

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

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## Better Days for VP Hall?

At long last, it would seem that there are better days ahead for Victoria Public Hall. Constructed in 1887 as the town hall for the city and to commemorate the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign, the building undoubtedly was at its best before the 1940s. Thereafter it was a story of steady decline and appalling neglect. Now it would seem that there are better days ahead with a detailed project report in place for its restoration and which awaits the nod of the Chief Minister. For heritage enthusiasts, this is good news. But a lot will depend on how the building is run and maintained in the long run. More important will be the plans that are in place to make the structure generate revenue. Once the home of public entertainment, meetings, indoor sports events and discourses,

VP Hall began to visibly decline from the 1950s. The lease for the hall ending in the 1980s saw prolonged litigation and the Corporation of Chennai had to fight tooth and nail to reclaim the space. Even more difficult was the emptying of the open area that belonged to

• by The Editor

the hall of its squatters – a row of shops and even a high-rise tower that housed a hotel. The occupants had to be evicted and the tower, which was an illegal construction, had to be demolished. Much of this was accomplished during the mayoral tenure of the present Chief Minister, who it is said has for long had warm sentiments towards the hall and the

role it had played in the city's history. Even prior to this, the first attempts at restoring the hall had been taken up by industrialist Suresh Krishna when he was Sheriff of Madras in 1992/1993. Thereafter, a sum of Rs 2 crores was sanctioned for the restoration of the hall when Mr Stalin was Mayor. But all of this came to naught owing to the metro rail work that began in the vicinity. Fortunately, deep drilling below the structure did not seem to affect it and it escaped the fate of Ripon Buildings which suffered numerous cracks and required repairs thereafter. And now there is serious talk once again on the restoration of the hall.

The plan is to make it home to a rolling museum (where thematic displays will be put

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## Metro work slows down city traffic

Commuters are navigating myriad traffic diversions in view of CMRL's metro rail work as part of the 118.9km phase 2 project that involves the construction of underground and elevated lines. Roads in many localities including Marina Beach, Panagal Park and the Boat Club-Chamiers Road have been barricaded. New traffic rules have also obliged heavy vehicles including MTC buses on the route from Vadapalani to Porur to turn left at the Arcot Road-Lakshmi Nagar 40 ft. junction and proceed via 40 ft. Road, 3rd Cross Street, 1st Main Road and Mount Poonamallee Avadi

road to reach Porur. The street connecting Lakshmi Nagar 40 ft. Road to 1st Main Road has been made one way. Barricades

• by A Special Correspondent

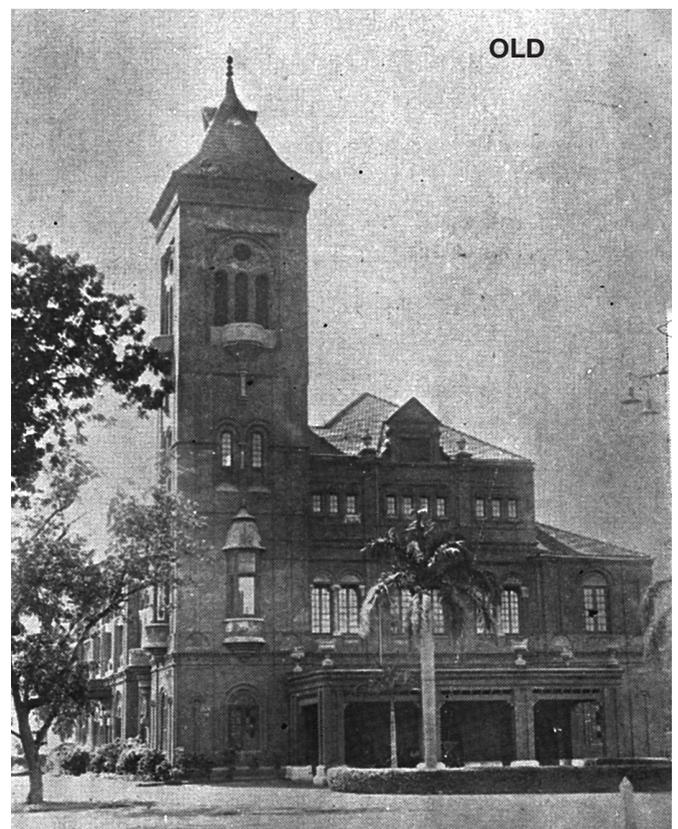
have also appeared in areas like Vadapalani, Valasaravakkam, Kodambakkam and Royapetah, leaving only a narrow lane for vehicles to pass through. In quotes to the media, CMRL officials have confirmed that the new barricades along the elevated corridor will remain in place until as late as December

2025 and for the underground section, until December 2026, by which time phase 2 of Metro is expected to be ready. Regular commuters and motorists are disappointed by the arrangements, for they feel that contrary to ensuring a smooth flow of traffic during construction, it has only worsened the situation in the affected areas. Confusion is reported to prevail as to which roads are now one-way and which two-ways, making for chaos as vehicles ply the streets from all sides. It is claimed that there is a higher incidence of traffic

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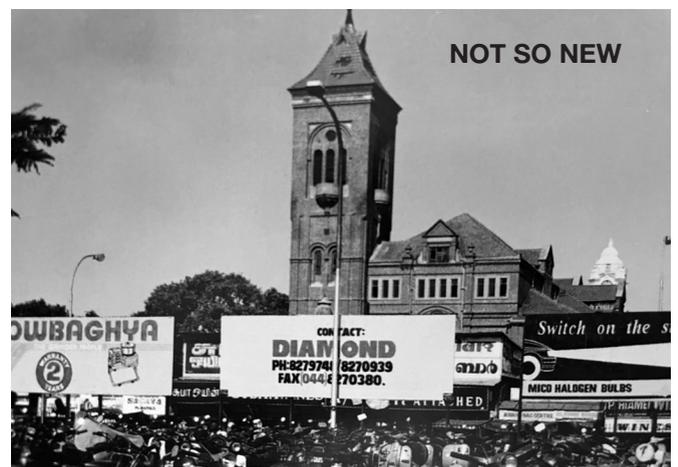
## HERITAGE WATCH

### City's Town Hall over the Ages



VP Hall, which is in the news these days for positive reasons, was meant to be the town hall of the city. Constructed in 1887 to commemorate the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign it was the epicentre of several developments in the city. Left to rack and ruin for decades, it now seems set for a new lease of life, which is to be welcomed. Designed by Robert Fellowes Chisholm, the classic red brick structure with its defining tower is a landmark of the city and deserves preservation and adaptive reuse.

Our OLD dates to 1929 and shows the hall as it was in its heyday, when it was the headquarters of the Suguna



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## BETTER DAYS FOR VP HALL

(Continued from page 1)

up periodically), a permanent museum, an entertainment space, restaurants and open-air displays. Much will depend on how these are designed and how the rolling displays are planned and curated. The building it is understood will be administered by a special purpose vehicle that will facilitate the hiring of expert staff who can make much of what is planned a reality. Ultimately however, political will to see all of this through will still be a necessity. It will be recalled that such plans were announced in 2007 for the University Senate House and none of them was realized – the structure was locked up and has in recent times been opened only for the photo biennale. However, there is hope. The police museum in the premises of the erstwhile Commissioner's

Office on Pantheon Road is an excellent piece of work and those in charge of VP Hall ought to at least visit the place to see what has been done.

There are however some simple ground rules that the renovated VP Hall needs to follow. Firstly, access to it must be via public transport. It is near a multi-modal hub and there is no point in encouraging people to come by cars and further congest an already crowded place. Secondly, those in charge must be given a free hand to run it commercially but with guidelines to ensure the heritage character is protected. Thirdly, the rolling exhibition ought to have a three-year calendar to begin with so that displays are planned well ahead to ensure publicity. Lastly, its restoration must be promoted as a project for the city and not for the benefit of one political party or the other.

## Metro work & city traffic

(Continued from page 1)

accidents, including that of motorists skidding on the sand from mounds heaped by the roadside. Residential streets are suddenly choked with traffic with people seeking shorter, less cumbersome routes. There is reported to be a lack of traffic police at affected junctions, as well. In fact, according to a piece in the *Times of India*, vehicles move at nearly 10 kmph near the Royapettah hospital during morning and evening peak hours.

CMRL officials say that the plans were made to mitigate traffic snarls during the period of metro work. In a quote to the *Times of India*, a metro official said, "This time after studying the traffic flow, plans for traffic management were drawn up by experts and submitted to the traffic police, who have approved. We have provided the required lights, signages and traffic marshals to manage the traffic movement." CMRL officials also said that traffic management across the corridor 5 route from Madhavaram and Sholinganallur via Koyambedu, Alandur and Puzhuthivakkam poses the greatest challenge among the 3 corridors of phase 2 construction.

It is unarguable that the metro works are crucial for social welfare in the long run, for they provide the people with better public transport facilities. However, it is equally important to formulate efficient traffic management strategies to reduce inconvenience to commuters, especially considering the long tenure of the project. The traffic

diversions that have been conceived must be implemented along with other rules that guide vehicular movement in as smooth a manner as possible. For one, there must be greater proactiveness in implementing lane discipline. Vehicles create traffic jams when they congest the streets with commuters either confused about the new rules or purposefully ignorant of them and a lack of traffic police at affected junctions invites daredevils to speed and dangerously weave through waiting vehicles, increasing the risk of accidents. Further, pedestrian footpaths - where they are functional - are affected as well with motorists attempting to use them to cut through the traffic. Along with the stringent implementation of traffic discipline, there must be more effort to educate and guide commuters through the new rules. Changes to existing one-ways and two-ways must be clearly announced and awareness created on the alternate routes that commuters can take. Heavy vehicles must be diverted through separate lanes from regular vehicular traffic. Residential streets that will pick up a portion of the strain must also be alerted in advance so that the populace is braced to meet the change.

As Sivasubramaniam Jayaraman of the ITDP points out in a quote to the media, the state government must devise a long-term plan to mitigate traffic woes so that the people do not suffer when big development projects are implemented even whilst ensuring that the projects are completed on time.

## Chennai once made quite the racquet

*The Woman from Madras Musings* fairly skipped to the living room in joy, for she was watching a very thrilling French open match with the better half. In true millennial fashion, the match was playing on OTT – a choice that turned out to be a poor one for the evening. For, fie upon the powers that be, the buffering wheel of death appeared on the screen at a nail-biting moment and refused to leave until the moment of truth had passed. (Wo)MMM was naturally left quite salty by the whole thing, which brings her to the point of this column this issue. (Wo)MMM was making rather unfair demands that the better half whisk her away to see the matches in person when the quick-witted man suddenly sat up in his seat. He reminded (Wo)MMM of recent news that revealed efforts are underway – or will be – to bring back a major league tennis tournament to the city. When that happens, (Wo)MMM will be grandly whisked away to exotic Nungambakkam, promised the better half. (Wo)MMM couldn't help but sink into the nostalgia of the days that were.

(Wo)MMM was quite small when the Tournament came to the city – it was around the time she was learning to hold a tennis racquet herself. Deemed tiny and harmless, she was readily taken along to most of the matches in the first year and all the years that followed. It was always quite an experience, as (Wo)MMM recalls. The stadium was almost

tennis star would gather his focus to serve to his opponent when, more often than not, a jarring whoop would emanate from the audience precisely at the point of toss. (Wo)MMM remembers feeling sorry for the players, for they would grow visibly irked – justifiably – and throw a murderous glare in the direction of the cry. It often got so bad that the chair umpire had to make earnest entreaties for respectful silence from the crowd. For a very long time, (Wo)MMM was certain that the city lost the Tournament solely on account of these pranksters.

With the possibility that the Tournament will return to the city, (Wo)MMM wonders if this particular quirk of our audience will make a return. She hopes not, for the rest of the crowd really did love watching stellar tennis in our own backyard. We deserve to hold onto the honour.

### On the social service that is directing traffic

*The Woman from Madras Musings* was driving by the usual route home when she spied a snaking line of cars in the distance. (Wo)MMM really did think she was doing the smart thing by ducking into an alternate route via an innocuous side road – she was patting herself on the back until she found herself caught in a gordian's knot of vehicles at the junction to the main road. On the bright side, (Wo)MMM

ple of vehicles parked by the roadside. After that, there was nothing for it but to scramble in search of its owners, which a couple of the interested pedestrians did quite enthusiastically. Once the harried owners appeared, things got better – the blockage was cleared and the great river of traffic resumed its treacle course. The last glimpse that (Wo)MMM got of the temporary traffic policeman was of him in a posture of visible relief – he had a hand on his hip and was mopping away the sweat on his brow with a handkerchief. (Wo)MMM doubts that he would venture again into the social service of traffic direction anytime soon.

### Let there be light

The other day, *The Woman from Madras Musings* came across the most surreal image she has seen in recent times. It was a photograph of a lovely blue lake, carpeted here and there with pretty greenery and graced by a couple of... streetlights. It took a beat for (Wo)MMM to understand what was she looking at. Two tall metal lamp posts seemed to be growing out of the water, making for a very strange sight indeed. The article that this picture had accompanied claimed that the lights have been erected deep inside a lake in our very own city, adding that activists suspected nefarious motives for the move. (Wo)MMM was left quite amazed by the whole thing.

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

always full and the audience exuberant. We appreciated everything, you know. Applause followed great rallies & aces and cheers broke out when things of delight transpired – such as an Asian player humbly bowing to the crowd after a match, or a tournament hopeful with a pair of haute fashion tennis shoes in an eye-watering shade of yellow. We even had cheerleaders, sponsored by a luxury watch brand – on account of which, (Wo)MMM remembers, she was pleaded with to swap front row seats more often than she would have liked, though the appeal invariably came with the bribe of a chocolate or two. For some reason, the stadium became the place to be seen – it was then roughly the real-world equivalent of a prestigious page-3 article. By all accounts, the city had fallen in love with the Tournament. But our city is our city and wags are wags, and wags there will inevitably be in any large crowd – and so, the clearest memories (Wo)MMM has from those halcyon days were the players getting very annoyed with the bad apples in the crowd. The hapless

got to have a front-row seat at the drama which likely caused all the havoc in the first place.

(Wo)MMM peered out of the window to spot a rather excited figure standing bang in the middle of the junction. He was clearly not an official traffic policeman but seemed to be greatly enjoying his self-appointed post. He imperially directed which car or bike was to go where and how, pausing every now and then to avuncularly scold those who sought to rebel against his instructions. Strangely enough, most people seemed to not be averse to taking his guidance – after all, there was no traffic policeman in sight and tempers had grown quite heated. At one point, the poor fellow made a grave mistake in his plans – the traffic flow he effectuated ended up creating a nigh-impossible snarl between two cars flanked by autos and bikes on all sides. It was made worse by curious pedestrians pooling on the footpaths to see how the whole thing would pan out. Our good samaritan stood visibly puzzled, clearly apprehensive of the paradox he had wrought; but he gathered himself quickly enough to loudly blame a cou-

Clearly, none in what must have been a fairly long chain of command had questioned the logic of such works – someone had to have asked for it; someone had to have studied the request and approved the budget; one or many persons had to have waded out into the water to erect the lampposts. (Wo)MMM wonders how the usual dinner conversation would have panned out that day – "My day was nice, thank you. We had to set up a few streetlights inside a lake and we did it quite well. Another helping, please." (Wo)MMM is astonished too that none seemed to be aware of such a thing until the article came along – for the piece claims that the streetlights were installed way back in 2018.

(Wo)MMM remembers that the trending city news on social media the day the article was posted seemed to be a debate over whether a certain actor had truly cut his hair or was in fact changing wigs. Perhaps the streetlight article trended later – (Wo)MMM confesses that she is ignorant on that point. She hopes it did in some small way, at least.

–(Wo)MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Growing beyond renaming of Roads

This refers to *Can we grow beyond renaming roads?* (MM, May 16-31, 2022). The penchant for renaming the roads does not seem to have diminished a wee-bit among the political parties, no matter even if they come to power after a long hiatus, promising good governance. As far as the present ruling party is concerned, it has an incorrigible liking to building flyovers too even at places where there are no traffic snarls.

In the first place, what is the need for renaming the roads which are already in existence and whose names are so very familiar with the people? If the intention is to name the arterial roads after the political leaders for posterity, the efforts will not pass muster as such roads will continue to be referred to and known by their old names. Further, it becomes incumbent upon the rulers to ensure that such renamed roads after the leaders should be kept in top notch condition as otherwise it would only amount to discrediting them.

Since the exercise of re-christening roads, which is politically motivated, mainly serves the interest of the po-

litical parties, and not that of the public in any manner, why should it be thrust upon the people forcefully? How can a government which vehemently dislikes things which are 'imposed' upon it, expect the people to accept such things which are of no interest to them?

\* \* \*

This refers to the new legislation introduced by the Government of Tamil Nadu, under the name and style of Tamil Nadu Apartment Ownership Act, 2022 which will set aside the previous Act, 1994 [Tamil Nadu Act 7/1995]. The press release issued in this regard states that the new legislation is the need of the hour, considering the vast changes and to safeguard interest of the apartment owners and improve the administration of common areas/facilities.

In the said Act, with regard to re-development of apartments, it is stated that:

Any work pertaining to re-development of a project may be carried out on such terms and conditions, as may be prescribed, after obtaining consent of minimum two-thirds of the apartment owners of such project, provided that, in respect of such project:

[1] a period of thirty years must

have been completed from the date of completion of construction of the project; or  
[2] the appropriate authority has certified that such a building is in ruinous condition, or likely to fall, or in any way dangerous to any person occupying, resorting to or passing by such a structure or any other structure or place in the neighbourhood thereof.

As could be seen, the two-third majority comes into play only if any one of the above conditions viz, completion of 30 years or if the building is found dangerous to live, is met. Further, even if a building is much older than the prescribed period of 30 years to qualify for re-development, and, if the appropriate authority certifies that the building is strong and can withstand the vagaries of the nature for a few more years, then such apartments do not have to face the axe. It must be stated that most of the apartments constructed decades ago are so strong that one does not find any signs of major withering. This is primarily because of the material used for the construction and the way they are built. The same cannot be said of the present day buildings. The collapse of an under-construction tenement at Chennai's Mouli-vakkam in the year 2014 is still fresh in memory.

That said, due to the age of the building, there could be damages and this again is caused due to poor upkeep and maintenance by the apartment owners. While such damages need to be repaired as and when they crop up, it, however, does not signal that all is not well with structure. Further, re-development does not necessarily mean demolition of the whole structure and putting up a new one. The building can always be refurbished.

If one were to, per se, reckon with the 30-year period, as mentioned in the Act, then many buildings, such as the State Secretariat and *Ripon Building*, to mention a few, will have to be demolished. But these buildings are still strong, safe and are capable of weathering many storms.

In view of the above, the apartment owners cannot take refuge under the redevelopment clause to browbeat the co-owners, who may have different opinions on re-development.

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### Reg. renaming of roads.

The Ex-Service Men community living around Tambaram had earlier taken up a case with the then Tambaram

## Remembering one more Anglo-Indian

Reading the article referring to 'Ms Alice Suares – Representing the Anglo-Indians in the State Legislative Assembly three times' (*Madras Musings*, June 1st, 2022), brought the name of a distinguished Anglo-Indian of Madras, John Shortt of the Madras Medical Service, to my mind. For many years, we – the late S. Muthiah and myself – thought that Shortt was of British roots, until we found a remark by Mary Ann Dacomb Scharlieb (*Reminiscences*, 1924, Williams & Norgate, London, 239 pp), reproduced below, which clarifies that Shortt was an Anglo-Indian (see 'East Indian'):

*'John Shortt was a gifted man who possessed a remarkable personality. He was an East Indian, and when in the subordinate ranks of the Indian medical service, he was able to save the life of a young officer of good family and much wealth. This young man was very grateful, and when he recovered from his attack of cholera, he told young Shortt that he would give him anything he asked for. The young man asked to be sent home to obtain a good degree, and with it admission to the upper ranks of the service. This was willingly promised, but it was felt that his great service was not yet adequately acknowledged. Therefore Mr. Shortt asked for a similar chance to be given to a young friend of his. The two men were sent to Edinburgh and maintained there until they obtained the M.D., Edin. Then they returned to Madras, and Dr. Shortt at any rate had a long and distinguished career. When I knew him he was Superintendent-General of Vaccination, and, as an amusement, was enthusiastically investigating Cobra poison and its antidotes. ...'*

In the recent past, I could identify the site where Shortt is buried in Yercaud, with help from a friend of mine then living there. This was announced in an earlier issue of the *Madras Musings*.

It is notable that Shortt was the first Indian to travel overseas (Scotland) to obtain higher degrees in medicine. I once thought Senjee Pulney Andy, also of Madras, was the first Indian to travel overseas for higher medical titles; but after my research on the life and work of Shortt (see my article *Surgeon John Shortt on Native Cattle Breeds of Southern India in 1889*, *Asian Agri-History*, 2016, Volume 20, 93-105; [www.asianagrihistory.org](http://www.asianagrihistory.org)), this was established otherwise and I had to revise my previous understanding.

The Anglo-Indian community in Madras, as a whole, has done yeoman service to the growth and development of Madras and many narratives could be said in that context. Hereby I remind the present-day Anglo-Indian residents of Madras the need to celebrate the life and achievements of John Shortt of Madras, who was, further to being an illustrious medical person, was a highly acclaimed veterinarian and a dentist as well.

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PS: There was a mention of the Arathoon Road, Royapuram in passing in the Alice Suares article. I had the pleasant surprise of meeting a person in a Mitsubishi Car Showroom in Perth, named David Arathoon. I talked about the Arathoon Road to David, who was thoroughly oblivious of the said street in Madras and the Armenian connexions of the city. It was fun to fill in some fragmentary details of this fascinating connexion to David Arathoon!

Municipality and Govt. of Tamil Nadu to rename the road joining the Tambaram Velacherry road and Air Force Station, Tambaram as Major Mukund Varadarajan Road. It was meant to be in memory of the late officer who was once a resident of this very road. He had sacrificed his life in Kashmir in a terrorist encounter, in the course of which he had bravely taken down three terrorists himself. He was posthumously awarded the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest Peacetime Gallantry Award.

We were given to under-

stand by the local MLAs and even by Ministers of the previous governments, that the necessary government orders have been issued in this regard. Sadly, the road is still known as Air Force Station road even almost a decade after the request was made. I only hope that the Tambaram Corporation and the present Government of Tamil Nadu will take some action in this matter.

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## HERITAGE WATCH

### City's Town Hall over the Ages

(Continued from page 1)

Vilasa Sabha. Our NOT SO NEW, features the building as it was in the 1990s, completely hidden by shops. Our NEW, taken a month ago shows a compound free of

all encroachments and the building lit up. But its interior is in a shambles and requires immediate attention, which hopefully the restoration plan will attend to.



# Madras in 1759 – I

A chance search for some material on the Elambore river landed me on this account of Madras in 1759. Published in the *Grand Gazetteer* (sic) of Exeter that year, it gives a fascinating account of White Town and Black Town. The first part reproduced here details Fort St. George shortly after the French had left and before the constructions of Patrick Ross and others had begun. We find that that the Capuchin Church of St. Andrews was still standing. There are descriptions of houses, the army, the security arrangements and above all the way private trade flourished. The spellings have all been corrected for convenient reading. Square brackets are notes provided in the original text, round brackets have been added by me.

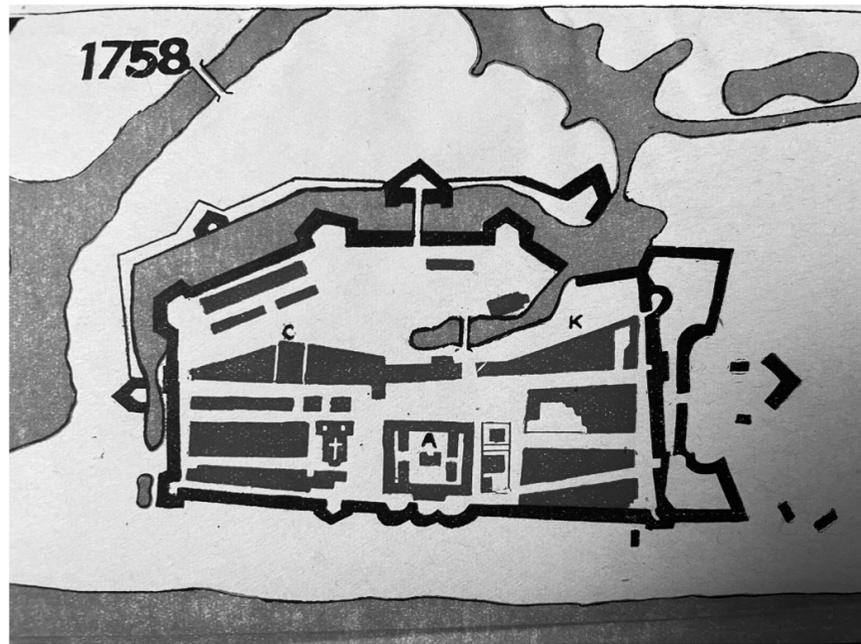
– Sriram V

## The White Town

Fort Saint George or Madraspatan [which in the Indian language signifies the town of Madras] on the coast of Coromandel, lies about 9 leagues south of Paliacatte (Pulicat), 2 degrees north of Saint Thomas (San Thome), 6 of Cabalan (Kovalam), 23 from Pondicherry and near 4,800 miles east of London according to some, but Templeman calls it 3,790 leagues east of London, and the sun rises and sets here 6 hours sooner than with us generally at 6:00 morning and 6:00 evening. The East India company were put in possession of it by one of the Pagan Princes nearly about 130 years ago, and had it ratified by the King of Golconda, to whom they pay 7,000 pagodas [worth about 9 shillings apiece] per annum for the royalties and customs but they gain four times the sum by them to the amount of 30,000 pistoles (Spanish gold coin and worth at that time around 18 shillings) at least (this gives us an idea as to how profitable the EIC was). It is a place of the utmost importance to them for its strength, wealth, and the great annual returns it makes in calicoes and muslins.

The governor of it is also so of all the settlements on this coast and the West Coast of Sumatra; he that presides at Bencoolen being but its deputy governor there. The governor is captain of the first company of soldiers as the second in council is of the next. He lives in great pomp and state and his judges pass sentence of death on any but the subjects of Great Britain. He and his council inflict any corporal punishments short of life and member, on

such Europeans as are in the service, and dispose of all places. They had greater power once but now execute no Europeans but pirates. He has yet authority to send prisoners to the Cork House, a hot dungeon under the town wall where they are allowed but rice and water, which is such a stove that it is certain, though not so quick, death as the halter (death by hanging), and the officers are sometimes by him suffered to hold courts martial and inflict punishment on the soldiers. He has but 200 pounds a year salary and 100 pounds a year gratuity; for so that the fortune they generally make is by trading (private trade by which most early Governors of Madras became rich). His constant guard is three or four blacks, besides 1,500 ready on summons. When abroad on extraordinary occa-



Fort St. George in 1758, from Lt. Col D.M. Reid's *The Story of Fort St. George*. A is Fort House, G is Clive's House and K King's Barracks.

## LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

– SRIRAM V

sions he is attended by the fifes, drums, trumpets, and two union flags, his counsel and factors on horseback, and their ladies in palanquin. On ordinary he has 60 or 80 peons [of whom 200 are kept in pay] besides his English guards, with loud rough music of that country. 50 or 60 armed blacks run before him and the cleverest of the European soldiers run by his palanquin armed with blunderbusses. He is also attended by a runner. Train of servants come up particularly two, called dubashes, to fan him and drive away the flies; and he is in all respects as great as the rajahs of the country. 200 soldiers drawn up in a line from the inner Fort to the church door guard him to it. Yet indeed this state is infinitely short of the Dutch governors of Batavia. The chief of his counsellors has 100 pounds a year. The two essay masters of the mint, one judge and two ministers, have each the same and a house. But though the said persons are not suffered to trade openly, yet they lay up to 1000 pounds and the Judge Advocate with his small salary makes as good a figure as a Lord Chief Justice in England. The Portuguese, who fled here for protection when the Moors drove them from Saint Thomas are obliged to raise a company or two of trained bands, on occasion.

Beef, pork, poultry, venison, fish, are much cheaper than Europe. Wildfowl are so plentiful that three teal, or twenty green plovers may be bought for 3 dimes. But wine and beer are sold at very high rates so that punch is the common drink of Europeans. Linen is so cheap that a private soldier can afford a clean shirt daily. Every one of these has his boy to wait on him; for their Indian parents let them serve the English for a trifle, to learn the language.

The whole town is divided into two, though some make of them three, towns which is the English or White Town and the black city on the north side of it called by the Moors Madrass or Chinnapattan. But then on the south side of the White Town is a little suburb called Maqua where the black water men and fishers live and beyond that is kept an out guard of blacks to give intelligence to the Fort. In the White Town stands the citadel, or a Fort having two gates, west where is the main guard, east towards the sea. It is defended by four large bastions who's north and south points are 108 yards from one another and those of the east and west delivered to the governor, whose lodging, and apartments for his servants, etc, take up 1/3rd of it. The outer Fort has batteries,

half-moons, and flanks, mounted with 150 guns and three guard towers besides 32 guns and eight field pieces on the outworks. The walls both of town and forts are built of ironstone (laterite), so called as being of the colour of wrought iron, and very rough on the outside like a honeycomb.

The White Town is about a quarter mile long, not half so broad. There are three handsome streets to the south and the like north of the Fort whose houses [about 120] are of brick with flat roofs covered with a plaster formed of seashells, upon which no rain can penetrate; and being secured with battlements they take air on them morning and evening. The walls of some are very thick and the rooms lofty, and what's peculiar to this country, the upper floors are laid with bricks. They are neat and stand generally pretty close to the streets without gardens or large courts but they have Italian porticos and row of trees before them. There is a barrack over against the west gate of the Fort where the soldiers off guard are obliged to lodge, when they send a corporal and two men every hour of night to patrol. North side is an hospital for the sick, who if soldiers, receive their pay, but if sailors, bear the charges of their own physick, and allow one shilling a day for provisions at the barracks. Other end is the

mint, where is coined gold and silver. An English church, Saint Mary's, stands on the north side of the Fort, a large arched pile, with fine carved work, and an organ. It is floored with black and white marble and is an elegant, lightsome structure, the windows large, not glazed, to admit cooling breezes. There is also a church for Roman Catholics (the Capuchin church of St Andrews which was later demolished). But the governor superintends both churches. Other public buildings are the town house; under which is a prison for debtors; a free school with its public library; a college, formerly an hospital. There are other schools for different nations. Elambore river runs close by the buildings on the town's west side where is no wall and only a large battery of guns on the river which commands the plain below it. East side a high stone wall though slight, appears grand to shipping in the road. It little needs being stronger, the sea, though it comes up to the town, being so shallow, that no large ships can ride within a mile of it. The town's north and south ends are defended with thick stone walls; but they are arched in and hollow within and may scarce hold out to one day's battery.

# The Cotton Route at Pulicat

Team 1: Vaishnavites + Arabs (Muslims) Vs. Team 2: Shaivites + Portuguese (Catholics)

Yes, this was the combination that lasted between the 13th and 18th centuries. The search for dyes in Pazhaverkadu led us to find the cordial relationship the cotton textile weavers had enjoyed with other religious groups for centuries. Further research proved that this partnership defined the cotton route with both the colour and quality of their cloth. The street of dyers was once filled with Turkish descendants – a few still live in Pulicat – who sold blue indigo to weavers who were predominantly located closer to the Perumal (Lord Vishnu) Temple. There was a clear demarcation of people concerning their trade or job. This led us to understand that there were demarcated partnerships with communities who made the respective indigo dyed cloths of blue, a yellowish shade, and a reddish-brown shade.

Our research on Pulicat Lagoon, located fifty-five kilometres north of Chennai, began in 2009 with the establishment of our Interpretation Centre. We found nature-culture linkages

defining the cultural landscape of the place. The reddish-brown or kavi colour was extracted from mangroves, which were wild in the lagoon till the 18th century. With the rise of lime usage in Madras, the mangroves were cut to fuel its furnace, because its dried wood gives maximum heat compared to other firewood. Most of the commodities that were exported by Vaishnavites were in shades of blue and Shaivites, shades of kavi. The religious places and dyers streets were aligned according to the blues and kavi extractors.

As our search for cotton traced the coastal lagoons of Coromandel (*kari-manal-medu*) Coast, we were intrigued by the presence of most *Kal Pallivasal* (Stone Mosques) closer to the Perumal temples. Further understanding of its urban form made us realise that cloth dying too defined the cultural landscapes of historical religious precincts. The stone mosque is very unique in architecture – it dots the coasts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. They were built by maraikayars – ship builders – who took care of textile shipments of Vaishnavites

on the high seas for six centuries. One may find a similar set up at Kancheepuram and many more places in Tamil Nadu. The urban form of Mylapore and Triplicane would match our definitions of the cultural landscape.

My recent visit to Potagada in Odisha recently concluded our urge to search for the cotton traces along the North East Monsoon coasts of India. Coromandel coast falls exactly where the North-East Monsoon rain cloud meets. The monsoon

● by  
Xavier Benedict

could be called export monsoon as most of the shipments that left the Indian coast were during that season. The import wind is the Southeast monsoon. During that season products from Southeast Asia and Gulf countries reached our coast. The first European fort and the port were constructed in Pulicat and most colonial forts in India were located on the North-east Monsoon lagoon mouths to the sea. The strategic locations helped the Britishers create the Buckingham canal by connect-

ing many channels and rivers. The canal that runs parallel to the sea coast today from Kakina-da to Marakanam once acted as the backbone to connect all the export trading ports along the coast and its hinterlands for the East India companies.

The historical records of Portuguese and Dutch at Lisbon and Hague respectively show that more than 80 per cent of consignments moving out of Coromandel coasts ports during NE Monsoon were cotton. The spices from the Indonesian archipelago and gold from Japan were bartered for the fine qualities of cotton. Interestingly, Indigo blues and yellows were dominating the Vaishnavite exports and reddish-brown (or Kavi) and white shades, the Shaivite exports respectively. Wars were fought for dominance; however, the sophisticated weapons of the Portuguese brought triumph and Shaivite exporters (or sometimes rulers) were always in the dominating position.

The eruption of Mount Tambora between 1812 to 1816 and its aftershocks were felt up to 1819, creating panic and an end-of-the-world feeling amongst the

high sea traders. Mount Tambora is a volcano on the island of Sumbawa in present-day Indonesia which had its most powerful eruption in human history during 1815 CE. The volcanic eruption killed more than seventy thousand people and the following year 1816 there was no summer. The colonialists who were facing high-level trade wars in Europe and the Indian subcontinent began to divide their business territories with high handedness after the death of a few important rulers in South India and as well as in Europe – for example, Tipu Sultan and Napoleon Bonaparte and as well the end of the American war of Independence. The companies' heads started negotiating to realise trade zones by dividing the colonies. That raised the need for signing the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 CE. The Treaty was the defining moment in the history of the world or globalisation. The British took over the major portion of the Indian sub continent and the Dutch left with the Indonesian islands.

Following the Treaty, the British Empire implemented major plans to create a world superpower. Their strategies and unrecorded espionage work started slowly dividing the trade relationship the Indian people had for centuries. All this cordial relationship eroded with the rising power of the British. They systematically broke the understanding between the above-said teams. As the British power rose on the ocean, along with the simultaneous rise of American cotton, religious understanding soured and gave way to the rise of communal hatred. This hatred helped the colonists to have a stronghold on the colonies as well as the trade. The Northeast monsoon coast that defined the modern history of India gave rise to all the modern establishments or institutions in the world after London. The colonial presence helped both in raising the quality of lifestyle and at the same time the hatred. Till today, we continue this strategy for our political and business gains.

The research on the Cotton Route should be encouraged to trace our original plant species and the urban form of India. The history or history books were written based on the colonial mindset but should in fact be traced to nature. Understanding history through nature would lift vernacular thinking. Such change would help us reduce the impact of climate change. Nature-culture relations matter to bring peace, prosperity and sustainability.

## D.H. Rao – his passion for philately, light houses, postal covers and the Buckingham Canal

I have lost a great friend, a co-traveller of a few decades – D. Hemachandra Rao, all of 82 years. Rao loved the city of Madras and gave it all he had to contribute. He was also one of India's foremost philatelists and perhaps the expert on India's lighthouses. The city and our passion for it brought us together some 15 to 17 years ago. We remained a team until the end.

Rao was a man of many large, unique parts. He became hyperactive after the passing of his wife and his retirement from his consultancy. He first went back to his long love that began when he was a kid – philately – and expanded it by the day. He was an expert at creating special postal covers to mark milestones and he chose to specialise in India's

maritime world – mainly, its Navy. Rao's collection of these covers are fantastic ones – some carry the signatures of great people, including the President of India. A part of this collection is now displayed at *INS Valsura*.

Rao would go many miles to create these special covers. He would access even the remotest Post Office in India to get a cover cancelled locally, bug a senior Naval officer and get the auto-graphed postal cover shipped to his place. Imagine the value of all these unique covers he created. Each now carries a story of history.

When a group of us launched 'Madras Day' (to celebrate the city, its heritage, people and places), Rao was at the heart of the venture. He created great special covers for August 22 (now a collector's item), organised exhibitions, volunteered to give talks on his favourite themes and even headed walks. His favourite walks were themed on the Buckingham Canal and on the old bridges of Madras.

He spent a decade researching India's Light Houses and the Buckingham Canal. The Tamil Nadu Archives in Egmore was his study centre – it was here that he spent long hours poring over

files that were shared reluctantly and piece-meal. Once his desk study was over, Rao launched on two great journeys. *The Light Houses of India* and *The Canal*. I was his co-traveller on many such journeys that educated me a lot.

Rao has travelled to every nook, channel, lock and basin of the Buckingham Canal – across Tamil and Andhra. There's nobody who knew the Canal as he did. He walked into the slush of faeces and muck around Basin Bridge, sailed in country boats off Mamallapuram and Peddaganjam, located Canal milestones in

● by  
Vincent D'Souza

Pulicat and Marakkanam, and photographed every rusting lock and archived thousands of pictures. Even until yesterday, Rao was at this venture – he recently printed a 6ft wide copy of the Canal drawings of colonial time and was preparing to sail down the Canal to locate milestones 64 and 65 off the ECR.

His Light Houses of India journeys were epic – from Madras to Dhanushkodi and Muttam, from Kanyakumari to Mangalore to Goa and Bombay and on to the



# EVs... from labs to roads in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has wisely taken the initiative to build on the many foundation blocks. How this is sustained and nurtured will determine if Tamil Nadu and the “Detroit of the East” will emerge a powerhouse in EVs for India and a new world rushing to embrace a cleaner mobility format.

Almost two decades ago, I had been inducted into a Council constituted by the Governor of Vastra Gotaland in Sweden, aimed at planning that province’s economic and industrial development for the next two decades. While its capital city of Goteborg was already home to Volvo, Saab, Ericsson, SKF, Astra Zeneca, Skanska and many more, the province was looking to sustain prosperity for the future. Their admiring gaze drifted to the Boston corridor in Massachusetts and the Bay area of California. The key learning was that to achieve their goals, the building blocks must include (a) an eco-system grounded by solid educational institutions, (b) buttressed by an open social environment conducive to attracting young families, (c) a deep and trained labour pool, (d) infrastructure capacity to allow efficient industry and commerce and (e) the ability to welcome sources of capital.

## Global Applicability of building blocks...

As most economists would agree, these building blocks have global applicability. So, when Chennai, the ‘Detroit of the East,’ plans its own development trajectory in an environment when the auto

industry is being transformed by electrification, it is essential to study the alignment of the building blocks to support the desired course. Fortunately, there is much to encourage, even as the road ahead is long and arduous. India’s national priority towards electrified mobility is governed by the need to address our commitments to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. Tamil Nadu can aspire to the pole position as the country embarks on this course.

## A wholesome Industrial Policy

Even as the first faltering efforts in building EVs in India started with kits, often of sub-standard quality imported from China, our national policy has fortunately dissuaded the settling of a trading mindset. It has encouraged a more wholesome industrial policy starting with knowledge acquisition and skill development. Madras (IIT-M), including its Research Park, has emerged as a reliable and productive crucible capable of delivering, in equal measure, talent and entrepreneurship. Timely focus on the EV topic and the establishment of the Centre for Battery Engineering and Electric Vehicles has led to a steady flow of successful start-ups. Ather India’s much admired EV scooter start-up, is now expanding its capacity in Hosur as a part of a package of investment amounting to Rs. 650 crore. A more recent alumnus, Grinntech (a Chennai-based start-up), is developing a range of high-technology Lithium-Ion batteries and their own proprietary battery management sys-

tems (BMS) and manufacturing capacity with an investment plan of Rs. 100 Crore.

## Advanced batteries from Lucas-TVS

The auto industry depends on scale. Viable economics will only result from a large manufacturing scale, especially when this involves the production of battery cells. India’s national policy on Advanced Chemistry Cell production calls for the creation of 50 GWh of domestic capacity by 2030 – to set this figure in context, it is almost half of all global capacity in 2021. The policy favours manufacturers of contemporary or advanced technology cells, a high degree of localisation and a minimum of 1-5 GWh

● by  
**Dr. V. Sumantran**  
Chairman  
Celeris Technologies

in each facility. In line with this policy, Lucas TVS, one of Chennai’s long-standing corporate citizens, will embark on the production of a highly patented Semi-Solid™ Lithium-Ion cell design in a new factory in a Chennai suburb. Production is expected to commence in 2023 and grow to an annual output of almost 10 GWh. Speaking on the technological advantages of their cells, T.K. Balaji stressed that “Lucas-TVS believes in investing in next generation technologies.”

Alongside cells and batteries, Tamil Nadu’s impressive auto component sector also adds to the state’s momen-

tum for EVs. Groups like TVS, Amalgamations (including the latter’s Simpson Ltd) and UCAL are developing a range of critical systems, including motors, motor controllers, DC-DC converters, electric coolant pumps, electric vacuum pumps, etc. More recently, Chennai-based BFIH Ltd (a Foxconn Group company) will leverage their manufacturing base to expand into EV components like battery controllers, motor-controllers and display clusters.

While battery cells and battery packs are critical to developing the EV industry in India, any national industry gains significance only when it is capable of integrating large complex products. Furthermore, India’s policy perhaps understandably favours the induction of EVs at either end of the industry – namely for small 2-wheelers and 3-wheelers and large buses. The sector will depend on subsidies during the nascent stages and there is a stronger case for subsidising a “common man’s” transport or public transit authorities.

## The Start-up share

Ola-Electric has attracted considerable attention investing in a large integrated manufacturing facility in Krishnagiri in western Tamil Nadu. Other less publicised firms are also taking impressive steps to scale up. Ampere originated as a start-up in Coimbatore and, post-acquisition by Greaves Cotton, has significantly ramped up an investment with a new 2-wheeler plant in Ranipet with an annual capacity to reach 1 million units. The cumulative assets in EV 2-wheelers are buoyed by sales data. In February 2022, sales had grown five-fold compared to the previous year.

Beyond 2-wheelers, Greaves Cotton, a powerhouse for small commercial vehicles, also plans to develop and manufacture a range of EV 3-wheelers suited for last-mile delivery applications and for low-cost people transport. Nagesh Basavanahalli, Vice-Chairman of Greaves Cotton, observed that “Greaves Electric Mobility is proud that more than 70 per cent of the workforce are women. Through our DEEP programme, we are also imparting reskilling training opportunities to the underprivileged, ensuring promising employment opportunities in the future.”

## Ready for the change

Another prominent corporate citizen of Chennai, the Murugappa Group, will also address the emerging market for EV 3-wheelers through their arm, Tube Investments, with an initial investment of Rs. 350 crore.

India’s commitment to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction goals depends on migrating public transit in cities to electric. Chennai headquartered Ashok Leyland has been active in planning its incorporation of EVs with the establishment of its subsidiary, Switch Mobility. With a significant market share among Indian city transit operators, Ashok Leyland has leveraged its UK operations and is developing a range of electric buses employing ultra-modern technology to meet Indian and global demands. Mahesh Babu, CEO of Switch-Mobility India, has confirmed plans to “invest close to 100 million USD in Tamil Nadu on technology development and manufacturing facility.” In addition, picking up from its very successful LCV, the Dost, Switch Mobility will also develop 2-3.5 T electric LCVs, the e-Dost, and e-Bada Dost to allow fleet operators and commerce giants the option of EVs for urban deliveries.

Finally, the benefits of EV technologies cannot be realised until they are deployed in personal and transport fleets. After an initial pilot of running two Ashok-Leyland EV buses in Chennai since 2019, the state government has sanctioned Rs. 3,850 crore to the Transport Department, including a loan of Rs. 450 crore offered by the German Development Bank (KfW).

It is also essential that suitable EV charging infrastructure deployment goes hand in hand with the growing sales. Already, standards for EV chargers ideal for the different classes of EVs have been developed through sponsorship by NITI-Aayog. As these standards facilitate common infrastructure across the country, we may anticipate lower costs arising from scale and higher local content. A unique, low-cost smart-phone enabled EV charge-point piloted by NITI-Aayog has demonstrated the possibility of significantly slashing prices to allow affordable charging for 2-wheelers and 3-wheelers at apartments, workplaces, public facilities and even food-and shopping malls. – (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*, March-April, 2022.)



Women workforce at Ampere in Ranipet.

# Neurology Services at VHS

● Our Series on Prof. Krishna-moorthy Srinivas, his Life and his Work – IV.

(Continued from last fortnight)

## Organisation and Delivery of Neurology Services

The early effort to run a department and establish himself by Srinivas seems to have been drawn from *Reminiscences: On Running, a Small Department* by Prof. Robert Currier which Srinivas read much later. It appealed to him as he reminisced that he had managed to muster those very enduring attributes required for the pioneering effort!

*Skin of a rhinoceros* – not be disturbed by criticism or opposition.

*The patience of an ant colony* – initially growth at snail's pace, but with proper planning and a realistic approach, success comes one's way.

*The optimism of Pollyanna* – characterized by irrepressible optimism and a tendency to find good in everything.

*The balance of a Wallenda* – Flying Wallendas being the

name of a circus act by dare-devil stunt performers, most known for performing high wire acts without a safety net. *The dutifulness of vestal virgins* – who were keen on upholding their responsibility as women priestesses in ancient Rome, to the Goddess of Health, Vesta. They were appointed to keep Vesta's fire alive.

*The willingness of Hercules* – to achieve the near impossible. *Self-deprecating humour of Rodney Dangerfield* – an American stand-up comedian (as no one can hope for respect or praise at the outset).

Robert Currier goes on to say, "You have to convince yourself that it is fun. Your spouse has to be comfortable living at a lower level than the town men who are pulling in the bucks and the fellow faculty members who are making it with the gadgets".

Srinivas first step in the planning was to set a list of priorities, starting with the most immediate requirement. He held tight to the purse strings of the department. Though each department was autonomous, he learnt to go slow and establish only what was required

immediately for basic smooth running of the neurological services. He was quite willing to single handedly stretch himself to fulfil the expert human resource requirement, ensuring continuity of care and adequate documentation of medical records. It was important to ensure that the VHS pharmacy had regular supply of essential drugs, and long term administration drugs like anticonvulsants and movement disorder medication.

The next step was to work toward the sanction of more space to fit in a few examination rooms in the OP and a few beds for neurology patients in the general wards. Subsequently, rooms adjoining the initial room allotted for neurology service at VHS were "purchased" by enhancing the central VHS funds through transfer from the department funds. With further expansion of the space, an EEG/EMG laboratory was attached to the OP department. Srinivas did the EMGs himself, for a long time, while there was a technologist to conduct the EEGs. Prior to the purchase of the department EMG machine, he would do free EMGs and NCVs by appointment, for his deserving patients from the two community hospitals, who required these investigations, at his private clinic, where he had set up his machine.

Then came space for the books, which were initially stacked in one room till the floor to roof wooden shelves all round the room with front glass pane were ready to take the books. Even before this formal move, the department had journals on its subscription list, namely, 'Neurology' (The green journal) the official journal of American Academy of Neurology, New England Journal of Medicine, Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry, Journal of the Association of Physicians of India, and Neurology India. Other cupboards were bought to lodge the overflow of books in neurology, other specialities and General Medicine. Over all it formed an excellent library with select books. Of these cupboards, two antique rose wood cupboard with glass front were donated by Dr. Kamala, a paediatrician who trained with Prof. Srinivas for DM Neurology.



Left to right: Prof. Tandon, Prof. Krishnamoorthy Srinivas, Prof. Baldev Singh and Prof. B. Ramamurthi.

The professor started grappling with the problem of how to expand the healthcare service to the patient of stroke, degenerative disorders and developmental disability, in an acceptable form. Affordability, be it acute stroke or traumatic brain injury or chronic neurological disease, had to be considered realistically. He was sensitive to the direct cost of treatment, which was subsidised at a bare minimum for the poorer patient. Indirect costs due to loss of employment of the adult patient and loss of a day's wage for the relative accompanying the patient to the OP had to be considered. Income lost by the family members who became caregivers could add considerably to the financial burden. Many of the patients at VHS belong to the unorganized sector.

Srinivas put together his first multidisciplinary team in the 1970s. Photographs in the department (part of his large collection) show the the team of doctors, physical and occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers making presentations to visiting dignitaries like Professors John Walton and Jack Foster from Newcastle-upon-Tyne in this period. Srinivas recognised that it was important to recruit doctors and qualified allied health professionals with the right aptitude towards patient care and ensuring their skills at basic level and taking it forward. The multidisciplinary team focused on motor, sensory and cognitive deficits and extended it to cover psychosocial rehabilitation and effective utilisation of community resources. In view of the large burden of neurological disorders, a public health approach to provide primary healthcare at the community level was essential. Spreading awareness and public

education about neurological disorders with specific emphasis on preventive aspects, initially with reference to stroke, epilepsy and dementia, seemed to show some response.

The development of patient care and clinical research at the Public Health Centre in West Mambalam, ran parallel to that in VHS with the generous support from the T.S. Srinivasan family and the construction of the dedicated Anantharamkrishnan facility block donated by Mr. Sivasailam of the Amalgamations group. These developments contributed to palpable progress in healthcare. Prof. Srinivas hardly went on leave, except to attend professional meetings, and so there was no loss of continuity in his patient care. When Lord Walton came to Chennai to deliver the T.S. Srinivasan Oration in February 1983, and visited the PHC and the T.S. Srinivasan Department of Clinical Neurology and Research there, he remarked, "A most impressive development, the combination of high quality specialist care with dedicated community service represented in this centre is surely a model for other centres to follow. I wish the Public Health Centre every continuing success in the future". With many philanthropists and business leaders coming forward to support Dr. Srinivas and his mission in community neurology over time the department evolved. With University affiliations for both Masters and PhD programs and formal Corporate Social Responsibility support in 2004, TINS-VHS as a fully fledged institute was born.

(To be continued next fortnight)

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– THE EDITOR

# It's time for CSK to rebuild

At the recently concluded IPL, Chennai Super Kings started off on the wrong foot, never really recovered and finished second from the bottom in the points table. While their non-performance came as a major disappointment to their legion of fans worldwide, in a way it was not surprising even though they had commenced as the defending champions; though perhaps second from the bottom was a position even the most cynical observer would not have envisaged for the four-time IPL champions. If there is any consolation, it is that the Mumbai Indians, the five-time winner of the title, finished at the bottom. CSK just about avoided that ultimate humiliation, for while both finished with eight points, they were slightly ahead on net run rate.

CSK looked like an aged team, and as everyone is aware, T-20 is a format in which generally the younger players excel. This was confirmed by the fact that even MS Dhoni in his 41st year struggled to live up to his reputation as the finisher par excellence, being able to play that role only once to perfection during the competition. Most significantly, the team's aged look was borne out in the fielding. Normally one of the sharpest fielding sides in the competition, CSK were sloppy this time around, dropping several straightforward catches.

There were other problems too. CSK never really got their combination right. Sometimes they fielded an extra batsman and at other times, an extra bowler when the situation didn't warrant the move. Inevitably, things didn't work out their way. And then neither the batsmen nor the bowlers covered themselves with glory. Most of the big names failed to come off, putting too much pressure on a few players. Sure there was

● by  
**Partab Ramchand**

the odd good performance but consistency was lacking and stars like Dwayne Bravo and Mitchell Santner were expected to contribute much more. It is to the credit of youngsters like Mukesh Choudhury, Shivam Dube and Ruturaj Gaikwad that they shone like beacons in the dark. Among the overseas signings, only Devon Conway and Moeen Ali pulled in their weight.

But CSK's real problem was at the top. The captaincy muddle was clearly the main reason behind the sub-standard showing of the squad. The appointment of Ravindra Jadeja as captain on the eve of the tournament raised a lot of eyebrows given the fact that Dhoni had been the CSK captain since the inaugural edition of the IPL in 2008. Dhoni's

name is indissolubly linked with the franchisee and he is known in Chennai as 'Thala.' He is the unquestioned leader and for him not to be the captain was unthinkable. Certainly, the charismatic Dhoni has been the chief reason behind the CSK success story through the years. Even as the campaign got underway the vast majority of CSK supporters were far from convinced that Jadeja's appointment was a wise one. And when CSK lost their first four matches, a host of questions were raised about his leadership qualities. Ravi Shastri for one did not mince words and made it clear that Jadeja was "not a natural captain" and looked like a "fish out of water" during his stint at the helm. "He hasn't captained at any level so to give him the responsibility I thought was a little hard on Jadeja," the former Indian head coach said in a TV interview.

CSK won just two matches out of eight that Jadeja captained. Midway through the campaign, Dhoni suddenly took over even as Jadeja kept his place as a player. When asked about the change, Dhoni suggested that the pressure of leading the side had taken a toll on Jadeja and that it had "burdened his preparation and performance." He hoped that with the all-rounder freed from the pressures of captaincy, he would regain his form.



M.S. Dhoni. Picture courtesy: The Hindu.

Dhoni did make a winning start with CSK defeating Sunrisers Hyderabad by 13 runs but the leeway was too much to make up. Under his leadership, CSK won only one more match against Delhi Capitals. In fact, CSK hit their nadir in their next game against Mumbai Indians when they were bowled out for 97 and ultimately, Dhoni's record was only fractionally better than Jadeja's in that CSK won two out of six games in which he led. More to the point, his hope that Jadeja's form would be reignited after he gave up the captaincy did not fructify as the all-rounder, probably distracted by the unhappy events, was unable to contribute either with bat or ball.

If there is a lesson driven home by the dismal showing, it is that CSK must be rebuilt even as Dhoni stays the captain. The form shown by some of the youngsters augurs well for the future and Choudhury for one seems to symbolize this. The 25-year-old left arm medium pacer who took 16 wickets in 13 games came in for a lot of praise from both Dhoni and the CSK head coach Stephen Fleming. Even as he rued the mishmash effort from the senior players, Fleming was of the view that it would drive them to step up next season. Yes, with better planning and performances in keeping with players' reputations, CSK could well be back with a bang in 2023 shrugging off 2022 as a bad dream.

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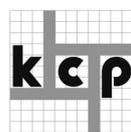


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