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MADRAS MUSINGS

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Why celebrate Chennai?

● by The Editor

There we go again, asking everyone to celebrate Chennai, for Madras Week is just around the corner. The cynics we are sure, must be already practising their counter chorus beginning with the usual litany – Chennai was not founded in 1639, the weather here is uniformly bad, there is a perennial water crisis, the roads are terrible, the civic body inactive and the traffic chaotic. To all of this we agree in toto but these in our view do not in any way detract from the fact that there are several aspects to Chennai that are sufficient reasons to rejoice.

Firstly, it is home to so many of us. And despite its lack of roads, water and much else, let us remember that we continue to live here, call it home and also, it must be admitted, have contributed in some way or the

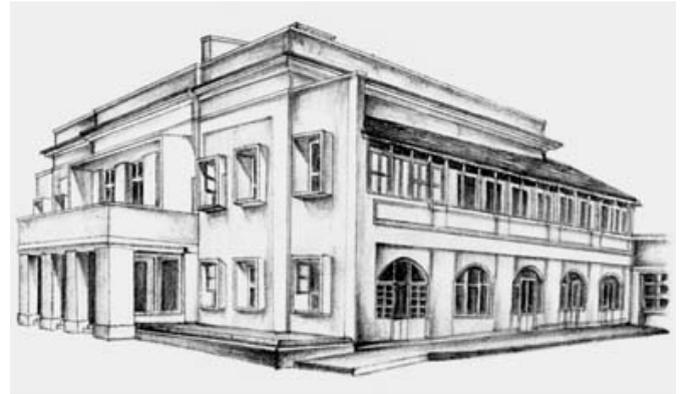
other to the problems it faces. This is where we ply our trade, educate our children, practise our customs, celebrate our individuality and much else. Chennai has given us space for all this and we must be thankful for that. And when it comes to civic issues, which city is wholly immune to them? Chennai has many achievements to its credit. While its many firsts have been documented sufficiently in MM and elsewhere, we need to also look at the many ways it contributes to the nation. Chennai being the medicare capital of India is well-known, but how many of us know that it accounts for 40 per cent of the medical tourism inflows into India?

We always knew that Chennai is referred to as the Detroit of India, but how many of know that we produce one vehicle

every three minutes that places us ahead of Detroit? When it comes to leather exports did we know that Chennai and Kanpur are forever neck-to-neck for reaching the top slot? And our record in IT is certainly impressive. If all this was not enough, our achievements in enrolment for school education and higher education, and our performance on public health are the envy of most other cities of India. It is just that in our characteristic understated fashion we prefer not to talk about any of this.

Madras Week is not just about celebrating a colonial past as many have unfortunately depicted it. It is all about cherishing what is good in our city and making it known to everyone. Are any of the achievements listed above from our colonial times? Hardly. All of them are peaks that we

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Our THEN is a sketch by artiste Vijaykumar of old Woodlands hotel, Westcott Road, where Krishna Rao began the first of his restaurant chain in the 1930s. Our NOW is Saravana Bhavan (Courtesy: *The Hindu*) also equally significant in Chennai's food history but whose owner died earlier this month being in the news till the end for wrong reasons.



Better facilities needed for the darshan

Thaipooam arrangements at Palani were reportedly exemplary, with the district administration working closely with the HR & CE, police, fire and rescue, health & other departments to ensure that pilgrims have a memorable spiritual experience. So, the fatal lack of planning for the Athi Varadar Darshan at Varadaraja Perumal

● by A Special Correspondent

temple, Kanchipuram, came as a nasty shock to devotee Tamil Nadu is known as the Land of Temples for a reason; the state is dotted with temples and hardly a fortnight goes by without a temple festivity taking place.

Tens of thousands of devotees flock to these festivals, and while they brace themselves to negotiate uncomfortably large crowds, safety or access to basic facilities have never been a major concern. Indeed, this year's

Per a longstanding tradition, the Athi Varadar idol is kept immersed in the temple's Ananthasaras tank and brought out for public worship only once every 40 years. On July 1 this year, Lord Athi Varadar was raised again and the elusive idol is on display until mid-August. Extensive media coverage spread the word far & wide, attracting millions of devotees - numbers unlike anything the temple has seen before. However, ground reports point to a lack of planning & arrangement to safely manage the crowds. Vehicles are not allowed access beyond a

point and people, including the elderly, often have to struggle to make their way to the temple entrances. Darshan queues snake around the temple for kilometres, with devotees often waiting for six hours or more to catch a momentary glimpse of Athi Varadar. Devotees also complain that they don't have access to basic facilities like water, toilets or food; for instance, just six bio-toilets have been installed for their use, and they're not properly maintained. Things took a sombre

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WHY CELEBRATE CHENNAI?

(Continued from page 1)

have scaled as an independent people. Is it not necessary to take some time off and look back at what we have attained? And please let us not waste our time on debating if Madras was founded in 1639 or not. There are many answers to that and there is no point in splitting hairs. If you are not comfortable about August as a choice for celebrating the city then let us select some other time of the year. But let us celebrate, that is what matters.

We at *Madras Musings* have chosen August for our annual thanksgiving for the city and we intend to abide by that. If others can come up with celebrations in other times of the year, we will join them then also. But celebrate we will. And so must you. Do you work in a school or a college or a commercial en-

terprise? Think of how you can join in. If you live in an apartment complex, see if you can organise a celebration. There is no one way to commemorate Chennai – you can cut a cake, clean your neighbourhood, help the deserving, man the traffic, promote water conservation – all of these can be celebrations of Chennai. Do it your way, but do share what you did with us.

The administration also perhaps needs to take a line or two from Uttar Pradesh, not a State known for its administrative capabilities, on how it handled the Sangam at Allahabad for Which there was praise. Perhaps it is also time for India to evolve some kind of a guide to be shared across States on how to handle events of this kind. With time, our population is only on the increase and events like this, owing to social media are likely to see greater crowds.

Hoping for better facilities

(Continued from page 1)

turn when reports emerged of 4 persons losing their lives due to breathlessness while waiting in the queue.

Even as the state government works to make amends & fix issues, one wonders where they dropped the ball, despite having sufficient funds to make the necessary arrangements. The slip-ups point to a grave underestimation of the number of expected visitors – after all, the event has never received so much media coverage before, traditional or social. It also looks like the administration was caught off-guard by the scale of planning involved; Athi Varadar this year attracted devotees from all over the country, not just Tamil Nadu. The basic two-system darshan in place – a free darshan queue and a single paid darshan queue for donor pass and ticket holders alike – was not effective in rallying the crowds, either.

A few checks could have greatly improved the experience for devotees. A multi-tier ticketing solution would have helped organize and mobilize crowds in an orderly fashion. Special arrangements ought to have been made for the elderly and parents with infants – for instance, the number of wheelchairs at the venue seemed hardly enough (this correspon-

dent could see only a couple, at the entrance). Temporary structures could have been put up for the comfort of the devotees – a roof to protect them from the rain and sun, and sturdy queue stanchions, for instance. That there simply needs to be more portable toilets and drinking water stations goes without saying.

A couple of solutions are already reportedly underway, which will hopefully fix a few problems. The administration is considering shifting the idol to a more spacious venue, and ticket slabs might be expanded. There are reports that a new queue has been added for senior citizens and devotees requiring the use of a wheelchair – where there are no attendants to push the wheelchair, the organisers are stepping in to help. The authorities are also proactively urging vulnerable persons such as the very elderly, pregnant women or parents with infants, to avoid the Athi Varadar darshan. It might be well to consider expanding the appeal to VIP pilgrims from out-of-state, who, with their special needs, contribute additional stress and disruption on an already strained infrastructure.

Here's hoping that the rest of the Athi Varadar fest sees better days, for devotees and administration alike.

The Tower of Babel

The *Man from Madras Musings* was quiet for a change. All around him a perfect Babel of voices rose and fell, each in its own cadence, pitch and punctuation. We were all standing in a newly-constructed toilet, of 4'x4' dimension, the temperature was at an all-time high and there was dust all around. Before you run away with the idea that a group of men had met in a loo for some nefarious activity let MMM dispel such notions. This was a toilet in the new chez MMM and his good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed and it was not working. A gathering of experts had been called in and discussions were in progress.

It was as MMM said earlier, something out of Babel for several native languages were heard. The marble layer was from Rajasthan, the plumber from Kerala, the supervisor a Telugu and the person who supplied the porcelain fixtures a dignified Muslim who no doubt swore into his beard in Urdu. Add a couple of labourers from Orissa and you have the complete picture. MMM's cook, from Bihar stood respectfully at the door – it was he who had pointed out that the flush received copious amounts of water but when the lever was pulled did not give of its plenty. It was he said, in a flight of imagery that was worthy of his master, as though a giant sponge somewhere inside that absorbed all the water that fell into the tunkee (as he referred to tank). Of Tamil there was none, barring MMM of course.

And that made MMM wonder. Where are our Tamil brethren? Is it really true that Tamil Nadu is so industrially developed that everyone is employed in some high-paying job thereby leaving aside all menial chores to people from other States? MMM somehow has his doubts, his view being that the bulk of the brothers are even now at some Tasmac outlet or the other, lifting their elbows ever so often. But then, if they are able to afford it or if the Government is able to make it affordable, who is MMM to complain?

Anyway, there we were, the brothers across India, unable to settle the matter of this mysterious toilet. Each blamed the other and for a moment it appeared that blood would be shed. The cook magically weighed in with tea and that calmed things down. It was decided that the marble needs to be broken open so that the flush tank, which had been

buried into the wall rather in the manner of Mughal-era courtesans, could be inspected. What was not mentioned was that MMM, who had paid for the original work, would now do so for the taking apart and reassembly. Not that MMM had a choice anyway but he did reflect on how inconvenient these modern conveniences were. In the old days, the flush tank was outside and you could even lift the lid and check if there was water before you went on with your business. But now there is no way you can do that, unless you have X-ray vision of course.

The dismantling was duly done and the culprit it was discovered, was a tonne or so of white cement that had made its way into the tank. Once again everyone blamed everyone else, each in his own language. MMM suggested in the Queen's tongue that they better get on with it. They did, and when finished it was found that someone had managed to leave a gaping hole above the commode. This it was decided, needed to be fixed with white cement, but then

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

that meant we ran the risk of it getting into the flush tank again. The cook felt another meeting was in order. MMM has wisely decided to abstain.

Tabula Rasa

Please don't even imagine that *The Man from Madras Musings* is showing off his (non-existent) Latin skills. But then, it occurred to him that there could be no better heading for this section than that expression, which means clean slate or scraped tablet. MMM has if you recollect from the last issue of MM, been of late walking by the beach and pausing to read all the explanatory kiosks that have been fixed by the side of our statues. He has since been making progress and covering greater distances, taking in more statues as he goes along.

Even as he approached Thiruvalluvar, MMM wondered as to what could have been written. Something on his immortal *kural*, that wonderful compilation of maxims, all of them more or less in Twitter format maybe? Some story of his concerning the chastity of his wife? Some speculation on his actual time period and the likelihood of being a Jain? Whatever it was, MMM was not prepared for a



blank kiosk, as can be seen in the adjoining photograph.

It is quite amazing that this State of all places could not come up with a 100 words or so on the man for whom a statue of several hundred feet was erected off the sea at the tip of India. And what is even more surprising is that nobody has as yet noticed. It is of course quite likely that there was no consensus on what to write. Or it could be that this being a Central Government project someone from Delhi has to do the writing. In which case, why don't they consult Young Victor of Saffron Party who till not so long ago was perpetually spouting Thiruvalluvar to those in the cow belt? He is of course not so popular here ever since he said that the white skins of cow belt tolerate us people in the south despite our dark complexions but surely his knowledge cannot be allowed to go waste.

Tailpiece

There is clearly no standardisation when it comes to the word crescent, at least as far as our signboards are concerned. *The Man from Madras Musings* presents both options – one where the silent letters are omitted and the other where they thought crescent was the adjective of crease.



–MMM

Annachi – humble beginnings, global presence & ignominious end

A few years back, I was at Hotel Saravana Bhavan, Ashok Nagar. Without looking at the menu card, I asked, “Do you have *kuzhaaputtu* and *kadalai curry*?” The server gave me a strange look and immediately went to his boss. The supervisor came over and asked, “Are you coming to Saravana Bhavan after a very long time? We stopped serving this particular dish many years back.”

Before Saravana Bhavan’s mini tiffin became the de-facto standard for breakfast in Chennai, *kuzhaputtu* and *kadalai curry* was a very popular item on their menu. It was so filling that people used to forget about lunch till 3pm. Whether it was Tirunelveli, Tanjore or the rich legacy of Chettinad, the hallmark of Saravana Bhavan was its ability to bring together traditional recipes from various parts of Tamil Nadu on its menu.

From trendsetters like 14 mini *idli sambars* and the 7 taste *oothappam*, to comfort fare like *aappam* with *kuruma* and *idiyappam* soaked in coconut milk, Saravana Bhavan was all about variety and innovation. As they became a household name, they did not restrict themselves to South Indian fare and added to their signature buffet dishes from Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. Their dessert varieties became equally sumptuous, with western fare like eggless cakes and bread varieties.

Saravana Bhavan’s traditional full course meal served on banana leaves was synonymous with Tamil pride and provided value for money too. Many foodies who stepped inside their restaurants not only enjoyed their meals but were also entertained by the sight of expert chefs deftly making fresh, hot *jilebis*.

Scenes from the 1990s, of North Indian families flocking to the Peters Road branch in their Maruti cars to enjoy eating *medu vadas* are still fresh in my memory.

The USP of Saravana Bhavan was that, whichever branch you had a meal or tiffin at, the taste and quality of their dishes were always consistent, with unparalleled precision. The uniformity of service would make even a six sigma black belt engineer proud. There were many urban legends about how Saravana Bhavan managed to achieve this. One such story claimed that they had a dedicated tasting team whose primary job was to visit all restaurant outlets first thing in the morning, to taste and certify the dishes.

Saravana Bhavan’s roaring success with its restaurant chains was so inspiring that many smaller players in little towns plagiarised its logo and named their own restaurants with variations such as OM Saravana Bhava. Perhaps this could be an interesting paper for marketing students to research.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Saravana Bhavan made hygiene and cleanliness an important standard in the restaurant business. The brand introduced the use of sterilized spoons, paper hats for chefs, and RO-powered, clean drinking water. Their staff was courteous, and big moustachioed supervisors in green uniforms were strategically appointed to ensure order while dining at the premises.

How many of us would have ever thought that soups could be made from drumsticks and cucumber as early as the eighties? Such was Saravana Bhavan’s passion for experimenting with new recipes.

In the nineties, I used to interact with some of their employees and it was so impressive to learn that the owner contributed to not just their Provident Fund, but also Life and Accident Insurance cover and their children’s educational expenses. From an employee

welfare perspective, these were path-breaking commitments at that point of time.

I’ve enjoyed Saravana Bhavan service in almost every part of the world, be it New Jersey, London or Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, Malaysia and of course, India too. Today, it has more than 40 outlets outside the country, and many more across various states in India. For a typical Chennaiite, Kapaleeswarar temple, Rajinikanth movies, Idli-sambar and Marina Beach are icons of Tamil identity. Saravana Bhavan has also joined this illustrious list.

● by
**Swaminathan
Ramasubramanian**

I was working for one of India’s leading IT company a few years back. Our president, a Bengali, was a great foodie. During all our customer dinners at the Taj or Oberoi, he took pride in choosing signature dishes for our clients. Once, Chennai welcomed him with a unprecedented downpour because of which we could not drive down to our main office in OMR – we had to change the venue of our meeting to a

nearby office in Guindy. It was customary for our president to have Saravana Bhavan’s masala dosa whenever he visited Chennai, but with rain playing spoilsport, we had to ask our cafeteria to make him one instead. As our president was enjoying his lunch, he said ‘When it comes to Dosa, no one can beat Saravana Bhavan.’ The naïve executive that I was, I was about to tell him the truth when my boss signalled me to remain silent. After the president left, my boss exclaimed, “What sort of a person are you! That man is enjoying his lunch thinking it is from Saravana Bhavan and you almost went and spoilt his happiness!” I learnt a lesson in corporate dharma that day. Though its been many years since that incident, we still laugh about it – that is the impact that Saravana Bhavan can have on a person.

Saravana Bhavan’s founder P. Rajagopal (also fondly known as Annaachi) was from a small village in the district of Tirunelveli. For an illiterate person of humble origin, Annaachi’s business acumen and historic success in a challenging consumer business is the stuff of legend. There is a saying in the village, “People do not understand the value of herbs grown in the backyard of the house”.



Annachi with his two sons.

Management graduates of our country would do well to study Saravana Bhavan and its legacy alongside their case studies of western business models.

Every successful man has a dark side... so did Annachi. His personal weakness landed him in jail and he was in the news for all the wrong reasons. What happened in Annaachi’s personal life is strongly condemnable and there cannot be any second opinion about it. Even during those trying circumstances, the brand he built never took a beating – though it must be acknowledged that Saravana Bhavan is no longer what it was. But there are plenty of lessons to be learned from him, especially for aspiring entrepreneurs. It may be true that today, Saravana Bhavan’s quality is not what it used to be. But Annaachi has left behind such a legacy by way of long-lasting impact on every Chennai foodie.

Goodbye, Annaachi.

The Other Chennai

Kissflow, a leader in business process and workflow management software used by organizations in over 160 countries, recently announced its expansion into the digital workplace segment. It has come up with a first-of-its-kind platform for fast-scaling enterprises. The launch was not happening in Silicon Valley, but in one of the conference rooms at the Leela Palace in Chennai.

There was an air of palpable excitement and anticipation. The room was full of Kissflow staff and their families (including toddlers running here and there), CEOs of leading IT companies, and friends of the founder, Suresh Sambandam. Suresh is a true blue, home-grown IT entrepreneur, and one of the frontrunners in the fast growing SaaS (Software As A Service) sector in India.

Despite the informality, it was a formal function as well. The chief guests were our very own local success story, C.K. Ranganathan of CavinKare,

who will be the first customer of the Kissflow platform; Vani Kola, Founder and Managing Director of Kalaari Capital, one of India’s leading early stage venture capital firms; and Santosh Babu, IT Secretary, Tamil Nadu, who spearheaded digital transformation in government departments. Spotting Girish Mathrubhutham, Founder of Freshworks, the first Unicorn from Chennai (a company valued at over \$1 billion) from Chennai, the IT Secretary said, “I know you. We haven’t met. We will meet soon”. Life is changing.

Suresh Sambandam from Cuddalore discovered computers after he finished his schooling. He taught himself computing and coding while he was pursuing a B.Com course at college. He went to Bangalore in search of an IT job and landed one at Hewlett-Packard. He did very well there and eventually struck out on his own in 2003 to set up OrangeScape.

What is Kissflow, the product developed by Orange-

scape? “It is a cloud-based workflow automation platform for small and midsize businesses, that helps create highly customised apps instantly. It meets the workflow automation needs of every team, department and organisation, and deploys the most intelligent business process management tools to ‘reduce chaos’ and

● by
**Sushila
Ravindranath**

bring in more efficiency, control and accountability,” Suresh says. Kissflow has had a five-star rating, excels in user experience and is ranked number 1 on the Google Apps marketplace. “We’ve now embarked on a greater mission of providing an intuitive product that unifies the entire spectrum of work. Our new no-code platform is built on consumer

scale capabilities coupled with enterprise-level security of the Google Kubernetes Engine, which is flexible enough to enable a perfect orchestration between various microservices of Kissflow,” says Suresh.

The audio visual on the company screened at the launch was full of exuberance. The background music was most appropriate. It was not rock or rap, but A R Rahman’s first super hit ‘chinna chinna aasai’. The young staff however, are not dreaming small, nor is Suresh.

Two other speakers were Ayece Goundan and Girish Mathrubhutham. Ayece Goundan gave Suresh a leg up in his early days and is now his mentor and investor. Girish Mathrubhutham was given a rock star welcome when he entered the auditorium, greeted with whistles and loud claps. The IT crowd knows its heroes.

Girish, a good friend of Suresh, indulged in a lot of friendly leg pulling. “Do you know why we call Suresh the Kamal Haasan of the IT industry? Because his product is Kissflow.” What is Kissflow an acronym of? Keep It Simple, Stupid and go with the Flow!

An Ayurvedic health farm in Avadi

(Contd. from last fortnight)

The death of Pundit Gopalacharyulu on September 29, 1920 threw the Ayurvedic College into turmoil. It was closed the same day, with 50 students facing an uncertain future. The next afternoon a meeting was held at the SKPD Ayurvedic Hospital under the auspices of the Madras Ayurvedic Propagation Sabha and discussions were initiated on the possibility of a revival. The teaching faculty was willing to continue without salary but the rent and administrative expense proved prohibitive. There was no option but to close. It was at this juncture that Dr. A. Lakshmiopathi stepped in, filling out a cheque for Rs. 1,000 as indication of his seriousness in the matter.

The College was shifted close to his Andhra Ayurvedic Pharmacy, which he had begun just a few months earlier with a capital outlay of Rs 50,000 largely bankrolled by the Raja of Mungala, a wealthy Telugu landowner. This was according to Dr. Lakshmiopathi located on Tramcar Road, which research reveals was close to Harris Road (present day Adithanar Salai). He was designated Principal and several pundits were brought on board as faculty. Largely at Lakshmiopathi's prodding, several District Boards and Municipalities came forward with scholarships for the students and its future appeared secure.

The Government at this time appointed a Committee led by Sir Mohamend Usman to study the various schools of Indian medicine in practise. The report was published in 1923 and as per the recommendations of the same, the then Premier, P Ramarayanagar, the Rajah of Panagal came forward to set up an Indian School of Medicine (ISM), offering his property Hyde Park Gardens in Kilpauk for the same. The institution, founded in 1925, struggled for three years in the face of a strict Congress diktat that students ought not to join any Government-sponsored college. Moreover, students preferred the College run by Dr. Lakshmiopathi. Feeling that it was not correct to compete with the Government, he decided to wind up his institution and encouraged the students to move to the ISM. The Madras Ayurvedic College therefore closed in 1928. But by then, its indefatigable Principal had already been spending considerable time on

his next venture – an Ayurvedic Health Farm in Avadi.

This had come about in 1919, by when Dr. Lakshmiopathi was a busy Ayurvedic practitioner. Patients came from all parts of India and it became his responsibility to find lodgings for them. He managed initially by renting houses along Harris Road but soon ran out of options. It became clear that he needed a large swathe of land where he could put up a guesthouse of some kind. He initially settled on four acres at Guindy but the Race Course was expanding and began eyeing the space. Having embarked on a property hunt once again, Dr. Lakshmiopathi found what he wanted at Avadi. As to how he chanced upon it is an interesting story and speaks



Dr. Lakshmiopathi and his wife Rukmini.

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

– SRIRAM V

much about the Avadi of 1919.

He had gone there to treat a patient on a Sunday and by the time he could leave it was 7.30 pm. Having reached the station he found that the last train had left and he had no option but to eat and sleep at the residence of the person he had gone to treat. Waking up next morning, Dr. Lakshmiopathi went for a walk and found the place charming:

"I saw a beautiful lotus tank which was known as Antharadi Kolam. Due to the green paddy fields in the area it was a very pleasant sight in the month of December. Yagna was performed at this site in the olden days. There were huge peepul and neem trees. The actual name of the tank was Anantha Narayana Deekshitulu Koneru. It seemed he had performed a yagna here in ancient times. There was forest all around."

All of this in Avadi! It must however be remembered that there is still an area named Thamarai Kulam here. On coming to know that the land cost was Rs 100 per acre here (!), Dr. Lakshmiopathi began buying. His initial purchase was four acres. He then acquired a neighbouring property containing 500 mango trees, all planted by Nawab Humayun Jah Bahadur and then owned by the leather baron and philanthropist Nawab C. Abdul Hakim. The latter on coming to know that space was

needed for a health farm, leased 112 acres at Rs 400 per year for a period of 11 years. Eventually, Dr. Lakshmiopathi acquired this and more and by the late 1930s owned 300 acres in the area. He named it Hakim Nagar after the businessman-philanthropist who first leased the land to him.

On January 13, 1926, Dr. Jacob Aron Chowry Muthu, the noted tuberculosis specialist and owner of the sanatorium in Tambaram, laid the foundation stone of the Arogya Ashrama at Avadi. The first kuteer or hut was declared open a year later by A. Kaleswara Rao, freedom fighter and later first Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly. The Arogya Ashrama flourished with visitors describing it as a paradise on earth.

The All India Ayurvedic Directory of 1938 had this to say about the place – This Health Resort is situated within easy reach of Madras on an elevated plain of about 200 acres at a height of over 140 feet above sea level. Its elevation its cool shades, its green pastures and its loose sandy soil amidst the forest surroundings make it an ideal place for a sanatorium. Numerous patients have been treated in the Health Resort for various ailments by having recourse mainly to Nature's methods and very satisfactory results have been obtained.

M.M. Kaviraj Gananath Sen of Calcutta says:

I not only visited but enjoyed the fresh air and idyllic surroundings of this Ashram for five days and was much the better for it. The charming atmosphere and the excellent arrangements would attract any townsman here, particularly if his nerves cry for rest and tone. The plan of having units of family wards at long distances from one another is far superior to the usual hospital crammed with patients living in the midst of agony and death occurring here and there. Dr. Lakshmi Pathi has undoubtedly conferred a boon on his countrymen. I believe that this Ashram has a great future. It should be a model for other Ashramams, which must be founded and worked on similar lines in all parts of India.

During the Second World War, the Government planned several defence establishments at Avadi and acquired the Arogya Ashrama for it. Dr. Lakshmiopathi was compensated and some of this money came in for use when his son-in-law, Dr. B. Ramamurthy, the father of neurology in India, set up the first department in the country for this discipline at the General Hospital. Much of the remainder went into the establishment of the Dr. A. Lakshmiopathi Neurological Centre at the VHS, Taramani. Both the GH and VHS have buildings commemorating Dr. Lakshmiopathi.

Three cases of cheating illustrative of 'White Collar Crime'

● by J. Lakshmikanthan, Asst. Prosecutor, II President Magistrate Court, Madras 1

Man, with his selfishness, greed and egoism, on the one side commits crimes because of his wants, avarice, aspirations, fear, self-respect etc., and on the other, is a victim. Greedy and cunning persons prey upon the gullible and unsophisticated members of the society, and upon persons placed under difficult circumstances and subject to financial strain. The former dupe the latter, who part with considerable sums as a consequence. Methods in commission of crime vary and subtlety develops according to social and economic progress. So much so, that 'white collar crime' has come into prominence, manifesting itself mostly in the offence of cheating.

The following cases of cheating are illustrative of this type of crime.

The facts relating to the first and second cases transpired between the years 1951 and 1952. There were two incidents, and they may be called the "Tanjore incident" and the "Pollachi incident" respectively, with reference to the places to which the parties who were cheated belonged. The accused were three in number, who formed a group, and they were charged in both the incidents. They belonged to Bombay. A Finance broker, the financier and his lawyer were the three involved. The three were well educated and by all appearances, they were cultured.

Several other health facilities and annual orations in his memory came up with the rest of the money. Not forgotten was the Venkataramana Ayurveda College, Mylapore, which got Rs. 50,000. The man who made all this possible died in 1962.

In 1946, his wife and freedom fighter Rukmini, became Minister for Public Health in the T. Prakasam Ministry at Madras. It was at her initiative that the ISM in Kilpauk was upgraded to a college. Rukmini Lakshmiopathi died in 1951 and Marshall's Road in Egmore is now named after her.

The author thanks Karthik Bhatt for giving him the idea for this story and also providing the link to the All India Ayurveda Directory, 1938. Many thanks to Rukmini Amirapu, granddaughter of Dr. A. Lakshmiopathi, for sharing a copy of his biography.

(Concluded)

The Managing Director of Modern Motors (Private) Ltd., of Tanjore and the proprietor of Krishna Talkies of Tanjore were in need of funds to develop their respective businesses. They both were friends. The first wanted Rs. 50,000 on the assets of his business, and another Rs. 50,000 on his personal properties, and the second wanted a sum of Rs. 1,25,000 on his theatre. Similarly, the Managing Director of Bhagya Lakshmi Mills of Pollachi wanted a loan of Rs. 6,00,000 (six lakhs) on the security of the properties, assets and machinery of the mills for discharging some old outstandings and for expanding the mills. The period of cheating in the 'Tanjore incident' was from 11-8-1951 till the end of 1951, and in the 'Pollachi incident' it was from 9-4-1952 to 15-11-1952.

The *modus operandi* of the three accused who acted jointly was similar in both the incidents. As a consequence of advertisements made by him in 'The Hindu', a daily of Madras, the finance broker of Bombay was contacted through correspondence by the parties. The respective advertisements made on 11-8-1951 and 9-4-1952, announced temptingly to the effect that huge loans up to several lakhs of rupees would be arranged and advanced on the security of mills, theatres, and other big running concerns and valuable immovable properties. After an on-the-spot inspection made by the broker of the respective properties and businesses of the parties, he expressed his initial satisfaction as to the value and worth of the properties on which loans were sought by the parties, and also his readiness to arrange for the loans on his return to Bombay. The parties were practically decoyed to Bombay by the broker and the parties went with thousands of rupees cash for stamp duty charges, registration and other incidental expenses in connection with the execution of the mortgage deeds. At Bombay, the parties were introduced to the financier. He was really worth nothing. While he gave the impression of a millionaire, he was actually living in a palatial building which belonged to his mother-in-law at Parel, Bombay. After ostensibly discussing about the amount of loans sought for by the parties, settling the rate of interest, terms

of repayment etc., the financier referred them to the lawyer, who discussed the matter with the parties in a professional way regarding the title to the properties and preparation to be made for drafting the deeds, and advised them to get ready the amount required for stamp duty, registration charges and incidental expenses, and also fixed the date for registration of the documents at Bombay. After a full discussion and settling even the details, the parties were asked to meet the financier. When the parties again contacted him, he asked for the stamp and registration charges etc., as the lawyers had informed him through the phone, and the party paid the amount mentioned on the clear and definite statement made by the financier, that the mortgage deeds would be prepared, registration effected, loan amount paid to parties, and the entire transaction would be completed in a couple of days. Thus, the Tanjore parties were deceived, dishonestly induced to part with a total of Rs. 8,750 between 19-11-1951 and the end of 1951, and the Pollachi party parted with Rs. 21,863 between 29-10-1952 and 4-11-1952.

The anxiety of the both parties to obtain huge amounts as loans were fully exploited by these three cunning accused, and from the moment the parties arrived at Bombay, they were subjected to psychological tension. After the amounts were collected by the financier from the parties, the three accused began to adopt a docile attitude. No stamps or papers for mortgage deeds were ever purchased by the financier or the lawyer. The parties were shown some bogus deeds typed on plain sheet of paper on which the accused stated that necessary stamp duty would be engrossed by them at the time of registration of the deed. The broker began to drop out. The financier who referred the parties to the lawyers began to find out for the first time, defects in the title to the properties which needed rectification. The parties were thrown from pillar to post and from post to pillar till they could no longer afford to waste further time and money by remaining at Bombay and they had to leave. Talks about reinspection of properties and documents relating thereto by the agent of the financier took place. Reinspection also was

made accordingly, but nothing resulted thereafter. The parties asked for the return of the cash taken from them by the financier, but nothing was returned, and the three accused did not express any intention of making good the amounts collected. Several trunk calls, letters, and advocates' notices were sent by and on behalf of the parties to the financier demanding repayment of the money that they were dishonestly induced to part with, but all were in vain. The amounts were lost. Apart from the cash lost, to and for, inspection and other incidental expenses incurred by the parties, the waste of time, the exertion made and worries suffered by them and the effect of utter disappointment in the transaction could be well estimated and imagined. Complaints about these criminals were made by the parties to the Government of Madras and they were forwarded to the police for investigation. These two cases were investigated by Mr. T. S. Vivekanandhan, then Inspector, Crime Branch, C.I.D., Madras, who is now Deputy Superintendent of Police.

Charge sheets under Sections 420 I.P.C., read with Section 34 I.P.C. i.e., cheating with common intention, were filed against all the three accused before the Third Presidency Magistrate, Madras on the ground of jurisdiction that the advertisements were made in 'The Hindu' at Madras. All the accused could not be secured together. The cases against each of the accused were split up and each was tried separately.

The charges framed against the lawyer in the 'Tanjore case' were quashed by the High Court of Madras in Cr. M.P. 1002/58 on 3-10-58 and in the 'Pollachi case' in C.C. 1663/58, he was acquitted on 8-5-59 after a full trial. The financier was tried and convicted and sentenced to four months S.I. in each of the two cases in C.C. 3393 and 3394/59 in December 1959. The broker was subsequently arrested and he pleaded guilty for the charges in C.C. Nos. 1535 and 1536/60 on 31-3-1960, and he was convicted and sentenced to 4 months S.I. and fined Rs. 500 in each of the two cases. It may also be mentioned that during the course of the trial in C.C. 1663/58, 3393/59 and 3394/59, several witnesses were examined

on two occasions before a Magistrate at Bombay on commission. It was found during the course of investigation that, prior to these two instances, the three accused had similarly cheated several other parties and collected huge amounts from them. Further activities of the broker and the bogus financier and his lawyer were effectively put to an end in the year 1959 and 1960.

In the third case the complainant was a retired civil surgeon who was residing at Santhome, Madras. Four persons joined together and cheated him. The first was an Honorary Presidency Magistrate of Madras. The second was his son. The third was an associate of the first and he belonged to the same locality as the complainant, and the fourth was also an associate of the first and third. They can be called as the first, second, third, and the fourth accused respectively.

In the middle of October 1956, the third accused and an old man named Mohammad Ismail Labbai approached the complainant, representing that the latter had obtained a decree for 96 crores of rupees payable by the State Bank, and they requested the complainant to advance a loan of Rs. 1000 i.e., Rs. 640 as the 'chamber sitting fee' of the Chief Justice High Court, Madras, for passing necessary orders in execution and the balance for other incidental expenses in The High Court of Madras. The complainant naturally asked for the decree and the relevant papers. A couple of days later, the third accused and Md. Ismail Labbai came with the first and the fourth accused, who were introduced to the complainant. The first accused explained to the complainant that the originals were all with the Chief Justice, High Court, but showed some typed copies so as to induce the complainant to make a payment of Rs. 1000 cash to the first accused. This was the beginning of a series of cash payments made by the complainant to one or other of the four accused who, jointly and in pursuance of a criminal conspiracy, cheated the complainant through the medium of Md. Ismail Labbai. They also, particularly the first accused, falsely represented to the complainant that if he pays off the creditors of Md. Ismail Labbai, he would get back the total amount with great pecuniary advantage to himself. Sometimes the first accused also represented that he was going to see the finance minister at Delhi to expedite the payment of the amount payable under the 'decree' in favour of Md. Ismail Labbai. Several bogus orders of High Court, bogus chalsans

for the remittance of money to the credit of the High Court for 'incidental proceedings' were produced by the first accused to satisfy the complainant. The accused went to the extent of preparing bogus High Court orders showing that cheque books and pass books for drawing amounts ordered in favour of Md. Ismail Labbai and 'poundage' to be paid. All these bogus documents and false representations were made by the accused so as to dishonestly induce the complainant to make not less than fifty one payments to one or other of the accused between the period 30-10-56 to 24-7-57 amounting to Rs. 48,390. The first accused requisitioned the services of a tout by name Imamuddin alias Basha, examined as prosecution witness No. 10 during the trial, and who became almost blind by then. He was an expert in drafting and concocting all sorts of bogus court orders freely using legal terms and phrases. The complainant also got exhausted by making these heavy payments till at last he thought, better late than never, that he should ask for a consolidated acknowledgement from Md. Ismail Labbai and three of the accused i.e., the first, third, and the fourth. From that time, all the accused began to disappear. So much so that, the complainant guessed that he was defrauded by them. When he found that there was no prospect of getting back the moneys lent by them, the complainant reported the matter to the police on 11-5-1958.

The crime was investigated by Sri. P.K. Varadachari, the then Administrative Inspector of Crime Branch, Madras City, who retired as an Assistant Commissioner of Police, Madras. The charge sheet was filed on 4-11-1958 against all the four accused in C.C. No. 6442/58 before the third Presidency Magistrate, Saidapet, Madras, for offences of criminal conspiracy to cheat and cheating him to part with a total sum of Rs. 48,390 (Section 120 B. I. P. C. and 420 I.P.C.). All the accused pleaded 'not guilty' to the charges made against them. The trial went on from 30-1-59 to 11-5-59 and fourteen prosecution witnesses, including the officer who investigated, were examined. On 14-5-1959, judgment was delivered by the court convicting the 1st accused and sentencing him to nine months R.I. The second accused was acquitted for want of criminal intention on his part. The third and fourth were released under Section 4 (1) Madras Probation of Offenders Act on their own bond and one surety for Rs. 1000 for a period of one year.

(Continued on page 8)

Quizzin'
with
Ram'nan

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

1. What colour coding will be required on the front side label of Indian packaged foods to represent high fat, sugar and salt content levels as per Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) ?
 2. As per the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, how much fine will be imposed for blocking ambulances?
 3. Name the head of the Indian Olympic Association and the world hockey body FIH who has become a member of the International Olympic Committee.
 4. According to the UN report, 'The World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights', in which year will India surpass China as the world's most populous country: 2022, 2025, 2027?
 5. The new Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla is an MP from which State?
 6. On June 17, which Asian nation launched its first satellite 'Ravana-1' into orbit from the ISS?
 7. On which peninsular river is the world's largest multi-stage, multi-purpose Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project built?
 8. On June 23, which famous sporting body celebrated its 125th year of founding with the inauguration of a new HQ building?
 9. Which Indian cueist recently became the only player to win Asian and World championships in all formats in both billiards and snooker?
 10. According to a recent revelation the air strike by the IAF on a terrorist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, was code-named...?
- ***
11. Which Chennai resident won the National squash title for a record 17th time recently?
 12. On June 20, which bank founded in the State got the approval from the Competition Commission of India to merge with Indiabulls Housing Finance?
 13. Name the entity started by M. Soundrapandian in 1972 that has been translating and publishing comics from around the world into Tamil.
 14. Name the Sangam era poem from which the FM Nirmala Sitharaman quoted to explain the govt-taxpayer relationship in her budget speech.
 15. Who preceded Udayanidhi Stalin as the DMK Youth Wing president?
 16. Which institution, offering unconditional emotional support to people who are feeling upset, distressed, depressed and suicidal, was started by Dr. Lakshmi Vijayakumar in April 1986?
 17. Name the State's new Chief Secretary and Director General of Police.
 18. Which respected Chennai institution's in-house magazine is called 'Eyelights'?
 19. What is the height of 'Aththi Varathar' and how long will the idol be in the reclining position?
 20. Name the town where Dr. U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer was born, represented by the U in his name.

(Answers on page 8)

Tamil Journalism

– Post-Independence and its progress

(Continued from
last fortnight)

When *Dinamani*, sponsored by the Express Group, made its appearance in 1934, it electrified the atmosphere of Tamil journalism. It was a low-priced newspaper (six paise), but it was different from its rivals in presentation of news and views. Within a month of its publication, its circulation shot up and it was more than the combined circulation of all other Tamil papers.

Dinamani had originally been started by S. Sadanand, who purchased the *Indian Express* from Varadarajulu Naidu. Both the papers later came into the possession of Ramnath Goenka. The first editor of *Dinamani* was T.S. Chockalingam, an ardent Congressman and a powerful writer. With him as joint editor was A.N. Sivaraman, who later notched new records in Tamil Journalism.

Both Chockalingam and Sivaraman were close associates even before they came to *Dinamani*. They had jointly produced a quarter anna tri-weekly, with news and views on the Satyagraha Movement, apart from trenchant criticism of the Government. Along with *Swatantra Sanghu*, another quarter-anna weekly edited by Sangu Ganesan, it became a rage at the height of the Satyagraha movement and sold like hot cakes. Chockalingam left *Dinamani* in 1943 and started a daily of his own, *Dinasari*, in 1944. The burden of running *Dinamani* fell on Sivaraman.

Sivaraman, a distinguished Tamil journalist often referred to as the Bhisma of Tamil Journalism, did not have much of an education in the conventional sense. He passed the secondary school course and joined a college in Tirunelveli but left it after barely six months. He was attracted by the Congress movement, especially by the ideals of Bal Gangadhar Tilak,



A.N. Sivaraman

and he took it upon himself to carry out the movement started by the Congress.

Although he discontinued college education, Sivaraman began educating himself through wide and purposive reading. Reading at all hours and far into the night became his habit. He was a prominent Congress volunteer in the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 and went to prison. He strayed into journalism when he joined Chockalingam in producing the tri-weekly *Gandhi*. After joining *Dinamani*, he switched over to its sister paper, *Indian Express*, for some years. He covered the San Francisco Conference for his paper and remained in the US for some years as its correspondent. He wrote articles on subjects like science and technology, agriculture and industry, political science and economics in a way which the common man could easily follow and understand. He was a teacher and guide for his readers and

● by
Mrinal Chatterjee

his mission was to educate his readers to be good citizens and educated patriots.

In 1942, S.B. Adityan, a barrister and a staunch Congressman, started a daily, *Dina Thanthi*, in Madurai, deliberately aimed at the lower class and the semi-literate population. The paper indulged in sensationalism and its four pages were filled with stories of crime, violence and cinema, written in an easy style and language. He provided readers what they liked to be fed and they lapped it up.

The paper's circulation increased manifold and Adityan brought out editions from Madras and other centres. As the Dravidian parties, the Dravida Kazhagam (under E.V. Ramaswami Naicker) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (under C.N. Annadurai) began to dominate the political scene in post-Independence Madras state (before it was renamed Tamil Nadu), Adityan resigned from the Congress and joined the Dravidian movement. His contribution to Tamil journalism was that he took the newspaper to the doorstep of the poor and downtrodden. Over the years, *Dina Thanthi* and its sister publications have not changed much in the type of journalism they began with. Neither has their popularity waned.

The path shown by *Dina Thanthi* has been followed by many other Tamil dailies. The most common features have been a) wide coverage of political warfare in Tamil Nadu, b) dominance of crime, sex and cinema, and c) multiple editions. *Dinakaran* followed this path and added better investigative stories. It is published from multiple centres. Unlike *Dina Thanthi*, it has an editorial. It has a good circulation and one reason for its popularity is said to be its anti-establishment posture.

Another daily which has made its mark is *Dinamalar*, established by T.V. Ramasubba Aiyer, a Congressman of Tirunelveli. It was started in 1951 in Trivandrum and played an active role in the agitation for the merger of Tamil areas in Travancore with Tamil Nadu, and was very popular for that reason. At one stage, the paper's office was raided by the police and its copies were seized. This happened when Pattom Thanu Pillai was the Chief Minister of the state.

After the success of the agitation, when Nagercoil and



T.V. Ramasubba Aiyer.

Kanyakumari were merged with Tamil Nadu, Ramasubba Aiyer moved to Tirunelveli in 1960 where *Dinamalar* concentrated on the problems of the local people, and in getting the people's grievances redressed. Its circulation went up and an edition was started at Tiruchi in 1966, followed by one in Madras in 1979 and Erode in 1984.

Dinamalar introduced offset printing in 1981 and adopted other modern techniques of printing. A feature of the paper is its photographic coverage, which gives it a unique place in Tamil journalism. During the Pope's visit to Madras in 1986, it came out with a four-page photo feature of the Pope's engagements in the city.

A Tamil daily which was the result of cooperative efforts is *Makkal Kural*, which appeared in Madras in 1973. It emerged from the ashes of *Navamani*,

founded by a cooperative society, which got into trouble with the DMK Government and had finally to close down. One of its leading journalists, Shanmuga Vel, floated Newsmen Associates in 1972 and *Makkal Kural* came into being the next year. It had an able and experienced editor in T.R. Ramaswami, who was formerly connected with *Patriot* and *Link* of New Delhi and with the Federation of Working Journalists. TRR, as he was known to his readers, had a powerful pen and a head for facts and figures. In 1982, he started an evening English daily, *News Today*.

Tamil language newspapers have been published from outside the country from the pre-Independence era. There was a Tamil newspaper titled *Tamil Nesan* in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia since 1924. It was the lone Tamil newspaper in Malaysia till *Tamil Osai* was launched in 1981. Later, it was rechristened *Makkal Osai*, which in English means People's Voice. Thamizhavel G. Sarangapani launched *Tamil Murasu* in Singapore on 1935. By mid-2012, it was the only Tamil language newspaper in Singapore.

Several Tamil language newspapers have been published from Sri Lanka, the best known being *Virakesari*. It was first published on August 6, 1930 by P. P. R. Subramanian, an entrepreneur and journalist from Avanipatti Village in Tamil Nadu. Subramanian guided the publication for over 20 years, during which it focused on the rights and grievances of the plantation workers, capturing the attention of the Tamil-speaking population. By mid-2012, it was the most widely circulated and read newspaper among the Tamil-speaking population in Sri Lanka. In



The first copy of Virakesari published on August 6, 1930.

(Continued on page 7)

Tamil lessons in Tharamani

(Continued from last fortnight)

Arumugam had a flair for languages. Besides Tamil, he spoke Bengali, Telugu, Hindi and some English. He became my self-appointed Tamil teacher and with the philosophy of one teaching a foreign language, he focussed on what I would need in daily life. So he included numbers, asking and answering polite social questions like *soukhyama*, *enna samaachaaram*, *enna vishayam*, etc., followed by objects like *tami*, *uppu*, *chakkarai*, *chaavi*, *puutu*. He explained the difference between *yaarume illa* and *onnume illa*, *pesha* and *solle* and soon followed adverbs like *sheeghram* and *medhue-medhue*. Meaning, he said, was not a property of words, it was in the context. Do not foreclose your options by saying *illai* and *aama* at once. It is best to say *paakalaam* (we'll see), even if you have made up your mind. Make the visitor wait while you can. You rise in the hierarchy of power, more people wait for you. They will never take you for granted. G.B. Shaw would have hired Arumugam to train government officers.

Arumugam had an original and practical mind. He taught me enough in a few months to help me make friends among peons, drivers, cooks, waiters, guards etc. When interviewed for the position of a warden at IIT-M, I had the cheek to tell the Dean *Tamil teryum*, I knew Tamil. The British hardly knew Tamil and ruled the presidency of Madras for centuries, I suggested.

Advanced lessons in the sociology and history of Madras (it was not Chennai yet), came from Mrs. Junie McMurray, Technician Grade II. Junie was 46 years old on Feb 25, 1980, when she joined I.I.T – not very young, nor fat (she could be called 'full' in English), fair, tall, charming, single, English-speaking, unattached. Some called her Venus, some Durga. Some men, as they sometimes do, had other ideas. But she told them where they belonged: tail between legs, they made an immediate exit, never to risk their lives again. In most, she inspired respect. "My grandfather was an army major," she would say. Her grandfather lived in Bangalore, as most 'class' Anglo-Indians did. Once, as he was speeding on his motorbike, he sighted a camel up ahead. But he did not panic. He just jumped off his bike and over the camel, hump and all, landing right back on the saddle of his bike on the other side, like the British Army Major in Ruskin Bond's story. Her grandfather had been a part of the musical band of the British Army in India and had led the band in playing *God Save The King*. 'Precision and economy make you great, Junie!', he would say. Did she go to college? 'Come on! Why would a girl want to waste her precious years poring over books! A girl needs to be smart so that she runs her home, makes her folk leave every morning and return every evening.' Perhaps old-fashioned, but not boring!

Her Christmas parties were fabulous. The quarters she oc-

cupied might have been small, but the parties had the who's who of IIT-M on the guest list. Ribbons, festoons, flags, balloons and some recorded hymns, both Tamil and English, repeated themselves every year with the same colours and cadence without losing their attraction. The insides of the home got a new coat of paint, some new wallpapers and little bulbs that glowed for a week, non-stop. She brought Christmas to IIT-M campus and kept it aglow, brighter than anywhere else! She introduced guests to her cat, chicken and parrot, recounting their feats with the kind of glint that parents with a JEE rank in their families have. Proud, yes; arrogant, no way!

Junie had the world on her finger tips. Her albums contained rhinos from Assam, boatmen from Bangladesh, elephants from Congo and tiger moths from Venezuela. She was a passionate philatelist. 'She shared her space and whatever else she had with birds, beasts and all else,' said Sister Valsam-

● by Shreesh Chaudhary
GLA University
shreesh.chaudhary@gla.ac.in

ma, her companion at Aasha Bhawan, the home for the aged in Upper Gudalur, near Ooty, where Junie spent her final days. Generous she had always been. Even in the pre-bottled and pre-water-and-coffee-dispensing-machine age at IIT, no one stayed thirsty within walking distance of her water-bottle or tea-flask. Her gold chain often rested in the vaults of the pawn broker, but her neighbours, on or off-campus, did not suffer so long as Junie had any metal on her body. 'How will you manage in your old age?', her friends asked. 'The Lord will take care of me!' Her faith was infectious. *Bhogwan aachhen*, God is still there, like Mother Teresa used to say in Calcutta. Did she have a foe? Not really, though at times, she resented the trips from the *tappal* to the Ad Block, while others tired their legs trekking to the canteen. But the work did not suffer, not while Junie was around.

Junie had always told her husband, a security sergeant at IIT, to cut down on liquor and cigarettes, but, as an English poet said, 'No use to talk to him, he was but one and twenty, or only a little older'. So finally, when the lump in his throat turned malignant, as, in Junie's words, 'it had to', Junie changed from a shy and obliging young bride mixing

soda with liquor and cleaning ashtrays, to a twenty-four hour nurse, sister, mother, priest and provider, wiping her eyes at times, at others, his lips and bottom, until he was lowered into the grave one day. Loyal to his memory, she didn't allow even death to part her from him. Her 'No!' to all the star-studded rings proffered to her was firm and final. But Junie responded to the call of duty, and joined the D.H.S.S as Peon Grade – III, and, like Cleopatra, turned the stool she sat upon into an object of the burnished gold and kept it so until she left about sixteen years later, as if saying dignity was not exclusive to a class.

Advanced lessons in Tamil, of course, came from the hostel workers. The dean asked me if I knew Tamil. I said yes and no. I took the keys and learnt. I told a worker accused of stealing, "*onne ke talkaai thengaa maari break pandre*". Both Arumugam and Junie McMurray, for different reasons of course, would have felt proud of me!

But my Tamil would have remained pathetic without my lessons in Tharamani. Tharamani was almost reserved for drivers, tailors, plumbers, electricians, construction workers and daily wage-labour of many other

hues, just as Anna Nagar, Besant Nagar and other Nagars are for Delhi-centric bureaucrats, businessmen and politicians. None of my colleagues at IIT-M was happy that I was quitting IIT Campus for Tharamani. 'For Tharamani?', they screamed. It had no sewage, no piped water supply, no telephone lines, not even reliable electricity supply. 'Your neighbours would be jealous, you would be robbed! Tharamani?' Yes, I said!

Four out of ten there spoke Telugu, but all spoke Tamil. Tamil here is at once rooted in tradition – *nii akkaa lo*, *nii amma lo* – just as it is modern – bastard, bloody etc, besides a lot else that even Rajnikanth can use. The economics of Tharamani is never disturbed by its sociology, but politics here is part and parcel of life. The area is vertically divided between A.I.A.D.M.K & D.M.K – two leaves, *irettai ilai*, and the rising sun, *suuryan*. There is enough work here for many to be full-time salesmen for two bamboos of the same ditch, as Kamraj allegedly said once. The divide is so sharp and discourse so passionate that a men's hair cutting saloon here forbids

(Continued on page 8)

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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Tamil journalism post-Independence

(Continued from page 6)

2005, *Virakesari's* e-paper was launched, which is said to be the world's first in Tamil.

Among other Tamil language newspapers published from Sri Lanka were *Eelamurasu*, *Eelamadu* and *Uthayan*. All the three papers were published from Jaffna, a Tamil majority area. *Uthayan* was founded in 1985 by journalist Nadesapillai Vithayatharan. *Thinakkural* was founded by Pon Rajagobal, former editor of *Virakesari* in 1977, and *Sudar Oli* was founded in Colombo on 10 September 2000 as a weekly newspaper. It became a newspaper on 29 October 2001. Nadesapillai Vithayatharan became the paper's editor in 2002.

Almost all Tamil language newspapers in Sri Lanka suffered heavily during the conflict beginning early 1980s. Besides Sri Lanka and Malaysia, Tamil newspapers are also published from countries like Singapore, the UK, Canada, Australia and several countries in West Asia.

By end-2012, *Daily Thanthi* was the largest-read daily in

Tamil Nadu. According to the Indian Readership Survey Q-4 2012, it occupies the seventh position among the top ten publications of the country. The Hindi daily *Dainik Jagran* tops the list. *Daily Thanthi* is followed by *Dinakaran* and *Dinamalar*. Among the Tamil magazines, *Kumudam* is the largest circulated. It occupies sixth position in the list of top ten language magazines of the country. Malayalam periodical *Vanitha* tops the list.

Newspapers across India and languages have had political leanings, some overtly, some covertly. But an interesting feature of Tamil journalism is that it has had distinct, in-your-face political leanings. Several newspapers were open and vocal about their leanings. In the pre-Independence era, it could be divided into three groups: the Dravidian Press, the Nationalist Press, the Muslim Press. Post-Independence, the trend continues; albeit with different rallying points (Courtesy: RIND Survey, March 2019).

(Concluded)

MOVING FROM IIT TO THARAMANI

(Continued from page 7)

political conversation, *arasiyal pesa kudaadu!*

But even Taramani had no regional bias! They accepted us as one of their own. Whenever I joined the queue near the water-tankers with my vessel, they often let me have my fill first. They put up with me when I protested against loud-speakers

and litter near my house! I put up posters on my compound wall saying I would break any litterers' or sticklers' or scribblers' heads like a coconut, '*thengaa-maari!*', but they did not mind and continued as usual. I went to the police; an inspector came and asked me to give him either the name or the photo of any litterer. I wished I could. Then a senior police

officer came home and advised me to solve this problem 'socially'. Then one day, somebody told me that I should stick a Ganesha or a Shiva tile on our compound-wall! With due apologies, we decorated our compound wall with tiles showing nearly all members of the Shiva family. And litter at my doorstep disappeared. God is a policeman in Chennai – yes,

literally! Past midnight once, when I was unconscious due to some food poisoning caused by a stale *samosa*, resulting in fever, diarrhoea and dehydration, my niece went to the bus depot at Taramani to bring home an ambulance. Two policemen followed her into our flat and eventually helped her bring me down from our second floor flat into the ambulance which took

me to a hospital. We do not know who they were! Proverbial exceptions, of course, were there! Like a drunk auto-rickshaw driver who insisted on over-charging and thought that I should use no language other than Tamil while I was in 'his state', or a drunken neighbour who assaulted a visitor from my village because my guest did not speak Tamil. Police had to step in saying they would 'give better training' in Tamil teaching! Like Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar said, anyone in India can speak about education.

But Taramani in general was pretty tolerant. Our Tamil was accepted, our Hindi was respected. Some members of my family even made some money giving Hindi tuitions. Chennai today is the most cosmopolitan city in Asia. Go to any restaurant in Thiruvanniyur and you will hear a Bengali manager welcoming you and an Assamese, Nepali, Bihari or Oriya waiter serving you *aahuu parathaa* or chicken *biryani* to the tune of a new rendering of *jiyaa bekaraar hai*, a Hindi super-hit of the 1960s. It comes through Radio Mirchi, not *Radio Pacche Mulgai*.

(To be continued next fortnight)

Cheating white collar crimes

(Continued from page 5)

The question may arise as to whether Md. Ismail Lubbai, who was examined as prosecution witness No.3, should have also been included as one of the accused. From his evidence, it was clear that he filed C. S. 173 of 1938 against the Imperial Bank of India as a pauper suit; the same was dismissed by the High Court on 12-9-1940. Thereafter, there was no further proceedings by, or in favour of, Md. Ismail Lubbai in the High Court, Madras. The evidence of Md. Ismail Lubbai and Imamuddin Basha were to some extent divergent. The former stated that the latter made him believe that further proceedings were going on, and the latter said that the former brought the fourth accused and asked the latter i.e., Imamuddin, to represent that the proceedings were being continued, and that the money due under the decree passed in favour of Md. Ismail Lubbai for huge amounts against State Bank, and was

ready to be realised. But certain it was, that the fourth accused was probably the first victim of this hoax and he was so ruined that he adopted the same tactics for realising at least some portion of the money lost by him by taking the first and the third accused as his partner, using the same Md. Ismail Lubbai as the medium, and Imamuddin as their technical adviser, to cheat the complainant and draw cash as heavily as possible from him.

The intervention of the first accused through the fourth accused in this affair was certainly a turning point. From that moment, the first accused played the leading role in this game of cheating. In fact, the first accused overdid his part to such an extent that at one stage Md. Ismail Lubbai sent on 2-5-58 a complaint to the Commissioner of Police against the 1st and the fourth accused for cheating him i.e., Md. Ismail Lubbai and for not accounting for collections made by the first and the fourth accused on his behalf.

There was another prosecution witness by the name of Ramachandra Naidu, examined as No.4 in the case. He was also a victim of this gang and he was similarly cheated between May 1956 to April 1958 to the tune of Rs. 650 on the same basis. His evidence also revealed the leading role played by the first accused. This witness contacted the Registrar, High Court of Madras and verified the bogus decree and the huge, imaginary amount to be immediately paid. Thereupon, the Registrar, High Court, Madras, sent a report to the Commissioner of Police on 10-4-1958 about Ramachandra Naidu's incident.

In the above said two cases, one common significant factor can be found, i.e., in the first case, the Tanjore parties and the Pollachi parties, and in the second case, both the doctor complainant and Ramachandra Naidu - all these were intelligent, influential persons but were duped just the same. It is surprising that none of them contacted the legal adviser

of their own before or at the time of parting with money and took advice. Probably, the same persons would have sought careful legal advice if a really needy person sought from them a mortgage loan on the security of his property. But the bogus financier, the fake financier broker, the degenerate Honorary Presidency Magistrate and his detestable companions, all these people obviously invoked so much confidence in the minds of their victims that they, the victims, had no time even to think about a lawyer. This is the fundamental implication of 'white collar crime'.

Answers to Quiz

1. Red, 2. Rs. 10,000, 3. Narinder Batra, 4. 2027, 5. Rajasthan, 6. Sri Lanka, 7. Godavari, 8. International Olympic Committee, 9. Pankaj Advani, 10. Operation Bandar.

11. Joshna Chinnappa, 12. Lakshmi Vilas Bank, 13. Muthu Comics (now Lion-Muthu Comics), 14. *Purananooru* penned by Pisirandaiyaar, 15. Vellakkoil M.P. Saminathan, 16. Sneha, 17. K. Shanmugam IAS and J.K. Tripathy IAS, 18. Sankara Nethralaya, 19. The 12-feet idol will be in that position for 40 days, 20. Uthamadhanapuram in Thanjavur district.

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