Continuing with the “Unauthorised saga”

And so, Chennai has added yet another feather to its crown of buildings that violate permits. The latest is a hospital (can you beat that?), which put up an eight-storey structure right in the middle of the city when it had permission to build only three floors. That was in 2007. Since then, for 12 years, it has continued to use the extra floors it put up, and what is more, had power and water connection to the edifice, thereby making it a fully functional block in the hospital complex. There was the matter of law of course and finally, in its slow fashion, it did catch up with the hospital. Late in May, the High Court ordered the demolition of the extra floors, services only up to the third floor but the hospital went on to extend them to all the remaining (and unauthorised) floors as well. It is astonishing that despite such a gross violation the authorities kept silent. When asked about this the Additional Advocate General, Tamil Nadu reportedly said that “that the officials could not demolish the unauthorised structures due to a series of ordinances promulgated between 2007 and 2012, followed by an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act of 1971 in favour of such buildings and consequent government orders issued for regularisation of those constructions”.

In short, the Government had through its own contradictory orders managed to allow for such a situation to come to pass. The entire saga sounds familiar to those who live in the city. It is an open secret that most high-rise structures violate norms and continue to exist, protected by the builder-bureaucrat-politician nexus or the time taken by law to come to a judgement. The instance of a T Nagar retail showroom that caught fire a year or so ago is

NEET – Need to prepare for, and not politicise it

Much has been written, debated and politicised about NEET and its implications for Tamil Nadu. Students in the State, and, in particular, those from weaker sections and rural areas. The problem can be dissected into two parts. First, in Tamil Nadu, selection to medical colleges was by marks under the State Board syllabus which is lower than the CBSE standard. The CBSE syllabus is the basis for NEET, it is said, places State Board students at a disadvantage. This difficulty is valid wherever a syllabus lower than that of CBSE prevails and the affected States are taking steps to bring about parity. Similar reforms may be introduced in the foreseeable future, to make selection to other professional courses also equitable and transparent.

Education is a subject on the concurrent list, constitutionally allowing the Centre and the States to take decisions, necessarily, in close coordination. Introduction of NEET has led some to see it as a threat to federalism and justify the demand for making Education an exclusive State subject.

(Continued on page 3)
NEET — no need to politicise it

(Continued from page 1) for the State Board examination to prepare for such progress. In the interim, a bridge course to coach students for NEET must be institutionalised and regulated. Of concern is the second part of the problem, which is more challenging — of government-run and aided schools lagging behind due to poor teacher quality and lack of accountability. Government teachers are adequately compensated and that cannot be the excuse for poor service. Students from government institutions have not been able to cope with NEET despite coaching. Experts say that coaching cannot add value when students lack grasp of basic concepts. Special attention to this is unavailable. Some parents, disregarding the free education in government-run schools, desist from seeking admission to private schools paying large fees and capitation, borrowing at high interest rates. Similar is the problem faced by rural students. Both the government and parents are unable to meet even the relaxed criteria extended by the State "exercising the right to determine admission policies to medical and educational institutions under the government's policy". In the circumstances, there is no meeting point between the capacity of these students and the enrollment criteria. Any amount of relaxing eligibility will not help. NEET is not the villain but it has exposed the poor state of teaching efficacy in government-run schools. Students of government institutions are not yet ready for the CBSE standard of tests. Mentoring is required to advise these students to be realistic and choose diplomas for technical skills within their reach, at the same time, encouraging only the exceptional ones capable of breaking out of systemic failings to achieve the difficult to take up NEET. Thousands appearing and thousands failing is cruel in its mass effect on young minds leading some to commit the extreme act of suicide.

Tamil Nadu should welcome NEET as part of modernisation of the selection process for admission to professional courses. That 14 lakh students in the country appeared for NEET and 8 lakh have qualified for 6,000 seats in MBBS and BDS shows the magnitude of demand and the need for a transparent selection process. NEET is advantageous in several respects. By avoiding multiplicity of tests for admission NEET reduces the pressure on students who had to prepare for several tests for the same admission paying multiple entrance fees and travelling to many venues. NEET does not interfere with the reservation system as operated by State governments. Nearly 69 percent of medical seats in Tamil Nadu are in the reserved category but based on Class 12 marks. Now the rankings will be based on NEET scores, reservation remaining at 69 percent. NEET, conducted twice a year, offers two opportunities instead of the earlier single chance a year. NEET allows students to answer in anyone of ten regional languages to help those studying in Indian languages.

To enable students in Tamil Nadu to adjust themselves to the new requirement a one-time exemption from NEET was granted to students for admission to government medical institutions and the government quota seats in private medical colleges. Having availed of this breather, a total of 1,23,078 students appeared for NEET in 2019 from Tamil Nadu and 59,785 cleared the test. While last year 39.56 percent of the total candidates who took State cleard the test, in 2019 the percentage has risen to 48.57 percent. The cut-off mark for the open category has also increased this year by 60 marks over 424 for the previous year due to overall increase in performance level. Another encouraging feature is that 1329 students scored more than 550 marks compared to only 81 in 2018. All these are indicative of the effect of coaching programmes to overcome the gap between NEET and State Board standards and of the ability of Tamil Nadu students to adapt to the new system given time and the support. As such, retaining NEET will not mean imposing an unfortunate incident or two to justify the demand for reverting a reform that is overdue.

The persisting failure of students of government-run and aided schools to rise to opportunities was not an easy challenge. This section had only one student scoring more than 400 marks out of 19,680 that took the test compared to 5,634 students for 500 and above across the 400 mark. The problem in government schools calls for urgent reform as it affects the destiny of socially and economically underprivileged children, presently unable to avail of opportunities because of poor services. NEET is a mirror to the government on the state of the education system.
I invited Mr. Muthiah to a meeting of the Rotary Club ofAmbattur at Taj Coromondel, where he highlighted the need for celebrating Madras Day. Those were early days. His voice was virtually the lone one for Madras Day, which was started much later in 2004.

I suggest that we institute a Madras Muthiah Memorial (MMM) Oration in Thiru Muthiah’s honour. We could have an oration on his birthday or during Madras Month during which he inspired us all by organising talks by eminent professionals from different fields every year.

Professor Dr. N. Pandiyan
Professor and Head of the Department of Andrology and Reproductive Medicine, Chettinad Super Specialities Hospital

A friend of MNS
In the passing away of Mr. Muthiah, the nature lovers of Chennai (that is Madras) have lost a great friend and well-wisher. He was very keen that the natural heritage of Chennai be preserved for posterity. Towards this, he would unhesitatingly publish many of the natural history articles pertaining to the flora and fauna of Chennai, whether they be original articles or those which have been published in Blackbuck, a journal of the Madras Naturalists’ Society that has a rather limited readership compared to MM. Several of our members are indebted to him for getting a wider publicity for their nature conservation efforts. A couple of weeks after the publishing, an honorarium would promptly be received by the writer.

Mr. Muthiah was very much concerned about the preservation of the Pallikkaramarai marsh, MM has several articles published about it and what little of the marsh that has been finally preserved is in no less measure due to the awareness created by people like Mr. Muthiah. He had a sympathetic ear to civic problems created by the stray dog menace and presented the views of both the dog lovers and critics. I recall many pieces in MM which put forth views on the problem of crows and feral pigeons that keep multiplying along with the human population. Articles on the avenue trees of Chennai and past botany of Chennai and Tamil Nadu always found a place in MM. The preservation and maintenance of the various gardens of Chennai were also highlighted.

We, the members of Madras Naturalists’ Society, gratefully acknowledge Mr. Muthiah’s significant efforts in preserving our nature heritage and thank him from the bottom of our hearts. We will miss him.

Dr. A. Rajaram
Madras Naturalists Society

Thank you, Donors
We today, publish donations received with thanks for the period up to May end.

Rs. 100: Ashok Kumar Reddy, Sivapriya Krishnan
Rs. 150: K.V. Ananthanarayanan
Rs. 200: H. Ramani, A.D. Nityaanand
Rs. 400: S. Mohan, Prema Venkateswaran, T. Appaswami, S. Meenakshi, Meenakshi Sundaram
Rs. 500: Dr. V.V. Jayaraman, Dr. K. Sriman

Our Readers Write

80-60-40
80-60-40 – that was what the invitation read, inviting us for a celebration at The Hotel Breeze on the Poonamallee High Road. This was the year 2010, the invitation was from Thiru Muthiah. I could not figure out what this meant until I reached the hotel and asked him. It turned out to be a witty pun, in keeping with his trademark sense of humor - 80 referred to his age, 60 his wife’s age and 40 was the number of years they had been married. Thiru Muthiah and his family were great hosts and the guests enjoyed an excellent spread of Chettinad and Sri Lankan food.

I have known Mr. Muthiah for 30 years since my Rotary days in 1989 and my term as the Secretary of the Association of British Scholars.

Join Karadi Tales at Odyssey, Adyar for a storytelling event by award-winning children’s writer Srividhya Venkat on June 15, 11 am to 12 noon.
The story of The Clever Tailor will be enacted with props in an interactive way. Get ready to find out how beloved tailor Rupa Ram manages to share a precious gift with his whole family. While the event is suitable for children aged 4–8, anyone who loves a good story is welcome!

Thank you, Donors
We today, publish donations received with thanks for the period up to May end.

Rs. 100: Ashok Kumar Reddy, Sivapriya Krishnan
Rs. 150: K.V. Ananthanarayanan
Rs. 200: H. Ramani, A.D. Nityaanand
Rs. 400: S. Mohan, Prema Venkateswaran, T. Appaswami, S. Meenakshi, Meenakshi Sundaram
Rs. 500: Dr. V.V. Jayaraman, Dr. K. Sriman

Our Readers Write

80-60-40
80-60-40 – that was what the invitation read, inviting us for a celebration at The Hotel Breeze on the Poonamallee High Road. This was the year 2010, the invitation was from Thiru Muthiah. I could not figure out what this meant until I reached the hotel and asked him. It turned out to be a witty pun, in keeping with his trademark sense of humor - 80 referred to his age, 60 his wife’s age and 40 was the number of years they had been married. Thiru Muthiah and his family were great hosts and the guests enjoyed an excellent spread of Chettinad and Sri Lankan food.

I have known Mr. Muthiah for 30 years since my Rotary days in 1989 and my term as the Secretary of the Association of British Scholars.
A Congress strongh... THEN...

A pioneer botanist: a path-breaker in horticulture

Many of you may not have heard of the scientist E.K. Janaki Ammal. But if you happen to be a plant breeder interested in the genetics of plants, their chromosome numbers and their pleiotropic functions, you would know quite well that the name E.K. Janaki Ammal must ring a bell. She was the renowned botanist who paved the way for many a student of horticulture in the British Indian Empire. In 1921, she was among the first women in India to obtain a Ph.D. She is known for her work on rose species, and her work with the Botanical Survey of India, John Innes Institute and the Royal Horticultural Society so that they can flower in the gardens. She was the first woman to receive a Doctorate of Science for her work on the genus Rosa. Her work with the Botanical Survey of India has led to the development of new varieties of roses that are now grown all over the world. She was also the first woman to receive the Indian National Science Award for her work in horticulture.

In May 1966, Viru & I bought a copy of her seminal work, *The Chromosome Atlas of Cultivated Plants*, when Viru was completing his first degree in Botany. We were impressed by her work on rose species native to India, and the book was essentially a horticultural treatise. Later, Viru continued to refer to Janaki Ammal's book even today, as it was the only book on roses that we could find. We were eager to know more about Janaki Ammal. Her work is described as remarkable, and we wished we had known her before she died in 1984. She was also a remarkable woman. She did not have any children, which is not uncommon for women of her time. She was also an accomplished writer. She published many papers and received several awards for her work. Her work has been widely cited in the field of horticulture, and her contributions to the study of the genus Rosa have been recognized by many horticulturists around the world.

We strongly felt that this remarkable woman scientist had not been given the recognition she deserved – after all, her papers are still available at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. She was an important figure in the horticultural world, and her work has led to the development of new varieties of roses that are now grown all over the world. She was also the first woman to receive a Doctorate of Science for her work on the genus Rosa. Her work with the Botanical Survey of India has led to the development of new varieties of roses that are now grown all over the world. She was also the first woman to receive the Indian National Science Award for her work in horticulture.

We were eager to know more about Janaki Ammal. Her work is described as remarkable, and we wished we had known her before she died in 1984. She was also a remarkable woman. She did not have any children, which is not uncommon for women of her time. She was also an accomplished writer. She published many papers and received several awards for her work. Her work has been widely cited in the field of horticulture, and her contributions to the study of the genus Rosa have been recognized by many horticulturists around the world.

We first needed to get in touch with a relation of Janaki Ammal. After some research, we found that her papers are available at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. She was an important figure in the horticultural world, and her work has led to the development of new varieties of roses that are now grown all over the world. She was also the first woman to receive a Doctorate of Science for her work on the genus Rosa. Her work with the Botanical Survey of India has led to the development of new varieties of roses that are now grown all over the world. She was also the first woman to receive the Indian National Science Award for her work in horticulture.

We were eager to know more about Janaki Ammal. Her work is described as remarkable, and we wished we had known her before she died in 1984. She was also a remarkable woman. She did not have any children, which is not uncommon for women of her time. She was also an accomplished writer. She published many papers and received several awards for her work. Her work has been widely cited in the field of horticulture, and her contributions to the study of the genus Rosa have been recognized by many horticulturists around the world.

We were eager to know more about Janaki Ammal. Her work is described as remarkable, and we wished we had known her before she died in 1984. She was also a remarkable woman. She did not have any children, which is not uncommon for women of her time. She was also an accomplished writer. She published many papers and received several awards for her work. Her work has been widely cited in the field of horticulture, and her contributions to the study of the genus Rosa have been recognized by many horticulturists around the world.
From 'Kuberar' to crook

by T. Dorai Raj, Inspector of Police, Crime Branch CID, Madras

On 11th January, 1963 when K.V. Rangiah Chettiar of Coimbatore—a man of unusual calibre and resourceful optimism—known to the public as a possessor of coffee and tea estates worth millions, who called himself “Kuberar” was convicted and sentenced to three years Rigorous Imprisonment for using a forged document as genuine and nineteen months, R.I. for cheating, in the Court of the Second Additional Sessions Judge in S.C. 171/62, it looked incredible but it was a fact.

A psychoanalyst would be hard put to find anything in his early life which would indicate that one day he would be a swindler of a rare type. His upbringing was the same as any child of the poor background brought up between two world wars. His paternal uncle, Veeri Chettiar and his wife Nagammal managed a small business. They had one son Velusami and two daughters Nanjammal and Lakshmiammal. Towards the end of the World War I, Velusami died leaving his wife and no other male member to fulfill the great debt to his parents on their death. Being devoted to his dead, the only members who could partake of his inheritance in the widowhood were two girls. They entered the Coimbatore University and graduated in Arts, Law and Commerce. Thus was born the scholar and the poet Coonur as though it was sent by the Court of Joint Magistrate of Coimbatore.

That was the reply which was accepted by him to achieve his purpose and when he got it, he addressed the Governor of Madras complaining against the unhelpful attitude of the Revenue officials and claiming a compensation of Rs. 3 lakhs. The Law Department of Madras which deals with the petitions informed him that a letter dated 21-11-1951 that it was open to him to work out his rights in a Court of Law. This made him waste his time for some time. In 1954, he again gathered his wits and prepared himself for further efforts. He applied to the Law Department to furnish him a certified copy of their reply dated 21-11-1951 on the pretext that he had lost the letter. Accordingly, it was furnished to him by post.

Early in 1955, he acknowledged it by a letter which was found enclosed a copy of a petition alleged to have been sent to the Collector of Nilgiris where he mentioned deliberately that all the original documents relating to his claims were with the Law Department, Government of Madras. He even asserted, he even quoted a reference number of the Law Department.

The subtle and suppositious fraud adopted to draw the Law Department into the picture was easily discerned and detected. The reference number quoted in the petition was found to be fictitious. He was never called by the correspondence relating to the grant of the certified copy and there was no original documents with them either. Consequently, the Assistant Secretary, Law Department promptly informed him in letter No. 35/55-1, dated 11-1-1955 that the original documents alleged to have been furnished to him by the Law Department. The letter was short and straight containing nearly executed typed matter with enough and a trifle more space between the end of the last sentence and the signature of the Assistant Secretary. This was exactly what he desired and he got it unasked.

He was not the person to let any chance slip from his hold. He also knew that modern scientific inventions were as serviceable to illegitimate purposes as they were for legitimate causes. He sought the help of the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-55 signed by the Assistant Secretary telling him by a letter bearing No.35/55-1, dated 11-1-
**TRIBUTES**

**Adieu to an Architect**

Chennai has become poorer with the loss of one more pillar of Chennai Society. S.L. Chitale, popularly known as 'Krish' to his legion of friends and well-wishers, succumbed to Cancer on 20th May, 2019. He was 87. The second generation of the family known as architectural firm, Chitale & Son, Krish was known not only for path breaking designs for buildings but also for his architectural ethos. After 1991, when the year Krish handed over the mantle to his son Kapil Chitale, he was actively involved in designing landmark buildings in South India and also gaining reputation as a socially committed human being, who worked relentlessly for the uplift of the downtrodden and needy. This article portrays him as an architect.

Comparing the difference between the style of designing buildings during his and his father’s times, he had often opined that the difference in his father’s time the emphasis was on symmetry and grandeur. But the buildings that I have designed are all different because I believe good design implies change. You cannot see a Chennai building today and say ‘that is how it was.’

Krish also believed that every building should have its own identity created by simple and expressive architecture corresponding to its specific functions and location. Kothari Building on Nungambakkam High Road was one of the first buildings in Chennai, which used sun control louvers. In Tarapore Tower, another landmark building on Anna Salai he used solid freeproof walls between individual shops, so that any contamination could be contained.

Krish was also known for his desire for the preservation of heritage in the city. He once said, “I am a die-hard believer in conserving heritage buildings. I have made sure that whenever we renovate such buildings, we respect them for what they are because they are our history”. Among the many following heritage preservation projects that he was involved in, was the renovation of the Library and District Boardroom of the Free Masons Hall, Egmore. Two other edifices that bear proof of Krish’s passion for heritage were the HSBC Building (Rajaji Salal) & Standard Chartered Bank (Armenian Street). Only the interiors were redesigned to suit the requirements of modern offices. One of the recent projects of the company where effort was taken to retain heritage values is the 100 years old ELSONS Garments located next to India Silk House on Anna Salai.

Krish never compromised on his work. On Vastu he told a client, “I don’t believe in it. Yes, we must respect tradition; but it was an ancient science based on knowledge and technology of that time. Some of it is not relevant today because we have changed, our lifestyle has changed and so also our cities.”

By R.V. Rajan

According to his son Kapil, in later years he began relenting and accommodating clients’ requests to design buildings which were Vastu compliant.

When someone asked him how his design incorporated sustainability, he retorted, “that is a lot of hogwash floated by people wanting to justify bad architecture. What do you think they teach us in architecture schools? Building Taj Mahal and India Gate. For all his writings, his exteriors were all a kind person who went out of his way to help friends in need. He used his resources & contacts to dream of big projects which would benefit the society. Many that he worked on were devoted to needy children.

“I have always been interested in any project connected with children, probably because of the difficult childhood I had. Having lost my mother early and with a father very busy in his successful career, I know what it means to miss parental love in the growing years,” said Krish in an interview to a magazine.

Krish’s total involvement in several voluntary organisations helped him gain the reputation of a social activist with a difference. A true believer in the ‘Service Above Self’ motto of the Rotary movement, Krish contributed his professional expertise as an architect free for all the projects he was involved in. All the voluntary organisations he worked for, including the Masonic Lodge, have been beneficiaries of Krish’s huge network of friends abroad. For his sustained and dedicated service he got several awards from several organisations including the prestigious RJ 323 Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008 from Rotary International.

The world of architecture will surely miss a doyen who contributed so much to preserving its values. Chennai will no doubt miss the world of architecture.

May his soul rest in peace!
An Air force coach who had mentored Women Cricket

There has been terrible news recently for cricket followers. Popular Tamil Nadu coach EK. Dharmalingam, former Karntaka all-rounder V.S. Vijayar- kumar and young cricket writer Siddhanta Putnaik, have all left us almost at the same time. Two of these, Dharmaling and Vijay, were good friends of mine. An aggressive opening batsman and new ball bowler, Vijayakumar was replaced in the Karnataka team by Roger Binny who went on to represent India with some distinction, With Dharmalingam, I had a long and happy association, first as a young admirer of his all-round skills, and later as a colleague, when he came to coach the TVS and Alwarpet CC cricket teams of which I was a senior member. We were often roommates on our cricket tours, usually within Tamil Nadu, and I found him a pleasant, considerate companion, neat and clean in the way he kept the room and his personal belongings. He was a soft spoken man with a keen interest in the game of cricket, wherever it was played. I first met Dharmala in the 1960s, when he was playing for Indian Air Force, Tambaram in the Chennai league. A short service commission recruit in the forces, he was a successful all rounder for the Services XI in the Ranji Trophy, leading to his eventual selection for a place in the North Zone squad in the Duleep Trophy. His exploits in the league and in first class cricket were quite sensational, and he regularly hit the headlines with several good bowling performances and dazzling innings. So it was that when I first met him at a mutual friend’s wedding reception one evening, I was completely taken aback by his slim, compact physique of medium height and his genteel demeanour and ready smile, for I had expected a tough, towering airforceman.

Dharmala then took a special release from the armed forces and returned to his home state, joining India Cements at San- karnagar, Tiruselvam, and playing for Jolly Rovers CC in the Madras league as a key member of a champion outfit. His nicely controlled, lighted legspin was a useful aspect of his game, his batting was positive and attacking, and his fielding and throwing were a sight for sore eyes.

It was as a coach that Dharmala made a valuable contribution to cricket. An NIS (National Institute of Sports) accredited coach, he made a mark as a Tamil Nadu state coach at numerous levels. He also assisted the chief coach at the international level, during Test matches and conditioning camps. A great friend and well-wisher, he certainly was, but he unwittingly knocked me out of contention during one of these camps when a flat catch at express speed from his bat at fielding practice dislocated my finger.

Dharmala also conducted his own private coaching programmes, mainly for schoolboy cricketers, generally at the Sishya School ground at Adyar. Hundreds of his wards went on to play excellent cricket at the league, state and even national levels. Some of them like W.V. Ramana and L. Sivaramakrishnan, he coached at Grand Prix CC, in the 1980s, eventually coming over to TVS group-backed Alwarpet CC, where, along with my hugely talented teammates, I experienced the pleasure of his company, quite et encouragement, and strict discipline. We went on to win a few titles including the prestigious Hindu Trophy and MCC Dyanora Cup.

Dharmala’s outstanding achievement as a coach was perhaps his work with women’s cricket as arguably the first leading cricketer in India to don the cap. Many Indian women cricketers owe their success to his mentorship.

Dharmalingam had a few health issues in the last decade of his life, but his was an invari-

THE ‘CRAZY’ MAN OF MANY PARTS

(Continued from page 7)

Madana Karna Rajan, Sathi Leelevathi, Aavai Shanmugi, Kadhala Kadhala and Pancha- thirumula. The high TRP rating these movies draw even to this day are a testimony to his prolific humour-writing.

Two facets of his life that were overshadowed by his bril-
lance as a scriptwriter and playwright were his paintings and his prolific work as a writer of venus. A keen student of Tamil literature right from his college days, he composed venus on several divine subjects. The ones on Lord Krishna, Mohan’s heart lay in Madras and more specifically in Myl-
apore. In his typical fashion, he would often remark that he felt homesick even if he went to West Mambalam!

At 67, his untimely demise leaves a huge void in the lives of countless Tamil theatre and cinema lovers. In a fitting tribute to his far-reaching im-

ception, amongst those who had gathered to pay their last respects were several fans, whose only association with him was through his art. The Tamil art scene is poorer for his passing.

-Karthik Bhattacharyya

Answers to Quiz


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