A new reservoir after 76 years

On November 21, 2020, the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, inaugurated the fifth reservoir of the city, located at Thervoy Kandigai in Thiruvallur District. It will have a capacity of one thousand million cubic feet (1 tmcft) and is expected to go a long way in solving the water crises that the city faces in most years. It has taken us 38½ years since the founding of the colonial city of Madras that is Chennai, for a fifth storage facility. What is even more significant is that this is the only such reservoir to be built since Independence! We are not certain if that is a record to be proud of.

The last time a reservoir was planned and executed for the city was in the 1940s. It was the brainchild of S. Satyamurti, who was Mayor of Madras in 1939/1940. The Poondi Reservoir scheme was mooted in 1942 and the foundation stone laid on the 8th of that month. The construction was completed four years later, by when Satyamurti was dead. The storage facility was rather appropriately named Satyamurti Sagar in his memory. With a capacity of 2,573 mft, it is of course smaller than the new one at Thervoy Kandigai but contrast the time taken – the latest addition was mooted in 2012, with actual work gaining momentum only in 2018. The cost incurred has been Rs 380 crores. The population of the city at the time work began at Poondi was 8 lakhs or so. It is now ten times as much and yet it took us 76 years to build a new facility.

It is not as though nothing has been done in the interim. We have had the Telugu Ganga scheme, we have harnessed the Palar, requisitioned the Veeranam lake and also got the Chengparaumpakkam waterbody to cater to our insatiable thirst. Desalination plants have come up and bear a significant part of our water demand, no matter what the environmental impact and energy costs be. In the interim many photo opportunities have been created by the plastic pots. And we have on occasion had railway wagons bringing us water. A Hollywood star was moved by the plastic pots. And we have on occasion had railway wagons bringing us water. A Hollywood star was moved by the plastic pots. And we have on occasion had railway wagons bringing us water. A Hollywood star was moved by the plastic pots. And we have on occasion had railway wagons bringing us water. A Hollywood star was moved by the plastic pots. And we have on occasion had railway wagons bringing us water. A Hollywood star was moved by the plastic pots. And we have on occasion had railway wagons bringing us water. A Hollywood star was moved by the plastic pots.

Cancer Institute fights the Covid challenge

As a continuation of last issue’s feature on how non-profit healthcare institutions are coping with the pandemic, Madras Musings reached out to distinguished oncologist Dr. V. Shanta, Chairman of the Cancer Institute (WIA), Adyar.

The Cancer Institute is perhaps one of the city’s most notable medical charities. Dedicated to the cause of providing excellent, affordable care for cancer patients, the institute is equipped with more than 500 beds and a research division as well. Normally, the hospital allocates more than 50 per cent of its beds to the needy, who receive free boarding and lodging. In addition, 40 per cent of the patients are treated free of cost while the rest pay a nominal amount. When the pandemic emerged in March, the unprecedented public crisis posed new challenges to the hospital and patients alike.

“There was an increased need for psychosocial support,” explains Dr. Shanta. “The patients had to not only bear the fear and panic caused by cancer, but also the pandemic.” When the lockdown was enforced, the lack of public transport resulted in patients facing a delay in treatment stretching to as much as three or four months. This posed an ethical dilemma to the institute – on one hand, they had to shield the patients and their families from the pandemic, but on the other, they had to take a call on how long it is possible to defer treatment. “Early common cancers are curable,” said the doctor. “Advanced disease can be controlled and if untreated, will progress to the stage of palliation. Palliative care could not be denied.” With patients unable to reach the hospital in the early days of the pandemic, the institute’s income took a sharp dip as well – revenues that are crucial to the functioning of a charitable institution.

(Continued on page 2)
A NEW RESERVOIR

(Continued from page 1)

up being water starved the very next season. And all along we have been attracting ground water with no let up.

All of this points to the sheer apathy of the leadership and the failure of the bureau to act in the face of this looming threat for the future. The political class has always been happy to wait for Chennai’s water problems (flood and drought) to rear their heads. It just so happens that with some firing fights, milking the publicity in the process. The bureaucrats have been quite content with pushing paper. Imagine a metropolis reaching a point of going without water. In what way is it commendation worthy to celebrate the arrival of monsoon in a parched city? Tankers catering on the roads with water brought in from the mofussil! At the other end, it is also a failure of the people. Even a simple scheme such as rainwater harvesting is met with opposition. It is a well-known fact that most large real estate developments give this the go by. That such a scheme is mandatory for approvals is got around by bribing, or worse, simply putting up a couple of so-called soak pits, with no follow through on the rest of the system. Ultimately, we get what we deserve.

The completion of Thervoy Kandigai is no cause for complacency. With it, Chennai will have raised its one full year only, while our droughts are known to extend beyond that. A few more reservoirs will not hurt and let us hope we don’t need to wait another 76 years.

Cancer Institute & Covid

(Continued from page 1)

The situation has reportedly improved with the relaxation of lockdown norms and the availability of inter-state transport—between June and October, the institute has seen a steady pick-up in attendance in both the general and paying wards. But funding remains a challenge. The overall revenue stream has been reduced by 50 per cent in adherence to Covid guidelines affecting the income levels. Like other medical institutions, the reduction in income is accompanied by an increase in cost. “In general, treatment costs cover the cost of initial diagnosis, treatment type, radiation, chemotherapy, surgery or a combination of the above,” said Dr. Shanta, pointing out that cancer treatment is expensive on its own. This is only to be set further increased with the pandemic necessitating the use of RT-PCR testing, protective garments such as PPEs and following protective guidelines against the pandemic. “We cannot be adequately thankful to them,” said the doctor.

The institute has also taken steps to implement touch-free sanitization devices. “A device allows the foot to operate the soap dispenser and the tap, as well. In the absence of hands, foot-operated hand sanitizer stands were kept in strategic places all around the campus for patients, attenders, visitors and staff to disinfect their hands,” shared Dr. Shanta.

Speaking of the future, Dr. Shanta pointed out that the pandemic has imposed certain necessities that will change the institute’s style of functioning, including treatment. “The doctor feels that cancer management can never be as ideal as it was before the pandemic, unless the virus is completely controlled. ‘We cannot afford to have the kind of long-term costs, though only to a certain extent – the scheme does not cover the full cost of cancer treatment. Further, the number of patients covered under other forms of medical insurance is also low. Public donations proved to be of great help to the institute in these times. Support from the people and the families of survivors was of great help,” shared Dr. Shanta. The hospital also received generous help from service-oriented individuals, companies and organisations in procuring necessary PPEs and lay down protective guidelines against the pandemic. “We cannot be adequately thankful to them,” said the doctor.

In the sun, the say the efficient ones. Alternatively, if one were to believe a certain video that (Wo)M MMM stumbles upon, steering is the best way to prevent and cure the coronavirus. There’s nothing wrong with steam ing with a little water. But when it finds it quite soothing when she’s down with the common cold. Howsoever, some have taken their ailments to hit the weapon against the coronavirus, aggressively steaming themselves in a manner that reminds (Wo)MM of the mater preparing vegetable korma for lunch. Similarly, the breathing exercise of kapal- abhuti is widely touted as an effective preventive measure for Cove. The idea of a forward which keeps popping up on What’s App groups that (Wo)M MMM finds particularly aggravating, is a small game that invites people to hold their breath for a certain amount of time, amounting that they can breathe. But, they certainly have not contracted the coronavirus. In the absence of an alternative game was probably designed for the lungs of a blue whale, not a human being. It does nothing to clear these small or large people who cannot hold their breath for the monstrous duration that the game demands. (Wo)M MMM observes there’s no harm per se in doing most of these things – one feels that a few of these practices are rather healthy years in medical and specialized medical fields and then finally open their practice, with a stethoscope ready at hand waiting to see patients and then people decide to follow free health advice from friends and family who they refer to. But free health advice is, of course, another problem altogether.

(Wo)MMM can only imagine how hard this situation must be for trained medical professionals. They study hard to bag a college seat amidst intense competition, train for their profession the game demands. “What’s the worst thing they can do? I don’t hear!” she cries out. This extraordinary claim was followed up with the collection team who resolved the matter quite easily, striking a friendship with the maid in the process.

New disciplines take a little time to sprout, but once it usually takes a few unforeseen hiccups before one settles down in a new routine. But, as far as the new vendors are concerned, it is worth making the effort to cultivate a good habit. (Wo)MMM wishes the new vendor all the best in instilling good garbage discipline in our city.

Trending

It used to be that milestones were used as an occasion to remember or commemorate a landmark event, usually after a decade or more. But, this has become defunct. Leipzig has been accred ted by the latest social media trend to celebrate the one, two or three-year anniversaries of the situation. History, movies or songs. These posts feature a variety of clips and information about the event. It was com mended by nostalgic commentaries hearkening back to the ‘good old days’ of a whole year or two ago. Even worse are the 6-month ‘anniversary’ trends – when since were anniversaries reduced to mere months! (Wo)MMM is left wondering if she is growing deeply cynical as she grows older. She hopes not.

(Wo)M MMM

Prescription Friction

The Woman from Madras Musings has many pet peeves, some of which are also quite mild, such as waiting while at a red signal. For instance, (Wo)M MMM will never understand what purpose can be served if the emergency lane is being used, unless, of course, one is an ambulance, which is seldom the case. But where the pandemic began, (Wo)M MMM has had to suffer one of her biggest pet peeves – health myths. There are some who believe that they are on par with doctors when it comes to identifying and treating garden variety illness. There are others who believe that experience taking all sorts of medicines, kayshams, and powders for an assortment of ailments. This qualification (Wo)M MMM feels, ought to dissuade them from offering advice to others, but instead it seems to instil in them a mysterious, unshakeable self-confidence. And so, there is much advice, much spoken, much written, and much said to the patient in the hospital. This is not what we expect from a doctor. (Wo)M MMM is falling prey to all sorts of strange cures. Rinse your nose, some say. Rinse your ears, say others. Rinse your nose while standing in the sun, say the efficient ones. Alternatively, if one were to believe a certain video that (Wo)M MMM stumbles upon, steering is the best way to prevent and cure the coronavirus. There’s nothing wrong with steam ing with a little water. But when it finds it quite soothing when she’s down with the common cold. Howsoever, some have taken their ailments to hit the weapon against the coronavirus, aggressively steaming themselves in a manner that reminds (Wo)M MMM of the mater preparing vegetable korma for lunch. Similarly, the breathing exercise of kapal-abhuti is widely touted as an effective preventive measure for Cove. The idea of a forward which keeps popping up on What’s App groups that (Wo)M MMM finds particularly aggravating, is a small game that invites people to hold their breath for a certain amount of time, amounting that they can breathe. But, they certainly have not contracted the coronavirus. In the absence of an alternative game was probably designed for the lungs of a blue whale, not a human being. It does nothing to clear these small or large people who cannot hold their breath for the monstrous duration that the game demands. (Wo)M MMM observes there’s no harm per se in doing most of these things – one feels that a few of these practices are rather healthy years in medical and specialized medical fields and then finally open their practice, with a stethoscope ready at hand waiting to see patients and then people decide to follow free health advice from friends and family who they refer to. But free health advice is, of course, another problem altogether.

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Bin Win

A new vendor has taken over the waste collection in a few areas in the city. (Wo)M MMM has praised the effort of the white vehicles put-putting around on a regular basis. They look quite compact compared to the conventional, big, noisy, greasy vehicles. The new vendor seems to diligently plan their rounds. Until then, however, let’s wait the medical advice to the experts, shall we?”
Jesse Owens' Visit

Jesse Owens had also visited Madras Christian College School, Chetpet during his stay at Madras. The renowned educationist K. Kurivila Jacob happened to be the Headmaster then. The school magazine for 1955-56 contains photographs of this great athlete. I was a student then. I am in possession of this magazine.

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Chennai 600101

Remembering Muthiah

I am writing to you from Paris to thank you for the pleasure that reading Madras Musings gives me.

Madras has always been a special place to me. Between 1974 and 1978, I visited Madras many times and lived in the city for several months. I remember the magazine Aside. I read Madras Discovered. I was, then, active in the travel industry after having taught history and worked as a journalist. In 1980, I authored the first travel guide of South India in French. My “affair” with India is now 47 years old. I met Mr. Muthiah in Madras in 2003. His sister, Mrs. Meenakshi Meyappan was known to me. I went to his house and he gave me several printed copies of Madras Musings. I was sorry to find out that he died last year. I loved his writing. I have several of his books in my library: Madras Discovered, At Home in Madras, The Spencer Legend, his book on the Connemara hotel…I guess I am a Muthiah fan. I certainly shared with him a curiosity for the past, a certain nostalgia, a passion for places which have a history.

A year ago, I found your presence on the internet, and I must tell you that it made me extremely happy to see that you are continuing Muthiah’s work. I now receive your excellent newsletter. I still visit Madras regularly.

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Thank you, Donors

We today, publish donations received with thanks.

– The Editor

Chandar Seetharaman is a practicing Architect from Alwarpet, Chennai. For the past 36 years, he runs the organisation CS Designs Pvt Ltd. His wife Vidya Chandar is also an Architect.

The Indian Institute of Architects (IIA) is the national body of architects with more than 25,000 active members. It plays a major role in promoting the profession of architects by organising and uniting the Indian practitioners in this field and aims to enhance the aesthetic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession both in practice and education.

This year the IIA NATCON 2020: Transcend was held online on July 11th and 12th. A sketching contest was held calling all members to submit their sketches themed – “Pride of your hometown”. Chandar submitted this pencil sketch – “Umbrella Repairman in Mylapore”. He was declared the winner under the category – pencil sketch. At our request he sent us the sketch and also two others featuring the Mylapore temple.

Chandar can be contacted at chandar.seetharaman@gmail.com

– The Editor
I was born in 1939 in Madras as Rajaji R.K.J. Ranga Rao, popularly known as the Zinda Garnet. Since my mother, Rasu Rangaguru, was a very fond lover of music, she always wanted her children to enjoy it. One day she came back from the temple with her two sons, S. Ranganatha Pillai and I. She knew that the music of that time was mostly classical, and she wanted us to enjoy it too. Because of this, I was introduced to music from a very young age.

My mother's wind-up gramophone held me tight, enraptured, entrapped in the magical world of music. My first concert was in a small temple in our village, performed by a local musician. From there, I started collecting 78 rpm records. The making of 78 rpm records was a skilled art, and I quickly became interested in it. I continued to acquire 78s from different sources, and I eventually started repairing and maintaining the gramophones. This helped me and others discover new records and enjoy them.

As I grew older, I started to explore different types of music, including folk music from different regions of India. I became interested in the Bharatanatyam dance form, which I learned from my mother, a renowned dancer of the Bobbili Estate. I also became interested in the history of Indian music, and I started collecting records from different eras.

I am often asked how I discovered my passion for music. It all started when I was a young boy, and I heard my mother playing the gramophone. The sound of the music took me to a magical world, and I was fascinated by it. From that moment, I knew that I wanted to be a part of this world.

In conclusion, music is a powerful force that connects us to our past and our future. It has the power to inspire us and bring us together. I hope that my passion for music will inspire others to explore and appreciate its beauty.
THERE were two ideological groups in Tamil writing during the 1930s, vertically divided in their perceptions of Literature, Culture and Fine Arts. Though they had mutual friendship, they were quite bitter in expressing their concerns in writing. The avant garde Manikkodi group was interested in modern writing in simple readable Tamil while the Anandavikatan group was more into popular and escapist forms of writing. Kalki was dominating the latter group as his story telling capacity and touch of Tamil language was very well received by the common Tamil reader. At that point of time he was emerging as the popular writer and was also responsible for increasing the reader base of Anandavikatan manyfold. The Saadamasam, a popular and liberal daily then provided a common platform for the groups to publicly discuss the issues especially when their differences peaked. Manikkodi wrote by Subramania Bharati while Kalki Krishnamurthy held his own opinions about the poet. Unfortunately, Bharati suffered from penury throughout his life, though he was very large at heart. His most productive years, at Pondicherry, were also spent under testing conditions. Later when he moved to Madras, he continued in the same state but unlike Thomas Gray’s writing “Chill penury represented their noble rage and froze the genius current of their soul” the unquenched fire in Bharati was always alive and lit many others' imagination as well. When he passed away on September 13, 1921, S. Satyamurthi wrote, “Had he been born in England he would have been the poet laureate and been adored by his race. Had he been born in any other free country, he would have risen to such heights of eminence that he would have lived longer and enriched his language and race more than he is able to do here. Had he been born even in Bengal, he would have been a Rabin-drarth Tagore. Those who know his poems will know I am indulging in platitudes of praise. But born in India and in Tamil India, Subramania Bharati had to spend the best part of an all too short life in exile from those who were near and dear to him. No wonder that he pined and nearly a decade and half later in 1935, a public debate about him took place where the dramatic personae were, Va. Raa, Bharati himself, and was with him in the then Pondicherry and was the poet's first biographer. When Va. Raa, wrote his novel Sundari in simple Tamil, it became a pathbreaker since he highlighted the ordeals of a Hindu widow. It also revealed the idealist and social reformer in him. After editing Saadamasam, a weekly from Tanjore, he joined Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu to run the Tamil journal Thirumigh Naidu. After being with Manikkodi for a while, he joined Venu Kuravi, a daily from Colombo, in October 1934 as desired by V. O. Chidambaram Pillai. A literary torrent was caused when in an article titled Three days with Va. Raa, N. Ramachandram, in the Manikkodi, (August, 1934), reported what Va. Raa seems to have stated during one of his conversations. He read the great poets of English, Shelly and Shakespeare, and India's Nobel Laureate Tagore, but I can say that all the writings of them put together will not equal a line of what Bharati had written.” The editor (again Kalki himself) responded to the letter in the same issue and column thus: “The name of the person was given, but I have omitted the name purposely, as I think he could not have said so.” Continuing, he wrote “If someone had said so, it should not have been untraceable. Bharati does not have any idea about either literature or poetry. It is possible to conclude that he is an illiterate (Nirakshara kusha). It is doubtful if he has read Shelly, Tagore and Shakespeare and if he has, probably he has not understood them. It is also doubtful, if he has understood even Bharati properly.” Va. Raa was known for his depth of knowledge in poetry both in English and Tamil (he had picked up Bengali also while in Pondicherry). When in 1930 he served a prison term, he wrote a 20-page article between October 6 and 11, titled What is Poetry? mentioning in the passing Leo Tolstoy and Swami Vivekananda. Kalki replied in the same journal in an article titled Bharati and literary criticism on 7-12-1935, not only opposing Va. Raa’s views but also adding that if Tolstoy had been shown the poem Vallippattu of Bharati, he would have suggested that all works of Bharati should be burnt. Kalki thought Bharati’s Vallippattu was highly erotic. He added that Va. Raa himself had appreciated Prometheus Unbound by P.B. Shelly, Va. Raa in his rejoinder said, if all Bharati’s books had to be burnt let the fire from heaven do it (suggesting from the contents of Shelly’s poem in which fire is brought from heaven) and not because of him! In the meanwhile Va. Raa wrote from Colombo to Ku. Pa. Rajagopal (original available in 4 pages) lamenting that no one seems to have objected to Kalki’s statement that Bharati was a good but not great poet. It was then that Chitti and Ku. Pa. Ra, wrote long articles questioning Kalki’s statement and the contents were later published under the title Kan- nan et keri by Sango Ganasan in 1937. In spite of differences of opinion, Va. Raa and Chitti respected each other well and when Va. Raa passed away on August 23, 1951, Kalki was present at the cremation and paid rich tributes to Va. Raa. Kalki in the 1940s became a great admirer of Bharati and questioning if he had read at all any poetry of English authors. As a reply to Kalki’s note, Va. Raa followed up with a detailed essay titled Bharati and literary review in the Saadamasam on 30-11-1935 explaining why he had said so, mentioning in the passing Leo Tolstoy in a different context. Kalki replied in the same journal in an article titled Bharati and literary criticism on 7-12-1935, not only opposing Va. Raa’s views but also adding that if Tolstoy had been shown the poem Vallippattu of Bharati, he would have suggested that all works of Bharati should be burnt. Kalki thought Bharati’s Vallippattu was highly erotic. He added that Va. Raa himself had appreciated Prometheus Unbound by P.B. Shelly, Va. Raa in his rejoinder said, if all Bharati’s books had to be burnt let the fire from heaven do it (suggesting from the contents of Shelly’s poem in which fire is brought from heaven) and not because of him! In the meanwhile Va. Raa wrote from Colombo to Ku. Pa. Rajagopal (original available in 4 pages) lamenting that no one seems to have objected to Kalki’s statement that Bharati was a good but not great poet. It was then that Chitti and Ku. Pa. 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Understanding Bharati—differing perceptions

The Bharati Debate

K.R.A. Narasiah

Quizzin’ V.V. Ramanan’s first 10 questions are on current affairs and next on natural wonders and phenomena.

1. Who are the partners of Oxford and Pfizer involved in developing a COVID-19 vaccine?
2. Apart from Virat Kohli, which Indian player has been nominated for the coveted ICC Men’s Player of the Decade Award?
3. The largest trade agreement was recently signed by the member states of ASEAN and its free trade agreement (FTA) partners (excluding India). What is it called?
4. Name the Dadasaheb Phalke award-winning thespian, who acted in 14 Sanyuk Ray films and passed away recently?
5. According to Bloomberg Billionaires Index, who has become the world’s second-richest person, overtaking Bill Gates, and now just behind Jeff Bezos?
6. What number should subscribers prefix for making calls from landlines within the country with the DoT asking telcos to make the arrangements by January 1 to implement the new system?
7. To which city did the new Air India One-B777 aircraft carrying President Ram Nath Kovind make its first flight on November 24?
8. Name the Harry Potter star who by posting a picture with her/his daughter, Instagram broke Sir David Attenborough’s record for being the person to accrue a million followers in the shortest time?
9. Whose record did Lewis Hamilton equal by winning seventh Formula One World title?
10. Fast-food giant McDonald’s has said it would sell a line of plant-based alternatives in 2021. What will it be called?

6

MADRAS MUSINGS

December 1-15, 2020

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10. Fast-food giant McDonald’s has said it would sell a line of plant-based alternatives in 2021. What will it be called?

(Answers on page 8)
A well-educated Tamil household,” S. Ramakrishnan said, “will happily spend fifty rupees on an English paperback but will not think of buying a Tamil book. As they are the ones with the money, this severely limits our markets. Then we face competition from other Tamil publishers – particularly from what are known as monthly novels. They are printed on the cheapest possible paper and sell for only two rupees. It is difficult to wean people away from them, and from the same sort of romantic and sensational stories brought out in serial form in Tamil magazines.”

Ramakrishnan, the founder of the courageous publishing house, Cre-A, died on Nov 17, 2020 at the age of 75, another victim to the Covid-19 pandemic. In a conversation with BBC’s Mark Tully, which the veteran journalist records in the bestseller No Full Stops in India, Ramakrishnan had spoken of the challenges he had faced when he ventured into the world of Tamil publishing in the early 1970s.

Ramakrishnan was a highly paid executive at an ad agency before he forayed into Tamil publishing. A member of the English-speaking elite of Tamil Nadu, he was determined to give Tamil readers well-produced, high quality books in terms of both form and content. “Three schools were Christian, three were Muslim, but all my works had not been done before. We have to extend the language so people can express themselves,” he told Tully.

A health-care manual translated into Tamil would sell but of its practical utility, but what about books on film or art criticism? How do you bring impractical, but enriching, thoughts and words into people’s consciousness, so it becomes part of their everyday reality? Experts say birding is a gateway to greater environmental awareness, but there was no field guide to birds in Tamil. Such matters mattered to Ramakrishnan, who decided that to enter the publishing world was an ideological, not a commercial one.

He managed to keep that commitment.

Ramakrishnan who encouraged translators of world classics and contemporary literature to do their best work, also nurtured local writers. Many Tamil writers who were used to benign neglect, were shocked at first when he pointed out the manuscript and suggested revisions. Soon, they realized that he just wanted their work to shine, be the best it could be. Ramakrishnan would work on the layout with his small team, and send the work of literature, into the world, with tastefully chosen artwork cover art.

Two years ago, when I first met Ramakrishnan at his office in Tiruvannamalai, I had with me a glossy version of Dilip Kumar’s Ramayananum Urumiyanum. Gently, he prised the paperback out of my hands and gave me the Cre-A edition with surreal art on the cover. Ramakrishnan was extremely proud of his protégé’s success. Earlier this year, Dilip’s short story from the same book, The Clerk’s Story, was made into a feature film, Nasir, and it won a prestigious international award. Ramakrishnan sent me the link to the online screening.

Before Dilip Kumar became a renowned writer, he worked in the Cre-A office-cum-showroom. It was located in Royapettah, above a paint shop, and not too far from Pilot theatre. Renowned authors used to drop in, as did people from the world of theater, art, and academia. The atmosphere was very vibrant, Dilip recalls. There would be a collective pondering and exploration of things that help enrich, and sustain, a person’s inner life. The topic could be anything – poetry, painting, philosophy, music, education – depending on the visiting person’s field of interest.

Ramakrishnan knew well the challenges he had faced when he ventured into the world of Tamil publishing in the early 1970s. As a member of the AIR Trichy Station Director, who covered the function from Ettayapuram in October 1947 and took the initiative of building Kovilpatti.

Cre-A Ramakrishnan. Courtesy: The Hindu.
It was a match watched among others by three young cricket fans who went on to become well known writers on the game. This was November 4, 1934 and nearly four decades later as a rookie sports journalist I sat with rapt attention listening to them as they sat at separate times related the events of that remarkable game. The match in question was the first-ever Ranji Trophy game between Madras and Mysore at Chepauk and the three spectators were P.N. Sundaresan, N.S. Ramaswami and K.N. Prabhu.

Besides being historic it is also remarkable in that it was over in a day. That was the start of the Ranji Trophy which over the years became the premier national competition. It is important to remember that at the time the Quadrangular tournament in which the participants were the Europeans, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Parsis was the premier domestic competition in what was then undivided India.

Despite its immense popularity it was felt that a tournament involving the various provinces in the land was also needed and thus was born the Ranji Trophy. Within a decade the Ranji Trophy became the prestigious domestic tournament with the abolition of the Pentangular (which the Quadrangular had become in 1936 with the participation of another team – The Rest) in 1945 with Mahatma Gandhi agitating against it because of its communal character.

Anthony de Mello then the secretary of the BCCI and one of its founding members recalls in his memoirs: “It was with trepidation that I submitted my proposal of the Ranji trophy for the national championship of India to the august gathering and also laid before the meeting in Simla an artists’ drawing of the proposed trophy a Grecian urn two feet high with a lid the handle of which represented Father Time. Even I was not prepared for what followed. The Maharajah of Patiala jumped up when I was scarcely halfway through my brief proposal. The pine scented air appeared immediately electrified. In deep tones charged with emotion His Highness claimed the honour and privilege of perpetuating the name of the great Ranji who had passed away only the year before. He offered to present a gold cup of the magnificent design submitted by me and valued at 500 pounds. To be called the Ranji Trophy it was to be competed for annually by the provincial cricket associations of India.

It is not for nothing that Madras has earned this aura of being a hallowed venue. In 1961 the first Duleep Trophy match was held at the Nallur stadium and 12 years later the first Deodhar Trophy limited overs game was played at Chepauk. But it is the staging of the inaugural Ranji Trophy game 86 years ago that has given the city its special status as far as Indian cricket is concerned. Tied Test II and it being the scene of several international records being set here all came later. It was the significant event of November 4, 1934 that set the ball rolling.

The match scheduled for three days was over in one involving just 5½ hours of play. To M.J. Gopalan went the honour of bowling the first ball. The pitch had been affected by heavy overnight rain and conditions were far from ideal for playing. But as Ramaswami told me "the cricketers were very keen on playing despite the wet field aware that it was a historic occasion." And as Sundaresan recalled: “It was with little hope of there being play that many of us reached Chepauk in the morning but we were swept away by the swift sequence of events.”

Swift is the right way to explain the dramatic events as they unfolded for on the rain-affected surface left arm spinner A.G. Ram Singh took six for 19 as Mysore were shot out for 49. With off spinner M.G. Vijayasaranthi later well known as a Test umpire reveling in the conditions in bagging six for 19 in 23 overs fared only a little better but they managed to get 130. But this was good enough to win by an innings and 23 runs with Mysore being bundled out twice in a day the second time around for 59. Ram Singh continued to be unplayable bagging five for 16 this time supported by Gopalan who had three for 20 and C.P. Johnstone (two for 13). Incidentally both teams were captained by Englishmen for while Johnstone led Madras, M.S. Teversham was the Mysore captain though the majority of players were Indians.

The ‘new normal’ Kutcheris of Margazhi 2020

(Continued from page 5)

topic in the given time”, says Harikatha artiste, Dushyanth Sridhar.

Sudha urges rasika-s to have a mindset to accept the fact that, even though it is virtual, efforts are being taken to organise kutcheris. They need to optimise their enjoyment of the concert. They have to formally sit, and not cook or do something while listening to the kutcheri; that will take away the special flavour of watching a concert. They have to create the concert ambience in the comfort of their homes.”

Answers to Quiz
