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MADRAS MUSINGS

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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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Let's waste water once more

The year 2019 promises to be one in which Chennai will receive adequate rains. This is one of those quinquennial occurrences that does much to restore faith in the future of our metropolis. For the rest of the time we are quite happy to lament loudly about the shortage of water and indulge in doomsday predictions. There is however very little concrete action as far as conservation of water is concerned. In fact it becomes even less in years when the rains are plentiful, which is when we ought to be saving every drop that falls.

For the first time since 2014, Chennai has registered a surplus of 30 per cent in the rainfall received till the month of September. With the northeast monsoon predicted to be normal, it is expected that the

water crisis that has gripped the city since 2017 will ease quite a bit this year. This is of course a welcome development and Chennai can congratulate itself on its serendipitous fortune. The sad part is that with the pressure easing, all action on conserving water has more

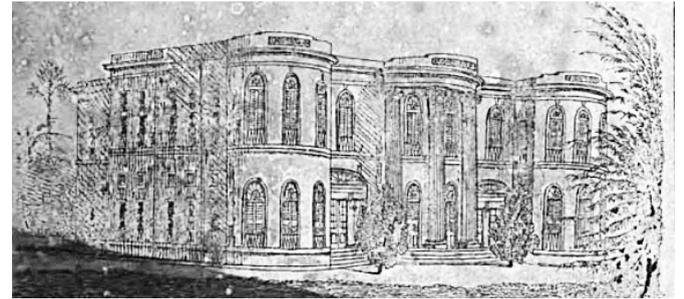
water scarcity and godmen also have moved on. Of course these do not have much of an impact beyond spreading some awareness at best. But what is worrying is that people who are affected by water shortages have also begun putting off implementation of rainwater

● by The Editor

or less ceased. The first of the signs that this is no longer a hot topic likely to get media attention is when rainwater harvesting and conservation cease to be the subject of seminars hosted by fringe elements and social climbers. Hollywood stars too have stopped expressing concern over Chennai's

harvesting schemes purely on the assumption that water will once again be available in plenty post the monsoon.

The Government too has gone on to focus on other matters. With the withdrawal of the water train from Jolarpet, the most striking reminder that we were brought to our knees just



Our **OLD** is the cover picture of the Madras Journal of Literature and Science, dated July to Dec 1847. Could the building featured in it be the College of Fort St. George? Our **NEW** is a picture of a structure with similar architectural features that still stands in the same campus but which is much smaller in scale. For more details read The College of College Road (p 4)



a few months ago has also vanished. Emergency measures for water not being needed means these will not garner publicity and so will not translate into

votes. It is no wonder that there was not a ripple in the media, both social and otherwise, when the Government admitted that
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Revamp deep-sea fishing scheme to provide relief for fishermen

● Readers may remember that we had published TN's deep-sea fishing scheme earlier, in Madras Musings Vol. XXVIII, Nos. 10 & 11. This is a follow-up article to monitor the scheme's progress. — The Editor

It has been two years since the Central and Tamil Nadu governments launched a deep-sea fishing project as a jointly funded arrangement. The project provided a major capital subsidy to replace 2000 boats with modern vessels for deep-sea fishing, thereby obviating the dependence on trawling in Sri Lankan territorial waters and offering hope of saving our fishermen from being jailed by

Sri Lankan authorities for transgressing fishing rights.

The Central and State Governments extended a total of 70 per cent capital subsidy (50 per cent from the former and 20 per cent from the latter) towards the cost of vessels then estimated at Rs. 80 lakhs each. The beneficiary was required to provide 10 per cent of the cost — Rs. 8 lakhs — and the balance was loaned by banks. The total outlay was Rs. 1,600 crores, of which Rs. 1,120 crores was to be subsidised by the governments.

The scheme holds promise of lucrative earnings through better technology and deep-sea fishing, which is more sustainable. It was liberal in terms of funding and subsidies but

its design, even at the outset, did not address the situational needs of target beneficiaries.

With two years having gone by since the launch, our doubts over the scheme's ability to meet its objectives are proving to be real. Considering that the livelihood and safety of

● by A Special Correspondent

thousands of our fisher families are involved, speedy implementation, say, within 2-3 years, has become a matter of high urgency. Even the 2-3-year span is too long to bear. To replace 2,000 boats over three years is a nearly impossible task, considering the

delivery time needed by boat yards to meet such a large order. The scheme, by its current design, has not taken this crucial factor into consideration.

So far, only 600 applications have been received. Of this, 65 have signed the tri-partite agreements involving the boat builder, the Fisheries Department and the beneficiary. Only 16 of this 65 have commenced operations. At this pace, there is little hope of the fishermen's problem ever being solved.

Some amount of major revamping must be done without delay to salvage the situation and regain hope. A review of the operational aspects of the new scheme would serve to identify the changes needed to

wean away, within two years, a substantial number of families from fishing in doubtful waters. Cost overrun, slow rate of delivery of vessels and the absence of assured buyers for the catch are three major obstacles which need to be addressed.

Price escalations and the lack of provision for the cost of fishing nets have taken the outlay per vessel from Rs. 80 to 100 lakhs. Having come so far, it seems necessary to increase the capital subsidy to cover the higher outlay. By increasing the capital subsidy, only 1,600 replacements would be possible within the original outlay of Rs. 1,600 crores, as against the planned 2,000. This is still a
(Continued on page 2)

Let's waste water once more

(Continued from page 1)

the new reservoir and the fifth for the city, slated for completion in October this year, will operate only up to 30 per cent of its capacity, chiefly owing to some civil works that have become hugely delayed. The Theruvoy Kandigai-Kannankottai Reservoir, planned to have a capacity of 1,000 million cubic feet of water, will be able to take in just 1/3rd of that volume. This means that that we are not much better as compared to what we were in 2015 when it comes to our ability to store rainwater. As for the rest of that surplus monsoon that we are likely to have, all of it will make its way to the sea. And so, we did not learn much from

our varied experiences of flood, cyclone and drought between 2015 and 2019.

If this is the way we are to administer our storage and usage of water, we are not likely to progress much. Having recognised that we have a problem, it is necessary for everyone from the citizen to the Government to arrive at a solution, implement it and move on to other things thereafter. But the present attitude of wallowing in misery when there is shortage of water and then wasting it in times of plenty is nothing more than perpetuating an issue and milking it for sympathy each time it strikes. Ultimately, it is we who are to blame and not the rainfall.

Relief for fishermen

(Continued from page 1)

better option than to wait for increased allocation to cover 2,000 replacements, risking the collapse of the scheme due to under-recognition of the capital cost. A further long bureaucratic process for new sanctions cannot be afforded.

An evaluation of the financial feasibility shows that at Rs. 9.5 lakhs worth of catch per voyage and 2 voyages per month, with fishing limited to 7 months in the year, the gross income from deep sea fishing could be 3-4 times the gross income from present operations in shallow waters. This opens the possibility to assign owners of 2 or 3 boats as shareholders of one deep-sea vessel instead of one boat owner/s for one vessel. This still enables each family to get increased earnings compared to the current practice, without the risk of jail. More importantly, this approach overcomes the critical hurdle of delivery time. It reduces the number of vessels needed for replacement from 2,000 to 1,000 with two owners each, or 700 with three. 1,000 or 700 vessels could be procured in half or a third of the time. The scheme can be completed in 2 or 3 years as procurement of 350 vessels per year is relatively feasible.

The revamp would shorten the time for project completion. By widening participation to 2 or 3 owners per vessel, the burden of funding their share of capital cost would get reduced. The arrangement also does not shut off opportunity to single ownership per vessel at a later stage, as any partner can buy off the share of the other, as and when confidence in the new

venture grows. Slow deliveries of vessels are the biggest impediment to quick implementation. To save time, the State government should place bulk orders in advance, instead of individuals placing orders as and when each of them complete funding and other formalities. This way, the building of vessels can commence and the boats can be transferred to the owners as and when they are ready.

It is unlikely that the fisher households would have the financial strength to hold the stock, a perishable commodity, in expectation of a fair price. This weakness, exploited by intermediaries, could result in uneconomic prices and distress sales. To minimise this risk, the Fisheries Department must extend assurance of purchase at a minimum support price. This support is necessary at least in the initial stages till fisher families can organise themselves as a co-operative set up. Working capital is another issue to be resolved, but this may not present much difficulty as the bank funding the vessel purchase can also extend the working capital with the catch as the collateral.

Happily, potential beneficiaries of the scheme have expressed much interest in adopting the new system as it takes care of the safe return of men from their daily fishing expeditions in alien waters and also holds promise of higher earnings. Eventual ownership of a 100-lakh asset with substantial capital contribution by the government should be a major attraction. With such a positive predisposition in its favour, the opportunity to successfully enforce the scheme and resolve the long-standing fishermen issue should not be missed.

Long before Twitter was Thiruvalluvar

For *The Man from Madras Musings*, this great Tamilian was the original Twitteratus (if that is the singular for Twitterati). Imagine being able to compose 1330 couplets and cover in them practically all aspects of life! And write them in such a way that he remains relevant for all time to come! What more do we need to know about him to celebrate him? In any other country, the work would have been the hero leaving its author to shine in its light, or looking at it in another way, remain in its shadow. But not so here.

Let's face it – we know very little about the creator of the *Kural*. Of his religious disposition we know nothing. There is nothing in his writing to indicate where he lived and what his time period was. Scholars are of the view that he was a Jain and the best man among them opines that the time period of this man of letters was around the 5th Century CE.

But then, who wants scholars with their dry-as-dust analysis when we can let our imagination run riot? Yes, we do know that he lived in Mylapore, had a wife who was dedicated to him beyond all call of love or duty (and of late has a photo of hers circulating on the Internet) and that he looked like the conventional sage as depicted in Amar Chitra Katha comics. He had a neat beard, well-shaped eyebrows, an aquiline nose, an avuncular mien and his hair was of the kind that makes MMM jealous – thick and long, dark tresses neatly coiled on his head. His complexion was golden. He sat cross-legged and wrote with a stylus on palm leaves and when standing had a tendency to lean to one side and hold up three fingers of one hand while the other clutched at manuscripts. His dhoti it appears, was worn in the old style of five knots. His taste in clothes tended to the simple but elegant, his garments falling around his person in neat folds.

But now we have moved a step further. This being an era of glorious colour, we are not content to imagine him in black and white and so have gone on to speculate on his colour of clothing. One group, of the cow-worshipping variety, is of the view that he wore saffron (but naturally) and sported the sacred ash and the sacred thread (but even more naturally), while the other lot, of the bashing-of-the-cow-worshipping variety differs strongly. It claims that he sported no ash, no sacred thread and no saffron clothes (it is MMM's view that they may not have objected if the colour was yellow). The funny thing is that neither of the groups has any authentic

evidence about the man and are shouting their opinions. There is an old adage in legal circles that when the facts are against you, present the law; when the law is against you, present the facts; when both are against you, shout loudly and thump the table. MMM leaves you to identify which of the three routes are being taken by both contestants in this quixotic battle.

There is, however, much at stake for both parties. For the saffron lot, laying claim to the Thiruvalluvar legacy means staking legitimacy in a State where they have no base. For the other group, also known as Party of the Forever Rising Son, losing out on Thiruvalluvar means losing a cultural hold over the people. Both unfortunately, have no love for the author of the *Kural* – he is merely a convenient tool to appropriate.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Fighting over the inchoate creator of a literary masterpiece is of course not unique to Tamil culture. This kind of thing goes on all over the world. The Bard of Avon is a parallel from the English language. But then everywhere else, such arguments are put forth by real scholars and that is what makes the debate over identity so interesting. Unfortunately, neither saffron nor the other lot can lay claim to any scholarship in this, or any other, aspect of culture. And in all the chaos they overlooked one aspect – People's Justice Forum was celebrating the birthday of Lotus Smile, their founder and matinee hero. They did it in usual Tamil style – large posters hailed him as the messiah. One of these had him in the garb of Thiruvalluvar!

Selfie times

The Man from Madras Musings stood at the gate of this historic precinct in our city. He had been invited by some of the higher ups in the place to conduct a heritage tour for the benefit of some school children and college students. MMM was familiar with the premises, having conducted several walks there in the past. But those were all mixed groups – young and old together and MMM had held them all spellbound, with even hard-nosed businessmen weeping at certain crucial moments. But a gaggle of children and what's more some college kids? MMM was really nervous.

He had been asked to present himself at the gate at 6.00 am for a 6.30 am event and there he was at the appointed hour, faced with what looked like a sea of school children, their teachers having a tough

time in keeping them together. MMM could only pity all of them – kids, whose parents who must have got up at an unearthly hour and also the teachers, who too must have stirred with the lark. But of the college students there was no sign. The authorities suggested that MMM had better wait till they, the college students landed up. And so, everyone waited. After half an hour, there being no signs of the students and the school marms getting restless, MMM wandered off to check on a group of youngsters who had been clicking selfies at various places on the premises. It transpired that they were the college students. The security officer of the premises having been informed, he herded them in and there was a flowery introduction to MMM.

The school children listened attentively. The college lot clicked selfies.

The tour began, the school children asking questions while the college lot took selfies. MMM waxed eloquent on personalities, places, portraits and pestilence – the children listened and laughed at the right places but as for the college students, they remained selfie bound. It was all that MMM could do to hold himself in from pouncing on them and impounding the phones. The journey eventually wound to a close but not before a stage wait outside the residence of the managing director of the historic premises, as that great personage wanted to take a (you guessed it) selfie with the group. But he did not emerge from his lair for quite a while. The school kids began to get restless though the college students, to give them due credit, did not complain, so involved were they in their selfies. After quite some time, news filtered down that MD sir was busy in a meeting (MMM overheard a whispered conversation that he was on his treadmill and if that be the truth MMM fervently hopes the he, the MD, soon trips over his (the MD's) shoelaces and sprains his (the MD's) back), and so could everyone move on.

The tour ended eventually (and here the college students had to be told that it had ended) and everyone assembled for a formal vote of thanks. MMM was given a memento while the audience clapped. Everyone barring the college students that is, for their hands were otherwise occupied.

As MMM was beginning to walk away, he found his way barred. The college students had come together and had a request. Could MMM please pose for a selfie with them as it was such a memorable experience? MMM obliged.

–MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Golden hour

Propos of the article on failing infrastructure, it was sad reading in the newspapers, that the accident victim Subashree was lying on the road for a full 2 hours from 2.30pm to 4.30 pm, and that she was alive for 1 full hour before she was taken to a hospital nearby in an open van. Why was Emergency Ambulance 108 not called for, and why did the policeman squabble over jurisdiction instead of taking the victim to a hospital and saving her life in the Golden Hour? Will the traffic policeman have acted so callously if his daughter/son had been involved?

And why did the onlookers not rush her to Kamakshi Hospital just 200 metres away, during the Golden Hour? Sheer apathy by the general public.

Some 20 year back, late DGP K. Ravindran IPS, along with Rekha Shetty, Administrator of Apollo Hospitals, formed a group called 'Helping Hands' – of nearly 15 members – and we were part of 'Save A Life' Club. I was an E.C. Member and we had clear areas earmarked for us in the city, and our phone numbers were available through a pamphlet with the Traffic Police. We were given ID cards with phone numbers of the nearest hospitals. Our duty was to rush to the spot on getting a call about an accident, mark the place with chalk, and rush the victim to the nearest Hospital within the Golden Hour. My area was from Vivek Memorial to Pattinapakkam (as I was staying in Santhome then). I did save at least 12 lives in 1 ½ years and had the agony of seeing one David dying on my lap in an auto, when I was rushing from Gandhi Statue to National Hospital, Parrys. We used to meet every Wednesday at the basement of Apollo Hospital and share our experience of saving the accident victims. After the demise of Ravindran, the club died a slow death.

As medical records show, a life can be saved if he/she is rushed immediately to a nearby hospital within the Golden Hour (1 hour). I feel so sorry that the apathy of the onlookers took away the life of Subashree.

M. Fazal

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A note on the late K.S. Sanjivi

Karthik Bhatt's article on Krishnaswami Swaminathan (KS), published in MM,

1-2 fortnights back, was excellent. When I was teaching in Loyola College Madras, the late Fr. Lawrence Sundaram (S.J.) and I have had several opportunities to discuss the nuances of English language. On many an occasion, Fr. Sundaram used to refer to the command of English language and literature of KS in a jubilant and highly appreciative tone.

In Karthik's article a reference in passing on KS's sibling, Krishnaswami Srinivasa Sanjivi (KSS), who pioneered primary health care in Madras, occurs. Shobha (Menon) has written on KSS in an issue of MM (2014). Distinguished nephrologist Muthu Krishna Mani wrote a note about him as well in *The National Medical Journal of India*, Volume 80, Issue 3.

KSS was a great teacher of medicine says Balasubramniam Ramamurthi (BR), famous neurosurgeon of Madras, in his autobiography 'Uphill All the Way'. KSS was the principal architect of the VHS Hospital in Adyar. KSS upheld the medical legacy left by Ramakrishna Venkata Rajam, the first Indian Dean of the combined edifice of MMC and GH in 1950.

The Swaminathan-Sanjivi brothers had another sibling, Krishnaswami Venkataraman, who directed the National Chemical Laboratory (CSIR), Poona and who was equally brilliant. He spent his work life in Poona.

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Thank you, Donors

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

– The Editor

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When the cows come home

Every year, during Diwali and Pongal, we get an expected visitor. Named differently at different times, we have been visited by Gopala, Perumal, Jambavan, Lakshmi and Kanaka Durga, names which invariably originate from the vast pantheon of Gods and Goddesses. This time, Venkatesha Perumal, a two-year calf/cow, visited us as its owner sang and showered encomiums, asking the cow to nod its head at various pauses, bestowing its wishes that were filled with everything bountiful. The animal was draped resplendently in bright colours of blue, green, red and pink, its forehead adorned with cowry strings and its hump strung around with a garland of bells which jangled every time it turned its head.

"Shake my hand", the owner, Govindan, would say, and the animal would lift its right forelimb. "Do a *namaskaram*", the owner would say but the cow would have nothing of it. "This is a cemented space," the owner would apologise, "on the mud ground, the cow will sit comfortably", he would explain. The animal however was quite an active creature, bobbling its head up and down, and trying as much as possible to turn around and walk.

"This is the only time we get to make some money", Govindan started conversationally. "I live in Periapalayam, and I have been making the rounds in the city for the last two days", he explained, his Tamil laced with a tinge of the Telegu dialect. "Five of us from my village have come into the city last week", he elaborated, "and we have been walking with our cows". "Our first stop was the Ayanavaram water tank, and from there we have taken different routes" he explained, injecting a sense of adventure in his journey.

"I started my journey yesterday and I have walked through the city touring Kilpauk, Nungambakkam, T Nagar and now Mylapore, taking rest every two hours", he recounted. "I spent last night at the Lighthouse. The Nageshwara Rao Park authorities do not allow us to rest outside anymore", he lamented.

He was very clear that he was entertaining people. "I live an honest life", he shared. "I help in farming. I also play the drum (*parai*) for all social functions – a naming ceremony, ear-piercing ceremony – by which I make



some money", he said justifying his honesty.

"But during Diwali and Pongal days, I earn between Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 a day", he explained. "Children want to sit on the cow and take pictures. Of course, they also feed the cow with fruits. Some North Indians (*settu karanga* in Tamil), apply kumkum on the cow's forehead". He sounded knowledgeable, underlying the subtle cultural differences with an earthy explanation.

"But on other days, the city can be harsh", he rued. "Everyone seems to be so busy, they do not have the time to stop and talk. No one looks at my Venkatesha Perumal." He shared his views on urban busyness and the disconnection in multi-storeyed buildings, independent homes and crowded localities where children did not play in the streets anymore.

By this time, the cow which had been stoic for some time, demanded attention. After having devoured the plantains that were offered, the cow looked at us intensely and turned to its owner's hand and licked it, perhaps communicating to him that it was time to move on. The owner patted its forehead and asked the cow to say goodbye, as it lowered its head at us for one last time and followed its owner to trudge another street and another home.

– Lata Ramaseshan

* * *

'Smart Cities' – the name itself smells sweet and to learn that Chennai has come under this rubric warms the cockles of one's heart. One dreams of garbage-free roads, nice pedestrian boulevards, easy access to metro, suburban and main railway stations, senior-friendly footpaths, etc. But what is the reality?

The city is stinking with all sorts of rubbish strewn along the roads – whether it's Adyar, Mylapore, or Annanagar. Go to any place in the so-called Greater Chennai Corporation area and one finds multitudes of potholes of different sizes and depths spelling doom to motorists and pedestrians alike. The menace of unauthorised vehicle parking in every locality has assumed alarming proportions. To cap it all, unhygienic conditions confront people on the roads everywhere.

Quite naturally, two judges of the Madras High Court gave vent to their anguish during the hearing of a public interest litigation (PIL) the other day. As can be expected, charity begins at home and the judges spoke about



the locality housing them and Ministers, that is, Greenways Road. The details are really shocking. Even the incumbent Chief Minister's official residence has unhealthy conditions prevailing with garbage strewn in the vicinity. This can be contrasted with the 'spic and span maintenance' of Poes Garden during the tenure of his mentor and former C.M. Jayalalithaa, remarked one of the judges.

This writer came across a rare, quiet, garbage-free area the other day, and no wonder the bovine of the species is chewing the cud contentedly with its keeper enjoying a mid-day snooze (see accompanying photo). The cow is nicely decorated and decked with flowers, coloured strips of cloth, etc. The area is Annanagar West Extension. It was striking in a way because even a short distance from the bovine's resting place, one finds garbage strewn around with badly constructed stormwater drains along the roads.

After living in Chennai for six decades, this writer finds conditions deteriorating with each passing year. There are only authorities with 'unseeing eyes' and callous attitudes. And the corporation of Chennai is more like an atrophied limb of the government.

However, one must not be pessimistic and give up. The following ditty by A.G. Howard may perhaps make us laugh even in trying situations:

By accident once, a pessimist sat with all of his weight on his Panama hat. He fussed and he fumed when he saw it was flat. When an optimist had a misfortune like that he looked at the wreck for only a minute and thanked the good Lord that his head wasn't in it.

– T. Rajagopalan

The College of College Road

Which is the college after which College Road takes its name? Women's Christian would be the most common answer though some have averred it is the Good Shepherd's School. The correct response as any history buff will tell you, was the College of Fort St. George, which functioned from what is presently the Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) campus, between 1812 and 1854. In its time it was a great centre of learning, and one that would have an immense impact on the political history of what in 1947 became Madras State and later, Tamil Nadu. And yet, when you walk into that campus from the towering archway that stands off College Road, you would be hard put to find any traces of that pioneering educational institution.

The campus is vast and fairly wooded. Dominating it is the old headquarters of the DPI itself, a white building in the neoclassical style and of indeterminate age, built probably in the 1930s. It has undergone many 'renovations', and in one of those many has lost all its commemorative plaques, if any were there in the first place. The many partitions, some temporary, some long-term temporary and some permanent, have made the place a rabbit's warren of ugly rooms but it has a core of great grace – there is a central quadrangle at each of the corners of which are round towers that indicate that there was an earlier structure in the place of which the DPI building came up, as and when it was built. Could these be the remnants of the College of Fort St. George?

There are other markers as well. As you enter the campus through the arch and walk straight ahead, with the Coom to your right, you will come across a crenelated gatehouse with many shuttered windows and a central arch that leads you to the river. This is kept perpetually locked. As per S. Muthiah, this was the ceremonial river entrance to the college, and Governors once sailed to it for convocations. This is an impressive structure, with a line of dentils forming an upper border to it, the tower block piercing its way through and culminating in an arched façade that has a bearded face carved on its keystone. This was probably old College Bridge House that is recorded by Ellis.

If this was not a puzzle enough, there is yet another intriguing structure, of an 1850s vintage at least, going by the number of arched windows that it has. This is to the rear of the DPI building and its graceful-



College Bridge House – Picture: S. Anwar.

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

– SRIRAM V

ly curved and red-and-white façade is marred by an aerial walkway constructed in the 20th century to link it with the DPI building. And then we have the Madras Literary Society building, Indo-Saracenic with a lot of trellis work, and similar in design to the grander Connemara Public Library. This we are able to clearly date – the Journal of the Society of Arts for 1907 states that the 45,000 volumes of the MLS had recently moved to its new building.

In short, the College is now a lost landmark of the city and it remains for the rest of this article to highlight as to why it qualifies as a landmark. The College of Fort St. George was set up in Nungambakkam by the Company in 1812. A large parcel of what was known as Moorat's Gardens, for this was the property of Edward Samuel Moorat, the fabulously rich but spendthrift son of Aga Samuel Mackertish Moorat, Armenian Merchant, was acquired to house the institution. A facility where its servants could learn the Indian languages, it soon developed into a scholarly hub where Indian teachers taught colonial students, thereby giving rise to much cultural interaction. A key figure in its development was Francis Whyte Ellis, who had come to Madras in 1796 as a Writer in the East India Company. He had risen steadily, becoming in 1810 the Collector of Madras. All the while, even as he focused on his work, Ellis studied Tamil and Telugu, becoming in the process an ardent admirer of Tiruvalluvar and his *Kural*.

This and his awareness of local traditions were to see him at his best in the final eight

years of his life, for Ellis died when barely 42, of food poisoning/cholera while on a tour of Ramnad district. But the legacy of those eight years lives on. Ellis played an important role in the growth of the college, and ensured it began a publications wing. One of the books brought out was on Telugu grammar penned by A.D. Campbell, a protégé of Ellis. Writing the foreword to the book, Ellis for first time expostulated what is now known as the Dravidian proof – that Tamil, Telugu and Kannada had roots outside of Sanskrit. That evidence would grow under people like Bishop Caldwell and later acquire gargantuan proportions thanks to the Dravidian Movement in the 20th Century.

The Tamil scholar Dr U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer in his biography of his Guru – Mahavidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai – notes that the latter came to Madras in 1839 and visited the college. The faculty for Tamil at that time was stellar to say the least – Thandavaraya Mudaliar, Madurai Kandasami Pulavar, Pu. Nayanappa Mudaliar, Ramasami Pillai, Visakaperumal Ayyar and Mazhavai Mahalinga Ayyar. A later compilation in A.R. Venkatachalapathy's excellent article in the book *The Madras School of Orientalism* (Ed: Thomas Trautmann) has names of other faculty members as well. In Swaminatha Iyer's words, the principal task of the teachers here were to lecture and discourse on Tamil, get old works in the language ready for printing, prepare course material from older treatises in a more understandable form and translate books from other languages such as Sanskrit into Tamil and

get them printed. The Thomas Trautmann compilation has yet another article, by Sylvia Vatuk on Islamic learning at the College which has names of several greats in Persian who taught here as well. Similarly, there were departments for Telugu, Canarese (Kannada), Malayalam and Mahratta. Strangely enough, there was also an Indian officiating as the English Headmaster of the College. In Ellis' time this was Bomaconeta Sancaraya Brahman, 'late Sheristadar of this Cutcherry,' which means he had served as the clerk at the Madras Collectorate while Ellis was heading it.

Between them, the scholars here brought several pioneering works, too numerous to list here. Certainly, the first dictionaries in various South Indian languages with meanings in English came from here. A random sampling over the years of working of the College would include Beschi's Grammars, Chidambara Vadyar's translation of the Uttara Kanda of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, a Tamil Grammar by the same author, A.D. Campbell's Telugu Grammar, Mamadi Venkayya's Telugu Dictionary, J. McKerrel's Telugu Vocabulary, a Canarese Grammar by the same author, H. Harris' Hindustanee Dictionary and the Rev. Miron Winslow's Tamil Dictionary.

At the end of the course of two years, all East India Company servants were tested in language proficiency – in conversation, reading from business documents and translation. There were medals, and more importantly, hefty increases in salary. Those who stood first were entitled to 100 pagodas a month, while those who came second drew 75.

The third class did not get any monetary benefits.

Several institutions that we recognise today as integral to Madras history came out of the College – the zoo, the museum and the Madras Literary Society. The last named, which operated as the library of the college and later became an institution in its own right, also ran a publication – *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science* – for several years. For many of the Board Members, Ellis and Campbell included, being ardent Freemasons, the premises also served as a Lodge. A record from the Masonic proceedings notes that the structure was not ideally suited for a secret society, for it was "much exposed and if closed insufferably hot". By 1839, the Masons had moved elsewhere.

The College was closed in 1854 and the Government decided to put the property to other uses. From other records it is possible to glean that the Museum functioned from the main building for several years as did the Madras Literary Society. College Bridge House was the residence of a series of judges of the High Court of Madras. With the Connemara Library and the Museum building being completed late in the 19th Century, both the Museum and the MLS moved out, only to have the latter come back to the same campus in 1907. The main building became the home of the DPI, which in turn put up its present block in the 1930s. As to what happened to the rest of the college premises is a mystery. More of what remains will vanish soon for the DPI is putting up a tasteless tower block at the rear of the campus.

Chennai's oldest sabha still going strong

● **A curtain-raiser for the December Music Festival 2019.**

Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha of Triplicane is the oldest sabha in Chennai. The records of the sabha reveal that it was launched in 1896 by Manni Tirumalachariar, a prominent resident of Triplicane, to foster the performing arts. It was then known as the Sangita Vidwat Sabhai. When the organisation was officially registered in 1900, the organisers sought the blessings of Sri Parthasarathy Swami – the presiding deity of the temple in Tiruvallikeni and hence the sabha was named after the Lord. It is said that this was the first sabha where the public came forward and participated in its activities. The Parthasarathy Swami Sabha has played host to several music legends in its nearly 120 year-old history.

From 1900 to 1905, performances were conducted at the residence of Tirumalachariar who had also lent his hand in launching *The Hindu*. In the 1930s, GNB's father G.V. Narayanaswamy Iyer took over as secretary of the sabha. "In the initial stages, retired diwans from the Mysore and Travancore durbars, High Court judges and members of the Madras Presidency were part of the executive committee. Former Chief Ministers M.G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalalitha have also been members of our sabha," says M. Krishnamurthy, the current secretary of the sabha.

"We are proud that over five generations of musicians, dancers and dramatists have contributed to the growth of our sabha. Believe me, even in 1939, during World War II, our sabha had regular programmes for our members!" Krishnamurthy recalls with nostalgia how the grand old man of Camatic music, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, gave a two-and-a-half hour concert during the centenary celebrations.

Harikatha was very popular at Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha, dating back to almost a hundred years, drawing large crowds. In 1905, Prof. (Rau Bahadur) M. Rangachari presented a discourse on the *Bhagavad Gita* and the entire lecture series was published in three volumes. A significant event in the history of the sabha was a lecture in 1906 by noted scholar Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.

Krishna Bhagavatar, Panchapakesa Sastri, Mangudi Chidambara Bhagavatar and

Gayaka Sikhamani Muthiah Bhagavatar were some of the prominent artists who delivered discourses here besides music concerts by well known vidwans. Srirangam Satagopachariar, Karappanangadu Venkatachariar, Embar Vijayaraghavachariar and Sengalipuram Anantharama Dikshitar were notable pravachana-kartas who drew big crowds.

"I can give a list of stalwarts of those days, like Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer, Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, Bidaram Krishnappa, Tiger Varadachariar, Ariyakudi, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Musiri, Chembai, Sarabha Sastri, Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer, Govindasamy Pillai, Kanu Chinrasamy Iyer, Azhaganambai Pillai, Dakshinamurthy Pillai, Gottuvadyam Sakharama Rao,

● by
Charukesi

Veena Seshanna, Rajamanickam Pillai, Mysore Chowdiah, T. N. Rajaratnam Pillai, who have performed for us. Ariyakudi performed more than a hundred kutcheris in our sabha!" says a proud Krishnamurthy.

Top Hindustani music maestros like Ravi Shankar, Omkarnath Thakur and Bismillah Khan deemed it an honour to perform at Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha. In 1950, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer once said, "Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha continues to grow as a premier sabha. Hence, it has all the support for continuing and maintaining the growth, except financial resources."

The main objective of the sabha was to promote music, dance and drama. It was fortunate to have the invaluable support of artists like M.S. Subbulakshmi, Vyjayantimala Bali, Hemamalini and the Travancore Sisters Lalita Padmini-Ragini in garnering resources for the sabha.

To quote C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) in 1955: "Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha has been one of the pioneers of the renaissance of Camatic music and Bharata sastra in south India and during its long continuous career of usefulness, it has taken every opportunity to cultivate sound taste and to encourage worthy exponents of the musical and dramatic arts."

The Tyagaraja aradhana, the Purandaradasa music festival and Annamacharya festival have become regular features. The sabha has been paying mu-

sical homage to Muthuswami Dikshitar at Ettayapuram every year on his anniversary, inviting musicians to participate in the tribute. Apart from presenting lecture demonstrations to highlight the salient points of Camatic music, the sabha has also been running a music school.

The sabha confers three awards every year – Sangeetha Kalasarathy on a musician, Natya Kalasarathy on a dancer and Nataka Kalasarathy on a dramatist. It presents awards to talented young vocalists, violinists, and mridangists based on their performance during the December music festival. The sabha also honours artists with the Palghat Mani Iyer Centenary Award instituted by Nithyashree Mahadevan and the M.L. Vasanthakumari Award by Sudha Ragunathan.

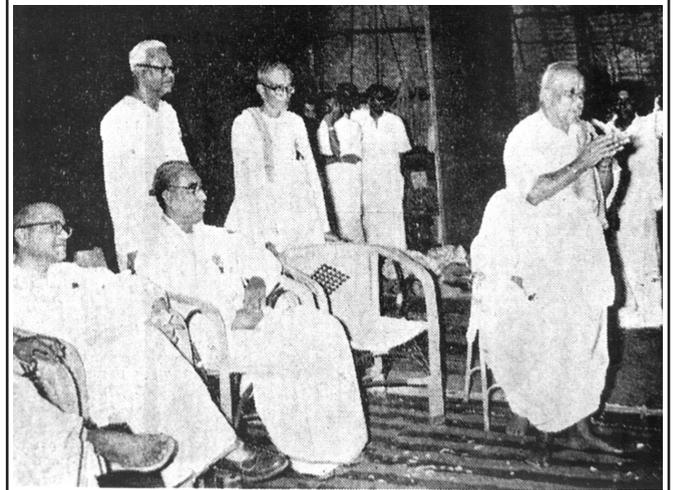
The activities of the sabha are planned and conducted by an eminent and enterprising team led by Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti (president), with Mohan Parasaran, P. Vijaykumar Reddy, Dr. Jaya Arunachalam, M. Balasubramaniam (vice presidents), R. Vijayaraghavan, M. Krishnamurthy (secretaries) and M.P. Varadan (treasurer).

Nalli, president of the sabha, says that Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha is probably the oldest sabha in south-east Asia. "I was invited to be its president succeeding Prof. K.A. Manavalan. Both of us had the pleasure of conducting many events including Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer's concert when he was 92. It was a memorable performance. Those days the Sabha used to conduct its events in February."

He recalls an interesting incident. Many years ago, before the music season, the *Times of India* had mentioned that thirty sabhas would participate in the annual December festival. Nalli was shocked to find Parthasarathy Swami Sabha missing from the list; the reason was the non-availability of a proper venue to conduct the annual festival. It was at this juncture that Jaya Arunachalam, noted social worker and vice president of the sabha, came forward to offer Vidya Bharathi Kalyana Mandapam as a venue for the season concerts which are now held here year after year.

It is remarkable that a sabha founded in the 19th Century continued to thrive in the 20th and is still going strong in the 21st Century. – (Courtesy: *Sruuti*.)

From the Sabha's archives



Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar at the 50th year celebrations.



C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer speaking on the occasion of M.S. Subbulakshmi's concert (1960).



M.L. Vasanthakumari in concert with Krishnamurthy Rao (mridangam), G. Harishankar (kharajira) and A. Kanyakumari (violin) in 1980.



Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti, R.K. Srikantan, Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman and Nithyashree Mahadevan at the Sabha's musical festival.



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

1. Which famous football club recently conferred life membership to Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee?
2. As of October 31, how many States and UTs are there in India?
3. Among the three India-born CEOs in the top 10 of Harvard Business Review's 'The Best-Performing CEO in the World, 2019', who is the top-ranked?
4. Name India's first international award constituted recently to honour exemplary work and achievements of the heads of State and Government and other distinguished persons/organisations around the world.
5. On October 22, who formally ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne?
6. 13-year-old Raunak Sadhwani has become the 65th Indian to achieve what sporting distinction?
7. What avian superlative was recently attributed to the male White Bellbird found in Central and South America?
8. According to the recently-launched NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index, which is the most innovative State for 2019?
9. Which tech giant recently announced that it has created a quantum computer whose processor had taken just 200 seconds to perform a "random sampling task" that would take the world's best classical computers 10,000 years?
10. McAfee, the leading global computer security software company, in its annual ranking said which Indian celebrity was the riskiest celebrity to search for online?

11. Where and on the banks of which waterbody was the Madras Boat Club founded in 1867?
12. What was the screen name of the 1920s star P.K. Nagalingam, who hailed from Pudukottai?
13. Name the 'Butcher of Alahabad' whose statue stood at the Spencer's junction and was removed in the late 1930s.
14. Name the three women whose statues are on either side of the Kamaraj Salai running alongside the Marina beach.
15. Which edifice's picture was embroidered on the curtain of the Suguna Vilas Sabha started by Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar?
16. In 1973, where was the first computer in the city (an IBM System 370 Model 155) installed?
17. About whom did Annadurai say "...when I first saw him, I suspected that he was an Aryan. Later, I was pleased learning that he was in fact Dravidian. There is no doubt that his looks will bring success to our plans for the future..."?
18. This actor's first-signed movie was a bilingual 'Paradesi' made by Anjali Devi but the cinematic great's second flick is nowadays identified as the debut film because it released earlier. Who?
19. For which work did Rajaji get the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958?
20. Which village in Usilampetti is reputed for sickles (aruvaals)?

(Answers on page 8)

More light on Gandhi's Chennai visits

Ever since we published the photo feature on some places in Madras that are associated with Mahatma Gandhi (*MM* Oct 16, 2019), we have had a flurry of phone calls, emails and messages via our website. V.R. Devika wrote in to say the Mahatma visited the Theosophical Society. B. Raman posted that he stayed at *Baghdad House*, the residence of Sivakozhundu Mudaliar in Patel Road, Perambur. Ramine-ni Bhaskarendra in characteristically thorough fashion dredged the Andhra Patrika archives and sent us this hourly itinerary of some of the Mahatma's visits to Madras. It throws light on why he went to some places listed earlier and also enlightens us of some other places he went to – The Editor.

1896

October 26

After a series of meetings held in Bombay and Poona Gandhi reached Madras and spoke about South African Indians at the Pachchayappa's Hall

Visited Theosophical Society accompanied by (later Sir) C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer

1915

April 17

Reached Madras Central from Haradwar. From Central, he went to the Indian Review Office (owned by G.A. Natesan & Co) near Broadway in George Town and stayed there.

October 18-20

Every afternoon, he met the students. On the 19th, he attended a meeting at Victoria Public Hall.

April 21

Gandhiji gave interviews to *Madras Mail* and *Andhra Pathrika*.

April 21

Evening: Spoke in Victoria Public Hall at the meeting organised by Indian South Africa League.

April 22

Evening: Visited the Madras Cosmopolitan Club.

April 23

Garden Party at *Humayun Manzil* residence of Nawab Syed Mohammad.



Humayun Jah Manzil, Royapettah, now home to the Government Hobart Higher Secondary School.

April 24

Spoke at a meeting organised by the Muslim League at Lawley Hall, Mount Road.

Meeting in the South India Athletic Association premises.

April 25

A meeting at Vasantha Mandapam, Govindappa Naicken Street, with Arya Vysyas (now Manali Hostel).

A meeting with Bohras in Mohammed Ali Buildings, George Town.

April 26

A meeting with the members of Madras Mahajana Sabha.

Visited the residence of Rev. T. Subrahmanyam and spoke with Indian and European Christian Community members. Rev. T. Subrahmayam was earlier in South Africa and shifted his residence to Peters Road, Royapettah, a few months prior to Gandhi's visit. He knew Gandhiji in South Africa itself.



The Theosophical Society, Adyar.

April 27

A meeting with Madras Students in YMCA.

April 28

Garden Party with Annie Besant and other Theosophical Society members at the Theosophical Society Office premises at Adyar.

Meeting with students at Pachchayappa High School.

1916

February 13

Gandhiji and Sorab Rustomjee arrived at Madras at 2.30 p.m. by Delhi Express.

Stayed at Bishop Whitehead and Lady Whiteheads' residence at Teynampet (this was most likely a house by the Long Tank).

February 16

At 8.00 am he met the students at the YMCA.

Later he attended the Anniversary of the 'Madras Social Service League' in the Quadrangle Hall of the Madras Christian College, which was chosen at a late hour due to the swelling crowds in place of the originally fixed Anderson Hall.

A meeting with the students at the Victoria Hostel.

1919

March 18

Public meeting in the beach opposite Presidency College to protest against the Rowlatt Act.

March 19

Visited the Madras Labour Union Office with BP Wadia at 6.30 p.m. and had a meeting with the workers of various industries.

March 20

Public meeting in the beach opposite Presidency College to protest against Rowlatt Act but Gandhiji could not attend as he was slightly indisposed.

March 21

Meeting with agitating Tramway Workers.

March 23

Announced the programme of Satyagraha.

(Continued on page 7)

Click

Festivities mean feasting, especially if it's one of the Big Ones, like the one that went by not too long ago.

Festivals also mean families. Which explains why some faces still look a bit stressed, but that could be guilt over the seemingly endless festive bingeing.

But some faces look particularly worn out, almost haunted.

That's because if festivals mean families, it follows that they also mean fotos... sorry, photos.

Which means that those extra-battered-looking citizens are the Chosen Ones, upon whose heads the task of making family photos happen descends.

Anyone who has attended an Annual-Celebration-of-Very-Big-Festival Family Gathering knows exactly what goes into getting this lot (with all due respect across generations) to work together to get those photos taken.

Assembling.

That's the key word and the situational Point Zero.

And it doesn't matter what the 'content' is. The family can be a mix of retiring wall flowers,

or a strange bunch of odd-balls, or a glittering collection of captains of industries and university professors, doyens from various fields of art, even a sprinkling of philosophers... but not one of them will do as they are told.

Which is why the Member-in-Charge-of-Family-Photos needs to be chosen carefully. He/she must exude a strong personality and a steady eye, 'like Mars to threaten and command', who can get the crankiest Oldest Member, or by sharp contrast, the most uncooperative toddler, to line up according to height.

● by Ranjitha Ashok

And that means Now!

Year after year, this scene plays out and everyone still hopes this year will be better.

It all starts out happily enough. The hostess sees that most guests have done well by the dining table, despite all the protestations that they

'really shouldn't'; the new outfits have been exclaimed over and admired; new jewellery (if any in these hard times), cooed over. The "My, how tall you've grown!" and the sotto voce: "Whoa! Those hips aren't lying!" comments are done. So, when the hostess senses a certain restlessness indicating that her guests are now anxious to leave and are wondering if right now is too soon for politeness, she suggests it's time to assemble for... you guessed it, The Photos.

It's 2019, so The Chosen One no longer carries a camera. Familiar with this particular

group, The Chosen One has assembled a back-up team, a couple of young adults to run interference, to herd errant aunts and uncles back into the fold, stare down rebellious youngsters, and gently remind those whose short-term memories have congealed that they

need to be heading 'that way' if they wish to be part of the family photos.

These youngsters have also been chosen with care. Last years' experience has yet to fade. A young person was put in charge, tried to get four generations into one designated garden space, failed miserably, collapsed in nervous exhaustion, and assumed the foetal position in a corner of the garden, refusing to unfurl for several hours. When last heard, he had left home, choosing to trek alone to Mount Everest, deeming that easier and safer.

Painful.

So, the herding begins. You'd think familial affection will smoothen the process.

It doesn't.

Put four aunts in place, the fifth suddenly decides she needs a glass of water and disappears. Get eight uncles lined up, the ninth goes missing. He is then discovered gazing at the sweet-meat displays, unable to decide on his third helping, but is quick to take umbrage at being summoned. Diverse cousins chase behind various members of the fourth generation, leaving many concerned about the future of this world. Someone chooses this moment to coo over Facetime at family across the seas – and is hurt that the

importance of this moment is not being recognised. Instead, they are being chivvied about to "Come, stand, no? Quickly – everyone's waiting!"

Then, some Bright Young Things decide to line everyone up outfit-colour-wise, leading to long arguments whether the bright pinks and flaming reds ought to be so close. (Where's a nice, soft contrast when you need one?)

Just as everyone thinks the group is assembled, a XS-sized aunt is discovered behind the bulkiest Distant Relative, in full martyr-mode for having been called last.

"Doesn't matter", the Entitled One sighs, "So what if no one can spot me in the photo? The world won't collapse."

Family eye-rolls all around.

Then, just as things quieten down, and practised smiles are being fixed in place, one of the aunts chokes on something. The coughing fit starts quietly enough, but soon begins to resemble a particularly angry thunderstorm, leading to much tumult and chaos, with many voices raised and many bits of advice given, all of which are ignored.

"They made me drink my hot coffee too quickly", the lady sputters, and everyone nods wisely, not too sure if this makes sense, but please don't argue... not now.

The heat is scorching; makeup is running, blow-dried hair is curling, and the kids are beginning to whine, push and shove each other. The youngest ones, told to sit on the ground, inform their exhausted parents that the grass is being mean and pokey. The Elders are trying to tell anyone who'll listen that they are getting....er... too old for this.

Just as the Chosen One is ready to click, everyone notices the sun is in their eyes, so all faces are...well...making faces.

A huge debate then follows on where to stand, and where to look.

Finally, the photos are taken, with an extra few for luck, and the group disperses, thankful for having survived the day. Some are convinced that the shutter icon went 'click' just as they were yawning, scolding, scratching their noses, or adjusting sarees...but too bad – too late.

It's done.

The Chosen One is later spotted sitting in a shady spot all alone, gazing into the distance, thinking long, long thoughts, and drinking several glasses of water.

If there are those among the group for whom all this fuss over photographs (that no one will ever look at after today) seems much ado over very little, they keep their thoughts to themselves.

And so it goes.

Till the Big Ones roll around next year once more.

GANDHI'S CHENNAI VISITS

(Continued from page 6)



With the British Parliamentary Delegation headed by Prof. Richards at Madras in January 1946.

1920

August 12

Reached central at 9.40 am by Bombay Mail.

At 6 p.m. a public meeting at Tiruvallikkeni Beach where he explained to the public about Non-Cooperation Movement.

1925

March 7

Reached Madras by Bombay Mail, he was on the way to Vaikom and stayed at Sriman Srinivasa Iyengar's Residence (*Amjad Baugh*) At 3.30 p.m. visited Yamini Purna Tilakam's Hindu Yuvathi Saranalayam.

At 4 p.m. Felicitation by the staff of Madras Corporation at Ripon Buildings.

At 6 p.m. a public meeting at Tiruvallikkeni Beach where he spoke about Hindi, Hindu Muslim Unity, Untouchability, Vaikom agitation and Khaddar.

March 21

Returned from Vaikom by Mettupalayam Mail along with

C. Rajagopalachari, reached Madras Central at 7.30 a.m. and proceeded to Srinivasa Iyengar's house in Mylapore. At 10 am spoke to Adi Dravidas at Ratnavel Chetty's Free Library Building (Whitehead Hall).

March 22

Visited the venue in Tiruvallikkeni, where a competition of spinning is conducted for women.

March 24

At 9.00 a.m. spoke about the prohibition at *Gokhale Hall*.

Visited Ramakrishna Students Home and Sanskrit College and had debate with the students there.

Visited Madras Ayurveda Pharmacy where Achanta Lakshmiopathi, Ramachari, Satyamurthy and Gadde Rangaiah Naidu received Gandhiji.

Visited Hindi Prachar Sabha.

At 4.00 pm visited Andhra Patrika office in George Town.

Visited Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu's 'Swarajya' office.

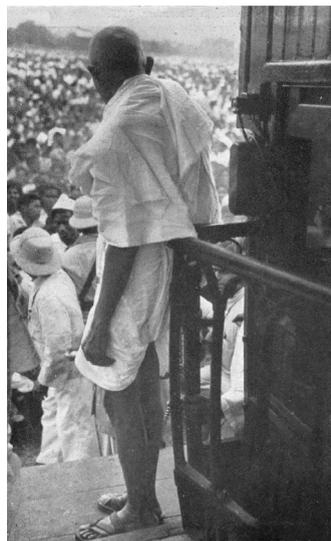
Visited Scavengers colony and Andhra Panchamas colony in Royapuram.

Dinner at S. Srinivasa Iyengar's residence 'Amjad Baugh', where 500 dignitaries from various fields attended.

At 7.45 p.m. a meeting was conducted in the vacant place behind the Ekambareswar Temple in Sowcarpet attended by Gujarati, Marwadi and Multani residents of Madras.

Next a meeting was conducted at Perianaickenpet.

At 9.15 p.m. Gandhiji left for Bombay from Central.



Addressing a crowd at Tambaram (Madras) from his special train in January, 1946.

Madras Men in India's first English cricket tour – 1

In the annals of Indian cricket, 1911 will always be a landmark year. In May that year, a squad of sixteen cricketers drawn from across the country embarked on a tour of England, making it the first All India Cricket Tour to that country. It was not the first visit by a team from India however, for a Parsee team from Bombay had already made the tour two decades earlier. An attempt to replicate the Parsee visit on a larger scale by a team comprising representatives from the Hindu and Muslim communities apart from Parsees was made in 1903-

04, only to be scuppered at the last moment ostensibly due to lack of funds, though there were insinuations that the real reason was the lack of cordial relations between the members of the communities. By 1909, the idea regained traction and efforts were renewed to facilitate the visit of a team that would be representative of the country.

An 'Indian Cricket Team for England Committee' comprising representatives from the three principle cricketing communities was constituted to oversee the preparations for the tour. Over forty leading cricketers from across the country were contacted and their availability ascertained. The final squad of sixteen was chosen by John Alexander Cuffe, an experienced Australian cricketer who represented Worcestershire in the English County Circuit, he having been hired to identify the best players and coach them. The team was captained by the nineteen-year-old Maharajah Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, a rather surprise choice and included several players who are spoken about and commemorated even today, such as Dr. H.D. Kanga, the Palwankar brothers (Baloo and Shivram), H.H. Shivajirao Gaekwad of Baroda and Keki Mistry. This two-part series is an attempt to profile the two cricketers from the Madras Presidency who were automatic picks in the

team despite their age at that time, Bangalore Jayaram and Kilvidi Seshachari.

What little we know of Seshachari today is thanks to a profile that appeared in the June 1906 issue of the magazine *Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game*. Born on January 2, 1875 Seshachari took to the game in his teens and made a name for himself as a wicket keeper in the minor club matches and soon found himself elected as a

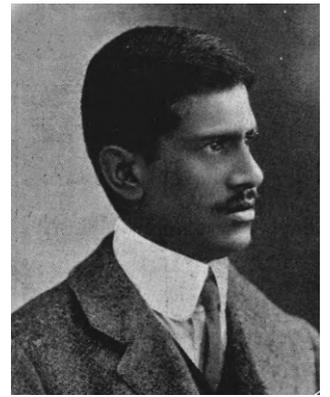
● by
Karthik A. Bhatt

member of the 'Premier Hindu Club of Southern India'. This presumably must have been the Madras United Club, founded by Buchi Babu Nayudu in 1888 as an attempt to provide Indians with an opportunity to develop their cricketing talent and to compete with the English on an equal footing in the game.

Seshachari's move to Ootacamund, 'the delightful sanatorium of Southern India' in 1900 to work in the plantations provided him with the opportunity of moving with and learning from several European cricketers, most notably the missionary C.T. Studd. His simple but effective practice of having balls thrown at him indiscriminately helped him gain the reflexes and skills so necessary for a keeper and before long, his cricketing graph

soon soared and he was in demand to play for several teams. He had an active fan following and after a game where he helped the United Hindus acquire a creditable draw against the Oxford Authentics in 1902, was presented with a gold watch and chain by an admirer. His performances often attracted effusive praise in the media. 'Seshachari is a stumper of the highest order, and has no equal in India', reported the Indian Sporting Times in 1903, describing his performance for the United Hindus against the Parsi Gymkhana. His disposal of Captain Greig of the Bombay Presidency in a game against the Hindus, had the Times of India exulting that it was 'superb piece of stumping, worth going miles to see'. With such encomiums being showered on him, it was little surprise that he was an automatic pick for the aborted tour in 1904.

Seshachari's occupation as a planter seems to have gained precedence over cricket during this period, as the profile notes in 1906 that he 'nowadays has no opportunities for practice'. He however continued turning up for various teams such as the Bombay Hindus, the Civilians (in Ootacamund) and most notably, the Maharaja of Natore with the same efficiency as before. The Bombay Gazette noted in 1909 that he was still the best wicket-keeper in India



and it was thus no surprise that he was selected in the 1911 touring party.

According to reports of the England tour, the duo of Seshachari (as keeper) and Palwankar Baloo (the lead spinner) created a formidable combination, though the tour was anything but a success. The All India team managed just two wins out of twenty-three games.

Seshachari played his last game for the Hindus in the Bombay Quadrangular tournament the following year. He thereafter turned out occasionally for the Maharaja of Natore's team and passed away due to pneumonia in January 1917 at Calcutta.

It is indeed unfortunate that today nothing much is known about the life of this cricketer, who was widely considered the best wicket keeper in his time.

(To be concluded
next fortnight)

Answers to quiz

1. Mohun Bagan, 2. 28 States and 9 UTs, 3. Shantanu Narayan of Adobe, 4. Gandhi Mandela Award, 5. Emperor Naruhito of Japan, 6. Grandmaster in chess, 7. Loudest bird with its call reaching 125 dB (similar to what you'd hear standing next to speakers at a rock concert), 8. Karnataka, 9. Google, 10. M.S. Dhoni.

11. The backwaters of the Ennore Creek that was fed by the Kosasthaliyar, 12. Raja Sandow, 13. James Neil, 14. Kannagi, Avvayar and Annie Besant, 15. The Madras University Senate hall, 16. IIT Madras, 17. MGR, 18. 'Sivaji' Ganesan, 19. *Chakravarti Tirumagan*, 20. Thirupachethi.

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