Welcoming guests with digital banners

Anyone familiar with Tamil Nadu, or should we say Tamil culture in particular, would not be wrong in assuming that a visiting foreign dignitary is welcomed the traditional way – poona kumbham, or an ensemble of nagaswaram and tavil, or a display of folk art. Maybe a presentation of something in local silk or a handicraft or two? All of these and more were on display at the informal summit between the Indian Premier and the Chinese President recently at Mamallapuram. What jarred was the State Government’s claim that it was customary to welcome visiting dignitaries by erecting digital banners.

This at least was the State’s plea when it approached the Courts last week with a request that it be allowed to erect banners along the route to Mamallapuram. The administrative agencies had been strongly chastised by the Court for allowing political parties to erect banners all over the city and State at will, one of which caused the death of a young woman last month and so the State was being extra cautious. Faced with such a plea, the High Court of Madras had to give permission. It reminded the State Government that its strictrues on banners pertained to political parties and not the executive itself, but safety measures had to be ensured. The question is, was the State at all warranted in filing such a plea? How could it claim that it was customary to erect banners and not part of our tradition till four decades ago? Floral or cloth arches were the utmost free that the administration itself was the State even mislead the Courts into granting permission. It reeks of cleverly portraying any event as necessary of banners. It reeks of insensitivity in the light of the recent mishap. Based on this permission, the Government will now merrily erect banners for all events under its purview. The power can also do the same, by cleverly portraying any event as being held with State support. All parties of the State are equally guilty of usurping public

Efficient governance for better impact of Public Health Services

NITI Aayog’s annual comparative reviews of states’ performance with respect to education, public health and social progress fill an important void in monitoring public governance. To governments and policy makers, the reviews provide objective, quantitative feedback on specific aspects. The novel feature is that the reviews are not confined to evaluating the scale of infrastructure but, more importantly, its impact. To the public and tax payers, they provide a report on how much and how well the money has been spent. NITI Aayog’s third report for 2017-18 throws light on Tamil Nadu’s efforts at bettering its own performance from year to year, setting benchmarks for other southern states functioning under similar conditions.

The report ranks states on performance. The rank for any given state can be misleading as it depends on performance of other participants. A good performance in itself could show up as a drop in rank when others perform better and, likewise, deterioration in performance could reflect as rise in ranking because others have done even worse. We shall, therefore, go by year-on-year performance on the three major aspects – Input, Outcome and quality of Governance.

The term ‘Input’ refers to physical infrastructure, staffing, equipment etc. for delivery of services. ‘Outcome’ represents the services delivered. Outcome is reflected by the community’s wellness, which is assessed by quantifiable indicators like, say, reduced incidence of TB, longevity, lower school drop outs, lower infant mortality etc. A high performance score on Inputs does not necessarily lead to beneficial Outcomes if the input (infrastructure) is not put to effective use to address the needs of target beneficiaries. ‘Governance’ is the conversion of Input into desired Outcome. Governance constitutes supervision, monitoring and accountability. For example, a 50-strong input with 80 per cent governance would yield 40 units of benefit compared to a 100-strong input with 10 per cent governance yielding only 10 units of benefit. Governance has a comprehensive role involving review of infrastructure and process designs for their relevance and effectiveness, making changes to them as necessary, monitoring quantity and quality of services delivered and enforcing accountability.

This direct causal relationship between Governance and Outcome is clearly brought out in the NITI review. Wherever Governance score is high, Outcome scores are as high as or higher than Input scores.

Going by the above, Tamil Nadu’s score on Outcomes is lower than that on Inputs or processes, indicating that there is scope for taking fuller advantage from the infrastructure already on the ground. In contrast, Kerala’s score on Outcomes is higher than its score on Inputs. Kerala’s effective Governance is significant when considered in the context of the state’s high literacy. Better Public Services could well be the result of the high literacy level reflecting in greater public awareness of eligibility and ability to demand good service.

In the three-year period ending 2018, Tamil Nadu’s score on Inputs had deteriorated from a score of 74.20 in 2014-15 to 68.92 in 2017-18.
Better impact of Public Health Services

(Continued from page 1)

The Man from Madras Musings is not much of a shopper whether it be the real or virtual kind. He rarely buys anything online for books, the rest of this activity being taken care of by his wife. He, however, insists that MM have taken estimated numbers as the basis for evaluating deliveries and immunisation has taken 2015-16. Frequent staff was only 9.98 months in 2017-18 compared to 15.74 respectively from 64.04 to 58.90 respectively for the same years. It appears, from existing infrastructures. More specifically, in terms of weight at birth. Of course, there are additional investments in infrastructure. What has been convenient looks over is that posters were 270 million whereas those were missed.

What has been convenient looks over is that posters and graffiti are not traditional methods of welcome either. While they may not claim lives, they do deface the walls of private property. And we may be reasonably certain that Mr. Xi went away with an impression of a very shabbily city with an array of posters and wall paintings. The extraordinary silence of the PM, a man who espouses the cause of cleanliness, over this issue is quite surprising as well. Here was a chance to clear up the city of this menace and it has been missed.

Just one question – are government-sponsored banners likely to be any safer when compared to political party-sponsored banners?

A sofa with six legs

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Madras Musings

IIT-M lingo

Language has always been an emotive issue and it is no wonder that it has played a crucial role in several conflicts in society. Euphonic references to a regional language in a pluralistic society, no doubt, serve to raise the pride and self-esteem of the people. This is what Prime Minister Modi did in his recent address at the IIT Madras convocation. Loud cheers greeted him when he termed Tamil as the oldest language and almost in the same breath, said that the state of Tamil Nadu was home to the newest language, namely IIT-M lingo. This drew further cheers from the packed audience.

What is the IIT-M lingo? – Entering the campus, one can hear students from all parts of India talking in English but a few minutes into the conversation, one cannot make much sense of it. The reason: students have drifted into IIT-M lingo, “a highly evolved melting pot of a language with some Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and God-knows-what else thrown in”. According to campus watchers, most students speak it with relish and for good reason – it is unique to the institution and can well double as a code language understood only by IIT-M students and alumni.

The Fifth Estate, the official student media body of IIT Madras, has offered a crash course to keep the fresher’s (juniors) get past seniors who love the lingo dearly. Here is a sample of IIT-M lingo:

Freshies – junior students.
Insti name – the closest thing to a re-christening, a nickname given to a fresher that defines him and seems to stick better than the actual name.
Junta – people.
Faculty – the institution where you got your JEE coaching from, surely very apt.
Intro – the act of introducing yourself.

Note: It is not often that The Man from Madras Musings gets mail directly. They are more often addressed to the editor and complain bitterly about his (MM’s) bastard variety of language in which God knows what goes on in our city. MMM expresses his delight at having received a letter, and what’s more it having reached the insti. “That is a good pointer and a four times gold in swimming.”

Maggu – a person who spends most of his/her time studying; they typically get dazzling CGPs.
Gult, Mallu, Gujju, Tam – denotes Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarathi and Tamil-speaking students respectively.
Fundu – fundamentals.
IIT-M lingo is a defining and constantly morphing feature of the institute, a language developed by several generations of alumni. Remarkable indeed. Here comes the punch: an exchange student even wrote her M.A. thesis on it.

T. Rajagopalan
Journalist
formerly Education Correspondent, The Hindu

My regards to She who must be obeyed and yourself.

A friend of MM
Vimala Padmaraj

Feedback on Chrome Leather Factory

My name is George Chambers. Roy Chambers was my grandfather. Thank you for posting this short history. I was born and have lived in Australia my whole life, but I would still like to visit India with my father one day to see this part of our history.

Thank you, Donors

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

- The Editor

Rs. 150: George Joseph
Rs. 400: Capt. R. Shankar
Rs. 500: T.K. Sriniva Ghar, R. Balasubramanian
Rs. 900: T. Santhanam, Benjamin Cherian, V. Ramnarayan, Ms. K. Nirmala
Rs. 1000: Ms. Girija Viraraghavan, Gopal Raj C.
Rs. 1500: N.S. Parthasarathy
The Mahatma in Madras

Gandhi came to Madras several times, the first being in 1896 and the last in 1946. In these two pages we showcase, by way of a sesquicentennial tribute, some of the spots associated with him. We have not included memorials to him in this collection – Editor

**Signpost inside Central Station – To commemorate his numerous arrivals to and departures from the city, always by train, the Indian Railways put up this plaque some years ago. It is at the entrance to platform 5.**

**Flatters Gardens – In 1915 when Gandhi visited the place, this was Govind Vilas and home of the magnate Lodh Govinddoss. It is since demolished and a part of the premises now houses Satyamurti Bhavan, the Congress Party HQ.**

**The YMCA Esplanade where he spoke in 1915.**

**The Victoria Public Hall where he watched a staging of Harischandra by the Suguna Vilasa Sabha in 1915.**

**Padmavati’s Hall, Esplanade (now NSC Bose Road) – where Gandhi spoke in 1915.**

**People’s Park where he addressed the Madras Bar Association in 1915.**

**The Marina – more precisely Tilak Ghat (now Tilakar Thidal) where he spoke on several occasions.**

**The YMIA Gokhale Hall – Gandhi spoke here several times, the first being in 1915 when he addressed the Gokhale Club at the premises.**

**The Lawley Hall (owned by the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam Trust), Mount Road where he spoke in 1915.**

**The Victoria Public Hall where he watched a staging of Harischandra by the Suguna Vilasa Sabha in 1915.**

**The Ramakrishna Mission Students Home, Mylapore, which he called at in 1915 and 1925.**

**The Spurt Tank – Venue for the All India Congress Session of 1927.**

**The offices of GA Natesan & Co, George Town, which was Gandhi’s place of stay during his 1915 visit.**

**The offices of GA Natesan & Co, George Town, which was Gandhi’s place of stay during his 1915 visit.**

**Ranade Public Library where he addressed an audience in 1915 (this ground floor library is now overshadowed by its later first floor addition – the Srinivasa Sastry Hall).**

**The Ramakrishna Mission Students Home, Mylapore, which he called at in 1915 and 1925.**

**The Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya – whose foundation stone was laid in 1946 by Gandhi.**

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Besides these locations, several others are untraceable or not recorded photographically. They include the old Madras Mahajana Sabha premises, the Lakshmi Memorial Arya Pathashala, the Arya Vaiyak Mahasabha and Amjad Baugh (residence of Sriman Srinivasa Iyengar where Gandhi stayed in the 1920s).

The Hyde Park of Madras

Cenotaph remains a name in the Teynampet area, with an eponymous road leading off Anna Salai/Mount Road towards Kotturpuram and beyond. As is well known, the name is traced to the vast monument that was erected on the spot in memory of Lord Cornwallis, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of India from 1786 to 1793 and once again Governor General of India in 1805. The circumstances leading to the commissioning of a statue of the Governor General and the construction of a cenotaph are dealt with in great detail in the series titled Know Fort St George (MM XXV Vol. Nos. 1-24, April 16th 2015-April 1st 2016). In brief, the British in Madras were living in mortal fear of Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan and it was Cornwallis who in the third Anglo Mysore war showed that the latter was fallible after all. The Tiger of Mysore had to accept crippling war damages – more than half of his territory was distributed among allies and two of his sons were taken as hostages. In gratitude for what Cornwallis had done, the British in Madras commissioned Thomas Banks in England to sculpt a statue which was completed in 1800 and arrived here to be erected behind the present-day Assembly building, Fort St George, under a cupola. Cornwallis during his second and very brief tenure as Governor General saw it in person at this site. In 1805, with Cornwallis dead, the British in Madras decided on a much larger monument – a cenotaph no less, under which they planned to position the statue in the Fort. The structure was soon completed at Teynampet but for various reasons (see MM, June 16, 2015) the statue was not moved there. It was only in the early 1920s by which time the cenotaph had itself been moved to FirstLine Beach where the monument was made. The statue did not survive for long under the cenotaph, being soon shunt-ed to the Connaught Library and from there, after Indepen-dence, to the Fort Museum. The cenotaph remains outside the Chennai Collectorate, once Bentinck’s Building and now a drab structure named after the labour leader M Singaravelar. It is mostly unoccupied but does serve as a urinal at times. Its longevity is nevertheless a matter to ponder over – it has survived a shift from Teynampet and later the complete demolition of Bentinck’s Building as well.

But several questions remain – who designed the cenotaph and what was it like when it stood in its original site at Teynampet? Answers to these are now happily found in William Taylor’s Madrasiana (published 1868). The following account is largely from this source with some modifications to suit the others who are independently acknowledged in this article.

On November 5, 1805, a public meeting called by John Oakes, Sheriff of Madras, was held at the Exchange, now the Fort Museum, Fort St George, to come up with ideas on a suitable memorial for the late Governor General. A committee was formed and some of the prominent names included, apart from Oakes, Benjamin Roebuck, Basil Cochran and Thomas Parry. It was unanimously agreed that a cenotaph be erected.

The design was by John Gantz (1772-1853), who was Chief Draughtsman of the East India Company, Madras. Vyasarpadi was where he lived and a Gantz Road there (now Ambulakkar Salai) commemorated him for long. He and his son Justinian were lithographers as well and executed several works chiefly comprising the sights and scenes of the city. Justinian also went on to establish the Madras Times, one of the city’s newspapers, in 1859. The committee closely supervised the execution and in 1810 also approved a long inscription naming Lord Cornwallis to be placed inside the cenotaph. This was entirely in Latin, written by C. Marsh, a resident of Madras. The Literary Panorama and National Register, a publication from England questioned as to whether the natives would ever understand a word of what was written but it appears that this query did not have any effect.

Maria Graham, who came here early in the 1810s noted that “it is the fashion for all the gentlemen and ladies to repair in their gayest equipages to the Mount road and after driv-ing furiously along they loiter round and round the cenotaph for an hour, partly for exercise and partly for the opportunity of flirting and displaying their fine clothes; after which they go home, to meet again every day in the year.” The cenoto-nap, noted Maria, “cost an
The man behind The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi is perhaps the most comprehensive documentation of the life and times of one of the great political leaders. As the nation celebrates its 75th year of Independence, this article commemorates Professor K. Swaminathan, whose remarkable contribution to Gandhian studies as Chief Editor of the Collected Works remains undimmed even today.

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi was a project conceived in 1956 as an attempt to collect and document Gandhian writings, speeches and letters over a period of six decades from 1884 till his death in 1948. It owed its origin to P.M. Lad, ICS who was then the Secretary to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. An Advisory Board with Morarji Desai as the Chairman was set up to guide the entire project. The Board included Prof. K. Kumarampatti, brother of J.C. Kumarappa, Gandhiji’s close associate, who was appointed the Chief Editor.

On his untimely death in 1957, he was succeeded by Jairamdas B. Desai, who was a short one, coming to an end with his appointment as Governor of Assam. A search was initiated for a successor who would be given the impetus to the project that had seen slow progress. The man chosen for the task was the eminent teacher, Professor K. Swaminathan.

Much like the man whose works he would painstakingly edit and compile, Swaminathan’s first calling was Law. Born in 1896 in Pudukkottai to S. Krishnaswamy Iyer and Dharmambal, Swaminathan graduated with a BA Hons Degree in English Literature in 1917 from the Presidency College after his early education at the Lutheran Mission School in Pusasawalkam and The PS High School in Mylapore. He then acquired a Law Degree from the Madras Law College in 1919 and served for a while as a junior under veteran Congress leader S. Srinivasan Iyengar.

On completion of his legal apprenticeship, Swaminathan moved to Pudukkottai and set up practice under the guidance of his father-in-law, a well-known lawyer and incidentally his namesake, whose daughter Visalakshi he had married even while a student in 1915.

Professor K. Swaminathan’s career shift from Law to English came about when he invited the Secretary to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, P.M. Lad, ICS to look at the possibility of collecting and reproducing here in full – “Who sold all that old iron, and set up a paltry substitute, we do not happen to know.”

The cenotaph itself was in place – “Who sold all that old iron, and set up a paltry substitute, we do not happen to know.” The 93 volumes of Gandhi’s collected works at Professor Swaminathan’s residence Dharmalayam.

Swaminathan was initially hesitant to accept the assignment as he had just then suffered a minor health setback. Visalakshi too was not keen on the idea and it was left to Swaminathan’s younger brother, who felt that a change of scenery would do him a world of good, to convince her. And so started the journey that would last nearly three decades and span 90 volumes of the 100-volume project.

Swaminathan threw his entire heart and soul into the assignment. Editing the series, in the words of H.V. Sharda Prasad, “was not work for Professor Swaminathan but tapas”. The epilogue of simplicity, Swaminathan dressed in khadi and walked to work every day. Gandhiian scholar Lalitha Zachariah who joined the project in 1968 writes in her piece ‘KS Recollected in Tranquility’ that the assignment was no mean task, and that she was recruited after a written test conducted in an examination format, with sections such as proof reading, dictation and formation of sentences! Besides the editorial aspects of the work, Swaminathan’s responsibility included administration of the office comprising of English and Hindi-speaking staff. That he managed with almost no knowledge of Hindi spoke volumes of his skills as an able administrator.

Lalitha Zachariah also recollects that Swaminathan never believed in constant supervision of his wards but instead gave them ample space for work, contemplation and fun. He was completely unassuming and preferred to visit his staff personally whenever he wanted something, instead of summoning them to his room. He was readily available when someone needed help with a problem and used to read every single volume before he went to print. His single-minded devotion to the project ensured that he surmounted various hurdles, the most significant of which came in the face of the Emergency. With Morarji Desai being placed under house arrest, an attempt was made to get Swaminathan to resign voluntarily by K.K. Nair, the eminent polymath who was to succeed him as the Chief Editor.

Swaminathan flatly refused and when it seemed that he would be dismissed, circumstances took a fortuitous turn. Morarji Desai being placed under house arrest, an attempt was made to get Swaminathan to resign voluntarily by K.K. Nair, the eminent polymath who was to succeed him as the Chief Editor.

Work proceeded in full swing and by the time he retired from the Collected Works project in 1985, 90 volumes had been published. He continued to be associated with the subsequent volumes of the series which consisted of material that came to light after the completion of the original set.

Swaminathan was an ardent devotee of Ramana Maharishi, having met him for the first time in 1940. He was in fact instrumental in the establishment of A Cenotaph for Cornwallis

(Continued from page 6)
When Len Hutton visited Madras

As a teenage cricket fan growing up in Madras in the sixties, I followed the game closely either through the running commentary on the radio or by reading books by famous authors. Besides following the careers of cricketers of my time, I also read about the cricketing greats of yesteryear. Books by Neville Cardus, John Arlott, Jim Swanton, Ray Robinson, Jack Fingleton and Berry Sarbhadihakri became part of my growing cricket library at home. Soon, like an amateur historian, I became more familiar with cricketers of the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. One of the cricketing careers that fascinated me was that of Sir Len Hutton. Both as batsman and captain he was one of the most significant cricketers of my time and I had two of his autobiographies in my collection – Cricket is My Life and Just Another Story.

Besides cricket, I followed other sports too, like tennis, football and hockey. It was my childhood dream to have a job associated in some way with sports when I grew up. As luck would have it, I joined the Indian Express in Madras as a sports reporter in June 1968 and thoroughly enjoyed my work.

In February 1970, the public relations officer with the newspaper came to the sports desk and casually mentioned that Len Hutton was coming to Madras on a private business trip. I jumped at the opportunity to meet and interview the great man and pleaded with my senior that I be handed the assignment. A handful of journalists turned up at the airport to meet him and we were told he would have an informal get-together with the press a little later at the hotel in Egmore where he was staying. When we all assembled at the hotel, Hutton was already in the lobby and without even waiting for questions, starting making comments about the Indian cricketers he had played with. “There is no better bowler in the world today than Amar Singh” he said heaping praise on the tireless Indian open-

Answers to quiz


Prof. K. Swaminathan

Swaminathan was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1972 for his stellar contribution to Gandhian studies. It would be a unique distinction of sorts when his two younger siblings, the legendary Dr KS Sanjivi (who had convinced him to take up the post of Chief Editor) and K Venkatraman too were later accorded the same honour for their contribution to the field of community healthcare and chemistry respectively (K Venkatraman was the Founder-Director of the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune).

Swaminathan passed away in May 1994. A remarkable testament to his humility despite his monumental achievements was the fact that he did not let his name appear in the CWMG series until the final volume, which came out in October that year.

Acknowledgements:

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The family of Prof K Swaminathan, especially his niece Gita Gopalakrishnan and his daughter Dr Dharma Chatterjee
Lalitha Zacharias
Past issues of Saranagati, newsletter of The Mountain

(Continued from page 7)