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MADRAS MUSINGS

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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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ASI needs to urgently redefine itself

The recent collapse of Last House on Snob's Alley in Fort St. George has only exposed the outdated way of functioning of the Archaeological Survey of India. It would appear that this so-called custodian of ancient monuments is now functioning in a manner that is in contravention of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958, which mandates that the ASI 'administers and maintains' any ancient building under its purview. That the ASI, far from doing so, has only been neglecting structures such as the Last House is more than evident from the manner in which the building deteriorated in less than a decade. Certainly if this is any indication, it is high

time the ASI is given a new direction and a new definition for functioning, with better accountability.

As the adjoining box shows, the Last House on Snob's Alley, was until the 1990s, a seemingly healthy structure. Your editor, who has had occasion to repeatedly visit the place

● by The Editor

recalls when the entire area was free of vegetation. You could walk around the building and thereby gain access to the front walls of Fort St. George. And then, sometime in the last decade or so, the building began to show rapid signs of decay. It was denied even the

most basic maintenance and gradually it lost its balcony, and all of its windows and doors. As to what happened to these is a mystery. A mute witness to all this deprecation was the ASI's blue board, which if the organization is to be believed, is a charm that protects from all hazards the buildings and structures by the side of which it is placed. No other maintenance work is deemed necessary.

By January 2019, the building was clearly on its way out. An investigative feature by *DT Next* revealed that between 2014 and 2018 it had been sanctioned Rs 1.08 L (or around Rs 20,000 per year) for maintenance and that

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A smart Chennai

● by our Special Correspondent

The Smart Cities Mission launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) turned six years old in June this year. Chennai's smart city initiative is a year younger than its contemporaries but has launched multiple projects in the city. Unfortunately, the relevance of its work has come under question and rightfully so, according to some quarters. The bone of contention lies in the choice of projects launched by the Smart Cities Mission, which many feel ignore basic, underlying civic problems in favour of blue sky solutions. Take, for example, the Pedestrian Plaza at T-Nagar, which was reportedly built at an approx-

imate cost of Rs. 40 crores; key stretches of the locality were reportedly left inundated within an hour of the recent downpours in the city, pointing to the inefficiency of its drainage systems. Or consider the Rs. 24 lakh Namma Chennai selfie point on Marina Beach, a structure of little practical value that stands upon a key natural landmark in dire need of efficient waste management. More significantly, the Smart City Mission is conspicuously absent in times of public crisis; for instance, it has not played a consequential part in handling the covid pandemic nor has it contributed towards the prevention or alleviation of the recent floods in the city

- solutions that a layman can logically expect to be made easier with technology.

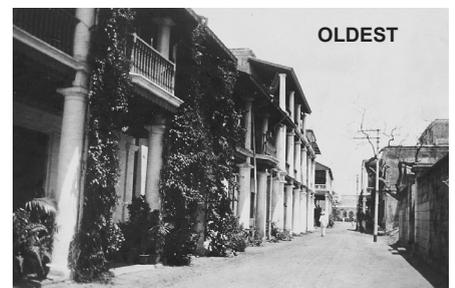
The Chennai Smart City website claims to have developed its vision for the city based on "a series of discussions with citizens, stakeholders & elected representatives overlaid on the detailed study of SWOT analysis of the city." However, a recent study by the NGO Information and Resource Centre for Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) has concluded that the city's smart projects bring little benefit to the urban poor. Quoting from the study, "Of the 37 completed projects in Chennai, only seven had a

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HERITAGE WATCH

The Decline and Fall of a Heritage Street

Nothing fills us with greater sadness than to present you with this visual record of how a heritage street has declined to ruin. Our Oldest is a 1919 photograph of St Thomas' Street in Fort St George – you see a long line of buildings on the



St. Thomas's Street, Madras, 1919, Unidentified Photographer, © Sarmaya Arts Foundation.

left, each fronted by a verandah, thereby indicating that the street retained its residential character of buildings even then. True they were all offices, but the structures remained.



Our Old is a sketch of the same street from 1945, done by Ismena Warren for Lt. Col. D.M. Reid's book, *The Story of Fort St George*. This as can be seen is a recreation of how the street may have been in 1760, but it is clearly based on how the structures were in 1945.

Incidentally, this is the first time we come across a reference to the street as *Snob's Alley*.



Our Recent, taken in 2015 shows the buildings on the left all without their porticos. But what is clear is that Last House on Snob's Alley (seen far left) is still standing, with its portico. The other photo, is a close up of the house itself as seen in 2015. This was the oldest residential structure standing in Fort St George.



Our New, taken two weeks ago shows Last House, reduced to rubble. Also to be noted is the forest of shrubbery that has grown all around, owing to complete lack of maintenance.



LAST HOUSE ON SNOB'S ALLEY

(Continued from page 1)

a Director of the ASI had declared that it could not be restored and recommended that it be removed from the list of protected monuments. Is that all that it takes for a building to be delisted? What about accountability for the years of neglect that brought it to a condition beyond restoration? And was it really beyond restoration? Who had scientifically done a study to declare this? What of the ASI's famed reputation in the past for painstaking restoration?

Unverified reports have it that the ASI was in the process of requesting funds for restoration of the place – once again there is no transparency about the veracity of such requests. These things take time said one official on social media – clearly so much of time that the building made things easy by collapsing in the meanwhile. The ASI can now close this file and go back to maintaining its head office in the Fort, which seems to be the only structure

that it is interested in. Just a few hundred metres away is Wellesely's House, also a 'protected monument' that is a collapsed ruin for over twenty years. How much longer does the ASI need to push files to get funds for restoration?

News reports of the collapse of Last House immediately brought forth the neo-nationalists who asked about the necessity of protecting a colonial edifice 'when so many temples are in ruins.' What is forgotten is that someone in their wisdom had made this a protected monument years ago and therefore it was the ASI's duty to protect it. And an organization that today at the whim of a Director can ask for a building to be delisted can tomorrow do the same for any temple as well.

It is high time the Government of India transformed the ASI from a paper-pushing department to a dynamic entity that really fulfils its mandate. Else we will have precious little to show by way of our heritage – colonial or otherwise.

A SMART CHENNAI

(Continued from page 1)

direct impact on the vulnerable sections of society. In terms of funds, of the Rs. 184.2 crore spent, only Rs. 3.9 crore was for the benefit of the poor and only Rs. 77 lakh was directly spent for low-income settlements." The study gave the example of Kannagi Nagar to illustrate its point – an art village was set up in the locality under the aegis of Smart City and the GCC, but little was done to address the lack of access to basic amenities such as anganwadi centres or the quality of water available in the area.

The problem is that there seems to be little clarity on what a smart solution brings to the table that isn't already within the purview of local administrative bodies. The ambiguity of the Smart Cities Mission is perhaps best captured by its own words – its stated objective is to "promote sustainable and inclusive cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of 'Smart' Solutions." These are ideals that can potentially fit almost any civic department serving the city. And so, when significant parts of T-Nagar find themselves flooded from the rains,

who should the public hold accountable? The GCC which has a team handling storm water drainage or the Smart City team which has taken on the mission of 'connecting missing links in storm water drains?' Transparency into Smart City's functioning and its measurable goals would have helped concretise its roles and responsibilities; unfortunately, there's little available by way of project analysis and case studies pertaining to the city. As it stands, a 'smart' project has largely come to evoke broad themes of innovation and technology but little understanding of practical impact.

The fact is that the core idea of a 'smart city' is a powerful one – it is undeniable that judicious use of technology in public administration can make a big difference to the lives of people living in the city. Smart City's own Namma Chennai app is a great example; it simplifies the process of lodging a complaint and most citizens report speedy resolutions to problems reported through the app. It is worthwhile to note that it works precisely because it is a decentralised solution that allows the relevant administrative bodies to respond more easily to public grievances. This is what Chennai needs

The New Custodians of Heritage

The Man from Madras Musings believes strongly in the protection of culture and heritage. He believes that there is only so much of give and take that can exist, beyond which there is a necessity to draw the line. But in all of this he is of the view that basic courtesies can exist – this is something that extremists on both sides of the divide, namely the rabid right and the loony left can do well to cultivate. In MMM's view there is very little to choose between either of these – they are all peddlers of intolerance in one form or the other.

This was more than forcibly brought to MMM's mind when he, and a camera crew of two, went to a historic shrine for some documentation. Now, MMM, whatever else may be his faults, is a stickler for due process of the law. Being well aware that video documentation of such precincts is a sensitive subject, he had made it a point to apply for permission from the trustee of the place and that had taken around six months to fructify into an assent. He then had to await the convenience of the administrative officer of the premises, who took time to identify a suitable date. But finally, it was all done – a letter from MMM had been accepted, taken on record, and permission granted. And so, MMM and camera crew went to the place.

Mind you, MMM is a born pessimist and he all along had this gut feel that something would go wrong. This sentiment was proved more than correct within a few minutes of setting up of the camera. The recording had not even begun when two toughies landed up and demanded to know what MMM and team were doing. To this MMM replied that a recording was in progress for which permission had already been taken. This was clearly not to the liking of the duo, one of whom immediately shouted that he had seen the crew taking pics of the sanctum. Since the shoot had not even begun and because MMM had already given an undertaking that sanctum was not part of the coverage, he tried explaining this. But by then quite a crowd had collected, all of whom were of

more of – a system that builds greater ease of work, transparency and accountability for local executive bodies. After all, not only are they the ones who keep the city running, but they are also our first line of defence against a crisis, as recent events have shown. And what better tool to create such a system with than technology? Perhaps the Smart Cities Mission should consider re-assessing the role it plays – one suspects that it has the potential to do greater good as a facilitator of local administration than as an executor.

the view that MMM and team had come to steal the place of some antique.

It was then that it occurred to MMM that he had not asked the two men as to what was their locus standi at the place. He did so and was told that they were custodians of the premises and that any shoots of this kind needed their permission. What then of the official sanction that MMM had received, asked MMM. To this the response was that they did not believe that MMM had obtained any permission. By this time the crowd was getting restive and MMM decided that it was best that he called the administrative officer over. Fortunately for him, that functionary not only answered the phone but asked for MMM and the two custodians of heritage to go over to the office.

When MMM announced this the two were clearly not happy but decided to tag along, the crowd following, an elderly man in the group being particularly vociferous that this was a law-and-order matter. It was a wonder that no kangaroo court had been set up and judgement of lynching passed by then. On entering the administrative officer's room, that functionary asked the two as to who they were. MMM at this point could

that the Last House on Snob's Alley had reached its end – in short, MMM had seen the last of it. It was enough to sink the most optimistic of heritage enthusiasts.

It was while MMM was deep in his grey thoughts that the telephone rang. TrueCaller revealed that it was a TV journalist. MMM answered most reluctantly, the last thing he wanted to do was to speak to a crew that had no idea as to what it was that was being covered. But it was his turn to be stunned – the lady at the other end was very well informed and spoke knowledgeably about several monuments inside Fort St George. She wanted to record MMM speaking about each of these places she said and so could she please fix a time and place for the same. MMM perked up immediately. This was clearly a new beginning. Here was this informed source wanting to do a serious study of the monuments and it was clearly MMM's duty to help.

But first MMM, and this is where MMM, in MMM's opinion, made his first error, wanted to know as to how the lady at the other end had such an exhaustive list of buildings in Fort St George. From a list of protected monuments that the ASI releases periodically was the answer. MMM was most impressed. And then he clearly made what in retrospect was a blunder – Why did the lady want MMM to record his 'bytes' on each of these buildings he asked. And then with a glimmer of hope he asked if the Government was finally taking steps to now restore each of these places.

No, came the answer. That was not the case. Was not MMM aware of a practice in most media houses of arranging for obituaries and tributes for well-known persons long before they actually die? MMM said he was. Well, said the lady, this was exactly what was being done, only it was being done for buildings. Given that all of these structures would collapse one by one given their state of maintenance, the channel was pre-recording obituaries for each of these so that they, the channel, would not be caught short as and when they, the buildings actually fell.

MMM's slough of despond just got deeper.

Tailpiece

It was Perhaps Greatest Writer who once, as the Man from Madras Musings recalls, wrote of a stately home of England where in summer the river lay at the bottom of the garden and in winter the garden at the bottom of the river. Chennai seems to be more or less at that stage. Next fortnight hopefully will see drier days. Till then, chin up, and stay afloat.

– MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

not control his astonishment. Why, they had said that they were custodians of the place he said. It was the turn of the administrative officer to be astonished. He said he had never set his eyes on them before. That ended the matter and the crowd melted. MMM and crew were escorted by an officer of the shrine for the rest of the shoot which went off peacefully. But the elderly gent decided that he had to tag along. And so he did, muttering imprecations all the while. At one point he said he knew the trustee well and so perhaps he ought to call and inform him of what was happening. To this MMM said he had the trustee's phone number and would gladly dial it on his phone. That ensured the elderly gent vanished as well.

While MMM is not in any way questioning the right of these self-appointed custodians to protect their favoured shrines, he would suggest that they identify real culprits – those who take pictures on the sly, scribble names on walls and paintings, deface sculptures and above all, eye antiquities.

An Obituary for Heritage

The Man from Madras Musings was sunk in what can only be described as a slough of despond. There were the incessant rains to begin with and then, when he went across to Fort St George, he discovered

OUR READERS WRITE



Looking back on the Delhi's 'Madras' school

Many thanks to *Madras Musings* for publishing my two-part story on the MEA/DTEA schools. The write-up on the school's fascinating history, almost 100 years old, evoked an avalanche of overwhelmingly positive response, bordering on nostalgia, from readers both in India and abroad. More than 10,000 people read the first part of the article in less than 10 days on *Madras Musings* itself, a feat in my 43 years of journalism. It also showed the reach of your respected fortnightly which pays so much care and affection for everything Tamil.

Thanks to the piece, two of my teachers, Natarajan (Delhi) and Prabhavati (Chennai), got in touch with me. True to his self-effacing nature, Mr. Natarajan wanted to know why I had highlighted him so much when so many others had played an equally and perhaps more critical role in the success of the institution. He was satisfied with my answer that this is the least I could have done after having relied quite heavily on his information-packed blog to unearth facts about MEA/DTEA.

To everyone who asked (and to those who may have wanted to but did not), I reiterate that the article was an overview – however comprehensive – of the school and not a comprehensive history. Doing justice to the latter concept will only be possible in a book, which will need financial backing which I lack. Let us hope that a good book gets written ahead of the MEA/DTEA centenary year in 2023.

Now that we are on the subject, I am aware that many ex-students and former teachers are engaged in planning a grand 100-years-of-MEA/DTEA celebrations, in both Delhi and Chennai. Two senior ex-students who got in touch with me and who are deeply engaged in the planning of the celebrations are S. Sudhakar (ssrcontact@gmail.com) and Sukumar Rajagopal (sukumar-rajagopal@gmail.com). One of them is based in Chennai and the other in Delhi. Wherever you may be, kindly get in touch with them to be part of the larger MEA/DTEA world.

On that note, I again thank *Madras Musings* for carrying my piece on our school.

M.R. Narayan Swamy
ranjini17@hotmail.com

The article on Delhi's 'Madras' school brought back memories of the years I studied in the Lodi Estate branch from 1959 to 1962.

After studying for the better part of my teen years in a high school in my ancestral village in Kerala, I moved to New Delhi to finish school and join the family. My sisters and brother were already studying in the Lodi Estate branch, so this was the automatic choice for me as well. After passing the admission test I joined the ninth class. There were two more who joined with me.

The school building wasn't equipped for the expanding number of students, so classes were held in tents. In the rainy season, some tents leaked. We plodded on, however.

Academics was given great importance and sports were add-on, though the school had a large playground and a regular sports master. The school did take part in inter-school sports events but didn't fare well.

Many of the teachers were excellent and took very good care of the students. So, no student went to the principal's office with teacher's complaints.

Since I did fairly well in the higher secondary examination, Rajagopalan Sir told my father that I should do B.A. (Honours) in mathematics in Hansraj College, which I did. That I did my master's in Economics is another story!

Kolathu's canteen was a great attraction during breaks, though the pocket money I got was nowhere near my needs!

I also skipped many classes and went to afternoon shows at Racecourse cinema. This movie house was exclusively for service personnel but general public were allowed.

It is my regret that I haven't been in touch with my school friends after I left New Delhi.

P.S. Seshadri
1959-62 Batch

Box full of thanks for the timely assistance extended in your recent mail in enabling me to speak to Narayanaswamy – in fact the matter could be steered ahead so much that I thought I should have the gratitude to thank you once again.

This write up on *Madras Musings* has presumably got over 10k likes and hence presumably these are all our students spread across the globe and it will help us tremendously to plan our Centenary celebrations slated in 2023 in case we get their contact details.

Sudhakar S
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More on Neo Roxy Cafe

Having been a resident of Purasaivakkam for several years, many pleasant memories flooded my mind, when I read Satyan(arayan) Bhatt's story on the Neo Roxy Café (NRC) that dominated Purasaivakkam as a great eatery and restaurant between the 1950s and 1970s.

Champaklal Bhatt, a first-generation Gujarati, had settled in Madras, much before I was born. My knowledge of Champaklal commences only after he had established NRC on Purasaivakkam High Road, close to the erstwhile Roxy cinema house (which was previously known as the Globe Talkies).

Champaklal was a wonderfully amiable person and a dear friend of my late father, K.P. Anantanarayanan. Equally amiable was his wife Virbala, who used to enchant me by the peculiar way she wore her saree. I say peculiar because, few Gujarati-s lived in Purasaivakkam at that time and my familiarity with the Gujarati-style of wearing a saree was far less. Satyan had spoken of Champaklal's passion for cricket, but had forgotten to speak about his deep interest in personal health care. I have seen heavy-weight discs and dumbbells and arm strengthening metal stretch bands in his house and occasionally have seen him exercising with those tools. As a caring human being he supported his younger brother and his young wife for several years and I remember participating in the inauguration of a new eatery, which Champaklal had helped in establishing as a property for his brother in Alandur, near St. Thomas's Mount.

Talking of NRC, his eatery used to make packs of sweets for people during Deepavali festivities. Compared with other eateries of the then Purasaivakkam, sweets made by and sold at NRC were highly sought after by Purasaivakkam residents. The cashew-medu pakora was one specialty item of NRC, which used to be freshly made only in the early afternoons on Sundays. I remember going to NRC especially between 2 and 3 p.m. to buy the cashew-medu pakora standing in a queue and waiting for 15-20 mins. Curiously only NRC sold ice cream to northern-Purasaivakkam residents, whereas the other eateries provided only cool drinks and rose milk.

NRC was a great landmark of Purasaivakkam until the 1970s. Genuineness and goodness prevailed in those migrant business people, who need to be remembered and thanked for their contribution to the welfare and growth of Purasaivakkam: indeed Champaklal and Virbala are two names to be etched in the archives of Purasaivakkam.

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The flame behind SuperFlame

April 14th, 2021 marked 50 years since the founding of SuperFlame, an LPG agency in the heart of Nungambakkam, Chennai. For nearly 40 years, a handsome woman clad in a white sari helmed this gas company. Her name was Indira Damodaran and she was the very first woman to become an LPG distributor in this city. While she may have obtained the distributorship because her husband was the Deputy General Manager of Indian Oil Corporation when he died, the way Super Flame grew and succeeded as a business was due to her hard work and perseverance. A five year stay in London made her a stickler for punctuality. Her favourite quote on the importance of time was about H.M. Queen Elizabeth proceeding for a function without the Duke of Edinburgh, because he was a few minutes behind when the

cavalcade left Buckingham Palace.

Her husband, Maneeram-kandeth Damodaran, a Chemical Engineer and India's first Gas Engineer, worked in Refineries of Shell and Indian Oil Corporation. He passed away at 46, and Indira Damodaran was just 37. She had to shoul-

● by
Ravi Damodaran

der the responsibility of the family. The reason she was in Chennai was because her only child, a son, had just enrolled in college a week before his father's demise. His last words were, "... go and join the gentlemen of MCC".

Apparently both Loyola College, Nungambakkam and Madras Christian College, Tambaram, had sent admission

notices. Fate did not cut the ties with Loyola, for it became one of the commercial customers of Super Flame.

From door-to-door sales and a handful of customers, she built the business and bagged several big name customers – Apollo Hospital, Women's Christian College, and the Taj Coromandel, to name a few.

Right up to the age of 80, she showed up every single day at 8:30 sharp and was there when the office closed at 6:30 in the evening. No wonder many thought she was more attached to her agency than anything else. They were not far wrong, because she moved around with a cylinder in her car; not LPG, but life saving oxygen, for she was suffering from multiple ailments of the heart. Jokingly she would refer to her heart enlargement as "I have a large heart", which indeed she had.



Mrs. Damodaran didn't just run a business, she also touched the hearts of all the customers she interacted with. To this day, nearly 12 years after her passing, people still fondly remember the lady in white behind the desk who welcomed everyone with a warm smile and genuine affection.

Her employees too would do anything for her, and when she died in February 2009, they offered to work without salary for one month until the legal transfer of ownership was processed for running the banking operations. Survived by her son, daughter in law, granddaughter and grandson, a book in her memory was recently published, authored by her granddaughter Damayanti.

Two pages for the Music & Dance Season

NATYARANGAM – A unique Sabha for Bharathanatyam

“It is our principle to take money from the dancers to give them an opportunity at our December festival” blurted out the secretary of a sabha in Chennai.

The group of people around the table froze.

It was a meeting to draw the budget of the December festival of a Chennai sabha and to find sponsors for the same. The business magnate who had been invited to be the Chairman of the committee that year, magnanimously offered to underwrite the entire budget. I was elated and thanked him for making it possible for talented young dancers to perform without having to pay for the opportunity.

“Pay to perform?” The Chairman was perplexed.

“Yes.” I explained, “This is the practice adopted by many of the sabhas in Chennai. Those who perform music concerts are paid a token amount by the sabhas, but the dancers are demanded to pay the sabha.”

“Is it so? But why?” queried the Chairman turning to the secretaries.

The opening statement of this article was the response.

This pernicious practice had started sometime in the late eighties and had begun throttling the dance community. There were enough well-heeled dance aspirants, whose talent ranged from promising to poor. And they were cornering most of the slots in the sabhas. The flow of dollars into the pool made matters worse by hiking the rates. Inaugural evening performances were being auctioned for fifty thousand upwards.

Many of us interested in the art were alarmed at what this could do to the art and the young artists. And wanted to do something about it. I had done a group discussion in *Srutii* and spoke in the TV talk show *Netru Indru Nalai* anchored by writer Sivasankari and many of us were raising the issue through the media and other forums. No solution was in sight.

One day I was lamenting over the state of affairs to R.Krishnaswamy, secretary of Narada Gana Sabha. As he was the president of the Federation of City Sabhas I hoped he could do something about it. He quietly said, “I shall give you the mini hall. The sabha will pay a remuneration to the dancer. Will you take it up and organise concerts?”

I was speechless for a moment. The next day I met him with

K.S. Subramanian and Viswanathan (writer Charukesi) who had launched a sabha to feature young talent in a periodic series of Bharathanatyam. Krishnaswamy offered the mini hall with lights and mike, advertisement and other incidental expenses. Our job was to find deserving dancers and organise concerts by them. He was making this offer for one year as an experiment.

The three of us were soon joined by Kannan of Aindu Karangal, a connoisseur of music, literature, dance and drama, Janaki, a dancer herself, writer and assistant to Pattabhiraman, editor – publisher of *Srutii*, Major General Balasubramanian and his wife Kalpagam, parents of dancer Pushkala Gopal.

Natyarangam was launched in September 1995 as a dance wing of Narada Gana Sabha Trust, Chennai, with a twofold purpose:

- (1) To provide a platform for talented young dancers of proven merit.
- (2) To create awareness in the audience, regarding various aspects of dance appreciation.

Two dancers were featured every third Saturday and there was a lecture demonstration on a dance related topic by an eminent Guru on the following Sunday.

All the committee members had their antennae up to spot talent and tried to watch practically every dancer who performed in the city and on television and put our notes together to draw up a list of dancers to be featured. Since every one of us had a fairly sound knowledge of the art, each dancer could be evaluated on merits and short-listed. The city sabhas had categorically refrained from featuring solo recitals by male dancers. Natyarangam decided to feature talented male dancers as and when we found them.

In 1997 Natyarangam launched its first thematic festival, Vandemataram to celebrate the golden jubilee of our Independence. Every day a senior dancer and a young dancer were featured. Each of them was required to present one patriotic song from the period of the freedom struggle and one *puḍu kavithai*, (contemporary Tamil poetry) relating to our country post-independence. We had sought the assistance of the members of YACM, Youth Association for Carnatic Music, that had brought in a renaissance

in the music scene with a wave of exceptionally talented young musicians, rooted in tradition and rooting for tradition.

At the first meeting of the dancers, poets and musicians, all the three declared it was impossible to set *puḍu kavithai* to Carnatic music. Some persuasion and an actual presentation of *puḍu kavithai* set to Carnatic music, more or less convinced them of the feasibility.

Young musicians like Vijay Siva, T.M. Krishna, R.K. Sri-rankumar, Sangeetha Sivakumar and others set the *puḍu kavithai* by poets like Abdal Rahman, Vairamuthu, Vaideeswaran, Mu. Mehta, Nirmala Suresh and Gnanakoothan to Carnatic music and lent a helping hand to the pioneering effort. Soundaram Kailasam and Kannadasan represented *marabu kavithai* (traditional poetry) in the contemporary context. The festival was a resounding success and a landmark event where *puḍu kavithai* entered the domain of Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam.

A highlight of the festival was the stage décor by artist Thota Tharani, who created an expansive space with tricolour bunting placed strategically. Thereafter it became the practice to design the stage décor to suit each year's theme. Twenty-four thematic festivals have been curated by Natyarangam till date with no repetitions, with many of them presented for the first time ever. And the festivals have brought together dancers with resource persons who were musicians, Harikatha artistes, poets, theatre persons, artists, historians and experts from many more disciplines. The synergy created by Natyarangam has educated, trained and empowered the young dancers to approach and assimilate Bharatanatyam as a holistic experience. The fallout of this has been the creation of awareness among the audience about the potential of the art.

Some of the themes presented so far are
Teertha Bharatham
 Sacred Rivers of India
Bharatham Kathai Kathaiyaram
 20th Century Tamil Short
 Stories and parallels from
 Puranas, legends and history

Baandhava Bharatham
 Relationships

Bhoopala Bharatham
 Kings as Protectors of the Land
 and People

Upanishad Bharatham
 Upanishads

Thyaga Bharatham
 Lives of Freedom Fighters

Chithra Bharatham
 Paintings by Contemporary
 Indian Artists

As the committee got to know the younger dancers and their problems, the lacuna in their proficiency became more apparent. Bharathanatyam is an art that is a confluence of various allied arts, literature, philosophy and cultural inputs. Most of the dancers did not know any Indian language, including their mother tongue and were far removed from the treasures of literature and culture that came with the language. But for a handful, most of the dancers had no training in music. Nor were they aware of the rigours of training for physical fitness.

● by Sujatha Vijayaraghavan

In the year 2000 Natyarangam launched its Natya Sangraham, a three-day immersion in Bharatanatyam at the camp in Thennangur, a village about two hours away from Chennai. Based broadly on the four abhinaya's, namely *Angika* (physical), *Vachika* (Music and poetry), *Aharya* (Costumes and props), *Satvika* (expression) a team of faculty members from various disciplines with Professor C.V. Chandrasekhar as the convener and co-ordinator, opened a window into other disciplines through lectures, demonstrations, assignment of tasks and evaluation, spot improvisation and much more. The day begins with yoga sessions at dawn and is followed by lectures and practical sessions. In the evening the Dolotsavam ritual at the temple of Pandurangan has the dancers rising to perform impromptu in front of the Utsava Murthy on the swing, while Aruna Sairam, T.M. Krishna, Ranjani and Gayatri, Jayanthi and Kumaresh or G.J.R. Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi sing and play for the Lord. The crowning glory is the dance for the Garuda Sevai at the temple where all the participants and some of the faculty lead the procession, dancing to the strains of the nagasvaram and the roll of the tavil ahead of the processional deity.

The names of the faculty members over the years would read like the who's who of the art scene in Chennai. Dr. Sudha Seshayyan, Poet Vaideeswaran, Kalanidhi Narayanan, the Dhananjayans, Vyjayanthimala Bali, Chitra Visweswaran, Sudharani Raghupathi, Rhadha, Alarmel Valli, Malavika Sarukkai, Bombay Jayashri, Trichy Sankaran, Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Sikil Gurucharan and many more have enriched the experience for the dancers in informal sessions.

The applicants for the camp are dancers from all over the globe and the numbers are restricted to around 30 participants each year. Every dancer has declared that it has been a life-changing experience. Which has been proved by the exponential growth in their perception and performance subsequently.



Malavika Sarukkai performs abhinaya at Dolotsavam at Thennangur 2013.

Some of the topics had never been tried before, like the *Vachana Kavithai*, the precursor to the *puḍu kavithai* which is in prose and defies setting to music. The other was the mystic *Kuyil Pattu*, an allegorical poetic drama. We realised that some of the teams put together stayed together over the years and came out with their own productions. One of them set a record by staging their Bharathi theme more than fifty times in India and abroad.

While the thematic festivals and other special programmes set the stage for exploring new themes and innovative approaches, Natyarangam launched its new project of Poorna Margam. This was to enable the dancers to revisit the traditional items of the Margam as several items of the Margam like the jatisvaram and sabbam are becoming endangered species and are passing into oblivion. In this bi-annual event, a senior dancer with a high level of proficiency in nritta as well as abhinaya, is chosen to present an entire Margam lasting two hours. Old and rarely handled items are brought back into focus in these recitals.

In December 2003 Natyarangam launched its novel project, Jana Bharatham. It literally means “Bharathanatyam for the people”. Dance goes out to the people as against the sabha system, where people come in search of art and entertainment. The objective is to take dance to sections of the society which

do not get to attend concerts in Sabhas. It is done through lecture – concerts of an hour's duration. Small groups of dancers present the nuances of dance in an interesting combination of education and entertainment. Each programme is tailored to suit the target audience and the dancers make the presentations in English as well as Tamil.

The group normally consists of four or more dancers, who perform solo and group numbers. The presentation is informal and interactive. Stripped of the trappings of the conventional presentation, such as elaborate costumes, make up, orchestra, lights and even a stage, the art can be seen in its pristine beauty at close quarters. Jana Bharatham groups have performed at schools, colleges, orphanages, old age homes, villages and tsunami-hit communities.

A performance module of *Jana Bharatham* happened to develop almost on its own. A lady came all the way from Coimbatore to commission a programme on Andal to be performed at her daughter's wedding. A group of young dancers was selected and given the subject to choose the lyrics, have it set to music and choreograph and perform. This proved to be a success and many more requests came up for thematic concerts at weddings. Significant was the invitation received from Kamban Kazhagam to present scenes from *Kamba Ramayanam*. Tamil writer Sa

Kandaswamy requested Love songs from the Sangam poetry *Aga Nanooru* to be performed in Bharathanatyam. Two dancers were chosen and their solo renderings were filmed for the Tamil Nadu Govt Archives.

Some of the other activities in the earlier years include quiz programmes, conducted by the dancers and competitions where the dancers were required to do on the spot improvisation for sancharis and depiction of episodes. The recent workshops on compering for Bharathanatyam are an attempt to develop communicative and presentational skills of the dancers. Compering sessions in English and Tamil are conducted for dancers with faculty members comprising



Thennangur 2013. participants and faculty.

writers, TV anchors, theatre persons and experts in compering, who evaluate and give feedback.

Natyarangam has also turned its attention to the bridge between the artist and the viewer, namely the media. The print media in English has a regular column for reviews and articles. While the number of knowledgeable critics was rather low, the vernacular dailies and weeklies have had fewer critics and have tried to make do with anyone who could write. The nadir was reached when a critic wrote in a Tamil weekly that “even though the name Anup Jalota sounded odd, the dance performed by that beautiful peacock on the inaugural day was marvelous.” It was ludicrously obvious that the writer never attended the programme and was ignorant not only of dance, but of the fact that the artist was a famous male singer of Hindustani Bhajans.

A seminar and workshop for critics was held in 1997, where a panel of experts drawn from writers, dancers and connoisseurs spoke on the various aspects of reviewing. It was agreed that a critic of dance should possess a knowledge of the art and a good style of writing. When the question arose whether a person with knowledge of dance should be taught to write or a good writer should be coached about the fundamentals and nuances of the art, the panelists unanimously chose the latter option. They held that writing is an art in itself and that it is easier to teach a good writer about the subject to be reviewed.

Natyarangam acted upon this advice and invited nine leading Tamil writers to review dance programmes during the 1998 December music and dance festival. Each one had to watch a senior dancer and a younger dancer performing at various sabhas in the city. Writers like Sivasankari and Anandhi Ramachandran had been dancers. But writers like Asokamitran, Prapanchan,

Thiruppur Krishnan had no acquaintance with the art. Each of them was accompanied by either a committee member or a young dancer to explain what the dancer was doing. *Dinamani*, the Tamil edition of *Indian Express* came forward to publish the reviews, which were superb examples of recreating the experience for the readers.

Natyarangam has come to be recognised for its vision and high-quality programmes. Sustained efforts over two decades have raised the benchmark for dancers. Their collaboration with musicians has helped raise the standards of dance music. Natyarangam can also rightfully take the credit for the growing acceptance and popularity of young male dancers, who have been regularly featured in its monthly, annual and special programmes.

The Natyarangam team is alert to the changing needs in the dance scene today and works towards answering them with action-oriented programmes. During the pandemic it kept the art alive by online presentation of its past performances and lecture demonstrations and a virtual Natya Sangraham on the web. A constant review of the goals and the level of achievement keeps the team busy all through the year in the promotion and propagation of Bharathanatyam and nurturing talent from the grassroots level.

The passing away of R. Krishnaswamy, the anchor of Natyarangam and some of the committee members was a setback. With K. Harishankar stepping in as the secretary and the induction of new members, the dedicated team is holding the banner aloft and is marching on.

The members of the committee at present are:

Sujatha Vijayaraghavan, K.S. Subramanian, S. Kannan, S. Janaki, K.S. Natarajan, Hyma Ramakrishna, P.C. Ramakrishna, Dharma Raman, S.B.S. Raman and Gayatri Srikant.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's first 10 questions are on current affairs and the next 10 are on Indian musical instruments.

1. NASA recently launched the DART spacecraft with what specific purpose?
2. Muhammad Aziz and the late Khalil Islam, who had maintained their innocence in the 1960s assassination of a prominent civil rights leader, were exonerated recently after having spent 20 years in prison. Name the leader.
3. A self-portrait 'Diego and I' recently set a record for the most expensive work by a Latin American artist ever sold at auction with a bid for \$34.9 million. Who is I in the painting?
4. Thanks to a nation blowing up one of its defunct satellites, astronauts aboard the ISS were forced to take shelter from being hit by debris. Which country blew up its satellite?
5. Asser Malik, a manager for the Pakistan Cricket Board, made news because of his marriage to a world-famous personality. Name his spouse.
6. Which city was adjudged the cleanest Indian city in Swachh Survekshan 2021 for a fifth straight year?
7. The Final Glasgow COP 26 agreement has aimed at capping global warming at how many degrees Celsius?
8. Which social media platform recently launched cyber-safety campaigns named 'Safe Stree' and 'My Kanoon'?
9. What is the 'Bharat Gaurav Scheme' launched by the Indian Railways recently?
10. In which bustling station has the Indian Railways opened the country's first 'Pod retiring rooms' similar to the ones in Japan?

11. What is the common name given to the two drums that make up the tabla?
12. How many frets and strings are there in a normal veena?
13. Which instrument's name is said to have derived either from '100 colours' or 'three colours' or from the name of the bow wielded by Vishnu?
14. Which tree's wood is normally used to make the mridangam?
15. A variation of the Jew's harp is frequently used as an accompaniment in Carnatic music. What is its common name?
16. Name the wooden clappers resembling a pair of table tennis racquets, commonly used by mendicants and devotional singers in Karnataka.
17. Only two instrumentalists have been honoured with the Bharat Ratna. What were the instruments they played?
18. Name the trapezoid-shaped plucked stringed instrument that many Hindustani vocalists use while singing?
19. Going by the number of holes, how many does a bansuri (North Indian bamboo flute) and the venu (South Indian bamboo flute) normally have?
20. According to music historians, which instrument was created by the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, by modifying the Taus?

(Answers on page 8)

Amazing Adyar

I bought a copy of a book titled *Amazing Adyar – A suburb to be proud of* by K.R.A. Narasiah, at its release function held at a star hotel recently. 88 years old Narasiah is a marine engineer turned bilingual writer in English and Tamil. He is also a speaker of repute in both the languages. Among his many other published works is the one he co-authored with S.Muthiah – a coffee table book on the Madras Port Trust. A well known heritage enthusiast, he pens a weekly column under the title 'Amazing Adyar' in *Adyar Times*. The book is a collection of his articles published between 2013 and 2019. As a longtime resident of Adyar and a regular reader of *Adyar Times*, I had read many of the articles when they were published. However I am happy that I bought the book because it contained many articles which I had missed.

The book is divided into three parts a) Great Institutes of Adyar b) Social Service organisations C) Personalities. It starts with a brief description of the origin of Adyar river and how it was the main conduit to transport vegetables and goods by the flat bottomed barges or coracles from the villages in the south to the city. Crossing the river Adyar from the then town of Madras was possible only by boats till the construction of the Marmalong causeway in Saidapet. This great southern area comprising villages and

paddy fields hosted many a chieftain and several landlords in the hoary past.

Part one of the book starts with the article about the Theosophical Society founded in 1875. It has produced some great people who helped the community in general and the society in particular. The most important addition in the Society complex was the Adyar Library in 1886. The Adyarites can boast of a place, such of which cannot be found anywhere in the world. The hall of the Theosophical Society is truly a pantheon in itself. Since theosophy is seen by the founders as the perennial wisdom and the root of all religions, this hall symbolises religious unity.

In the article on Rukmini Arundale there is interesting information about the controversy surrounding her wedding to Arundale who was 26 years senior to her. The marriage was registered in Bombay. We also learn that Kalkshetra Foundation founded in 1936 in the

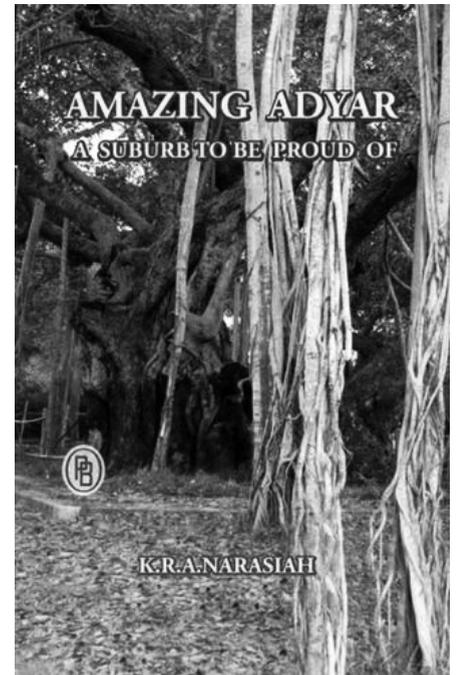
● by
R.V. Rajan
rvrajan42@gmail.com

society's Besant Gardens when Arundale was the President of the Theosophical Society. As the institution grew Rukmini Devi knew she needed inde-

pendent space to widen the activities of Kalakshetra and soon acquired land in the then village of Thiruvanniyur. The institution moved into the new campus in the 1960s. There is a brief reference to several students of Kalakshetra who came out of the Foundation to make a big name for themselves, such as the Dhananjayans.

Many Adyarites may not know that tucked away in the Kalakshetra campus near the school is located the most informative library in Tamil literature of the Sangam period. Named the Dr. U.V.S. Library, it is dedicated to the memory of U.V. Swaminatha Iyer popularly known as 'Tamizh Thatha'. It houses all the collections of the great Tamil scholar, with elaborate notings and explanations in his own hand writing. He was also the first editor of the 90 years old Tamil monthly *Kalaimagal*.

It is a matter of pride for Adyar that India's first women's movement was started here. Called the Women's Indian Association (WIA), it was founded in 1917 by Annie Besant, Maragret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa. Later Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy was to take the WIA to greater heights. She also helped start *Avvai Home*, the first shelter for destitute women in Madras. She ensured that *Avvai Home* had a tie up with The Olcott Memorial School, located near Elliot's Beach, dedicated to the children of lowest level of society both economically and by caste. The school was the idea of Col. H.S. Oclott the founder President of the Theosophical Society. As early as 1894 he felt the need to educate the



Dr. Shantha.

children of the most underprivileged and from the lowest rung of the society. There is also a brief reference to 'The School' started by J. Krishnamurti (KFI) which was located inside the Besant Nagar premises of the Theosophical Society until recently. The students here are not taught the usual way as done in other schools but learn more from observation and listening.

The article on the Cancer Institute, another institution founded by the indefatigable Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy gives

(Continued on page 7)



The Theosophical Society, Adyar.



The Adyar Library.

Not so happily, ever after, after all

Watching your old friend-from-school tell her grandchild stories?

So you're probably in a syrupy, sentimental how-time-flies-what-an-adorable-image state of mind?

Look again.

See those lines on her face?

No, she didn't have them yesterday.

Come to think of it, she seems to be collecting lines and furrows rather speedily these days.

Bound to happen.

That's what storytelling to a bunch of smart younglings in 2021 can do to you.

There was a time when elders told you stories; you just listened, laughed, or got terrified, bawled your eyes out and then went out to play.

Not anymore.

Let's just say you're storyteller-in-charge of the younger set of grandchildren this evening.

You begin with a golden oldie. (Okay, confess – you went out for a 'ladies' lunch', then hit the gym, forgot to brush up on your stories, and now have run out of options. Really, grandmothers in the 21st century!)

Anyway – so you start with Goldilocks.

Simple. Straightforward.

Not really.

"Goldilocks went into the pretty little cottage."

"Why?"

"Er...she was tired."

"Wasn't she scared?"

"No, I guess not."

"But how could she go into a stranger's house without permission? And eat stuff when she didn't know what's in it?", this from the nuclear family uber-urbanite large, maze-like apartment complex dweller.

Having never viewed these stories from this angle, you need a second to think that through.

Today, *Hansel and Gretel* will not merely bite off bits and pieces of the cottage, the good lady (please note!) will invite them in and give them steaming hot chocolate to wash it all down, while they watch their parentally-approved TV shows.

And the wolf will probably run ahead of the little girl in red, making sure her path is free of pebbles and thorns.

It gets even better when you help yourself to stories from mythology. Attitudes towards blood and gore have changed. Young parents, who, when they still operated as your kids, had no problem with violence and mayhem in stories, have now gone all millennial on you, and tend to look askance at heads being sliced off, at new-borns who are seen as potential danger being despatched at birth, or little ones being slapped so hard their jaw lines change forever.

Incidentally, how come you never realised how steeped in inappropriate-for-young-ears violence these stories have always been?

So you find yourself editing as you go.

"The wicked uncle picked up the newborn and...er...um...sent it far away."

Or, when you say, "And he made himself as small as an ant, flew into the monster's mouth and..." you think you sense a slight uneasiness in the air, so you brake, shift gears and turn it into something like: "And then he...he...er...bounced up and down inside that monster's nose and escaped when the bad guy sneezed."

Gales of laughter and falling about.

Well, okay – maybe that was better than saying the good guy got out by tearing open the bad guy's stomach, because that was the only way that sorry excuse for a life could have been killed.

And that's another thing.



"Didn't she know you mustn't throw tantrums?"

You admit that there does seem to have been a major

head off over Laurel and Hardy, and closer home, 'Pakoda'.

Very aware, the little ones these days.

And you ask yourself – how come you never wondered if it was okay for a stranger to kiss someone when she was sleeping? Or how come princes never needed rescuing? Surely they must have made some bad judgement calls too, like accepting apples from strangers, going into the woods alone, or closer home, granting boons rashly, especially when you knew that person's track record of generally anti-social behaviour. Also, why did all the good people have to be drop-dead gorgeous? Look around – you see how unrealistic that is?

You look back at your unquestioning acceptance of every story that was told to you, and wonder.

Innocence? Naivety?

Or just a simpler world?

● by Ranjitha Ashok

"And the poor broken-hearted king died of sorrow."

"You mean he became a star?"

"Well..."

"Amma says when people die, they become stars."

"Well, okay, fine, then yes, the king became a star."

"When will you and Thatha become stars, Paati?"

A logical thought progression, but suddenly being brought slap up against your own mortality shocks you into silence for a bit.

"And the queen was very angry and said her son must be king."

flaw in that particular queen's upbringing.

If you say, "...and that person was so stupid," you are told: "Mustn't call anyone 'stupid'."

"She was very fat", will probably earn you a censorious, "Mustn't call anyone that."

To be fair, their world is far more ultra-touchy than the rough-and-tumble one you grew up in, and they're just trying to make appropriate adjustments.

They are also right in many ways, and you are willing to learn and change, while remembering how you laughed your

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– THE EDITOR

AMAZING ADYAR

(Continued from page 6)

details about the origin of the Institute and how it has grown into 'A Centre of Excellence' in the country because of the untiring efforts of Dr. Krishnamurthi, the heir of Dr.Reddy, and Dr. Shantha displaying sheer passion and dedication to the cause. Dr. Shantha was the recipient of Ramon Magasaysay Award in 2005.

The last article in part one gives details about M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, an institute founded by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan renowned for his leading role in India's green revolution. It was he who advocated 'Sustainable Development' through 'sustainable agriculture' by preserving the all important bio-diversity.

He received the first ever World Food Prize in 1987 for being a world scientist of rare distinction. He invested the money received from the award in the institute which is located on two hectares of land given by the Tamil Nadu government.

Part two covers Social Service Organizations under eight categories. Many of them are not that old but are rendering great service to specific causes. Under the first chapter titled 'Extending assistance to the needed' the institutions covered are a) Ability Foundation b) Bala Vidyalaya Trust, c) Institute for the Deaf & Dumb d) Vidya Sagar e) Spastic Society of Tamil Nadu f) Vishranthi g) Catalyst Trust g) Aseema Trust h) Pathway and i) Kakkum Karangal.

While most of the organizations in this section are well known, I would like to talk about three institutions which are of recent origin and doing good work in their chosen area. The first is the 'The Ability Foundation', the brain child of Smt. Jayashree Ravindran, herself a deaf mute person, established in 1995 as a public charitable trust not just for the empowerment of the disabled but with an intention of mainstreaming persons with disabilities. Based in Radhakrishna Nagar, Adyar, Ability Foundation is involved in pioneering activities ranging from publishing, media counseling, referral services, advocacy, training and employment.

(To be concluded next fortnight)

Doubling as sports and film critic

The movie scene in Chennai that was Madras leaves me with a blur of memories. I have always been fond of films and my earliest recollections are of sitting on my father's lap in the late fifties and crying through *Goonj Uthi Shehnaï*, the Rajendra Kumar-Ameeta starrer with melodious music by Vasant Desai. I was not crying because it was a sad movie but because I was hungry or bored, I forget which. Throughout the sixties I never missed a popular English or Hindi movie, making plans for the evening show or the Saturday matinee with my friends. And if my friends were not available I never hesitated in going for a movie all by myself. Of course I also kept a tab on theatres that had regular Sunday morning shows of old movies – alas, no more a feature of the city theatre scenario these days.

In 1968, I joined *Indian Express* as a sports reporter. The lady in charge of the cinema page, coming to know of my interest in films, asked me whether I could review movies for the newspaper. I jumped at the opportunity and for many years I doubled up as a sports reporter and a film critic. Covering my two favourite beats and getting paid for it – there certainly was no luckier journalist in the city! I began to take a deeper interest in movies, came to recognise films by the director rather than the stars, familiarised myself with cinematic techniques and phrases and by the early 70s, became a keen student of the

movies. That brought me closer to film distributors, theatre owners and film-makers. It also opened a whole new avenue of preview theatres wherein we film critics were privileged to watch the movies before they were screened for a general audience. The Film Chamber theatre, the mini theatre in the same premises, Suprageet, Mena and other such compact theatres became a part of my life.

Through the 70s, 80s and 90s my love affair with the cinema continued and I never missed a film festival organised by the American Center, the British Council, the Russian Cultural Center or Max Mueller Bhavan. I still treasure memories of the Frank Capra film festival and the Oscar films festival shown at the American Center, the early Hitchcock films shown at the British Council or the classic Kurosawa movies, which I saw at the Russian Cultural Centre. Covering the movie scene of course brought me into contact with a number of eminent personalities of the celluloid world and interviewing Roman Polanski during Filmotsav 80 in Bangalore takes pride of place in the memory list. He answered the questions disarmingly in his halting English but was able to get his ideas across in no uncertain terms and also displayed an impish sense of humour. A short chat with Sharmila Tagore at the same festival was something I will never forget, even if it was only for a few minutes and I remem-

ber thinking that she was even more gorgeous in person than on celluloid – and this when it was well past her 'An Evening in Paris' days.

In the eighties, I had an extended interview with the British director Christopher Miles who came across as a well-informed personality, exuding charm and typical British humour. I always carry vivid memories of a long informal chat with Jag Mundhra at the coffee shop at the Chola

Khan in 1998 was another experience that will not be erased from memory so easily. The irresistible showman in him came right through in the interview. And of course there was dear old Mr. Umaphathy, owner of Anand theatre, for whom my wife, even though she was almost 40 and a mother of two, was always 'papa' (baby). I also clearly remember with some amusement a manager of a theatre accusing me

there. If only film critics here really had that power!

It was fun while it lasted but like all old things it came to an end when I retired from the profession. In the last few years, I have stopped reviewing films but my love affair with the movies has never stopped. I still read Pauline Kael and Stanley Kauffmann, have many film books in my library at home and make it a point to watch old films on YouTube or the various movie channels (with Halliwell's Film Guide always by my side). I used to attend as many film festivals as possible and once in a way made it to the theatres to catch up on today's movie scene before I was put off by the excessive violence, explicit sex scenes and bad language. Very occasionally I succumb to my daughter's request to see a film which she assures me is wholesome entertainment. But otherwise I am happy with my collection of old films and my nostalgic memories.

● **PARTAB RAMCHAND** looks back on his days as a film critic interviewing Roman Polanski, chatting up Sharmila Tagore and being accused of spoiling a film's business on account of a negative review.

Sheraton in the mid 90s when he was already well known in India for making slick commercial thrillers with more than a tinge of sex under the Amritraj Productions banner. Ashok Amritraj of course I met a number of times, right from the days Amritraj Productions was launched in the late 70s. Covering his tennis exploits earlier in the decade obviously helped. Ashok made a name for himself as one of the top independent producers in Hollywood and so popular was he as a personality that I remember filmmakers from the movie capital flying down to Madras for his wedding in 1991. Talking to Feroz

of spoiling his business because I had carried a negative review of one of the films released

Answers to Quiz

1. It will be crashed onto Dimorphos to see if asteroids can be diverted from a collision with Earth, 2. Malcolm X, 3. Frida Kahlo, 4. Russia, 5. Malala Yousafzai, 6. Indore, 7. 1.5, 8. Instagram, 9. Under this scheme, private tour operators can take trains on leave from the railways and run them on any circuit of their choice, 10. Mumbai Central.

11. Bayan and Dayan, 12. 24 frets, four metal melody strings, and three metal drone strings, 13. Sarangi, 14. Jackfruit, 15. Morsing, 16. Chittka, 17. Sitar (Pt. Ravi Shankar) and Shehnaï (Ustad Bismillah Khan), 18. Swarmandal, 19. Bansuri has six holes and a blowing hole, while the venu has eight holes and a blowing hole, 20. Dilruba.

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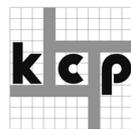


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