**HERITAGE WATCH**

**Bicentennial of a Lovely Landmark**

It is not often that we feature a happy story in this column for most of our subjects have either been demolished or are being demolished or await demolition. It is therefore with delight that we congratulate the congregation of the St. Andrew's Kirk for the magnificent manner in which they have preserved their historic edifice. It is arguably the best maintained heritage structure in the whole of Chennai and may rank among the top ten in India.

This wonderful landmark completed 200 years on February 25, 2021, and this was commemorated with a grand event at the premises. The event also saw the release of a book titled Celebrating God's Goodness put together by a committee comprising congregation members. It is a worthy record of the history of the church.

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**Marina’s proposed Smart Carts turn problematic**

The Greater Chennai Corporation plans to introduce ‘smart carts’ to the Marina beach. The move is part of a larger beautification plan in line with a 2019 Madras High Court directive to transform Marina Beach into a world-class beach – it aims to regularise the beach vendors by capping the number of smart carts at 900, which will be placed in designated vendor zones throughout the area. Given that the Marina is said to harbour roughly 2000 vendors under the current system, the ‘smart cart’ plan has predictably received strong pushback from the thousands who currently depend on the beach for their livelihoods – the drastic move comes at a time when vendors are already under constrained economic circumstances from the pandemic, reeling under a year’s worth of lost revenues.

The issue is further complicated by the smart cart allocation process, which details two categories under which the smart carts will be given to vendors via a lottery system. Category A covers the allotment of 340 smart carts and gives priority to existing vendors, while Category B covers 360 smart carts and invites new vendors to apply. The finalised vendors will take up the smart carts on a rental basis and are expected to abide by cleanliness regulations failing which their license will be removed and awarded to the next applicant in line. The allotment process for both categories was conducted as a draw of lots earlier in January, which was live-streamed by the GCC on its social media channels. The list of successful applicants was subsequently

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**Why not make the Covid vaccine available to everyone?**

For the past few weeks, the daily statistics as regards the virus indicate that the city has entered a deadlock phase in its battle. True, the numbers are not alarming when compared with metropolises such as Mumbai and even less so when you compare them with figures from abroad, but it cannot be denied that the scourge is holding its own in the city. This is despite the best efforts of the frontline health workers. What should the city be doing to gain further ground against the Corona virus?

There can be many reasons for the figures stabilising. There is increased use of public transport, schools and colleges are partially functioning and weddings and other celebrations are regularly being held and while these are restricting numbers at least on paper reality indicates that people are thronging such events. All of this cannot be helped – humankind is sociable by nature. Moreover, while it may be convenient for the well off to grumble that the crowds are back, for those on the road it is not out of choice but compulsion – they need to get around if they have to keep the home fires burning. It is seen in daily reports that a significant chunk of new cases is contributed by those coming into the city.

Unlike elsewhere in India, Chennai’s civic officials have been remarkably nimble in identifying clusters and tackling them. The city and the State have ranked high on testing as well, preferring to go for the more rigorous RTPCR method instead of the less effective antigen test. This is in line with the best practices in the world, and reflects the city’s commitment to containing the outbreak.

This is despite the best efforts of the administrative machinery and infrastructure to gear up but now such measures have no meaning. It is far better to focus on battling the disease than shying away from it.

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**Marina’s proposed Smart Carts turn problematic**

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**Why not make the Covid vaccine available to everyone?**

(Continued on page 2)
Why not make the Covid vaccine available to everyone?

(Continued from page 1)

tests. Therefore, this is not one of our concerns. On the other hand, we seem to be ineffective when it comes to dealing with those who do not wear masks. This is really a serious issue – a quick survey of public spaces, shops and various modes of surface transport indicates that most people do not wear masks and even if they did, wear them wrongly. The greatest problem, of course, is that face masks remain the cheapest and most effective way of keeping the virus at bay.

Secondly, the city has to get going on its vaccination drive. There is really no reason as to why the current batch of vaccines has to be made available only to health and other front-line workers. The ground logic in such prioritisation but when those whom it was meant to benefit do not take to it, what can be done! Statistics indicate that there is no social and economic reason for response from those for whom the first batch of vaccines were intended. If the demand for the first dose was poor, it has to be understood that people are unable to get the second dose. Under such circumstances, why restrict the availability to just doctors, nurses, other medical staff and civic workers?

With more people vaccinated we can at least ensure that the virus when it attacks will be less lethal and that fewer deaths, and probably less people getting infected. This will eventually lead to a further reduction in cases. Ground reality seems to indicate that the good Indian “jugad” has worked wonders, and it is doing the rounds of how influential people not in any way connected with healthcare or civic services are managing to get ahead in the vaccination queue. This however is not a bad thing for the vaccine has to start reaching more people. Why not then throw it open to all.

Marina’s proposed Smart Carts turn problematic

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published on the GCC website, but has since been removed with no comment.

Meanwhile, the Chennai-based NGO Arappor Iyakkam is demanding the cancellation of the smart carts tender, alleging corruption in the tender award. The organization has reportedly filed a complaint with the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption. A queer commentary by Jayaram Venkatesan published in The Hindu reads, “…The Corporation floated a tender for the supply and installation of 920 smart vending carts with a value of Rs. 16.47 crore. The tender publishing date was October 10, 2020, and the scheduled bid opening date was November 19, 2020. A Quad Enterprises did not have the required pre-qualifications. Therefore, a series of amendments were made to the criteria to try and make the firm a viable bidder. In another move, a clause in the corrigendum giving themselves permission to reopen the tender while in the bid opening process was already marked as “closed.” A Quad Enterprises did not have the required pre-qualifications as per the criteria.

One feels that the Marina beautification efforts can do much better than smart carts to strike a more efficient balance between environmental cleanliness and commerce. It might serve the public better to focus on waste management, maintenance of restroom facilities and access to drinking water, instead of disrupting daily wage earners who make a living at the beach. Surely, we have the funds to work out more creative, impactful solutions – after all, the administration recently spent a whopping Rs. 24 lakhs on a selfie monument at the Marina beach.

Auto reminiscences

In these pandemic times, The Woman from Madras Musings has been keeping away from public transport, keeping in mind the safety of the elders in the family. Curiously, (Wo) MMM finds herself missing Chennai autos the most, even though they have a bad rap in general. (Wo) MMM has come to realise that some of her warmest memories of the city pertain to auto travels.

There was a time when (Wo) MMM used to travel extensively by share autos and autos. The routine involved getting on a share auto on Nungambakkam High Road until Anna’s Skywalk, only to get onto another share auto that plied all the way until Alapakkam Main Road. The passengers were often familiar faces and each of their stories unravelled through the phone conversations they held in the auto. From loan officers and professors to marble contractors, one got a momentary glimpse into each of their lives, loves and hassles. On one admittedly satisfactory occasion, the phone rang with an urgent call. The driver jumped to the defence when a new lady passenger objected to (Wo) MMM’s “unduladike manner” of crossing her legs while sitting. The share auto drivers became acquaintances too – more than once an embarrassing occasion when (Wo) MMM found herself without change, they were generous enough to give her off cheerfully at the final stop. To (Wo) MMM’s glee, they invariably allowed her to hook the bag whenever she wished, too.

A particular stop after the Marina college underpass was always marked by a rather smartly dressed traffic policeman whose pet peeve was share auto drivers stopping to have a chat in the busy intersection in the hope of picking up passengers. He would run towards the vehicles, entreat them to go on their way without holding up the traffic. It became such a familiar sight – after all, the auto drivers never shied away from the opportunity to make a stop at that profitable junction when they had the chance – that (Wo) MMM immediately identified the policeman when her friend was stopped at another area in the city for not wearing a helmet. (Wo) MMM told the policeman that she recognised him from the Loyola underpass junction, which unfortunately caused the gentleman (and the friends) some alarm.

The way back home usually necessitated a detour from Ispahani Centre on Nungambakkam High Road. In (Wo) MMM’s experience, this was a strangely pleasant whistle auto drivers in the city – almost every other trip was a strange conversation worth remembering. For instance, (Wo) MMM discovered that most auto drivers have the most singular side hustles. One gentleman specialised as a villain extra in Rajinikanth movies; one moonlighted as a wedding responsibles. (Wo) MMM was one of the self-declared champions of auto races in the city. The

Trending: Legal beagles and lawyer cats

The Woman from Madras Musings, having been running into quite a few viral bits of news about lawyers on their misadventures. For a niche genre, it seems to have a rather surprising amount of content. (Wo) MMM has come to realise that the lawyer cat is far is the video of lawyer cat. True to its name, it features a hapless lawyer who seems to have run into the most progressively ridiculous realistic cat filter whilst video-conferencing a case. But dear me, was it even the case before the patient judge rather embarrassingly. “I’m not a cat.” Unfortunately, the video doesn’t tell us what actually happened to lawyer cat – (Wo) MMM hopes that he argued his case successfully as the snow-white, marvellously whiskered kitten that he was.

Closer home, the lawyers in our fair county have been having their share of adventures. Taking dubious decisions around court decorum. The all-too-human bungles seem to have cropped up amongst the legal community too – for instance, some seem to have logged into e-courts in their vests or other such casuals, eliciting reprimands from the judges. (Wo) MMM also read a rather entertaining news item on a lady lawyer who had to log into his call from his car, allowing an interested person in the backseat to watch the proceedings in.

In (Wo) MMM’s opinion, these are rather forgivable as first-time errors – after all, it takes time to pick up new rules of etiquette for new mediums. (Wo) MMM finds herself more surprised at dramatic lapses in judgement, such a senior advocate smoking a hookah during e-court proceedings. One hopes that he is an exception, especially senior judges in the field, would think twice about doing such a thing in public. For in mind the safety of the elite doctors, nurses, other medical staff and civic workers?

We at Madras Musings wish the congregation of St Andrew’s the very best and pray that their good work should continue.

HERITAGE WATCH

(Continued from page 1)

Apart from the fact that it is a venerable marker of our city’s history, the kirk is also an architectural marvel for its proportions, but the members have consistently attended

It is not easy to maintain a church of such lofty dimensions, but the members have consistently attended

(Continued from page 1)
Remembering a medical couple

Dr. K.V Thiruvengadam & Dr. Malathi Thiruvengadam

Dr. K.V. Thiruvengadam and Dr. Malathi Thiruvengadam passed away in recent times, at the ripe old ages of 93 and 91 respectively. Highly respected in the medical field, the couple leave behind inspiring careers marked by public service. This article, however, is dedicated to their legacies as grandparents.

Dr. K.V. Thiruvengadam was an esteemed clinician and teacher. He inspired a flood of articles written by his colleagues celebrating his life and career. His dedication to ethical medical practice and holistically patient care inspired generations of students to strive for medicine’s highest ideals.

To thousands of patients over his decades of practice, Dr. K.V. Thiruvengadam was a diagnostican and a healer. He conducted his clinics in a home office, separated from his living room by a thick, wooden door. On one side of this door, Dr. K.V.T. presided over his medical practice, with piercing fluorescent lights and sharp antiseptic odours hanging over tumbling stacks of medical paper work. But at the end of his workday, when he opened that wooden door and stepped into the bright chaos of his living room, he was simply known as Thatha. To his grandchildren, who could be reliably found engaging in some mischief in this living room, what Thatha did in his office remained somewhat mysterious. To them, he was defined not by his medals or accolades, but by the love and affection he showered on them.

Thatha had a soft-spoken, gentle demeanor that endeared him to his family. While Paaati would never hesitate to call out her grandchildren for creating havoc in the living room, Thatha rarely descended into the fray. He sat in his favorite chair, his nose buried in a medical journal, and pecked above the pages to offer the rare half-hearted scolding. He had a propensity to start chuckling during his reprimands, which markedly reduced their impact on curb ing unruly behavior.

During free time spent with his grandchildren, Thatha loved to share stories. When his grandchildren were young, these stories were lighthearted and playful, often focusing on the adventures of the fictional character Tarzan. As Thatha grew older (and his grandchildren did too), his fantastical stories turned into lessons about life and the wisdom he imparted. Thatha shared his values, his ideals, and the strong ethical code that guided his personal and professional life. The legacy he left for his family was every bit as important as the one he left for his patients and colleagues - Thatha will always be remembered for his unshakeable commitment to excellence, his compassion, and his infinite kindness.

Much like Dr. K.V.T., his wife Malathi Thiruvengadam lived a life of selflessness and consequence. She was quite brilliant – she was a trained physician and a gifted musician, too. She was a pillar of strength for her family.

When a young Malathi (née M. Malathi) chose to attend medical school, it was not for lack of other options. Her intellectual curiosity and work ethic had resulted in top marks in a variety of disciplines, from mathematics to French. These accolades were hard-fought and well-deserved. When Malathi saw professors discriminate against her in favor of male students, she spoke up and demanded fairness. When Malathi saw this happen to others, she did the same. Later, those who heard Malathi’s stories about her school would notice a theme – she advocated courageously for equality and fairness. She demanded that people be judged on their merits alone. After the completion of her medical training, Dr. M. Malathi (then Dr. Malathi Thiruvengadam) spent over twenty years practicing obstetric medicine before retiring to care for her family. A devoted wife and mother, she tended to her household with the same passion and commitment that had characterized her career in medicine. Decades later, her grandchildren would learn lessons in courage at her knee.

Malathi Paaati, no less outspoken than the young M. Malathi, turned her attention to sharing her knowledge with the next generations. To her grandchildren, there seemed to be no skill that she did not have – of growing up, sharing her knowledge, and passing it on. Her passion and commitment that defined her. To her grandchildren, his unshakeable commitment to sharing his knowledge with all those who knew her, his values, his ideals, and the wisdom she imparted.

As the years passed and the physical demands of garden ing caught up to her, Malathi Paati could be found walking her grandchildren around the yard, sharing her plans to harvest mangoes from the towering trees that shaded the back windows. Every year, she delivered on this promise, and an entire room of the house would be filled with mangoes from the ground up, soon to be parcelled and delivered to neighbors, family, and friends.

As the years passed and the advent of the computer, Thatha decided to teach herself Sanskrit. She sat in one corner of her living room as Thatha sat in the other – he, browsing through medical journals with Carnatic music playing on the radio; she, poring over verb conjugation in her Sanskrit textbook. During breaks in her studies, she shared stories of her childhood – of growing up the daughter of a forest officer; of early years in schooling, and of the values that came to define her. To her grandchildren, Paati’s love for learning would leave a lasting imprint. Through word and deed, she modeled the virtues of lifelong curiosity and unshakeable tenacity.

Malathi Paaati served as a shining example of life well-lived. She would be missed dearly by all those who knew her, and generations of her family will forever be molded by the wisdom she imparted.

Dr. K.V.T., the Padma Shri awardee by Shobha Menon

Dr. K.V.T, the Padma Shri awardee popularly known as Dr. KVT, is an eminent physician and clinician whose skills are the last word in diagnosis. He has been witness to an era in medicine, from excited promises of a new medical revolution with reverence to the present developments in telemedicine.

Dr. K.V.T reminisces, “I had finished my B.Sc Chemistry and was being interviewed for entry into an engineering course in Guindy Engineering College. My impressive marks in Human Physiology prompted the legendary Sir A.L. Muddalair (then on the interview panel) to persuade me to apply for medicine and so I joined Madras Medical College, though it happened to be just for 20 days. On the next day, a cycle messenger came over from Stanley and informed me that if I did not report the next morning at Stanley Medical College, my medical course admission would be cancelled! Only then, I realised that a letter had been sent transferring me to SMC (and it had languished unattended in my letter box). The transfer was necessitated because MMC wanted to replace me with another medical student who was also a good footballer (then much needed by M. Muddaiah, whom I disowned). I hesitated to pay fees again, though I’d already paid up at MMC. The kind Vice-Principal loaned me Rs. 120 to meet it.”

It was well into World War II before antibiotics reached Madras for the first time. In Dr. KVT’s words – “Those days we had to wear mask while opening a vial! Streptomycin was to be used selectively and chloramphenicol for treatment of typhoid had to be reverently handled.”

Dr. KVT also remembers the inauguration of the new outpatient block at Stanley in the late 1960s and the building of the new surgical block behind the demolished Gray Ward where, once, he recalls, French nuns were looking after the terminally ill. He was also present during the period when Paediatrics was developed as a distinct specialty at the hospital, with Dr. A. John as the first paediatrician; he also remembers the emergence of the Medical Oncology block.

When Dr. KVT was Vice-Principal at Stanley Medical College, Dr. A.N.K. Menon was Dean, and Dr. Kutumbiah, the Principal and “the office, a well-oiled machine!” Dr. KVT’s eyes sparkle as he remembers eminent stalwarts like Dr. Mahadevan, the first surgeon to open the heart in the 1940s; Dr. Kini, an ortho-surgeon of outstanding ability; Prof. Ananthanarayanan, who “had a wonderful way of teaching Anatomy, especially embryology – with no slides or powerpoint projectors at that time, he could put romance even into Embryology”; and gynaecologist Dr. Madhavan, who was known for his Cartesian elegance, “used to come any time at night, very fast in his Vauxhall car.”

Dr. KVT finishes his conversation with a final comment – “In Government service, if you have the will you can do a lot of work. Many of our patients were very poor, had to be housed on cots and below cots. Many times, with no money even to go home. From Poor Fund, it’d take a long time to get funds. So, we’d reimburse them most times!”

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From Madras Musings Archives

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Our seaside scrub

By focusing us to continue our chores to the safety of our homes, the Covid pandemic has opened our eyes to the bounty of nature that abounds around us. To their joy and surprise, people are beginning to notice a variety of birds in their own backyards, beauties hitherto unnoticed. As for myself, I have started taking daily walks to the seaside to get away from home and enjoy the cool morning breeze. The seaside is hardly 500m away and my walks cover a stretch of land around 50-100m wide, adjacent to the high-tide line. Lately, I have begun to appreciate the richness of nature that can be seen even on my short strolls.

The stretch of land that I walk by is marked by a variety of scrub vegetation that is present along our Coromandel coast. One can see different species of thorny grasses and herbs, including two spreading plants known as Goat’s-foot Glory and Beach Bean which sport beautiful pink flowers. Presently, this kind of vegetation may be seen south of the Adyar Broken Bridge and pockets further down by the side of the ishikwadi settlements. It must have been part of the kingdom’s native vegetation – today, greater population numbers have forced it to diminish.

This scrub is noticeable especially due to the large pink cup-shaped flowers of the Goat’s-foot Glory, the leaves of which resemble a went’s foot. Their flower in numbers is a pleasing sight, more so when a hoopoe is searching for insects in this green and pink mat. The Beach Bean plants, which also grow in equal profusion, bear pink-flowered flowers and its pods are broad and bean-like, quite unnoticeable.

Sometimes, we also get islands of the Giant Milkweed which sport leaves and flowers apart only at the base. Possibly due to the salty air and constant breeze, the stems are shorn of leaves beyond a height of about two feet. Nevertheless, the stems are favoured lookout points for the Plain Prinia and the migratory Brown Shrike.

The green mat below shelters many prey species for the birds like roaches, spiders, robberflies, butterflies, and moths. The stems are favourite lookout points for the Plain Prinia and the migratory Brown Shrike. The green mat below shelters many prey species for the birds like roaches, spiders, robberflies, butterflies, and moths. The stems are favourite lookout points for the Plain Prinia and the migratory Brown Shrike.

The scrub vegetation is frequented by all and sundry. Fishing communities prefer the seaside as a public toilet while the educated city dwellers use it for their dogs to do their dirty business. What a sorry state of affairs! We are masters at spoiling our beautiful surroundings.

It is not as if the beach scrub is useless. This scrub vegetation has evolved to hold the soil in place and has established itself on tropical seashores. In fact, when a patch was cleared as a part of the beautification drive, the consequences were immediate – the sea breeze blew sand right into the promenade and onto the public. Fortunately, the vegetation was left to grow once again, and has remained untouched. But in other places, beauty has been irreversibly damaged in the process. In the simple case here, we are set to lose all its beauty once the scrub gets cleared for human activities.
Rai Bahadur V. Venkayya – Pioneering epigraphist of India

Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan’s first 10 questions are on current affairs and next 10 on currencies and monies:

1. Name NASA’s latest robotic rover that touched down on Mars recently and will study whether there was ever life on the red planet?

2. Simple. Who are the new Australian Open singles champions?

3. To reduce consumption of plastic in its packaging, Coca-Cola is to trial bottles made from which material?

4. Which big country recently reported the first case of a bird flu strain, H5N8, being passed from poultry to humans?

5. Sagarika, the first of its kind in India, was recently inaugurated by PM Modi at Willingdon Island, Kochi. What is it?

6. Which South Indian state capital is the only Indian city to be recognised by the Arbor Day Foundation and the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as a ‘2020 Tree City of the World’?

7. Which Indian was the winner of the inaugural ICC Player of the Month Award for his heroics in the month?

8. In which district was the foundation stone for CFCCL’s Cauvery Basin Refinery expansion project spread over 1,330 acres and costing Rs 31,580 crore laid recently?

9. Which crypto-currency recently became the first to list a market capitalisation of $1 trillion?

10. Name the popular French electronic music duo of Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo and Thomas Bangalter, known for performing with helmets on, which has decided to split up.

• Book Review by Dr. Chithra Madhavan

In life, Venkayya’s schooling was in Chittoo where he did extremely well despite dire financial straits, and went on to join the Madras Christian College (MCC). Staying in a hostel in Madras, he again felt the pangs of poverty, but bore all this with fortitude, writing in his diary, “I cannot altogether forget the humiliating position which I occupied both at Chittoo, when I was preparing for my Matric examination and at the Student’s Home, Madras. Perhaps, for the pinching poverty throughout the period of my education, I might not have made much progress. In fact, poverty has been my best friend.” He subsequently joined the Free Church Mission High School (Anderson School) in Kanchipuram in 1885 and remitted money back home to educate his siblings. He made good use of his stay in Kanchipuram to visit the glorious temples in this ancient town.

In 1886, he went to Mamallapuram to see the famed Pallava monuments and sculptures, and what a visit that turned out to be! It was at this seaport of the Pallavas that Venkayya met E. Hultzsch, the famous German epigraphist, who was the first Indian Epigraphist to the Government of India. In the words of John H. Marshall, Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1902 to 1928, ‘From first to last, his life in the Archaeological Department was one of assiduous labour and devotion to duty and his work throughout was characterised by sound scholarship.’

As a boy, he had studied the Vedas and ancillary scriptures from his father, Appa Sitarama Ayyar, a profound Vedic scholar – a learning that was to stand him in good stead later in life. Venkayya took charge as the Officialising Government Epigraphist in May 1903, and the villages and towns with artificial lakes, tanks and irrigation channels. He wrote an article on ‘Irrigation in South India’ and gave a long list of all the tanks mentioned in the Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagara inscriptions.

(Continued on page 7)
The VI or VII Statues of King George V

The first was installed so long ago that memories of it are hazy at best and indeed, it is quite likely that there was no such statue at all. All we know is that shortly after the 1925 visit of King George V to Madras when he was Prince of Wales, a statue/bust of his was unveiled inside the Flower Bazaar Police Station. As to what happened to it we have no clue. And why was it unveiled in such a location? After all those were days when Indians rejoiced in the Pax Britannica and there was no danger to such a statue/bust. One of the reasons why there are so many doubts about this first statue/bust is the installation within a few years of the second and only surviving statue to George V in the city.

The one that stands behind the Flower Bazaar Police Station. Were these two one and the same? Did it stand inside the police station and later was shifted out? For the record, the second statue, a fine bronze depicting King George V as King Emperor and in coronation robes was sculpted by Sir Bertram Mackennal. It was funded by the Gujarati magnate Kushaldoss Chaturbhujadoss on behalf of the citizens of Madras, ostensibly in gratitude for the King Emperor acquiescing in the prayer that Black Town be renamed George Town. That decision had been taken in 1906. The statue it would appear was sculpted post the coronation in 1911. Holding the orb and the sceptre, His Majesty still stands, watching the going on in George Town. During political rallies his sceptre (and (horror!) crown come in handy for hanging bunting. The statue is obviously popular with posters. If the King were to glance down, he would witness a forever changing kaleidoscope around his pedestal. In the morning it is a convenient urinal, during the day it watches over countless parked two wheelers, in the evening it is where the local drunks rest and finally at night it is a convenient place for the homeless to sleep on.

The third was a singularly ugly bust (not that the King was any eye candy) all pop-eyed and glaring, sculpted by M.S. Nagappa, which stood in the middle of Panagal Park. It was unveiled in 1934 by Sir Mohammed Usman, a noted British sympathiser, when he was acting Governor of Madras. In what always seemed to be an irony to me, the bust occupied centre space in the park while the statue of the Raja of Panagal after whom the place was named, was relegated to the rear. Around ten years ago, the bust which by then lacked a nose vanished and the Raja of Panagal was moved to his rightful location where he still stands though the beautiful brown hue of the statue is now all painted over in gold, blue, black and several other colours. That is local aesthetics for you.

An almost identical statue to one near the Guindy railway station from where the road took a sharp turn to St Thomas Mount. This area has now changed considerably owing to flyovers and the metro and so the exact location is difficult to pinpoint. In another work of his titled Madras, the Birth Place of British India, the same author is more specific – it was under a terracotta-coloured pavilion on the road south after he crossed Marmalang (now Marmalalai Adigal) Bridge. Somerset Playne in his Southern India dated 1915 gives us more details – this was a life-size statue and stood near the Guindy Lodge, present day Raj Bhavan. It was funded by T. Namberumal Chetty the builder baron though who sculpted it is not known. Was it made of marble or was it of bronze? There are no surviving photographs and as to what happened to this statue is also quite a mystery. Technically of course, King George V was not in Madras in the early 1900s, falling as it did within Sadiapet. The statue if it survives, must therefore be in some district museum.

The last in this set was in Chingleput gifted by Kushaldoss Chaturbhujadoss, dating to 1913. Statue in Guindy gifted by T. Namberumal Chetty dating to 1911 and whereabouts unknown.

Lost Landmarks of Chennai – SRIRAM V

Rai Bahadur V. Venkayya

The book on Rai Bahadur V.Venkayya has a valuable footnote by eminent archaeologist, Padma Bhusan Dr. R. Nagaswamy, Former Vice Chancellor, Kanchipuram University and Former First Director of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu Govemment. The author is V. Venkayya’s great granddaughter Sunitha Madhavan, a double gold medallist from the University of Madras, who was Professor and Head, Department of Economics, Meenakshi College, Chennai. She has painstakingly collected all the information about this scholar from various sources including his diary, correspondences, journal articles, newspaper cuttings, coin collections, newspaper articles and many more. This volume provides an insight into the life and achievements of Rai Bahadur Venkayya, whose legacy has, and still continues to inspire many a historian and archaeologist.
When TN’s long wait for the Ranji Trophy ended

Thirty three years ago on March 30 1988 I saw something that I thought I would never see in my life. I saw Tamil Nadu win the Ranji Trophy.

Yes, out there in the middle at the MAC stadium S. Vasudevan the acting captain in the absence of appointed captain K. Srikkanth who was away in Sharjah on national duty received the trophy that almost every cricket follower in the state had accepted would never come back again.

So how did this unthinkable feat come about? Certainly on the eve of the 1987-88 season there was nothing to suggest that this would be Tamil Nadu’s year. On the contrary those following the fortunes of the state team over the years had virtually conceded that Tamil Nadu would never again win the Ranji Trophy to add to their solitary success of 1954-55 when as Madras they had defeated Holkar in the final at Indore. In fact the joke doing the rounds for long was that the only way Tamil Nadu would get the Ranji Trophy was to steal it!

Time and again the state team had raised the hopes of cricket fans only to bring them down to earth with a sickening thud. Since that one success they had made the title round in 1967-68 and 1972-73 only to lose to Bombay in the final a year later. Course of a place in the knock out rounds was not always guaranteed with Karnataka (then Mysore) and Hyderabad in the south zone. But every time they made them to the knock out stage they came a cropper against Bombay or Delhi. Till 1987 the record against Bombay read: played twelve, lost twelve and against Delhi it was played five, lost five.

Tamil Nadu’s performance at the league stage in 1987-88 was par for the course. Three wins, a loss and a draw saw them topping the table pushing Karnataka to second spot. And when it came to the knock out rounds Tamil Nadu had more than a fair share of good fortune. In the first place Bombay defeated Karnataka in the pre-quarter final to remove one of Tamil Nadu’s main challengers. Delhi beating Bombay in the quarterfinal made it that much easier for Tamil Nadu who in the meantime made the final with victories over Uttar Pradesh in the quarterfinal and Punjab in the penultimate round. But their real stroke of good fortune came when railways got the better of Delhi narrowly on the run quotient rule then prevalent after rain ruined their semifinal.

With both their bugbear teams knocked out Tamil Nadu were now clear favorites against Railways in the title round and this time they did not let down their supporters. In fact they won the five-day match by an innings and 144 runs dismissing their opponents for 317 and 248 and noting up their highest-ever Ranji total – a small matter of 709 all out. The one jarring note in the triumphant moment was the smallness of the crowd – there were hardly 300 spectators at the stadium to savour the scene of Vasudevan receiving the trophy that Tamil Nadu had waited for 33 long years. But the spectators did see a touching scene for after receiving the trophy Vasudevan handed it over to S. Venkatraghavan. Then the TNCA secretary Venkat as player and captain had tried very hard for so many years for Tamil Nadu to win the Ranji Trophy but in vain.

As for the good fortune factor in not having to face either Delhi or Bombay on their way to their title triumph Vasudevan summed it up in a TV interview after the final when he said that the team was so high on confidence that they would have beaten both teams. In any case the victory was rewarded by national recognition for within a year VB. Chandrasekhar, M. Venkatramana and Robin Singh who all played leading roles in the unexpected triumph were representing the country alongside the regular India players Srikkanth and W.V. Raman.

Over the last three decades and more Tamil Nadu’s best has been to make the title clash as many as six times but they have faltered at this final hurdle, as many as six times but they have faltered at this final hurdle, losing at home and away and going down to Delhi, Karnataka (twice), Mumbai (twice) and Rajasthan. The result is that there is a new joke doing the rounds that Tamil Nadu wins the Ranji Trophy every 33 years. In that case 2020-21 should have been the season to look out for but as fate would have it the competition was not held for the first time since its inception in 1934-35.