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# MADRAS MUSINGS

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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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## What do overseas business visits achieve?

The Chief Minister has just returned after a three-nation tour to promote foreign direct investment in the State. It is perhaps the first in several decades in the history of Tamil Nadu, the last CM to travel abroad being M.G. Ramachandran. The ruling party has been jubilant over the trip while the Opposition has quite naturally criticised the move, asking for a white paper on what has been achieved. There is, of course, much to be said, both for and against such visits, and it all depends on perspective.

While Tamil Nadu may not have seen its CMs travel abroad seeking foreign investments, it

has been common practice in other States. N. Chandrababu Naidu was a frequent traveller and in recent times, Mamata Banerjee too has done the rounds seeking investments in West Bengal. Given that Tamil

● by The Editor

Nadu ranks far higher than most States when it comes to being a destination for industries, the question being asked is whether such a trip is warranted at all. After all, was this not the reason that previous incumbents never felt the need

to move around? To that it can be said that circumstances have since changed and as de facto CEO of a State, the CM does need to travel and show the flag here and there. Moreover the earlier occupants were high-profile personalities in their own right, known among the diaspora, who really comprise the target audiences for such visits. That cannot be said of the present CM and so it is a good publicity exercise as well.

That said, there is nothing wrong in the Opposition asking for a white paper on what was achieved during the visit. Prima facie, the details available in the public domain are scarce and do not point to a strong agenda – a

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## City's infrastructure – a matter of concern

This month, Chennai has seen an alarming number of deaths due to a negligent city administration. 23-year-old B-tech grad Subhasri fell victim to a traffic accident caused by an illegal hoarding at Pallikarai; 14-year-old Dheena was killed by an exposed live wire at Dhanam Nagar, Mugalivakkam neighbourhood; 42-year-old Sethuraj was electrocuted when a damaged electric pole fell on him at Chitlapakkam. As the administration scrambles to take corrective measures, the lack of coordination between state departments is noticeable with officials shying away from assuming responsibility and

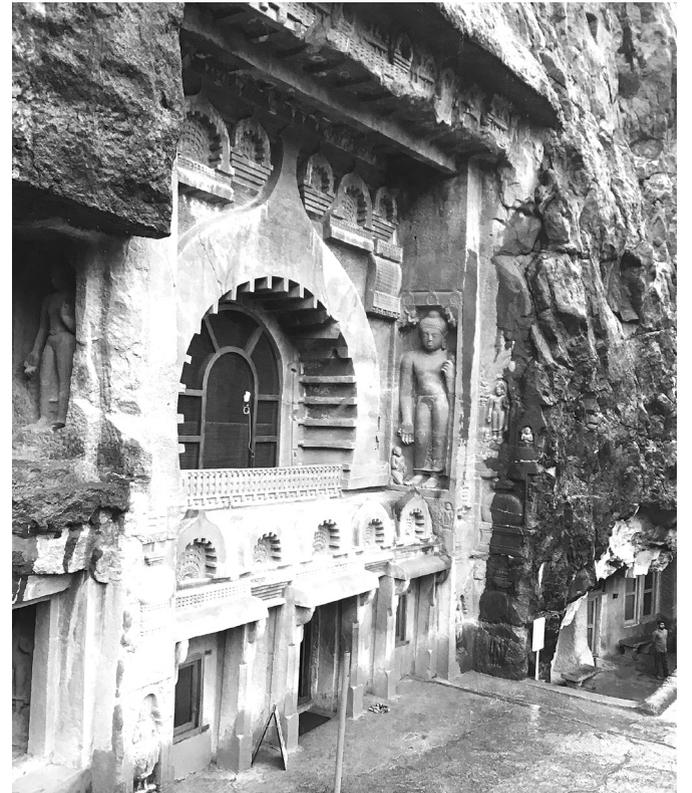
passing the buck among one another.

In Subhasri's case, a flurry of action took place following public outrage. Every stakeholder responsible for the accident, it seems, has been charged. A case has been filed against former AIADMK Councillor S. Jayagopal who erected the illegal hoardings (celebrating his son's wedding) on the Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam radial road. He is still at large, with the police reportedly being 'unable' to trace him. The lorry driver Manoj Yadav, on the other hand, was instantaneously apprehended and arrested. The authorities have promised

stringent action against the printers who make the banners and the High Court has directed the State to give the grieving family a compensatory sum of Rs. 5 lakhs.

● by A Special Correspondent

Additionally, Chennai Corporation conducted a massive, first-of-its-kind exercise where it removed more than 2,000 illegal hoardings in a single day, covering Island Grounds, Lloyds Road, Dr. Radhakrish-



Our OLD, photographed by your editor on a recent visit, is the famed facade of Cave no 9, Ajanta, 1st century BC.

Our (not so) NEW taken in 2009 by V. Ganesan, is Chisholm's design of Senate House's interior, with the arch from Ajanta carefully incorporated.



nan Salai, Kamaraj Salai, Royapettah High Road, Ambattur, Sholinganallur, Perungudi and Thiruvottriyur – this despite stringent rules being in place on such hoardings, all of which the Corporation has adhered to more in the breach. Phone lines have also been set up for citizens to lodge complaints against unauthorised banners and hoardings in the city.

The question remains, however – how did matters

reach this stage? In December 2018, the Corporation had announced that illegal banners had to be removed or persons involved would be subject to a fine of Rs. 5,000 or a year's imprisonment or both. Surely, the authorities who lapsed in enforcing this ban are subject to action as well. However, there has been no talk regarding corrective measures in this regard, yet.

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# Achievements of overseas business

(Continued from page 1)

visit to London to study ambulance facilities and the fight to control malaria there, a visit to Suffolk to see renewable energy facilities, meetings in the US with Foxconn and seeing animal husbandry facilities in that country – none of these really point to anything substantial. Of far greater benefit probably have been the meetings with the Indian diaspora in the US and in Dubai. The Government has since announced that MOUs worth Rs 2,780 crores have been signed. Employment generation projections from these have widely fluctuated from 20,000 to 37,000.

The point to be noted is that these are MOUs – and both parties can back off at anytime. And such big figures, and even bigger ones, have been touted around earlier, with very little materialising. The 2015 investors meet organised by the J. Jayalalithaa government, it was announced, had netted Rs. 2 lakh crore worth of investments. Four years later, very

little of this has translated into reality. Earlier this year, we had another global investors' meet and it was declared that Rs. 3 lakh crore worth of MOUs had been signed. There is no sign of industrial development on that scale anywhere in Tamil Nadu. The Opposition had asked for white papers even then but none has been forthcoming.

On the political front however, the CMs visit has, it is said, achieved more – he has consolidated his position as party leader it is alleged. The party and the Government – which has thus far functioned as a dumvirate, the deputy CM being the significant other – has, it is said, increasingly rallied behind the CM. But that this is not the end of the story is manifest from the fact that several Cabinet Ministers have also announced their intention to travel abroad. On the agenda are matters such as education in Finland, fighting brush fire in Australia and night safaris in the Singapore Zoo. Perhaps the demand for a white paper is not unjustified.

# City's infrastructure – a matter of concern

(Continued from page 1)

In the case of Dheena and Sethuraj, matters are more concerning. Dishearteningly, these accidents seem to have been caused by negligence in maintenance and coordination. Dheena had come into contact with a live wire which had been left behind by workers who had dug up the area to lay wires for streetlights and drainage pipes. The work hadn't been completed, so the live wire was covered with mud and became dislodged during the rains.

Following Sethuraj's death, Electricity Minister P. Thanigamani held a press conference stating that neither death was the TNEB's fault. He said that the live wire Dheena stepped on was part of a streetlight maintained by the Chennai Corporation; and that the electric pole that fell on Sethuraj was brought down by a falling tree branch, which in turn was caused by a truck hitting into the tree.

Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash said that the GCC was not responsible. He did add that investigations were ongoing and promised to take action against corporation officials if they were found cul-

pable. In Dheena's case, fingers have also been pointed at the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) who were doing digging work in the locality.

In the meantime, the NGO Chitlapakkam Rising surveyed its locality and identified close to 60 damaged electric poles. Reportedly, it had lodged complaints with the TNEB last year regarding the faulty poles but was told that the issue couldn't be fixed immediately as the department was understaffed. In the last 24 hours that this article was written, a cow has died in Chitlapakkam from a live wire, which reportedly fell from an electric pole which had been replaced a day before.

As the politics of responsibility play out, members of the public are left wondering where to go for help in these cases. It is reported that the Chennai Smart City project is working on an Integrated Command and Control Centre to integrate the various functionalities of the GCC (see page 5). One hopes that a similar solution will be implemented to aid coordination between State Departments.

# ASI's standard operating procedures

**T**he Man from Madras Musings has come to realise that one of the ways to remain in love with this city of ours is to travel as much as possible to other parts of the country every once in a while and return. Then, after having been bumped around on poor roads, alternately roasted and drenched in the heat and rain, and finally, having suffered practically non-existent public transport, you come to realise that Chennai that was Madras is heaven after all. To quote from a Mughal Emperor, if there be a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.

And everywhere that MMM went, he found that the Archaeological Survey of India has been earlier. This organisation is capable of really good work, but suffers from everything beginning with lack of funding, bureaucracy and a general lassitude. Consequently, its track record is patchy at best, ranging from excellent in a few places to abysmal in most. But no matter how good or bad it is, you cannot fault it on its standard operating procedures that are so inviolate that it is a wonder that this organisation has not yet obtained an ISO certification, something that some of the most inefficient of entities are in possession of.

The obligatory blue board declaring a monument to be protected is one such. MMM is not certain as to what the ASI hopes to achieve by erecting these in front of all the monuments that nominally at least come under its protection. Does it assume that those who come to these places and scratch their initials, phone numbers and messages to loved ones on the immortal plaster or stone, actually pause to read as to which Act of the Government they are likely to be prosecuted under? And even if they did, these boards are often so rusted that they cannot be read. MMM has even seen one planted upside down.

The behaviour of the staff, if they happen to be on the premises at these sites, is a second standard. No matter which part of India you happen to be travelling in, chances are you will come across a bad-tempered person

at the ticket counter, who asks you to tender exact fare, for the ASI does not carry loose change, ever. It is also only with reluctance that tickets will be sold, for by asking for them, you the tourist are preventing the ASI staff from continuing with their reverie. There is very little you can do at ASI monuments, apart from gawking at what is around and wondering as to what it is all about. Very few have any information. But when it comes to what you cannot do, the rule-book is clear and has copious amounts of information. Moreover, the staff themselves are absolute authorities on don'ts – no photography, no videography, no sketching, no singing and no many other things.

The condition of toilets in most ASI-controlled monuments leaves much to be desired. In fact most of these places have no toilets at all, barring the ones for the exclusive use of the ASI officials themselves. These no doubt,

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

are spic and span but MMM has no clue as to where they are.

## Book sales, the ASI way

**I**n keeping with the nature of its activities, the books that the ASI brings out are all of a sound vintage, having been written at least four or five decades ago. To give the ASI credit, it keeps many of these volumes in print but does very little by way of updating information in them. Thus when *The Man from Madras Musings* recently picked up a volume, he was quite surprised to find that it stated that the nearest place of stay for a well-known monument was a Government *dak bungalow*. A quick look at the credits page revealed that the volume was written in the 1950s and has been reprinted several times with the same information! No mention was made of an industrial township that had sprung up in the vicinity in the intervening decades, with plenty of hotels in operation. In any case, who would want to stay in a *dak bungalow* in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

As to how MMM bought the book in question is quite a story by itself. He and his good lady were visiting a monument and by the ticket counter was a publications counter where a man of sage-like aspect was meditating. He could well afford to do so, for the last customer had evidently come there quite a few years earlier. But on display were some very interesting publications. MMM expressed his desire to purchase a couple and it was with

great reluctance that the salesperson, if he could be termed that, got up, stretched himself, and fetched the books. These were the only copies left he said with some lugubrious pride. He also added most helpfully that some of the pages were damaged. MMM said he did not mind and so could he know the price. The man busied himself with paper and pencil and after some considerable addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, not to forget the application of square roots and some algebraic equation, came up with a ridiculously low figure. The prices, like the content of the books, had not been updated in decades. MMM asked if he was quite sure and to this the man, assuming that MMM was finding the price to be high, said that no bargaining was allowed and so if MMM did not want the books he, the salesperson, would be quite happy to put them away. MMM hastened to assure him that this was not the case and it was just that he found the prices to be too low.

It was at this moment that MMM's good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed, observed that given the amount of time that had been wasted at the counter there was very little left to see the monument and considering the weight of the books asked if it would not be better to buy them on the way back. This was agreed to and MMM and good lady wandered off to admire the monument. When they returned it was to find that the sage had vanished and there was a new hermit in his place. This one had clearly not quite conquered anger and brusquely informed MMM that the volumes he desired were not in stock. What about the ones that MMM had seen in the morning, asked MMM. To this the man replied that he, MMM was clearly mistaken, for there were no such books in stock as far as he, the salesperson could remember, in his thirty years of service. MMM was about to turn away when his good lady fixed the counterperson with a beady eye and drew his attention to the two books in a shelf by the side. She had, she later informed MMM, had seen the earlier incumbent of the high office of book sales, placing them in that cupboard.

And so, MMM did come away with the books, but not before a long-winded billing process involving all the mathematics mentioned above, to which some integral and differential calculus was added. MMM was also asked to sign a register and furnish several personal details. But he did get the books.

–MMM



## OUR READERS WRITE



### Modi-Xi in Mamallapuram

I was pleasantly surprised as well as pleased to read in a recent newspaper that a meeting between Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping will occur sometime soon.

Pleased because a dialogue between the two emerging powers is most timely and a welcome element.

Pleasantly surprised because the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Government of India has finally chosen a section of Madras, viz., Mahabalipuram, as the venue for this meeting.

The choice of Mahabalipuram is indeed most appropriate because the Pallava King Mahendra Varman (c. 7th Century AD) received Xuanzang a.k.a Yuan Chwang, a Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar and

traveller. We know too well that Xuanzang's entourage and travels brought several Chinese cultural elements into Southern India, e.g., playing string-driven tops (*pambaram*) and *vallam kali* (dragon boat racing of China). In turn, these visits encouraged many southern Indians, especially Tamils, to travel to ancient China (e.g., Bodhidharma).

We should also recall that many Malay Chinese (prisoners) from the overflowing jails of the Straits Settlements were moved and settled in Naduvattam (The Nilgiris), when the quinine yielding plants were established. These relocated prisoners were used as 'labour' in these fledgling plantations. I am not referring to the so-called 'dentists' in the China

Bazaar area in Madras CBD presently, because such practitioners abounded in Calcutta and Bombay at this time.

I hope both the governments of India and Tamil Nadu will utilize the knowledge of Joe T. Karackattu, who knows southern India-China cultural links too well. Joe Karackattu lectures in IIT (Madras) in the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences. He can be reached at (044) 2257 4541 and via email: joe@iitm.ac.in.

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### Memories of First Drama Conference and Refugees

I am a regular reader of *Madras Musings* since many years. I am in my 90th year and was taken on a pleasant journey of nostalgia by the article *Behind the Scenes at Tamil Nadu's First Drama Conference* (MM. Vol. XXIX, 11/2019). I was in Erode during 1940-44, a student at the Mahajana High School. I remember the dramas of 'TKS

Brothers' such as *Sampoorna Ramayanam*, *Manithan*, *Krishna Leela* and, of course, *Avvaiyar*. We lived in 'Cutcherry Street', next to Maniyakarar's house and Dr. M. Krishnaswami. He was a friend of the TKS Bros. and they visited him sometimes. Dr. Krishnaswami's family were our good friends too. We learnt that Muthuswami, one of the four TKS Bros., played the 'Sthree Part' in their dramas. A few days back a friend told me that Sri Muthuswami's grand-daughter was the one who has translated the now bestselling book *Sapiens* (by Yuval Noah Haran). The subject of *Sapiens* is not easy to be translated – it is a scientific one – and surely the intellectual genes have been passed on.

It is of no purpose to recall that the Periyar disciples threatened boys like me being 'pappara pasanga' and we were somewhat living in fear on our way to school. Those were turbulent times. Several families were uprooted from Burma (1941-44), Malaya – it was a time of war – and several

'refugees' and relatives of Indians in these countries came by foot from Burma all the way along the Coast; many narrated their sufferings and several died in the course of this travel. They were paupers when they reached India (Madras).

As a young boy then I heard their sufferings and so when now I hear of refugees and uprooting of persons in Assam, the Rohingyas migrations, etc., I feel sad; are we right to turn back people who come seeking succour? My own uncle and family fled from Karachi (where they were living, for years happily) during the 'early days' of partition. These sorrowful events are before my eyes even now. Has man learnt anything from the past? Much is spoken of 'sons of the soil'; there are hundreds and hundreds of 'Madrasis' who have made their fortunes in Bombay, Calcutta, Nagpur, Delhi. Would we like all of them to be returned?

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# Restorer of vintage cars

Post-retirement, most people opt for conventional hobbies or go spiritual to keep themselves busy. My friend Chittoor Subramaniam Ananth (C.S. Ananth) chose an eclectic hobby – restoration of vintage cars. A hobby, nay a business, which calls for a deep understanding of automobiles and the passion to seek new knowledge to deliver on client promises. A man who had thought Automobile Engineering irrelevant and chose Chemical engineering for his degree instead, Ananth never imagined that he would one day be considered a vintage car wizard.

Born in Calicut, he studied at the Madras Christian College school before joining A.C. College of Technology. His first job was with Union Carbide India as an Engineer Management Trainee. During his stint at Carbide in Mumbai, he was selected to be a part of the Official

Car Rally Team. This gave him an opportunity to learn about cars as he had to be associated with the preparation of the rally car. After Carbide and a brief stint as a businessman, he joined the Chennai-based UCAL group where he rose to become the CEO. Though his retirement plans were to travel and play golf and tennis, his son prodded him to buy two vintage cars – a Morris (1936) and a Fiat (1936). Ananth entrusted the restoration of the cars to an engineer who had a workshop. When he realized that there was hardly any progress even after waiting for 2 years, he decided to restore the cars himself, which involved a lot of research and hard work. In 2005, both the cars won first prizes in their respective categories at a show held by Madras Heritage Motoring Club, which Ananth had founded with a few others. Coincidentally, he received

these prizes from his celebrity son-in-law, chess wizard Vishwanathan Anand, who was the chief guest at the function. Ananth was delighted beyond words. Thus began his tryst with vintage cars.

Ananth said, "Based on my success at restoring cars, a few friends approached me to restore their cars. One of them was A. Sivasailam, Chairman of the Amalgamations Group. Since I was entering the world of commercial restoration of cars, I was advised by my auditors to register a company. I

by  
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spent three months to develop a proper business model with clear standard operating procedures (SOP). TEAM CSA was born in January 2007 and it consisted of mechanics, body beaters, painters, an electrician and an upholsterer."

While he was trying to establish TEAM CSA, tragedy struck when he was diagnosed with cancer of the bile duct. The next two years saw him fighting the disease. He reopened his garage in 2010, located in the spacious compound of his beautiful home in Neelankarai.

Ananth continued, "I was touched by the fact that Sivasailam was waiting patiently for me to recover and do the restoration of his car – a 1947 Riley." It won the best restored car in its category in the 2010 Madras

show. There was no turning back. More cars followed and Ananth found himself working full time restoring. What he started as a hobby had become a business. In the last 12 years, he has restored 70+ cars including a Ford Model T, a Jaguar, a Plymouth and a Rolls Royce of 1935 vintage. TEAM CSA became one of the top car restorers in India.

Unlike a few fly-by-night car restorers, Ananth believes in high quality execution without making any compromises, which makes him constantly seek information to improve his knowledge on the subject. In August 2013, Ananth went to Germany to get special training from the largest restorer of cars. But, none of the materials they used in Germany were available in India. Thus began a long search for substitutes. In the year 2014, Ananth spent a few lakhs on R&D for improving TEAM CSA's process. "With import substituted materials, our fit and finish has reached global standards," says Ananth.

Among his many celebrity clients was the Maharaja of Udaipur who got his Triumph Car restored by Ananth. It is now in the museum at the Maharaja's palace. He is also a consultant for the Gee Dee car museum in Coimbatore.

In 2013, cars restored by TEAM CSA won several prizes at the Chennai show. According to Ananth, the crowning glory came in 2017. He explained, "We had completed the restoration of a 1914 Benz,



C.S. Ananth – A man who gives new life to vintage cars.

which is only one among the 3 such cars surviving in the world. According to Mercedes Benz, Stuttgart, this car was beyond restoration. TEAM CSA took on the challenge and restored the car to almost 100% originality. It won the first prize in its class at the 21 Gun Salute International Show in 2017 in Delhi. I was delighted when at the same show, a 1947 MG which was restored by TEAM CSA also won the first prize in its class. The foreign experts who judged this car could not find even a single non-original part in the car."

While he gained recognition in the form of prizes for his restored cars, Ananth was frequently invited to be a judge at vintage car contests held across the world. He was the Chief Judge for international shows at Malaysia and Singapore, besides assisting judges at a prestigious show in France. He was also one of the judges at the 21 Gun Salute International Rally held in Delhi.

Recently, Ananth was invited by the international body of historic vehicles,

(Continued on page 4)



One of Ananth's best restorations, a 1948 Plymouth, owned by a historic Chennai company now.

# Once a centre of learning – Thiruvottriyur

Today Thiruvottriyur is better known for its factories and the problem of sea erosion. The religious minded know of the temple of Adipuriswara/Padampakkanathar and Tripurasundari and those in South Chennai are forever planning to visit it some day. The shrine itself, large by city standards, presents a strangely unplanned layout. The two sanctums, one to the Lord and the other to the Goddess, were once separate temples and unified into one unit at some unspecified date. A wall now encloses both and in between the two is a third shrine to Thiruvotreeswarar, built in the late 19th/early 20th Centuries. The main gopuram to enter the temple complex was built to align with the last-named sanctum and so has no

spatial connect with the two older shrines. Add a whole lot of later un-aesthetic constructions, and you today have a rambling complex devoid of any cohesion. Worse, it detracts completely from the sanctum of Adipuriswara and the pavilion dedicated to the lord as Tyagaraja which fronts it, both being of great beauty.

What is also strange is that the surrounding streets too do not appear to bear any connection with the temple, which considering that Mylapore and Thiruvallikeni retain their links with their respective shrines despite the depredations going on, is rather puzzling. A casual read of historic accounts however tells us that this was not always the case. Thiruvottriyur was a centre of great learning with plenty of monasteries surrounding the shrine, at least till the 16th Century CE or so. That almost nothing survives of these great schools is an indication of how much we have lost.

K.V. Raman, in his *Early History of the Madras Region*, writes that Thiruvottriyur has a continuous history going back to the 7th Century and two hundred and odd inscriptions record its development almost until contemporary times. As per the scholar, donors came from all over the country, including Kashmir! In the 10th Century came Niranjana Guruvar, who built a temple here dedicated to Niranjaneswarattu

## LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI – SRIRAM V

Mahadevan – a name that suggests that the benefactor was from Kerala. He established a math here to teach the Soma Siddhanta of the Pasupatha cult and that attracted many monks. One of those who came to study there was Chaturanana Panditha, who as Guru Vallabha had been the preceptor to Rajaditya, the elder son of Parantaka Chola I (907-953AD). When that prince was killed in the battle against the Rashtrakutas at Takkolam, Vallabha took to monastic orders, being known thereafter as Chaturanana Panditha. In due course he became the head of a Soma Siddhanta Math at Thiruvottriyur and after him, it would appear that a series of pontiffs, all of them taking the same name, headed the establishment. In the 12th Century, a Vagisha Panditha was also associated with the same math. The poet Kamban who lived at the same time and composed his *Ramayana* at Thiruvottriyur, is also said to have been a devotee of this monastery which was also known as Thirumayana Matha. The head pontiff of the Math had a say in the management of the temple and kept an eye on its accounts as well.

That women too established centres of learning here is evident from an inscription that says Ariyammai, wife of Prabhakara Bhatta who came from Margapura in Aryadesa (somewhere in North India), established the Rajendra Cholan Math at Thiruvottriyur. According to Dr. V. Raghavan, it is very likely that Ariyammai and her husband were part of a large migration from the banks of the Ganga to the south, following Rajendra Chola's conquest. By the 11th Century, the Kulothunga Cholan Matha, named after the regnant monarch, came up here and a village was given to it so that it could support fifty devotees each day. In the 13th Century, with the Chola power on the wane and independent rulers coming up, we hear of Vijayaganda Gopala Deva, ruler of Kanchi, endowing the Thirugnana Sambandha Matha at Thiruvottriyur with a village in Puzhal, for the feeding of a sub sect of Shiva devotees – the Maheswaras. In the 14th Century, an Angarayana Matha had come up here, at the behest of the Vijayanagar ruler Harihara II. Women from the courtesan community had their teaching centres here too, with the seniors being responsible for passing on their learning to the younger members of the sect.

Both Sanskrit and Tamil were taught at the temple. In keeping with the belief that it was here that Panini received the fourteen Maheswara Sutras from Shiva himself, a grammar school flourished in the shrine for the propagation of Sanskrit. The institution functioned from the Vyakaranadana Vyakhyana Mandapa here and it was known in Tamil as the Vakkanikkum Mandapam. Tamil was greatly encouraged by the continued singing of *Thevaram* and *Thiruvempavai* for which King Virarajendra I (11th Century CE) reclaimed sixty veli (roughly 360 acres)



The pavilion to Shiva-Tyagesa, Thiruvottriyur.

become what it is now. The famed singer Bangalore Nagarathnamma was a munificent donor to it. Today it has clearly seen better days and the priest has no idea of what the place was once. Not far from here is a street that bears the name Nandiodai Periya Thottam – clearly a garden that belonged to this monastery at one time.

Present-day Thiruvottriyur gives no indication of what it was in its heyday. But scattered around the four streets are stone slabs with carvings that may on closer inspection yield a story or two.

This article owes much to two sources:

*Early History of the Madras Region* by Prof K.V. Raman, Amudha Nilayam, 1959

*Madras and Tamil Nadu, an Anthology of the writings of Dr. V. Raghavan*, Dr. V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts, 2016

## RESTORATION OF VINTAGE CARS

(Continued from page 3)

FIVA (Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens) – a worldwide organisation dedicated to the preservation, protection and promotion of historic vehicles and related culture – to be an advisor on its legislation commission in order to address the restrictions imposed on historic vehicles by various Governments. Ananth is the first Indian to be invited to the FIVA panel. With the support of FIVA, a team led by Ananth has presented a

memorandum to The Union Ministry of Transport, regarding legislation concerning historical vehicles in India. Its success has the potential to be Ananth's single biggest contribution to the vintage car fraternity.

At 75, Ananth is not sure how long he can continue to work 8 to 10 hours a day pursuing his passion for restoring cars. But I am sure he will continue as a useful member of the local & international bodies devoted to vintage cars.

## Thank you, Donors

We today, publish donations received with thanks for the period upto September.

– The Editor

**Rs. 100:** Mrs. P.L. Reddy, A. Meenakshisundaram, A. Uthandaraman, S. Nadana Guru, P. Srivathsan, Dr. G. Sundaram

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# Smart Chennai – a discussion

**The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the Smart Cities Mission in 2015, which aims to execute 'smart solutions' that help develop cities in a people-friendly, sustainable way. Chennai Smart City Limited (CSCL) is the local arm of this initiative. It is also the organisation behind the upcoming Pedestrian Plaza at T-Nagar and other key projects. Madras Musings had a chat with its CEO, Raj Cherubal.**

## What is your vision of a Smart Chennai?

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has the concept of a liveability index, which basically focuses on improving the quality of life. Electronics, IoT (Internet of Things) etc. are just tools that help us do the job better. Ultimately, the concept of 'smart' is to improve the quality of life in an inclusive, sustainable way so all members of society can benefit.

## What should be Chennai's top priorities? What are the biggest projects in CSCL's portfolio at the moment?

In any Indian city, pretty much everything needs repair. Chennai Smart City has worked on various aspects.

For example, water is a key issue. We're restoring 210 water bodies under the Corporation, including the gigantic 25-acre Villivakam Tank, which is a huge achievement. The Greater Chennai Corporation is also doing a lot of work on storm water drains and Chennai Smart City has helped with a few missing links here. Parking management is also an extremely important project.

Apart from these, we are working on the Integrated Command and Control Centre project which involves a lot of data collection – the idea is to use Analytics, AI etc. to improve governance. Rain gauges, flood sensors etc. are being

installed under this project, which will involve hardware as well as integration of data with other departments.

We've installed solar rooftops on Corporation buildings and established 28 smart classrooms in Corporation schools. We're also beginning work on a mega traffic management system, partly funded by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). The project involves studying 350 junctions in Chennai and we will implement solutions in 154 by leveraging analytics to optimise traffic management. It will include automatic signals and installing GPS systems on MTC buses so passengers can figure out when the next bus is coming and so on.

## What are some of the unique challenges that Chennai is facing in implementing Smart City projects?

Almost all Indian cities have similar problems – the systems' capability to coordinate among various departments is low. Luckily, Chennai has already done quite a bit of homework over the past few years in various fields – footpath projects, water body restoration, solid waste management etc. So, when the Smart City opportunity came along, we were able to do a lot of good work.

For instance, Pedestrian Plaza, Traffic Management, Vehicle Sharing etc. were old projects that were explored many years ago. After multiple attempts and experimentation, they hadn't taken off. They are now coming on well thanks to past experience.

## So, Chennai was better prepared for implementation?

Yes, because compared to many other cities, Chennai has better coordination between departments like Corporation of Chennai, TANGEDCO, Metro Water and so on. There

are also a lot of experts like architects and consultants who know how to implement these kinds of projects. So even though it is difficult, Smart City projects are coming along well – Pedestrian Plaza is almost complete, Parking Management project is beginning etc. These things would have been impossible if Chennai hadn't had past experience with pilot projects.

## It is interesting to know that Pedestrian Plaza is actually an old project – some have the impression that it is a new project spearheaded by the CSCL.

Yes. Work had actually been going on for 8-9 years. The projects have been at various stages of planning. Due to lack of funds and other reasons, they didn't take off. But the NGOs, government officials etc. have been doing their homework on this for almost 8 years.

● by  
Varsha Venugopal

## What is the main goal behind expanding the footpath? What is the larger plan for T-Nagar?

It is not just widening the footpath. This is a congested commercial area. Shopkeepers should do well and at the same time, the public should have a place to hang out and enjoy life – except for the beach and the mall, there are no such spaces. In that sense, this is meant to be a public space, an open mall. We're bringing in furniture, play equipment for children, wall paintings to beautify the place etc. Most importantly, parking management is also being implemented there. So is cycle sharing, so passengers can connect between metro rail and buses easily – for example, people can come via the Metro Rail, take a cycle to the Pedestrian Plaza and shop.

In addition, we also worked on the storm water drains – there's underground ducting there. Hopefully, the road shouldn't be dug up again for the next 30 years. It's not simply a footpath widening project – there's a lot of different elements to it.

## It was earlier proposed that Sir Theyagaroya Road would become a pedestrian zone. Is it true that the shopkeepers objected and so this wide footpath became a compromise?

No. We haven't given any commitment that this will be a pedestrian-only zone either. At the moment, we're doing work in phases. All such gigantic projects are implemented in phases – it is not easy to get from where it is now to the end point in one shot. For example, we're building a multi-level carpark there. We're going to be installing hundreds of cameras etc. to automate street parking - an app will tell you where parking is available and so on. We're also planning to charge for parking so only serious shoppers park in the spaces.

## How is the expanded footpath to be protected?

We will implement a parking management system – if people park on the footpath etc, the car will get locked. As mentioned, we will also charge for parking.

Apart from that, we're getting an operations company to take care of two major parts. First, maintenance - if the paint chips or anything needs to be repaired, for instance. Second, event management to conduct music, cultural events, to attract people. As for hawkers – the High Court has said that the area is a no-hawker zone. So, the Corporation will anyway implement the court order.

We're also testing out technology as a solution. For instance, we've seen in pilots that cameras can detect when shops extend onto the footpath.

## Why has the Pedestrian Plaza become a greater priority than garbage disposal, water conservation and traffic discipline?

Garbage is a massive subject that was kept out of Smart City on purpose because there were some big tenders happening in parallel. We purposely didn't take it up because we didn't want to do a half-baked job. In any case, as far as Pedestrian Plaza is concerned, some work has happened. That entire area is becoming zero waste. All the bins have been removed. The shops keep their waste outside and it gets collected in the morning, not the evening. The shopkeepers work with the Corporation to segregate waste and so on.

Also, we're in the process of starting 24-hour water supply in

T-Nagar – we'll manage water better by fixing leaks, smart metering etc. Similarly, TANGEDCO is just about to start using smart meters for electricity. Today, someone has to go and check the meter manually but in a smart meter the process is electronic and information can get sent through the internet. It translates to a lot of savings in money, prevention of leakage, theft etc. At the same time, the data will help TANGEDCO improve the quality, voltage etc. of the area.

Additionally, not just the Pedestrian Plaza but even the other major thoroughfares – Venkatnarayana road, GN Chetty road, Usman road etc. – are getting upgraded. Not as fancy as Pedestrian Plaza, but similar principles are being implemented to improve walking, parking, facilities and so on.

## What has been the Plaza's impact on traffic?

Traffic discipline is a much bigger problem. First of all, when you redesign the road where people can walk on the footpath, manage parking intelligently etc. – that itself segregates fast-moving vehicles from slow-moving ones and people, which improves traffic flow to some extent.

Beyond that, traffic discipline is a much bigger problem. Changing a few footpaths and junctions won't change it dramatically – we need more buses, metro rails etc.

## It's not an area specific problem, it's a connectivity problem that spans the whole city.

Exactly. For example, in T-Nagar, once the planned work is done, it will be far easier for people to walk in T-Nagar, park better in T-Nagar and so on. But the traffic itself is originating in different parts of the city. Just by doing a little bit here and there in one part of the city is not going to change the traffic problem. For that, the city needs to invest in more buses, more connectivity to metro rail – more metro rail in fact.

At the same time, for all this to work, you do need things like a parking management system etc. And as part of Smart City, some of those things have happened.

## How are Chennai's citizens contributing to and supporting CSCL initiatives?

Wherever possible, we work with the residents, agencies, consultants etc. For example, we have many NGOs helping us with many of the water body restoration projects. They in turn work with the local people. For the Pedestrian Plaza project, we worked closely with the shopkeepers who are a tremendous source of support – they're happy to get involved in operations and management etc. We do our best to get the local people involved.



The Pedestrian Plaza.

Quizzin'  
with  
Ram'nan

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

1. Which Indian film was listed in the "The Guardian list of the 100 Best Films of the 21st Century"?
2. Which Indian won his World record-improving 22nd World title in Myanmar recently?
3. According to a recent United Nations panel finding, USA, France, UK and Iran may be complicit in war crimes in which Asian country?
4. Who gave Canada its first Grand Slam singles tennis title recently?
5. Name the long-standing, much-criticised leader of Zim-babwe who died aged 95 recently.
6. US adventurer and millionaire financier Victor Vescovo has become the first person to do what feat?
7. UNESCO has decided to translate and publish an anthology of writings of which religious order's founder in world languages to commemorate his 550th birth anniversary?
8. Who recently, at the age of 20 years and 350 days, became the youngest captain in Test cricket?
9. Which place in Jammu and Kashmir has been named country's 'Best Swachh Iconic Place'?
10. The Union Health Ministry has announced plans to set up National Genomic Grid for the research purpose of which disease?

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11. Why was Sri Kulasekaramudaiyar Temple of Kallidaikurichi in the news recently?
12. For what mega project have Thiruporur, Cheyyar, Vallathur, Thodur, Maduramangalam and Mappedu been short-listed?
13. Artefacts found in which place in Sivagangai district have determined a possible link between the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation and Tamil Brahmi, the precursor to modern Tamil?
14. Why is September 17, 1949 an epochal date in Tamil Nadu politics?
15. According to popular lore, actor Nagaiah founded which institution after seeing some people huddled, braving the rain, at a bus-stop to go for a kacheri at Mylapore?
16. After which activist is the Loane Square Garden on Broadway named?
17. How does one better know Kuppaswamy Iyer of Pattamadai who once practised in Malaya before finding his life's calling in Rishikesh?
18. Which famous establishment in George Town was established by M.C. Cunnann Chetty in the mid-1920s?
19. In which institution did Dr. Andrew Bell develop what became known as the Madras System of Education?
20. In which area did the famous Giacomo d'Angelis make the first flight in Madras in March 1910?

(Answers on page 7)

# Roses, foxhounds and schoolgirls in uniform – Remnants of the Raj

● This article by Ann Leslie dating to the 1990s and its introductory note, handwritten by Mr. S. Muthiah (alongside) were recently discovered among our papers. We are reproducing them here as a tribute to our founder.

"At the Ooty club we still like to maintain our traditional standards," the Secretary, Mrs. Nergish Patel, told me firmly through a cloud of cigarette smoke, while handing me a warming brandy-and-hot-water.

Ooty may be only 11 degrees north of the Equator, but at 7,400 ft high above the baking plains of Southern India, it can be so cold that my Raj-era hotel, the Savoy, has log fires in its cottage bedrooms.

Mrs. Patel was quite shocked that I should imagine that standards might have slipped since Independence. I mean, just because the Raj disappeared 50 years ago, that's no reason why the Ootacamund Club – once the most prestigious institution in 'Snooty Ooty', the 'Queen of the British Hill Stations' – should let any old riffraff through its grand white portals.

"Oh, we're still very strict here!" said Mrs. Patel who had even thrown out the novelist and British media-world power-broker Farrukh Dhondy. The distinguished Mr. Dhondy, on a trip to India, fancied a chotapeg, a little drink, among the moth-eaten tiger-skins and jackal heads of the club.

"But he was not wearing a jacket and tie!" said Mrs. Patel. "He was wearing a *salwar kameez*! So of course I threw him out even though he is one of my cousins!" And even though virtually all the members of the Ooty Club, including its charming president, Mr. Stasp Kothavala, are now Indians – for whom, therefore, a *salwar kameez* should be acceptable dress.

But the Ooty Club's rules are the rules of the Raj – and that's the way its Indian members like it. As one surviving British member, 77-year-old tea-planter Bill Craig-Jones, told me: "Many members like to be more British than the British!" In fact, had I not had a formal 'Letter of Introduction' from a club member, the feisty Mrs. Patel, on behalf of her 'more-British-than-the-British' Indian members, would have thrown me out, too. She'd have been quite undeterred by the fact that the Ooty Club,

founded in 1841 and once the social hub of the Raj's oldest hill station, is completely empty for most of the year – as it was that night.

In the sepulchral dining room, a club servant, with great formality, served Mrs. Patel and me an English five-course dinner, carefully typed onto a menu card bearing the Ooty Club antlers.

The ghostliness of the dark-panelled room was enhanced by the unsettling presence of endless photographs of past Masters of the Hounds of the Ootacamund Hunt, once the most famous in all the Raj.

There they sit, these large, blue-eyed burra-sahibs with walrus moustaches, gazing confidently out through the ears of their horses at Ooty's undulating Wenlock Downs: they must have thought that this way of life would never end. India was theirs, Ooty was theirs, the everlasting Empire was theirs.

These burra-sahibs and their memsahibs had set about creating an eternal England-in-India dream.

Many, especially women and children died – thanks to the plague, typhoid, 'jungle fever' – as they struggled to create Cheltenham in an alien land.

Their graves and memorials still exist in St. Stephen's Church – whose teak columns were looted from the palace of the defeated warrior Tippu Sultan. For example, poor Georgina Wroughton, who died in 1847 "aged 30, leaving her husband and seven children to deplore their irreparable loss."

They, and so many young men, were all sacrificed for the cause of Empire – and,

whatever one now feels about our subjugation of millions of people around the world, these Imperial tragedies remain intensely moving.

British soldiers, whose fever-destroyed corpses so often filled these graveyards of Empire, called cemeteries like this 'padre's godowns' (warehouses). St. Stephen's padre is now an affable young Indian, and his 'godown' of forgotten sahibs and memsahibs and their baba-log, baby people, is crumbling into oblivion. But the Ooty Club staunchly prefers to preserve its ghosts, even though, confesses Mrs. Patel, "when I first came here I did wonder whether I could live in a place full of these old dead men and so many dead animals on the walls."

She cheerfully downed another brandy as yet another portion of over-boiled Brussels sprouts (introduced to India by the Brits) was served. "But it's full of wonderful old books, first editions of Charles Dickens, the Brontes and so on." And perhaps the mustachioed masters of hounds felt they'd earned the right to live here for ever.

After all, it was the British who 'discovered' it (although it belonged to a now almost extinct aboriginal tribe, the peaceable, toga-wearing and polyandrous Todas – of whom, as a child, I was mistakenly terrified). Two young surveyors had hacked their way up through miles of mosquito-infested jungle and discovered a paradise of rolling grassy hills, waterfalls, butterflies and wild flowers.

Soon paradise acquired a railway – a little rack-railway 'toy train' which still, as in

my childhood, is pushed up painfully into the cool, blue mountains by one of the last two steam trains left in India.

The 54-mile journey up from the plains takes almost four hours and the little Victorian engine, gasping and snorting, needs lots of stops to recover, or to avoid sacred cows, or herds of black monkeys or absentminded villagers picking flowers on the line.

Once Ooty became the summer headquarters of Britain's Madras Presidency, its hillsides were covered with little gabled and fretworked Victorian villas, with names like Iris Cottage, Westbury Villa and Sunnyside, which – shabby and stained with monsoon moss – still survive in this now-cacophonous Indian town. Here, apart from the plethora of servants, the masters of the Raj could forget they were in India at all. They imported plants from Britain – roses, peach trees, apples, gorse bushes, pines, or strawberries.

By 1876, the Viceroy Lord Lytton could write ecstatically to his wife: 'Imagine Hertfordshire lanes, Devonshire downs, Westmorland lakes, Scotch trout streams!' He even loved the Ooty monsoon: 'Such beautiful English rain, such delicious English mud!' Lord Macaulay, author of *The Lays Of Ancient Rome*, began writing the mammoth Indian Penal Code here.

By the time I came to school here in Ooty, the confident Raj of Macaulay, Lytton, and Lord Curzon had died, but the Raj habits lingered on. The British Army had

(Continued on page 7)

An article that's more than 20 years old but still an enjoyable read, <sup>it finds</sup> and many memories appear in the

There are roses, foxhounds and schoolgirls in uniform. Fifty years after the British sahibs left India, the Empire lives on in Snooty Ooty. A TOP MAIL WRITER RETURNS TO INDIA, WHERE SHE SPENT HER CHILDHOOD, AND DISCOVERS THAT SOME PARTS OF THE RAJ HAVE NEVER DIED.

Daily Mail (London) on August 12, 1997 and was recently <sup>sent</sup> ~~reprinted~~ to me by a <sup>former</sup> ~~former~~ Raj writer who had caught up with the author, who had followed <sup>in the</sup> Independence Day. The author, who had been born in India, had returned to discover what her life was like 50 years after the Raj had left.

Byline: ANN LESLIE

FIFTY years ago this Thursday, the British Raj in India - which had lasted fewer than 200 years - died at the stroke of midnight. As India celebrates the Golden Jubilee of her Independence this week, ANN LESLIE, born in India during the last years of the Raj, returns to the land of her birth to see whether any of that Raj still survives in the hearts and minds of those millions we once ruled.

AT THE ... our traditional star

# REMNANTS OF THE RAJ

(Continued from page 6)

gone home, the British civil servants, too – at the height of Empire, a mere 1,000 of them administered one-fifth of humankind, a ratio of two British bureaucrats to every four million Indians.

But some of us stayed on in the ‘new’ India. Every Hot Weather, when temperatures rose to 110°F, and the plains shimmered and rang like a vast brass gong under the hammer blows of the sun, we’d head joyously for the hills.

Memsahibs, like my mother, of the now-gone Raj – like their sisters before them – would pack up their tweeds, their white cardies and their gardening gloves and, in a cloud of mothballs and small children like me, pile into long-distance trains, and head up into some corner of that foreign field which was forever Esher.

The annals of the Ooty Hunt, I noticed, still adorn the Ooty Club.

But surely, I thought, the Ooty Hunt must now be defunct. I was wrong. “We still have seven or eight meets a year!” according to the only surviving European member, Craig-Jones. And who keeps it going? The Indian Army, based at nearby Wellington Barracks.

“Tremendous riders, these chaps.” But, “oh, yes, of course they wear the traditional hunting pink! And we have the stirrup cup – which is provided

by the Indian Army as well!” The courtly Mr. Mahendra Ahluwalia, manager of the Savoy, lays on the traditional Hunt Breakfast.

But why bother? After all, there’s nothing to hunt these days. Overpopulation, and the growth of industry, have largely driven the wildlife out of these once idyllic hills. Even the jackals, which the British hunted instead of foxes, have retreated; there’s not been a ‘kill’ of anything, apart from the odd rabbit, for years.

“But the Ooty Hunt is part of our tradition!” exclaimed Mr Ahluwalia, shocked, like Mrs Patel, at my assumption that modern India would reject her Raj heritage.

The present Huntsman, a tiny, little Indian called Mr Pakyanathan, speaks no English, but is still intensely proud of his tattered hunting-pink coat, his tinny hunting horn, and his pack of foxhounds, descended from those imported here in the last century. Even the names remain relentlessly English: Albert, Gallant, Unicorn, Amanda.

And, astonishingly for me, my old Ooty school, St Hilda’s School for Girls – once all-English, now all-Indian – carries on as if the past 50 years of Indianisation had never happened. Same grey uniform, same 16-bed dormitories, even the same Sunday breakfast of puffed rice and boiled eggs.

The same compulsory services in chapel – even though 90 per cent of the children are non-Christians.

And the same school magazine, the *Clarion*, still issues a hearty “Congrats to Carmichael House for their horse-like stamina that won them the Cross Country Cup!”

Whew, what a run! “Why?” asked one of the saree-clad teachers, “Should St Hilda’s change just because India is independent?” Why indeed? St. Hilda’s is 100 years old – and independent India a mere 50. Where once bossy little prefects called Sarah and Penny dished out ‘lines’ to the juniors, now bossy little Sangeetas and Sonalis do the same.

Mrs. Bessie Collison, the Indian headmistress – who delighted in showing me, “an old Hildite”, around – may wear a saree, but Miss Hall, my old headmistress, would feel she was a worthy successor to ‘Hildite’ tradition.

To my further amazement, Higginbotham’s the bookseller still exists – where, I’m told, one can still order a copy of *First Steps Tamil*, published in 1922 by missionaries, and still reprinted. It contains such immortal ‘conversations’ as: ‘Yonder I see an elephant standing. How did it come here?’ Second Person: ‘It is not a true -elephant. It is a monolithic sculpture.’ First Person: ‘My eyes deceived me. The deftness of the hands of the sculptors is something marvellous.’



The Old Church, Ootacamund, Nilgieries. Photo credit: most likely by ATW Penn, now in the T. Stanes collection.

My own Indian idyll came to an end four years after Independence because of a panther and a rabid dog. The panther had streaked out of the mossy woods where I was taking a friend’s small Maltese terrier for a walk.

The terrier’s lead was dragged from my hand, his little body was never found, and I suddenly felt a terrible sense of foreboding.

I’d recently been bitten by a stray dog in Charing Cross, the centre of Ooty (and had to endure three weeks of agonising anti-rabies injections).

And I knew that the hungry panther and the rabid dog meant that I would probably now be sent ‘Home’ – as the British in India always called England – never to live in India again.

And thus it happened. I was nine-and-a-half years old,

had been at boarding schools all over India since I was four. But those schools were in India: now I was going ‘Home’ into exile. And my heart broke. As it broke for so many who earlier had to leave India, and who never felt truly at home anywhere else again.

Some even returned, like tea-planter Craig-Jones, who bought a farm near Andover in Hampshire in the 1960s. “And then one day I told my wife Dorothy: ‘I’m going to pack now.’ And she said: ‘Where are you going?’ – and I said ‘Home.’ And she said: ‘I’m coming, too!’ Because ‘Home’ was no longer England for us, it was India.” For a moment, my eyes filled with tears, because here, in what’s left of the old eucalyptus-and-mimosascented Snooty Ooty, I knew exactly what he meant.

## Little-known Italian doctors in Madras in the 1830s

● Few Italians have come to Madras in earlier centuries. Notable among them are the Jesuits Constanzo Beschi (Viramamunivar) and Roberto de Nobili. But there were more...

Nicolò Manuzzi (1639-1717; read as Manutchi) was a non-Jesuit who came to India from Venice on turning 17. He is believed to have accompanied Richard Coote (the Earl of Belomont), an Irish lord. Manuzzi arrived in Delhi in 1655-1656 and first worked as a soldier in Dara Shikoh’s (Shah Jehan’s son) artillery. After Dara’s murder in 1659, Manuzzi practiced medicine in Goa. Where and how he trained in medicine is still a question. Therefore, some consider Manuzzi a quack. For a short period, he served in the Deccan artillery, under Mirza Raja Jai Singh. Between 1671-1678, Manuzzi practiced medicine in Lahore and served as a physician in the court of



Nicolò Manuzzi.

Shah Alam, a son of Aurangzeb between 1678-1682. He arrived in Madras in 1686 and remained here for the next 30 years – till his death. In 1640, the only Englishman living outside Fort St. George was Clarke (Thomas, John?), who built a house for himself at a site on the

Popham’s Broadway–Esplanade Road (Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Road) junction, close to the sea. Glyn Barlow in *The Story of Madras* (1921) refers to a stream that flowed where the Broadway tramlines held their course in the 1920s and this stream watered Manuzzi’s Garden, which was famous at that time for the medicinal plants it harboured. When Clarke died in 1686, Manuzzi married Clarke’s widow Elizabeth in Pondichéry, and thus he inherited Clarke’s house. A hearsay story is that Manuzzi treated Satguru Gobind Singh in 1708.

Pasquil Maria Benza (1788-1839), a qualified medical doctor, served in the Madras Medical Establishment (MME) between 1832 and 1839. After qualifying for MD from the University of Palermo (Italy) in 1811 and after acquiring the membership of the Royal College of Surgeons of London in 1822, he worked as an Assistant Surgeon in Corfu Island, a

British Protectorate then (now a part of Greece) between 1829 and 1831. From Corfu, he came to Madras to join the MME in 1832. Benza died in England in 1839. His first name is variously spelt: ‘Pasquale’ and ‘Pasquil’ in different documents. Nothing much is known of his contributions to medical science, but he was an enthusiastic geologist and mineralogist. He has published papers pertaining to the geology of the Nilgiris. In a slim

book captioned *Saggio sul’ uso interno del carbone* (An Essay on the Internal Use of [Char] coal), published in Palermo in 1814, and authored by Giovan-ni Mackesy (Principal Surgeon, University of Palermo), Benza’s name figures as the English translator, although I could not find any translated passages in that edition I could access.

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### Answers to Quiz

1. Anurag Kashyap’s *Gangs Of Wasseypur*, 2. Pankaj Advani, 3. Yemen, 4. Bianca Andreescu at the US Open, 5. Robert Mugabe, 6. Visited the deepest points in every ocean, 7. Guru Nanak, 8. Rashid Khan of Afghanistan, 9. Vaishno Devi temple, 10. Cancer.

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11. A Nataraja idol stolen from temple 37 years ago was traced to a museum in Australia and brought back, 12. Second airport for Chennai, 13. Keezhadi, 14. The DMK was ‘born’, 15. Vani Mahal, 16. Mayor Sriramulu Naidu, 17. Swami Sivananda, 18. Gem & Co., 19. St. George’s School & Orphanage, 20. Pallavaram

# Huge responsibility for the duo

That Chennai is the tennis capital of the country is a well-known fact for well over 60 years now. Ever since Ramanaathan Krishnan burst upon the scene in the mid-fifties, a player from the southern metropolis has generally been the flag bearer of the sport internationally. Whether Grand Slam events, the ATP Tour circuit or the Davis Cup, the charge has been led by the likes of Krishnan, the Amritraj brothers Anand and Vijay, and Krishnan's son, Ramesh. In the last couple of decades, it has been the turn of Leander Paes and Somdev Devvarman to be the leading players in the country and both of them have had Chennai as their initial training base.

Under the circumstances, Chennai lads Prajnesh Gunneswaran and Ramkumar Ramanathan have a huge tradition to follow when they spearhead India's challenge against Pakistan in the upcoming Davis Cup tie to be played at Islamabad on September 14 and 15 (The ITF decided to postpone India's Asia Oceania Group 1 Davis Cup match against Pakistan to November due to the escalated diplomatic tension). If they do win as expected, they will have a bigger responsibility as India bid to claw back into the elite World Group.

Prajnesh and Ramkumar are the two leading Indian players on the ATP Tour. Ramkumar is younger by five years but the first to make his mark, achieving a career high ranking of 111 about a year ago. Since then, he has found the going hard and has slipped to rank

185. Prajnesh has done much better. He reached a career best ranking of 75 in April this year and is currently ranked at the 88th position. And while Ramkumar has been eliminated in the qualifying rounds for the four Grand Slam events, Prajnesh, thanks to his ranking, has bagged a direct entry into the three Grand Slams so far this year. Each time though, he has lost in the first round to a player ranked above him.

The 24-year-old Ramkumar has had one decidedly notable victory on the circuit – at the 2017 Antalya Open, he pulled off a major upset in the second round, defeating world no. 8 and top seed Dominic Thiem of Austria. This was his first match against a top ten player. Ranked world no. 222, Ramkumar won in straight sets 6-3, 6-2. He progressed to the quarterfinals where he lost to Marcos Baghdatis in a third set tie break.

Ramkumar, who has honed his skills at the Sanchez Casal Academy in Barcelona, is a tall right hander and his game is power packed. He has a brilliant serve-and-volley game and his smooth ground strokes are a blend of control and accuracy.

Prajnesh has had a number of notable victories on the circuit, too. His rise has been fairly meteoric. At the start of 2018 he was ranked 243, but by the end of the year he had risen to 104. Fully aware of the intense competition, the 29-year-old left hander gave himself more realistic goals for 2019 – getting into the top 100 and playing the Grand Slams. He has now achieved both and



Ramkumar Ramanathan.



Prajnesh Gunneswaran.

Vijay Amritraj is of the view that Prajnesh has it in him to break into the top 50.

It was at the BNP Paribas Open earlier this year at Indian Wells that marked a major turning point in Prajnesh's career. It was at this star-studded arena that Prajnesh attracted considerable attention, alongside the likes of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal

Following his impressive showing at Indian Wells, Prajnesh won through the qualifying rounds to make the main draw of the Miami Masters, but could not replicate his stunning run at Indian Wells. He bowed out in the first round to world No. 61 Jaume Munar of Spain, 7-6, 6-4. Playing his second straight Masters 1000 main draw, Prajnesh per-

formed creditably before going down to a player ranked more than 20 places above him. The wins over Paire and Basilashevili were not Prajnesh's first victories over players ranked far above him. In June last year at Stuttgart, he stunned world No. 23 Dennis Shapalov of Canada, making the tennis community take note of his rising star. The wins over the two players at Indian Wells gave him the confidence that the earlier shock victory was not a one-off.

Among the biggest changes Prajnesh has made to his game is a stronger and more effective

backhand. Coupled with his big serve and powerful forehand, it has given him an increasingly intimidating playing style. Expectations have started growing that the best still lies ahead for Prajnesh – and Indian tennis. The year 2018 was the breakthrough year for Prajnesh. He reached four ATP Challenger finals, winning two of them. He won his first ATP Challenger title at the Kunming Challenge in China, defeating Mohammed Safwat of Egypt in the final. Then, in an all-Indian final, he defeated Saketh Myneni at the Bangalore Challenger. He finished as the runner-up at the Ningho Challenger in China and at the Pune Challenger events and, in August, he won the bronze medal in the singles event at the Asian Games in Jakarta.

As he climbs the ladder, Prajnesh will find the going tougher; but he is confident about his own game. His exploits come as a breath of fresh air complete with the promise of more to come. He lost five years of his career to knee injuries, but he is certainly making up for lost time.

by  
Partab Ramchand

and Novak Djokovic. The BNP Paribas Open is the largest WTA – ATP combined event outside the four Grand Slams. It is known to many tennis fans as the fifth Grand Slam. Coming through the qualifying rounds, he defeated world No. 63 Benoit Paire in the first round, and then got the better of world No. 18 Nikoloz Basilashvili in the second round. This unexpectedly successful run was halted in the third round by the big serving Croatian, Ivo Karlovic. But Prajnesh has provided ample evidence of his growing stature.

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