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MADRAS MUSINGS

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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Budget promise for 3 heritage buildings...

But will they be saved?

(by The Editor)

Our State Government (and yes, there is such an entity functioning) works in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. Just when you thought all hopes on heritage were lost, it has come up with a few pleasant surprises for conservationists and activists, in the latest Finance Budget, passed in the Assembly in the month of March. While these are positive signs, it would have been far better if the Government had also come up with a clear directive on what needs to be done with heritage structures not falling within the purview of the State Archaeological Department (SAD) and what are the plans for implementing such a directive.

But first, the good news. The Government has sanctioned funds for the restoration of two heritage structures in the city and one more in the districts. And all of these are buildings of the colonial era, thereby indicating that at last our administrators have begun to consider structures built during that period to also be worthy of conservation. The Queen Mary's College and the Victoria Hostel on Presidency College's campus in Chennai and the Kumbakonam Arts and Science College will all be restored at a cost of Rs 26 crore.

All of these come under the heading of manna in the wilderness, for these had all been given up as lost causes by those interested in their welfare. Ever

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The Victoria Hostel, Presidency College.

Is State budget prudent?

After the GST is vested in the newly constituted body of State Finance Ministers, the Central and State budgets do not evoke the IPL-kind of expectation and excitement on budget eves. However, still of interest is the impact on household budgets and on the type and quality of public services offered for the well-being of citizens.

Compared to the 2017-18 Tamil Nadu Budget, which was a incoherent flurry of allocations, such proposals as have been set out for 2018-19 are more meaningful although, in the latter, a sign of seriousness over the state's tightening finances is missing. Nevertheless, Chennai has cause to cheer over some of the Budget proposals.

The Pallikaranai marshlands of 690 ha in the City has been given Rs. 167 crore for eco-restoration over a span of five years. It is better late than never to save what is left. This is a unique expanse of space consisting of stretches of open

water, shallow water, islands and mud-flats attracting a variety of birds that explore, inhabit and breed in these surroundings. It is a great pity that what was once spread over 6,000 ha has been reduced to just 690 ha because of indiscriminate encroachments and real estate vandalism. The project includes

Flood control measures for the north and south of the City receive a timely, and what seems a substantial allocation, of Rs. 3,298 crore. Between now and the North-East Monsoon this project must be completed on a war footing. That would be a test of the mettle of the government and not the inclusion

City's roads. This measure that seeks to replace nearly all the present fleet of 3,797 buses, combined with the Metro matching its fares with the cost of motor cycle use, could make a significant difference to the City's pollution levels.

Most studies point to the need for major improvements to the quality of health services and raising education standards to produce students of readily employable quality and grade. A 2018 Survey by the All India Council for Technical Education shows that while Chennai ranks second in the country for employability, Tamil Nadu as a State has fallen to a poor ninth in rank. *Employability* is both availability of jobs and availability of suitable candidates. The Budget for 2018-19 provides for Rs. 11,638 crore for Health and Rs. 27,205 crore for Education. Only when the actual accounts are available would we know if these sums are for specific additional schemes alone or are

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● by A Special Correspondent

the most essential provision for barring further incursions. But we cannot help wondering, within the limits of technical requirements, why the project cannot be completed in a shorter period, say, three years. The fear is that what is stretched for so long is likely to fade out of serious focus. And longer the exposure, events have a knack of overtaking human plans. This project, if completed swiftly, would add much value to Chennai's environs.

of its cost in the Budget. This project would offer protection against the City's annual flood and its devastating impact on the poor.

To replace 3,000 buses, a sum of Rs. 4,593 crore has been set apart. The significance is more than new buses. If the sum is used wisely and with the latest e-tendering process to avoid "leakages", we could have by this time next year, a large fleet of non-polluting buses of modern design operating on the

Is State budget prudent?

(Continued from page 1)

for the two sectors. It is likely that they are in keeping with past allocations. In these two sectors, more work is needed to raise service quality even within available infrastructure rather than just additional funds.

The Budget has announced liberalisation of norms for plot coverage and other infrastructural supports to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector. This sector has shown good response after the last Global Summit Meet 2015 with over 5,544 units having already started production. This sector has relatively higher job-creating potential per unit of investment and that too within a short gestating period. The proposals have already been welcomed by this sector. Encouraging MSMEs is a move that could yield good results.

While we may have reason to be satisfied over these proposals there is no way of knowing how well and speedily they would be implemented. This is where the weakness is – in implementation and transparency as regards the outcome. For instance, in the 2017-18 Budget, there were a few interesting proposals. Extending drip irrigation to 35,000 acres under sugarcane, diversification by increasing the area under highly remunerative horticultural crops, an innovative programme of supply chain management for perishable commodities to reduce post-harvest losses, an additional one lakh acres under micro-irrigation, with 74.47 lakh out of the total 81.18 lakh operational holdings being small and marginal holdings, launching an innovative programme for organising them into *Farmer Producer Groups* to promote collective credit mobilisation and technology adoption, water-body restoration of 4,778 tanks and 477 anicuts and benefiting 5.43 lakh hectares of ayacut lands are all imaginative projects that have the potential to make farming less vulnerable and more remunerative. Similarly, integrated solid waste management projects sanctioned for nine corporations, 107 municipalities and 400 town panchayats at a cost of Rs.969 crore would have been an important step towards raising sanitation standards.

But then, what happened to these projects? Were they completed or are they under execu-

tion? Have they succeeded? Do we want to have more of them or give them up because they were found unsuitable? We do not know the answers to any of these questions from the annual Budget exercise or any other easily identifiable site. In the Budget presentation speech, there are platitudes and expressions of concerns for various vote potential segments followed by sums assigned for each. It is difficult to know more about them afterwards. The Budget is not presented as a report on what happened and as a rationale for the on-coming year's plans – funds for new schemes and more funds for old successful ones. The Budget format could be modified for transparency and accountability. A comparative study of other State budgets to ascertain if they are more citizen friendly would be interesting.

A concern not sufficiently reflected in the Budget speech is on declining financial sustainability. Fiscal deficit – that is, with reference to all expenditure, revenue and capital – has risen from Rs. 20,583 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 44,481 crore in 2018-19. The deficit cannot but be borrowed. As there is borrowing every year, there is accumulation of outstanding debt several times the annual borrowing to be serviced. The outstanding debt at the end of March 2018 was Rs. 3.55 lakh crore. The interest on this could be of the order of Rs. 28,000 crore which is over 60 per cent of the fiscal deficit i.e., current borrowing. It was 50 per cent in 2015-16. More of every year's borrowing goes for servicing past borrowings gradually moving towards the tipping point. To cut this vicious circuit, revenue should be increased through greater collection efficiency. Unproductive schemes, freebies and giveaways must be weeded out. More importantly, economic growth should be accelerated to yield more tax revenue. GST may save the situation to some extent, yielding more revenue than in the past as it has already shown a 5-6 per cent rise in the early months of its introduction between July 2017 and February 2018. To supplement it, governmental action would be required to reach the goal of financial sustainability and to secure large fiscal space for development plans. We hope the clouds of political uncertainty would clear to make good economic decisions easier.

Empty halls & famous voices

The Man from Madras Musings was all excited. A secretary of one of the bigger Sabha-s of the cities had just called and asked if MMM would be so kind as to come and confer an award on one of the most famous lady artistes of yesteryear, a story-teller par excellence. The diva was a sort of role model for MMM when it came to relating tales from the past. Of late, age has kept her confined to her place of residence, which is the hoary town with the big temple and MMM and others of his kind content themselves with recordings of this artiste.

MMM agreed at once. But he also asked rather doubtfully if the recipient would come in person. That to MMM was what would make the event really meaningful. The lady

tative, her granddaughter, a budding artiste who is not yet close to the original. MMM was disappointed but he understood. Age has its limitations. Shortly thereafter, MMM, having realised that it was well past the scheduled time of inauguration, suggested that the event had better get underway. If the Sabha was going to wait for an audience, it would have to do so till eternity. And so, Secretary, granddaughter-of-awardee, a master of ceremonies and MMM trooped onto stage. Score – on stage – 4, in the audience – 3 (two others had come in to keep MMM's good lady company, thereby qualifying those watching the stage as an audience). The event may have been more cosy in the Sabha Secretary's lair.

counters all across the city on this particular day. Of late, as *The Man from Madras Musings* has written in earlier columns, these counters have begun to distribute food as well. With prosperity the numbers of these kiosks have increased and of late there are people who distribute savouries, biscuits and other dry food items even as they walk around in the festival.

Our well-fed populace, which is of course perpetually hungry (and may MMM add here, becoming more and more obese as well), makes a beeline to each of these counters and collects everything on offer as though there is a famine in progress. And then, these are all just cast away on the road, after a bite or two. As a consequence, all

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had in the past been known to stoutly resist all temptations to come to Madras, citing reasons of ill health, for she is of a venerable age. Sabha Secretaries have tried all their blandishments but in vain. The voice at the other end of the wire was most reassuring. MMM need not have any worry on that count, it said, for the old lady had said she would make it. MMM readily accepted and then duly read out his sole term and condition – namely he ought not to be given any memento of any kind – no shawl, no lacquered or copper Tanjore plate, no filigree garlands with sandalwood balls and above all no coffee mug. This was agreed to after some hemming and hawing at the other end.

Came the great day and MMM was all agog. He had worked out his speech to a nicety. As the appointed hour approached, MMM and his good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed, made their way to the venue. It was only as he drove into the premises and saw a complete absence of any kind of activity that MMM realised that something was amiss. Perhaps the audience was all already inside and waiting? MMM and good lady took a peek inside the venue to find row after row of empty seats welcoming them. Leaving his good lady to bravely sit in the empty and freezing auditorium, MMM went in search of the Sabha Secretary. He found him in his lair deep in conversation with a few other functionaries. Of the awardee of the evening, there was not a sign.

MMM was welcomed profusely. The Sabha Secretary was most apologetic. The old lady, like the audience, could not make it and, unlike the audience, had sent a represen-

The MC had a prepared text and asked the "assembled throng" to clap loudly and welcome MMM. He thanked the audience for coming in such large numbers. MMM wound up his speech in record time and the award was handed over. The highlight of the evening was the old lady's acceptance speech, which she had recorded as an audio file and sent. The programme ended quickly but not before Secretary had sidled up to MMM and asked if he had changed his mind on accepting a memento. They had a coffee mug ready...

It was late at night when the phone rang at chez MMM. He answered it to find it was the artiste (herself, not granddaughter) at the other end. She had missed the event she said, and wanted to call and apologise. MMM had to pinch himself to believe it was really the artiste speaking. There followed a wonderful 45 minutes of conversation, replete with stories, music and anecdote, and exclusively for MMM! At the end of it, it was MMM who felt awarded and rewarded.

Freebies in God's name

These are days of freebies. A leader with near divine and immortal pretensions, and now no longer with us, introduced us Tamils to the joys of free living, 'high' thinking and we as a State live on gifts. The festival of ten days that the land of peacocks in our city's heartland celebrates every year in March/April is no exception. The eighth day event is, of course, the biggest with lakhs attending. For centuries it has been customary for charitable institutions and people to set up water and light-refreshment

the dry and wet food gets churned underfoot by thousands of people and becomes an oatmeal like paste that sticks closer to your soles than a brother. Not all the waters of the world can wash it off. And cleaning up the place becomes a nightmare for those whose thankless task that is, the next day.

This year, the police have swung into action and said all food-stall organisers will need to seek prior permission. That should control this menace to an extent. As to how effective this curb will be needs to be seen. In Chennai, the best of laws can be diluted in implementation. As to how far this freebie epidemic had spread was made evident to MMM when he conducted a heritage walk during this festival. To assist in the clear hearing of commentary, MMM has now invested in electronic receivers that resemble cell phones in appearance, for all those who register for his walks. And this event was no different. He and his colleagues were distributing these gadgets to the participants when several others began to line up. One of them remarked to MMM that it was sad that he, MMM, was restricting the distribution of free cell phones to a few rich people who did not need them anyway. And in case you thought that the person who said it was below poverty line, let MMM assure you that this was not the case. Prosperity was writ large on his visage and Julius Caesar would have liked him for he wanted men around him that were fat. MMM's interlocutor was no different. Clearly he had been to too many of those food stalls in his lifetime.

—MMM



Tramway memories

The article on Madras Trams (MM, February 16th) evoked pleasant memories of my childhood. A double track tramway passed through Westcott Road, opposite our house, linking Parry's Corner/Broadway in the north to Mylapore/ Luz and beyond in the south. The typical clashing noise of steel wheels moving over steel rails and the clanging of bells of the trams were a constant "background music" those days. The nights were illuminated periodically by lightning-like flash of sparks emanating from the contact point of the current collector with the overhead wires. The tram driver standing in the front with his hand on a short throttle handle was a familiar sight.

The best part of this eco-friendly mode of transport was that it merged so well with the pedestrian traffic. In fact, moving at little more than walking speed, the trams were like motorised pedestrians. You could get on and off it at will. Unlike their more energetic cousins, the buses, no tram ever oversped or went out of control. I do not think anyone ever got run over by a tram! It was indeed sad that it had to disappear almost overnight.

A small clarification. It was stated that:

The approaching tram could be one that commended Ovaltine for Good Health or Zandu's Oriental Balm for All Your Pains or Woodward's Gripe Water for Babies or Lodhra Ladies' Tonic. Guessing them right, my younger brother, who had this cognitive skill, beat me to it most of the time in this game. Incidentally, only Woodward's of these once-celebrated brands seems to have survived the ravages of time.

I should point out that 'Lodhra Ladies Tonic' is very much "alive and well", along with many other Ayurvedic preparations, even 118 years after they were first introduced in the market by my grandfather Dr. K.N. Kesari when he established the house of Ayurvedic medicines 'Kesari Kuteeram' in 1900. The trust earned over more than a century is their most effective advertisement.

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Holloway search

I am writing to you as Director of the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History in Frankfurt, Germany – Europe's leading research institution in

A residential apartment in Saidapet, which has been recycling grey water for 16 years now, is an example for all Chennaiites, who are all too familiar with the problems of sewage mismanagement and water crisis. The apartment, housing eight households in Sri Nagar Colony, has adopted recycling by preparing the necessary infrastructure at the construction stage itself.

Through separate pipelines, grey water is diverted to a bed of water-loving plants. Indukanth S. Ragade, a grey water recycling expert and author of a book titled *Self reliance in water – A practical manual for town and city dwellers* introduced the idea to the apartment dwellers around twelve years ago.

"It is simple and requires minimal additional budget, when provided for at the construction stage itself. Grey water in our apartments reaches the *Canna Indica* plants, the roots of which absorb the organics present in the soap and detergent. All these plants require is sunlight and regular pruning."

The water then seeps into the layers of the soil and recharges the closed well which was built a few steps away from the plants. Explaining the procedure, Ragade says: "The plants can absorb water up to 5 cm deep within 45 minutes. There is no chance of stench." The closed well is connected to

three chambers of an overhead tank and can be used for non-potable, purposes including gardening and flushing.

So what happens to the organics? Our bath soaps contain long chains of fatty acids that are biodegradable. Linear alkyl benzene sulphonate and Sodium tripolyphosphate, the components present in the detergents, are easily soluble. On average, a person uses one gram of toilet soap with 90,000 gms of water, which makes the compounds in grey water negligible.

Indukanth points out that the roots of the indigenous plants including *Canna indica*, *Heliconium* and *plantain*, act as filters in removing these organics, while retaining the salts. Water then seeps into the layers of soil, where it goes through natural cleansing says Indukanth. However, the percentage of salts would remain the same. "500 parts of inorganic salts is ideal," he suggests.

Residents of the apartment admit that the procedure has been fruitful, and they have been able to reduce reliance on private water tankers. We have not accounted for the amount of water saved. But our ground water goes dry only during the peak summer season (around May), unlike in other apartments who have to start buying water from February itself," said

When it pays to recycle grey water



Indukanth S. Ragade, a grey water recycling expert, initiated the procedure at an apartment in Saidapet. Picture courtesy: Laasya Shekhar.

V.H. Prasad, a 92-year-old resident, who spearheaded the project in the apartment.

Grey water (from sinks, bathtubs, washing machines etc) accounts for around 65 per cent of the household usage, while black water (sewage from toilets) amounts to 35 per cent. By recycling grey water, the quantity of water released to the underground sewage network can be reduced.

"It is stupid to mix the resourceful grey water with the sewage, when you can recycle it in your own household. A lot of the government's expenditure in running and treating sewage in the Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) can be brought down, if grey water is not sent to the

sewage-carrying pipes in our streets," says Indukanth. In his opinion, the lateral movement (one-way outflow) of grey water which dominates the urban scenario should be replaced with cyclical movement (reuse/recycling).

Grey water is one of the issues dealt with in the very crowded rainwater harvesting ordinance, 2003. It made the implementation of RWH systems compulsory in all existing buildings in Tamil Nadu and also mandated that "Wastewater from the bath and wash basin shall be treated by organic or mechanical recycling and taken to a sump for onward pumping to an exclusive overhead tank for use in toilet flushing. Any excess shall be connected to the rainwater harvesting structures for groundwater recharge."

This, however, largely remains rhetoric in Chennai. The reasons cited by experts are the lack of awareness among civilians as well as government officials. A Metrowater official simply avoided the topic, stating that recycled water is unhealthy.

A feasible solution now appears to be in the hands of the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority and Chennai Corporation, if they make grey water recycling mandatory for all residential projects.

– Laasya Shekar

legal history (<http://www.rg.mpg.de/en>).

I am currently writing on William Holloway, Justice of the Madras High Court from 1863 to 1877. I am particularly interested in finding out more about his motivation for translating a book of a famous contemporary German Professor of Roman Law (*Savigny: System of the Modern Roman Law*, 1867). My hypothesis is that he wished to embellish his credentials because he was in the running for Chief Justiceship against his arch enemy, the then Attorney-General, Bruce Norton.

I am interested in all archival materials, personal papers and professional correspondence pertaining to Holloway. Perhaps the publishers of Holloway's translation (J. Higginbothams) might have kept records with regard to the book. I understand that they are still based at the same location where they were in the 19th Century.

Any advice and ideas which you might have in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

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PROMISE TO SAVE THREE HERITAGE BUILDINGS

(Continued from page 1)

since the QMC campus was not made over to the Government to build a Secretariat, it was wilfully neglected. Its central *Capper House* was allowed to collapse and several other buildings on the premises were left to deteriorate, no funds being allotted for their restoration. That there is now a willingness to let bygones be bygones is a cause for cheer. The Victoria Hostel is in what can be only termed as an appalling state and students living in it have

frequently launched protests to highlight their precarious existence. The Government had toyed with the idea of demolition and it appears better counsel has since prevailed. As to the college in Kumbakonam, a Chisholm masterpiece, with the river by its side an integral aspect of its design, a presentation on its condition done by conservationist Girija Viraraghavan made those present wonder as to how any structure could be so neglected. It is heartening to note that this building too will see better days.

On paper all this is to the good. But what of the implementation? This is where the absence of a policy document on heritage is felt. Lack of clear directives will mean much of these restorations will be entrusted to the Public Works Department, which will take up the task using the same guidelines that it has for new construction. Contractors and

architects with no experience in heritage conservation will be roped in and carry out the task. If this can be avoided, these restorations can serve as examples for other heritage structures.

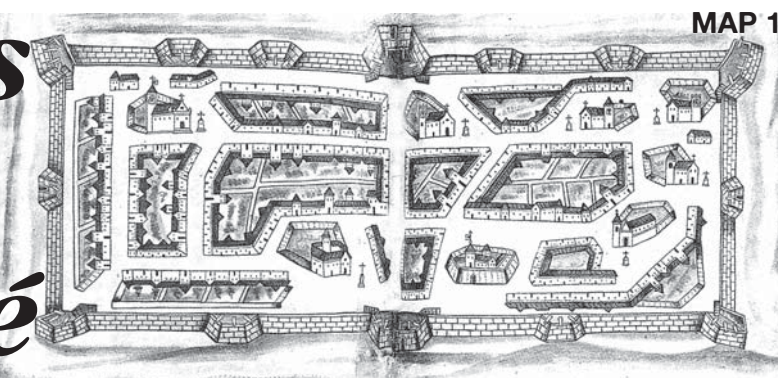
What is also of concern is the lack of any consistency on what constitutes heritage and merits restoration. The identification of buildings for restoration has been based on whims and fancies of those in office at best. This cannot be the yardstick by any means. Several other deserving structures are suffering neglect – the Teachers' College in Saidapet, being a prime example, as are also structures within Fort St. George and the Government Press in the Mint. Can the Government please come up at the earliest with what it believes to be heritage worthy of preservation and also lay down clear guidelines on what can or cannot be done with structures that fall within that category?

It was a century

In *Beat of Happiness* (MM, March 16th), it should be noted that Kanchi Paramacharya's life on earth lasted a hundred years between 1894-1994 and not as printed.

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The ghosts of Fort San Thomé



San Thomé High Road is a busy thoroughfare today with cars, buses and two-wheelers careening through it at all times. Hardly anyone in those vehicles is likely to pause to reflect that they are driving through what was once a fortress, complete with high walls, gates and bastions. And it had had its share of battles as well. In its time, it was twice the size of Fort St. George. Which is perhaps why the English disliked it intensely.

On paper, the Portuguese-built San Thomé fort has survived. Two maps of it are in existence, the first by Captain Pedro Barretto de Rezende, made in 1635, four years before Madras was founded. A map with no scale, it shows a rectangular fort with four gates, one at the middle point of each of the four sides. There were four churches within the Fort, apart from the Cathedral, and these were St. Paul's, St. Dominic's, St. Augustine's and Our Lady. The last one has been tentatively identified as the present Rosary Church, built in 1635. Of the others there is no trace. Four churches of San Thomé, but outside the Fort walls, are also recorded. Of these, St Francis, which stood near the west gate, has vanished but still in existence and going strong are the Luz, St Lazarus and the Madre-de-Deus Churches. The Luz is well known and the other two are to the south of San Thomé. Lazarus Church is on a road named after it and as for Madre-de-Deus, it now goes by the name of Dhyana Ashrama, is much modernised and is on Mada Church Road, Mandaveli. The Mada Church is but a translation of Madre-de-Deus, Mother of God.

Francois Valentijn, a Dutch East Indiaman, made a second map, in 1674 and that is scaled. By then, the rectangle of de Rezende's San Thomé had become irregular in shape. It had added a smaller rectangle to itself on the western side, thereby making inroads into Mylapore. The western boundary, complete with a new gate now stood on present day Kutchery Road, at the intersection of that thoroughfare with Bazaar and Devadi (Deorhi Sardar-ul-Mulk Dilawar Jung Bahadur) Streets. The whole enclosure now measured 825 by 780 yards (2475 by 2340 feet). The principal thoroughfare east to west was Rosary Church (which extends west as Kutchery) Road. This began at the west gate and went east beyond the cathedral to the seashore where there was a flagstaff.

Another road ran north to south, which, had it survived, would have been parallel to and further west of the present San Thomé High Road, with gates at the northern and southern sides. A ditch ran around three sides of this Fort (the eastern side had the sea) and was most likely dry.

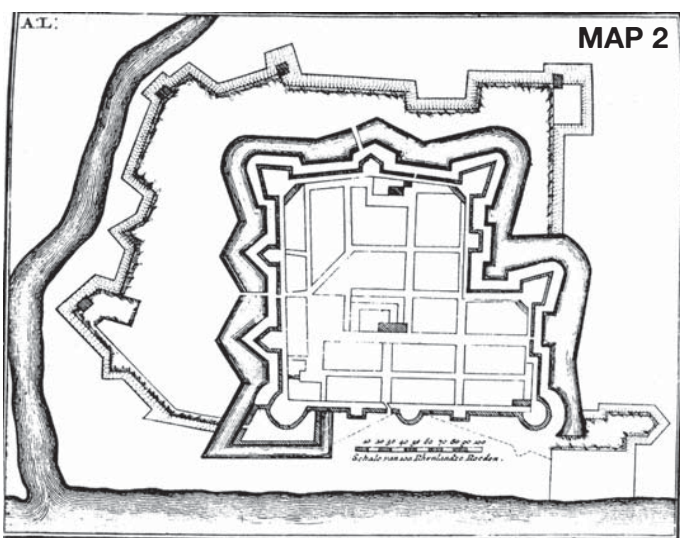
Life within this enclosure was not very peaceful and by the time the British had begun building Fort St George, many of San Thomé's residents, particularly the women, were thinking of moving over to the new settlement. The heyday of San Thomé had been a hundred years earlier. In 1662, further chaos threat-

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

— SRIRAM V

ened when the Golconda forces, encouraged, aided and abetted by the Dutch in Pulicat, besieged San Thomé. The settlement capitulated and thereafter, for eleven years, the place was under the control of Golconda. A courthouse was built by the Golconda Sultanate and this kutchery lent its name to the road that ran alongside.

It is probably at this time that the flagstaff, referred to earlier, was erected at the eastern end of the Fort. This was a masonry pillar and over time came to be known as the Dutch flagstaff which was clearly erroneous, given that the Dutch never had control over San Thomé. It was the French that really succeeded in conquering the place. That was in 1672, when Admiral de la Haye anchored before San Thomé on July 10th and "marvelled at its fortifications". The British in Fort St George were delighted with the prospect of the French laying waste the whole of San Thomé and Governor Langhorne sent a contingent of officers to welcome de la Haye and offer him all help. The French embarked on a two-pronged attack on San Thomé from July 13th. The ships opened fire from the east, while troops



attacked from the southern side. Captain de Rebre was the hero of the day and by July 15th, San Thomé had surrendered. Its magazine was found to be full of gunpowder. There is still a Powder Mill Street in the vicinity that indicates where this was. The town was given over to the French troops for looting but the only place where anything of value was found was the Governor's residence.

De la Haye had the western wall repaired and identified a place just outside it for the natives to set up a market. This place is still Bazaar Road. The west gate was named Porte Royale. The bastions were all given names – de la Haye, Caron, Marin, Portugais, St. Louis, de Rebre, Dauphin, l'Admiral, Bourbon, Francois, Major and San Peur.

But the French occupation of San Thomé lasted just two years. Admiral de la Haye tried his best to negotiate with the Sultan of Golconda for a permanent transfer but was not successful. The Dutch were too powerful for any progress. The Moors, the remnants of the old Golconda forces that had occupied San Thomé since 1662 had regrouped at Corumbat (probably Kodambakkam), and laid siege to the Fort. They were repulsed but not before a pagoda (temple), 400 paces from the western wall and which had been fortified by the French, was destroyed. Was this the original Kapaliswarar Temple?

By 1673 the Dutch and Golconda forces had joined up and renewed their attack on San Thomé. With the English at their prevaricating best, the

French were isolated. De Rebre was killed and the blockade was so effective that the settlement and its garrison were reduced to starvation. Sea battles between the French and the Dutch were fought off Triplicane leading to the curious from Fort St. George and villages nearby to crowd the beaches. By September 1674, it was all over and de la Haye and his troops left. The English now began demanding that the Golconda troops demolish the San Thomé walls. This was begun in right earnest but given up sometime later. But in 1697, a contingent of the original Portuguese together, with some of the Mohammedan residents, tried to wrest power and rebuild the walls. The Governor of Goa sent his appointee to take over the administration. But by then the Moghuls were very much a local presence, via the Arcot troops. Sensing that this development could cause all kinds of trouble, they acted decisively. A contingent was sent and on January 8th that year it began to demolish all that was left of the San Thomé walls. The work was completed within a few days and for years afterwards, the debris of the Fort was used for construction in the neighbourhood. San Thomé fort vanished thereafter. In 1749, the area came under British control.

There are still some interesting vestiges. The eastern front of San Thomé is much higher than the seacoast and is accessed by a series of steps going down. This is not the case anywhere else in Madras. It probably indicates that much of San Thomé is standing on a masonry wall, perhaps the outworks of the original

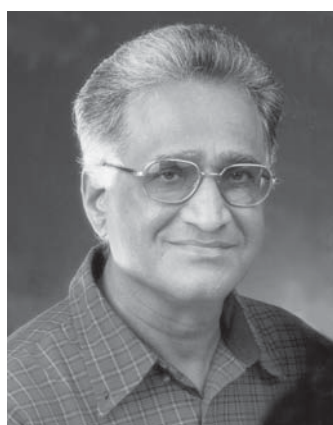
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A personal history by R. Aravamudan with Gita Aravamudan*

Tales out of the ISRO story

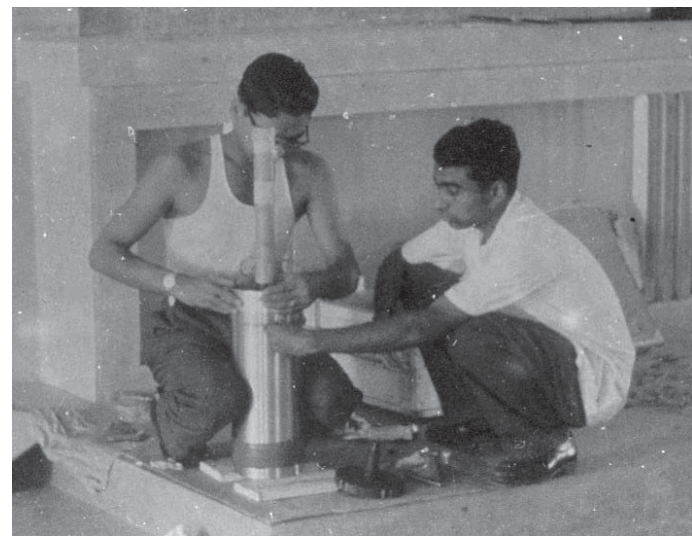
On September 28, 2014, the launch of Mangalyan, India's first home-grown mission to Mars, was a spectacular success. No other Mars Mission had succeeded in its very first attempt. ISRO had developed all the technology required for the launch from scratch. It was undoubtedly a remarkable achievement for the team of scientists at ISRO led by R. 'Dan' Aravamudan.

Thirty five years earlier it was a different story. On August 10, 1979, the launch of SLV 3, the first home-grown launch vehicle of ISRO, went out of control and it splashed into the Bay of Bengal, about 5 minutes after take-off. "The very first attempt to launch a satellite launch vehicle (SLVs) by ISRO was a failure," reported Abdul Kalam who was in charge of the project. He was disappointed but was not dis-



R. 'Dan' Aravamudan.

pioneers who laid the foundation to the savvy young engineers who keep Indian spaceships flying today. It is the tale of an organisation that defied international bans and embargos, worked with laughably meagre resources, evolved its own technology and grew into a major



Aravamudan (in vest) and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam preparing a payload in Thumba (1964).

heartened. He called it a "partial success". Abdul Kalam and Aravamudan, were colleagues right from the inception of the small Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station (TERLS), established by the visionary Vikram Sarabhai in the mid-1960s at Thumba, near Trivandrum in Kerala. TERLS is where the story of India's space odyssey begins.

In the book, *ISRO – A Personal History*, Aravamudan narrates a gripping story of the people who built ISRO and how they did it, from the rocket

* Harper Collins, 2017.

secure job to join Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, in his visionary project to take India into space. He is an award-winning senior scientist who had served as the Director of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota and of the ISO Satellite Centre, Bangalore.

Several anecdotes that the author recalls, the human side of the growth story, makes the book endearing.

* * *

While in the USA attending a training programme in 1963, the entire group of young Indian trainees, including Dan and Abdul Kalam who were all vegetarians, got into strange situations because of their staunch vegetarianism. One day, when they were desperately looking for a friendly café which would satisfy their palate, they stumbled upon one run by an old lady.

• by
R.V. Rajan
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While she did not understand their request, she allowed them use of her kitchen to cook whatever they wanted with the ingredients available with her. The group walked into her little kitchen and started piling everything vegetarian that they could find into a baking dish. Soon they had rice, vegetables, baked beans, onions, garlic and a few green peppers all mixed up with a generous helping of cheese on top and popped the dish into the oven. "The hotpotch dish turned out to be Manna to our deadened taste buds," says Dan. The old lady called it the 'Thing'. The dish became a local hit and the old lady started serving the 'Indian Thing' to her other customers also!

* * *

Doppler Velocity and Positioning System (DOVAP), a large, container-like long trailer built by NASA, came to India as a part of the initial collaborative agreement with NASA, in 1964. Transporting the equipment from Madras harbour by road to Trivandrum, a distance of 800 km, posed a big challenge at a time when container trailers were a rarity in India and there were no good roads to transport such big equipment. Since Dan



The pioneers who developed the first launch vehicle.

was from Madras and familiar with the equipment he was sent to Madras to get the job done. With help from his father, he found a contractor who agreed to take on the assignment.

"The DOVAP had to pass on the highway in front of my father's house in Chromepet. On D-Day, all my brothers and sisters, their friends and other extended family members gathered to watch the vehicle as it rolled majestically by. All along the route, the local police had to be kept informed as it had created considerable excitement among people who mistakenly thought it was a giant rocket being transported."

* * *

By the mid-1960s, space scientists from all over the world



Sarabhai and Aravamudan looking at a piece of moon rock.

started coming to conduct experiments with sounding rockets at Thumba. Those were simple times when there was an extraordinary amount of goodwill amongst the international community of scientists. Russia (or the USSR as it was known then) contributed a military helicopter for range safety and a computer TERL had those days.

Dan who was a fairly good photographer with a Yashica camera was given the responsibility to fly over the range in the helicopter and take some pic-

tures which were to be pieced together to form a survey map of the TERLS area. Abdul Kalam, Dan's lodge mate, who also had a good camera accompanied Dan on the chopper. Though it was an exciting ride, the photos that they took proved to be totally useless in the absence of zoom lenses. The team had to wait for several more years before they could get their range properly mapped.

* * *

The launch of the first sounding rocket from Thumba on November 21, 1963 marked the official beginning of the Indian space programme. But it was the formal dedication of TERLS to the U.N. on February 2, 1968 that gave the real impetus to developmental activities. Indira

trailer?" Seeing my stunned look she burst out laughing. I am 6 feet 2 inches tall, and my head was brushing the top of the trailer which had a low ceiling. While I smiled bashfully, I wondered whether she had actually listened to any of my technical explanations."

* * *

In 1969, the Americans landed on the Moon at a time when TERL team was still launching sounding rockets. Little did they know then, that one day they themselves would launch spacecraft to the Moon and to Mars and beyond; then they heard that a piece of moon rock was coming to Thumba in a glass case. It was the size of a walnut. It was put up in the foyer of SSTC on top of Veli Hills. A programme was planned for a formal inauguration of the exhibition. While the team thought that the event would be of interest to only employees of TERL, a large local crowd turned up for the event stirred by the mention of moon rock in local newspapers. It became a law-and-order problem. Local police and civil authorities had to be called in to help control the crowd.

* * *

Kalam and Dan became close friends as they were the only bachelors in the original group. In 1970, Dan got married to Gita, a young journalist. Kalam and other friends of Dan hosted a dinner for her at Mascot hotel. On his first visit to Trivandrum after Dan got married, Dr. Sarabhai threw a party for some visiting dignitaries and Gita was introduced to him. In typical Sarabhai style, he asked her all about herself and what she wrote, "May be you can also become part of our programme in some way." he said. Gita came away glowing and feeling very special. Trivandrum offered Gita excellent writing opportunities. Gita, driving around the narrow roads of Trivandrum, was a

(Continued on page 6)

Quizzin'
with
Ram'n'an

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

1. What is the claim to fame of 'Shakti Stala', located at Thirumani in Karnataka's Tumakuru district, that was inaugurated on March 2?

2. Which film won the Best Picture Oscar recently?

3. For the first time, India has signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with which countries for civil nuclear cooperation?

4. Who recently achieved the distinction of being the youngest international captain in cricket history at the age of 19 years and 165 days?

5. Which small island nation has decided to issue 'Sovereign' that will become first cryptocurrency to be legal tender?

6. Name the noted Indian architect and urban planner who has become the first Indian to win the Pritzker Prize considered the 'Nobel Prize of Architecture'.

7. Which Union Territory has become India's first to run completely on solar power?

8. India's tallest National Flag was unfurled recently at Kote Kere near the historic Belagavi fort. What is the height of the flag pole: 100m, 105m, 110m?

9. The International Football Association Board, which sets the rules for football, has approved the use of what new feature at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia?

10. Name the much-loved British scientist, known for his work with black holes and relativity and author of the bestseller *A Brief History of Time*, who passed away recently.

* * *

11. Who played the villain to MGR's hero in the flick *Rajakumari*?

12. Mahatma Gandhi was its president from 1918 to 1948 and the present one is Justice Shivaraj V. Patil. Which institution in Chennai?

13. During the Emergency, the spouse of which Dravidian icon conducted a 'Ravan Lila' to mock Indira Gandhi's Ram Lila at Delhi?

14. Who debuted as a heroine in *Manamagal* made in 1951?

15. Which 175-year-old school came up at the location of Madras Stables Company?

16. Which Chennai-based choir has performed at the 2000 and 2012 Summer Olympics as well as sung for the Pope in 2009?

17. Where would one find the tomb of the legendary army commander Yusuf Khan popular in folklore in Maruthanayagam?

18. Which eminent citizen of Madras during his distinguished career had served as the VC of Travancore University, Banaras Hindu University and Annamalai University?

19. How many pillars made up the colonnade built in 1734 by Governor Morton Pitt at the Fort?

20. Which 1917 work by V.V.S. Iyer is considered the first modern Tamil short story?

(Answers on page 8)

An iconic school in West Mambalam

A landmark institution in West Mambalam is the Ahobila Mutt Oriental Higher Secondary School that started functioning in 1953 at Kothandaramar Koil Street. This was a dream project of N. Srinivasachari who had been a teacher par excellence and had retired as Headmaster of Ramakrishna Mission High School (North Branch).

N.Srinivasachariar was the adopted son of Sri Vasudevachariar, popularly known as Maharishi Vasudevachariar, founder of the Ramakrishna Mission High School (Main), the one opposite Panagal Park, T'Nagar (started in 1932) and various other educational institutions in the T'Nagar area. Srinivasachariar joined the Ramakrishna Mission High School soon after it started and later taught English with great proficiency. When the North Branch of the High School started functioning at Bazullah Road, T'Nagar, he took over as Headmaster of the School.

During his stint as English teacher at the Main School and, subsequently as Headmaster of North Branch, he was responsible in moulding the careers of several students who later went in to occupy high positions in life. The list is long but I mention just a few. Former Indian Army Chief Sundarji, B.S. Raghavan I.A.S. (former Chief Secretary, Tripura, and Director, Political and Security Policy Planning, Union Home Ministry, and Secretary, National Integration Council), Narayan Vaghul, former Chairman of ICICI Bank, R. Rajamani I.A.S., who served as Jt. Secretary in the Secretariat of three Prime Ministers, Krishnamoorthy Santhanam, former Chief of DRDL, and M.R. Sivaraman I.A.S. former Chairman, Board of Revenue, Government of India.

Srinivasachari was adept at spotting talent in his students not only in the academic field but also in other spheres of activity, and provided them opportunities and guidance to perform well. He laid great emphasis on character-building through moral education. He was a strict disciplinarian, not by using the cane and harsh language but by calling the student and talking to him, pointing out his defects and the need for good behaviour, making him understand that he (Srinivasachari) was not there to punish

the student but to correct him for his own good.

Srinivasachari, after retirement, founded the Sri Ahobila Mutt Oriental High School to impart Vedic education and at the same time to provide children an opportunity to study more modern subjects. The School was started in June 1953, blessed by His Holiness, the Jeer of Ahobila Mutt, and is unique disseminating religious education. Students of the school learning Vedas report to the school at 6.00 a.m. to study *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, the *Prabhandas* of the Alwars, *Stotras* of the Acharyas and then continue with the regular school curriculum. The Vedic education continues after the regular school hours. These

● by
N. Venkateswaran

students are provided with breakfast, lunch and dinner at the School itself.

Initially, the school functioned in a thatched shed belonging to the Sri Kothandaramar Koil. Permanent structures came up later, thanks to the munificence of the public and well wishers. The School has been making great strides, producing excellent results with many of the students scoring high marks (first rank in several subjects) in the State board examinations year after year, but the performance of the students in the Oriental schools are not reckoned for awards. Their performances remain unpublished.

The School has also been a centre of communal harmony where Muslim students admitted to the school have opted to learn Sanskrit and have scored high marks in the subject. Many Muslim students have won gold medals in Gita recitation competitions open to all schools.

The school adopts a Gurukulam method of imparting education to the students and there is close interaction between the teachers and students. Another unique feature about the school is its dress code which is dhoti and white shirt.

N. Srinivasachariar lived up to 101 years of age and in a function got up by his old students to celebrate his entering 100 years, he declined to accept presents and, in his inimitable



humble manner, suggested, "I do not want to receive anything, but if you want to do something, do it for the school and if I am an instrument towards it will give me great pleasure." Donations poured in from all parts of the country and abroad where his old students are, showing how revered he was. When a few of his old students met Dr. N.V. Vasudevachari, Secretary & Correspondent of the school (who is also the nephew of Srinivasachariar) to discuss the arrangements for the function to celebrate his entering his 100th year, he narrated an incident that took place a few years ago.

He introduced himself as Sundar, his old student at R.K.M. Main, about 60 years earlier. Srinivasachari could immediately recollect his student days and enquired about his well-being. Sundar told him that but for his guidance and encouragement during his school days, he could not have achieved the high position he had in the Army.

In a function got up at the school premises in 2002, to mark Srinivasachari entering his 100th year, several of his old students assembled at the place. (There were no formal invitations for the function and news about the function was spread only by word of mouth).

Even at the age of 100, he was able to recognise most of them and recollected some of their personal attributes during their school days, showing that his memory was still good and he had not forgotten his old students. He insisted that he walk to the meeting place from his house and addressed the large gathering that was present for the function.

The School continues its traditions under the guidance of Dr. N. V. Vasudevachariar who himself is an octogenarian and has devoted himself to propagating the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*.

TALES FROM ISRO

(Continued from page 5)

source of great amazement and amusement to the locals who would exclaim, 'Ayyo. *Sthree car Oतिकinnu*.'

There was an unforgettable moment at the first ever launch she witnessed in Thumba. Dan had dropped Gita off at control centre where the wives of two other colleagues were also present. There were some people watching from the beach as well. Dan was in the tracking station. However, due to some problem the rocket didn't take off. Dan rushed from his tracking station to the launch pad and became immersed in trying to figure out what had gone wrong. Meanwhile, Gita soon found herself all alone on the terrace of the control centre as the other husbands had

collected their wives. As the security person was waiting for her to leave the centre so that he could lock the door, she went out on to the beautiful beach and realised that she was in a totally deserted place not knowing where to go. Just then a jeep drove by and Kalam hopped out.

"What are you doing here all alone?" he asked. When he heard her story he burst out laughing "Trust my buddy to forget he got married. He must have buried his head in the rocket. Come, let us go find him." They did find him with his hand, and not his head, inside the rocket fixing the problem!

(To be concluded
next fortnight)

Waiting in the waiting room

Madras always had, and continues to have, some of the best doctors and medical talent. Yet I think we would all largely agree that it is no fun going to most doctors these days. Gone are the days when doctors were like family friends, punctual to boot, had all the time and would see patients in homely spaces. With corporatisation of healthcare and even polyclinics being fitted out with cubicles, workstations and what-have-you, not to forget the great wall – secretaries – to get past, and an overworked doctor who is rushed for time, it is surprising that people even make the trip to have a problem addressed.

We have all heard of waiting rooms, but today this acquires a new meaning. I used to think that the only specialists who were difficult to see were the cardiologists, obstetricians and trauma care specialists because they could be summoned to attend to a critical patient 24x7, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

Even you were inclined to complain, the restraining thought always was "What if I were in that patient's position?". And we waited, whiling away the time by, generally, looking around and exchanging notes with fellow patients, trying to read back issues (no *Illustrated Weekly* these days) or craning our necks to watch inane programmes beamed on the telly or wrote, doodled, or muttered chants and prayers. Secretaries meanwhile give cryptic answers and feign complete ignorance of the doctor's whereabouts when it is well past appointment time and the queue hasn't moved.

One reason why patients are kept waiting is because, I suspect, doctors don't leave for the consultations until they have made sure that at least a percentage of the patients have reported to the desk and are waiting. Fair enough, because many patients too don't arrive

on time. But my problem is when appointments are given as late as 9 PM and the doc is nearly an hour behind schedule. At what time are we hapless patients expected to go back, wash up and have dinner? And if there are children in the waiting room, young mothers are forced to whip out packed dinners, feed the child (easier said than done) and even get ready to rock them to sleep.

Clever nurses who double as secretaries give appointments at the exact same time that doctors are on rounds! So, when you make an extra special effort

● by
Sudha Umashanker

to beat the traffic and get there ahead of time, you experience a mixture of disappointment and frustration when you are made to wait for at least an hour and a half (which is the norm in most corporate hospitals). Some time is spent on filling out the Registration form (if you are a first-timer), repeating your history to the junior doctor or updating him/her, have the nurse weigh you, making the payment etc., and then you wait for what seems like an eternity to hear your name being called. Elderly patients who have made the trip from the suburbs and are diabetic often debate whether to hold on just a while longer or leave or grab a bite (hospital cafeterias are not an option). On a recent visit, a wife who had taken permission from the office to meet the doctor almost got into a fight with her husband when the doctor stepped out. The argument being over whether he stepped out for a loo break or for lunch and whether or not they should wait because she was also ravenous. Peace returned only when the doctor materialised again.

Another group of doctors are the types who make you wait for whatever reason, but once inside the consulting room chat you up so warmly that you begin to feel guilty for the others waiting outside. All anger vanishes by the time you are done, but the only thing you have to take care of is not to look any other patient in the eye for taking so long.

Calling before you leave for the clinic and enquiring where you figure in the pecking order or asking for the last appointment for the day are measures regular patients adopt to save time. No guarantees against any surprises, but at least one tried.

If you have no choice but to twiddle your thumbs, the waiting hour is the best time to play some mindless games on the phone or free up 'Memory' by deleting unwanted mails and messages.

On a recent visit to the dentist's office for routine scaling, the junior doc left the patient who happened to be my friend quietly at one point without any explanation. Prior to that she had heard her asking the nurse for a pin tip so had, presumably gone looking for the accessory herself. Minutes ticked by with no sign of the doc's return. My anxious friend queried the nurse who said she had gone to talk to a patient coming out of surgery, counselled by her. Then, even the nurse vanished. Panic struck her. What the hell was going on? Did she find something unusual in her gums or tooth and what would happen if the anaesthetic gel wore off by the time she returned? "Hello, hello anybody here?" yelled the friend. The doctor returned and responded to the "What happened? Where were you?" somewhat coolly but not convincingly. Still fuming when she left the clinic my friend received a SMS from a healthcare company that books appointments asking to rate the duty doc. How would you describe your experience?

She was tempted to get even – a tooth for a tooth would have been nice – and tell it like it was, but with doctors aka demi-gods she realised impulsive actions would only lead to long-term complications. Maybe the doctors have their own side of the story. As for us patients, as long as we are likely to get sick we need doctors more than they need us.

The ghosts of Fort San Thomé

(Continued from page 4)

fort. The Dutch flagstaff was demolished sometime early in the 20th Century but made a comeback post 2004 as St. Thomas' staff complete with a legend that the wooden pole

that stands there was a staff of the Apostle and he had planted it to prevent any incursion of the sea beyond that point. That San Thomé was largely spared the horrors of the 2004 tsunami has only buttressed this legend.

NOSTALGIA

When a station was a treat

Egmore Railway station, now all of 110 years old, brings back fond memories of life in Chennai in the 1930s and '40s, particularly of its refreshment room, where we would go after shopping at the city's only mall, Moore Market, and have a treat.

This South Indian Railway refreshment room used to be a favourite haunt of my father and his journalist buddies in the days when journalists sent news to their papers by phone and telegrams. A bottle of beer cost 8 annas (16 annas made a rupee). One rupee was a very precious amount, especially for journalists who were so poorly paid.

A rupee was all my mother spent for the day's marketing which included meat, fish, vegetables and everything a family needed, except for the rice, masala etc., which was bought monthly.

People like the Raja of Pithapuram and the Raja of Kollengode spent time in the Egmore railway refreshment room waiting for their trains. But in those days, railway refreshment rooms were not only for travelers. They were numbered against the few restaurants in Madras. Eating out not encouraged in those days.

My father used to take us for a treat to the Egmore railway refreshment room. We looked forward to the sponge cake and lemonade fare and spent time moving around watching cars drive onto the platform, people alighting and entraining, something so much in the past, then, the guard blowing a whistle, waving a green flag and the train steaming out.

No idli-dosai. Only English breakfasts of two fried eggs, bacon and coffee. Really expensive. You could have a four-course English lunch: soup, a fish dish, meat dish and a dessert. You couldn't just eat with a fork, strict British manners were followed, with cutlery meant for specific purposes, so knives and spoons were also used. A great favourite, which now may be termed Anglo-Indian, was Rice and Curry and the famous Mulligatawny soup which is really a kind of pepper rasam with some other ingredients put in, even some chicken pieces could be added and you got Chicken Mulligatawny soup.

Trains in those days had four classes. First class, which was only for the rich and the British. The first class four-berth compartment had an attached bathroom. Then, there were the second class and interclass, classification depending on the degree of thickness of the cushions (interclass cushions were very thin). Last but not least, the third class with wooden seats. A third class compartment would have forty to fifty seats on long wooden benches.

Any travel meant a hold-all, suit-case and a trunk. Travel light was years away. Round the corner near Egmore station was the Egmore Ice factory which has a history of its own.

– Anna Varki

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Tennis was his magnificent obsession

It is not uncomplimentary to call the late M.V.G. Appa Rao, better known as Kanni, a tennis addict. Few amateur tennis players would have travelled so extensively and played so much competitive tennis as Kanni did in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Imbued with the amateur spirit, he played for honour and pleasure, so much so that defeats, instead of dampening his enthusiasm, served to stimulate his appetite for more and more tennis.

Coming from a Zamindar family in Andhra, Kanni moved to Madras in the 1930s in pursuit of education and found more than just studies here. He took to playing tennis at the age of 13. He was enthralled by the game which eventually played a dominant role in his entire life. Joining Presidency College in 1943 gave a significant boost to his tennis. He became the best player of Madras University when he won the Stanley Cup (the foremost Collegiate singles trophy) twice, in 1946-1947. He was also part of the Madras

University team that won the All-India Inter-University Championship in 1949.

After his M.A in Political Science, he left for England in 1951 for higher studies. Inevitably, tennis totally eclipsed Political Science! Playing tournaments on the grass courts of England, he nursed an overwhelming ambition to play matches on the manicured lawn courts of Wimbledon. Although he did not qualify for Singles and

Tamil Nadu, especially in Doubles.

40 years have passed since his premature demise at the age of 52, yet his memory remains strong in the minds of his friends. His excessive adoration of tennis, knowledge and experience of the game, sportsmanship, reporting skills and generous hospitality, combined with a touch of absent-mindedness, made him one of the most colourful personalities on the

ball landed and signalled it was in, much to the annoyance of the umpire and the delight of the opponents!" Such instances were not unusual with Kanni.

Seshadri continues: "Kanni disliked getting a walkover from his opponents for whatever reason. Once, when he was playing a singles match in Amritsar, his opponent, local champion Satsayal gave him a walkover after losing the first set as he was feeling unwell. They both changed and met around a cup of tea, when Kanni asked his opponent how he was feeling. On hearing that he was perfectly alright, Kanni proposed they resume the match, which they did despite Satsayal's reluctance. Strangely enough, Kanni lost the match!"

In the 1960s, Kanni often went to England in summer to play in tournaments and also cover Wimbledon for leading newspapers in Madras. In 1967, however, a paucity of foreign exchange put his trip to UK in jeopardy, and he was advised to meet a senior official in the RBI in New Delhi. At the Bank, when asked by the receptionist whom he wanted to meet, he forgot this gentleman's name! By a rare stroke of luck Kanni and the receptionist managed in due course to identify the official he sought. Kanni's absent-mindedness led him to such piquant situations many a time.

When the legendary Ramanathan Krishnan started his tennis campaign in London in 1951, Kanni was a student and both of them travelled and played tournaments in England and Europe. Krishnan recalls an



M.V.G. Appa Rao.

amusing incident: "We were both boarding a train in the London Underground. I got in first, and Kanni followed. As the train was about to start, he jumped out and so did I. His explanation was that he had been missing classes recently and was behind in submitting assignments. His angry professor was sitting in the compartment and he wanted to avoid a confrontation!"

Kanni believed tennis was the universal remedy for all human ills and encouraged his friends and relatives to benefit from playing the game. Indeed, some of his family members were good tennis players. They included his daughter Namratha, (better known as Dimpu and now living in the US; she was once among the top women players in India), his late brothers, M.R. Appa Rao and M.S. Appa Rao, and sister Kanamma. Though not a player herself, his charming wife Dolly offered full support to his tennis. She remembers that even on their honeymoon in 1960 on board an Italian luxury liner, he had taken his tennis racquets, as there were tennis facilities. But, apparently, he didn't play!

It was a privilege to have known and played with this extraordinary tennis personality.

● by V.K. Parthasarathy

Men's Doubles, he made it to the Mixed Doubles in 1952. Then came a long period of participation in tournaments in Indian States and also in England, Europe, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Kenya. He was once ranked No.4 in India and continued to be one of the top players in

tennis courts. Even today, anecdotes about him abound in tennis circles. He was a serious contender on the court but was too much of a gentleman to have the killer instinct. In triumph, he was subdued, in loss he was graceful and his sense of fair play went beyond observing the rules in letter and spirit. When playing in clubs, he always graciously gave his place to others.

His close friend and compatriot P.S. Seshadri, now 87, recalls an incident: "Kanni was playing an important doubles match in the early 1950s. At a crucial moment, the opponents hit a shot that just narrowly missed the line and the umpire rightly called it out and the opponents themselves felt it was out, but Kanni went and inspected the spot on which the

Answers to Quiz

1. It is set to become the world's largest solar park with a capacity of 2,000 MW, 2. *The Shape of Water*, 3. Russia and Bangladesh, 4. Rashid Khan of Afghanistan, 5. Republic of the Marshall Islands, 6. Balakrishna Doshi, 7. Diu, 8. 110m. The dimension of the flag is 9600 sq. feet, 9. VAR (video assistant referees), 10. Stephen Hawking.

* * *

11. Chinnappa Devar, 12. Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, 13. Maniammai (wife of Periyar), 14. Padmini, 15. Christ Church High School, 16. Madras Musical Association, 17. Samattipuram near Madurai, 18. Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, 19. Thirty-two, 20. 'Kulathankarai Arasamaram'.

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