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MADRAS MESSAGES

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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When will we again see a City Council?

● by The Editor

The High Court is getting more and more impatient. And who can blame that august body for losing its cool? There are no signs of any elections to civic bodies in the entire State, leave alone the Corporation of Chennai. Come October, we will have completed two years of civic administration sans an elected body. It appears that not many in the city have really noticed. The State Government too is pretty much relaxed over the delay. The Opposition is the one that is crying foul.

Strangely enough, two years ago, when the elections fell due, it was the Opposition that did not want them. This despite the local administrations under the present party in power not having performed much and therefore standing very little chance of a re-election. The Opposition took the matter to court, querying the hurried announcement of dates, irregularities and law and order problems. The Courts had obligingly stayed the elections.

Since then, it is the State Government that has hummed and hawed. It has cited a delimitation exercise, to be in place following the 2011 Census, as the principal stumbling block. It is however not clear as to what has really held up this exercise for over seven years now. In September 2017, the Court had ordered that the elections had to be completed by November that year. There was no action and when summoned and asked to explain what amounted to contempt of court, the Election Commissioner of the State was quick to apologise. He also cited certain changes in the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act that placed legal hurdles in the conduct of the elections.



Ripon Building, home of the Corporation of Madras: When will it see an elected Council again?

It needed World Environment Day to awaken us to the dangers of accumulating plastics in our surroundings. Discarded plastic clogs our waterways and stormwater drains, artificially flooding our neighbourhoods. Landfills are rising higher and higher with dumped plastic posing a serious health hazard. Recently, in Patna vets removed 80 kg of plastic from the stomach of an infected cow. Annually, around the world, nearly 13 million tons of plastic waste is dumped into the seas affecting marine life and endangering marine species.

The problem about plastic is that, on the one hand, it cannot be totally avoided as it is indispensable for our good living, permeating every part of our lives and our needs. The problem on the other hand is that it does not decompose easily, and its waste keeps accumu-

Green Warriors and the Plastic Monster

lating around us. Therefore, not being able to avoid it altogether, we can only avoid its use wherever possible, and where it is still used, reduce its rate of accumulation by recycling. All this does pose a challenge as to where to begin and who should do what to tame this ever-enlarging monster.

The Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016 stipulate the procedure and discipline for producing, using, recycling and

disposal of plastic products. There is little to quarrel over these provisions which have remained on paper as a good piece of bureaucratic craftsmanship. The last report of the Central Pollution Control Board, India, is for 2015-16, the very year of the Plastic Waste Management Rules and is of

to be evolved by local bodies for collection, segregation and disposal of plastic waste. The apathy of the system – and, of the citizens – in orchestrated harmony in dealing with such a serious threat to environment is disturbing.

That nearly 50 per cent of plastic usage is for single use or disposable products – plastic bags, plates, throw-away cutlery, bottles – does give a sizeable opening for reducing usage itself. Carrying one's own cotton or jute bag/s to receive grocery and vegetables could substantially reduce usage. Nothing stops our doing it here and from now – except the will to do it. The collective impact, if all "mothers" in every household impart a force to this movement, would be visible and the change dramatic. We will have achieved much to tackle the plastic menace. We should not wait for a law, under fear of penalty or punishment, to tell us do this.

● by A Special Correspondent

little value to assess the impact of the Rules. No report is traceable in their website for 2016-17. It is too early for the 2017-18 report. That much for the seriousness of enforcement of the PWM Rules by the promulgating body itself. There is no sign of the provisions of these Rules having been taken seriously by state governments and the local bodies under them. Most important among the requirements under PWM Rules is of an organised system



The mountains of waste challenging the ragpickers.

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Green Warriors, Plastic Monster

(Continued from page 1)

The problem of unavoidable use of plastic, calls for more effort. We buy medicines, beverages, toiletries that come in plastic containers. When throwing waste away, we could take a little trouble to segregate them to make the collector's job easier. Collection of used plastic for recycling is a logistic nightmare. The makers of products with recycled plastic are supported by, and dependent upon, a large network of ragpickers at the base of the pyramid with retail and wholesale collectors above them who, in turn, provide the raw material to the recyclers for turning them into granules. These are bought by manufacturers to make plastic products.

The ragpickers' job is indeed a tough one having to scavenge among garbage to separate the plastic waste day after day. The least we can do is to lighten their task by segregating our waste diligently every day. This makes the basic collection efficient and enables the ultimate completion of the cycle – waste, collection, recycled granules to plastic product with recycled material saving one cycle equivalent of plastic accumulation. Recycling cannot be done endlessly for technical reasons, but one recycling of 100 per cent of the waste itself could halve the accumulation rate, provided 100 per cent of the waste is successfully collected. It is estimated that currently collection effectiveness is only 40 per cent. Taking it toward the 100 per cent mark is in our hands by segregating at source and presenting it in a manner that makes the ragpicker's job a little easier and a little less unpleasant.

Segregation and collection activities are inherently difficult for enforcement as these are mostly individualised activities spread over tens of thousands of households and establishments, day after day. There is no answer other than a strong civic sense driving every one of us to take a little trouble to segregate at source and making it easy for collection.

Rightly have the ragpickers been hailed as "green warriors". Their activity operates synergis-

tically with civic bodies in charge of collection of garbage and waste for disposal. It is estimated that there are about 60,000 ragpickers in Chennai who generate 400 tonnes of plastic waste a day. The ragpickers keep the recycling units working. If collection effectiveness is raised from 40 per cent to 80 per cent the recycling units can double their production, make more profit, give more employment and keep the environment plastic-free. The ragpickers have a tough job over 12 hours or so to earn Rs. 8-10,000 a month. They are the unsung heroes of this environment saga.

There are 8,000 registered and 10,000 unregistered plastic units in Tamil Nadu. Unimaginative imposition of 18 per cent GST on scrap had reduced the demand for recycled granules as it narrowed down the cost differential with virgin raw material. On representation, the government reduced GST on scrap to 5 per cent but, strangely, retained GST on granules at the same 15 per cent. It is offering more food to the still strangled person. The one-sided reduction of tax has not remedied the situation as granule demand for recycling continues to be adversely affected. We can expect accumulation of garbage and loss of livelihood for ragpickers who have been contributing to clearing waste. The Tamil Nadu government should have taken this up at the last GST Council meeting. This small sector plays a central role in creating a plastic free environment. Leave alone subsidy and tax exemptions, it is self-defeating to punish them with an incongruent tax rate.

Admittedly, larger issues of replacing plastic components, wherever possible, by those made of alternative bio-degradable and replaceable material are even more relevant in taming the plastic monster. Meanwhile, desisting from plastic containers in everyday purchases and facilitating the collection and recycling of plastic waste lie within reach and can produce speedy visible impact. Households with a civic sense and ragpicking green warriors can strike the first assault.

Taking people around Madras

The Man from Madras Musings has been around for quite some time in this city of ours. He therefore is ideally placed to give advice on where to go and, more importantly, what to see, particularly if those spots are of the historic kind. This appears to be the understanding of many Non Resident Indians at least, and come September, MMM's mailbox gets fairly filled up with queries from those up north and also several others from faraway lands. They plan to visit Chennai, they say in their emails, particularly in December (when the weather is better they invariably write, even if they are from the African Sahara), and would it be possible to meet up with MMM, and, even better, could MMM take them around? Yes, MMM is now one of the sights. To these queries MMM gives a patient and considered reply. Then comes the most important question, at least to these NRIs. Does MMM charge for taking people around? When they receive an answer in the affirmative, most vanish into the night, leaving the field open to others.

MMM happened to mention this in passing and there was a sudden awakening in his audience. The bus nearly capsized when all the ladies crowded on one side of the vehicle, to get a clear look from the windows. MMM asked one of them as to what they hoped to see. After all, the leader was not put on display, at least not as yet. To this he was told that you never know – you could get an accidental view as the leader was being ferried between wards (MMM did not have the heart to tell them that at leader's level, there is no question of being ferried between wards, it is the ward that is brought to the leader's bed,) or you could see VIPs arriving or departing, or better still, the exact moment the bus passed the hospital could coincide with the release of a health bulletin... The possibilities were endless.

Faced with such macabre tastes, MMM opted to keep silent. After all, his throat needed a break. The discussions thereafter steered away from heritage and focused solely on leaders in sickness and speculating on when

The train then moved and, suddenly, a few minutes later, the cabin was flooded with light. MMM's co-passenger said that this often happens and proceeded to deliver what appeared to be a very learned lecture on strange behaviours among light bulbs he had known. He was waxing particularly eloquently on an erratic tube-light he had been fond of, when the cabin was flooded in darkness again. MMM's co-passenger was rather discomfited at this and while he gathered his bearings, MMM went off in search of the attendant.

The man feigned surprise that the matter had not been attended to already but, to do him credit, he came at once, armed with screwdriver and a spare set of bulbs. He proceeded to swing his impressive bulk on to an upper berth and once there began a series of complicated manoeuvres into which all passengers were drafted. MMM was the man who had to periodically press the switch to see if whatever it was that the attendant had done, had borne fruit. MMM did his best though he did get

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Not all prove so miserly; some have offered gifts in kind. But there are only so many coffee mugs and pens that MMM can use. He also cannot be swayed by chocolates from abroad and so he firmly refuses any alternative to cash. It is, therefore, only the very determined who get to see the city with MMM. You may assume that it is all sweetness and light thereafter. But that is where you make your bloomer. Retaining the attention span of the visitors is a great challenge. And in this, the general filth and squalor is a great competitor to MMM's commentary. There he will be, declaiming in rolling periods about a certain building, and there the visitor will be, his/her attention completely diverted by a pig chasing away a dog, or two people bathing in the open, or a pile of rotting flowers and fruits from a nearby roadside shrine.

There can be other claimants to attention as well. MMM recalls a particular tour when he was taking a group of ladies across the city in a luxury bus. MMM waxed eloquently on the beach, the Fort and Mylapore but nothing really interested the participants. They kept gazing out of the window and MMM may not have even been there for all they cared. Matters continued this way till the bus happened to pass by a fairly well-known hospital and where at that precise moment, there reposed, in an advanced state of illness, one of our beloved leaders.

D-Day would be. MMM was later thanked profusely for making the tour soooooo interesting.

Train travails

The Man from Madras Musings boarded the train at Egmore station, reflecting on how dirty this once pristine terminal had become over the years. Nothing had however prepared him for the filth in the compartment that he got into. Mind you, it was an upper class coach and MMM had paid quite a bit for the ticket. These are days, as you know, when flight tickets, if booked in advance, are actually cheaper than train tickets. It is just MMM was sorely tempted to enjoy a leisurely train journey. He had a good book with him and looked forward to reading it, falling asleep and waking up in time the next morning to get off at his destination.

But the dirt was something else. The window pane had not been cleaned in years evidently and, peering through it, MMM could make out a very brown Egmore station in which people appeared to be waking about at midnight, even though it was only early evening. The cabin that MMM sat in was steeped in darkness and no pressing of any switch got the light to work. MMM complained to the attendant who said the electrician would look into it. When? Shortly. Would that mean after the train had left or before? He could not say.

confused as to when to switch 'on' and when 'off' and did switch on when the attendant said off. The net result was that the attendant sprang to the ceiling with all his hair standing on end like quills on a fretful porpoentine. Order was restored when MMM switched off the light. Thereafter, this task was entrusted to another attendant who coordinated perfectly with the first man.

The light bulb was partially fixed – to the extent that it worked like a disco strobe light – flickering on and off at rapid intervals. Some suggested an online complaint and this was done. A reply was received stating that the matter would soon be attended to. Die-hard fans of the railways cheered. There was talk of how the railways in India catered to a vast multitude and the number of passengers at Egmore station in a day equals the rail-using population of England in a year or some such dubious statistic that routinely keeps popping up on social media. Under the circumstances, ought we to trouble railway officers over a mere bulb? MMM's fellow passenger embarked on a lecture about how nobility and commitment to action was a strong trait in Indian Railways. But of action there was no sign. By then it was time to go to bed and so the lights had to be switched off anyway. And so that was that. Who said train journeys are boring?

–MMM

MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition. *Madras Musings* is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

– THE EDITOR

POINTS OF VIEW

Whither education in India?

● Are the thousands of schools, colleges, and universities in India equipped to cultivate competence, abilities, and capacities to meet new and emerging opportunities and challenges? The answer is 'No'. So what is wrong, and what is the remedy?

Yesterday's educational system will not meet today's, even less so, the needs of tomorrow," said Professor Daulat Singh Kothari, Chairman of the 1964 Education Commission, presenting his report to the Union Government over half a century ago. Kothari's words sound prophetic today.

There is no doubt that India's present education system doesn't compare favourably with global standards, and is much less than satisfactory even for domestic needs. The growing armies of unemployed graduates and mounting ranks of jobless postgraduates in subjects like History, Sanskrit, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Political Science or any other Social Science discipline, and the overflowing registers of employment exchanges across the country, stand witness to this fact.

It stands to reason that if these degrees don't make students eligible for decent jobs, the system needs to be thoroughly refurbished and remodelled. Our schools, colleges, and universities are producing young men and women who are less than prepared for employment, because of both their less relevant, mediocre academic credentials and the poor standard of training. They are far from equipped to immediately join the ranks of aptly qualified and adequately trained workforces sorely needed to take over the new openings that India's fast-growing economy is throwing up.

So, what's wrong with our educational system, and why are these youngsters found wanting in the eyes of employers? The reason is that they have gone through outdated and obsolete syllabuses and have not been taught the skills required in today's job openings. Also, most of the pedagogic infrastructure and supporting paraphernalia – labs and laboratories, industrial workshops, tools, techniques, and devices – are either not working or fall way short of international standards.

India's educational system is a complex and labyrinthine venture – with more than 15 lakh schools, over 35,500 colleges and 700 degree-granting institutions dotted over the country delivering knowledge in diverse disciplines to more than 20 million students and counting. Access to education has markedly climbed, particularly after the Right to Education Act came into effect. Consequently, the literacy rate is also jumping and is nearly 66 per cent overall.

In the days of yore, instructions in essential axioms of morality, ethics and philosophy, civilisation, ancient heritage and culture were imparted in

classrooms. No more. The 21st Century is the age of STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. If teachers and trainers don't fully prepare youngsters in the niche areas of STEM, the youth will only swell the ranks of the unemployable and unemployed.

Are our thousands of schools, colleges and universities equipped to cultivate competence, abilities and capacities to meet new and emerging opportunities and challenges?

No, the reality is that nearly 60 per cent of the students who pass out from government and private institutions are hardly aware of the latest research, developments and innovations. This is also true of alumni of private and deemed universities. Of course, alumni of IITs and IIMs do stand out and make a mark at global levels, but the need of the hour is for most schools, colleges and universities to rise to the occasion and turn out personnel ready to take responsibilities.

A recent survey by the *Indian Express* revealed the horrendously low standards at engineering colleges in Haryana, Andhra, Karnataka, etc. The academic levels are low because student with poor grades are admitted for hefty monetary considerations; nearly 300 engi-

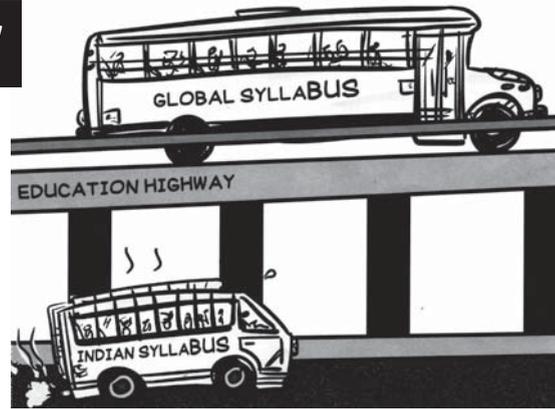
neering colleges have been ordered to shut shop, and some 500 others are under the HRD ministry's scanner for inferior standards. The Subramanian Committee, the latest to study the matter, also expressed deep-seated dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning levels of students at the school, college, and university levels.

An eminent educational administrator, N. Sundararajan, feels that by 2030, the existing challenges for Indian education – access, equity, and quality – will only be greatly exacerbated unless we significantly transform our education model. "The global economy is undergoing structural transformation; there will be need for a workforce of 3.3 billion by 2020, increasingly in the services and capital-intensive manufacturing sectors... and 90 per cent of GDP and 75 per cent of employment will be in these sectors," he feels.

Therefore, flawed, substandard academic streams which do not match current needs should be immediately discarded or reformed, borrowing ideas from the Universities of Berkeley, Stamford, London, Harvard, Ottawa, etc. Multiple national and international educational testing and assessment agencies have often pinpointed the flaws in India's overall educational model which are crying out for instant attention.

It is necessary to urgently halt sanctioning of new colleges and universities. It is a disgrace that many deemed universities function from small premises with poorly qualified faculty, openly 'selling' M.Sc., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. It is imperative for the powers that be to chalk out an elaborate, vibrant and multi-faceted education model to guide India's youth to meet the demands of the millennium. It is also imperative to boost national investments at all levels of educational reform. The Union Budget should make at least a six per cent provision for this annually. For, unless new institutions, including IITs, IIMs, and other institutions of excellence are generously funded to sponsor and conduct quality research projects, the gaping holes in higher education and research will stay put.

Meanwhile, strict financial audit is essential to check fraud



● by
Prof. M.R. Dua
(Former head of the
Journalism Dept. at the
Indian Institute of Mass
Communication,
New Delhi)

Needed more curators of walks

My weekends in August are super busy. The mornings are for Madras Day walks.

One evening, I went on my sixth – guiding a group of architecture students around Fort St. George.

Fellow-traveller Hemchandra Rao, a historian and philatelist did not shy away when I suggested two tours – one of the Old Bridges of the city and one on his favourite subject of study, Buckingham Canal.

The first Canal tour had a big response and so we repeated it. That Sunday was pleasant and we decided to retire to Saravana Bhavan on Mount Road for a slow breakfast after the tour.

Rao is a busy bee and we are already working out the details of the Buckingham Canal tour of the Palaverkkadu region (Pulicat) – which allows you to appreciate the linkages between this Canal and rivers that flow eastwards, the unique eco-system of the Pulicat lake and the Canal's life on the boundary of the neighbouring state.

The Madras Day celebration has attracted more people with domain knowledge in subjects of their interest to curate and lead Walks.

But I would like to see more people curate Walks.

This is a city of many parts and people and histories. And we must present every shade and colour to people who wish to learn or are just curious.

I have a long list of ideas.

The railway houses in Perambur, the churches of Broadway and of Vepery, the cantonment zone of St. Thomas Mount, the Basin Bridge Creek, the Christian legacy of Little Mount, the Anglo-Indian heritage of Pallavaram, the old town of Muthialpet and the food joints of Mannady.

This list gives you an idea of the rainbow themes that Walks can cover.

And this pursuit must not be left to a few.

Schools and college teachers, foodies and roadies, scholars and research students, even senior residents ...all of them are capable of leading Walks in our City. They will bring diversity to this pursuit. And help people enlarge their knowledge of this city.

During one Madras Day event, I bumped into this man who had lived in China Bazaar in the 1960s and 70s. A few prompts and he rewound to his days in that busy neighbourhood. And to the streets which offered smuggled goods – soaps and shampoos, handbags and dark glasses, scents and lipsticks, sarees and terylene shirts. This was the era when we hardly had any of these fancy lifestyle products. And we desired them when we could afford them.

I have convinced this person to help curate a Walk of the 'smuggled goods sale' streets. To understand a life of the near past. That era may not be relevant now. But we should be aware of it.

And this is what Walks can do.

– Vincent D'Souza

in universities' spending, such as the incidents reported from the Aligarh Muslim University, Allahabad, and universities in Puducherry, Garhwal, etc. Similarly, academic vigil should ensure that undeserving faculty are not promoted. Such steps will go a long way in encouraging and rewarding genuine and original research and innovation.

Promotions under the MPS (merit promotion scheme) should not be automatic; excellence should be the deciding criterion; merit needs to be respected and awarded, while stagnation and a niggardly attitude to scholarship should be dealt with sternly. Introducing innovative schemes should be encouraged. Moreover, as technology plays a dominant role in all branches of knowledge and education, it should be actively yoked to academic and research pursuits.

It has been widely proven that if scientists are left alone, they can be more creative, innovative, and dedicated to the

pursuit of individual and joint research. It's largely due to such freedom that professors in many western nations are able to win prestigious international awards and honours like the Nobel Prize almost every year.

The good news is that UGC may soon be "freeing top-ranking institutions from its control... and provide [them] greater autonomy" with some conditions, for starting new courses, new departments, and schools.

Another plan is to grant autonomous status to well-established colleges of repute to manage their research and academic courses, admission processes, etc.

In brief, a dynamic nation like India should be at the forefront in innovative, out-of-the-box methods of teaching and knowledge streams. Diversity, variety and polymorphism should be hallmarks of a successful educational system in the New India that we seek and strive to build. (Courtesy: Vidura)



Luz Church 2nd Street, that was once Amjad Baugh.

Where a Governor's Lady & the Gandhis were hosted

In the early 1900s, a Mylapore *vakil's* success was estimated based on his address. The beginners and those who were forever fated to remain in the bottom-rungs of law resided at Chittrakulam. Greater prosperity meant moving into Nadu Street. A fairly large practice saw them taking up residence at Pelathope and North/South/East Mada Streets. The truly big ones made it to Luz Church Road and beyond. Among those who belonged to the last category was Sriman Srinivasa Iyengar. The son-in-law of Sir V. Bhashyam Iyengar, he had begun life in law under the latter and later apprenticed himself under V. Krishnaswami Iyer. He became one of the giants of the Madras Bar by 1908 or so. The residence in North Mada Street not proving to be sufficient, the search began in right earnest for a house that would reflect his status.

Srinivasa Iyengar zeroed in on *Amjad Baugh* on Luz Church Road by 1910. Its previous ownership is not recorded and it has been guessed from the name that the property probably belonged to Muslim nobility. Ambujammal, well-known patriot and daughter of Srinivasa Iyengar, recalls in her memoirs, *Naam Kanda Bharatam*, the day her father took his family to see the house. There were any number of trees all around the vast compound, which, according to legend, spread over 150 grounds (eight acres and a bit more). The house had a colonnaded verandah running all around it and the rooms inside, though few in number were truly enormous. She also recalled that the property had no compound wall. A line of tamarind trees marked the boundary, with the space between them was filled in by *lantana* bushes.

The children loved it. Not so impressed was Ranganayaki, Srinivasa Iyengar's wife. It was not as though she objected to the

size or was awed by it. After all, her father, Sir V Bhashyam Iyengar, lived in *Lakshmi Vilas*, a property of comparable proportions on Luz Church Road itself. The kitchen, she noted, was quite some distance from the main house. The residence proper too, she said, was quite dilapidated. But soliciting his wife's views was just a formality for Srinivasa Iyengar. He went ahead with the purchase. Repairs were done and a new kitchen, closer to the house, was built, with the old one becoming the cowshed.

Living in such a large bungalow was not stress-free however. The loneliness, after the more intimate surroundings of North Mada Street, was frightening. The garden threw up its challenges by way of a regular supply of snakes, several of which were poisonous. The three ponds in the premises filled up during the rains and became home to a colony of frogs that kept the occupants of the house awake throughout the night with their croaking. Luz Church Road was so quiet that any woman that braved it by walking alone would be robbed of her jewels. Even the meagre possessions of the poor women who came from the neighbouring village of Bheemannapet, to gather fallen leaves and scrub wood, were not spared. Riots would often break out between the residents of the neighbouring villages of Bheemannapet and Mandaiveli. At other times, cholera and small pox epidemics would rage through these hamlets and Luz Church Road would become a route for a series of funeral processions.

Amjad Baugh did not bring much happiness to its occupants. Srinivasa Iyengar was a short-tempered man who dominated his family. His wife had several health issues. Daughter Ambujammal had a troubled marriage, her husband suffering

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

A special for Gandhi Jayanthi

— SRIRAM V

a nervous breakdown shortly after the wedding. Moving into *Amjad Baugh* from the small town of Kumbakonam was not easy for him. Srinivasa Iyengar's

became a staunch Gandhian, and in the 1930s, much against her father's wishes, courted imprisonment. Released in 1934, she became a full-fledged free-

much of the family members by the late 1940s. Ambujammal had moved to Alwarpet where a street would later be named after her, the one parallel to it being named after her father.

Her brother, Parthasarathy, who had a successful career in insurance, chose a life of spirituality following his son's death, referred to above. Becoming a renunciate, he founded a hermitage in the name of his tutelary deity Vaishnavi at Tirumullaivayil, which flourishes even today.

The land surrounding *Amjad Baugh* was sold by his descendants and made way for plenty of houses. By the 1990s, even the main house became a distant memory, no trace of it surviving. The space where it once stood is now a cul-de-sac off Luz Church Road.

dom fighter and social worker. In 1941, following her father's death, she chose to donate her extensive collection of jewels to the Congress party. Post Independence, she chaired the Madras Social Welfare Board and founded the Srinivasa Gandhi Nilayam.

Amjad Baugh was depleted of

son suffered an accident that left him disabled in one leg. In later years, a grandson died in a freak accident — electrocution while trying to play the radio in the midst of a thunderstorm. A brooding miasma hung over the place, which affected subsequent generations as well.

Srinivasa Iyengar became the Advocate General of Madras, in 1915. The grounds of *Amjad Baugh* hosted several official parties thereafter. Most notable was a visit of Lady Pentland, the Governor's wife, for a ladies' evening. The *Government House* band played and catering was from Harrison's, of Broadway. In sharp contrast was the reception given to Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba, when they were served boiled peanuts, apples, oranges, grapes, an assortment of dry fruits, buttermilk, coconut water and the South Indian *panakam*. Almost everyone invited — and this included several Englishmen — turned up, such was their curiosity to see Gandhi.

The women were all indoors and most of them were bedecked and bejewelled in honour of Kasturba. Much to their shock, she was in the simplest of clothes and her only ornaments were iron bangles as worn by Gujarati peasant women. Gandhi too was in traditional Gujarati gear — kurta, dhoti and turban.

Gandhi brought much peace to a troubled household. He became an honoured guest in 1925, when he, and his wife, stayed at *Amjad Baugh* for several days. The household gave up all orthodoxy and threw its doors open to freedom fighters of all castes and religions. Srinivasa Iyengar, who was already a member of the Congress, became more involved in the freedom movement, and in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, chose to resign from the post of Advocate General. He was elected to the Legislative Council in Delhi. Ambujammal

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

The *Hindu* turned 140 on September 20th. Its journey from an eight-page weekly in the 1880s to its current avatar has been a remarkable one with several firsts to its credit. That it has managed to achieve tremendous success despite many odds is thanks in no small measure to the spirit of the founders and the several men who have been at its helm over the course of its journey. The book featured in this issue is a biography of one such person, Kasturiranga Iyengar.

Born in 1859, Kasturiranga Iyengar had his early education in Kumbakonam, before completing his law degree at Presidency College in 1884. On completion of his apprenticeship under the legendary Sir V. Bhashyam Iyengar, Kasturiranga Iyengar rather intriguingly chose

to establish practice in Coimbatore than in Madras. He however established himself as a leading lawyer within a short span of time in the city which was then slowly starting to gain importance.

Kasturiranga Iyengar returned to Madras in 1894 after a successful decade in Coimbatore. Apart from achieving legal success, he had also held several public positions, having been elected to the Coimbatore Municipal Council and the Coimbatore District Board and also being appointed Honorary Magistrate. Even during his apprenticeship, Kasturiranga Iyengar had displayed a keen sense of public-spiritedness. He was one of the founders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1884, a nationalist body which would serve as a platform for Indians to air their grievances and come together to voice their views on matters of social reform.

... AND MORE LOST LANDMARKS

Queen Marians' haunts in the 1930s & 1940s

When I was in the Queen Mary's College hostel, our mode of transport was the man-pulled rickshaw or the tram. Our favourite haunts were Round Tana, which has now changed so much, and, of course, Moore Market, which is no more. It was for us a mall for all seasons!

Our trips to the Round Tana from QMC were by tram. The trams started from *Ice House* (or *Widows' Home*) now called *Vivekananda House*. The conductor rang a bell to denote a stop or a start. The tram dropped us at Round Tana and proceeded down Mount Road to Saidapet. We invariably alighted at Round Tana to see a movie at the Elphinstone. Now that landmark too has disappeared, along with Swadeshi Emporium and

Chellaram's, which was the best place to buy sarees.

The matinee show at Elphinstone Cinema started at 3 p.m. and got over by 5.30 p.m. which would get us to the hostel by 6 p.m. The late show went on till 9 p.m.; this meant we had to have a senior student, called 'chaperone', accompanying us,

where Rabindranath Tagore had staged his play *Chitrangada*. It was Tagore's practice to accompany his theatre unit wherever it travelled. Dressed in flowing robes, he would sit in a corner of the stage and read aloud the play in a rich melodious voice as the action unfolded. But the only problem was that he read in

● Excerpts from 'One Woman's India' by Anna Varki

and a permission slip signed by a member of the staff on duty. We enjoyed *masala dosa*, *badam halwa* and other goodies at the Udupi restaurant across the road.

In those days, Elphinstone Theatre was famous. It was

Bengali. When those of us who had planned to go for the play heard that it was going to be in Bengali, we hesitated, wondering whether to go or not. Father, on learning of our hesitation, encouraged us to go. He said that we would understand and

troubles was the fact that G. Subramania Iyer (who was one of two remaining from the founding group) decided to withdraw from the newspaper, leaving M. Veeraraghavachariar in sole charge. A failed attempt in 1901 at reconstituting the paper as a joint stock company (due to poor public response to the share issue) only made things worse.

It was in these circumstances that Kasturiranga Iyengar decided to purchase the newspaper. It was not a decision that had ready approval of his friends and relatives. Undeterred and placing supreme confidence in the growing popularity of the paper amidst the public, he along with Sir C. Sankaran Nair and T. Rangachari bought the paper for Rs. 75,000 in 1905. Thus began a two-decade association with the paper, one that would end only with his death in 1923.

Kasturiranga Iyengar faced several challenges within a short span of taking over. He lost the services of C. Karunakara Menon, who had been with the paper since the 1880s and had served as its Editor since 1898. M. Veeraraghavachariar, who was serving as its manager and principal administrator too left due to illness. Undeterred by the challenges, Kasturiranga Iyengar brought in his nephew, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, who was a lawyer in Tanjore, as Assistant Editor and manager of the paper and undertook several

(Continued on page 6)



Moore Market of yesteryears.

follow. So we went. I must say it was a rich experience.

Much later, Pandit Ravi Shankar came to the Elphinstone with his orchestra, which used the *jaltarangam*. This was a set of water-filled porcelain bowls, which were arranged in a half-circle, which were struck by bamboo sticks to sound the notes of music, such as *sa re ga ma pa da ni sa*. Uday Shankar was the first to come up with and stage a contemporary Indian ballet. He, his wife Amala and their troupe staged a dance-drama at the Elphinstone.

Next to the theatre was an ice-cream parlour called the Elphinstone Soda Fountain, now replaced by Vasantha, a vegetarian restaurant. The taste of the peach melba ice cream they served is still fresh in my mouth. P Orr and Sons is still there. Khadi Bhandar, which had the pride of place in our hearts during the freedom struggle, was a small shop then; now it is a showroom selling only handspun and handwoven cloths. The present Bata showroom housed the famous Italian restaurant *Bosotto*, well-known for its pastries. The other famous landmark, which has shifted from Mount Road, is the G.K. Vale Studio.

The word 'hanagraph' must sound strange to man today. It was a cubbyhole-sized photo studio that took eight photographs for the cost of a rupee. These photos were slightly bigger than today's passport size photographs. Inside the studio was a table on which you could rest your hands. You could pose with a book or a bouquet of flowers, usually dry flowers kept handy by the owner, or pose with a friend. All these little stores were clustered around Round Tana, where a statue of Annadurai stands today.

Our favourite shopping centre was Moore Market, next to Central Station, where you could get anything under the sun! There were small eating-places where puffs, *pakodas*, *samosas* and cold drinks could be enjoyed. One of the shops had a sign, 'Ready to serve hot pups',

meaning warm baked stuffed pastries. Perfumes in tiny bottles were also available, the hot favourite being 'Evening in Paris' — a tiny dark blue bottle priced at one rupee and four annas. It was a great place for Christmas purchases and second-hand books. Shopping at Spencer's at that time was not considered affordable.

In those days, refrigeration or any kind of cold storage was a dream! Behind Moore Market; there were shops from where you could buy live turkey, goose, and chicken. You could choose the bird and get it prepared for cooking at home for special occasions.

Another landmark, which has disappeared, is 'My Lady's Garden' with a pond alongside, and the Zoo. The Zoo was a favourite picnic spot. We could go boating and enjoy elephant rides!

Those were also the days when the Cooum River was clean and students from Women's Christian College could cross over to Spur Tank Road without sullying themselves and give their blouses to be stitched at their favourite tailor — Jyothi's. Incidentally, the shop is still there, run by the grandchildren! For Queen Marians, their favourite tailor was the humble smiling Naidu, who stitched blouses to perfection from puffed sleeves to leg-of-mutton ones. Started as a one-man outfit in one room, Naidu Hall is, at present, a flourishing business of readymade garments run by his grandchildren, while still maintaining the quality that was Naidu's hallmark!

Apart from the Marina Beach and good old Moore Market, there was the Egmore Railway Refreshment Room. It's a place of which I have fond memories since we could always have a treat there.

The refreshment room used to be a favourite haunt of my father and his journalist buddies. People like the Raja of Pithapuram, the Raja of Kollengode, and others waited in the refreshment room for trains for their

(Continued on page 7)

From India's Digital Archives

— Karthik Bhatt

He nurtured The Hindu's growth



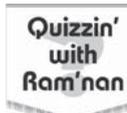
Kasturiranga Iyengar.

even functioning out of the offices of the newspaper. It was but inevitable that Kasturiranga Iyengar too would become associated with the newspaper. Soon after his return from Coimbatore, he was appointed its Legal Advisor in 1895. His association was not confined to his legal capacity, for he was an active contributor to its columns on legal, political and social matters.

While the newspaper started to make its presence felt by being vocal on several issues of national interest, it was far from smooth sailing on its financial front. With little advertisement revenue to fall back on and a small circulation (with a good number of subscribers in arrears), it was largely dependent on the munificence of a few patrons who sympathised with its cause. The death of one such patron, Maharaja of Vizianagaram in 1897 threw the paper into deeper difficulties. Adding to its

It was a successor of sorts to the Madras Native Association, a body that had been founded by Gazulu Lakshminarasu Chetty in 1852 and which had become inactive following his death in 1868.

The *Hindu* had been founded in 1878 by six young men, G. Subramania Iyer, M. Veeraraghavachariar, N. Subba Rau Pantulu, T. T. Rangachariar, P.V. Rangachariar and D. Kesava Rao Pant, all of whom were members of the Triplicane Literary Society. It was started as a journal which would serve as a forum to represent Indian opinion, the lack of which was sorely felt when the British-owned newspapers criticised the appointment of Sir T. Muthuswamy Iyer as Judge of the Madras High Court. With their avowed purposes being similar, the Mahajana Sabha and *The Hindu* began a close association, with the Sabha for sometime



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

1. What major initiative towards financial inclusion was launched by Prime Minister Modi on September 1st with a capital of Rs. 14.35 billion?

2. Who is the author of the recently-released book *Moving On, Moving Forward – A Year in Office?*

3. Who is the newly-elected Pakistani equivalent of Ram Nath Kovind?

4. Name the new index launched jointly by S&P Dow Jones Indices and BSE Ltd to measure the performance of private banks?

5. Which Olympic medallist and former World champion has been signed by BSNL as its brand ambassador?

6. According to a recent Supreme Court ruling, what should be the minimum compensation paid to the survivors of rape and sexual assault?

7. Anshula Kant is the new Managing Director of which public sector bank?

8. The National Rail and Transportation Institute (NRTI), India's first railway varsity, has started operations in which Gujarat city?

9. The 2nd World Hindu Congress, held recently in Chicago, was organised to mark the 125th anniversary of which speech in that city?

10. In which South Indian city has Samsung opened the world's largest mobile experience centre?

11. What was the original name of the now non-existent stretch on the Marina that was called *Seerani Arangam*?

12. Which educational institution has the Fyson clock, named after a former principal and eminent botanist?

13. What first do C.N. Thamotharanpillai and Caroll Visuvanathapillai have in the context of education in the City?

14. Who gifted the Queen Victoria bronze found in the University of Madras complex?

15. The stretch from the Phoenix Mall junction towards the Vijaya Nagar bus terminus in Velachery has been renamed after which religious figure?

16. What structure was built by the Franciscan monk Pedro de Atongia in 1516?

17. Which saint's shrine is in front of the temple flag-mast at the Kapaleeswarar Temple?

18. What establishment in Mylapore was founded in 1905 by the cousins C. Ramaswamy Aiyangar and C. Ramanujachari?

19. Name the library of Carnatic Music established by a German, Ludwig Pesch, in 1980.

20. Which popular shop for silks and apparels started off as RKT (Thiruvengadam Chettiar) Bros.?

(Answers on page 8)

Rickshaw bandhan

That sooner or later a person gets sentimentally attached to the animal that carries him safely is exemplified by the caring pat a cowboy would give his animal on its flanks after dismounting. Lochinvar would have embraced its neck, after he rode into the wedding venue and galloped away abducting his fair lady Helen betrothed to a misfit.

However, long after all such horses had ridden into the sunset, we had in reality buses, cars

women washed the dirty linen of the area not in public but within closed premises. Two to three donkeys, the beasts of burden, would always stand as sentinels outside, their shaggy heads bent, lost in asinine meditation. Surly one used to bray whenever I passed their haunt. A surly kickass!

Once, I was surprised to see a rickshaw parked near uncle's gate. I knew he was against the concept of a man pulling another man. Or men carrying

● by J.S. Raghavan
Sketch by Aras

and trams in Madras to ride – plus horse driven carriages, called *jutkas*. Also as cheap means of transport, rickshaws pulled by men.

During summer recess, I used to visit my uncle in Mylapore. He was staying in a rented house in Oliver Road, (now Musiri Subramnian street) adjacent to Vivekananda College. A *vaman thurai* was nearby, where men and

devotees in *dollies* uphill for worship. Then why this rickshawman who was wiry with curly hair, smelling strongly of a combo of arrack, beedi and honest sweat here? I learnt that his name was Palani and he cleared the mystery before long.

No, *ayya* will not travel in his or any rickshaw. No way. But it was meant for *amma*, who gave Carnatic music lessons to girls in the area of marriageable age.



She had a divine voice and so was very much in demand. As a clincher, the wedding of most of the girls who took lessons from her, got fixed within a very short time after the start of the first lesson, much to the delight and relief of the girls' parents.

I heard that If uncle had to go with his wife for any function in the neighbourhood, Auntie would travel in the rickshaw gracefully, like a reigning monarch, while Uncle, a tall sturdy man with long legs would briskly walk alongside, making Palani, puff and huff, to keep pace with him.

On a rainy night, when Aunt had to go to the hospital, the trio made hurried progress. But lo and behold, the right wheel climbed over a small boulder

and careened. My aunt, despite her bulk, embarrassedly picked herself up unhurt, from the river sand mound. But Palani had twisted his ankle.

There were no street lights. It was drizzling. My uncle, an action king, brought the situation under control. He picked up Palani and carefully deposited him in the rickshaw. And started pulling the vehicle to the doctor's clinic, a street away, unmindful of the protests of the horrified Palani. 'Agreed, I will not ride in a hand-pulled rickshaw. Never did I tell say will not pull one,' he told startled Auntie.

After Palani's ankle healed, Uncle gave him a brand new cycle rickshaw so he would need only to pedal. Not pull.

He nurtured The Hindu

(Continued from page 5)

measures to put the paper on a strong financial footing. The pages were increased, which brought in more advertising revenue and arrears in subscription were dealt with by stopping supply of the paper to defaulters. On the news front, he subscribed to Reuters and appointed more correspondents in mofussil and North Indian centres. Under the stewardship of Kasturiranga Iyengar, *The Hindu* grew to become one of the country's leading newspapers, not afraid of taking on Governors and public servants and championing several public causes, most notable amongst them being the Arbuthnot bank crash and its fallout. In many ways, it became the hub of political activity in Madras, which earned it the sobriquet "a den of conspirators" in bureaucratic circles.

The book, written by V.K. Narasimhan who was the Deputy Editor of *The Hindu*, was published in November 1963 as a part of the Builders of Modern India series. The series was an initiative of the Publications Division of the Government of India that dates to the 1920s. In its own words, the ob-

jective of the series is the publication of short biographies of eminent people who have been instrumental in the national renaissance and the freedom movement. Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer has written the foreword to this book, which is a fascinating profile of the life and times of a multifaceted personality.



Till October 28: *Paradise Lost* – an exhibition of paintings by Adam Khan.

Adam is a British artist who lives and works from Kodaikanal. As a backpack traveller in his twenties he travelled to most parts of the world and then from Uganda he landed in Bombay, and finally fell in love with Kodaikanal and settled there permanently. He created his own garden and all his works are inspired by the pristine beauty of his garden. He is also the examiner for the arts department in the Kodai international school (at DakshinaChitra, Muttukadu, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.)

Waiting for a City Council

(Continued from page 1)

In August this year, the High Court expressed its annoyance once again. The Tamil Nadu Government's self-imposed deadline of January 2018 for completion of the delimitation exercise had come and gone and there was no news. The Election Commission has responded by stating that it can issue an election notification within three months of the State Government notifying the newly delimited wards and constituencies. The EC has said it needs a minimum of 90 days to finalise electoral rolls in line with the new bounds. That is quite understandable. What is not is the State Government's delaying the notifying of the delimitation exercise. Clearly, it is not keen on holding civic polls. In the meanwhile, it has been quite content, through a series of Bills, to extend the tenures of Special Officers administering the various civic bodies in the State. The present extension takes the tenures to end December 2018.

How does all this delay affect us? It may not be so apparent and many go around claiming that they would rather have a

bureaucrat in charge of the city than a bunch of corrupt councillors. Sadly, not many know that the release of funds from the Finance Commission for various civic projects is dependent on their being an elected body in place.

The laws forbid the Finance Commission from funding States where provisions for electing local bodies are not in place. The State Government is arguing that the stipulation is only that laws ought to be in place and it is not mandated that election to local bodies ought to be held as well. The Finance Commission has however begged to differ. The result? Around Rs 3,800 crores has been withheld from the State for various municipal and rural projects.

And, so, the next time you notice that the roads in your area have not been laid for long or that the parks are collapsing for want of maintenance, or that the local health centre lacks basic medicine, you know where the problem is – lack of an elected body. And no seasoned bureaucrat can do anything about it.

Self-driving – yesterday and tomorrow

A memorable scene in the 1963 Tamil movie *Paar Magale Paar* features Cho Ramaswamy who makes his screen debut as ‘Mechanic’ Madasamy. As a teen, this character had run away to the Tamil capital, where besides freedom, he also tasted special buns from McRennett bakery and *chai* from Irani tea shops. We meet the young man in the portico of a bungalow in Madurai, the home of an industrialist (played by a pipe-smoking Sivaji Ganesan).

Now, the mechanic doesn’t think much of the rich man’s mini-fleet and says so, bluntly, in *Madras-bashai*. He even attributes a car’s sorry state to the car owner’s “self-driving.” The Sivaji character looks like he is about to have a fit. Still, he needs a skilled person to drive his college-going daughters around. When they chime in to say that the mechanic appears to be a “witty fellow,” he hires Madasamy on the spot.

Self-driving cars, autonomous vehicles that ferry people and goods around without a human at the wheel, have been in the news a lot lately. But in southern India, “self-driving” used to mean you drove your own automobile, you didn’t need the services of a chauffeur. Back in the days of black-and-white movies, the self-driving woman was a rare sight on Indian roads. Such a woman may have been regarded as a person in charge of her own destiny – an object of envy.

My mother, who was a college student in the Madras of

the 1960s, was very much in awe of any woman, who could take the wheel. Though she had taught herself to ride a cycle and pedaled to classes, driving lessons had been out of the question. This was a pity because she had a wonderful sense of direction and could comfortably navigate the streets of the city. I can see her fixing a flat tyre in a pinch. She came from a family of engineers and worked well with her hands. Although she didn’t say it, I sensed that she wanted me to join the ranks of self-driving women.

When my father, an accountant, said, “You should be always in the driver’s seat,” he only meant it figuratively. Take

● by
Vijaysree Venkatraman

charge of your life was the idea. On the daily commute, we were both happy passengers. He was content to sit back and pore over work-related papers. Ditto for me, except I took the train or the bus and read works of fiction. Following the plot of a sci-fi trilogy or reading a Sanskrit play in the original was so much easier than having to focus on the chaotic roads ahead.

As a graduate student in the United States — land of great distances — I finally signed up for driving lessons. On the narrow streets of Boston, former cow-paths, I did my best to

avoid moving objects (pedestrians, pets, and vehicles) and standing ones (utility poles, trees, and parked cars). My driving instructor, who chatted away on his cellphone, would spring to action just before I did anything catastrophic, so all was well. I got my license on my second attempt.

My driving licence was of no use when I was back in Chennai to visit family. The chauffeur-driven Ambassador, a perk from my father’s office days, was long gone. Public transit was unreliable. I could hire a call taxi, if I planned to be out all day; there was the auto-rickshaw for shorter rides. Most evenings I would be stuck at home, because I didn’t want to deal with stress-inducing transit options. The engagements column in *The Hindu* listed fun events in various parts of the city. “All are welcome,” most said, but if I could not get to these venues by myself, the events might as well be happening in Timbuktu.

When ride-hailing apps like Uber and Ola came along, the city came alive for me. I suspect this is true for some other women as well. It is not that Chennai suddenly became a happening city in the last five years or so. It is just that we now have a safe and convenient way to get to events that interest us. In theory, we can now go where we want, when we want to. Accessibility is no longer an issue.

Even so, I can’t wait for self-driving cars to hit the roads. The world over, automakers are now testing prototypes. The current versions expect the human to take over in tricky situations – if there is an accident ahead or if there is construction going on, for instance. So, it could be a while before we have fully-autonomous cars, but imagine: cars that park themselves, no chatty cabbie, no worrying about the motives of the driver.

Perhaps self-driving cars, law-abiding robots, will only work in utopian cities where people, both pedestrians and drivers, obey the rules of the road. It may be difficult to programme them to ply in congested roads where nimble vehicles try to squeeze through gaps to get ahead. Here in Chennai, humans might stomp the robots and bring them to a complete standstill in many instances.

Driverless cars may simply not be a possibility here. But the backseat of the Uber or Ola is a good place to sit back and dream of fanciful things. Isn’t that how humans have progressed through the ages – through advances in technology and a bit of wishful thinking?

Memories of Chetpet

There’s a buzz in the air around the plans for an underground station that will emerge at Chetpet. Drilling for soil testing has already begun at one end of the Chetpet Bridge, leading to speculations as to whether the tunnels will burrow under the Cooum or over it.

We shall soon be told. With that, one more slice of the old Harrington Road habitat will disappear. Hurrah! I am all for progress.

Except on a misty rain drenched morning when memories rise over a steaming cup of tea. I think of the ever-popular Hansa Stores and its owner who was simply referred to as the Hansa Stores Man. He looked after the needs of scores of schoolboys studying at nearby Madras Christian College school. He kept the flakiest of fresh mutton patties behind a glass cabinet that he served on paper plates with a dollop of what was then a great delicacy, Kissan’s tomato ketchup. Sometimes you could get a gentle whiff of the fresh bakery bread from CVK Bros. opposite. It was certainly the softest whitest bread you could buy. It was hand-wrapped in grey-white unglazed paper, with a double crease on the top. If you were competitive you always tried to prize the button of the label that was stamped with the initials and baked on top before the others did.

● by **Geeta Doctor**

I am reminded of the old Post Office that used to be where the KRM Centre, Shoppers Stop and all the other offices now loom. My ageing father’s daily routine was to walk across the road, umbrella in hand and have a chat with the Postmaster.

It might have been for a simple task like buying an inland post cover or to send a money order. To do this he had to navigate a treacherous terrain occupied by the local cows and buffaloes lying in the pools of muddy water. It was a bovine beauty parlour. For sitting on their back, clad in white plumes, like beauticians, the visiting egrets used their long beaks to pluck at the ticks and mites hiding behind the buffalo ears. The mites themselves were a busy lot. The red rain bugs called “Velvetu poochi” by the locals, usually surfaced to breakfast on termites and ran around in circles searching for a bargain. The mounds of decomposing cow dung were the favorite coffee bars for the more sophisticated crowd of Sulphur yellow butterflies. The clouds of horse flies competed for a bit of liquid dung circling around the flapping tails of the cows. Shiny blue-green beetles searched for tree barks into which they drilled holes to lay their eggs. There was a whole community of living creatures that co-existed in that green space.

I was reminded of them once again when we cut down the branches of an over-grown Drumstick tree just before the rain. Suddenly the local women from the village appeared and foraged for the leaves, the white drumstick flowers and the pods. I remember how the older women would come after the rain and collect all manner of leaves and pods, stems and buds from the wild flowers and herbs that had sprouted from the pavements outside our house. Each one of these they explained had a medicinal property and would be dried and powdered, if not cooked that very day.

Today, of course we have paved them with cement and stone. Progress, like a blade of grass, is a double-edged thing. It cuts and heals.

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Queen Marians’ haunts in the 1930s and 40s

(Continued from page 5)

respective onward journeys. Others who spent time here were not always travellers but just those who wanted a place to eat or meet. A bottle of beer cost eight annas. Sixteen annas made a rupee, so one rupee was a precious amount, especially for journalists, who were poorly paid.

Father used to take us for treats at the Railway Refreshment Room. We looked forward to devouring the sponge cake and lemonade, and enjoyed spending time watching the trains pull into the sta-

tion, the people boarding and alighting, the guard blowing the whistle or waving a green flag, and the train steaming out.

The English breakfast consisted of two fried eggs, bacon and coffee, and it was all really expensive. There was a four-course English lunch that included soup, a fish dish, a meat dish and dessert. You couldn’t just eat with a fork! Strict dining etiquette was followed, with each piece of cutlery meant for a specific purpose. A great favourite (which now may be termed ‘Anglo-Indian’) was Rice and Curry and the famous Mulligatawny soup.

He recorded South India for Government

● **Linnaeus Tripe's life as a photographer peaked when he served as the Government Photographer in Madras, between 1857 and 1860.**

Linnaeus was born to Cornelius and Mary Tripe of Plymouth Dock, Devon (now, Davenport) in 1822. He came to India, preferring a career overseas, and enlisted as an ensign in the Madras army (specifically the Madras Native Infantry) in 1839. He was promoted as a lieutenant in 1840 and as a captain in 1851. He got interested in photography when he was training as an officer cadet. His proficiency in photography impressed the government, and consequently he was appointed as the official photographer at the British Mission to the Court of Ava (Burma). What necessitated the creation of a new position of a photographer at that time?

The Second Anglo-Burmese war of 1852 ended with the British annexation of Pegu and occupation of Rangoon.

Dalhousie, the Governor General in Calcutta, required King Mindon Min of Burma to sign a treaty recognising annexation. Government of India established a Mission office in Upper Burma in 1855 with Arthur Phayre as the Commissioner of Pegu Province and Henry Yule as the Secretary of the Mission. Further to a diplomatic objective, the Mission was keen on extracting detailed information on this region. Dalhousie considered that a visual record of the journey would convey a better idea of the natural features of Burma than a written report and that "sketches of the people and of cities and palaces would give a life and interest to the future report of the Mission". Colesworthy Grant, an artist in Calcutta was selected to go the Pegu Mission and create artworks of the region. Since photographs were becoming popular, Linnaeus Tripe, who by then showed talent in taking photographs, also was commissioned as the

official photographer by Dalhousie.

Tripe hardly spent 40 days in Upper Burma, because of health setbacks. Nonetheless, during his stay in Upper Burma, he travelled on the Irrawaddy to Amarapura, and made close to 200 lightly albumenised salt prints from large wax-paper negatives (10" x 13"; 260 x 345 mm). On return to India, he

● by
Dr. A. Raman
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was able to create a portfolio of selected 120 calotype prints of Upper Burma. Some of Tripe's images made in Burma can be viewed in the website: <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/24634/lot/116/>. No document indicates the type of a camera Tripe may have used. Most probably it was a large 'daguerreotype camera' which was built using wood (or metal) with bellows from the lens to the glass plate. Alternately, it could have been custom-built.

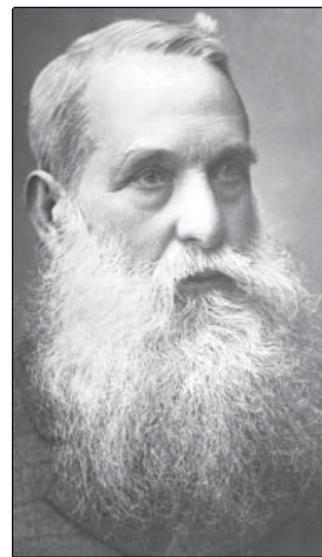
At the *Madras Exhibition of Raw products, Arts and Manufacture of South India 1855*, in the section 'Photography, Lithography, Painting, etc.' Tripe won the first class medal for his photographs of the temple towers and precincts of Halebedu and Belur (*Photographic view of the temple of Hallebede and Baelloor*), which were created scientifically and

imaginatively. Alexander Hunter, the Founder-President of the Madras Photographic Society (MPS), established in 1857, comments on the items submitted by Tripe at the Madras Exhibition (1855),

"... the best series of photographic views on paper is exhibited by Captain Tripe. It consists of 68 large pictures 21" x 14", taken from the Jain temples and ruins of Hallebede and Baelloor in Mysore. The majority of these are clear, sharp, and well defined in details, proving that great care has been taken to obtain the correct focus."

Andrew Charles Brisbane Neill attached to the Madras Medical Establishment was another avid photographer of Tripe's time. Neill accompanied Tripe to Halebedu and Belur.

Tripe used the then state-of-the-art 'calotype process' (also known as Talbotype) first developed by William Henry Fox Talbot. The calotype process involved the treatment of a quality paper with light-sensitive silver compounds before exposure in the camera. The realised image was then developed using the sensitiser, viz., gallo-nitrate of silver (a compound consisting of silver nitrate, acetic acid, gallic acid, and distilled water) and fixed. The calotype negative process underwent improvements in the 1850s and photographers applied warm wax to the developed negative to improve printing transparency and re-



Linnaeus Tripe.

duce visibility of paper fibres, which was used by Tripe. We cannot say that all of his photographs were the best, but given the circumstances and technicalities then available, their compositions were good.

Tripe taught the calotype process to the employees of the Public Works Department and the collodion process to pupils at the Madras School of Industrial Arts. He was a member of the Madras Photographic Society and explained periodically the then new advancements made in photography to other members of MPS.

Tripe's assignment as the Government Photographer ended in 1859. He sold his cameras and other instruments to a Captain Wincon and P. Orr. He gave away the furniture, chemicals, and accessories to the MPS and returned to the 12th Madras Native Infantry. He retired in 1875 as a Colonel. No records exist whether he made any photographs between 1860 and 1875. He returned to Devon and died in 1902.

Answers to Quiz

1. India Post Payment Bank, 2. Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, 3. Arif Alvi, 4. S&P BSE Private Banks Index, 5. M.C. Mary Kom, 6. Rs. 4 lakh, 7. SBI, 8. Vadodara, 9. Swami Vivekananda's speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions, 10. Bengaluru.

* * *

11. Tilak Ghat (Thilakar Thidal), 12. Presidency College, 13. They are considered the first graduates of the University of Madras, 14. Gode Narayana Gajapathi Raju, Zamindar of Visakhapatnam, 15. Guru Nanak, 16. Luz Church, dedicated to Our Lady of Light, 17. Gnanasambandar, 18. The Students' Home for destitute boys adjacent to the RKM Vivekananda College, 19. Sampradaya, 20. Rasi Silks.

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