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MADRAS MUSINGS

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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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Welcoming guests with digital banners

Anyone familiar with Tamil Nadu, or should we say Tamil culture in particular, would not be wrong in assuming that a visiting foreign dignitary is welcomed the traditional way – *poorna kumbham*, or an ensemble of *nagaswaram* and *tavil*, or a display of folk art. Maybe a presentation of something in local silk or a handicraft or two? All of these and more were on display at the informal summit between the Indian Premier and the Chinese President recently at Mamallapuram. What jarred was the State Government's claim that it was customary to welcome visiting dignitaries by erecting digital banners.

This at least was the State's plea when it approached the

Courts last week with a request that it be allowed to erect banners along the route to Mamallapuram. The administrative agencies had been strongly chastised by the Court for allowing political parties to erect banners all over the city

strictures on banners pertained to political parties and not the executive itself, but safety measures had to be ensured. The question is, was the State at all warranted in filing such a plea? How could it claim that it was customary to erect ban-

● by The Editor

and State at will, one of which caused the death of a young woman last month and so the State was being extra cautious.

Faced with such a plea, the High Court of Madras had to give permission. It reminded the State Government that its

ners to welcome distinguished visitors when such a practise did not exist in the State even four decades ago? Floral or cloth arches were the utmost we stretched ourselves to and we did a mighty aesthetic job of these. Banners and cut outs



Dr. VIJAY SRIRAM sent us this picture when the nation celebrated Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. We are dedicating three pages in this issue to the Father of the Nation.

were not part of our tradition till very recently. While it would be too harsh to say that the State misled the Courts into granting permission, it is necessary to point out that it is shocking that the administration itself has come out in favour on the necessity of banners. It reeks of insensitivity in the light of the recent mishap. Based on this

permission, the Government will now merrily erect banners for all events under its purview. And that means the party in power can also do the same, by cleverly portraying any event as being held with State support.

All parties of the State are equally guilty of usurping public

(Continued on page 2)

Efficient governance for better impact of Public Health Services

NITI Aayog's annual comparative reviews of states' performance with respect to education, public health and social progress fill an important void in monitoring public governance. To governments and policy makers, the reviews provide objective, quantitative feedback on specific aspects. The novel feature is that the reviews are not confined to evaluating the scale of infrastructure but, more importantly, its impact. To the public and tax payers, they provide a report on how much and how well the money has been spent. NITI Aayog's third report for 2017-18 throws light on Tamil Nadu's efforts at bettering its own performance from year to year, setting benchmarks for other

southern states functioning under similar conditions.

The report ranks states on performance. The rank for any given state can be misleading as it depends on performance of other participants. A good performance in itself could show up as a drop in rank when others perform better and, likewise, deterioration in performance could reflect as rise in ranking because others have done even worse. We shall, therefore, go by year-on-year performance on the three major aspects – Input, Outcome and quality of Governance.

The term 'Input' refers to physical infrastructure, staffing,

equipment etc. for delivery of services. 'Outcome' represents the services delivered. Outcome is reflected by the community's wellness, which is assessed by quantifiable indicators like, say, reduced incidence of TB, longevity, lower school drop outs, lower infant mortality etc. A high performance score on Inputs does not necessarily lead to beneficial Outcomes if the input (infrastructure) is not put to effective use to address the needs of target beneficiaries.

'Governance' is the converter of Input into desired Outcome. Governance constitutes supervision, monitoring and accountability. For example,

a 50-strong input with 80 per cent governance would yield 40 units of benefit compared to a 100-strong input with 10 per cent governance yielding only 10 units of benefit. Governance has a comprehensive role involving review of infrastructure and process designs for their relevance and effectiveness, making changes to them as necessary, monitoring quantity and quality of services delivered and enforcing accountability. This direct causal relationship between Governance and Outcome is clearly brought out in the NITI review. Wherever Governance score is high, Outcome scores are as high as or higher than Input scores.

Going by the above, Tamil Nadu's score on Outcomes

is lower than that on Inputs or processes, indicating that there is scope for taking fuller advantage from the infrastructure already on the ground. In contrast, Kerala's score on Outcomes is higher than its score on Inputs. Kerala's effective Governance is significant when considered in the context of the state's high literacy. Better Public Services could well be the result of the high literacy level reflecting in greater public awareness of eligibility and ability to demand good service.

In the three-year period ending 2018, Tamil Nadu's score on Inputs had deteriorated from a score of 74.20 in 2014-15 to 68.92 in 2017-18.

(Continued on page 2)

BANNER POLICY

(Continued from page 1)

space and erecting digital banners for all kinds of occasions, even as the administrative machinery remains a mute spectator. But those out of power were quick to pose as models of propriety when it came to the present banner question. They appealed to their party cadres to restrain from erecting these and even went on to criticise the State Government for planning to put them up. As an alternative, they suggested that the State prints posters and has them pasted on all walls leading to the summit. Another suggestion was that graffiti could be used.

What has been conveniently overlooked is that posters

and graffiti are not traditional methods of welcome either. While they may not claim lives, they do deface the walls of private property. And we may be reasonably sure that Mr. Xi went away with an impression of a very shabby city with an array of posters and wall paintings. The extraordinary silence of the PM, a man who espouses the cause of cleanliness, over this issue is quite surprising as well. Here was a chance to clear up the city of this menace and it has been missed.

Just one question – are government-erected banners likely to be any safer when compared to political party-erected banners?

Better impact of Public Health Services

(Continued from page 1)

It suggests that investment in infrastructure and related needs have not been growing. Outcome scores – that is, the overall score for benefits from the infrastructure – show a drop from 64.04 to 58.90 respectively for the same years. It appears, therefore, that less and less advantage has been derived even from existing infrastructures. More specifically, in terms of final impact, Low Weight at Birth increased steadily from 10.46 per cent in 2014-15 to 13.03 per cent in 2015-16 and to 15.49 per cent in 2017-18. Vacancy of medical officers at PHCs has grown from 7.58 per cent in 2015-16 to 15.06 per cent in 2017-18. The average occupancy of level-3 posts of staff was only 9.98 months in 2017-18 compared to 15.74 months in 2015-16. Frequent transfers and the consequent short duration postings are not conducive to a sense of commitment to the job on hand. This indicates that better management could have yielded higher Outcomes even without additional investment in infrastructure. Of course, there are aspects in the report that the Tamil Nadu Government has commented on – NITI Aayog has taken estimated numbers for indicators like institutional deliveries and immunisation cover as the basis for evaluation; but then, it might be the state's own fault for delaying the filing of data.

Awareness of available facilities and entitlements and convenient access to them are two major factors that govern how impactful the facilities are to the beneficiary. Awareness

that a facility is available is as low as 50 per cent according to one study. People often do not know that they are entitled to free medicines, life-saving drugs, x-ray tests, laboratory tests and ambulance at call. As regards convenience of access, one field study has estimated that only 60 per cent of Primary Health Centres are located within half hour distance. Simple features like the hours of working of health centres are important. For the poor, long distances, hours of waiting and avoidable repeat visits deprive them of their wages for the day thereby increasing the effective cost of the so-called “free” service provided by the government. That could explain under-utilisation of public facilities and increasing preference for private health care.

The Annual Reviews are useful to diagnose design defects of existing infrastructure that hinder higher service standards. Erroneous assumptions of basic data such as those pointed out by the Tamil Nadu Government must be avoided by NITI to maintain credibility of the findings. The results for 2017-18 were made available only in June 2019, that is, after a lapse of 15 months, by when valuable time had gone by without opportunity to make course corrections. In these days of real-time data, efforts should be made by all concerned agencies to get the review ready, say, within six months, if it is to serve the purpose, which is to eradicate deprivation, not just poverty. India's “income-poor” were 270 million whereas those deprived of basic facilities were more than 364 million.

A sofa with six legs

The Man from Madras Musings is not much of a shopper whether it be the real or the virtual kind. He rarely buys anything except for books, the rest of this activity being taken care of by his good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed. And so when she announced that a new sofa had been ordered MMM merely nodded acquiescence and awaited the new arrival with bated breath.

MMM's good lady had ordered it the e-way, though not on ebay but one of those sites that has a name that sounds like a spice being sautéed. And so in due course the sofa duly arrived, delivered by a man who wore a company T shirt – black in colour with the sautéed spice logo and name emblazoned in white. MMM was most impressed. He was even more so when the man unpacked, duly assembled the sofa, cleared the packaging away and left, without expectation of a tip. Aha, here we were in the 21st Century at last reflected MMM and on that happy note decided to curl up on the new sofa and snooze.

It was only on waking up with a sensation of leaning to one side that MMM decided that matters needed to be investigated. After having ascertained that the problem was not with MMM but the sofa that he began looking at it more carefully. Sure enough, the problem was soon revealed – the sofa had six legs of which only four had bushes. The man had clearly overlooked fixing them on the other two and so the entire sofa had a distinctly lopsided feel to it.

This having been ordered the e-way, the remedy too had to be via the same route. In the old days, a phone call would have been made and someone you knew at the other end would have assured you of service. MMM guesses that in earlier times a letter would have been sent. Anyway, MMM, with enough experience on other websites of not receiving any response after registering complaints the e-way, opted to put out a tweet on the problem instead, tagging the sautéed spice company in the message. That, as is invariably the case, produced an instantaneous response and within a few hours the man who had delivered the sofa was back.

His first reaction was one of awe. How did MMM notice that there were only four out of six bushes he asked. MMM smiled modestly. He, the deliveryman that is, then declared that he did not have any spare bushes with him. MMM, smiling a lot less by then asked the man as to why he had come to attend a problem of bushes without any spare ones. To this he had no answer. He did acknowledge that MMM had a point

there and promised to be back soon, with a bagful of bushes.

He was back soon thereafter, with a triumphant smile – the bushes had been found but the new ones would be black in colour, while the old ones were white. And so he proceeded to fix the two new bushes and having dusted his hands, beamed at MMM triumphantly. Finding that MMM did not sport an equally gratifying smile he was concerned and asked if anything was wrong. MMM had to tell him that he did not fancy going through life with a sofa that was piebald in the legs. The bushes had all to be of the same colour said MMM. The deliveryman gave in but not with good grace and made the replacements. MMM noticed that he did not clean up the debris before leaving this time.

Perhaps the sautéed spice does cause some temper but the episode did bring home to MMM the fact that we were not yet in the 21st Century when it came to perfection in delivery and after sales service.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

After the fines skyrocketed

By a stroke of a pen, or it may be by the punch of a key, whoever it is that passes these laws has ensured that fines for traffic violations have been increased many times over in this, our land. Every kind of disobedience on the road will now attract damages that are in four figures at the minimum, along with endorsement of licence for certain misdemeanours. Cameras have come up on many thoroughfares and in some places at intervals of ten feet or so. They wink and blink at the vehicles that pass by and their switching between blue and pink lights makes for a colourful display. MMM sincerely hopes that they are recording violations and passing on the recorded numbers to the authorities for the imposition of suitable fines.

With so many checks in place MMM expected that traffic behaviour would improve but that has not yet happened. Perhaps it will. On the other hand it may not. But MMM is still puzzled over why policemen have increased in numbers at all traffic junctions and once there they do not so much regulate traffic but lie in wait for two-wheelers in particular and on whom they pounce with unfailing regularity. MMM wonders as to what they do after apprehending these riders. From what MMM

can see, there appears to ensue a prolonged conversation beneath a tree or two, the beginnings being rather one sided, with the police doing much of the talking and the riders adopting a very beseeching and obsequious attitude. Subsequently, there is a silence of sorts, the police having said its say and the apprehended still digesting its import. After this, conversation becomes general and then the offenders, if in a group retire a short distance away and confabulate amongst each other even as the police, who have several calls on their time, focus on other offenders who are passing by. And then the shortly-to-be-declared offenders return. There are fresh parleys and then everyone departs with a smile on their faces. This is known as a win-win situation in management jargon. Yes, even the police is smiling, no doubt with the satisfaction of having done its duty. Those that were fined are smiling too, no doubt with the satisfaction of having discharged their debt to society. The State ought to be smiling too, with the money by way of fines flowing into its kitty. But something tells MMM that this last may not be happening. The offence is most likely dealt with in a spirit of ‘give and take’, with nothing being put on record.

After all, in a democracy it is discussion, debate and deliberation that delivers and not the dictatorial imposition of the law.

Tailpiece

In Bengal, NSC Bose is a man who is still considered to be alive and well, despite seven decades going by since he vanished during the Second World War. In Chennai that was Madras, he has a thoroughfare named after him. But as the Man from Madras Musings notes, there are considerable variations in the spelling of his name when it comes to signboards as can be seen from the two adjoining pictures.



–MMM

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



PRAISE GOD
Vimala Padmaraj

26th Sep 2019

Dear Mr. M.M.M.,

Many is the time I have wanted to write to you, especially after having laughed heartily over your column in Madras Musings.

This time I am writing because someone else besides me has seen the humour in: URBAN CLAP. Each time I saw the advert on T.V. I would grin to myself.

If the name has originated from New Delhi, I am not surprised. They are the most halfbaked people ever. However if it is from Bombay I am sorry for that means the refining influence of the cultured Parsis is over. The new breed has a puffed up quality in the advertising world.

I have been an admirer of Mr. Muthiah - met him a few times. I have seen Mr. Sriram with him and

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email: vimpadmaraj@vsnl.net
vimpadmaraj@yahoo.com

think he is a worthy disciple. And of course I love Madras.

This letter is actually unusual as I am writing it with a steel pen dipped in ink. I am one of an endangered species - a letter writer.

My regards to She who must be obeyed and yourself.

A friend of MM,
Vimala Padmaraj

P.S. Whats a letter with out a P.S.?

The Rakhi cover is because I am a nut who must buy anything new from the post office.

PPS. When will people realise that Clap is English slang for VD or STD??

IIT-M lingo

Language has always been an emotive issue and it is no wonder that it has played a crucial role in several conflicts in society. Eulogistic references to a regional language in a pluralistic society, no doubt, serve to raise the pride and self-esteem of the people. This is exactly what Prime Minister Modi did in his recent address at the IIT Madras convocation. Loud cheers greeted him when he termed Tamil as the oldest language and almost in the same breath, said that the state of Tamil Nadu was home to the newest language, namely IIT-M lingo. This drew further cheers from the packed audience.

What is the IIT-M lingo? - Entering the campus, one can hear students from all parts of India talking in English but a few minutes into the conversation, one cannot make much sense of it. The reason: students have drifted into IIT-M lingo, "a highly evolved melting pot of a language with some Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and God-knows-what-else thrown in". According to campus watchers, most students speak it with relish and for good reason - it is unique to the institution and can well double as a code language understood only by IIT-M students and alumni.

The Fifth Estate, the official student media body of IIT Madras, has offered a crash course to keep the freshers (juniors) get past seniors who love the lingo dearly. Here is a sample of IIT-M lingo:

- Freshies** - junior students.
- Insti name** - the closest thing to a re-christening, a nickname given to a fresher that defines him and seems to stick better than the actual name.
- Junta** - people.
- Factory** - the institution where you got your JEE coaching from, surely very apt.
- Intro** - the act of introducing yourself.

● **Note:** It is not often that The Man from Madras Musings gets mail directly. They are more often addressed to the editor and complain bitterly about his (MMM's) barbs at various kinds of humbug that goes on in our city. MMM expresses his delight at having received a letter, and what's more it having reached him despite being rather vaguely addressed.

Dear Mr. MMM,

Many is the time I have wanted to write to you, especially after having laughed heartily over your column in Madras Musings.

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I have been an admirer of Mr. Muthiah - met him a few times. I have seen Mr. Sriram with him and think he is a worthy disciple. And of course, I love Madras.

This letter is actually unusual as I am writing it with a steel pen dipped in ink. I am one of an endangered species - a letter-writer.

Enthu - lots of enthusiasm, as in, "I have enthu for coding".

Machan/Machi - Dude.

RG - Relative Grading. Many courses are graded based on the overall performance of the class but RG is used for a good many other things, such as the act of distracting others from studying. Example: "I swear, he RGeD the whole class and became the only person to get an S".

Cup - the act of failing; the fail grade for any course is indicated by 'U', which resembles a cup. Example: "He cupped in MA1100".

Crash - to sleep, as in, "I am crashing after three night-outs straight".

Gen - general, random, as in, "I don't want to do some gen course".

Thulp - to ace a test or hog on food. "She thulped the Physics quiz".

Lite - stop taking things too seriously, as in, "Take lite and sleep, da".

Stud - a person who manages many things in the insti. "That stud is a nine-pointer and a four times gold in swimming."

Maggu - a person who spends most of his/her time studying; they typically get dazzling CGPAs.

Gult, Mallu, Guju, Tam - denotes Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarathi and Tamil-speaking students respectively.

Funda - fundamentals.

IIT-M lingo is a defining and constantly maturing feature of the institute, a language developed by several generations of alumni. Remarkable indeed. Here comes the punch: an exchange student even wrote her M.A. thesis on it.

T. Rajagopalan
Journalist

formerly Education Correspondent, The Hindu

My regards to She who must be obeyed and yourself.

A friend of MM
Vimala Padmaraj

PS.: Whats a letter without a P.S.?

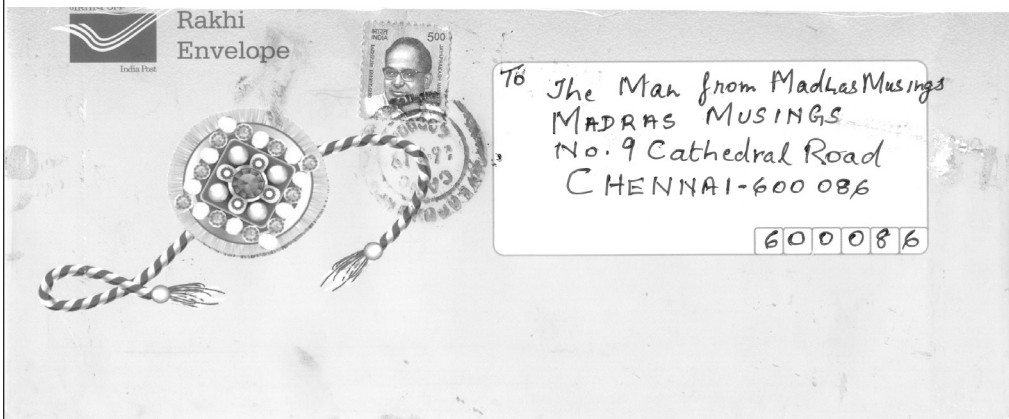
The Rakhi cover is because I am a nut who must buy anything new from the post-office.

PPS: When will people realise that Clap is English slang for VD or STD??

Feedback on Chrome Leather Factory

My name is George Chambers. Roy Chambers was my grandfather. Thank you for posting this short history. I was born and have lived in Australia my whole life, but I would still like to visit India with my father one day to see this part of our history.

received on MM website



Thank you, Donors

We today, publish donations received with thanks for the period upto October.

- The Editor

- Rs. 150:** George Joseph
- Rs. 400:** Capt. R. Shankar
- Rs. 500:** T.K. Sriniva Chari, R. Balasubramanian
- Rs. 900:** T. Santhanam, Benjamin Cherian, V. Ramnarayan, Ms. K. Nirmala
- Rs. 1000:** Ms. Girija Viraraghavan, Gopal Raj C.
- Rs. 1500:** N.S. Parthasarathy

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's questions are from September 16th to 30th. Questions 11 to 20 relate to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. The International Astronomical Union recently named a minor planet between Mars and Jupiter after which famous Indian classical singer?
2. Which Indian tech major has won the United Nations Global Climate Action Award (UNGCCAA) in the 'Climate Neutral Now' category?
3. Which former Chief Executive of the World Bank is the new MD of the International Monetary Fund?
4. Who were voted the best men's and women's players in the recent Best FIFA Football Awards held in Milan?
5. Who will be honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, India's highest in cinema, for the year 2018?
6. Which State Govt. has launched the country's first 'Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)' described as the world's first market for trading in Particulate Matter emissions?
7. Which film will be India's official entry to the Oscars 2020?
8. Fill in the blanks: On September 17, the first-ever World _____ Day was observed by World Health Organisation with a global campaign 'Medication without Harm'.
9. Name the iconic and the world's oldest travel operator that went into administration recently.
10. In one of its significant acquisitions, Facebook paid a reported \$500 million for technology start-up CTRL-Labs. What does CTRL-Labs primarily make?
11. What emergency solution for the city which started on July 12 was wound up on October 8?
12. Which place in its heyday had 11 ponds, about 9 kms of road, a public bath, two tennis courts, mini zoo and a bandstand?
13. Where was the first screening of films in Madras done on December 5, 1896?
14. Which famous but now non-existent edifice, completed in 1900, was the handiwork of architect R.E. Ellis and contractor A. Subramania Aiyer?
15. Which institution in the metropolis is considered the "birthplace of boxing in India"?
16. In 1957, who became the first woman Mayor of Madras?
17. Which institution in Vepery is considered the first missionary-founded school in India?
18. What was started by Dr. Alexander Hunter, a military surgeon, in Popham's Broadway in May 1850?
19. What is presently located at 84/1 Periyar Thidal, E.V.K Sampath Salai?
20. Expand IMPCOPS, located on Lattice Bridge Road in Adyar, known for its Ayurveda and Natural medicines.

(Answers on page 8)

The Hyde Park of Madras

Cenotaph remains a name in the Teynampet area, with an eponymous road leading off Anna Salai/Mount Road towards Kotturpuram and beyond. As is well known, the name is traced to the vast monument that was erected on the spot in memory of Lord Cornwallis, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of India from 1786 to 1793 and

dence, to the Fort Museum. The cenotaph remains outside the Chennai Collectorate, once Bentinck's Building and now a drab structure named after the labour leader M Singaravelar. It is mostly unoccupied but does serve as a urinal at times. Its longevity is nevertheless a matter to ponder over – it has survived a shift from Teynampet and later the complete

LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI – SRIRAM V

once again Governor General of India in 1805.

The circumstances leading to the commissioning of a statue of the Governor General and the construction of a cenotaph are dealt with in great detail in the series titled Know Fort St George (MM XXV Vol. Nos. 1-24, April 16th 2015-April 1st 2016). In brief, the British in Madras were living in mortal fear of Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan and it was Cornwallis who in the third Anglo Mysore war showed that the latter was fallible after all. The Tiger of Mysore had to accept crippling war damages – more than half of his territory was distributed among allies and two of his sons were taken as hostages. In gratitude for what Cornwallis had done, the British in Madras commissioned Thomas Banks in England to sculpt a statue which was completed in 1800 and arrived here to be erected behind the present-day Assembly building, Fort St George, under a cupola. Cornwallis during his second and very brief tenure as Governor General saw it in person at this site.

In 1805, with Cornwallis dead, the British in Madras decided on a much larger monument – a cenotaph no less, under which they planned to position the statue in the Fort. The structure was soon completed at Teynampet but for various reasons (see MM, June 16, 2015) the statue was not moved there. It was only in the early 1900s by which time the cenotaph had itself been moved to First Line Beach that the shift was made. The statue did not survive for long under the cenotaph, being soon shunted to the Connemara Library and from there, after Indepen-

demolition of Bentinck's Building as well.

But several questions remain – who designed the cenotaph and what was it like when it stood in its original site at Teynampet? Answers to these are now happily found in William Taylor's *Madrasiana* (published 1868). The following account is largely from this source with some quotes from others who are independently acknowledged in this article.

On November 5, 1805, a public meeting called by John Oakes, Sheriff of Madras, was held at the Exchange, now the Fort Museum, Fort St George, to come up with ideas on a suitable memorial for the late Governor General. A committee was formed and some of the prominent names included, apart from Oakes, Benjamin Roebuck, Basil Cochrane and Thomas Parry. It was unanimously agreed that a cenotaph be erected.

The design was by John Gantz (1772-1853), who was Chief Draughtsman of the East India Company, Madras. Vyasarpadi was where he lived and a Gantz Road there (now Ambedkar Salai) commemorated him for long. He and his son Justinian were lithographers as well and executed several works chiefly comprising the sights and scenes of the city. Justinian also went on to establish the *Madras Times*, one of the city's newspapers, in 1859. The committee closely supervised the execution and in 1810 also approved a long inscription commemorating Lord Cornwallis to be placed inside the cenotaph. This was entirely in Latin, written by C. Marsh, a resident of Madras. *The Literary Panorama and National Register*,



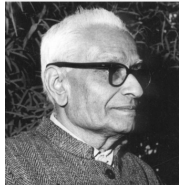
Our **OLD** is the Cenotaph, as it stood in all its (hideous) glory at the intersection of Cenotaph and Mount Roads in the 19th Century. Our **NOT SO NEW** from the 1980s is the same structure with magnificent Bentinck's Building forming a fitting backdrop. Our **NEW** by R. Shantaram shows the structure as it is now – with posters on the pillars and a general air of decrepitude.



a publication from England questioned as to whether the natives would ever understand a word of what was written but it appears that this query did not have any effect.

Maria Graham, who came here early in the 1810s noted that "it is the fashion for all the gentlemen and ladies to repair in their gayest equipages to

the Mount road and after driving furiously along they loiter round and round the cenotaph for an hour, partly for exercise and partly for the opportunity of flirting and displaying their fine clothes; after which they go home, to meet again every day in the year." The cenotaph, noted Maria, "cost an
(Continued on page 7)



The man behind *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi is perhaps the most comprehensive documentation of the life and times of our country's greatest political leader. As the nation celebrates his 150th birth anniversary, this article commemorates Professor K Swaminathan, whose remarkable contribution to Gandhian studies as Chief Editor of the Collected Works remains underrated even today. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi was a project conceived in 1956 as an attempt to collect and document his writings, speeches and letters over a period of six decades from 1884 till his death in 1948. It owed its origin to P.M. Lad, ICS who was then the Secretary to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. An Advisory Board with Morarji Desai as the Chairman was set up to guide the entire process. Dr. Bharatan Kumarappa, brother of J.C. Kumarappa, Gandhiji's close associate, was appointed the Chief Editor. On his untimely death in 1957, he was succeeded by Jairamdas Dowlatram, whose tenure too was a short one, coming to an end with his appointment as Governor of Assam. A search was initiated for a successor who would be able to give new impetus to the project that had seen slow progress. The man chosen for the task was the eminent teacher, Professor K. Swaminathan.

Much like the man whose works he would painstakingly edit and compile, Swaminathan's first calling was Law.

Born in 1896 in Pudukkottai to P.S. Krishnaswamy Iyer and Dharmambal, Swaminathan graduated with a BA Hons Degree in English Literature in 1917 from the Presidency College after his early education at the Lutheran Mission School in Purasawalkam and the PS High School in Mylapore. He then acquired a Law Degree from the Madras Law College in 1919 and served for a while as a junior under veteran Congress leader S. Srinivasa Iyengar. On completion of his law apprenticeship, Swaminathan moved to Pudukkottai and set up practice under the guidance of his father-in-law, a well-known lawyer and coincidentally his namesake, whose daughter Visalakshi he had married even while a student in 1915.

Professor K. Swaminathan's career shift from Law to English came about when he invited the ire of the Government of Madras by inviting the Congress leader S. Satyamurti to address the Bar Association. He was threatened with cancellation of his Bar licence in case of failure to apologise for his act. The nationalistic streak in him refused to let him do so, thus bringing his legal career to a crossroads. The renowned philanthropist Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar came to his rescue and appointed him as Lecturer of English in Sri Meenakshi College which he had founded in Chidambaram and also funded his stint at the Oxford University, where he joined Christ Church College and obtained a BA degree

in English Language and Literature. On his return from Oxford in 1924, he re-joined Meenakshi College as the Head of the English Department. Soon, his alma mater Presidency College (Madras) came calling and in 1930, Swaminathan joined the institution as Additional Professor of English. In 1948, he was promoted and appointed the Principal of the Government Mohammadan College, wherefrom he retired in 1953.

Post his retirement, Swaminathan joined the *Indian Express* as its Assistant Editor at the behest of his close friend Ramnath Goenka. Around this time, he was involved in the translation into English of Rajaji's *Ramayana* and Vinobha

● by
Karthik Bhatt

Bhave's work on the *Bhagavad Gita*. It was Vinobha Bhave who recommended Swaminathan's name for post of the Chief Editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. For Swaminathan, an ardent Gandhian in thought and action, it was a great chance to serve the man he considered a true yogi. His first meeting with Mahatma Gandhi had been in 1915, when the leader visited Madras and stayed as a guest of G.A. Natesan, the editor of the *Indian Review*. Swaminathan had been one of the volunteers deputed to look after the needs of Mahatma Gandhi, an event that would sow the seeds for a life-long devotion to the leader.



The 93 volumes of Gandhi's collected works at Professor Swaminathan's residence Dharmalayam.

Swaminathan was initially hesitant to accept the assignment as he had just then suffered a minor health setback. Visalakshi too was not keen on the idea and it was left to Swaminathan's younger brother, who felt that a change of scenery would do him a world of good, to convince the duo. And so started the journey that would last nearly three decades and span 90 volumes of the 100-volume project.

Swaminathan threw his entire heart and soul into the assignment. Editing the series, in the words of H.Y. Sharada Prasad, "was not work for Professor Swaminathan but *tapas*". The epitome of simplicity, Swaminathan dressed in khadi and walked to work every day. Gandhian scholar Lalitha Zachariah who joined the project in 1968 writes in her piece 'KS Recollected in Tranquillity' that the assignment was no mean task, and that she was recruited after a written test conducted in an examination format, with sections such as proof reading, dictation and formation of sentences! Besides the editorial aspects of the work, Swaminathan's responsibility included administration of the office comprising of English and Hindi-speaking staff. That he managed with almost no knowledge of Hindi spoke volumes of his skills as an able administrator.

Lalitha Zacharia also recollects that Swaminathan never believed in constant supervision of his wards but instead

gave them ample space for work, contemplation and fun. He was completely unassuming and preferred to visit his staff personally whenever he wanted something, instead of summoning them to his room. He was readily available when someone needed help with a problem and used to read every single volume before it went to print.

His single-minded devotion to the project ensured that he surmounted various hurdles, the most significant of which came in the face of the Emergency. With Morarji Desai being placed under house arrest, an attempt was made to get Swaminathan to 'resign voluntarily' by K.K. Nair, the eminent polymath who was to succeed him as the Chief Editor. Swaminathan flatly refused and when it seemed that he would be dismissed, circumstances took a fortuitous turn. Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister following the Congress Party's defeat in 1977 and the crisis blew over.

Work proceeded in full swing and by the time he retired from the Collected Works project in 1985, 90 volumes had been published. He however continued to be associated with the subsequent volumes of the series which consisted of material that came to light after the completion of the original set.

Swaminathan was an ardent devotee of Ramana Maharishi, having met him for the first time in 1940. He was in fact instrumental in the establish-

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A Cenotaph for Cornwallis

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immense sum of money, but is not remarkable for good taste." Besides this account, there are plenty of others that repeat the same fact – of the British in Madras going around it of an evening and how it soon came to replace Cupids Bow by the beach (now occupied by the War Memorial) as the spot to be seen at.

By the time Taylor wrote his *Madrasiana* the space around the monument had clearly undergone some changes. But his is a word picture that is worth reproducing here in full –

"The monument was always as it now is; but (as may be judged by the wide sweep around) the interior closed by an iron railing was originally much more spacious. It took

an oval form; and the enclosed space was laid out with paths and planted with a few evergreens; never properly cultivated or care for. The interior of the building had merely benches and chairs; but Romance declares that many a man there wooed his future mate; and hints that ghosts, and night apparitions were not wanting – fabulous, without doubt. The iron railings of the outer circuit were all spear-headed."

Here Taylor hints that the railings had all gone by the time he saw the cenotaph and that there was an inferior replacement in place – "Who sold all that old iron, and set up a paltry substitute, we do not happen to know."

The cenotaph itself was clearly going to seed by then for he also writes, "Perhaps it now might be scarcely credited that

this place was once the Hyde Park of Madras, and the road thence eastward its Piccadilly."

Taylor then goes on to describe the long line carriages making their way home, each one's path lit by two grooms bearing two lanterns each. These men evidently waited near Blacker's Gardens (now Congress Grounds, see MM, June 16, 2019) and from there a brisk canter meant the Horticultural Society gardens. Here, as people went to their respective homes the lights would divide and branch off, "as numerous as fire-flies, only much larger; and, like them, moving in all directions; a kaleidoscope of lights constantly changing figure." Who can imagine all this on Anna Salai and Cathedral Road today?

When Len Hutton visited Madras

As a teenage cricket fan growing up in Madras in the sixties, I followed the game closely either through the running commentary on the radio or by reading books by famous authors. Besides following the careers of cricketers of my time, I also read about the cricketing greats of yesteryear. Books by Neville Cardus, John Arlott, AA Thomson, Jim Swanton, Ray Robinson, Jack Fingleton and Berry Sarbhadhikari became part of my growing cricket library at home. Soon, like an amateur historian, I became more familiar with cricketers of the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. One of the cricketing careers that fascinated me was that of Sir Len Hutton. Both as batsman and captain he was one of the most significant cricketers of his time and I had two of his autobiographies in my

collection – *Cricket is My Life* and *Just Another Story*.

Besides cricket, I followed other sports too, like tennis, football and hockey. It was my childhood dream to have a job associated in some way with sports when I grew up. As luck would have it, I joined the *Indian Express* in Madras as a sports reporter in June 1968 and thoroughly enjoyed my work.

In February 1970, the public relations officer with the newspaper came to the sports desk and casually mentioned that Len Hutton was coming to Madras on a private business trip. I jumped at the opportunity to meet and interview the great man and pleaded with my senior that I be handed the assignment. A handful of journalists turned up at the airport to meet him and we were told he would have an

informal get-together with the press a little later at the hotel in Egmore where he was staying. When we all assembled at the hotel, Hutton was already in the lobby and without even waiting for questions, starting making comments about the Indian cricketers he had played with. "There is no better bowler in the world today than Amar Singh" he said heaping praise on the tireless Indian open-

answered our questions. The typical English humour came through as well as the Yorkshire accent. Asked about the six greatest all-rounders he had seen, he reeled off five and then after a few moments added the name of Wilfred Rhodes. "You must always have a Yorkshireman," he said amidst laughter.

Hutton was asked which he considered to be his better innings – the famous world record



● by
Partab Ramchand

ing bowler of the thirties who formed a great pairing with Mohammed Nissar.

On and on Hutton went, regaling us with stories and anecdotes even as he readily

score of 364 at the Oval in 1938 or his dazzling 37 at Sydney in 1946. The latter was such a brilliant knock that it was said even the Aussies were sorry to see him get out so it was not

an unacceptable query. Hutton thought for a moment and then in his famous Yorkshire drawl said "Well, 364 is a lot of runs isn't it?"

Inspired by meeting one of my boyhood heroes, I wrote a report that was well featured in the newspaper and appreciated by my journalist colleagues but the happiest moment was yet to come. The following day was my weekly off and while at home, my senior called me and said that they had another meeting with Hutton at the Madras Cricket Club where he was an honoured guest. My senior told me that Hutton was full of praise for my report and wanted to meet me. Unfortunately I was not at the MCC at the time and he left Madras the same night, so I never got the opportunity to meet him again. Even though it is almost half a century since that day, I carry vivid memories of listening to Hutton and interacting with him. The praise was the icing on the cake.

Answers to quiz

1. Pandit Jasraj, 2. Infosys, 3. Kristalina Georgieva, 4. Lionel Messi (Argentina) and Megan Rapinoe (USA), 5. Amitabh Bachchan, 6. Gujarat, 7. 'Gully Boy', 8. Patient Safety, 9. Thomas Cook, 10. Mind-reading wristband.

11. The water train from Jolarpettai, 12. People's Park, 13. Victoria Public Hall, 14. Moore Market, 15. South India Athletic Association (founded in 1901), 16. Tara Cherian, 17. St. Paul's, 18. The Madras School of Arts, 19. The Dravida Kazhagam office, 20. Indian Medical Practitioners Co-operative Pharmacy and Stores Ltd.

Prof. K. Swaminathan

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ment of the Ramana Kendras in Delhi and Madras. The land for the Kendra in Delhi was obtained thanks to Morarji Desai. After his retirement from the Collected Works project, Swaminathan edited *The Mountain Path*, a journal published by the Ramana Ashrama. Other significant contributions include the translation of 1,254 verses of poet Muruganar's *Guru Vachaka Kovai* into English and the authoring of a biography on Ramana Maharishi, which was published by the National Book Trust.

Swaminathan was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1972 for his stellar contribution to Gandhian studies. It would be a unique distinction of sorts when his two younger siblings, the legendary Dr KS Sanjivi (who had convinced him to take up the post of Chief Editor) and K Venkatraman too were later accorded the same honour for their contribution to the field of community healthcare and chemistry respectively (K Venkatraman was the Founder-Director of the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune).

Swaminathan passed away in May 1994. A remark-

able testament to his humility despite his monumental achievements was the fact that he did not let his name appear in the CWMG series until the final volume, which came out in October that year.

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Lalitha Zachariah

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