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# MADRAS MUSINGS

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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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## Making a sham of heritage conservation

What makes for heritage conservation if a structure is generally believed to be of 'aesthetic, architectural and cultural merit'? The best would be for the edifice to be preserved in its entirety and put to adaptive reuse. The next best would be for it to be retained and turned into a museum of some kind, though this is really not a viable option in India where countless badly run museums proliferate with hardly any footfalls. The worst

option, just short of outright demolition, would be to leave the façade standing and paint it regularly so that it looks well preserved. And yet this

● by The Editor

is precisely the kind of 'plastic conservation' that our State appears to specialise in, and the most recent example is what has happened to the Raja Sir

Savalai Ramaswami Mudaliar Choultry that stands just opposite the Central Station (see *HeritageWatch* alongside).

Constructed in 1888 by the eponymous businessman and philanthropist, the precinct was meant to provide transit accommodation for people who arrived in the city by train. The land was leased from the Government and the facility, housed in a beautiful Indo Saracenic structure, was

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## City traffic and ways to keep it in control

If God were to offer one gift relating to our city, to be granted instantly upon asking, there is a high probability that many of us would want a noise-free, pollution-free, smooth movement of traffic and pedestrians on the roads. A sample of such peace on the roads can be experienced on the days of flash strikes by auto-rickshaws. That is some indication of the role of autos in traffic chaos.

It feels good to see the on-going activity of the Chennai Corporation and the Police authorities to clear the streets to make them safer. Nearly 11,000 abandoned vehicles, which were no longer in working condition but were occupying public space, have been cleared. The resultant sales proceeds of over Rs. 3 crores

● by A Special Correspondent

was given to the Police department for improving road conditions and traffic discipline. Such a drive is commendable and should not remain a one-time activity as, by itself, it will not check continued dumping. Preventive measures backed by enforcement are necessary to stop such vandalism. Without a centralised recycling hub – where old vehicles are shredded, their spare parts stripped and remaining shells cubed – people may not know how to dispose of their unwanted vehicles. A recycling centre that charges a fee for its services would remove that excuse.

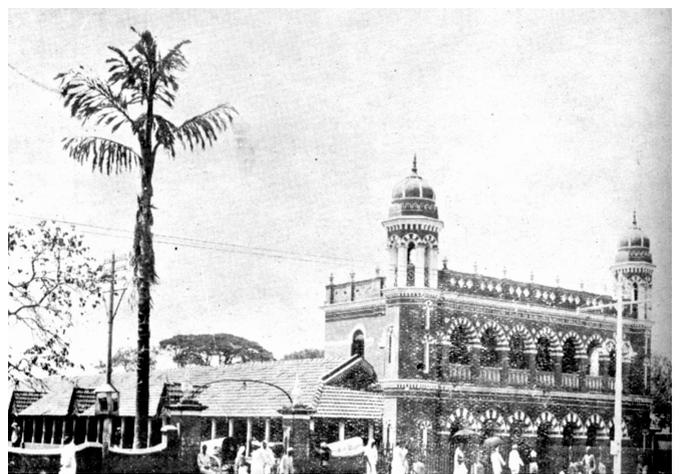
The re-laying of 33,000 interior roads and 471 bus routes seems imminent as the clearing

of abandoned vehicles was meant to remove this impediment to commencing reconstruction work. There is no mention of modernising pedestrian sidewalks as part of the road reconstruction programme. It is now an opportune time to construct walking paths and bicycle tracks and protect them from encroachment by vehicles and road-side vendors. The residual space should be set aside for vehicular traffic even if such order of priority calls for re-directing traffic flow and identifying more one-way stretches.

Fines have now been raised substantially to increase the

(Continued on page 2)

### HERITAGE WATCH



Our OLD dating to 1928 is of the RSRM Choultry in all its glory, just 40 years after it was built. Our NOT SO NEW dates to 2008, when the building was run as a hotel, and was well-maintained, all its wings in full use.

Our NEW, dating to 2020 and taken by Rahul Jaywant Bhise, a student of the Asian College of Journalism, shows the façade in all its glory but now a hollow shell, with the rest of the building having been done away with.

The E. Padmanabhan Committee Report classified this building (no 156, page 243) as belonging to category 2a – a structure possessing aesthetic, cultural and architectural merit. Sadly only the façade has been considered worthy of retention.



# Controlling city traffic

(Continued from page 1)

cost of traffic violations. These now attract a fine of Rs. 500 against the old penalty of Rs. 100. Disobeying orders given by the traffic police now attracts a fine of Rs. 2,000; the old penalty was Rs. 500. Though this may initially have some effect, in the longer run, chronic violators will find out that the high fine is "real" only if it is enforced. They will also understand that higher fines will not eliminate bribes but raise the bribe rate correspondingly while retaining it as a cheaper alternative to paying the fine. Higher fines and, therefore, higher bribes are more attractive for the dishonest ones among the policemen. They might look for more opportunities to "book" violators. Booking more violators may seem like fulfilling the objective of deterring violations – except that the revenue goes to individuals of the police force and not to the government. So what, if the deterrent effect is achieved? After all, proceeds of fines are not meant to be a major revenue source to the government. In that case, why not regularise this practice and pluck out its moral content? At one time, Karnataka experimented with a coupon system. Policemen levy fines which go to the credit of a police welfare fund. High fines tend to make private settlement attractive; so, reducing the fines and introducing the police welfare system seems an option deserving consideration.

If traffic reform is to have a material and lasting impact, it must correct certain critical impediments.

One: A rational lane allocation must be in position. Enforcing the present system – every lane for every type of vehicle – would only institutionalise chaos. The original time-tested system must be revived – bicycles and pedestrians on the left most lane, duly protected, the next lane to its right for two and three wheelers, the next for buses and trucks and the last for cars, combining the last two on narrow roads. This is a rational, universally adopted order of precedence for the right of road-space. It was followed in Chennai until it got deformed over the years. It allots lane space according to speed and chassis occupancy of road space and avoids mixing slow and fast vehicles or narrow and broad vehicles.

Two: In Chennai, there are about 50 lakh motorised vehicles with 8-10 per cent new ones added every year. Of this, about 75 per cent are motorised two-wheelers. That is a virtual explosion of traffic density every year. Until the day two-wheeler users adopt

public transport services, there is little hope of Chennai seeing peace on the roads. The Metro could be the answer. The Metro's moves to increase daily ridership has seen some response. Traffic did improve to a little over one lakh a day, but this is nowhere near the daily capacity of even the present limited stretch. Surface traffic of two and three-wheelers must be the target segment of focus for the Metro. The Metro's pricing must aim at equating, if possible, or being slightly higher, if unavoidable, to the cost of commuting for two-wheeler users. This pricing strategy will rapidly increase ridership and fill the bogies, increasing total revenue and improving Metro's bottom line. Besides matching current commuting costs, there must be some form of certainty to two-wheeler users that their Metro rates would continue to be protected, consistent with fuel costs. They need this assurance to take an investment decision – take back the capital by discarding the vehicle, or save capital by not buying one. If this plan succeeds, and when the full network of the Metro is completed speedily, we could see a massive shift of two-wheeler and auto users to the Metro, resulting in a sea change on the roads. Two-wheeler manufacturers may encounter a falling demand. A dire picture of an economic slow-down will be painted. This shift is a step in the right direction to a more cost and time effective way of commuting for most people, giving rise to better reach for job opportunities, more savings, more free time and less pollution.

Three: The image of the policeman needs a makeover. If the service at the local Primary Health Centre or teaching in the government school is poor, people, thankfully, have the option of going to a private source. For traffic management services, there is no private source. So, we must make the policeman effective. Decades ago, the policeman was used by mothers to frighten children into eating properly or doing the homework in time. Now, his image is changed to that of a dud or bribe taker. Traffic violations of every rule happen right under their noses every day, everywhere. People know that the police dare not book violations when party flags and influential connections are there to over-rule the policeman to "protect" offenders. Another common excuse for disregard of the police is that they are corrupt. This is the refrain of taxi and auto drivers who use that as a justification for desecrating traffic norms. Political interference, indiscriminate post-action probes and demon-

# Lotus awards times

It seems as though it was only the other day that the Man from Madras Musings wrote about the national awards, you know the ones he is referring to – India Jewel, Lotus Jewel, Lotus Wealth. And here we are, a year later, with yet another instalment of the awards, with, as a fallout, even more material for MMM to ponder over.

Firstly, MMM is delighted that his dear friend, Man of Drawings (MD), has been conferred with Lotus Wealth. MMM's happiness would have been double had MD's good lady, Milady Delightful had been around to witness this but then one cannot have everything in life. The two MDs, man and woman, were exemplars of positive thinking, who made a success of their lives despite all the obstacles placed in their way, and yet had enough cheer left over to spread joy all around. To MMM, MD & MD were India Jewels but the Lotus Wealth is still great.

Now having sung of saintly humans, let MMM come down to the prosaic. A scan of the list of the Lotus Adorned reveals that many unsung heroes and heroines have made it and for that MMM expresses his congrats to the powers that be behind the selection. MMM also sees that the colour of the clothes that people wear has not made a difference – which is all to the good. Yes, MMM would have been happier had there been more musicians, especially of the South Indian kind but he does acknowledge that the two duos who received the Lotus Wealth, making it a quartet of sorts, are most deserving.

MMM however learns that those of the terpsichorean world are not happy. Hell hath no fury like the dancer scorned. The mood, so MMM understands, was not happy to start with what with some low-life individual circulating an email in which he/she had listed what he/she felt were all the evil practices of the dance world. The Government ignoring these artistes for the

lotus awards has added insult to injury. For weeks on end, so MMM understands, dancers have been scanning the horizon for the arrival of the beloved, namely the intimation of the award. And what they got was a lemon. The build up towards this anti-climax has been as predictable as any dance performance – the hopefuls queued up in Delhi, sent messages (read voluminous curriculum vitae) via companion, cloud, parrot, swan and peacock, pined away in anticipation and were tormented by the moon's rays, the humming of the bees and the song of the nightingale. They pushed away food and milk untasted and wasted away until their watch straps could be used as belts. Now, alas, all of this has been to no avail.

MMM also understands that rage and disappointment was writ large on some celebrities who took to slavishly prais-

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

ing the Prime Minister and his second-in-command on social media in the hope that someone would bring these paeans to his august notice and thereby promote their chances for the lotus. But that too has not worked. MMM hopes that these sycophants realize that much thought has gone into the selection of most awardees and many of the recipients were really not the kind who lobbied. It is quite likely that that era of lobbying is really over.

That message has however not penetrated. MMM hears from sources in the corridors of power that lobbying has begun hard for Lotus 2021. And given the number of posthumous awardees this year, many of those vying for the recognition are reportedly prepared to consider dying for it as well.

In the meanwhile, the snobbery among the lotus-ed people continues – the bejeweled looks down on the jeweled who in turn sneer at the wealth. In the eyes of the bejeweled and the jeweled the wealth are to be 'cast into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth' to quote from the good book.

## Taking a Bat to an Alphabet Soup

The Man from Madras Musings learns from reliable sources that matters are afoot once again in the piece of hallowed green where many a cricket match was played in our city. For years now, as is well known, this glorious turf has remained silent chiefly because of some misunderstandings over the alphabet. The TNCA which is responsible for the place had built its new stadium and was so confident of itself that it built three extra stands,

namely I, J & K for which no permission had been taken from the CMDA (or is it the COC, MMM forgets which). Anyway, the appropriate authority saw red over this flouting of rules and refused to permit the opening of these three stands, namely I, J & K.

For years it has been the practice for cricket matches to happen without these three stands being opened up and there matters rested. Not that Chennai has really been a hot favourite for the staging of matches even though the CSK team is a popular one in the IPL sweepstakes. There have been controversies over featuring players from Sri Lanka and then, when that matter was rather unsatisfactorily resolved, a superstar now in some hot water raked up the Cauvery water issue and ensured that matches were held elsewhere.

Now it appears that there is a rethink. The Govt. of TN and its arm, namely the CMDA or is it the COC, has softened and offered that panacea for all ills, namely the process of regularization. Yes, it is true that the TNCA did not take permission for the construction of stands I, J & K but who does not err, and is it not true that to forgive is divine? And as always, there is a sacrificial offering to be made. MMM understands that this is the neighbouring MCC, which it appears will be entirely brought down and rebuilt so that the stands I, J & K can be regularized. To MMM it all appears to be a rather convoluted way of sorting matters out but then he realizes that there was no other way either. The new design for the MCC, MMM is informed, is very good. But he will still miss some of the old spots when they make way in the larger interests of I, J & K.

Perhaps the powers that be at the TNCA and the MCC could have left matters as it is and administered stands I, J & K as a Union Territory of sorts. But that is just an idle thought. Here is to the robust future of the new MCC and to the filling up of stands I, J & K. And may we see more cricket – tests, ODI and IPLs.

## Tailpiece

The Man from Madras Musings mourned the passing of TV Antony, senior civil servant and administrator par excellence. He was a man with a sense of humour and once told MMM the circumstances in which he, namely Mr Antony, was shunted out from one post to another – the Chief Minister of the time had a speech impediment and asked for his TV antennae to be moved. This he said, was misunderstood, and he found himself shown the door.

– MMM

ization weaken the police force day by day. Police must be able to book offenders without fear or favour. To have a deterrent effect, he must be authorised to dispense punishment for breach in a transparent manner. This can happen only with the recognition that policemen are the arm of Law, placed at the very frontline in the battle for conformity with rules and that they are there to protect us from chaos on city roads. A respectable image of the police as a protective force is a basic requisite for a civilised society. Infrastructure, equipment and rules do not work by themselves to manage traffic or maintain law and order.

**OUR  
READERS  
WRITE**



**More focus on the present please**

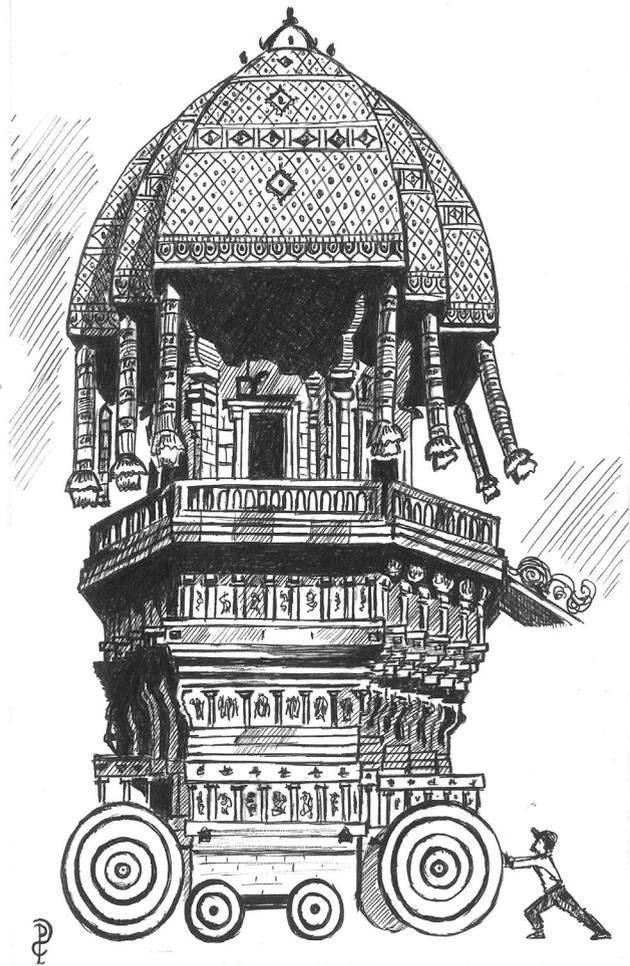
I am writing this to record my enjoyment and appreciation of two of your brilliant pieces in the recent issue of *Madras Musings* – one on Sridhar-

Bharanidharan-Marina and the other comparing the audiences for music and for dance in the MMM column; hilarious and so true! Look for more!

The Bharanidharan piece struck a chord in me: I was a resident of Purasawakkam

**● Pavithra's Perspective**

**Chariot of the Gods**



I was fascinated the first time I saw Valluvar Kottam. Well, wouldn't you be, if as a nine-year-old you saw a giant chariot? As it was, I was spellbound by regular-sized chariots at temple festivals and this one was humongous, with steps that people could climb and explore within. Despite aching legs and exhaustion, I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

A few years later, I learnt that it had been the brainchild of the then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Kalam M. Karunanidhi in the 1970s, built by the legendary Ganapati Sthapati and had been inaugurated in April 1976; that the entire chariot itself was a massive replica of another famed chariot, one in Thiruvannamalai; that it contained all 1330 couplets of the Thirukkural in the Kural Mandapam; and that the wheels alone were 11 feet in diameter and 2 feet in thickness.

When I decided to draw Madras's famed sights, it was one of the first attractions I chose. I had a whale of a time with the details, especially the roof. But perhaps the best part was the tiny man trying to "push" the chariot. Perspective, you see. I wonder if he knew that it was stationary and couldn't ever be moved?

PS: Of course he was imaginary!

Details about the miniature: Black and White; Pen and Ink. Dimensions: Approximately: 5.5" X 2.5"

● Pavithra Srinivasan is a writer, journalist, artist, translator, columnist, editor and is fascinated with History.

during 1944-54 and resided for a while in Vellala Street.

As a reader/contributor to *Madras Musings*, I see more of history and forays into the past. Please do also give space for the present and a peep into the future.

**S. Viswanathan**  
Editor & Publisher  
*Industrial Economist*

**Cho at his best**

The article *Nani Palkhivala in Madras* (MM, January 16-31, 2020) brought back nostalgic memories of a meeting I had attended. When the meeting commenced, Cho Ramaswami was to present Palkhivala to the audience. Cho took the mike and said,

'Mr. Palkhivala is a lawyer.' The well-read audience who knew Palkhivala to be a renowned lawyer laughed out loud at his statement. Cho stood unperturbed and when the crowd calmed down, said with a mischievous smile, 'I am also a lawyer!' The crowd went into raptures and it took a long time for their clapping to stop.

**Tharcus S. Fernando**  
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**Humorous & interesting**

I agree with what Mr. Srikanth has expressed in his letter to the Editor, regarding the new

MMM's sense of humor. The last issue regarding old calendar cardboards which are never thrown away because they have Divine pictures on them, and how they are left with nails after the daily sheets are torn off is true of almost every South Indian household. The issue of audience participation at music festivals is again enjoyable and very true.

Such articles of simple day-to-day happenings tinged with humor will make the reader feel a sense of participation with the magazine as we can relate to these incidents better. Hope MMM keeps it up.

**Prema Raman**  
88, Harrington Road, Chetput  
Chennai 600 031

**When a neighbourhood celebrates**

The annual Sundaram Finance Mylapore Festival was held between January 9-12, 2020. Given below are some of the programmes that took place during the event.

**Concerts at the Park**

Carnatic music concerts at the Nageswara Rao Park in Luz by students of Sruthilaya School set the ball rolling for the 2020 edition. Though the dew disappeared earlier than it has of late and the sunshine crept into this verdant park, the group of vocalists and instrumentalists, all in their teens and dressed in traditional attire started the concert on the dot of seven.

They sang for an hour as family and friends and some Mylaporeans who take walks or exercise in this park stopped by to listen to the music. Hot cups of coffee were passed around to rasikas who sat around the stage at Chess Square.

**Cultural shows on main stage**

The stage shows that were held in Sannithi Street quadrangle drew a large audience. Various open-air performances were held over two evenings. From folk music and dance to classical music and choir, these recitals have led from one to the other ending with the main show – a Bharatanatyam dance drama.

On Friday January 10th, when the Telengana folk troupe came back for a second recital, their spirited dance to recorded music set feet tapping. The music may have spluttered and

stopped but the artistes weren't despondent; they got into the groove when things were set right. Through the weekend, there were a string of recitals from 5.30 p.m. onwards. The highlights included a malkhamb display on Sunday and two



One of the park concerts held during the Mylapore Festival.

Inside the school, some 50 participants were busy playing Daya Kattam. Seniors especially



Street lined with kolams.

were very happy to take part in the contest that was held at the school's prayer hall. Said Nagalakshmi, a 75-year-old Mylaporean, "No matter whatever commitments I

have, I keep everything aside and make sure to participate in the Daya kattam contest every year."

**Vintage Pelathope bungalow hosts talks**

A one-hundred years old house in Pelathope in Mylapore was the venue for two public talks. On Saturday, January 11, Jaishri P. Rao gave a talk on the histories, heritage and cuisine of the small Thanjavur Maharashtra community. Rao recently published a book on this subject and her talk was based on material she has collected over time. On Sunday, January 12, Padmapriya Baskaran whose passion has been to detail online hundreds of significant but forgotten temples/ shrines of Tamil Nadu talked on 'Gods of the Holy Koovam River'. Padmapriya has published a book on this subject.

The Fest featured over 30 events across four days. – Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*. Pictures courtesy: Sundaram Finance Limited



Folk Dance by the students of Department of Natya, MGR Janaki College of Arts and Science.

# The inner vision gets recognised with a Padmashri

In her celebrated poem *Tran-science* Sarojini Naidu says, *Nay, do not grieve tho' life be full of sadness, Dawn will not veil her splendour for your grief, Nor spring deny their bright, appointed beauty to lotus blossom and Ashoka leaf.*

The indefatigable Mahe-ma-Manohar couple proved the essence of the sentiment expressed in her poem.

Manohar was born and raised in Madurai, the city that he loved and continues to admire, and graduated in Chemistry from American College in 1957. His father, fond of music and fine arts, made Mano learn to play the piano, which he was quite good at. However, Mano loved the fine arts and liked to draw. In a meeting in February 2018 at the Madras Literary Society Library, when he was in a near-total-blind condition, it was awesome to watch him make a PowerPoint presentation on his life with a fine touch of humour and an inimitable grace innate to him. He said that he enjoyed drawing pictures from his early childhood, and that the subjects of the art he created kept changing as he grew in years. When he was in the American College, he was struck by the dignity of the brick building in the campus and made a pen and ink drawing of the college Chapel which drew the attention of college authorities as well as the students.

It was then he realised that he had a feel for architectural entities. He says, "I had a good comprehension of perspective and a natural flair for pen and ink drawings."

After graduating in 1956, he shifted to the then Madras, where he joined a chemical firm that specialized in making electric lamps for miners replacing Davy's safety lamps. His first art work was a Christmas greeting card that he made for his boss, who was highly impressed. His company sent him to London for three months in 1962 to enhance his technical skills, where on his own he visited museums, listened to western classical music and went around with his English friends. He quipped that the England-returned tag improved his marriage prospects! Back in Madras, he met Mahema, a graduate in fine arts from Stella Maris. The meeting bloomed into genuine love and soon they were married. In 1969, Mano went to Oberlin University in the US to pursue his Masters degree and Mahema joined him. He says that 1970-1972 were the best years of his life. Back in Madras, he continued with his Company and retired as its technical director.

During early 1960s, Manohar was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a progressive incurable degenerative eye-condition, which leads to total blindness. Manohar was forced to experience the limits of vision, but this did not lead him to give up his passion. While this was bad enough, worse was yet to happen. On December 30, 1972 – three days after the couple celebrated their ninth wedding anniversary – a road accident turned Mahema into a quadriplegic. Shattered dreams did not suppress the couple's noble life. As sung by Sarojini Naidu,

they accepted what was meted out to them with a rare kind of dignity that saw Mano emerge as writer as well. He would also sketch on the spot while his wife read to him.

His first book was *Green Well Years*, an autobiographical account and in effect, a tribute to the city he loved the most – Madurai. The book featured festivals in Madurai like *Chthirai Thiruvizha* etc. Mahema provided the text for his sketches. That was followed by his second book, almost a documentation of Mahema's life, titled *Dreams, Seasons & Promises*. Mano went on to publish his third work, *A*

**We at Madras Musings are delighted that Manohar Devadoss has been conferred the Padma Shri by the Government of India. We offer our felicitations through this article on him by historian K.R.A. Narasiah.**

*Poem to Courage*, a life sketch of Mahema and in 2007 published *Multiple Facets of My Madurai*, in which every page had a sketch and an explanation by the side.

He published a tribute to Mahema in 2010 titled *Mahema and the Butterfly* with colourful sketches. The couple spent decades carrying each other's burdens: Manohar taking care of her physical and emotional needs, despite his progressively failing eyesight and Mahema helping him sketch and paint and write books by being his eyes. It is remarkable that the couple did not allow the debilitating tragedy to spoil their colourful and meaningful life. Until Mahema's death in March 2008, they made postcards for charity, with Manohar doing the sketches and she providing the text. Their sense of humour and sincerity of purpose in life earned them many admirers and more friends.

His latest work co-authored with architect Sujatha Shankar titled *Inked*, has 61 sketches by Manohar, including two by his spirited wife Mahema. Descriptions of 42 subjects by Sujatha interspersed with his own notings is to be shortly published. The book narrates the story of the city's metamorphosis in an evocative manner and Mano



The indefatigable Manohar-Mahema.

seems to freeze time itself with his work.

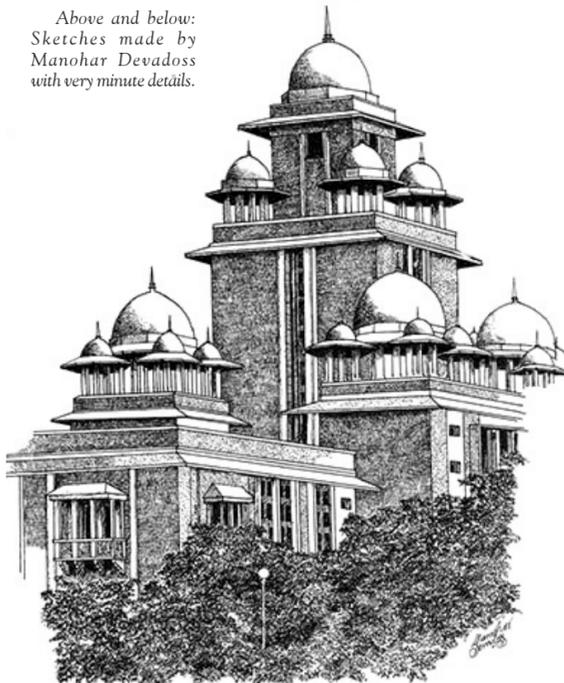
One is reminded of Vita Sackville-West when she sang: "The country habit has me by the heart,

For he's bewitched forever who has seen,

Not with his eyes but with his vision, Spring flow down the woods and stipple leaves with sun."



Above and below: Sketches made by Manohar Devadoss with very minute details.



Basking in the company of his old friends: S. Muthiah, Sujatha Shankar, K.R.A. Narasiah and Sriram V.

# Achieving with a quiet passion

– Remembering T.V. Antony who passed away last week

"Without passion man is a mere latent force."

T.V. Antony, a celebrated civil servant, joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1956 and was allotted to the Tamil Nadu cadre. His passionate commitment, pioneering and exemplary work, primarily in the important areas of Population Stabilization, as well as Agriculture, earned him the civilian award of Padma Bhushan in June 2004.

T.V. Antony, born in 1933, was the son of another legendary civil servant, T.A. Varghese of the old Indian Civil Service. Both father and son served Tamilnadu with great distinction and both of them retired as Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu.

After graduating from Loyola College, Madras with B.Sc. (Hons) in Chemistry and from the Madras Law College with a B.L. degree, Antony succeeded in passing the Central Services Competitive Examination with a high rank, which merited his inclusion in the Indian Administrative Service in May 1956. In Tamil Nadu, T.V. Antony worked in several important posts. He was Collector of three districts, viz Madurai, Tirunelveli and Thanjavur, Special Officer of the Corporation of Chennai, Secretary (Planning), Chairman, State Planning Commission, Chairman, Electricity Board and Chief Secretary. In the Central Government, he worked under the Ministry of Commerce as Director, Export Promotion in Brussels, Belgium, and as Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

An amiable officer of integrity and humility, T.V. Antony had the ability to easily communicate with all sections of people, particularly those below the poverty line to exchange information and ideas, mainly to crystallize his thoughts on the problems faced by these persons and their needs. He often visited slums along river banks and "kuppams" along

the seashore for this purpose. After these investigations, T.V. Antony was convinced that the top priorities for the nation, if the incidence of poverty is to be reduced in the country, should be (a) population regulation and stabilization and (b) agricultural development. Career opportunities, both in the State and in the Union enabled him to pursue these priorities with missionary zeal and commitment, much beyond the call of duty.

In the area of population regulation and stabilization, age-old mindsets had to be changed to accept the two children per family norm. Not an easy task. Undaunted, T.V. Antony mounted a massive publicity and propaganda program, mainly in Madras City and in the Districts where he was Collector, enlisting the support of the media (print, radio and television), several non-government organizations,

● by  
S.P. Ambrose  
IAS RETD.

besides government and local bodies to effectively spread the message of the advantages of a small family. Simultaneously, he implemented a broad strategy for population regulation and stabilization, which was not limited to surgical procedures and contraceptive devices, but also to literacy, empowerment of women, marriageable age, spacing between children, and nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers. Through official intervention he spread the message for a small family in the marriage halls, as well as through mid-day meal centres. As Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi, T.V. Antony, with experience of population regulation and stabilization was in a position to formulate and influence policy, and also review the progress in the differ-

ent States in the achievement of national targets on population regulation and stabilization. In this area, Kerala and Tamil Nadu are in the forefront.

In view of his experience and expertise, he was much in demand in several States to advice on the most suitable strategy to be adopted in these areas.

The citation for PADMA BHUSHAN reads, "Shri Antony is best known for his contribution to the very steep fall in the Crude Birth Rate of Tamil Nadu from 28/1000 to 19/1000 during the decade 1984-1994. As Collector of Thanjavur, he created the concept of the "Mass Family Planning Camps" in 1971-72, which was later adopted all over the State. This was also repeated in Madras later, when he was Administrator (1974-76) for which Madras received a National Award, the "for the Sake of Honour" from the Rotary."

After superannuation, T.V. Antony was invited to be a Member, Chairman or Advisor in the following organizations connected with Population and Family Welfare:

- Member, State Planning Commission, Government of Tamil Nadu.
- Member, National Institute of Health and Family Welfare.
- Member, State Population Commission.
- Member, Population Foundation of India, New Delhi.
- National Advisor for Population Stabilization, Health and Family Welfare Ministry
- Member, National Population Commission under Chairmanship of the Prime Minister.
- Member, Rajasthan State Co-ordination Committee for Empowerment of Women.
- Member, National Rural Health Mission.
- Member, Central Council of Health and Family Welfare.

The Rajasthan State Government conferred the State Award "for his outstanding contributions to the State in the field of Population Stabilization and Women Empowerment."

It was in Thanjavur district, the 'rice bowl' of Tamil Nadu that T.V. Antony, who had listed Agricultural Development as the second national priority, exerted himself ceaselessly to maximize agricultural production. I can do no better than quoting the citation from the Padma Bhushan Award, which says, "Shri Antony's contributions have been primarily in the areas of Agriculture and in Population Regulation. In 1969 – 1972, he galvanized the extension mechanism to popularize high yielding

## The Lord Mayor of Madras

One of the significant positions among many that T.V. Antony held was that of Special Officer in charge of the Madras Corporation. It came to him in a dramatic fashion when following the Muster Roll Scandal, the Corporation Council was suspended, several officers were dismissed and the administration of the city was taken over directly by the State Government.

A few years ago I was working on a book on the Corporation of Chennai, which never saw the light of day. But during the course of the research I met TV Antony and enjoyed the interactions with him. "I was merrily coasting along in the IAS when the then Chief Minister M Karunanidhi called me to his chamber and declared that I was the Lord Mayor of Madras," he remembered with amusement.



T.V. Antony as Special Officer of the Madras Corporation interacting with slum dwellers in the 1970s.

In 1973, the Corporation was superseded by Government due to what became called the "Muster Roll Scandal". This happened following disclosures of serious financial and administrative irregularities and misappropriation of large sums of civic funds, in which members of the Council, former Mayors and officials were all involved. Many of them were charge sheeted and convictions followed. As a senior IAS officer TV Antony, was appointed as Special Officer to exercise the functions of the Council, the Mayor and the Standing Committees (except the Taxation Appeals Committee) – in effect he became the Corporation itself. The Executive Officer (Commissioner) continued to function.

The Administration Report of the following years (1973-74) records the then Commissioner V.Karuppan's remarks, "A significant fact of this year is that the oldest Corporation of the Country was superseded from December 1, 1973 on the grounds that the council, the Civic body failed to safeguard the interest of public money and came under the Administrative Control of the Special Officer who replaced the Mayor, Standing Committee and Council..... His correctional methods brought out a good deal of discipline in the rank and file of the staff and the financial control was very effective". A High-level Committee instituted in 1977 sought to further improve efficiency and reform the structure of the Madras Corporation.

In the event Antony's record as Special Officer was to lead to a series of successor officers under whom the Corporation was administered till 1996. It then got an elected body but that too is now a matter of the past. The city is once again administered by bureaucrats.

– Sriram V



T.V. Antony at a health facility.

rice varieties, to ensure the use of correct agricultural practices, to ensure abundant supply of inputs and to install more than adequate marketing facilities."

T.V. Antony was a warm hearted friend with a quiet sense of humour and a ready smile. He used to knock on the doors of friends' houses, particularly those who were not in the best of health, without prior notice and cheer them with humorous anecdotes. He used to combine

such social visits with a brief check on civic amenities in the neighbourhood, and if necessary arrange for remedial action. Invariably, he made these visits on a bicycle for the purpose of exercise, and this habit continued till he was physically unable to use the bicycle.

Mr. T.V. Antony will ever be remembered for his services to India, especially Tamil Nadu. He achieved much with quiet passion.

# Nani Palkhivala in Madras – II

(Continued from  
last fortnight)

## Palkhivala and Cho Ramaswami

No account of my reminiscences of Palkhivala in Madras will be complete without mentioning the mutual respect and admiration that Cho Ramaswami and he had for each other. I have the fond recollection and pride of bringing them together on a public platform for the first time. Their appearance in the same event used to attract enormous crowds. Whenever Palkhivala shared the platform with Cho, one could see that he was visibly infected by Cho's humour. Once he invited Cho to preside over his meeting in Matunga, Bombay, and for breakfast at his home which faced the Oval maidan. In the story of Palkhivala's association with Madras, I regard the coming together of Cho and him as a landmark event. Palkhivala, who was well-known among the intellectual class and the upper echelons, became enormously popular among the middle class and the younger generation in Madras after Cho's association with him, especially after a speech at Abbotsbury in which Cho presided. Of that speech, I have vivid recollections, which I will share later. Cho – I am sure everyone knows – was not only a journalist but also a film actor and a playwright. Through his *Thuglak* writings, he was immensely popular with the middle class, of which Madras has always had a considerable number. The first time I got Cho to meet Palkhivala was later in the evening after the budget speech at R.R. Sabha in 1970. While making arrangements for this speech, I was exploring ways of getting the youth and the common man in Madras to attend Palkhivala's speeches. Since Palkhivala and Cho belonged to the same profession – Cho was then the legal advisor to the TTK Group – and were deeply concerned about the welfare of the common man, I wanted them to meet and possibly come together on public platforms. Cho was at his satiric best and I believed that his immense popularity with the middle class would help attract them to Palkhivala's speeches. A week before the speech at R.R. Sabha, on a late evening, I went to Cho's office. It was then located in the *Ananda Vikatan* offices near Indian Overseas Bank's Head Office on Mount Road. Mahendran, who later became a famous film director, was then an assistant editor of *Thuglak* and he was sitting at the front office. Rather than customarily

sending in my visiting card, I gave the invitation for the budget speech, asking Mahendran to inform Cho that we wanted him to attend it. Mahendran went in and after giving him the invite, came out and told me that Cho wanted to meet me. I went in and met him. He had not yet lost the hair on his body. He had also not yet adopted the familiar green attire, which became a habit in more recent times. His response impressed me, "Mr. Gopal, thank you for inviting me. Palkhivala is a great man, an icon for all of us. But my presence would only be a distraction. People should come to listen to him, not gaze at me." But I was insistent. I assured him that I will wait for his arrival, take him to the stage and seat him away from public gaze. He attended the speech at R. R. Sabha and as quietly as he slipped in, he left after the event. Later that evening, at a dinner hosted by A. Sivasailam, the famous industrialist, I told Palkhivala about Cho's inconspicuous visit. He immediately became curious to meet him. I then rang up Cho, and Palkhivala spoke to him on the phone and expressed a desire to meet him. It was then 9.30 p.m. Cho arrived at Sivasailam's house by 9.45 p.m. Palkhivala and he held a conversation for a little more than half an hour. In the following issue of *Thuglak*, Cho carried synopses of Palkhivala's speech at R. R. Sabha and their conversation. From that time onwards, Palkhivala became more popular among the middle class in Madras.

## A speech at Abbotsbury

In 1973, I arranged Palkhivala's speech, presided by Cho, at Abbotsbury. In the *Thuglak* issue immediately preceding this event, Cho had published a small note signed by him, in which he invited the readers to attend it, not because he was presiding but to hear the man who was championing the common man's cause!

I believe that if I was invariably successful in arranging Palkhivala's budget speeches in Madras, it was due to a divine intervention on many occasions, including the one at Abbotsbury in 1973. Palkhivala only found time to give that speech on 4 February 1973, a Sunday. But Abbotsbury was booked for a wedding on that particular Sunday. Since Cho was presiding, we could not find any other auditorium large enough for the expected crowd. I spent sleepless nights trying to work other options. A solution presented itself when my mother looked up the almanac and said that that Sunday morning was not suitable for any auspicious

function and the marriage party might only arrive between 2 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. I wasted no time in seeking the person who had booked the hall for his daughter's wedding. Fortunately, he was the Branch Manager of ACC and Palkhivala was the Chairman of ACC! Overwhelmed, the gentleman readily consented to let us use the hall in the morning. I assured him that the pandhakal (an auspicious pole forming part of the wedding ritual) will be protected by our volunteers and I would be happy to provide seats for him and the groom's family at the event. It had thus happened that we not only got the venue but also got it free of cost! The Sunday arrived and the audience overflowed the hall. Many stood outside the hall, under

● by  
T.S. Gopal

the scorching sun to hear Cho and Palkhivala. Cho's introductory remarks were so witty that Palkhivala said, "Rarely have I seen the Chairman outshine the speaker in advance." This was also the occasion when Palkhivala said with a broad smile as to why he thought the organisers had invited Cho to preside, using the anecdote of a waitress in a U.S. railway restaurant, who served the customer two eggs, "in case one turned out bad." Among the numerous people who attended the event, there were distinguished personalities such as A. Sivasailam and D.C. Kothari, well-known industrialists, J.H. Tarapore, the famous architect, Justice Narayanaswamy Mudaliar, K.S. Venkataraman I.C.S. (Retd.), M.S. Subbulakshmi and T. Sadasivam. Making arrangements for this speech, successfully despite the initial hurdle, gave me immense satisfaction as this event brought Palkhivala in close contact with the youth of

Madras. He always loved and had great hopes for the younger generation of the country. As I recall those events, more memories of the 1973 Abbotsbury speech come back. An interesting incident concerns the late J. Jayalalitha, former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu. She was then a busy film star. It is well-known that she wanted to become a lawyer but circumstances led her into the film industry. She held Palkhivala in high esteem and wanted to attend the speech at Abbotsbury. Sometime before the event, she called up Cho, who was her good friend, and asked him if a seat could be reserved for her at the venue because she might arrive late. Cho asked me on her behalf but I firmly declined the request. Normally seats were not reserved for anybody and I was not willing to make an exception for Jayalalitha. But I must add that we used to have volunteers sitting in rows other than the first row, and they would give up their seats for VIPs if needed. I also felt that a popular film actress arriving late would be an unwelcome distraction at the venue. When Cho conveyed my decision to her, she was understandably upset and did not attend the speech. This coincided with the time when she was writing some of her reminiscences as a series in *Thuglak*. After that unhappy incident, the series came to an abrupt end. As if he held me to blame for it, Cho said in a lighter vein, "Gopal, because of you she stopped writing her reminiscences!" Another interesting memory relating to the speech at Abbotsbury is that Palkhivala came to Madras by a Tata owned private aircraft – it was 'Cessna' if my recollection is correct – because his busy schedule prevented him from catching a commercial airline flight from Bombay in good time. The plane landed in Madras two hours before the event and flew



back without any passenger, while Palkhivala, who later visited the Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry, went to Delhi by a commercial flight. His arrival at Madras by a private aircraft caused an interesting titbit to appear in *Ananda Vikatan*. Bala, who was on the editorial staff of the magazine, was a close friend of Cho. I used to chat with him while waiting to meet Cho at the *Ananda Vikatan* office. At Abbotsbury, while we were chatting before the speech, I said to him that Palkhivala had to arrive by a private plane. Impressed by the public adulation that he witnessed at the event, he caused a box item to appear in *Ananda Vikatan* that read 'Palkhivala came by a private Tata plane especially for this speech'. The same piece also carried a facsimile of the initials 'NAP' written by Palkhivala with the caption, 'This is how he signs'. Appearing in *Ananda Vikatan*, which had always been quite popular among Tamil readers, was unexpected publicity for us. I sent the clippings to Palkhivala. He was pleased to see them and felt flattered like a child. Cho's presiding over the speech at Abbotsbury and that piece in *Ananda Vikatan* made him a household name in Madras.

(To be continued  
next fortnight)



A full house at Abbotsbury to listen to Palkhivala. Among those that can be made out are A. Sivasailam, M.S. Subbulakshmi, T. Sadasivam and Justice K.S. Venkataraman, ICS.

# Marble-like chunnam in 18th- and 19th-Century Madras Presidency

Lime (calcined limestone), referred as *çûnam* ('chûnam') was used in the Indian subcontinent for ages. In the Tamizh country, lime was referred as *çûnnâmpu*. Thomas Lehmann explained the etymology of *çûnnâmpu* as follows:

'The word *çûnnâmpu* is first attested in the 12th century war poem *Kalin-gathu-p-parani* According to the Tamil Lexicon of the University of Madras *çûnnâmpu* is derived from *çûnnâ* (Prakrit). It is possible that the word *çûnnâmpu* was in use before the 12th Century.

The nature and quality of *chûnnam* used in the Madras Presidency are formally recorded in various published reports by the British either living in or visiting Madras from the 18th Century. All of them consistently remark that the quality of this material used in building human residences and other buildings was superior than that used for the same purpose elsewhere in India.

James Anderson of Hermiton comments in an article on *chûnnam* (1799, p. 7):

'No cement for building hath as yet been discovered in Europe that can be compared with the fine *Chunam* of India for closeness, toughness, durability, and beauty. It sets as quickly as stucco, and at the same time acquires a hardness greatly superior to our best lime mortar, and is alike proper for works underwater, as for those that are exposed to the air; so that it supersedes the use alike of gypsum and of puzzuolana, or terras.'

Reverend James Cordiner, a teacher at the Male Military Orphan Asylum in Madras between June 1798 and April 1799, and later Chaplain at the *Government House*, Colombo (Sri Lanka), while returning to Britain in 1802 from Colombo via Madras, comments appreciatively on the quality of *chûnnam* used in the then newly constructed Banqueting Hall and a few other new buildings in Madras. He also clarifies that the sparkling *chûnnam* was made by mixing lime and unrefined sugar – the *jaggery*<sup>1</sup> – in particular proportions, so that the *chûnnam*-finished walls were beautiful, enduring and sparkled like marble.

Walter Hamilton in his travelogue – *the Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindostan, and the Adjacent Countries* (1820) says (p. 193): *Chunam*, or lime, oc-

curs in extensive quantities among the boundary hills, and is accessible during the rains, from whence it is transported by the inland navigation to the most distant parts of Bengal; but it is greatly inferior to the beautiful shell-chunam of Madras. A commerce in *chunam*, wax, ivory, and other articles, is carried on with the *Cosseahs*<sup>2</sup> and other mountaineers on the eastern frontiers of Bengal.'

Maria Callcott, a popular British writer and traveller of the 19th Century and one who lived in Madras and Bombay in 1809–1811, describes in her book *The Essays towards the History of Painting* (1836, p. 220):

'Panaenus<sup>3</sup> (the brother of Phidias) used a plaster or stucco in the Temple of Minerva at Elis, Southern Greece, mixed with milk. This should be something like the beautiful marble-like stucco or *chunam*-work of India. I once saw a floor laid at Madras, among the materials of which were *jaggree* (*jaggery*) or coarse sugar, water and milk.'

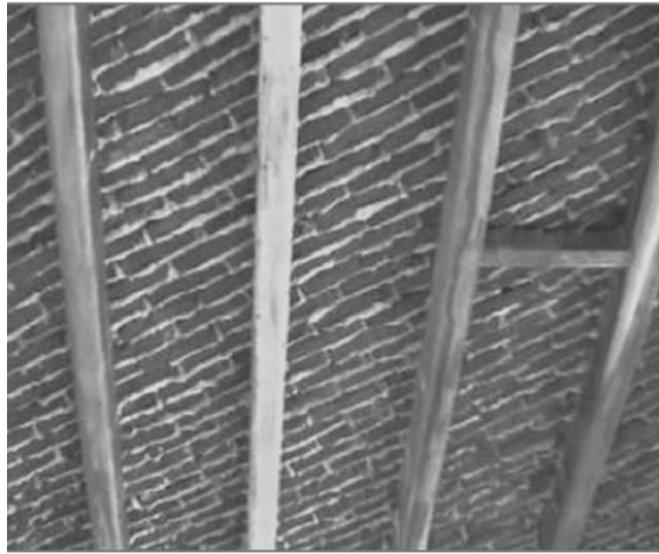
Because of its quality and shine, the Madras *chûnnam* was preferentially chosen for use in several buildings in Singapore in the mid-19th Century. *The Government House* and *St. Andrew's Cathedral* are two classic examples. To carry out this task, convicts deported from Madras, who were familiar with the technology, were used as labour.

## The Madras Terrace Roofs, unique construction using *chûnnam*

Madras *chûnnam* was used both for fixing bricks and plastering wall exteriors. A popular component of human residences from the early decades of the 18th Century Madras was the 'Madras terrace roof'



Mortar mill used while building the Government House, Singapore. (Source: McNair and Bayliss, 1899)



Inside view of Madras-terrace roof. Wooden rafters hold the diagonally-laid baked, slender, red half-bricks (*arai-kal*) plastered along their left-right and front-back faces (Source: <https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/366973069635001123>).

(MTR). Before the popularity of MTR in the 18th Century, houses of middle- and low-income earners were essentially thatch roofed, using interwoven sun-dried plant materials (e.g., grasses and palm foliage)

● by  
**Dr. A. Raman**

laid tightly on bamboo frames. MTRs were constructed using baked, red bricks plastered with lime mortar, placed diagonally over 30–45 cm apart-wooden rafters. If considered necessary, the MTRs were supported by wooden pillars.

Frederick Hemingway (Collector and Magistrate of Trichinopoly [Tiruchirappalli]), comments on the houses in the district Tiruchirappalli in the first decade of the 20th Century (1907, p. 81):

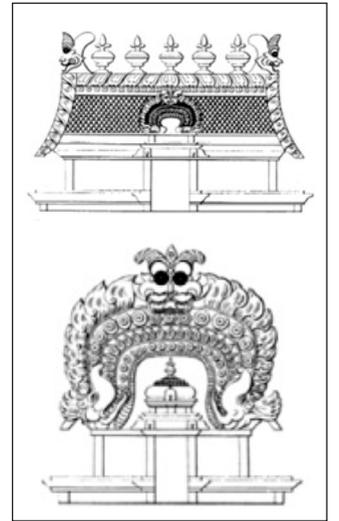
'The houses of the poor

are thatched. Persons of even moderate wealth build themselves terraced or tiled houses. Terraced houses are rare in Namakkal and Udaiyarpalayam taluks, where tiles are generally used. Terraced houses, in many other districts, are usually owned only by the wealthy. Two-storied houses are perhaps more common in this than in most other districts. Thatch is made of plaited coconut leaves covered with straw of various kinds. Occasionally a loft or mud terrace called *kurangumacchu* (a kind of mezzanine) is built beneath the roof. Houses are generally oblong in shape.'

## Engineer John Thomas Smith and the Lime Mortar of Madras

John Smith (1805–1882), chief engineer with the Madras Engineers Corps (MEC), is immortalised in Madras for designing and building the Grecian-Doric column lighthouse in 1838–1839. Smith explored the science of limes and lime mortar used as building material. Many of the classy engineering papers and reports submitted to the government at Fort St. George (Madras) by MEC staff were published in the *Reports, Correspondence and Original Papers on Various Professional Subjects Connected with the Duties of the Corps of Engineers Madras Presidency*, edited and published by him from 1839. These papers enlighten us on some of the remarkable science that flourished in Madras.

(to be continued  
next fortnight)



Above: Ornate *chûnnam* work on the *sikarā* of the *vimānā* of a temple in the Madras presidency (Source: Rāz 1834, plate xxvi. Lithograph by William Day and Louis Haghe, London. Artist not identified). Below: *Neerazhi mandapam* (the hall in the middle of the temple tank) adjacent to the *Chithira Sabai* of *Tiru-k-kutralanāthar* temple management, Courtallam. The 3-storey tower bears beautiful *çûnnâmpu* sculptures. Estimated construction was either during the Vijayanagara Empire (14th–17th Centuries) or during the reign of the *Madurai Nayaks* (16th–17th Centuries). Recently colour-washed because of a festive event in the *Tiru-k-kutralanāthar* temple. (Photo: A. Raman, July 2018.)



1. *Jaggery* is the unbleached, raw sugar from sugarcane juice (*Saccharum officinarum*, *Poaceae*). *Jaggery* is also made from Asian Palmyra (*Borassus flabellifer*, *Arecaceae*) by extracting and boiling the sap that oozes from the cut end of either the shoot bud or the inflorescence. It is the most abundantly available sugar source widely used by the less well-off rural people of India (Playne et al., 1914–1915).

2. *Cosseahs* — people belonging to the Khasi Hills of the Shillong Plateau, Meghalaya (Nongsie 2002).

3. *Panaenus*: a painter in ancient Greece (c. 500 BC) (Leake 1821).

# Establishing a world-record in Madras

January 12, 1964 dawned bright and clear. It was clearly a lovely day for cricket and the huge Sunday holiday crowd assembled at the Corporation stadium in Madras, eagerly looking forward to an action-packed third day's play in the first Test between India and England. They had watched two eventful days, with India having declared at 457 for seven and England replying with 63 for two at stumps the day before. The third day promised to be engrossing with the expected duel between Ken Barrington, Jim Parks and Micky Stewart and the Indian spinners led by Salim Durrani and Chandu Borde.

But the packed crowd saw one of the duller days of Test cricket as England dawdled

along to finish the day at 235 for four. The most boring part came during the fourth wicket partnership between Barrington and Brian Bolus, the opening batsman who resumed his innings. The two added 119 runs in nearly five hours – a sure cure for insomnia for the spectators.

There was a reason behind England's dawdling. Parks and Stewart had taken ill and were not in a position to bat. If they could be kept away from the crease that day, there was ample time for them to recover as the following day was the rest day.

So Bolus and Barrington just blocked and blocked, eking out only 27 runs in the two-hour period between lunch and tea. Gathering runs was of the least interest to the duo as their

goal was to eat into the time. But amidst all this, the bored spectators did witness a world record.

The Indian left-arm spinner Bapu Nadkarni was well known for his accuracy, but on this day he was so parsimonious that

● by  
**Partab Ramchand**

he set a world record. Taking runs off him was like squeezing the proverbial water out of a stone. Over after over, he kept wheeling them down on the same good length spot and the two batsmen just played the ball dead at their feet. Ultimately, he sent down 21 successive maiden overs which has re-

mained a world record – this included a long spell of 131 balls without conceding a run. By the time England were all out for 317 on the fourth morning, Nadkarni had the mind-boggling and eye-rubbing figures of 32-27-5-0. In the second innings, as England made a brave bid to reach a target of 293 runs in 265 minutes, Nadkarni curbed their charge with two quick wickets, finishing with the figures of 6-4-6-2 as the Test meandered to a draw.

Just nine months later at the same venue, Nadkarni enjoyed the best match of his 41-Test career, picking up five for 31 and six for 91 against Australia. Indeed, Nadkarni reserved some of his best batting feats too for the Madras crowd. Against



England in January 1962, he and Farokh Engineer figured in an eighth wicket stand of 101, which was India's first century partnership for this wicket, Nadkarni's share being 63. Three years later, the same pair broke that record by sharing an eighth wicket partnership of 143 runs against New Zealand, Nadkarni scoring 75.

## Making a sham of heritage conservation

(Continued from page 1)

administered by a private trust which in the 1970s made way for the Official Trustee of the High Court who managed the space with a descendant of the founder as a co-trustee. By then the need for a choultry having faded, the place was leased out to a hotel.

In 2006, the building was included in the Justice E. Padmanabhan Committee report that listed out structures that could not be hidden behind large public hoardings in the city. The same report became the basis of the 2006 judgement of the High Court of

Madras which ordered the State Government to explore the necessity to protect around 400 heritage structures in the city with the formation of a Heritage Conservation Committee to oversee the task and also pass a heritage act for the State. While the State Government dithered over the matter, taking its own time to pass the Act, setting up a toothless Conservation Committee in the interim, disbanding the same later and never forming a new one thereafter, the High Court, with all due respect to it, watered down its 2006 judgement in 2010 by choosing to inter-

pret that the Padmanabhan Committee report was intended only for facades and had nothing to do with other parts of heritage buildings. That was in the P Orr & Sons case and this was exactly the kind of loophole that bureaucracy was waiting for. Thereafter, any heritage conservation, barring some prestigious edifices such as Chepauk Palace and Ripon Buildings, has come to mean a coat of paint to a peeling exterior. Private buildings have fared even worse – many listed in the 2006 judgement have since been demolished citing dilapidation and public safety.

It is safe to assume that no scientific study on structural stability was ever done in any of these instances, given that many of these buildings were quite sound at their core.

The RSRM Choultry was handed over the Metro Rail in 2014 and the latter body assured the High Court that it would protect the structure. What it has done is to retain the façade, in keeping with the High Court's 2010 guideline and done away with the rest of the building. Work has now begun in the rear on Chennai Metro Square – a 33-storey structure that will dwarf not

only what is left of the RSRM choultry but also all the other heritage buildings in the vicinity – Central Station, the railway headquarters, Siddique Serai, Ripon Buildings and Victoria Public Hall. This will be a monstrosity that will destroy what was for long a very harmonious skyline. But then when it comes to 'development' in India, aesthetics has always taken a backseat.

In the middle of all this the façade of the RSRM choultry will survive, with no connection to its surroundings. But yes, we did save it did we not?

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