per day of nine

Garbage bin a landmark

The garbage bin at my street corner is of great concern to me. Every time I step out of home, it confronts me. And I feel depressed. So depressed that my head spins like the wheels of this garbage bin.

One recent evening, I walked down to the corner to wait for a friend who was picking me up for coffee and conversation.

To Ola drivers, auto drivers, friends who come by and strangers, besides the cooking gas cylinder delivery man, this bin is a landmark. There is a giant Metrowater tank around, but it's too far. There is actor Vijay's office, but it is on Level 3. So the bin is a convenient landmark.

More so since it is always pushed to the side of the road even though the Ramky staff push it into its corner after emptying it every morning.

On another evening, after a nice shower I was standing close to the bin when I heard some strange noises. Then two bags rolled out. I was a tad nervous now.

Perhaps giant rodents? I dreaded the thought.

Already, the rats had been taking it out on the shoots of my dear *thulasi* plant and all the while we thought it was dying of some ill-omen.

There were more noises from the other side of the garbage bin. Then I saw two cows. They were tearing apart these large plastic bags and seeking stuff to masticate for their evening *tiffin*.

The bags were full of plastic covers. I now realised why our street-end bin was overflowing so much nowadays. The staff at the two big stores on the other side were neatly packing their waste and dumping it in our bin at night.

I had once challenged the boys and they abused me. I restrained myself, for I didn't want them to next throw their waste over our walls and spoil the bonnets of the Etios and Titanium.

Actually, I don't mind the overflowing waste. It is the stink that drives me mad.

I think there's not much of fish and meat waste in there. But, still, kitchen waste stinks. Roasted in this head and soiled in the showers. It is the stink.

My neighbour has planted some jasmine in our campus. The blooms are doing well but they are losing the battle with the stink.

I read that the Corporation has plans for biogas plants at Ward level. That's a good idea. If the stink is any indicator, there's a lot of gas in our backyards that needs re-generation.

I am not sure how many residents may want to get their kitchens connected to the Ward gas plant. You know how people have some reservations. What if the gas is from recycled chicken wings?

So I expect the gas lines to be connected to the noon-meal kitchen at our local Corporation school that is just down the road.

I am hoping this project is rolled out quickly.

I don't mind rodents going for the *thulasi*. But I will be at my wit's end if cattle begin to froth and gasp after feeding on tons of plastic and paper dumped inside our garbage bins. I don't know if Blue Cross works 24x7.

Please roll out the gas plants before we have the councillors in their seats.

– Vincent D'souza
Mylapore Times

Thank you, Donors

We today publish donations received with thanks for the period 16.08.16–15.12.16.

– The Editor

Rs. 50: Ballal C.B.L.; Sasikala C.

Rs. 100: Baskkaran K.B.100; Eji K Umamahesh; Gopalakrishnan S.; Jayaraj M.S.; Kalyanasundaram T.V.; Meenakshi Sundaram; Prakash S.; Rajagopal S.; Ramaswamy V.; Shantha Venkataraman; Sivakumar S.; Sreenivasan C.V.; Sridhar Ganesh; Subbaraman N.V.; Subramanian S.; Sundari Sidhartha; Viswanathan C.

Rs. 150: Jacob John K.; Kamalakannan A.; Krishna K.V.S.; Vijaya Raghavan A.

Rs. 200: Chitra, S; Indukanth Ragade; Parthasarathy N.S.; Raghavan S.S.; Ruthnaswamy C.; Unnaikrishnan P.; Vaidyanathan R.

Rs. 300: Immanuel D.J.B.

Rs. 400: Gopalan T.R.; Jayaraman V.V.; Karuppaiah L; Murthy S; Narayanan S.A.; Parvathi Menon; Pethachi M.C.T.; Rajagopal R.; Ram Mohan, G; Ramani H; Rangarajan S.; Ravindranath J.V. Soora Chandhiramouleeswaran; Sridharan, R.K.; Srinivasan K.S.; Sundar S; Yatheendra Prabu K.

The Holy Indian Cow

These are very bovine times. The country is divided into two – those who rejoice in the cow and the other half that rejoices in what is within it and by that *The Man from Madras Musings* does not mean milk. The party of the first part is threatening to carve up the party of the second part as they say in legalese, rather in the manner in which party of the second part was all along carving up the cow. It is in the light of all this no doubt that a company decided to put out appropriate messages on the sachets of cows' milk that it sells.

MMM is featuring the picture alongside for your reference and reading joy. It is also to prove that he is not making up much of this column, a calumny that he has had to suffer much from frequently. But since the photo alongside may not be very readable, MMM is also giving below the relevant extracts from it, together with his interpretation on what each line is meant to signify.

The first and most important statement is what you see clearly – Indian Cow Breeds Milk. That in effect means cows and bulls are saintly creatures who only breed through immaculate conception when it comes to progeny. For the rest of the time, whenever they get excited, they breed milk. Now for the lines up top, on what could signify as the mast-head of the sachet. Reading 1 to r, the first line states 'No injection use conceive, Natural only.' This once again establishes the purity of the cow. It does not obviously receive any injections from bull of any kind. It conceives, but naturally, when it feels like it, or when ordained by God. Line 2 states 'No injection use before Collect Milk'. Taken in conjunction with the main statement that Indian cow breeds milk it is quite obvious that just like Indian people, the cow too breeds rather freely, without the help of any injections, only it breeds milk. For progeny it looks to nature. Talking about humans, MMM is aware that Indians are rather prone these days to taking injections to breed. But that is largely because they have become slaves to degrading Western habits. In the good old days, when toilets were all out in the open and the Gods designed the first aircraft, we Indians could breed without such artificial aids. Let us therefore learn from the cow.

Line 3, which is Daytime go outside for Nature Food is to be taken together with Line 4, which is Night time inside Shelter. This is no immoral or depraved cow. In keeping with its purity of thought and action, it sets out each morning in broad daylight and not for any hanky panky at that but only for Nature Food, which considering their abundance in our city, MMM assumes refers to plastic covers and poster pa-

pers. By evensong, holy cow is back at home. It does not tarry at the local Tasmac bar or wonder if it can pick up a bull and be off to the local discotheque. In short, its private life is above board, as an Indian cow's ought to be.

It is therefore no wonder that such a wonder cow can claim to be 'rich in medicinal properties'. It must be so repressed that it must be requiring a tonne of anti-depressants to keep it standing. MMM will ignore the last line that states the saintly cow in question is from Q1 Organic Form, whatever that means. But he is quite clear that this is the kind of cow that this will win votes, and also foment riots.



On moving statues

Last fortnight's piece by *The Man from Madras Musings* on the great thespian's statue going walkabout resulted in some feedback, the burden of which was that MMM ought not to have rejoiced at its shifting. MMM reserved his judgement on that, but then having

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

all along been a fan of Simply Great (SG), the actor, MMM decided to pay a courtesy call on him in his new home. After all, having enjoyed the breezes of the beach for so long, SG may be feeling rather claustrophobic in his new location by the Adyar, which river, as though in welcome, has been rather extra smelly of late.

And so MMM went to meet SG. The tall gates leading to the memorial were locked and there was no way MMM could have entered, he having never been lissom enough to leaps and bound. Not wanting to be impaled on the spear-shaped grilles, MMM just hung around for a while hoping that some security guard or the other would turn up to let him in. This did not happen. As MMM left, the guard to the neighbouring property sauntered up and advised him to be sure to visit on October 1, that being SG's birthday when, so the guard said, there was sure to be a commemoration of some sort.

What of the rest of the year MMM wondered. Well, SG, like so many other Tamil greats, is fated to remain behind locked doors. Which seems a great pity for SG was a man who loved the public and would have been happy if they were allowed to saunter in at will.

On the same vein, MMM could not help reflecting that Chennai as a city is dotted with several memorials of this kind. There is one to the constitution maker, which is not far away from that of SG. This is also locked up all the time. The ones to the father of the nation, his *sambandhi* who was Governor General and then held a series of other public offices each less important than the previous one, and that of a beloved Chief Minister who put us on the industrial map are all next to each other. These, though open to visitors, hardly see any foot-falls and remain for most of the year empty structures. So is that of a leader of the backward classes. This edifice, incidentally, was put up after quite a bit of jingoism on the part of his followers. But they too appear to have forgotten all about it once the building was put up.

All of this is rather sad, at least in MMM's view. This is a city that is rapidly losing whatever it once possessed by way of commons. Where then are people supposed to go? The beach, once a happy place to congregate in, is now out of bounds for any group that is greater than four in strength, chiefly because there is a fear that the bull people will return. And talking about the bull peoples, MMM wonders as to what happened to them all. Where are those experts on indigenous vs imported cows, and the same breeds of bull on whom whole pages were written in print and social media?

Anyway, to come back to the memorials, it is high time the Government decided to put these places to some use. Yes, MMM is aware that in foreign countries too memorials are what they are meant to be – places honouring the dead. But there they appear to attract several tourists, which is not the case here, especially with gates barred and watchmen chasing people away on all days except birthdays of the dear departed.

Tailpiece

The Man from Madras Musings has heard of waterbeds, but he had never seen a water tanker bed. The man in the pic appears to be quite comfortable sleeping on top of the vehicle. You can never account for tastes.



– MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Metro and the Moon

Regarding *Riding the Metro, finding it costly*, (MM, September 16th), the stretch between Nehru Park and Central is not yet operational.

As a family in HIG, we find it convenient to take the Metro from Shenoy Nagar station, which is a hop, step and jump from our home, to places like Vadapalani and, of course to the airport too. The Vadapalani station is also right in front of the Forum Mall to which we go to catch the latest movie.

In Singapore, the pedestrian Metro subway leads right to the Mall, though it would be akin to asking for the Moon for such facilities in Chennai, where to be fair the new stations are being maintained well.

To add to the article, it does not take into account transport like the Ola and Uber cabs and the share autos in the city which have gained popularity now.

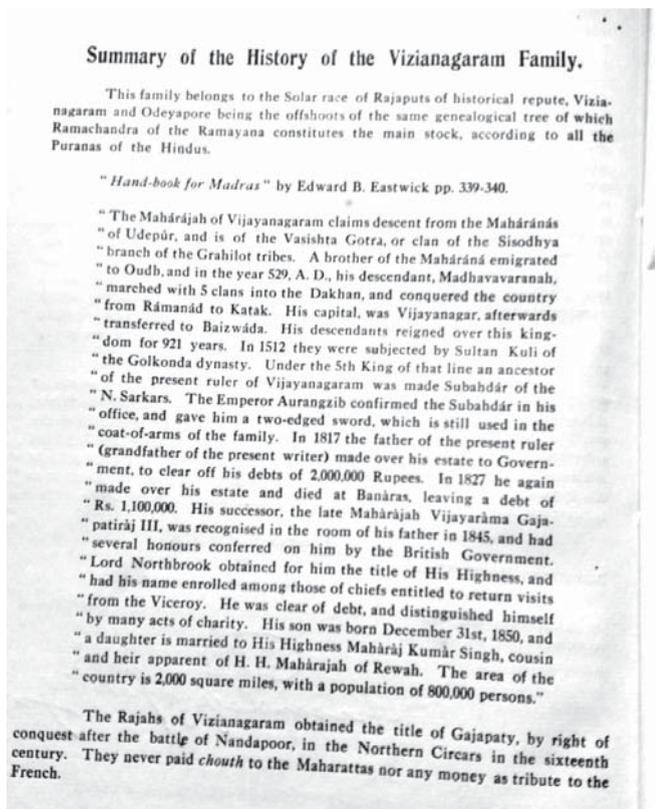
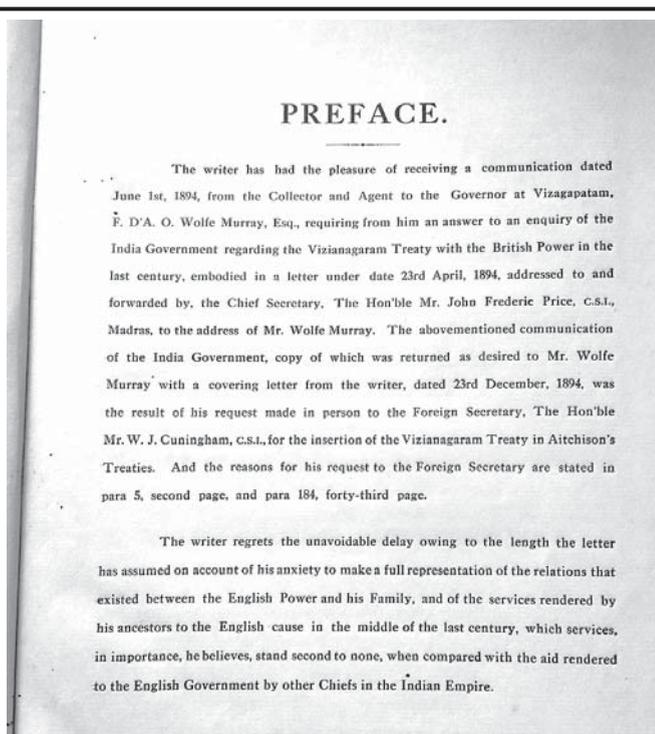
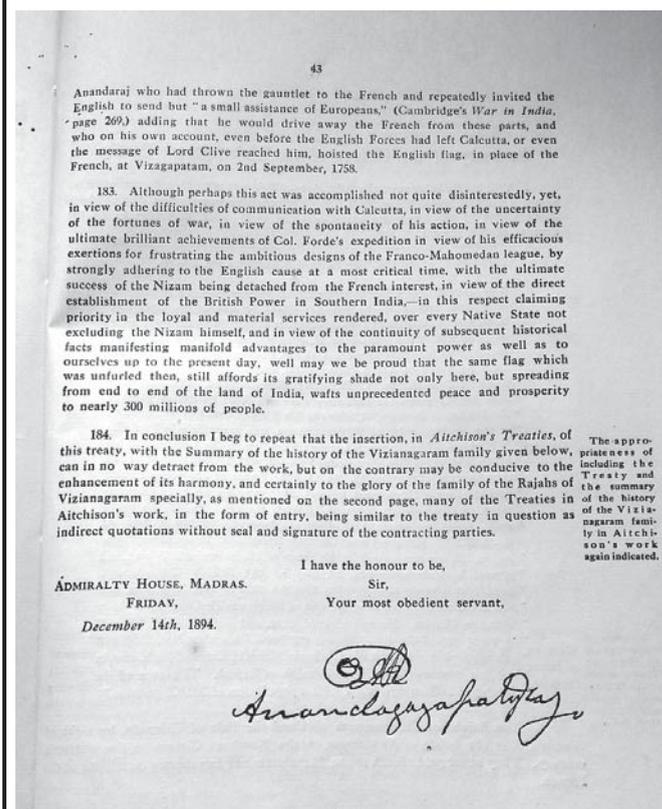
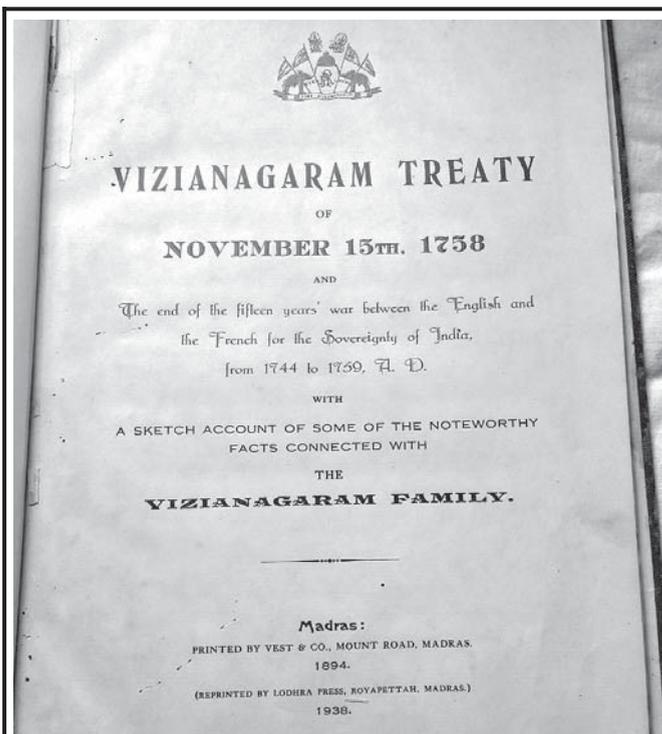
T.K. Srinivas Chari
srinivaschar@gmail.com

Levelling down

Propos NEET, *A wake-up call for the State*, (MM, September 16th), the government is fully aware that many children who desire to join good institutions change over to CBSE schools for their XI and XII classes. In spite of this, the powers-that-be have been reluctant to upgrade the syllabus over many years.

They want every one to come down to their level. It is called Samaseer Kalvi. God save our children!

T.M. Srinivasan
adiisha@yahoo.com



The Vizianagaram Royals

My grandfather, Dr. K.N. Kesari (1875-1953), was a friend of the princely Vizianagaram family and the printing press that he set up in the 1920s, Lodhra Press, was involved in reprinting a report in 1938 that was originally compiled in 1894 and went by the tortuous title: "Vizianagaram Treaty of November 15th 1758 and the end of the fifteen years' war between the English and the French for the Sovereignty of India, from 1744 to 1759, A.D. with a sketch account of the noteworthy facts connected with the Vizianagaram Family".

I send herewith images of the title page, preface, the last page of the main text and an appendix giving a brief history of the Vizianagaram Family.

From the preface it would appear that the report was prepared originally in 1894, in response to a communication received by the then Maharaja from the British India Government for the insertion of the Vizianagaram Treaty of 1758 in Aitchison's Treaties.

The report itself is a brief history of India of the 18th and 19th Centuries (mostly dealing with the shenanigans of the princely rulers and their dealings with the British and French colonial powers of the time) with extensive quota-

tions from chronicles of Indian history by British writers such as Meadows Taylor, Robert Orme, Henry Beveridge and Macfarlane, and even an odd quote from Thomas Babington Macaulay. In another dimension the report is a fervent plea by the ruler of a princely state to the British powers-that-be to confer the privilege of including the Vizianagaram Treaty of 1758 (with the British) in Aitchison's Treaties, considering the unwavering loyalty displayed by the Vizianagaram Family to the cause of enhancement of British power in India. Inclusion in Aitchison's was probably reckoned as the acme of recognition of a ruler's loyalty to the British Colonial power.

The report aptly concludes with the valediction "Your most obedient servant". Indeed!

The present Union Civil Aviation Minister belongs to this lineage. And then who can forget the one and only 'Vizzy', the Maharajkumar of Vizianagaram who used to inflict his unique brand of cricket commentary (with more off-field rantings than descriptions about what was going on in the field) over All India Radio on hapless listeners in the 1940s and '50s?

K. Balakesari
22, Westcott Road, Chennai 600014

*Charles Umpherston Aitchison (compiler): A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Summuds relating to India and Neighbouring Countries. (India 1862-65)

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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

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

● I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to **CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS**, as **subscription to *Madras Musings*** for the year 2017-18.

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

Name :
Address:

All cheques to 'Chennai Heritage'. DD/Cheque should be sent by Speed Post only.

CHARIVARI – 6



The Duke who gave us a canal

In all probability, it will remain Buckingham Canal forever. No politician of our present times will want his/her name to be associated with such a degraded waterbody. Yet, at least till the 1950s, this was a navigable canal, through which supplies came from Andhra to Madras and people travelled by boat to Mamallapuram and beyond.

Operated by a system of locks, it left behind numerous Lock Colonies within the city, and at least one lock still survives, behind the University buildings. Outside the city limits, the Canal is largely intact and is one of India's longest, stretching from upper Andhra to deep down Tamil Nadu, a length of 800km. Prior to 1875, it existed in two parts, a northern canal, named after Basil Cochrane and later the second Lord Clive, and a southern canal. It was the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos who got the two connected through the city, and consequently lent his name in perpetuity to it.

His Grace The Right Honourable Richard Plantagenet Campbell Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Grenville, the 3rd Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, was the first (and probably only) duke to accept a gubernatorial post in India. As he was a peer of the highest order in the British aristocracy, this was rather unusual. But he was no stranger to public life, having, as the *Indian Charivari* puts it, held many ministerial appointments, the last one prior to becoming Governor being Secretary of State for the Colonies. He had just assumed charge when the *Charivari* was published and so the book merely wishes him well on his embarking on his career in India. In the event, Madras was his only posting here.

Taking charge in 1875, the Duke had almost at once to play host to the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII. The harbour works were begun on that occasion. A year later, he was faced with the terrible Madras famine. The Imperial Government in Calcutta largely thwarted his attempts at relief. The Viceroy Lord Lytton refused to believe that a famine was in progress and even after visiting Madras contented himself with writing about how the natives in the relief camps were all fat and happy. Undaunted, the Duke of Buckingham appealed to the Mayor of London who in turn ensured considerable sums were collected and sent over for relief. A food-for-work programme was begun in 1876, which involved the digging of the canal through Madras. Completed in 1878, it was named after the Governor. It was also in the same year that the Buckingham Mill Co Ltd, promoted by Binny & Co, went into production. The entity was clearly named after the Duke as he was then the Governor. It was also during his tenure that the British graves in Madras were all documented. The long-forgotten burial spot of Lord Pigot was discovered and he was interred with due ceremony in the Church of St Mary's in The Fort, the Duke funding the tombstone with its simple legend 'In Memoriam'.

The Duke completed his tenure in 1880 and returned to England where he resumed his career in local politics, passing away in 1889.

– Sriram V



In its last days... the Pioneer Laundry building, once a Masonic Lodge.

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI – SRIRAM V

Laundry, auctions, where the Masons were

For years it stood, just beside the LIC building and completely dwarfed by it. It was best known by the name of its last co-occupant, the other being the famed auction house of Murray & Co. But the building, with its colonnaded portico had a far more interesting history than that, for it began life as a Masonic Lodge.

The building, or whatever structure existed on the site earlier, first finds mention in 1849 when the Lodge Pilgrims of Light met there. This was a short-lived body, for it died out in 1862, but its meeting place was evidently quite popular for we find that by 1877 the Lodge Perfect Unanimity (PU), today the oldest Masonic body in South India, was thinking of acquiring it. PU had in 1839 embarked on building its Masonic Temple by the beach. The Lodge was however not happy with the structure when it was completed at enormous expense. It would later be sold to the police whose headquarters it remains till day. In the meanwhile PU moved to Vepery and by the late 1870s was considering a shift to Mount Road.

The property, known by then as the premises of Mr Garratt the tailor and spanning 100 grounds (around 6 acres), was acquired in

1883 for Rs 18,000. Shortly after moving in, members began complaining about the place. The existing bungalow was not suitable for meetings and suffered from poor ventilation. The installation of two punkahs at the cost of Rs 150 did not help. It was then decided that a new building had to be put up on the surrounding land, of which there was plenty. But of money there was none, all of it having been spent on the purchase and initial repairs. Building a first floor room for meetings was considered more practical and to fund this, the Lodge borrowed money. Wor. Bro. R.F. Chisholm, the well-known architect, designed the room, which strangely enough had no roof other than thin timber beams. This was fine on clear nights, but when it rained the place was a mess. Moreover, rats, owls and birds began to reside in the rafters. Mangalore tiles were considered but were ruled out on the grounds that the timber could not bear their weight. Tarpaulins were eventually resorted to, in 1887. The groundfloor became the dining room.

Financial difficulties continued to dog the Lodge PU, chiefly because of the building. Moreover, the weight of the first floor,

the light roof notwithstanding, had caused the ground floor walls to bulge out. Parts of the property facing General Patters Road were sold in phases, all of them eventually becoming the plot on which the firm of WE Smith (now Bharat Insurance) Building.

Renting out the compound for grazing cattle and growing fruit at Rs 8 a month to Gopal Pillay brought in some revenue, as did leasing a disused wing of the bungalow to Masons. Electric lights were used for an installation ceremony as early as in 1890 and by June 1st, 1891, piped water from Red Hills was available.

But the property proved a cash guzzler. With the Lodge PU facing financial difficulties, it was decided in 1905 that the property be sold to the District Grand Lodge of Madras (DGL), the apex body for Freemasonry. With that building became the home and meeting place of all the Masonic lodges in the city. But complaints continued unabated. The DGL finally opted to move to its present property in Egmore in 1916, disposing off its erstwhile home to Kushaldoss Chaturbhujadoss, the Gujarati

(Continued on page 5)

Madras aviation – in peace & war

Chennai, or Madras as it was known earlier, is the pioneer city in the history of modern India. Aviation excitement caught up with Madras within seven years of the Wright brothers' first flight on December 22, 1903.

Giacomo D'Angelis, a confectioner from Messina, Italy, arrived in Madras in 1880. He ran a flourishing confectionery business, and in due course of time established *Hotel D'Angelis*, Madras's finest hotel of the time, in Mount Road. Inspired by Frenchman Louise Bleriot's flight across the English Channel in 1909, D'Angelis built a biplane, with the help of Simpson's, entirely from his own designs. The airplane was powered by a small horse-power engine. He tested his aeroplane at Pallavaram, and then arranged for a public viewing, for a fee, in March 1910. D'Angelis made the first public flight on March 26, 1910 from Island Grounds. Clearly, Madras pioneered the first flight in India, and may be in Asia as well. Subramania Bharati wrote in 1910 about the plane that was built by Tamil workers in the workshop of Simpson's. Then, in 1914, J W Madley, the civil engineer who built Madras's water supply system, assembled an aeroplane and flew from Island Grounds over the Red Hills water reservoir to make an aerial assessment with photographs.

Madras again took the honours, when more aerial activity began to spread across India. On February 14, 1911, Jules Tyck made demonstration flights from Island Grounds. He changed his demonstration timings from 6.30 pm to 8.30 am for better weather conditions. Governor and Lady Lawley turned out to see his successful flights over the Beach and Mount Road and over George Town. On the same day, in Mysore, Baron de Caters took off from Mysore Exhibition Grounds to Rangoon. En route, he made exhibition flights in Secunderabad at an aviation exhibition. During that same week, on February 18th, Henry Pequet made the historic first airmail flight at 5.30 pm from Allahabad exhibition ground to Naini, 13 miles away across the Yamuna. This was the first official air mail traffic, and the first official postal airmail cancellation in the world.

While all initial flights in India were made by Europeans, Madras is closely linked with the emergence of India's first aviator – engineer, designer, and test pilot. This was Srirama Venkata-

subba Setty, better known as S.V. Setty. Born in Mysore in 1879, S.V. Setty graduated with a degree in mathematics from Madras University. Thereafter, he joined the College of Engineering, Guindy for two years after which he shifted to the Thomason College of Engineering, Roorkee, to complete his studies. He joined Mysore State Service as an engineer in 1906. He won a scholarship in 1909 to Faraday House to pursue an electrical engineering diploma. Evincing keen interest in aviation, Setty joined A.V. Roe and



D'Angelis' Madras-made aeroplane.

Company (later to evolve as the famous Avro) in 1911, in its design and drafting department. Soon he enrolled in a flying course. When Setty flew the Avro D prototype it crash-landed. Setty analysed its flaws and redesigned the aircraft. He also demonstrated the improve-

Bombay in 1932, and also being the first person to be issued a pilot's licence in India in 1929, it should be noted that Madras also had aviation pioneers. The Madras Flying Club pioneered air-mindedness in the Presidency. Set up in 1930, the Madras Flying Club commenced with 11

● by Air Marshal
M. Matheswaran
AVSM VM PH.D (RETD)

ment by test-flying it in front of the Australian aviator John Duigan. Impressed by the solution, John Duigan bought the aircraft, and named it Avro Duigan. Setty played a significant role in the design and development of the prototypes of the Avro 500 and Avro 504 aircraft. The Avro 504 evolved as the world's first trainer aircraft. It was also the first aircraft to bomb Germany in the Great War. Setty returned to India in mid-1912, and was employed by the Mysore government. He went into design and manufacture of aircraft, but this was cut short by a ban imposed by the British India government. Unfortunately, Setty died prematurely in 1918 in an influenza epidemic that killed a fifth of Bangalore's population.

While J.R.D. Tata is considered the father of Indian civil aviation, for flying the inaugural postal flight from Karachi to



S.V. Setty (on right) and an Avro biplane of Great War vintage.

fighter aircraft during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

Capt. V. Sundaram was the first person to get a commercial pilot's licence in 1937. He flew from Karachi to Madras. His wife Usha became India's first woman pilot, and they flew for the Mysore Maharaja and Tata Airlines. They set a world record flying a *de Havilland Dove* from London to Madras in 27 hours. This record for a piston-engine aircraft is still unbroken.

The Great War (1914-1918) saw the use of aircraft in war, and this catapulted aviation research into military applications. From then on it was the military dimension that led aviation development. The Indian Air Force came into existence on April 1, 1932. The IAF's first squadron, No 1 Squadron was established, albeit, very slowly. It took three years to establish three flights, and it remained so till the beginning of World War II. These were mostly deployed and used for policing activities in the NWFP. With war clouds looming in 1939, Coastal Defence Flights were created, with No 1 CDF positioned in Madras in 1940. Similarly, No 5 CDF was in Cochin, and No 6 CDF was in Vizag. While the IAF remained stagnant at one squadron, there



were at least 6 to 8 RAF squadrons in India till 1939. A Volunteer reserve concept was created, and civil licence holders were allowed, both Indian and British, for induction into the coastal flights, with mandatory training. The flying clubs became resource providers.

Beginning with the creation of the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force through World War II, Madras Presidency funded the creation or re-equipment with new aircraft of quite a few RAF squadrons. These were Nos 35, 79, 98, 99, 234, and 264 squadrons, and were known as "Madras Presidency Squadrons". For example, the No 35 squadron history states... "35 squadron was founded in 1916. When in 1940, it became the first in Bomber Command to be re-equipped with Halifaxes, the money for the new aircraft was given by the people of the Madras Presidency."

(To be concluded)

A MASONIC LODGE

(Continued from page 4)

magnate. He in turn leased a part of the building in 1918 to Pioneer Laundry. In 1927, the remaining portion was leased to Murray & Co.

That was not the end of it. In 1951, MCT Chidambaram Chettyar acquired the entire property, land, bungalow and all. On the open space beside the old building he put up his dream edifice, a 14-storeyed structure to house his United India Insurance. This was completed in 1959 by when insurance had been nationalised and Chettyar himself was killed in an air crash.

With that the entire property including the Bharat Insurance building and the old Masonic temple became LIC's.

The structure also served as the office of the advertising agency O&M and in that capacity played host to ad legend David Ogilvy who described it as a cross between a church and a barn. Whatever it was, it survived as a reminder of a more gracious era. That was until 2015 when LIC, for presumably reasons similar to those that make it neglect Bharat Insurance building, demolished the Masonic temple, thereby obliterating history of a century and more.



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

1. What is Hillary Clinton's recently released memoir, about her most recent presidential campaign, called?

2. Halimah Yacob was recently elected as the first female president of which prosperous Asian nation?

3. On September 13th, the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2024 and 2028 Summer Olympics to which cities?

4. The 'Bakhshali manuscript', an ancient Indian manuscript in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, is now thought to mention the first use of which concept?

5. What are the proposed terminal points of the 'bullet train' that is to run between Ahmadabad and Mumbai?

6. What is 'Operation Insaniyat', initiated by the Ministry of External Affairs recently?

7. On September 11th, Defence Minister Nirmala Seetharaman flagged off the 'Navika Sagar Parikrama'. What is it?

8. On which heavenly body has the International Astronomical Union named two mountain ranges as Tenzing Montes and Hillary Montes in a tribute to the first humans to conquer Mt. Everest?

9. Which Navaratna PSU has got Cabinet approval to be upgraded to 'Maharatna' status?

10. Name the new portal launched by the Union Ministry of Human Resource and Development to provide a digital platform to teachers to make their lifestyle more digital.

* * *

11. Jivabhumii, Vellivilakkau and Kaliyugam were some of the names considered for which popular magazine before the present name was adopted?

12. The storage tanks of which fuel company were hit by SMS *Emden* on September 22, 1914?

13. Which 1785 initiative had the motto 'Quicquid Agunt Homines'?

14. With which industrialist would you associate the Paragon Cinema in Madras, the Ritz Hotel in Mumbai and the general insurance company, East-West Insurance?

15. Which Chennai-based institution, part of the CSIR umbrella, was founded on April 24, 1948?

16. Tiruvakkarai (Villupuram District) and Sattanur (Perambalur District) have which specific kind of national park?

17. The Jain temple on Kutcheri Road is dedicated to the 12th Tirthankara. Name him.

18. Which famous freedom fighter took up residence for ten years on Easwaran Dharamaraja Koil Street in Puducherry?

19. 'Little Randolph', 'Gold Mohur', 'Flor de Spencer' and 'Torpedo' were brand names of which products made by Spencer's?

20. Name the cargo ship that hit the shores of Marina in November 1966, and remained as wreckage till the 1990s?

(Answers on page 8)

Requiem for the TELEGRAM

AS INDIA DECIDES TO DISCONTINUE ITS TELEGRAPH SERVICE IT IS

PERHAPS PERMISSIBLE TO ENGAGE IN MILDLY WISTFUL REMINISCENCE

ABOUT TELEGRAMS - STOP-

"E-I-S-H-5," he called out gently and even though his voice was quietly cajoling, my five-year-old brain, not yet used to the English alphabet, struggled to grasp the new order of those letters.

He went on to explain, "E is 1 dot, I is 2 dots, S is 3 dots, H is 4 dots and the numeral 5 is 5 dots. Similarly, T, M, O is 1 dash, 2 dashes, and 3 dashes respectively." He went on to tell me that the international distress signal 'SOS' was transmitted quite simply and easily on this basis as: dot dot dot / dash dash dash / dot dot dot / or in other words, you spelled out each letter in Morse code. My eyes opened in child-like wonder as it all began to fall into place. 'It's all so simple,' I thought, and it increased my yearning to learn more because I had the best teacher in the world – my very own Dad.

Dad (known as 'Robby' in the office) was employed in Madras in the P&T Department of the Central Government – short for Post and Telegraph Department, of which the Telegraph section country-wide, became sadly defunct in 2013.

There is a good chance, however, that if any of us has ever sent or received a telegram at all, that at some time in its life it could have passed through the hands of my Dad or any one of the other Anglo-Indian men or women who once served the P&T Department all over the country, especially in the South. The P&T Department was an Anglo-Indian bastion, though seldom talked about. Since the earlier nature of their work required them to 'tap out' words, P&T employees were often ribbed as 'Brass Tappers'.

My lessons in long distance communication began at five when Dad said, "Son, before the teleprinter arrived, long distance communications were sent and received in Morse code and we operators had to be no less than perfect to correctly encode or decode and transcribe the message that had to be transmitted or received."

Through the years I learned more from Dad. "After the teleprinter was introduced as the advanced technology of the day," he explained, "it made work a little easier. We teleprinter operators (called Telegraphists or TLs) sat in a large hall called the Instrument Room (or IR) at individual desks and worked behind the scenes. On our desks there were teleprinter machines that were connected to another city via an electronic link. Every day we

sent or received a stack of telegrams destined for or from that city from that particular machine."

To send a telegram, you went to the nearest local Post Office and booked (wrote) a telegram to a person in, for example, Calcutta. It was then sent from that local Post Office to the Central Telegraph Office (CTO for short) for final transmission. (The CTO was housed in that colonial style red-brick building on 1st Line Beach, opposite Madras Beach station on the suburban rail line.) It was then put into a pile of telegrams for Calcutta and given to the TL working the Calcutta line.

Dad revealed to me how a telegram was sent. The TL then transmitted it by typing the text of the message on his machine. The typed matter appeared simultaneously only on the Calcutta TL's machine and it emerged in Calcutta on a rib-

● by Bruce Robson

bon of paper from a spool fed into the machine. A code signified to the TL the beginning and end of a message on the ribbon, which was broken off and 'gummed' on a special form. This form was then sent off for despatch via the channel that kept track of 'sent' and 'received' telegrams. In the same way the Calcutta operator sent his messages to the Madras TL who did the same thing. "The wonder," Dad said, "is that messages could be transmitted simultaneously and continuously from either end until all messages for a particular city were sent or received."

Most of us who have had the opportunity to receive a telegram will remember the pink form on which two or three strips of white paper tape conveyed the urgent message.

Dad said that most people did not give a thought at that time to the ones who worked to keep communications going in the country through the telegram. "Many of us at the P&T Department were Anglo-Indians and we filled important centres in almost all cities, especially in the South. News was conveyed by us from one location to another on a teleprinter. The matter transmitted consisted of information regarding births and deaths, arrivals and departures, congratulatory messages, weather reports, news despatches – you name it and it was sent as a telegram."

We the Robsons lived in St. Thomas Mount and Dad went to work to the north of the city

by train. There were many Anglo-Indians working in the Department and they came from other Anglo-Indian localities in Madras – Kasimode, Royapuram, Vepery, Purasawalkam and Pallavaram. They all met at the office where shifts were referred to on the 24-hour clock. Everyone knew what 6 to 14, 7 to 15, 10 to 18, 14 to 22 or First Watch meant. Unlike Railway men, the P&T staff did not travel anywhere, yet they traversed the country while just sitting at a desk. Sunday was the usual day off since most of the TLs were Christians. Almost everyone saved

Telegraph Sports Day, and the Telegraph Christmas Tree, or on Christmas shopping trips to 'Moore Market' it was sheer joy to "chin-wag" with people who were considered good friends.

Dad retired in April 1979. He told me that he wanted to write a book one day on life as he saw it through the eyes of a Telegraphist. Sadly, an illness robbed him of muscular strength after retirement. He passed away in December 2005.

To keep with change, the Telegraph Department had to give way to the advent of new technology. When mobile phones, email, SMS, WhatsApp and Facebook came along, they offered instantaneous communication. The Department shrank to a quarter of its original size as the teleprinter was replaced by a computer to send telegrams by email. The desks vanished; the incessant hum of conversation and the constant chatter of the teleprinters were heard no more. In the midst of it all, quietly and finally, the telegram became redundant and died a silent death. The Government decided to close down the facility of the telegram on July 15, 2013.

On that last day, the public was given the opportunity to send telegrams one last time before midnight. To commemorate this poignant moment in history, and to keep alive the memory Dad and his tenure in the Telegraph Department, I went all the way to the familiar CTO at about 8 o'clock that night and sent separate telegrams to my Mum, sister, three brothers, and one to myself saying: "Last day last service – Sent from Dad's office".

As I came home that night, nostalgia overwhelmed me. Though Dad was no longer with us, I wanted to reach out to the many other surviving Anglo-Indian men and women who had worked alongside with him. I wanted to convey to them that I too grieved at the passing of an era that still holds a special place of affection in our hearts. By descent I consider myself to be a footnote in that chapter of the history of the telegram in India. – (Courtesy: *Anglos in the Wind*.)

Glamorous go-getter from Chennai

What happens to a middle class Tamil Brahmin, Besant Nagar girl, who has the longest legs in the neighbourhood and a fondness for *thayir saadham* and pickle, when she ups and follows her mother to the U S of A? Years later, she becomes the face of one of the most watched, Emmy award winning American cook shows, Top Chef (and gets to wear fabulous clothes and jewellery). Along the way, she also becomes a top model, occasional actor, cook book writer, columnist and arm candy (later, wife) of author Salman Rushdie. Padma Lakshmi is the prototype goddess of the Indian immigrant success story in America. (In Chennai we first came to know of her only when she brought Salman over to meet her grandparents.)



Padma Lakshmi.

● by
Janaki Venkataraman

tempts to enter the world of modelling, her leaving after college to Italy, to pursue a career in fashion modelling. After initial struggles, she achieves what she set out to do, become a top European model, whose horizons widen as speedily as her Tambram inhibitions disappear.

A strict vegetarian to begin with, Padma began to eat meat

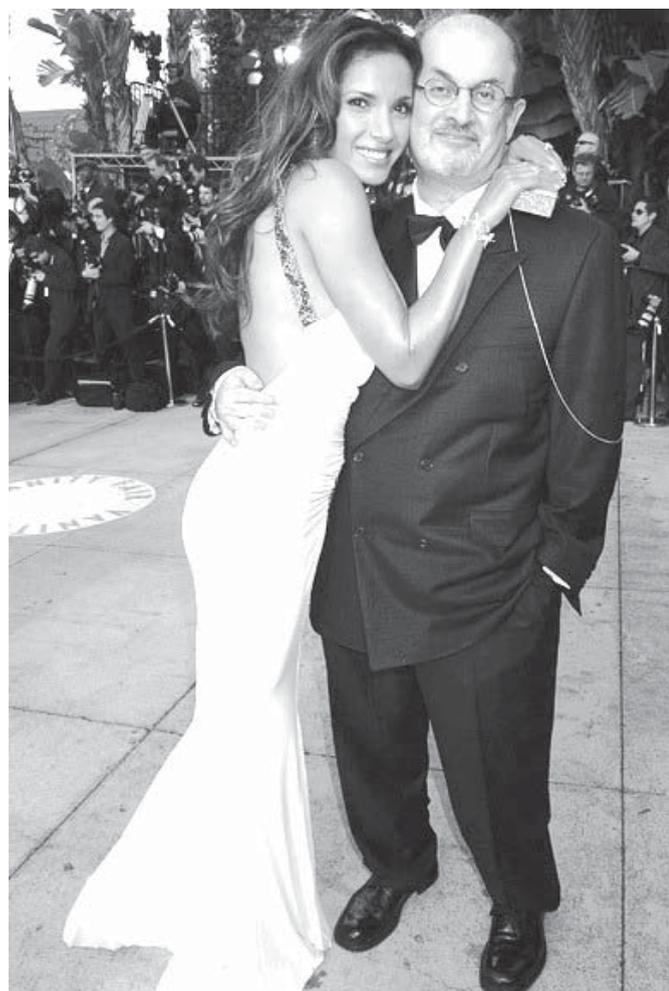
flowers to live snails. The recipes that intersperse the chapters in *Love, Loss and What We Ate* by Padma Lakshmi, Harper Collins India, are deceptive in their simplicity: *thayir saadham*, *khichdi*, *chatpati chutney*, egg in a hole etc. Padma's culinary tastes are far more complex and informed. She offers an interesting recipe for a stomach cleanser, though, called Cranberry Drano. It is said to cleanse your insides after binge eating, as Padma is forced to do during shootings of 'Top Chef'.

As for her love life, most of the men she has been involved with seem to be much older, wealthier and knowledgeable than her. That, of course, leads both the reader and the author herself to wonder whether she was not looking for father figures who could mentor and protect her, as her own father was always absent from her life. As a young model, she learnt from her much older Italian lover all about fine living; from Salman Rushdie, she learnt how to express herself in words (one cook-book, and several columns on fashion and food happened during this period in her life); from the billionaire lover she acquired after divorce from Salman, she learnt, well, how to live the good life; and from the youngest lover of them all, the only non-celebrity, she got her child.

There is a lot in the book about Endometriosis, a uterine condition that Padma suffered from most of her life until an enlightened doctor in New York treated her for it. (She blames the illness in part for the break-up of her marriage with Rushdie, as she was too ill to please him and he was too uncaring to understand her condition). Padma is currently co-founder of the Endometriosis Foundation of America that promotes early diagnosis and treatment of this painful condition.

The picture that emerges of Padma Lakshmi at the end of this book is that of a glamorous, globally successful, gently aggressive, go-getter of a woman. Yet there is a sub-text that portrays a woman who at heart still remains that wide-eyed, eternally curious girl who lived by the beach in Chennai and loved her Thatha and all her aunts and uncles and cousins and the jars of mouth-watering pickles her beloved grandmother made.

**Love, Loss and What we Ate* by Padma Lakshmi (Harper Collins).



Padma and Salman Rushdie on their wedding day.

Excerpts

● My grandmother emerged with a small *katori*, or bowl, with mashed-up lentils and rice from the kitchen. Her hand, wrinkled and worn, had mixed rice for every child of our family in this house for over thirty-five years. It was the same hand that had braided and oiled my hair, drawn countless marks of vermilion on my forehead, and had even landed hard on the side of my thigh when needed. This hand had shown Neela how to pleat her sari, and Bhanu the right way to burp Rajni and Rohit. It was the same hand that mixed batches of our secret house recipe for *sambar* curry powder twice a year, wielded the ladle of *dosa* batter when I first learned to make the fluffy thin crepes on the iron griddle, and administered Tiger Balm to KCK's temples in the days when his head ached from the monsoon heat.

For a moment, I thought she might be the one to feed Krishna herself. I was keeping a low profile, doing as I was told. After handing me the bowl, she bent over, with agility, impossibly low, and applied a line of holy *vibhuti* ash across Krishna's forehead as she lay writhing in annoyance. "Ippo, nee *punnu*," Rajima said. "Now you do it." Then I heard my mother's voice, coming from a table where an open laptop was perched. She was tuning in via Skype and commanding me from Los Angeles. "Come on, Pads, the baby's hungry!" I snapped to attention and placed a small espresso spoon of *kichidi* into the baby's mouth. At first she coughed and sputtered, but in mere seconds, she seemed to be mashing the pap with her tongue against the roof of her mouth like an old toothless man. Everyone in the room seemed to exhale at once. I heard the hearty belly laughs of the priests.

I thought then that for the first time in my life, in that house, these women were finally saying: "Okay, you're up. It's your turn." For the first time, I did not feel like a minor, a junior, or a half pint. For the women in my family, I had finally made it to full adulthood, into their club, the big league. For a second I mourned not only the final extinguishing of my girlhood...

In her fast paced, very readable autobiography*, *Love, Loss and What we Ate* Padma traces her life from the secure roots in her maternal grandfather's family in Besant Nagar, Chennai, (she went to school in St. Michael's, Adyar) to her following her divorced mother who had left for America to build a life for the two of them. We see her coping with the excitement of her new life, the uncertainties of her identity as a brown skinned immigrant, her discomfort regarding her mother's successive boyfriends, her early at-

in America, encouraged by her mother, who felt it was better nutrition. But it was during her time in Europe that she became a true foodie. Until then her favourite foods were spicy South Indian, with the occasional *chaat* thrown in. Europe opened the doors of fine Western cuisine to her, and the cheesemongers of Paris taught her to appreciate every kind of cheese there was. Then there was really no stopping Padma's palate. It was inquisitive, adventurous and would try anything edible, at least once, from

Excerpts

● The city of Chennai itself, however, was much different from what it was when I had built sand temples in the courtyard. The city that had felt in many ways like a sleepy town had become a frenetic metropolis. Much of the sand was now asphalt. St. Michael's Academy had expanded into a large compound with tall buildings and fields for soccer and cricket. The Milk Bar that was once a leafy oasis was now a seedy, dilapidated place to be avoided.

Neela and I visited the old flat. All around our old building, urban development now made the area feel very congested. We could no longer see the ocean from my grandfather's bedroom window. Taller buildings had been erected all around. Everyone wanted to live near the sea. The courtyard below had been asphalted, too. Children no longer made temples in the sand. I couldn't believe how small the flat looked. It had always felt huge to me. I visited each room, could still see the lizards where the cracked walls met the ceiling. The place was empty save for some sewing machines and tailors, employees of Neela's business. So many of us had grown up here, fought as children here, cried as teenagers, and often run back to this place as adults. Several sewing machines hummed as I walked barefoot on the old green marble from room to room. Underneath the hum, I could still hear echoes of Rajni tattling on me to Bhanu, the screech of my grandfather's metal desk chair as he rose to say good-bye to a student. The house had never been beautiful, but it was beautiful to me, even in its dilapidated and empty state.

Yet for all the changes, much felt the same in the new apartment. There were still buckets of hot water for bathing, in spite of showerheads being installed in these new bathrooms. There were still far too many of us, old and young, from my grandmother to Krishna. We would crowd onto the floor, draping ourselves on pillows, grooming and feeding like a troop of monkeys, me scratching my nephew Sidhanth's back, Neela braiding my hair, kids climbing among our bodies. Aunt Bhanu kneeling on the floor, peeling potatoes or mangoes. My grandmother haggling with every vendor she came across on the porch below.

And we still talked, a lot. Our conversations were a blur of languages. Everyone in the household was tri- or even quadrilingual. I grew up speaking Tamil, the language of my ethnicity; Hindi, the national language but also the language of Delhi; and English. Others in my family added Malayalam, the language of Kerala, my ancestral home, to that list. "Please" and "okay" were in English and bookended many bursts of speech. "Please" – someone might begin, then switch to Hindi – "could you make some chai for me?" Then, without skipping a beat, she might continue in Tamil, "I'm really craving it" – then back to English – "Okay?" Certain words were just better in one language than another.

Speedy completion of Metro necessary

(Continued from page 1)

that they would not go for less than Rs. 150. They prefer localised trips to maximise payload ratio. The auto-user is unlikely to be a habitual user for going to work. He is a casual traveller depending on work exigency, reach and urgency.

The bus is only Rs. 15 for the journey, but takes more than an hour, including several stops, whereas the Metro takes just 13

minutes for the same journey; the class of bus users would find the Metro way out of reach. Bus users are not an immediate potential market for the Metro.

A motorcycle, at an efficiency of about 36 km/litre, is Rs. 2/km for 20 km, Rs. 40 per day, Rs. 1040 for 26 days. There is no parking cost. (8 km plus distance to station assumed as 2 km to and fro at boarding side and same at destination side.) To this, interest of Rs. 300 on the motor cycle loan, payable monthly, must be added, adding up to Rs. 1340. The saving in time, air-conditioned comfort and pollution-free and punctual travel might induce motor cycle users to spend another 10 per cent over their cost. Adding 10 per cent to the cost of Rs. 1340 converts to Rs. 1474 which is the Metro affordability threshold.

The present cost of Metro is Rs. 2158 and needs to be brought down by Rs. 684. Reducing the parking charge per day from Rs. 15 to Rs. 10 would help to reduce Metro cost by Rs. 130 per month. The balance Rs. 554 per month or Rs. 21 for return trip or Rs. 10 per single trip is about the reduction needed — from the present fare of Rs. 24 to Rs. 14 per trip. That reduction by 40 per cent may appear large, but after the proposed reduction the rate of Rs. 14 is still nearly Rs. 2 per km higher than Delhi's throw-away price that is eroding the financial viability of the organisation. A substantial part of the motor cycle traffic, say as much as 75 per cent, is ripe for transfer to the Metro, if the fare is rationalised.

In 2013, the total vehicle population of Chennai was 39 lakh of which 31 lakh were two-wheelers. The total went up rapidly to 48 lakh by 2016. The

focus should be on winning over the growing motor cycle segment for the Metro to thrive and for the city atmosphere to improve.

But then, would not fare reduction decrease revenue and result in revenue loss? Being a public utility, the Metro cannot shut down for a few hours, days or weeks to save costs just because the traffic volume is low. Operation goes on and costs are incurred irrespective of the traffic volume. As such, Metro has only costs that are of a fixed nature and not varying with production to meet varying volumes of demand. Any fare income is contribution to this fixed cost. Therefore, it makes sense to try and increase traffic volume to augment the contribution to fixed cost. The surge in total revenue, when fare is lowered, would be higher as the price elasticity of demand for Metro travel is likely to be high.

Thus, it makes sense to lower the fare to match or get closer to the motor cycle commuter's cost. That would only increase total revenue and higher asset utilisation.

While Delhi Metro may be the cheapest, it may not be the ideal model, as the low rates have led to huge losses of the order of Rs. 466 crore annually — and growing year after year. With better last mile connectivity and comprehensive network coverage, it may not be necessary to offer such low fares in Chennai. People are desperate for relief from the suffocating congestion and may be willing to pay reasonably more than what it costs them now.

It is not possible to feel the benefits of the Metro proportionately as and when the mileage increases. Only when the project is complete, or if the total mileage attains a critical mass, can the benefits be felt.

Investment made up to now, therefore, is yet unready to yield returns. On these counts, therefore, speedy completion is crucial. With all sanctions now scheduled for release in tranches, with much of the specifications for components standardised and with a larger proportion of underground in the remaining phase — to avoid time-consuming land use permissions for overhead and surface tracks — speedier execution is possible, necessary and must be rigorously monitored.

Owing to high traffic density, average bus speed in our city in 2014 was 18 kilometres per hour. Over the next five years it is expected to come down to 12 km per hour. That is the sound of opportunity. Chennai Metro must be implemented quickly and mass usage encouraged to derive the expected benefits.

Dates for Your Diary

October 1-2: A two-day workshop on Macramé Jewellery making for adults (at DakshinaChitra. For details: 98417 77779).

October 2: Workshop on Gond painting on hand made paper for children (At DakshinaChitra. For details: 98417 77779)

Answers to Quiz

1. *What Happened*; 2. Singapore; 3. Paris and Los Angeles; 4. Zero; 5. Sabarmati to Bandra; 6. To provide assistance to Bangladesh in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the large influx of Rohingyas from Myanmar; 7. India's first all-women crew global circumnavigation expedition; 8. Dwarf planet Pluto; 9. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited; 10. Diksha.gov.in.

11. *Kalki*; 12. Burmah Oil Company; 13. The weekly *Madras Courier* newspaper; 14. Rm. Alagappa Chettiar; 15. Central Leather Research Institute; 16. National Fossil Wood Parks; 17. Vasupujya Swami; 18. Subramania Bharati; 19. Cigars; 20. *Stamatis*.

DISFIGURING A HERITAGE SKYLINE

(Continued from page 1)

importantly, it will have to seek a go-ahead from the Heritage Conservation Committee of the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA). This body, not exactly known for its dynamism, will have to view the request in the light of the High Court's judgement that, based on the Padmanabhan Committee report, clearly forbids blocking of heritage structures with permanent or temporary constructions. A 33-storey building will undoubtedly do just that. But will the HCC of the CMDA take a hard look at the proposal? Peopled as it is by just personnel from Government departments and ministries, it is

quite likely that the Committee will yield to pressure. It has been known for flexibility in that respect, always in detriment to heritage.

As to what CMRL wants with such a monstrosity in such a crowded area is possibly clear only to those working within it. Does a metro service really need such a large administrative building? Moreover, parts of it are to be leased out for commercial development as well. This happens to be one of the most congested parts of the city. Such a large building, with its attendant footprint, will only add to the chaos. Emergency measures, not something for which Chennai is best known, will have to be doubly stringent here.

The land in question was acquired after some litigation from the Raja Sir Savalai Ramaswami Mudaliar Choultry. At the time of the verdict, CMRL had committed that it would preserve the Choultry in its entirety. That is now open to question too. How can a single storey structure 'survive' if it is to be dwarfed entirely by a 33-storey building? Will it even be visible?

It is now entirely up to the HCC of the CMDA to ensure that some serious thought is given and such an idea is firmly nipped in the bud. But will it do so? We hope it will prove wrong the scepticism of *Madras Musings* and stop the CMRL's mindless project in its tracks.

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations



Since 1856,
patently leaders
— A WELLWISHER