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MADRAS MESSAGES

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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Elevated road, threat to Cooum?

● by The Editor

The elevated road corridor from Maduravoyal to the Harbour back in the news. A Committee recently reviewed progress on the project with particular reference to the issues of land acquisition.

Earlier in the year, it was decided that the road, planned originally for four lanes, will now be expanded to six. With all this, it appears that the project will take off once more, five years after it was stalled ostensibly for environmental reasons while it was an open secret that the actual cause was political. The story then given out was that the piers for the elevated road were being erected on the Cooum riverbed. This, the Government elected to power in 2011, was unwilling to proceed with and the project was shelved. Now, with the same Party in power, the idea has been revived. As to what happened to concerns regarding the river nobody has a clue.

The project, originally estimated at Rs 1,800 crore, had two major heads of expenditure – construction on the actual roadway at Rs 1,345 crore and the balance to be spent on resettling around 7,000 families

(Continued on page 2)



Towers to nowhere on the Cooum River bed. (Photo by R. Raja Pandiyan.)



A vision by night, now much in demand by day (see page 8). (Photo: R. Raja Pandiyan.)

When political parties take over citizens' spaces

Misuse of public surface and aerial space and walls is taking place right in front of our eyes every day. Those responsible are shopkeepers, vendors, bus and truck owners and householders restricting usable road space, preventing safe pedestrian use of pavements, clogging drains and causing road accidents. In the list of offenders, the self-authorized abuse of public facilities by political parties is reserved for special mention for the scale and audacity of their virtual take-over of the City unmindful of the hardship to citizens.

Recently, we saw the chaos created by a political function – citing which is not to cast re-

lection on the eminence of the political personality whose memory was being honoured. By someone's count 138 hoardings were erected on a kilometre stretch on the arterial road of Chennai through which all traffic incoming and outgoing has necessarily to go through. The hoardings were grouted on the platforms forcing poor pedestrians to walk nervously close to the edge of busy Anna Salai to avoid being run over and to escape the adventurous driving styles of State Transport drivers who have declared their independence long ago. To enhance the celebratory ambience even further, hundreds of hoardings, thousands of flags and festoons were erected all over the city by Party functionaries vying with each other in number, size and colour as a measure of loyalty to their leadership. All this, in the face of the Court declaring such use of public space as illegal.

Commandeering public spaces and facilities by political parties is not limited to special occasions. We see multi-coloured graffiti on public walls in most streets. They occupy the whole wall surface, stretch-

ing across 30-40 feet, eulogising the qualities of head and heart of the leader. We are happy to have such leaders taking charge of our destinies which, they think, is more than enough to compensate us for losing spotlessly walled streets. Who pays

Mass meetings at the apex level for birthdays and anniversaries could be substituted by manageable gatherings spread over district centres whereby, in fact, the message would be more effectively disseminated.

One mass meeting of a lakh or two for mere demonstration of strength is at heavy social cost. Announcements of meetings can be made in newspapers instead of obstructive hoardings and arches. Meetings should be outside peak hours.

Areas subject to large-scale ingress and egress should be avoided for large gatherings. Meetings near schools, colleges and hospitals should not be permitted. Under no circumstances should pedestrian conveniences be compromised.

Nor are political parties the only "culprits". Construction of pandals spanning the road in front of temples at festival, *namaz* on roads and blaring microphones at all times of the day from these sources are going unchecked.

Irresponsible intrusions into the citizens' rightful space, perhaps, is the main reason why Tamil Nadu is at the top in All

● by A Special Correspondent

for cleaning up the ugly graffiti and repainting? Most often the unclean walls are not restored and the question of paying for it is not allowed to arise.

Use of public space is necessary for expressing ideological beliefs and messages in a democracy but this needs to be balanced against the cost to citizens in terms of safety, convenience, ease of movement, speed in coping with emergencies, diverted traffic, missed flights, lost opportunities, adverse effect on pollution and so on. Hundreds of hoardings, huge arches and cut-outs and flags are traffic hazards and should be prohibited altogether.

(Continued on page 8)

ELEVATED ROAD THREAT

(Continued from page 1)

and 500 business entities that were likely to be displaced. Spanning 19km, the project when completed was expected to cut commute time for containers and lorries bound for the harbour from anywhere up to 4 hours to just 30 minutes. Repeated delays in the project have however meant that the cost has escalated. The recent decision to expand the road width to six lanes has also impacted plans. The revised cost is expected to be Rs 3,500 crore. The National Highways Authority of India, which is the agency to execute this project, as been pushing for it relentlessly ever since the plan was shelved. Everyone has expressed happiness at the resurrection of the scheme.

What is not clear, however, is as to how the ground reality as far as the Cooum is concerned, has changed. Around two kilometres of the river from Chetput downwards were originally to be the worst impacted. A casual drive down the river in Egmore will reveal several pillars erected on the riverbed, with rusting steel rods sticking out of them. This was the original route, and it came in handy for a newly elected State Government looking for ways and means of cancelling any project closely associated with the previous one. It is interesting that it is the same party that is still

in power and is yet keen to revive the shelved scheme.

It is learnt that the Indian Institute of Technology has given a new alignment for the road by the side of the river and with this, piers, around 650 of them, will be on the riverbank and not on the river bed. It has since also been announced that with the new alignment, there will be no necessity to seek coastal regulation zone (CRZ) clearances, as the river will no longer be affected. What is puzzling is the lack of clarity on what exactly is the new alignment.

Those who have the interests of Chennai's waterways, such as they are, at heart, are concerned at this lack of transparency. It is not all that far back in time that the Mass Rapid Transport System (MRTS) was erected on the Buckingham Canal, thereby finishing off that waterway for good. All talks of its revival ever since have been hollow claims. It has also resulted in several areas becoming permanently prone to flooding each time it rains. If the same blunder is to be made with the Cooum, many more parts of the city can come under water and it could be the making of a first-rate ecological disaster. It is to be hoped that the powers-that-be make their plans transparent, and, more importantly, do a realistic assessment before jumping into the construction.

Thank you, Donors

We today, publish donations received with thanks for the period upto October 11th.

– The Editor

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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

Public Service, Chennai Style

Mylapore, which to *The Man from Madras Musings* is the centre of the universe, becomes quite unapproachable during the festival of nine nights aka Navaratri. Doll sellers occupy the pavements, such as they are, and set up displays of their wares. The civic authorities, who in MMM's view, consider our street widths to be elastic and, therefore, capable of expanding at will to accommodate all demands for space, make no effort to restrict traffic around the four Mada streets during this season, or, for that matter, at any other time of the year. As a consequence, vehicles of all kinds jostle for space with an increased number of pedestrians, who in turn stop at every doll-seller's stall and slow down movement. Tempers run high and the language used is rich to a degree.

During such occasions, MMM does not add to the chaos by driving to Mylapore. He prefers to walk to and from the place. The distance between chez MMM and the

stowing dirty looks at the owner of the stalled car. As for the pedestrians, MMM did notice a couple of them taking photos on their cell phones of MMM pushing the car, but beyond that there was no help forthcoming. The cake was taken by a man who came close and then helpfully advised MMM that his effort would bear more fruit if he placed his hands differently on the car's boot. Having said that, he walked away, leaving MMM to toil.

MMM pushed the car all the way to the end of the road where there was sufficient space to park it. The grateful owner thanked MMM profusely and then went off to look for a mechanic, even as MMM trudged home. He had never realised that pushing a car was so difficult.

Having come home, MMM was received by his good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed, and she queried the reason for MMM's dishevelled appearance. MMM told her all, fully expecting a word of praise for his public

rich musical history. One of the group was a talented and professional singer and he was asked to sing a song that had been composed 400 years earlier at the same shrine. He had barely launched into the composition when along came a guard and said that UNESCO rules forbid singing of songs at protected sites. MMM knew this was not true, but he chose not to argue. The group moved to a place in the open and the song was duly sung.

The next port of call was a picturesque spot and one of the group being a talented artist, began to sketch the sight. Mind you, it was just a small notepad, and not an easel on a stand or any such thing. But who should come along but a security guard to state that no sketching was permitted as per ASI rules in protected monuments. Some others were busy with their cameras and were told that no photography was permitted either. It was a wonder that we were allowed to even walk about the place. MMM could not

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

temple is not exactly short, but then it is not really all that far either. And, so, it happened recently, MMM walked to Mylapore, and his work there having concluded, walked back. An added bonus was that he could take a good look at the dolls being sold. The wares this year were, however, disappointing in the extreme.

Having brooded on the general decline in quality, MMM walked on, and presently left Mylapore. A short distance away there was quite a bit of chaos. Traffic had come to a standstill. Cars were hooting angrily. Fortunately for everyone, this was a thoroughfare into which buses could not come and so those brute vehicles were not added to an already heady mix. The epicentre of all this was a stalled car and standing next to it, wringing his hands in helplessness, was a man whom MMM knew. He was trying to explain by word and gesture that he needed the vehicle to be pushed and that help was not exactly forthcoming. MMM immediately bounded in and offered to push. This was accepted with alacrity and the man got into his vehicle.

And so there was MMM, in full evening dress, pushing a fairly large car along the road. The vehicles behind, after a final hoot or two, moved on, but not before be-

service. On the contrary, the good lady clicked her tongue censoriously. If she had been in MMM's place, said She Who Must Be Obeyed, she would have sat in the car and steered it while the owner pushed. Did it not even occur to MMM, she asked. Truly, it had not. Which is why MMM is MMM and his good lady is She Who Must Be Obeyed.

List of Don'ts

The Man from Madras Musings, his good lady and several others have just returned from a tour of several heritage spots in a State that is forever in a stage of war with our State over the river that connects us both. On the itinerary was the City of Victory, once capital of a great empire that included all of our State, but now a ruin, albeit maintained very well thanks to the UNESCO World Heritage status that it enjoys.

It was a spot where every prospect pleased, but alas, as the poem goes, only man was vile. The attendants in charge of each of the monuments, all of them in the employ of the Archaeological Survey of India, had devised their own set of rules on what could be done and, more importantly, what could not be done at these monuments.

MMM and friends had seated themselves in the courtyard of a temple with a

help wondering as to why, despite so much of security, many of the monuments were disfigured with graffiti.

If this is the way the ASI hopes to attract visitors to its monuments, it had better do some serious rethinking. MMM can understand restrictions on photography, for usage of flash can affect paintings in particular. But what can the possible objection be to sketching and/or singing?

Tailpiece

Red Alert they said, heavy rains they declared and having done all that, they also announced that the monsoon was arriving a fortnight earlier. It amazes *The Man from Madras Musings* that the weather forecasters could have got it so wrong in this time and age. It stayed dry, and there is no sign of the monsoon either. Not everyone complained by the way – the schools played it safe by closing down in anticipation of the floods. And, our Corporation, having just announced that we were ready for deluges of all kinds, even while everyone knew that the ground reality was otherwise, heaved a sigh of relief and went back to its state of rest. Of course we do not know what the next week will bring.

–MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Greens of Madras

The natural history came in Geeta Doctor's 'Memories of Chetpet' was excellent. It ties in neatly with my experience when I was out on a morning walk – not in Chetpet but T. Nagar – and saw a woman picking some pavement greens. What she was gathering was the leaf of the “musumusukai” plant. Great to beat phlegm in kids, I was told. She also asked me to feel the leaf – its was burry, not smooth like spinach. The berry of this plant is also supposed to have some medicinal use.

I googled the plant up. Its botanical name is *Mukia/ cucumis maderaspatana*. The “maderaspatana” simply refers to the fact that that is where they were first described. Madras being one of the earliest East India Company bases in India, so much early plant collecting was done there from the 1690s onward, Henry Noltie of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh tells me. They are not endemics, as I was hoping. Even so, I was thrilled by the name.

So yes, what do we lose when we lose the commons to concrete structures other than interesting roadside greens?

This is something to think about, as the writer points out.

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The reasons why

The State govt., meaning ADMK, does not want to

hold local body elections because of the vertical split in the party. The local leaders at the Ward level have changed their loyalties. Hence those now in power do not know who will canvass for whom and they have no idea how the people will vote. It is a risk. Because it is the same local councillors who have to get them their MP & MLA votes! Point number 2: Even though there are no elected representatives in the local bodies, low level bureaucrats like Executive Officers are being advised and aided actively by the erstwhile councillors & chairmen of the defunct local govts to make the usual amounts of money from contracts and illegal businesses NOT TO WORRY !

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Nilgris reps

An interestingly different kind of a role played by Kasturiranga Iyengar (MM, October 1) in the social annals of the Nilgris is not known to many. While regularly holidaying during summer in the hills, his close friend happened to be R.K. Shanmugam Chetty of Coimbatore. In the wake of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of the Indian Government, the Nilgris was created as a separate legislative constituency in 1921. Iyengar made use of the opportunity and his influence to project R.K. Shan-

mugam Chetty “as the only suitable candidate” to contest from the Nilgris and lobbied for him.

The native candidate happened to be H.J. Bellie Gowder, an efficient public works contractor

who also successfully completed the construction upto Coonoor (1899) of the now famous UNESCO heritage-branded Nilgiri Mountain Railway. He was a tireless champion of all the indigenous folk and a Badaga headman. A largely self-taught man, Bellie Gowder put up a tough, spirited fight against Iyengar's protegee Shanmugam Chetty but lost the election nonetheless by a slender margin.

As well known, Shanmugam Chetty's entrance into the Madras legislature from the Nilgris gradually led him to greater heights. Bellie Gowder, undeterred by his defeat continued to play a distinguished role in the subaltern history of the Nilgris (was made Rao Bahadur, 1930). His son H.B. Ari Gowder (a long-time legislator in later times) rose to be a notable votary of the Justice Party and has a road named after him in Madras (albeit incorrectly as Arya Gowda Road).

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The Nilgris

Deep-sea fishing along Madras coast

The article on deep-sea fishing along the Madras coast that appeared in MM, September 1st and 16th, jogged my memory on fishing and related sectors developing as an industry in the Madras Presidency in the early decades of the 20th Century. Some details, which could interest the readers of MM, are given below.

The Madras Fisheries Department (MFD) was considered a ‘model’ department for its contemporaries in other Presidencies of India because of the highly advanced methods, the Madras marine fishermen used in drying fish and preparing fish oil and fish manure. Consequently close to 250 small fish-oil factories existed along the Madras coast, run and managed by the fishermen themselves. Commercial production of high-quality tinned and cured fish was regularly demonstrated at MFD.

The Indian Industrial Commission Report (1916-1918) submitted by the Holland Commission (T.H. Holland, A. Chatterton, Fazhulbhoj Currimbhoj Ebrahim, Edward Hopkinson, C.E. Low, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Rajendra Nath Mukherjee, Horace Curzon Plunkett, F.H. Stewart, and Dorabji Jamestji Tata) indicates the following: ‘Indian fisheries (especially deep-sea fisheries) have been neglected, except in the case of Madras, and their possibilities should be developed by properly equipped Fisheries Departments; And again “The (Madras) Fisheries Department deserves even fuller support from Government, especially in the further development of deep-sea fishing’, wherein the segment”... except in the case of Madras’ requires our close attention”.

In 1917, the staff at the Madras Fisheries Department (MFD) consisted of two Europeans, marine and piscicultural experts, and three Indians: (1) an oil and soap chemist, (2) an assistant to the piscicultural expert, and (3) an Assistant Director (AD). The AD was a highly educated affluent with European scientific training, who came from a socially marginalised family. MFD was headed by an Honorary Director. I could track down the names of the officers listed above. The Honorary Director

was Frederick Nicholson, the piscicultural expert was H.C. Wilson (who died sometime in 1916 or 1917), the marine biology expert was James Hornell, the assistant to H.C. Wilson was B. Sundararaj, the Assistant Director was V. Govindan, and the soap & oil chemist was A.K. Menon.

The Indian Industrial Commission Report (1916-1918) commends the Madras Fisheries Department: ‘Scientific ichthyologists should be added to The Zoological Survey.’ Very likely this was the stimulus for the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) in Calcutta to set up the Marine Biological Station (MBS) in San Thomé, Madras, sometime later (1950s?). At this juncture, it is useful to recall the yeoman service done to the science of Southern-Indian fisheries by Ambat Gopalan Kutty Menon (popularly known as AGK) and Krishnan C. Jayaram (KCJ), who served the ZSI — MBS for more than two decades.

The MFD included two highly specialist offices (referred as branches) in 1916-1917: Pearl and Chank Branch Office and Tanur Experimental Station (TES). The Pearl and Chank branch was headed by Hornell. Chank harvesting occurred all along the eastern coast from Madras to Cape Comorin (Kanniyakumari), while the pearl harvesting was confined to Tuticorin. TES went through an intense metamorphosis over time. In 1916-1917 it was an experimental cannery for producing marketable fish. However, by 1940, it transformed into a rigorous research department. During this time, TES collaborated with the Nutrition Research Laboratories (NRL) at Coonoor and investigated the nutritional benefits of fish products. One of their – combined – major findings was the plentiful availability of vitamin A in Indian shark – and sawfish liver oils. This research finding was a breakthrough since at this time, Europe was reeling under the pressure of World War II, which stopped the supply of cod-liver oil from Norway. The finding made at TES in collaboration with NRL Coonoor is remarkable.

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● Pavithra's Perspective



View of the Chennai Harbour, Royapuram

The very name conjured up a vision of thugs, rowdies, straggling streets, murders, mayhem and a whole host of horrors in my adolescence. My friends swore up and down that they'd witnessed blood running down the narrow alleys; my teachers warned me never to approach the place and even the movies I saw did nothing to dispel the notion.

Until one evening, sometime in the early 2000s, when I happened to attend a lecture on Madras's famous murders by Randor Guy – in said Royapuram. Lightning flashed, thunder rumbled and the lights went out as I listened, slack-jawed, as Aalavandhar's decapitated head was buried on the beach. By the time the lecture ended and I emerged from within the venue (a schoolroom) and into a narrow alley myself – my perception had changed. Suddenly, Royapuram seemed not a nest of thieves, a hive of scum and villainy (so eloquently put by Obi-Wan Kenobi in Star Wars) but a quaint, much-maligned place with more soul and stories than I could've ever imagined.

I returned home, passing along the Royapuram over-bridge which offers a view of the railway station (built in 1853) on one side, and a stunning panoramic perspective of the Chennai harbour on the other – a harbour which is, quite literally, the nerve-center of the city. And I marvelled that I'd shut my eyes to the beauty of it all, thus far.

Not anymore. Since then, I've visited Royapuram dozens of times. The over-bridge remains one of my favourite haunts; the view still riveting.

Details about the miniature: Black and White; Pen and Ink. Dimensions: Approximately: 3.5" X 5".



The museum and its theatre.

The road that once skirted this landmark still bears the name but of *The Pantheon* that once dominated this thoroughfare there is not a trace. It is to HD Love's *Vestiges of Old Madras* that we turn for a brief history of the property.

Comprising 43 acres originally, it extended from Casamajor's Road to Police Commissioner's Office Road. The land was granted to Hall Plumer, Civil Servant and Contractor, who built a mansion there. By 1789, the building and its surrounding land had been taken over as Public or Assembly Rooms and designated *The Pantheon*. Plumer was still the owner and it was only in 1793 that the property was acquired from him. The administration of the place, together with the conduct of "amusements for the settlement", was entrusted to a committee of gentlemen and this was a veritable who's who of the city for it comprised Basil Cochrane, Col Henry Malcolm, Benjamin Sullivan, George Powney, Charles Floyer, Mark Wilks and James Brodie, among others. The entertainments, balls and dinner parties that took place there were the responsibility of a master of ceremonies. "Notwithstanding the great heat of the climate, *The Pantheon* at Madras exhibits, once a week, a brilliant assemblage of our fair country-women," exulted the *Monthly Magazine* in 1807. "They having bravely traversed an immense ocean, cheerfully reside on the sultry shores of Hindostan, to solace our countrymen during their long absence from their native isle. It is really a pleasing sight to behold this lovely group forming." Being asked to abstain from *The Pantheon* was the height of social disgrace as happened to Sir Paul Jodrell, physician to the Nawab, and his family, for certain unknown transgressions, as early as in 1789.

The Rev. William Taylor, in his *Madrasiana*, written in 1889, has some details of how *The*

The Pantheon – a name remembered

midst of all this, he unwittingly also caused its eventual demise, for he was busy supervising the construction of the *Banqueting* (now *Rajaji*) *Hall*, which he declared open on January 1, 1803. With that, gubernatorial patronage of *The Pantheon* ceased to a great extent.

The traveller Maria Graham, later Lady Callcott, writing in 1818, left behind a brief description of the place, when it was still

The Pantheon for Rs 28,000 to the Government, which set up the Collector's Cutcherry there. It was known thereafter as the Land Customs House.

By 1850, the Madras Literary Society, housed in the erstwhile premises of the College of Fort St George on College Road (present DPI campus), began hunting for a space for its newly formed museum. It proposed a swap to the Government, wherein the

hub in many ways, was influenced by this decision.

The burgeoning collection of the Museum necessitated the construction of additional wings at the Pantheon and they successfully hid the original structure. William Taylor in his *Madrasiana* writes that "to come at the original building you have to remove the colonnade, or portico, the upper storey, and lastly the two sides, leaving only a small lodge on either side; and then the old building will remain which was once called *The Pantheon*."

The Pantheon soon came to be known as the Museum. In the late 1800s, work began on the Connemara Public Library and the Museum Theatre in the same compound, and together with the National Gallery (originally the *Victoria Memorial Hall*), which came up early in the 20th Century, all traces of *The Pantheon* that once stood here vanished. But to most people it is still Pantheon Road and not EVK Sampath Salai to give it its post-independence name. Memories in Madras do not fade all that easily.

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

– SRIRAM V

Pantheon was constructed and its architectural style –

"To account for the origin of the building, it is needful to go back to about the beginning of the present century, when Madras was very Grecian in taste; Grecian couches with chintz covers, printed with uncial Greek letters, Grecian tripods and lampadas; of course, plays also. A considerable number of civilians and officers had been smitten, in early life, with Garrick's and Kemble's performances, and were stage-struck themselves. It became necessary to build a theatre, and it was done. A stage manager was commissioned from England; and a Mr. Rowbotham was imported in that capacity. By his instructions the roof over the stage was laid with iron grooves, so that a heavy cannon shot being rolled over them produced a mock thunder."

Taylor, going over the place long after it had been given up as a venue for entertainments, could still trace its original plan – "You would have gone up a few steps into a large oblong hall; going out at the other end, a narrow platform would conduct you to some steps, leading up to another oblong hall, with a room on the south side to which you would descend by steps. This style of construction was for the purpose of a theatre. The entrance hall was for the audience; the broken space was filled in by the orchestra; the hall above was for the stage, green room and manager's apartment." Taylor did not think much of *The Pantheon's* architecture but conceded that it was built more for use than show.

The Pantheon undoubtedly reached its zenith when Edward, the Second Lord Clive, was Governor of Madras between 1798 and 1803. He was a *bon vivant* and hosted several balls and suppers at *The Pantheon*. In the

its prime – "I was two evenings ago at a public ball in *The Pantheon*, which contains, besides a ball-room, a very pretty theatre, card-rooms and virandas. During the cold season there are monthly assemblies, with occasional balls all the year, which are very well conducted. *The Pantheon* is a handsome building; it is used as a freemasons' lodge of modern masons, among whom almost every man in the army and navy who visits Madras enrols himself."

It is interesting to note that *The Pantheon* was made available to Freemasons. That was sometime in 1800, when the Lodge of Perfect Unanimity, today the oldest of the Masonic lodges in Madras, began holdings its meetings there. The monthly rent was 15 pagodas. The Masons held civic receptions here as well, the most noteworthy one being in 1805 when Col. Sir Arthur Wellesley, a Mason of Trim Lodge No 494 of the Irish Order, was given a grand farewell on his departure to England, where, after defeating Napoleon, he would become the Duke of Wellington and twice Prime Minister of England. *The Pantheon* was not devoid of earlier Masonic links, for Dr. James Anderson, the famed botanist, had grown mulberry trees in its gardens as well.

But by the 1820s, *The Pantheon* was no longer what it once was. As early as in 1821, a part of the compound was sold and the central house was acquired by Edward Samuel Moorat, who owned extensive property in the area. A whole set of stellar tenants – Thomas Fiott de Havilland, Thomas Parry and George Arbutnot – occupied the place. In 1830, Moorat sold

Land Customs Office could move into *College House* while the Museum could occupy *The Pantheon*. This was duly agreed to and the shift was made. It is interesting to note that the Masons had already shifted to *College House*, as early as in 1830. It is very likely that the Literary Society, which was a Masonic

Another lost landmark

It was September 1939. To us, it was Jagdish's shop that broke the news of declaration of the War that later came to be called the Second World War. Almost every street corner had, what would pass off today as, a *paan* shop or *potti kadai*. Jagdish's shop offered a wider range of necessities than a *potti kadai* – soda, Spencer's soft drinks like Orange Crush and Lemonade, Vimto, cigarettes, bananas, Parry's sweets, biscuits, betel leaves and *chuman*, small packs of Ashoka scented crushed betel nuts, small household needs, English and Tamil newspapers and magazines. The newspapers were stacked on one side and the magazines displayed overhead as a garland on a string tied from one side of the shop to the other. His shop was popular for the variety of publications he offered. Displayed, on that day, more prominently than usual, was a large poster of *The Madras Mail* evening paper crying out: *War Declared!* – in huge black letters.

Residents around Jagdish's bunk picked up their newspaper from him every day. Not many

subscribed with the publisher to receive direct door delivery. Among readers, there was a much higher percentage of multiple household readership of each copy of a single newspaper than now. These days we have exclusive single household readership of multiple papers. Every newspaper had posters for display outside the shops to give the day's news. That is how they were *Breaking News!* Events waited for the morrow for the "breaking"; it was a leisurely world. The slight sign of competition, to "break the news earlier" than the competitor, was evident when the Nizam passed away. One newspaper announced his demise a day earlier than its occurrence, adding predictive value to their news. Another newspaper exhibited its uncompromising devotion to accuracy and truth and "broke" the same news long after it had occurred, taking time, perhaps, after ensuring corroboration of eye witnesses.

Jagdish's shop commanded respect more than others of the



Life around Jagdish's shop

category. He had the advantage of location of the tram stop, and, later, the bus stop, in front of his shop. Jagdish's shop front had become a standing loiterers' club comprising the waiting commuters who came every day, different groups at different times of the day. Jagdish and his captive customers exchanged views on the state of the Union. Among such customers was one who resided in the ground floor of the two-storeyed building just behind Jagdish's shop which was on Royapettah High Road opposite to the Indian Officers' Association's extensive premises called *Mohana Vilas*. He was a lawyer who espoused the cause of industrial labour and, in due course, headed the labour wing of the then leading political party. He earned a stature over time as a constructive labour union leader defying the prevalent trend of negotiation through flash strikes and flash lock-outs. All this and perhaps a little benefit of the exchanges with Jagdish, while waiting for the tram, must have played a part in this lawyer rising in time to be the President of India.

In another way, Jagdish's shop front became what would today

be known as a centre for participative democracy. Simple things were done then not knowing that they would become fancy jargon later. The nearby Lakshmiapuram Young Men's Association (LYMA) was then run by two brothers – not young by age but by their untiring

by N.S. Parthasarathy

energy. They brought eminent personalities to talk on burning issues of the day to the LYMA shed in front of the temple. Gatherings at these meetings once every 2-3 weeks or so would spill about the shed that could hold only about hundred people. Announcements of meetings were written in chalk on a large blackboard in a beautiful hand. Display of this Board by Jagdish in front of his shop was his contribution to participative democracy. The display lent respect to Jagdish's shop. And Jagdish helped to fill the hall and much more for LYMA. It was sheer synergy.

Rajaji, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy

Iyer, Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, Sir Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, S. Varadachariar, Ma Po Si, A.V. Raman, Khasa Subba Rao, Annadurai, Karunanidhi (then emerging in political arena), and many such illustrious personalities of the time adorned the dais in LYMA.

Statesmen, doctors, constitutional experts, lawyers, judges, vice chancellors, ministers were there to speak to an enlightened audience. Speeches were followed by questions and answers. Invariably, it was K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, retired Judge and Sanskrit scholar, who, as President of LYMA, gave the vote of thanks. The erudition that he brought to bear upon such a routine task was remarkable, at times, overshadowing the main speech. It was a pity that newspapers invariably concluded the reports of the meetings with these words: K.S. Ramaswami Sastri also spoke. Perhaps, the "brand value" of the main speakers robbed KSR

of a more honourable mention as was his due. That was like reporting the cricket match saying that Sachin Tendulkar also batted.

Mylapore was not a geographical spot. It was a social phenomenon. It was India's legal brain and centre of culture comprising music, dance, temples, colourful festivals, early morning *marghazhi bhajans* and a school of considerable repute that produced India's senior civil servants. Mylapore also provided constitutional architects, Supreme Court judges, great jurists, a silver-tongued orator reputed to have known all the words in the Oxford Dictionary, freedom fighters, musicologists, composers, poets. Mastery of Law was the speciality. If you were born in Mylapore you could not have helped being an eminent lawyer. Every girl of marriageable age aspired to marry into a Mylapore lawyer's family. The heroine, Miss Malini, in a movie of that title, sang the lyrics composed by Kothamangalam Subbu, also a Mylaporean: *Mylapore Vakkeelaathu Maattupponnaavaen!*

Edward Elliot's Road marked the northern boundary of

In the block of buildings on right in the main picture was Jagdish's shop on Royapettah High Road. In the inset, the block is seen on the left with the new buildings of the Indian Officers' Association complex on the right (Photos: R. Raja Pandiyar).

Mylapore. This one road could boast of many luminaries – T.R. Venkatrama Sastri (jurist), Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri (whose mastery of the English language astonished the British), Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Iyer (lawyer), E.V. Srinivasan (ophthalmologist, who was seen in his Rolls Royce), C. Rajam (founder of Madras Institute of Technology) and lesser known, but no less distinguished, Chief Engineer Ramasundaram who made a name for himself for building several airstrips in the country in record time to prepare India against possible external attack during the Second World War. Rajam lived in a palatial house called *India House*, at the junction of Mowbray's Road. Bus conductors would shout *India House!* with extra gusto perhaps to express their awe of the imposing bungalow, to alert passengers desiring to disembark in that area. *India House* was later acquired by S.S. Vasan, celebrated as India's Cecil B. de Mille as he was the forerunner in producing movies with specta-

(Continued on page 6)

Our Museum's wealth

Hero-stones, less known sculptures

(Quizmaster V.V. Raman's questions are from September 16th to 30th. Questions 11 to 20 relate to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Government recently proposed to merge which three State-owned banks to create India's third largest lender?

2. Which State has the highest number of people living with HIV, according to the HIV Estimations 2017 report released by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry?

3. In which South Indian capital has the country's first-ever dedicated dog park come up?

4. Kevin Mayer of France set a new world record in which grueling sporting event at a meet in Bordeaux on September 16th?

5. Because of their new film *Sui Dhaaga ... Made in India*, which actors were recently made ambassadors of Skill India Campaign to promote the Skill India Mission?

6. Who is the author of the book *Narendra Modi: A Charismatic & Visionary Statesman* that was released on the Prime Minister's birthday on September 17th?

7. According to the recent ordinance banning Instant Triple Talaq, how many years of jail term will be awarded to the husband?

8. In which North Eastern state was the country's 100th and the State's first, airport inaugurated recently?

9. Name the weightlifter who was awarded the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna recently?

10. On September 20th, India contributed \$1 million for installation of solar panels on the roof of which famous building in New York?

11. What is the relevance of •Unity• and •Eagle• to the history of Madras?

12. Which street inside Fort St. George is/was called •Snob's Alley•?

13. Which well-known patriot wrote *Naan Kanda Bharatam*?

14. What first does Dr. P.V. Rajamannar have in the context of jurisprudence in the city?

15. Which establishment's activities in Madras began in the Church of England's Temperance Institute on Esplanade Road?

16. Best & Co was the first to market what product in bulk in Madras, introducing it in 1889?

17. Which Chennai-based college was the first in the country to offer music as an optional subject for the B.A. degree?

18. On which thoroughfare in North Madras will you find a Parsi fire temple, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, a mosque and a Hindu temple?

19. In which suburban Chennai temple is Shiva said to have blessed sage Agasthya with a vision of his marriage with Parvati?

20. Which European firm provide the technical inputs for the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) when it was started in the early 1950s?

(Answers on page 8)

The supremely beautiful places including erstwhile stone sculptures of deities North Arcot, South Arcot and datable to various dynasties in Salem Districts of Tamil Nadu India are the pride of the and areas in Karnataka and Government Museum, Chennai. Visitors stand in awe of the One hero-stone is from superb workmanship and try to Chippagiri in Karnataka. Dated identify the names of the deities, many of which they know, C.E., this carving is in three and some of which they don't clearly demarcated horizontal sections. Prominently seen in the same visitors do not care to look at other stone slabs, which the lowermost panel are two too have carvings ... not of deities warriors, each on a galloping horse. The man on the left these have no fascination for holds an upraised sword, while the onlooker. We suppose it is the other has a lance in his right hand. Below the horses can be seen a few corpses to show that this is a battlefield. The panel above this head holding an upraised sword records that this slab, which was carved in the middle taller one holding an umbrella. Bhogishwara in Tagadur, was in flanked by two A few women seen in the back-memory of Vidyarasi, a well-apsaras holding him ground are obviously apasras known Shaivite teacher of the and fanning him with waiting to receive the hero and Pasupata sect of Shaivism who fly-whisks. This is to accompany him to Vira-swarga. is praised in this record. The show that the hero Apart from the numerous other man in this carving is his has ascended to hero-stones in the Museum, student. The distinctive hair-heaven. On the top- there are a few memorial stone style of these two personages most panel, which is on display. These are slabs have been well sculptured in slightly damaged, are which have been set up in this unusual panel. seen a Shiva Linga memory of a person, usually a Another memorial stone on with a seated figure king or chieftain, by their relationship and worshipped. An eye-tury C.E. Though the prov- and a person stand- catching hero-stone datable to enance is not known, it depicts ing on another. the 8th Century C.E. is from a vibrant battle scene with the

Another hero- Tagadur, Dharmapuri District, king prominently carved in the stone in a fairly good Tamil Nadu. This stone slab, centre on horseback, fighting condition, albeit flat at the bottom and curved at with a sword. Around him are slightly damaged at the top, is the top, has a Shiva Linga in the numerous foot-soldiers holding

Hero stones, called Nadukal in Tamil, usually have a sculpture of a man who died while fighting on the battlefield or in some other selfless act of bravery. These men are shown holding weapons, usually a bow and arrow, and riding on an elephant or on a horse and fighting with enemies. An inscription seen at the top of the slab will contain the relevant information about the hero and his gallant acts. Many hero-stones also show apsaras or celestial women above the battlefield to receive those who died in war and to take them to heaven or Vira-swarga. Some hero-stones also have tiny carvings of the sun and the moon on top, indicating that the fame of the hero will last till forever. Sometimes a Shiva Linga is also depicted at the top, if the person who died was a Shaivite. The Museum has hero stones from many

Memorial stone, Tagadur, Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu.

Recognise the raga ?

For the concert audience, when the guess is correct. There are some veterans who have organised by Music Academy attended concerts for years and something to look forward to. Some can relate to the raga and have a little notebook where they write the song list and raga for •Carnatic Music Rasikas•. The event will be held at the Chari of the Tag group of Main auditorium of the Music Academy on Sunday, October 9.30 a.m.

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