Tree policy – the need of the hour

Trees have never had it so bad, or so good, depending on which way you look at it. On the one hand, everywhere from Aarey Milk Colony to the Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, Egmore, they are being cut down in the name of development. On the other hand, all of this felling, which would have otherwise passed unnoticed, has made it to the news, with environmentalists and lay nature-lovers crying foul. Trees evoke emotions in all of us, the question however is, can expansion of civic services be forever held back in the name of protecting nature? Or is there some other way out?

The Courts have ordered a stay and the trees are safe, for now. Could the Metro Rail sheds have been located elsewhere? Perhaps. Could the Egmore Eye Hospital have planned its new structures in a different part of the campus? Certainly, for there is ample space available. Then why did it choose only the tree-shaded part of its premises? We will never know. We need to however be thankful that because this was a government-owned premises, news of plans to deforest came to be known in advance. Had it been a private property, or had the space been cleared for a party meeting, would there have been any time to approach the courts?

How can the Government prevent such occurrences in future? It can, in a way, take a leaf out of what has been done in matters concerning heritage buildings. The High Court had in 2010 or thereabouts, ordered that 468 buildings be listed and that the CMDA appoint a committee to look into whether they needed to be preserved. While what followed was largely disappointing, it

Pedestrian plazas good, but not enough

The T. Nagar Pedestrian Plaza has just been inaugurated under the aegis of the Smart City project. The project kicked off in mid-2018 and, at an outlay of Rs. 33.8 crores, it has been completed in eighteen months, except for the planned multi-level car park. Similar Pedestrian Plazas are to be constructed in Velachery, Anna Nagar and Tondiarpet. T. Nagar’s Plaza stretches from the Thanikachalam Road-Thyagaraya Road intersection to Panagil Park junction. The original vehicular road has been narrowed down to accommodate just a one-way traffic towards Panagil Park, allowing cars to park on the left. The space thus released has broadened the walking paths on either side of the one-way road. Pedestrian walkways are smoothly paved; they’re equipped with benches and bollards to prevent two-wheeler invasion, as well as ramps for easy movement of pedestrians from road to pavement and vice versa.

When I visited the Plaza, shops on either side of the road seemed to be celebrating the new shopper-friendly atmosphere in full swing. They have undergone a major make-over to take advantage of the substantial increase in footfall in the Plaza as a result of the new congenial ambience. Pondy Bazar is dazzling, especially in the evenings, flaunting its claim to be the best open-air mall in this part of the country. However, the dustbins placed at intervals are too small for the volume of garbage that a busy evening in the Plaza generates. Many of them are overflowing. Larger bins and continuous clearing are necessary. A dedicated cycle track with coloured tiles, that was part of the proposed design, could not be identified on the crowded Saturday evening of my visit.

A disappointing outcome is the increase in noise and pollution levels from the continuous traffic that moves through the Plaza. If the new Plaza seeks to provide a fine experience for shoppers, it is perhaps necessary to remove the provision for motorised traffic altogether on this short stretch. Shoppers, after parking their vehicles, should be able to walk about in the Plaza free from traffic and its pollution. Once vehicles are allowed, two-wheelers tend to take the law into their hands and it is impractical to keep them under watch all the time. We witnessed a harassed cop trying to control the cross-crayons of motorcycles defying his presence and invading the new walkways. We understand that there is a plan to hold periodic street shows and music but these may be drowned out by the noise of the ceaseless traffic that is presently permitted. If traffic is blocked, a narrow strip is all that is needed in the middle for a couple of electric mini-buses to ply up and down, stopping for hop-ons and hop-offs. The removal of noise, smoke and dust would bring about a world of improvement to the open-air mall atmosphere. We do not know if the traffic is a temporary feature or specifically allowed for in the design. If it is the latter, it is a serious dampener to the objective of creating a relaxed, pollution-free ambience.

The Smart City concept has brought other pedestrian woes to the forefront as well. All these years, pedestrians have been ignored in road design. Government engineers, even today, are trained to think of making roads only for motorised vehicles, with pedestrians getting an apologetic of a walkway and that, only if anything remains. Chennai may be among the most “walked on” cities in the country. The limited space protected for

(Continued on page 2)
Tree policy needed

(Continued from page 1)

cannot be denied that dem-
ollution of heritage structures
has become a little more dif-
icult than what it was in the
past. True, a few efforts have
managed to get around this
restriction but they have done
so after taking recourse to due
process of law. While we may
lament the destruction of build-
ings such as Binny’s, Gordon
Woodroffe and D’Angelis’s, we
cannot deny that the decision
to demolish was arrived at by
the Government after some
consideration and study.

It therefore becomes nec-
Essary to have a survey done
of green pockets within the
city, list the number of trees
in them and also document rare
and ageing specimens. An
NGO such as Nizhal probably
already has these details and so
we hope the Government will
support as well. Once this
is done, it is necessary that the
findings be published togeth-
er with classification of such
pockets into categories – must
preserve, may be preserved and
need not be preserved. There
has to be a well-reasoned argu-
ment as to why green areas fall
in different categories. And
as and when some trees in the
last category need to go, there
has to be a plan or com-
mmitment from those who are
responsible for the felling as to
where and how they propose to
make up for the loss in numbers.
A tight watch needs to be kept
on how the new trees fare and
whether they are being planted
sufficiently in advance or not.

Presently, trees evoke a lot
of emotion but every little act
on is forthcoming. While we
do not want to see trees cut
down, letting them grow wild is
also not an option. They need
to be pruned periodically for
public safety. Similarly, while
we understand that trees are
valuable assets, we do not seem
to be able to do anything about
people nailing signboards, cables
and hoard-
ings on to them.

Let us ponder over all these
aspects and arrive at a tree
policy for our city.

Pedestrian plaza needed
for the city’s walkways

(Continued from page 1)

Pedestrian use turns away thou-
sands of people from walking
to two-wheelers or autos. In our
weather, quite a large part of
our outings could be walk-trips,
it is after all how the roads
would be used if they were
paved. There could be a sub-
stantial reduction in the usage
of motorised transport, saving
oil, lessening congestion and re-
ducing pollution and accidents.
The ripple effect of the
Smart City programme is being
felt not only in the new pave-
m ents on 23 roads in T. Nagar
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Making Chennai water positive

Pavithra's Perspective

The Lonely House

One of the weird things about my childhood was that while I lived in Velachery, my school was in West CIT Nagar – maybe not a huge deal in these days of vast commutes, but an exhausting journey in those years when Velachery was pretty much consigned to the wails and could be reached only by PTC buses (“I cannot do savanna to another town, Amma!” – Autorickshawah). I’d leave home at 6.15 in the morning and by degrees, learned to enjoy the hour that took me past Guindy, Saidapet and eventually, school. And one of the areas I passed, was St Thomas Mount.

Not that I did, technically – more like skirting the edges. But the name stuck in my memory and eventually became ingrained into my school-commute psyche, so much so that I could no longer think of my school run without simultaneously remembering St Thomas Mount too. As an adult, though, I realized that I’d seen woefully little of the area, and set out to repair my omission.

These old homes, now blackened and sometimes crumbling, with their corrugated iron roofs... (Continued on page 5)
Two pages for the December Music Season

Making music in summer

The story of Dhanapal

(T)he many in Chennai, December is synonymous with Carnatic music. But for around 23 years or so between 1918 and 1941, there was much of the art to be enjoyed in sum-
time too. This was due to the summer school of music, which
was convened each year during the
months of June and July. It did not have any formal premises, and met at places such as the YMCA, Andhra College, Madras Presidency College, the Hindu and Kalinga High Schools, both at Triplicane.

The Summer School had much to do with evangelical activity. The Rev. Herbert Arthur Popley was attached to the London Missionary Society and had arrived in Madras Presi-
dency sometime in the early 1900s. He spent much of his working life at the Enola Mission in CMS and while there, had the opportunity to learn about the Thirukkural and Indian classical music. He then translated the former and embroidered upon the latter, the Summer School was born. In the 1920s, he published his translation of the Kural in two volumes and as for music,
he wrote a book on it too. But had he not been the School's producer all of this.

The School's Summer Session was

(Dhanapal’s students: Mother and Child)

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On the fine art of detection

by S.K. Chettur, I.C.S.

This being the Music Season, it is perhaps appropriate that we bring you a story in which the name of M.S. Subbulakshmi too was unfortunately involved. A reading of this excellent summation by S.K. Chettur, I.C.S. reveals unknown facets - 1. that it was in the Trivandrum Mail and not the Boat Mail that the murder was committed, contrary to what is often spoken and written about; 2. the motive of M.S. Subbulakshmi in it, which latter day raconteurs appear to conveniently overlook.

Editor

A prominent Chettiyar banker got into a first-class compartment of the Trivandrum Express at Madurai railway station. It was not his intention to travel by first class. On the contrary, he had intended to travel by second class. As all the second class berths were occupied, he was forced to go ‘first’. At Trichy Junction, he was seen seated in the compartment of his I Class berth and he met a friend who saw him purchase and consume some savouries from an Indian restaurant. When the train left Chingleput, he went to an outer door of the compartment thinking it was the door leading to the bathroom and stepped out. Now it was not, and as the train was in motion, he fell out and was badly hurt. He crawled into the clump of bushes where he lay till he was discovered. The papers in his pocket and the evidence of his two companions who were traced, proved the truth of his story that he was no murderer but only a midnight traveller.

To return to the murder, on the motive theory, it was found that the Chettiyar had recently interested himself in politics and backed one of the two parties contesting in a District Board election. There was some evidence that the party which lost the election and result of his support to the rival candidate was very much incensed against the deceased. This was a likely clue and I believe it was followed up, but without much result. The only other motive was based on an inquiry into the private life of the deceased which elicited the fact that he had one illicit amour but there was not enough to suggest that anybody, whether jealous or otherwise, was interested in effecting his murder.

Mr. L.A. Bishop, the then Chief of Police, when investigating the case, and spared no effort to bring you a story in which the Celestial Detective would not perhaps have a chance to outdo the priest. But it is said that truth is the bestõee method of analysing “clues” scientifically with microscopes etc. of the kind that Mr. L.A. Bishop could combine the inductive reasoning of Dupin (so ably imitated by his successor Sherlock Holmes) with the psychological methods of Chesterton and the chemico-analytic methods of Dr. Freeman, the murderer of the Chettiyar that I have referred to above would not perhaps have got away.

Mr. Chettur indeed demands an admirable Chrichton. But it is said that truth is stranger than fiction. It is our hope that this “rara avis” will be very much to the taste of the younger generation of our police detectives. Ed.

Note: With all due respect to Mr. Chettur, it must be said that Mr. L.A. Bishop, the then D.I. of Police, and later L.G. of Madras, was a very able and experienced officer who personally investigated the case, and spared no effort to solve this crime. Both lines of investigation suggested in this article were pursued with great tenacity but the element of luck, which, as every police officer knows, often plays a vital role in solving cases, perhaps contributed to the failure of the police to secure a conviction.

When dealing with gangster criminals, methods involving greater trust in personal intuition, or reasoning from observed facts are called for when investigating crimes today. I sometimes think that more of our police officers would make excellent detectives if we could let them stay on cases of crime and detection to keep their minds open to new ideas, and adapt the methods or the techniques of detection relevant to the local conditions. This may seem like gratuitous advice but it is well worth a trial. Many of our police detectives would not have heard perhaps a story or two, Father Brown or Dr. Freeman and if so, the greater discredit to them for not recognising in Dupin of Edgar Allan Poe the great father of modern detection; or not seeing in G.K. Chesterton’s Father Brown the most original psychological detective that has ever been conceived or written. As in Thorneby’s Dr. Freeman the originator of the modern method of analysing “clues” scientifically with microscopes etc. of the kind that Mr. L.A. Bishop could combine the inductive reasoning of Dupin (so ably imitated by his successor Sherlock Holmes) with the psychological methods of Chesterton and the chemico-analytic methods of Dr. Freeman, the murderer of the Chettiyar that I have referred to above would not perhaps have got away.

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When dealing with gangster criminals, methods involving greater trust in personal intuition, or reasoning from observed facts are called for when investigating crimes today. I sometimes think that more of our police officers would make excellent detectives if we could let them stay on cases of crime and detection to keep their minds open to new ideas, and adapt the methods or the techniques of detection relevant to the local conditions. This may seem like gratuitous advice but it is well worth a trial. Many of our police detectives would not have heard perhaps a story or two, Father Brown or Dr. Freeman and if so, the greater discredit to them for not recognising in Dupin of Edgar Allan Poe the great father of modern detection; or not seeing in G.K. Chesterton’s Father Brown the most original psychological detective that has ever been conceived or written. As in Thorneby’s Dr. Freeman the originator of the modern method of analysing “clues” scientifically with microscopes etc. of the kind that Mr. L.A. Bishop could combine the inductive reasoning of Dupin (so ably imitated by his successor Sherlock Holmes) with the psychological methods of Chesterton and the chemico-analytic methods of Dr. Freeman, the murderer of the Chettiyar that I have referred to above would not perhaps have got away.

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Women doctors’ hospitals in Madras – with notes on the related influencing developments in India in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

At least 30 years before qualified women doctors from Britain, America and Australia came to India to assist in the health care of women, Anni Marie Scharlieb living in Madras (now Chennai) graduated with an LMS (Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery) diploma from the Madras Medical College in 1875. She then proceeded to London to earn an MBBS degree from the newly started Medical School for Women. She returned to Madras after completing advanced training in operative midwifery at the Allgemeines Krankenhaus, Vienna, Austria in 1884. The Government of Madras established a women’s hospital in Moore’s Garden – the Royal Victoria Hospital for Caste and Gosha Women (RVH) – which she superintended from 1884 to 1887; the hospital was shifted to its current location in Triplicane, Chennai in 1890. Doctors in Madras, such as Ida Sophia Scharlieb and Murthudakshmi Reddy, played a major role in taking women’s health care to new heights.

While chronicling the lives and works of pioneer women doctors of Madras, this note also enunciates details of the establishment of premier women’s hospitals in Madras: (1) The Maternity Hospital (MH) in Egmore and (2) The RVH in Triplicane, in the backdrop of an overall context of women’s health management in the rest of India, triggered by the Dufferin Association and its spurs, the Association of Medical Women in India and Women’s Medical Service for India.

In the late 19th and early 20th decades older than the RVH, performed remarkably on many a score: for example, in starting of a midwife training school and the Diploma in Gynaecology and Obstetrics programme, the latter setting the trend for the rest of India. The MH pioneered in developing a facility to treat infants and children as well in 1899, thanks to the efforts of pediatrician S.T. Achar, thus earning a reputation as the ‘Egmore model’ in medical care.

Cultural reasons prevented Hindu and Muslim women of 19th-Century India to seek medical support from male doctors, either during childbirth or when they required attention on other personal health and hygiene matters. A few qualified overseas missionary women doctors came to India in the early decades of the 20th Century, with an intent of assisting Indian women and popularizing Christianity. Many missionary women doctors came from Australia. For instance, Laura Fowler-Hope from Adelaide served as a doctor attached to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission of Calcutta, worked at the Duchess of Teck Hospital in Patna between 1905 and 1917. Flora Innes from Brisbane and a medical graduate from Edinburgh, UK, attached to the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Association of New South Wales, began medical work at the Presbyterian Mission at Sheolihungur (Solingapuram), Tamil Nadu in 1911. She joined the Christian Medical College & Hospital (CMC&H), Vellore in 1918. Ethel Ambrose, also from Australia, worked in the three decades (1905–1934) at Poom and established a women’s hospital at Pandalurpur, Maharasthtra in 1909–1910. Mary Golder, a nun of the Society of Jesus–Mary–Joseph, and a trained medical doctor holding specialist diplomas in obstetrics, gynaecology and ophthalmology, came from Belgurug, Victoria, Australia to India as a medical missionary in 1920. She was the first nun–doctor authorised by the Pope Pius X to work in southern India.

By this time, 36 years old, Scharlieb, living in Madras (now Chennai) graduated with an LMS (Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery) diploma from the Madras Medical College (MMC). She went to Edinburgh in 1888 and studied further at the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women (ESWM) in 1894 and trained at the Grant Medical College, Bombay, and qualified in medicine from the University of Bombay in 1899. Kadamani Ganguli (1861–1922) began medical practice in Surat (vegetable) medicine under the guidance of General Edward Green Balfour (1845–1930). Scharlieb found the cultural shackles of India bravely. She graduated with an MD from the London Medical School for Women (LMSW) in 1894 and trained at the Royal Free Hospital, London. She was the Principal Medical Officer at Surat Women’s Hospital, Gujarat, for many decades until her death at 90 years, Rakhmabai blazed new social trails for Indian women in general and women doctors in particular.

References, in passing, mention about one Annie Jaganadhan, who qualified in medicine in Madras in 1883, possibly with a licentiate in Medicine & Surgery (LMS) from the Madras Medical College (MMC). She went to Edinburgh in 1888 and studied further at the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women (ESWM). In 1892, she returned to India and joined as a house surgeon at Cama & Albless Hospital, Bombay. She succumbed to pulmonary tuberculosis at an early age – similar to Ananadibai – in 1894. Nothing further is known about Annie Jaganadhan. Another Annie as an 18-yr-old, accompanying her barrister husband William Mason Scharlieb (1829–1891). She visited women patients at the Madras General Hospital (MGH) during her spare time, when the struggles and pains of the women she saw there touched her heart. Her experience pushed her to seek admission into MMC to qualify as a doctor in 1875, when the college opened its gates to women, thanks to Surgeon-General Edward Green Balfour (1813–1889). Women were admitted into the 3-yr LMS programme, which included a brief training in midwifery. A 4½-year-long MBCM (Bachelor of Medicine, Master of Chirurgery, similar to a modern-day MBBS) programme existed in MMC, but was open only to men. After marrying in 1884, Mary Scharlieb went to London in 1881 and acquired MBBS and Honours titles of the University of London, studying at LMSW (established 1874). Using the scholarship monies she had won during her study time at LMSW, Scharlieb trained in operative midwifery (now obstetrics) for four months with Gustav August Braun (1821–1911) at the Frauenklinik (Women’s Clinic) of the Allgemeines Krankenhaus der Stadt Wien (General Hospital of Vienna), Austria. The Government of Madras, at the personal interest of Anna Julia Webster, wife of Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, Governor of Madras, established an exclusive hospital for women, under the supervision of Scharlieb, which came up in a spacious, multi-room garden house in Moore’s Garden in 1884. This hospital was named the Royal Victoria Hospital for Caste and Gosha Women (RVH). According to Scharlieb: ‘In India, at any rate in those long gone-by days, little was to be seen of a trained and skilled help of the Government, or at any rate without the initiative and sympathetic interest of the powers that be. I was extremely anxious that there should be a hospital dedicated entirely to the service of Caste Hindus and Gosha Mahomedans. Naturally there was a certain amount of opposition from local ladies, but finally Lady Grant-Duff, the Governor’s wife, and Surgeon-General Furnell called a meeting of the chief members of the Indian community. There was the usual amount of speech-making setting forth the merits of the scheme. And finally a series of resolutions was submitted to the meeting to the effect that the proposed institution of a hospital exclusively for the use of Caste and Gosha ladies; that the hospital should be under my care; and that I should have such assistance as I considered necessary. Details were settled later, and without too much loss of time a very nice house in a large garden was found and dedicated to the service of the hospital.’

I ought to state that soon after the house was opened I wrote to Lady Biddulph, and through her obtained the Queen’s gracious consent to the hospital being called the Royal Victoria Hospital for Caste and Gosha women.

(Madras MUSINGS by Ramya Raman and Anantanarayanan Raman)
Four years senior to Seshachari, Jayaram was born in April 1872 in Bangalore. He took a keen interest in sports at an early age, learning both cricket and tennis. Though nothing is known about his family, he presumably hailed from a wealthy background, for in his piece ‘Memories of Mysore Cricket’ in the Mysore Supplement of The Hindu he mentions that he was also an avid rider, making good use of the Gulf Arab ponies kept by his father. Despite his early success in tennis (he played the sport well enough to win several matches for his college), he did not pursue the sport as his real interest lay in cricket. He was a regular visitor to the Bangalore Gymkhana to witness cricket matches played every Thursday (being a military holiday) and soon the style of play of several European cricketers began to grow on him.

He soon began to establish a reputation as an excellent batsman playing for his alma mater, the Central College in Bangalore as well as the Gymkhana. He played several match winning knocks against a variety of Indian and European teams, with his first century coming against the Yorkshire Regiment in 1891. He captained his college to four titles between 1889 and 1895 in the provincial inter collegiate trophy instituted by Justice Brandt and Sir Philips Hutchins. His exploits earned him several admirers across the country and in 1895 he was appointed the Director of the Mysore Geological Department.

On graduating from the Central College, Jayaram joined the Mysore Geological Department in 1895 as one of seven apprentices under Dr. W.F. Smeeth, considered to be the instant, for in his first match he scored 127 against the Essex Regiment, playing for the Bangalore Gymkhana and following it up with 133 against Madras. His exploits were not restricted to his appearances for the Bangalore Gymkhana, for he also regularly turned out for the Madras United Club, whose skipper S. Subramaniam called him ‘easily the most versatile player that the Presidency had produced’. Describing his batting as one of tremendous power, Subramaniam recalls that Jayaram’s biggest hit was at the Chepauk ground, where he hit the ball to the middle of the Old Engineering College ground next door (where today the Tennis courts of the MCC stand, a good 150 yards away from the pitch).

By the time the selectors met to finalise the squad to tour England in 1911, Jayaram was past his prime, having played little cricket in the preceding few years. He was however selected on account of his experience of the English playing conditions, with the Bombay Gazette expressing its hope that he would be ‘still a reliable bat and should make useful contributions to the scores of his side’. This hope remained largely unfulfilled, as Jayaram finished 6th in the list of leading run scorers for the side, with a highest score of 81. Pushing 40 years of age, Jayaram retired from cricket soon after his return from England. He however had a distinguished stint on the official front, being appointed the Director of the Mysore State Geological Department in 1916. He retired in 1927 and spent the last few years of his life at his residence in Bangalore, the quaint Masie Lodge on Lalbagh Road (which seems to have been in existence till the 1970s). He passed away on December 4, 1936 at the Bowring Institute.

Acknowledgements:
Cricket, A Weekly Record of the Game, March 1898 (B. Jayaram) and June 1906 (K. Seshachari).

(Concluded)