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MADRAS MUSINGS

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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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When a city is careless...

● by The Editor

It is now quite clear that contrary to all claims of victory over Covid, we may be staring down an abyss. The virus has clearly not gone away. In fact, during the time we were celebrating the falling numbers it was merely crouching for a spring so to speak, with renewed vigour. Unfortunately, the sharp spike has come at a time when the administration is involved with the Assembly elections, which by itself is a very demanding exercise. What is unfortunate however is the carelessness of the people. The attitude towards Covid that we now see is completely inexcusable.

Just around a month ago, Tamil Nadu and Chennai appeared to have come up trumps as far handling the pandemic was concerned. Union Ministers praised us, doctors and experts predicted that the end was in sight and there were learned articles as to how there was no possibility of a second wave in the city and state. And then the numbers began to rise, and have continued ever since. At the latest count, as on 27th March, we in the city appear to be well on our way to daily increases in four digits. The only consolation is that at present casualty figures are still low.

While there is much that can be laid at the door of the administration for this evolving crisis, there is a lot that could have been done by we, the people. The wearing of masks is the first and perhaps most important step. This by itself seems to be a huge hurdle. Most people prefer to go around without this simplest of protective devices. Of course, this is not surprising in a state where the helmet law is still considered a punishment. The heat was given as an excuse then. We presume the fogging up of spectacles will be the reason for not wearing masks.
 (Continued on page 2)

City gears up for the Assembly Election as it fights to stave off second wave of pandemic

The sixteenth legislative assembly election of Tamil Nadu is to be held on April 6 and, according to the Election Commission of India, 62.6 million people are eligible to vote, of which 40 lakh voters are attributed to Chennai. The elections come at a time when the city is struggling against a new swell of corona virus cases – for instance, Chennai saw a 100% rise in fresh cases over a span of three weeks, according to an NDTV report.

One of the reasons for the new surge is thought to be 'covid fatigue', which has resulted in lax discipline to-

wards preventive guidelines and social distancing – the practices of wearing masks, washing hands and maintaining prudent distancing seem to have largely gone out the window. In fact, the new cases are reported to be workplace and family clusters, with the latter arising out of a failure to comply with home quarantine measures. Reports say that electioneering efforts from political parties are adding to the strain, with party gatherings and campaigns adopting loose enforcement of the covid protocols outlined by the Election Commission of India. The city's medical community is reportedly bracing itself for an exponential rise in fresh covid cases. Given the situation, sanitary voting arrangements are expected to be a crucial line of defense against a second wave of covid – after all, most things that one takes for granted in voting is a red flag in these pandemic days, from crowded polling booths to the voting machines.

According to a report in *The Hindu*, the Election Commission has increased the number of polling booths in the state from 68,324 to 88,937 in a bid to reduce crowding at the polls.
 (Continued on page 2)

HERITAGE WATCH

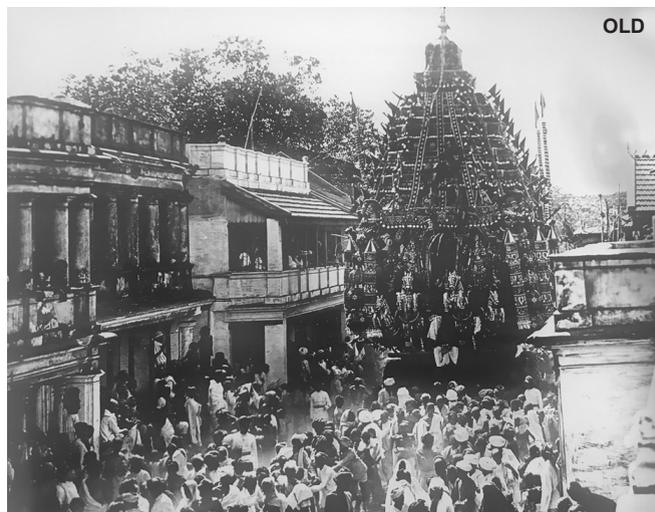
The Kapaliswarar Temple Panguni festival

The Kapaliswarar Temple is unique in the sense that it has a poem from the 6th century describing its annual calendar of festivals. We allude to the Poompavai Pathigam of Sambandar. The Panguni festival is included in it too and what we see today therefore is a mark of continuity of our city's traditions. It is therefore a part of our heritage.

That said, this year, we sincerely feel that a toning down of the event would have been advisable. Last year the celebrations were not held and to make up for that, there was a closed-door observance of the same, earlier this year. It may have been best if the 2021 edition too had been celebrated the same way. The crowds that poured in on the key days of the ten-day celebration had to be seen to be believed. In a situation like this, the temple administration and the permitting authorities ought to have thought twice about allowing such an event. True the police kept announcing that people needed to wear masks and even went to the extent of distributing these to those who were without them but even masks prove ineffective when it comes to crowds of this magnitude. We have to wait and watch the next week or so as to what the impact of this event is going to be on Covid statistics.

Our Old is a picture of the ther (car) procession, from the early 1900s, courtesy *Vintage Vignettes*. Our New is of this year, courtesy *Mylapore Times*.

Since these are times when an article like this will immediately elicit heated responses that we would have never dared to write this way about Muslim and Christian celebrations, let us assure our readership that we are completely against all religious gatherings of this magnitude during a time when individual safety is paramount.



When a city is careless...

(Continued from page 1)

Avoidance of crowded spaces is the next precaution. You only need to see what is happening in election meetings to realise why the numbers are growing. There are practically no masks to be seen anywhere and the people are tightly packed together – a perfect breeding ground for the virus. The High Court has recently suggested (only suggested) that the Election Commission may spread the message about attendees at political meetings wearing masks. But there is no sign as yet from the EC about this. A rather languorous video on how to vote however does advise precaution, maintaining of distance and wearing of masks.

We next come to religious events and get-togethers. The recently held Kapaliswarar temple festival was a case in point (see *Heritage Watch*). The same is true of weddings, cinema screenings and public events. These could have been avoided. While we understand that the entertainment and hospitality industries are suffering, bailout packages for these

rather than simply encouraging them to open up may have been advisable.

Lastly, we come to the hesitation in getting vaccinated. For once our city appears to have adopted the good manners of old Lucknow in allowing others to go ahead in being injected. That a city which has a high literacy rate and prides itself on being a rationalist bastion should be so diffident when it comes to preventive steps is puzzling. The only option left for the administration is to then make it compulsory. We trust they soon will for we otherwise do not see much hope for Chennai.

In the midst of all this chaos, we persistently hear rumours that a lockdown may be imposed. Those that spread this do so with cheer, as though it was a long-promised holiday. Truth be told, little beyond idleness is achieved by lockdowns. It has been established that they only postpone and do not prevent peaks. What is wanted is discipline and rigour in safety protocols even as we go about our daily duties. Can Chennai demonstrate its ability to adhere to such norms?

Gearing up for the Assembly Elections

(Continued from page 1)

As for enforcing covid protocols, district Election Officer G. Prakash has been quoted saying that citizens without masks will not be allowed to vote. It is also reported that voters will get their temperatures checked upon arrival with an infrared thermometer; those showing signs of infection will be issued a medical certificate and allowed to vote during a special schedule. Every voter will also be provided a hand glove to cast their votes, while citizens who have tested positive will be provided PPE kits to cast their ballot at the voting booths. It remains to be seen how far these efforts will go in curbing the spread of infection on election day.

One's thoughts immediately turn to the possibility of e-voting, of course. While no such mechanism exists currently, it seems to be a large scale project that may come to fruition only during next election season – the Election Commission of India is reported to be collaborating with IIT-Madras to develop remote voting operations based on blockchain technology. In the meantime, absentee voting has been rolled out for the first time in the state for a small group of people comprising senior citizens above the age of 80 and citizens with

disabilities. Mr. G. Prakash explained that the process of absentee voting involved complex logistics, where the voting machines would be physically taken to voters' houses based on prior appointment. It is reported that 1.59 lakh elderly voters have opted for this route and voting is already underway.

Given the scale of the operation, it is understandable that the current process cannot be rolled out to a larger voter base; however, one cannot help but wonder why more effort was not taken to introduce other remote voting options to the general public. For instance, the recent US presidential elections come to mind, which leveraged the postal network to allow mail-in ballots. Restricting postal ballots to a small section of the voter base may not have a significant impact in reducing risks, especially if the younger family members of a household or residential complex are forced to visit a booth to vote.

One feels that Digital India can do much better. After all, we've been living with the pandemic for over a year and knew that we had an election year in the offing. With many across the city reluctant to brave the crowds and cast their votes, it remains to be seen how far voter turnout will be affected.

Putting the dis in disinfect

Are'n't we still in a pandemic? *The Woman from Madras Musings* can't help but wonder at the flagrant flouting of covid norms everywhere she goes. Mask wearing has disappeared as has social distancing, but the charming habit of spitting on the streets is back. So, it came as no big surprise to learn that the virus has planted its unwelcome flag on (Wo)MMM's territory – a family in the pater's apartment complex tested positive for covid-19.

(Wo)MMM recalled an earlier brush with the virus, when the in-laws fell sick – a corporation official had checked in on the family almost every day during the quarantine period, which had been quite a relief at that time. Assuming that the authorities would show up to help this time too, (Wo)MMM waited for a couple of days. No one came. A brief chat with the uncle who had been coordinating with the authorities revealed that he was having a hard time getting them to commit to a visit – he was initially informed that the team was too busy to come by, and it was only after multiple follow-ups that they had reluctantly admitted that they perhaps had a duty to perform in this case, and would get the concerned official to drop in. Unfortunately, the official didn't seem to be that concerned after all – many promises were made day after day that the visit would take place within the hour, to no avail. Uncle was ready to give up when (Wo)MMM decided to have a go at the matter.

(Wo)MMM made a call to the official, explaining the importance of swift action since the apartment housed senior citizens. She was promised that someone would come by in the evening; not willing to let the matter drop, she placed a second call in the afternoon to confirm. (Wo)MMM was put onto another official who told her that his colleague was entirely misinformed and that this team would not be able to help her out in this matter. She was given another number to get in touch with and the call promptly ended.

After multiple tries, the second phone number directed (Wo)MMM to a covid control center. On hearing the issue, the control center informed her that they were the control center and not the sanitization team, and gave her the number of a health official. The control center gentleman had some advice as well, presumably from experience – please don't ask the health official too many questions, simply make a polite request for the sanitization, he pleaded. (Wo)MMM thanked him, duly made a note and rolled up her sleeves for the next round.

In a pleasant surprise, the third phone number put her in touch with a health official on the very first try. She heard (Wo)MMM's story patiently

for a full five minutes. After a pause, she asked which zone the apartment came under. (Wo)MMM's heart sank. This is seldom a good question to hear when trying to get help from the authorities. True enough, the health official declared quite cheerfully that this particular zone wasn't under her team's purview and asked (Wo)MMM to get in touch with the right health official. This, of course, led (Wo)MMM to yet another number to call.

The fourth phone number was absolutely unreachable. (Wo)MMM wouldn't have called even the better half so many times during their courtship days. She tried the number all day and well into early evening, but nobody picked up. But (Wo)MMM was damned if she would give up now – she set an alarm for 9am the next day and continued her quest. On the 17th call or so, a clearly annoyed health officer picked up the call, demanding to know who (Wo)MMM was and what she wanted. (Wo)MMM had perfected the response by now and told her the whole story. The health official responded

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

that unfortunately, she was the health official, not the sanitization inspector. (Wo)MMM didn't fall for the trick this time though – she knew that any response would only lead to another phone number to call, not constructive action. (Wo)MMM remained silent while the health official hopefully waited for her to take the bait. After a while, it was clear that (Wo)MMM was the winner in this stand-off; the health official sighed and asked her for the address so she would direct the sanitization inspector to pay the apartment a visit. And then, much like a genie from the Arabian Nights, the health official disappeared, never to be seen again. (Wo)MMM made a second phone call to the control center, who gave her the phone number of the sanitization inspector.

Phone number five led (Wo)MMM to the elusive sanitization inspector, who picked up the phone after a few tries. In Pavlovian reflex, (Wo)MMM automatically launched into her tale, when the sanitization inspector interrupted her to let her know that he had already paid the apartment a visit and arranged for sanitization. However, he quickly added that the rigorous sanitization efforts that were undertaken a few months earlier had now been phased out – the unspoken words hinted that (Wo)MMM ought to be glad that it was done even the one time. (Wo)MMM was left rather surprised that the authorities seemed to have relaxed vigilance over the pandemic given that cases are on a rise in the city.

With the authorities dis-

playing lukewarm enthusiasm, (Wo)MMM is now getting in touch with a private sanitization company to help – however, you can't help but wonder how folks who cannot afford such services will fare.

Electioneering in the time of covid

The Woman from Madras Musings recently came across a campaign march. A sea of flags fluttered in the wind, held proudly aloft by party cadre as they marched to the tune of the party's campaign song. The leader was seated in a car, smiling and waving at the public as he passed them by. He wasn't wearing a mask, presumably because it would have cramped his smile. On reflection, (Wo)MMM felt that perhaps this could be condoned, given that he was sufficiently distanced from the rest of the marching troupe, isolated as he was in his car; but she did wonder as to why he didn't choose to follow protocols and lead by example.

The marchers were another story. Only some wore masks and, with no room for social distancing in an on-road campaign, they marched shoulder to shoulder. Some sang along to the music in a manner that would have made any primary class music teacher proud – they didn't shy away from opening their mouths wide and singing full-throated.

It has been reported that parties campaigning for the upcoming election have been issued clear directives to follow covid norms. (Wo)MMM wonders why they haven't been taken seriously; or indeed, what is stopping the health authorities from enforcing them. You would think that any party that wants to lead the state would be aware of the fact that they would be taking over administrative responsibilities during a pandemic.

Moon for a vote

The Woman from Madras Musings came across an independent candidate from Madurai who quite literally promises voters the moon – he is offering voters a 100-day trip to the moon if he wins. It doesn't stop there – he also promises homemakers a robot to automate housework, a mini-helicopter for every household and a 300-foot artificial iceberg to keep his constituency cool, among other things. According to the candidate's affidavit, he reportedly has Rs. 10,000 cash in hand and around Rs. 2,000 in the bank.

It turns out that his manifesto is a campaign to caution voters against falling for tall election promises. (Wo)MMM finds the whole thing rather clever – his campaign turned viral quite quickly. The election symbol that he chose is, of course, a dustbin.

–(Wo)MMM

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Maintenance of Marina Beach

I am a senior citizen who has been going for walks on the Marina beach for almost 30 years now. I read your article on Marina Beach in the latest edition of *Madras Musings*. In spite of putting up good facilities, they are not maintained properly. While the public is mainly responsible for littering the beach, the staff assigned also do not do their job. I wonder if any official of the Greater Chennai Corporation ever visits the facilities. About two years back, they provided First Aid Kiosks where a doctor was supposed to be available to take care of any emergency. Now, these are kept closed and look shabby. They also provided drinking water facilities which are abandoned now. The taps have been removed and the sink is broken. The few available toilets are open only after 6am, whereas many people like me start walking at 5am in order to get a parking spot and avoid crowds. Let us hope that

the concerned authorities take corrective action so that we enjoy the facilities provided at the beach.

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Death is a great leveler

I remember the 1957 General Elections in the Madras South constituency discussed by Karthik Bhatt (*Madras Musings*, March 16-31, 2021) in which T.T. Krishnamachari won handsomely, polling with over 80,000 votes. H.D. Rajah came a poor third with hardly 25,000 votes. But posthumously, I would say, H.D. Rajah nearly caught up. If there is a TTK Road in Alwarpet, there is an H.D. Rajah Street in nearby Teynampet (off Eldams Road). Death is indeed a great leveler.

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COVID19 Vaccination – Public Health Centre Style

This is in response to the articles on the vaccination drive, by the Special Correspondent and by Mr. Rajagopalan Venkataramanan. I faced a lot of pressure from friends and well-wishers to take the vaccine. There were a few stories afloat regarding the malfunctioning of the Co-WIN app, but I downloaded it earnestly. However, the required OTP never arrived. The ArogyaSetu app had a page for vaccination which was much better than the Co-WIN app. I tried to fix an appointment but could not get at the date, though I could see the various UPHC based on the pin code. Finally, I went to the nearest UPHC to get the details, but the staff were ill-informed and directed me to the COVID19 recovering unit which was in the process of being closed. I then went to the GCC Zonal office and the health section identified Padi Manjakuppam as the vaccination centre. I stepped in to find a few patients waiting after the shot and it was totally free. The staff said to come before 2 pm anyway.

I learnt that another UPHC near Chennai Public School was also good, so the next morning I went there with my wife. Before starting, I decided to try registering through the ArogyaSetu app. And lo! When I touched the blank window, the dates showed up and I registered. When I went to the UPHC, there was a sizeable crowd of around 10 to 15 people. Since it was an online registration, we had a green channel and in a span of 10 minutes, we were vaccinated. After a BP check, the staff ascertained that we had our breakfast and asked us to wait for 30 minutes. In the meantime, we informed the admin staff that we got vaccinated showing our online ref, which took just 10 minutes. There were no hassles – why can't people visit the nearest UPHC!

As a good Samaritan, I shared my experience with the parents of my daughter's friend, who were frantically trying to get registered in a private hospital. They followed my advice and were happily vaccinated. Let MM readers know and spread this for the benefit of many Chennaites.

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Will the Vax Shield me?

We Indians love controversies. These controversies help keep us in good cheer and spirits helping take our minds off our mundane and often dull existence.

Now the Corona Virus has provided us with a controversy of a new variety. The two available vaccines, Covaxin and Covishield have had their benefits and risks discussed threadbare. Thanks to Whatsapp this topic is being discussed in almost every household, pushing even the elections to the background.

It was reported that from mid January when vaccination started, that the response from healthcare workers was poor. There was a certain reluctance in taking the vaccine. This was in large measure due to the fact that the Phase III trial data of Covaxin and that of the bridging study in India of Covishield was never made available in the public domain. There were reports of vaccines being wasted as vials that had been opened did not have the full number of patients to be given to.

When the vaccine was opened to those above the age of 60 and for those between 45-60 with co morbidities the response improved but here too with a twist. Those between the ages of 45-60 who went to get vaccines were asked if they had any of the comorbidities listed to make them eligible for the vaccine. Normally not having a co morbidity would be a good thing but in this case it makes you ineligible for vaccination at the moment. So either the patients spun a yarn about a comorbidity or the hospital simply filled in one of the listed conditions so as to give them the vaccine. This led to the

Whatsapp rumor that if you put in a fake comorbidity your medical record would be updated affecting your eligibility for health insurance.

The attitude of the Government is baffling. There are a 130 crore people waiting to get vaccinated. Even if we leave out the under 18 for now at least 80-100 crore people would need the vaccine. To date just 4.5 crore people have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Why not simply open up vaccination for all?

One theory why Government is reluctant to do this relates to the large number of Covid vaccines India has exported. Until last week 5.84 crore doses of mainly the Covishield vaccine had been exported by India to over 70 countries around the world and if vaccination is opened up and there is a shortage of vaccines the Government would be blamed.

The latest issue is the non availability of Covishield vaccines in most hospitals in our State. On further inquiry we are told that the doses of Covishield have been kept in reserve to give the 2nd dose for those who got that vaccine as their 1st dose. So as of now only Covaxin is being pushed at almost all centres to persons getting their first dose.

We Indians are a class conscious society. Now a new class distinction has been added. Are you a Vax or a Shield person is the question that is often asked.

The larger question though is whether Vax or Shield, will the vac shield me?

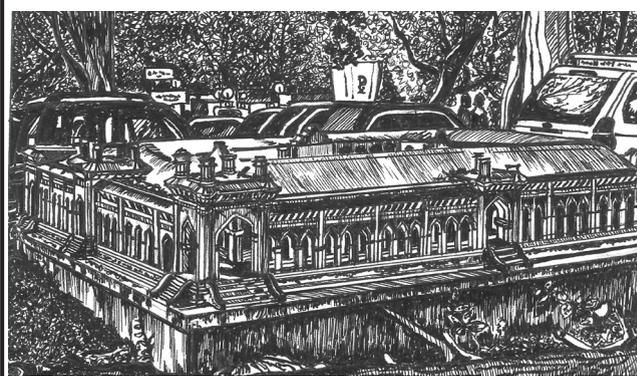
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Memories are for ever and can be sweet

As a person of Indian Origin born in 1941, I left India for good in 1966. Memories linger, however, of Chennai, Mylapore and other parts of India in the 60s. Today, I live by two media sites, *Live History* and *Madras Musings*. Chennai's cricket scenes from the late 50s and 60s are vivid – I recall MCC, MRC, YMCA, BRC, Jolly Rovers, Gandhi Nagar CC and so many others. Who can forget S.V.S. Mani, V.V. Kumar, Kirpal Singh, Milkha Singh, Venkat Raghavan, the flamboyant P.K. Belliappa and the evergreen "Indian Bank Mani", without whom no test match in Chennai was worth watching? I also remember the Kapaleeswarar temple and tank surrounded by coconut trees. In the end, nothing changes except change itself. To look back on these memories is like looking into the lenses of a frolicking "bioscope" man. Mr. Muthiah was indeed that bioscope man

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• Pavithra's Perspective



The Moore Market

I was six years old, when the Moore Market burned down.

The tragedy didn't faze me, I must admit, chiefly because I wasn't aware of it when it happened (in fact, I wasn't even in the country). But relocation to Chennai meant that I found the place mentioned more than once in random conversations, movies and Thamizh serial stories as a sort of magic kingdom (rising, with a rather puzzling, but nevertheless magnificent Arabian outline against the Madras skyline) where you could acquire anything from ceiling fans to second-hand books probably lost in the 15th century. The Arabian outline made sense years later, of course, designed at it was in the Indo-Saracenic style by R E Ellis and finished in 1900. I bemoaned the fact that I could never visit this splendid cavern of forgotten treasures, for no matter how much I read and heard, it was nothing, I knew, compared to the real thing.

And then, years later, I did stumble upon it – or rather, a miniature model version of it, amidst cars, beedi-chewing pedestrians, crushed plastic bottles, two-wheelers and aeons of neglect – in the parking lot of the Chennai Suburban Railway Terminus. I stared at this monument to lost glory, still beautiful, still retaining its charm with its tiny steps, delicate arches and corridors, all inspiring me with a deep desire to attain the dimensions of a Lilliputian.

I couldn't, of course, but I could do something else: record it as a miniature. Terrified as I was that the model too, might be destroyed, I raced to finish it while it still stood, crumbling corners notwithstanding. It was one of the first miniatures I did and is by far, my favourite.

Description: 3.5" by 5" approximately
Medium: Black and White Micron Pens; 0.20mm and 0.35mm.

From Water Works to the Wayside

It has remained by the wayside for years and passers-by hardly glance at it. I too have driven down Cathedral Road so many times and yet never noticed it earlier. It was only when the lockdown was imposed and walking for exercise became a part of daily routine that I first took the time to investigate as to what it was. For the record, this a solid casting that is firmly grouted to the footpath outside *Karunai Kudil*, the commercial complex built by the church just next to the Bishop's House and St George's Cathedral. The top portions of this object had clearly been taken away at some time but what is left of it is big enough.

In the dark you may be excused for assuming it to be a crouching hound or pig.

I guessed it had something to do with our water supply for it resembled fluid valves I had seen in industrial establishments. Closer inspection revealed some letters inscribed around the gland of the valve but try as I might, I could not read any of it – no matter whether I went to decipher them in the morning or the evening.

Clearly, I had reached that age when stooping low and trying to make out rusted lettering was beyond me. I needed help from younger people. This was when three young lawyers – Kavita Vijay, Ashtawadh Balan and Nidhi Bhaiyya came to my rescue. They promised to get back soon and sure enough, they did. The letters read Glenfield British Patent 405385. We had got somewhere though it was clearly not enough.

A casual search for Glenfield on the internet did not reveal much. This was a company based in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland and in its time an engineering major. It is no longer in operation, at least not in the business of manufacturing water valves. Founded in 1865 as Glenfield Iron Co, it was initially running a foundry and making castings, the owner being a Thomas Kennedy. A sister concern, the Kennedys Patent



The Glenfield valve on Cathedral Road.

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

– SRIRAM V

Water Meter Co, operated from the same site. This was even older, founded as it was in 1852. The two plants were situated on a site spanning eleven acres and employed around 80 or 90 people. In 1899, the two merged and became Glenfield and Kennedy Limited. Business then was booming with Thomas Kennedy Jr, nephew of the founder taking the company to great heights.

One of the reasons for the success was the opening of branches at several parts of the British empire. This was when most cities in the colonies, and even those in Great Britain were investing in water works for piped supply. Glenfield and Kennedy began receiving a number of export orders for their valves. It was evident that one of those pertained to the supply of valves to Madras, and one out of the lot supplied had made its way to Cathedral Road where it still remained, though defunct. I thought I had reached a dead end with that.

But there is a God who watches over researchers and sure enough that divine personage had not been idle. Tucked away in a cupboard at home was the Golden Jubilee Souvenir of the Kilpauk Water Works (1964) and I happened to be reading it for my forthcoming book on Madras. Suddenly an advertisement

for Glenfield-Burn sluice valves for water works purposes jumped out. The page adjoining it had an article by K.K. Bhattacharyya of Glenfield & Kennedy Limited, Calcutta (oh and how many fond memories that brought back, especially the address – Fairlie House, 4 Fairlie Place). The heading of the article – *Our Association with Madras Water Works Since 1885* – told me that I had struck gold (at least what people like me think of as gold).

The company was no stranger to Madras. As early as in 1885, it had supplied a 42" worm gear-operated sluice valve that controlled the water supply from the shaft (a masonry bowl in Kilpauk that stored water from Red Hills) to the city. This was its first order from the city. "With the completion of the water works, the pumping mains and the distribution system, a series of valves has gone in," continues the article. It lists a bewildering variety – 1-24" spur gear-operated sluice valve controlling main no 1 to North Madras, 1-36" rising spindle type headstock-operated sluice valve on an old pumping main now controlling city mains no 1 and 3, 1-24" ordinary cap type sluice valve controlling main no 3 from the shaft ... and so on. I was entering some unknown territory here. Much of what was listed in 1964 may have now been discarded or may be not. Chennai, and especially its municipal departments have a tendency to cling on to old stuff for long and then dump them just when they need to publicise their heritage.

Though I was thrilled that Glenfield and Kennedy had been associated with Chennai's water supply for 80 years in 1964, I was none the wiser about 'my' valve, the one on Cathedral Road. What variety was it? Could it be one of the "several other 14", 30" and 36" size valves of different operation" that were used "in the city's water supply system up to 1914, costing Rs 45,516" There were besides others – electrically and hydraulically operated valves, control valves and venturi meters as well that the company listed in its supply to Madras.

It was back to the internet but now with more information. This time I chanced upon Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, one of those depressing sites that tell you all about how glorious British industry was till the Americans, the Germans, the Japanese, the Taiwanese and the Koreans came along, with of course the Chinese. One of the photographs featured was of the Glenfield Recoil Valve, for difficult reflux conditions (clearly reflux was not something exclusive to digestion, water works also had them).

From a visual point of view, the valve on Cathedral Road

Miyawaki forests to increase green cover in city

In November 2019, there was a 123,000 square feet area in Kotturpuram, with garbage dumped to a depth of four feet. Next year, the dumpsite transformed into a mini forest with 2,000 native plants, volunteers' efforts and 15 lakhs funded by the Greater Chennai Corporation. The incessant debris was cleared and replaced with topsoil that was obtained from restoring lakes. Thus sprang the first Miyawaki forest in Madras.

The success of the first Miyawaki experiment in Kotturpuram sparked off the creation of other urban forests in the city. Presently, there are 30 Miyawaki forests with a total of 60,000 saplings in areas including Valasaravakkam, Sholinganallur and Mugalivakkam. NGOs called Trees Trust and Thuvakkam came on board for the completion of these Miyawaki projects.

In 2019, Care Earth Trust, an NGO that takes up environmental restoration activities in the city, conducted a study on the green cover of Madras for GCC. They found that the tree cover had to be increased in the city. The NGO recommended that at least 2 lakh trees had to be planted every year (that is, one million trees in the next five years). The Union Ministry of Forests, Environment and Climate Change has also recommended 33 per cent green cover in Madras. Currently, the city has 19 per cent. To increase the

seems closest to the recoil variety. But the patent number, namely 405385 seemed to be of an earlier vintage for a GB Patent No 405385A, awarded to the same company for a valve that eliminated air locks in water mains, dated to 1932. Which means 405385 must have been older. It was Meenakshisundaram Natarajan, who is a walking encyclopaedia on Madras water works history that filled me in – it is an air release valve, in keeping with the patent number. The Cathedral waterline he informs was main no 5.

The valve on Cathedral Road must be nearing 90 years and more if it predates 1932. I hope the CMWSSB takes care of it



A view of the mini-forest raised along the Canal Bank Road in Kotturpuram.

number of trees and plants in the city, the Miyawaki method was suggested.

Miyawaki forests will improve the area's micro-climate, but may not impact the climate of the entire city, says Dr. Balaji Srinivasagopalan, former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. The tree roots will also hold the soil together and facilitate rainwater seepage. Additionally, urban forests are supposed to reduce the heat island effect. "Heat reflected by glass and concrete is common in a city like Madras, especially due to a lot of IT parks and other glass buildings. These heat waves constitute the heat island effect," explains the former forest conservator.

While talking about the nature of Miyawaki forests, he says

that they are just emulations of natural forests. "Natural forests take many hundreds of years to emerge. Just 30 centimeters of topsoil takes 200 years to develop. But Miyawaki forests can come into fruition within 3 to 4 years," he adds.

The relatively fast growth rate of Miyawaki forests can be attributed to the practice of planting native species very close to each other. For instance, in the Kotturpuram Miyawaki forest, local species like peepal, jackfruit, neem, hibiscus, banana and papaya saplings were planted at a distance of one metre from each

other. "When you plant trees close to each other, they tend to grow taller. If you space them in a wider area, then they will start branching out. That is, they will grow horizontally also," explains Dr. Balaji. Consequently, the green density of Miyawaki forests is typically thirty times greater than usual and the growth ten times faster. Within a year of its inception, the Kotturpuram urban forest has yielded banana fruits, hibiscus flowers, papaya and drumstick pods, with 70 jackfruit trees, 40 tamarind trees and 50 neem trees competing for space, reported *The Hindu* in February 2021.

In half a year, locals will be permitted to enter the Kotturpuram Miyawaki forest for walking and other activities. GCC

intends to create 1,000 such small forests in different parts of the city with the help of open or reserved areas in future.

The Miyawaki method of afforestation was founded by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki in 1970. He proposed planting multiple layers of native plants to grow a forest – a canopy layer, tree layer, sub-tree layer and shrub layer. The mini-forests of Chennai follow the same technique.

Apart from the rapid growth of flora, Miyawaki forests have other advantages which outweigh the relatively high expenditure and effort they consume during the first two years – they each grow into a self-sustaining ecosystem that supports various animals, birds and insects. Moreover, these forests are not burdened by weed growth – since the plants are planted close to each other there is no space for unwanted pests to sprout. This further strengthens the theory of the Miyawaki method: 'Zero management is the best management.'

Dr. Balaji shares how Miyawaki forests can be created: "A mini-forest can even be started in 10 to 20 meters width too. Accordingly, we have to choose native plants for 4 to 5 layers. It takes a lot of planning. You plant a dominant tree in the centre which needs sunlight, and plant a tree close by that can survive in the shade. Then shrubs, climbers and herbs. The soil has to be dug up and organic manure and good soil must be added." The Kotturpuram urban forest used

(Continued on page 7)

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Quizzin' with Ram'nan

Quizzmaster V.V. Ramanan's first 10 questions are on current affairs and the next 10 are on the Oscars.

- Which artiste recently became the most-decorated woman in Grammy Awards history with her 28th win?
 - Who recently became the first Indian woman cricketer, and the second in the world, to notch up 10,000 international runs?
 - Which famous businesswoman with Chennai roots, a former head of a global food giant, is publishing her memoir *My Life in Full: Work, Family and Our Future*?
 - Bhavani Devi has become the first Indian woman from her sport to make it to the Olympics. Which discipline does she represent?
 - The country's first centralised air-conditioned railway terminal is to come up in which south Indian city?
 - Who has shared the National Award for Best Actor with Dhansh (Asuran)?
 - Name the book and author that have been chosen for the Sahitya Akademi Puraskar for 2020?
 - French businessman Andre Aboune recently paid \$62 million for the painting *The Journey of Humanity* by British artist Sacha Jafri. What is the claim to fame of the artwork?
 - In the recent UN World Happiness Report 2021, India was ranked 139 out of 149 countries. Which Nordic nation topped the list, for the fourth consecutive year, ahead of Iceland and Denmark?
 - Twitter founder Jack Dorsey's first ever tweet was sold recently for the equivalent of \$2.9m as an NFT. What is NFT and what was the tweet?
- ***
- Though popularly called the Oscars, what is the official name of the award?
 - What rare distinction is shared by *It Happened One Night* (1934), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)?
 - Who was the first Indian to receive an Oscar and for which film?
 - Winning once is a big achievement but which global legend is the record-holder for most awards won with 22 Oscars?
 - Though Charlie Chaplin's *Limelight* was released in 1952, it got an Oscar 20 years later for 'Best Original Dramatic Score'. Why?
 - In 2003, which flick won all the 11 categories for which it was nominated?
 - India has sent entries since the 1950s to compete for Best International Feature Film honours. However, only three films have been nominated. The first was *Mother India*. Name the other two.
 - Name the two people who have not only won Oscars but also Nobel prizes?
 - Katharine Hepburn has the most Best Actress awards with four statuettes. Which artiste won an Oscar for playing Katharine Hepburn?
 - The 2021 Oscars nominees were announced recently. Which Indian was a co-announcer and which movie got the most nods?

(Answers on page 8)

The forgotten pages – Vavilla Press

The quaint red building at Ramanujam Street in Old Washermanpet is a rarity. Hundreds of vehicles pass through the street, paying little attention to the Indo-Saracenic beauty almost clouded by the dust rising from traffic. To the eyes of a trained heritage enthusiast however, the little red building is like a bright flag waving for attention, tempting one to drop in and explore its mysteries. The plaque outside reads "Vavilla Press-1856" and I can't help but race in. The little red building shines within, lit by a couple of tube lights that flicker. Rows of books stacked in antique wooden shelves greet me. A lone man sits at the centre table reading a newspaper. He pauses to welcome me inside, introducing himself as Alladi Srinivasamurthy.

The name Alladi immediately strikes a chord. The most famed of the Alladis was the former Advocate General Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer. When I ask if he is related to the great man, he replies in the affirmative. "A distant relative", he says. He begins talking about the journey of the Alladi and Vavilla families as they made their way to Chennai from Andhra Pradesh. His fascinating narration pulls me into a time warp.

Vavilla is a tiny hamlet near Nellore in erstwhile Madras Presidency. Ramaswamy Sastrulu left Vavilla in search of greener pastures. He arrived in Madras and settled in Tondiarpet with his family. He first tried his hand at the business of printing in 1854. By 1856, he had saved enough to establish his own press in Tondiarpet and named it "Vavilla Press". The area comprised two and a half grounds. A striking Indo-Saracenic building rose in its place, where books were printed in English, Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu.

Ramaswamy Sastrulu sparked a movement in printing and his son Vavilla Venkateswara Sastrulu upped the ante. With three printing machines, two typesetting machines, ten hand composing

machines, as well as paper and board cutting machines, Vavilla saw tremendous growth under him. For someone who had lost his father at the young age of seven, Venkateswara was remarkably industrious, hard-working and sincere in carrying forward his father's dream. On completing his graduation, he plunged into his father's profession almost immediately. A fresher himself, Venkateswara could gauge the growing need to disperse knowledge. He had chosen his target audience already – the newly educated society that was thirsty to read. He planned to print grammar texts, literature and poetry that would be in continuous demand.

Vavilla printed epics like the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita*, as well as their commentaries; it also brought out a Tamil translation *Adi Shankara's Soundarya Lahari*. Venkateswara also meticulously published a variety of ancient Sangam Tamil grammar texts



Alladi Srinivasamurthy with his works on display.

books with equal conviction. Interestingly, he also published *Vinodamanjari*, a book outlining a dialogue between the two sects. In the 1920s, a direct sales outlet for Vavilla books was established at 292, Esplanade

V.V. Sastrulu was well known in the freedom fighters' circle. He was a close ally of Tilak, Lajpat Rai, C.R. Das, Satyamurti, Prakasam and Rajagopalachari.

In the 1920s, when the Dravidian movement took root in

V.V. Sastrulu also published *Balabodhivilakkannam* – a concise grammar text for children, written by Visakaperumal Iyer in 1928.

A great philanthropist of those times, V.V. Sastrulu was a close friend and benefactor of V.O. Chidambaranar. VOC helped V.V. Sastrulu in translating and publishing James Allen's *From Poverty to Power*, written in 1901. VOC titled the Tamil translation *Valimaikku Margam*. In the preface of the translation, VOC mentions that he has used Tamil words like *Ekdu* he had coined in the book. He goes on to mention that V.V. Sastrulu, son of Vavilla Venkateswara Sastrulu was the friend of Guru Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and that he has often extended monetary support to VOC. He thanks him profusely for the same in the book published in 1930.

As he was interested in bringing foreign literary works to Tamil, V.V. Sastrulu also brought out translations of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Lilavathi* and the English novel *Griselda*. A paralytic stroke left V.V. Sastrulu confined to bed in 1942. Yet, he continued to run the Press from his home. Following his death on 09.02.1956, his sister Saradamba's sons took over managing the Press. However, with cut-throat competition in the industry, Vavilla's Tamil publications began to steadily decline from the 1960s. The Esplanade office was shut down. Vavilla's Telugu books continued to bring in good business and a new sale outlet was established in Hyderabad in 1990. The Press machinery were sold in 1994. Those who worked for decades in Vavilla lost their jobs.

The management is still in touch with nonagenarian Madhavaram Subbarayalu, who joined Vavilla Press as a binder when he was barely 14 years old. Saradamba's grandson Alladi Srinivasamurthy who now manages Vavilla, says that the Press is paying a pension of Rs.1,000 per month to Subbarayalu. The Press is now being managed

(Continued on page 8)

by Nivedita Louis

such as the *Tholkappiyam* with Ilampooranar's commentary, *Puraporul Venbamalai* written by Aiyannarithanar, *Vetriverkai* poetry and it's commentary by Adhivceeraramapandiyar, *Thirumuraithirattu*, *Thiruthondar Venba* poetry and it's commentary, *Asarakovai* by Veruvayin Mulliyar, *Abhirami Antadi* and it's commentary by Abhirami Bhatta, Sanmuga Kavirayar's *Bharata Vachanam*, *Senthan Divakaram* by Divakaranar, *Tirupadal Thirattu* by Thayumanava Swamigal, *Yayathi* and *Thandalaiyar Satakam* by Padikkasu Pulavar. Venkateswara constantly explored old texts and books that he could publish and republish. He took the help of Thirunavukkarasu Mudaliyar, who worked in the 1920s as Tamil professor in Pachaiyappas College, to assimilate and compile these monumental works.

Venkateswara was intent in publishing any work that was introduced to him as beneficial to the society. Tamil Bhakti literature owes its growth in 20th Century to Vavilla. Ramalinga Swamy's *Manumuraikandavasagam*, Narayana Bharathi's *Govinda Satakam*, *Thiruvenkata Satakam* and Gurupada Dasar's *Kumaresa Satakam* were published by Vavilla Press. Venkateswara Sastrulu published both Saivite and Vaishnavite

the state and the Justice Party came to power, he constituted a high level committee to inspect and publish books. This Committee comprised eminent people like Rao Sahib Krishnaswamy Iyengar, C.S. Srinivasachari, V.O. Chidambaranar, T.P. Meenakshisundaram, Mani Thirunavukkarasu Mudaliar and P.T. Sankaranarayana Pillai. In the publisher's note printed in Vavilla books, it is mentioned that this "intellectual committee would strive to identify best books, edit them meticulously and bring them to print. These books are not for the Tamils alone, and the Dravidians should make use of them. Those Tamil people well versed in English should be aware of world's best fiction, science, politics, economics, history, philosophy and must excel in it."

V.V. Sastrulu established the Andhra Chamber of Commerce in 1942. He was also a member of Pachaiyappas Trust, Suguna Vilasa Sabha, Ranade Library, Chennai Port Trust, Madras Mahajana Sabha, Film Censor Board, Masonic Lodge and a Senate Member of both Madras and Annamalai Universities. He was also the publisher of the English monthly magazine *Federated India*, Telugu monthly magazine *Trilinga* and the childrens' monthly magazine *Balavinodini*. *Balavinodini* was edited by Bharathiyar's close aide and namesake, the former *Swadesamitran* editor Varakavi A. Subramaniya Barathi.



The exterior of the Vavilla Press.

Leading the Tamil Nadu charge in Indian Cricket

The 2020-21 cricket season has augured well for Tamil Nadu cricket, especially in the matter of contributing to India's success on the world stage. Perhaps for the first time in the state's history as many as three TN cricketers spectacularly propelled India to series victories in Australia and at home. The extraordinary exploits of off spinner R. Ashwin have for instance been of exceptional significance for the state's knowledgeable sportslovers who have waited patiently for heroes to celebrate as their own. That he is the second

he seemed to lack a follow through. On the asset side of the balance sheet, he kept unfurling a whole new bag of tricks unknown to many of his predecessors, and had loads of confidence and this uncanny ability to take wickets. I was intrigued, but not convinced of the quality of his bowling, tending to dismiss his unusual success rate to poor batting, spin-friendly wickets; and luck. And, I, like some of my contemporaries, waited for the coin to drop and for batsmen to unravel his bowling. It never happened.

That was aeons ago. Since then, Ashwin has evidently put in much thought and effort into

worst odds imaginable posed by Covid-19 protocols and a spate of injuries to key players. His exploits against England in the recent series have firmly established him as one of Indian cricket's greats and the number one spinner in the world.

And what a revelation has Washington Sundar been! If T. Natarajan, the left arm seam bowler has been living subaltern proof of the spread of cricket to the farthest corners of Tamil Nadu across social and economic strata, Sundar too has emerged as an unlikely star in



R. Ashwin. Picture courtesy: The Hindu.

(Continued on page 8)

● by V. Ramnarayan

fastest in the world to claim 400 wickets in Test match history is stuff of which fables are made. Add to that the fact that he has five Test centuries under his belt batting in the lower middle order, and he easily qualifies as the best achiever of all time the state's cricket has produced. In addition to his incisive bowling that spearheaded India's Test wins over Australia and England this season, he has also come of age as a genuine all rounder. Only half-fit, he played a never-say-die innings in partnership with the injured Hanuma Vihari to save the Sydney Test last year when all seemed lost. Here were two wounded soldiers whose heroism reminded old timers of some of the bravest deeds in Test history.

Back home for the England series, Ashwin made history once more by scoring a match winning 106 besides capturing eight wickets in the match to complete a rare all rounder's feat. And with 400-plus Test wickets in his bag, he promises to set bowling records few can equal or surpass.

* * *

When I first set my eyes on Ashwin the off spinner more than a decade ago, his run-up was awkward, his body was falling away in his delivery stride, he did not finish his action in the classic manner, his left leg did not stand erect, but seemed to buckle, and

his bowling as the considerable improvement in each of the foregoing aspects of his craft shows. Accused of trying too many variations, he has, instead of cutting down on variety, actually added a couple of new deliveries to the carrom ball, his first invention to take the cricket world by storm.

What he has done to convert raw talent into a weapon of opposition destruction has been the large increment in control and accuracy he has sweated to achieve. He studies and analyses each and every batsman and works out a tailor-made strategy for each of them. He sets elaborate traps sometimes, but his more straightforward ones work just as well. While he revels in dismissing the best batsmen, he must be the best polisher-off of the tail in the world.

Ashwin must be the most elegant no. 7, now no. 6, in the world, reminiscent sometimes of the iconic V.V.S. Laxman, and we came to count on him every time the side needed runs from him. He however tended to throw away his wicket, disappointing the team and fans by loose batting. We no longer even despaired of him, instead resigning ourselves to his cavalier ways of self destruction.

All that changed in Australia. His beautiful, controlled aggression as a bowler played a major role in India's incredible recovery from their humiliating defeat in the Adelaide pink ball Test. And his defiant half century to draw the Sydney Test from what seemed certain defeat was the icing on the cake for a team dogged by the

80 tonnes of compost, 18 tonnes of coir pith, 12 tonnes of cow dung and two tonnes of straw for organic manure, reported *The Hindu* in February 2021.

Though the Miyawaki method is a quicker way of creating forests, it has its own limitations. "It's not an alternative to normal plantations. It can only be developed where there are space constraints. Under normal circumstances regular plantations are the best," said Alby John Varghese, Greater Chennai Corporation's (GCC) Regional Deputy Commissioner (South) to *The News Minute*.

Further, not all environmental experts agree with the Miyawaki approach, particularly in congested urban locations. Shobha Menon, founder trustee of the NGO Nizhal is one of them. "Many people want to employ this method to create a forest in double-quick time. But that is not how nature works. We cannot undo the harm we have done [to the environment] immediately. We actually cannot create a forest; what is being done is planting trees and making an area wooded," she points out. "It will turn into a forest only when all the multi-various biodiverse interlinkages happen in the area. Deciding sensitively what and when to plant, what combination of trees, shrubs, climbers etc. is a complex business."

Shobha also feels that public awareness of the importance of nurturing and caring for green spaces is crucial and possibly more important than rapid growth techniques. "It is important to inculcate the

concept of caring for their green spaces in a continuous manner in the minds of people," she remarks. She speaks from experience – Nizhal aims at conserving green cover in Madras and has seen success with setting up a tree park in Kotturpuram in 2010, next to the area's MRTS campus, just 1.4 kilometers away from the Miyawaki forest.

Nizhal's advisor, Dr. T.D. Babu shares the shortcomings of the Miyawaki method. "In an area meant for 100 trees, if 1,000 trees are planted, they will reap lesser ecological benefits. The trees are incapable of growing to their full natural profile, spreading their branches. Miyawaki forests cannot effectively absorb carbon dioxide, because the surface area is lesser in Miyawaki forests when compared to traditional forests," he explains. This is a key point - an increase in carbon dioxide leads to increased temperatures and it is through photosynthesis that plants help cool down the area in their vicinity. The reduced leafy surface area also means lesser transpiration - the process by which plants release excess water vapour - and therefore, a weaker impact on rainfall rate.

Interestingly, Dr. Babu feels that the Miyawaki approach has only led to greater use of concrete than nurturing more green cover. "The Miyawaki method is shrinking the green canopy of Madras, growing the concrete jungle instead. That was what happened in Shenoy Nagar's Thiru vi Ka park of 8.8 acres. There was a large area of green canopy that has been converted into a metro station in 2017. The authorities claim

that they have compensated by planting more trees than those in Thiru vi ka park, by planting at the four corners using the Miyawaki method. One can observe the impact [of the Miyawaki method] before and after - today, it is just concrete", claims Dr. Babu. He feels that 100 or 200 trees could have been planted in the Kotturpuram Miyawaki forest instead of 2,000; that would have brought a greater cooling effect.

Dr. Balaji points out that Miyawaki forestry is just one of the methods to increase the urban tree cover in Madras. He suggests three other methods to increase the percentage of greenery in the city. "The first method is, we can find institutional lands such as offices, schools, factories or wherever there is enough space, and we can plant trees. The second method is, construction of more service roads in the city for planting trees on the sides with no hindrance. Most of the other roads have various wiring and piping networks underground. While doing repairs, the roads would be dug, and the roots of the nearby trees will be damaged. The service roads would provide an alternate location for trees to grow, without any underground obstructions. The third method is to mandate every house in Madras to grow 4 to 5 trees. Each house can grow useful trees like drumstick, banana or mango. At least they can have it in four corners of the house, even if most of the spaces are given to car parking. It will improve the green cover of the city on a micro level," he says.

Miyawaki forests to increase green cover in city

(Continued from page 5)

Leading the Tamil Nadu charge in Indian Cricket

(Continued from page 7)

the cricket firmament from a modest background, his first name a token of gratitude to Mr. Washington, a kindly mentor of his father who supported the talented boy's cricket right through the various stages of age-group cricket, I said 'unlikely' not because I doubted 'Washi's' ability but because of the rapidity of his ascent to international recognition thanks to his fearless brand of cricket. He has already played crucial parts in both saving and winning matches for India against Australia and England. While his off-spin bowling has served to expose the vulnerability of even top class batsmen like Steve Smith, Joe Root and Ben Stokes without ever looking dangerous in the manner



Washington Sundar. Picture courtesy: The Hindu.

of senior bowler Ashwin's off spin, his batting has already taken the cricket world by storm, with its left handed elegance, effortless shotmaking and sound defence, all marked by one quality that promises a long and distinguished career on the strength of his batting skills alone. Terribly unlucky

to miss his maiden Test century at Ahmedabad, Washington need not despair. We expect many centuries from him in future.

We have already sung the praises of T. Natarajan in these columns. His overnight elevation from net bowler to a key role as a swing and seam specialist in all three formats of cricket on the recent Australian tour has been the real fairytale of Tamil Nadu cricket. He did not figure in the Test matches at Chennai and Ahmedabad against England, but was back in the side in the T20 series which India won after a hard fought battle. Natarajan will surely find a place in the Indian team for the forthcoming world T20 championship.

Yet another Tamil Nadu contribution to India's recent successes has been the brilliant part played by national bowling coach B. Arun, a former Tamil Nadu and India all-rounder, Though Arun's specialisation lies in fast bowling, and he has largely been acknowledged as the man responsible for the remarkable consistency, improved pace and rigorous discipline of our pacemen from Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami to Bhuvnesh Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah, and his discovery and encouragement of talented youngsters like Mohammed Siraj, the spinners, too, give him credit for his valuable insights and inputs. Bharathi Arun is

indeed a vital link in the Indian bowling chain.

Tamil Nadu can validly take pride in the role its representatives have played in India's entry into the final of the World Test Championship. Closer home, will it be too much to expect a Ranji Trophy triumph, last accomplished by the state as far back as 1987-88?

Answers to Quiz

1. Beyonce, 2. Mithali Raj, 3. Indra Nooyi, 4. Fencing, 5. Bengaluru, 6. Manoj Bajpayee (Bhonsle), 7. 'Sellaatha Panam' by Imaiyam, 8. It is the world's biggest painting covering nearly 17,000 sq ft, 9. Finland, 10. Nonfungible token and the tweet 'just setting up my twttr' was first published on March 21, 2006.

11. 'Academy Award of Merit', 12. The only films to have received the 'Big Five' awards (Best Picture, Director, Actor, Actress, and Screenplay), 13. Bhanu Athaiya for *Gandhi*, 14. Walt Disney, 15. It was not released in Los Angeles County until 1972 and hence was not eligible for any Academy Awards until that time, 16. *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, 17. *Salaam Bombay!* and *Lagaan*, 18. George Bernard Shaw and Bob Dylan, 19. Cate Blanchett (Best Supporting Actress) in *The Aviator*, 20. Priyanka Chopra and *Mank* (10 nominations).

Vavilla Press – a forgotten one

(Continued from page 6)

by Srinivasamurthy and his brother.

Today, around 2,000 books sit silently in the shelves waiting for buyers. Footfalls barely trickle in these days, acknowledges Srinivasamurthy, a retired Madras High Court Advocate. The brothers are planning to send the Telugu books to Hyderabad and are considering vacating the sprawling premises. "What

happens to the rare books here?" I ask. "We are planning to assign a small space to establish a library in the name of V.V. Sastrulu or his father. The rare English book collection will be on display and open to public use. We would also need help and support from people", says Srinivasamurthy.

The Press that supported freedom fighters like VOC is awaiting a change. I run my fingers over the books, open

the old ones and feel the withered table top as I prepare to take my leave. Srinivasamurthy stands at the door and waves goodbye. I thought I could feel all those 2,000 books waving to me through the pink walls of their home as I rev up my car and speed away. My thoughts are full of Vavilla – a name that lives on in this city, carefully wrapped in a time capsule, tucked away in Old Washer-manpet.

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