

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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Egmore Station to undergo extensive makeover

The Southern Railway, which has been chalking up plans to modernise the Egmore railway station, has finally released details. In what promises to be a complete sweep of the premises, the station will get a much-needed infrastructural upgrade. What is heartening is that the heritage aspect of the station is to be retained, with much of it being repurposed. But will the proposed modernisation dwarf the age-old edifice? That is an aspect that the railways will do well to ponder over even as it goes ahead with the makeover.

There is no doubting the fact that the Egmore station, the second such facility in the

city after Central, is urgently in need of changes. What was once a largely empty station with trains on metre gauge and essentially from Chennai to

● by The Dy. Editor

the south, has morphed into a busy terminus for broad gauge trains from all over India. That by itself has caught the infrastructure unawares. Added to this, the increased congestion in the neighbourhood has also added to the station's woes. Getting off public transport and walking to the building is a nightmare owing to the

chaotic traffic. Driving in is another matter altogether, and as for parking, that is a near impossibility. The railways did attempt some expansion to the rear of the station, essentially to cater to suburban railway traffic but that has not helped much. Unlike Central, where People's Park to the rear and west proved a convenient outlet for expansion along with the sacrifice of Moore Market, Egmore is hemmed in.

Envisaged as project costing Rs 842 crores and to be completed in 36 months, the contract has been given to DEC Infrastructure and Projects Pvt

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Heat of migrant worker row singes state entities, both business and political

The two-minute video appeared on social media channels in the first week of March. Set in what seems to be an unreserved coach on a moving train in Tamil Nadu, it shows a man asking one of his co-passengers whether he speaks Tamil or Hindi; the scene then shows him proceeding to abuse and assault three migrant workers, angrily accusing them of stealing local jobs. The video went viral and understandably created a furore, in the wake of which more such videos mushroomed, purportedly documenting violence against migrant workers in the State. Though the media were later discovered to be either fake or maliciously misrep-

resented, industrial sectors in Chennai and Tamil Nadu that depend on migrant labour are left worried about the unease among their migrant employees.

● by A Special Correspondent

Tamil Nadu is reportedly home to about a million migrant workers who prop up the state's industrial and manufacturing sectors. In fact, more than 70 per cent of those who work in MSMEs, restaurants and construction firms are estimated to be migrant workers. The fake videos have spread considerable panic among this

base, many of whom have been staying away from work on reading reports related to the alleged migrant violence. Some business leaders say that their employees are leaving for their own states as their families back home are anxious. "Some of my workers have also left for their hometowns after getting calls from their families. We are in touch with them," said M Ravi, President of the Chennai Hotels Association to *The Hindu*, adding, "The migrant workers have played a crucial role in the restaurant and hospitality sector in the State. They learn our language and recipes quickly."

(Continued on page 2)

HERITAGE WATCH

Egmore Station – Then, Now and In Future

VERY OLD



And so, finally, Egmore station is to see some sweeping changes, much of it essential. The story alongside has all the details. Once the Madras terminal of what was the South Indian Railway Company (headquartered in Trichy), it stands on land acquired from Dr. Senjee Pulney Andy, one of the early Scottish-qualified medical men of the city. The terminus itself opened in the 1870s with what seems to have been a classic style station (see VERY OLD, pic courtesy T. Stanes & Co).

The present edifice, designed by Henry Irwin in 1902 but considerably tweaked by the railway architect E.H.C. Bird, saw construction begin in 1905 and opened for business on April 11, 1908. The contractor was T. Samynada Pillai who undertook construction of several other iconic buildings in South India. Egmore station was a thing of beauty, with its three-span roof structure, carved pilasters and brackets based on South Indian temple design, its dome, corner towers and contrasting use of

(Continued on page 3)

OLD



Egmore Station to undergo extensive makeover

(Continued from page 1)

Limited, a Hyderabad-based entity with Tata Consulting Engineers providing the Project Management Services. A press note from the railways has it that 'the major scope of the Re-development work includes Construction of New Station buildings (G+3 structures) on both sides of the station (Gandhi-Irwin side & Poonamallee road side), Arrival/Departure Concourses, Arrival/ Parcel FOB, (and) Multi-level car parking.' The total built up area will be about 1,35,406 sq.m. 'The redevelopment is intended to provide an iconic structure with modern state-of-the-art facilities while retaining the heritage value of the existing structure' adds the note.

The sketch of the proposed terminal and the drawing that shows its positioning with respect to the original edifice seem to indicate that the present structure will play second fiddle at most in the new scheme of things. It forms neither a part of the dedicated pick up or drop off locations, being pushed to one side of the new plan. This is not how

cities abroad have integrated their heritage station buildings with modernisation. The old almost always forms part of the arrival area, as it presents an impressive front. In the case of Egmore too this needs to be done, if the old edifice is to remain relevant. It is pertinent to point out here that in Central, the arrival area fronts the main station building. It does not have to be different in the case of Egmore.

The rest of the plan as rolled out promises to be just what the station needs – escalators at all platforms, increased seating space, better and more toilets, and above all, connectivity to other modes of public transport, including the Egmore Metro Station. We wish the railways all the best in this new endeavour and would like to add just one more request – can the extension please have aesthetics as an important aspect? The present additions to the station, including the escalators and the kiosks are all monstrously ugly and shabbily maintained. Egmore station was once a prospect that pleased the eye. May we please see a return of those days?

Migrant workers' row

(Continued from page 1)

Many business heads have taken proactive measures to meet with the migrant workers they employ and reassure them of their safety.

The administration too has quickly rallied to assuage fears. A press release was issued in which CM M.K. Stalin stated, "Migrant labourers need not fear. If there is any threat, you can reach out to the helpline numbers of the police department." The Chief Minister also visited Kanam Latex, a business involved in the manufacture of hand gloves, to personally enquire about the well-being of the migrant labourers who worked there. It was reported that the workers gave positive feedback about their experience working in the state, acknowledging that the state administration was supportive and that the local people were friendly. The CM urged them not to give in to rumours and reiterated that the State government was committed to providing safe working environments for guest workers from all states.

The issue has opened a can of worms in the State. Charges of inciting violence have been filed against politicians and media houses whose handling of the report is seen to be deliberately misleading; this,

of course, is hotly contested by those charged. On the other hand, some factions are using the opportunity to bat for job reservations for local workers. The Thanthai Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam (TPDK) staged a large protest in front of Shashtri Bhavan, demanding that priority be given to Tamils in Central government jobs based in the State. They also sought reservations in the appointment of Supreme and High Court judges. Ground opinions are split amongst the people as well, going by social media chatter.

While many are aghast at the divide and seek to reaffirm that TN is a welcoming state, there is also a significant pool of others who express real concern about what they see as a massive influx of migrant workers.

The impact of the subject is so varied and widespread that it can be argued that fake news is not the real problem anymore, even though it is the root cause. In hindsight, perhaps this is a debate that was imminent. What TN needs now is to spread awareness of migrant labour proportions and the crucial role they play in enriching local economies. Concerns of local joblessness need to be addressed head-on and given its own importance, separate from the subject of

Tamil Nadu, in the considered view of *The Man from Madras Musings*, is the heartland of posters. And Chennai, being the capital, is the headquarters of the poster world. There are posters for just about anything – birth, death, puberty and marriage announcements, the latest issue of magazines, music and dance performances, plays, films, classified ads, shady medical treatments, real estate schemes, coaching classes, and of course the comings and goings of our political leaders. Even demolition and well-digging agencies put up posters. That the city can also win any competition on daft laudatory posters hands down is a given. MMM was left ruminating on this aspect after the recent birthday celebrations which were, er, widely celebrated to the extent of involving a camel.

cent times it would seem that pater's party is following the lead of the mater when it comes to posters.

Do you recall the famous birthday posters for the mater? Well, MMM does, and he wishes that he had captured a few for posterity. The problem was that MMM, like everyone else, assumed that the mater will be around forever, and her birthdays would come around each year. Who would have thought that she would go the way of grass? Well, it did happen that way and MMM having procrastinated till too late now regrets. But he was filled with delight when the recent birthday celebrations yielded a rich crop of such posters. One complimented the birthday boy for thinking about the people even when he goes on walks. Well, that is why he was elected was he not? On

tory. The redeeming feature of these episodes, in MMM's view, is that they are brief – ten minutes apparently being too long in today's world where the average attention span is that of an ant. And so MMM prepares for these accordingly but let him assure you that the stress he goes through is nothing less than what he undergoes before full-length presentations. The butterflies are in full force in the stomach on a permanent basis. The post-release phase of these videos does have its amusing moments though. There was a recent one on Avadi where MMM held forth to debunk the oft-held view that the name is an acronym for Armoured Vehicles and Ammunition Depot of India (can you imagine a country of our size having one ammunition depot?). Many lauded

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

In MMM's view, mater dei was really the mother of posters. That even as mundane an event as her going to the party HQ or her office was sufficient reason for posters indicates to what extent she encouraged it. Politicians wanting to curry favour hired ghost writers to churn out captions by the minute and had them converted into kiosks, banners and posters round the clock. Given the speed at which mater dei's convoy whizzed about it was a moot point if she noticed any of what was written. But she must have been able to see her face beaming down at her and that must have been enough. It is of course quite likely that the gradus mater (Lesser Mother) took notes on what was said and passed them on to mater dei for due consideration.

Pater familias on the other hand, no matter what his other faults be, was certainly more moderate when it came to posters. Perhaps given his scholarship in the lingua franca, his followers hesitated before putting up anything. His retribution when it came to errors in language, so MMM is informed, was severe. But nevertheless, he did nothing to curb the poster menace, which proliferated. But in more re-

that note MMM must add that the national leader too is lauded for activities that you would assume were part of his daily routine. After all, nobody is going to put up a poster for MMM praising him for churning out this column each fortnight.

There were then the usual ones that lauded birthday boy as sun, moon, light, etc. There was a poster that sang the praises of his wife – (daughter-in-law of a ruler, wife of a ruler, and mother of a ruler-to-be). There was a message addressed to sister – enough of governing the world, come attend to the house – MMM wondered if this was in praise or meant otherwise. He also suspects that the powers-that-be would not have been so amused on seeing the picture that accompanied it – the lady in question seated in company of past greats at a round table, while the brother stood in an attitude of obeisance (or admiration) behind.

But the best was a couple put up by leaders from other States. One had the other regional leader commending our man as future national leader material. The other, put up by another regional party had it that our leader was hailing their leader as national leader material. And so it went on. And all this just weeks after our city's municipal corporation resolved to combat the poster menace with fines being levied on offenders. MMM wonders as to whether the Corporation fined anyone during the recent festivities.

History Bits/Bytes

Of late *The Man from Madras Musings* has taken to the electronic medium to hold forth on what he has gleaned over several years on the city's his-

MMM's efforts but a good measure of how many actually saw the episode was had from the number of comments that said Avadi was an acronym for (you guessed it) Armoured Vehicles and

Clearly fake news rarely dies in India.

But that was not all. There was a call from a journalist that went as follows –

Sir, I want to speak to you on history of Mount Road

MMM: Ok, what do you want to know?

That only sir, history of Mount Road

MMM: What aspects?

That only sir, history

MMM: (sigh) Have you done any reading?

Yes sir, we saw your video.

MMM in complete silence hung up. But then if there are people who assume that history can be doled out in ten-minute bits or is bytes, who is MMM to complain?

Tailpiece

A journalist friend of *The Man from Madras Musings* sends this amusing snippet of information – many old buildings along a particular stretch of Virugambakkam have been demolished in order to facilitate Metrorail work. Left standing however are three structures that belong to TASMAR, the Government's marketing arm whose sole task is to vend liquor and keep everyone on a continuous high. Ironically, a few years ago these were the very outlets that the local public wanted closed! Such is the state of our State. On that merry note, see you in the new financial year.

– MMM

migrant labour. The engines of state politics need to examine their own messaging as well, for it cannot be denied that their attempts to take a certain political stance may well have alienated guest populations. Migrant workers have played a key role in growing our state's coffers. We cannot do without them and it is up to us to keep them feeling safe and taken care of.

HERITAGE WATCH

(Continued from page 1)



PRESENT

brick, granite and sandstone. Its chief attractions were its refreshment rooms (catering by Spencers and ice from Unger's Royal South Indian Ice Factory) and the drive-in platform, alas, both gone now. Our OLD shows a photo taken in 1914 and featured in Southern India by Somerset Playne.

Our PRESENT is by William Satish. The station, as per railway statistics, handles Rs. 32 crores worth of tickets per year, translating to 117 lakh tickets sold. It serves 552 trains every day with 24,600 peak hour footfalls.

Our PROPOSED is from the plans provided by the Southern Railway.



PROPOSED

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Sd. Rohini Ramesh
(Publisher)

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Statues on the Marina

Talking of statues on the Marina (MM: February 16, 2023) I remember, after the statues of Tamil scholars were erected as a part of the World Tamil Conference over 50 years ago, it was then rumored that the statues actually came to life in the dark of the night in celebration of the Conference. Some claimed to have seen Kannagi and U.Ve. Swaminatha Iyer playing ring tennis across the road. All so eerie!

G. Ram Mohan

Flat 2B, Arihant Sr Narayana
Door nos. 33 & 35
Fourth main Road
R A Puram, Chennai 600 028

Apollo Hospitals

Reference to 'Apollo Hospitals – Early struggles', (MM, February 16, 2023). A bouquet of kudos to Dr. C. Pratap Reddy, the honourable founder of the first corporate hospital with global standards in India. After its success and fame, some others also ventured to establish similar hospitals in India, but Apollo Hospitals still continues to function with its glory in the field of medical care. Even though there were many initial problems while taking a footstep, it's founder has succeeded in creating legendary footprints. It has grown with several branches and many para medical institutions. It has successfully managed to remain in the forefront of medical services. Recently it was reported that the Apollo Hospitals has established the Proton Beam therapy for cancer treatment, first of its nature, at very high cost at its Chennai cancer unit, when others gave up such attempts after facing several hurdles. The power to move with grit for making such efforts against all odds is commendable.

At the same time, people feel that Apollo are high starred hospitals and many feel frustrated not to have access to them due to the high cost of treatments. Having established a strong foundation, the management should try to offer affordable rates to the subaltern and poorer folks. It can solicit help from many charitable institutions for contributions to its ventures to serve the patients and earmark a higher portion of profit for CSR to help the people. However, it is true that the charges are cheaper than those prevailing abroad.

About the Proton therapy

The Metro and the changing city scape

When we resided off Mount Road in the 1960s and 70s, there were a few places I haunted. New Elphinstone Theatre, Bata showroom, Mount Road Post office, Christ Church School, Buharis restaurant and Higginbothams.

The walk from home to Higginbothams took about 20 minutes and there were many eye-catchers along the way which took our minds off the sweat. You could spend as much time as you wanted in this bookstore, even read a few pages of a book you liked and nobody asked you nasty questions!

Some years ago, when I dropped in at the vintage book store, there was a dullness all around. Work on Chennai Metro was on at a furious pace and this had disrupted all the businesses on Mount Road, now called Anna Salai.

"We hope the new rail line will bring us new customers," the store manager had told me. What he was hoping for was for book-lovers from all parts of the city visiting Higginbothams once access by the Metro was made easy and simple and cheap.

Mount Road has revived but it is not anymore, the buzz road that it once was.

Chennai Metro projects are underway in many zones of our city. Phase Two is an ambitious one, with one line running north-south and another, east-west. And once these lines are in operation, mobility is going to be great. What interests me, and will for all those who take great interest in this city, are the changes that are brought about by such large civic projects. They change the face of our neighbourhoods.

Earlier this week, I had to shop at a place in the middle of TTK Road in Alwarpet. I got there close to 7 p.m. There was a strange silence all around me, this in a zone which was not too long ago a bustling channel of vehicles and a hub for retail stores. Massive barricades on two sides of the road enclosed civil work on the local station for Chennai Metro that would come up, two buildings had been brought down and many more would be shaved off in the weeks to follow.

Changes are also taking place in Luz and on Kutchery Road, on Luz Church Road and off TTK Road, as they are in other parts of the city. And if you are familiar with these areas, you may have noticed that shops you frequented, apartments where your friends used to reside and hawkers who used to serve your needs have all gone or will soon disappear.

The Marina off Queen Mary's College and the TN Police Headquarters is already looking different, with giant cranes and massive barricades dominating this skyline. Imagine what this beach area will look like when the Metro stations, parking lots and newly designed zones come up.

The changes are immense. Reason why I have been asking city-based freelance photographers to document the changes that are taking place in the city because of Chennai Metro. Can you imagine what Luz Circle (which is to be the intersection of two Metro rail lines) will look like in 2025? – Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*.

– Vincent D' Souza

introduced by it, a doctor from Thiruvananthapuram opined that, "it is regrettable that high cost of these therapies is a huge hurdle to cross for the poor and "medically undeserved". Combination therapy that combines radiation therapy, chemotherapy, targeted therapy, including immunotherapy has been found to be more effective,

both in terms of the cost and better prognosis. Advanced treatments must be accessible for all those with cancer." I sincerely hope that such treatments would be made available to the common folk in the near future.

K.Rajendran
Anna Nagar
Chennai 600 040

The Round Tana

The name has been around for long, in fact so long, that nobody knows how it came about. As is usual, a number of stories with no facts to support them have been bandied around. There is no round tana in fact – all that remains is a statue of Annadurai marking the spot where it stood. But round tana is still spoken of as though it exists. It is one of those enduring lost landmarks of the city.

Old records clearly indicate that the name owes its origins to a round or circular police station that stood there. The word Thana is pan-Indian and has existed since Mughal times at least, indicating a police watch post. And the oldest reference to the Round Tana that I have been able to find is in the report of a commission to enquire into postal communications in India dating to 1852. The document suggests several delivery routes in the city for areas 'far from

the General Post Office'. One of these is along 'Triplicane, Royapettah, St Thome and Adyar beyond the Elphinstone Bridge.' The first point of call on this route is given as the 'Circular Tannah' at the entrance of Triplicane. Now how does this clearly explain that it was indeed a police station that was being referred to?

In 1873, the Government investigated the effectiveness of registration of births and deaths

bend was like the Tamil letter L and so was referred to as tana and so a roundabout became a round tana!

What did the Round Tana police station look like? We sadly have no answer. Most police stations of the time were pyols (platforms outside houses) and therefore exposed places with no protection from the elements. The Government on realising this, ordered in the mid 1800s the erection of 36 teakwood lampposts, each 8 feet in height and fitted with ten lamps covered with glass globes, to be near a Thana. That Mount Road police post was an important landmark is made clear from many residents of the area in the 1870s writing their addresses as simply the Round Thana/Tannah, Mount Road. William Hickey the lawyer was one, as was M.A. Apparow Moodelliar, pioneering 'cholera doctor, royal Pegu pony merchant and commission agent.' Being at the southern end of Government Estate, the area was full of saddlers, livery makers, horse merchants and carriage hirers. The famed Burghall's Stables was just opposite and comprised the area occupied today by Simpsons, *The Hindu*, *The Mail* and P. Orr & Sons.

By the 1880s however, the police station at the Round

Sir Charles Lawson makes note of the city's illumination and says 'the Maharajah of Vizianagaram's Fountain at the Round Tannah was brilliantly illuminated with a large number of variously coloured lamps.'

In 1910, the long-awaited plan to gift a statue of Lord Ripon to the city bore fruit. Subscribed to by the Indians of Madras and sculpted by Francis Derwent Wood, it was erected fronting the Vizianagaram Fountain and unveiled there by the then Governor Lord Pentland. These were the two monuments then that defined the Round Tana. Sometime in the 1920s, the statue was shifted to front D'Angeli's Hotel. It moved from there to Ripon Buildings during the Second World War. The fountain ran dry by the 1940s and became a convenient urinal. The '40-foot square, Indo-Saracenic in style and topped with a dome' structure was deemed an eyesore by the then Commissioner, J.P.L. Shenoy ICS and ordered to be removed, and re-erected in a park nearby. The latter part of the instruction was never complied with. Shenoy rather ironically erected public latrines on the spot. Beneath these was an air-raid shelter – a necessity during the Second World War.

In 1956, the Corporation of



Above: Vizianagaram Fountain at the Round Tana, courtesy Madras, Its Past and Present, by S. Muthiah. Below: The Ripon Statue with the Vizianagaram Fountain behind, personal collection of Sriram V.



LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI – SRIRAM V

in the city. There were designated registrars who at a salary of Rs 30 per month operated out of their houses, most of which were in the poorer districts of the city and near impossible to locate. Therefore, it was decided that the office of the registrar would be attached to local police thanas and a list was published. The seventh division of the city had its registrar at the 'Round Tannah, Mount Road.' All the names preceding and succeeding this are identified as the police tannahs of the respective areas and there is no doubt therefore that the Round Thana was nothing but a police watch post. Bradshaw's *Illustrated Handbook to the Madras Presidency of 1864* also defines a tannah as police station. This clearly gives the lie to the oft-repeated claim that a right-angled

Tana had vanished. It is quite likely that this was the station that was shifted to the entrance of the Chepauk area, where it still stands. The space occupied by the police station at the roundabout had by then been taken over the Maharajah of Vizianagaram's fountain. In his *Narrative of the Celebration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria (1887)*,

Madras approved of a Rs. 10 lakh plan 'for the construction of an underground arcade with three subways and an attractive underground shopping centre in the Round Tana in Mount Road. The shops will be situated in the outer periphery of a circle, in the centre of which will be a circular lawn about 50 ft in diameter,

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The Round Tana with a car parked on it circa 1950s, courtesy Greater Chennai Corporation.

Artist Maniam: living in the hearts of many Tamil readers

India was preparing itself for Independence. The time was also coinciding with the need being felt in restoring India's forgotten culture and heritage. Ramaswamy Krishnamoorthy (1899-1954) (hereafter, Ra Ki) and Thiagaraja Sadasivam (1902-1997) established *Kalki* in 1941. Providence brought Maniam to Kalki as a young artist. Soon the combination of Ra Ki's writing and Maniam's artwork began to create magic among *Kalki* readers and subscribers. This was possible because of the synchronization of thinking between the two creators Ra Ki and Maniam that developed over a decade. Let us see from the start.

T (handarai) U (mapathy) Subramaniam, my thatha, was born as the eldest son to T (han-

Amman Koil. He was initiated into the world of art through his chittappa T (handarai) K (umaraswamy) Lingayyah, who was only five years older than him. As a child, he watched his uncle Lingayyah and S (undaram) Rajam (a close friend of Lingayyah, and the older brother of Veenai Vidwan Sundaram Balachander) sketching the day-today events in the busy thoroughfares of Mylapore. These artworks of Lingayyah and Rajam influenced Maniam immensely. Lingayyah died at an early age of 16 and Rajam later became a person of high distinction in the world of Carnatic Music further to being a talented artist-painter.

I recollect two childhood incidents of thatha – narrated to me by my appa, T (handarai) S (ubra-



Ponniyin Selvan characters: Nandini and Vandiyathevan, 1950s.

maniam) Loganathan (better known as Ma Sé) – that go to show the sparks of Maniam's passion for art as a young boy. As a student in the Dādi Vadhiyar School, he did a pencil caricature of his teacher, who was fast

class room and noticed the only student – the young Subramaniam – who seemed to be working intently on his notebook, while rest of the class was busy raising a ruckus. The Inspector collected the Subramaniam's notebook

different story! When Maniam was studying in the P.S. High, he made a clay figure of Rajaji, coinciding with Rajaji's visit to the school. Little did young Maniam ever imagine then what his future life was going to be!

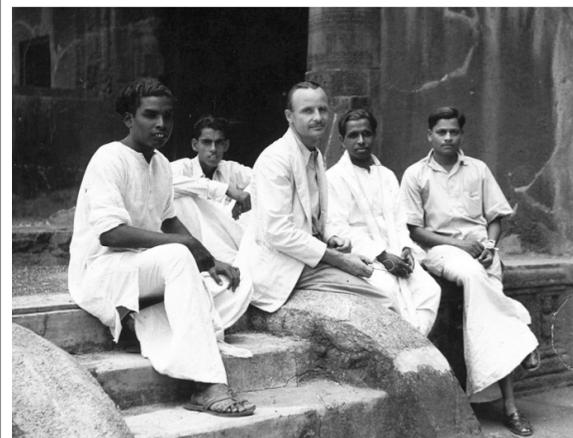
Subramaniam joined the Madras School of Art (MSA, presently, the Government College of Fine Arts) in Periamet and trained in fine art when the famous Indian sculptor Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhury (1899-1975) superintended the school between 1929 and 1957. Here

(Continued on page 6)

by Subhashini Maniam
suba@maniamselven.com

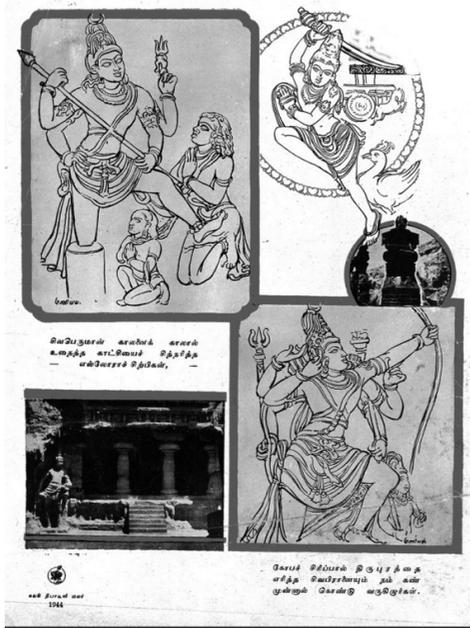
asleep in the class room after assigning some work to the students. Unexpectedly the inspector of schools walked into the

only to see a pencil caricature of the asleep teacher. That this incident placed Maniam in a tight spot with his teacher is a



Maniam, Ananthanarayanan, Ellis R. Dungan, Kalki and Nagaraja Rao.

darai) K (umaraswamy) Umapathy and Gnanambal Umapathy in Mylapore on 26th January 1924. Subramaniam used the sobriquet Maniam in professional circles, and later grew into a highly sought-after artist in the then state of Madras. Having lost his father when he was 20 months old, he grew up in the care of his grandfather T (handarai) C (hengalvaraya) Kumaraswamy (a traditional-Indian medical practitioner of the Thandarai Vaidyasalai) in Ponnambala Vaidyar Street, Mylapore. Subramaniam first went to the Daadi Vadhiyar School in Nadu Street and later to P (ennathur) S (ubramania Iyer) High School (Branch), located near Mundagakkanni



Murals and Sculptures of Ajanta & Ellora for Deepavali Malar 1944.



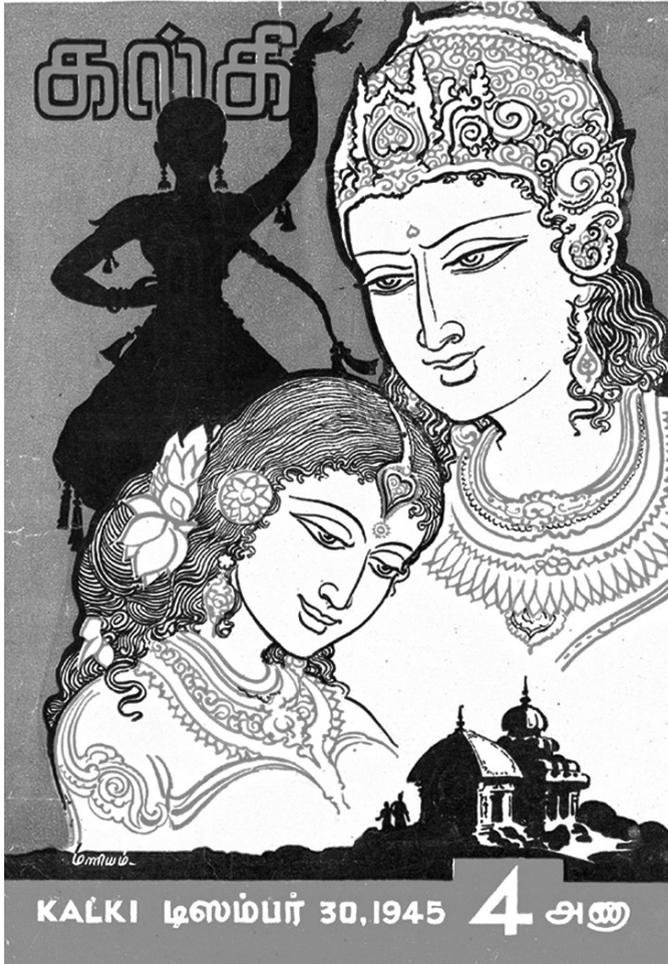
Costume Design & Art direction for Parthiban Kanavu, 1958.

Artist Maniam: living in the hearts of many Tamil readers

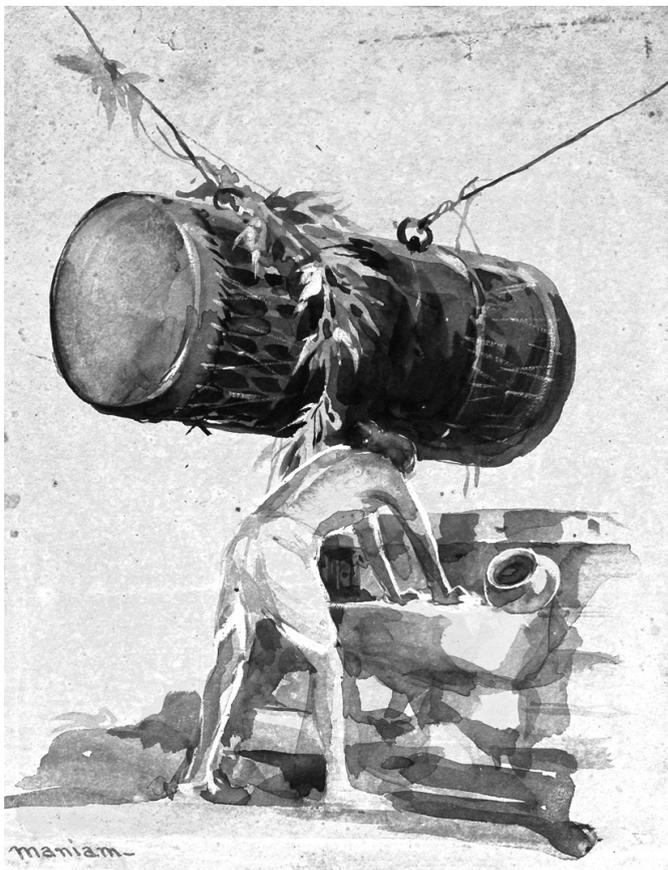
(Continued from page 5)

as a learner Maniam displayed his spark as an artist of promise. Along with S. Dhanapal, H.V. Ramgopal, Krishna Rao, as colleagues, Subramaniam enjoyed an inspiring companionship as a young artist. While being a student at MSA, in 1941, he got introduced to Ra Ki as a potential candidate artist by S.

Rajam's father Sundaram Iyer. Ra Ki intuitively spotted the talent of Subramaniam and offered a position to join his fledgling *Kalki* as a full-time artist. Subramaniam was naturally delighted and astonished with the offer made by Ra Ki and asked him whether he could join after completing his Diploma in Fine Arts from MSA. Probably not to let this talent slip through his



Sivagamiyin Sabatham Coverpage artwork, 1945.



Water colour study of a man grinding sandalwood paste done during his MSA years.



Students and the faculty of Madras school of Arts, 1941. Seen in this picture are: Kalaimagal Swamy, Simha, Chitraleka, Maniam, Silpi, Principal Debi Prasad Roy Choudry, K.C.S. Panikar, Dhanapal and Ramgopal.

fingers, Ra Ki challenged Subramaniam, whether he or his diploma was going to either draw or paint. After much thinking, Subramaniam (signing as Maniam) dropped out of MSA and joined *Kalki* as a full-time artist. Subramaniam always thought highly and reflected positively of Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhury and Ra Ki as the strongest influences in his life and referred to both of them as his gurus.

In 1944, Ra Ki, the American film director E(lli) R(oderrick) Dungan, R.N. Nagaraja Rao (stills photographer), Ananthanarayanan (*Kalki* staffer) went to see the Ajanta and Ellora artefacts. Maniam, as the artist, had the opportunity to accompany these men; at this time, Dungan was scouting for location for the movie *Meera* and Ra Ki was writing *Sivagamiyin Sabatham*. Therefore, Ra Ki preferred to get some seed thoughts from there. This first visit to Ajanta and Ellora enabled the blossoming of the artistic eyes and mind of Maniam. He was lost in the beauty of the Ajanta murals so much, that he stretched his stay there to capture the artistic charm of those artefacts on canvas. On returning to Madras, he contributed his artworks of Ajanta murals to the *Kalki Deepavali Malar*, 1944, converted as an article titled *Ajanta Adisayangal* by Ra Ki. Because of the possibility that Maniam could be lost in the meandering caves of Ajanta, Ra Ki has indicated in that article that he felt compelled to leave Ananthanarayanan as an escort for Maniam in Aurangabad to continue his work in Ajanta and Ellora.

Maniam returned to Madras as an enlightened artist with a new artistic grandeur. Supplemented by keen observations, meticulous historical thoughts were brewing in him. As a young artist, he created tail pieces and *Kalki* cover illustrations for *Sivagamiyin Sabatham*, although artist Varma was the principal

artist for that novel. Periodical feedback from the *Kalki* readers, applauding the artworks of young Maniam along with those of Varma gave the assurance and encouragement to hone his uniqueness as Ra Ki's principal artist. I have heard from my appa and paati that Maniam used to reverentially refer to Ra Ki and Sadasivam often for nurturing him. He held both of them in high esteem for encouraging and providing adequate space for him to blossom into a preferred and liked artist of Madras. Such associations, accelerated by a constant thirst for uniqueness, refined him as a sought-after artist in the next decade of his life.

When Ra Ki commenced the novel *Ponniyin Selvan* in *Kalki* in 1950, Maniam had grown into a talented and full-fledged artist in his own right.

From this time onwards, Maniam explored various means and measures to express his special sense of aesthetics, be it either for design value or for re-imagining scenes of historical past through creative art. *Amara Thara* was the last serialised story that Maniam and Ra Ki collaborated together for *Kalki*. Due to the love to re-create visual imagery of Ra Ki's historical writings on the silver screen, Maniam resigned the full-time position as an artist from *Kalki* magazine in 1957. With the blessings of T. Sadasivam he embarked on his life as a freelancer. He continued to work for *Kalki* as a freelance artist till his last breath. He served the art director for the movie *Parthiban Kanavu*, another magnum opus of Ra Ki, produced by Jubilee Films V. Govindarajan, directed by Daasari Yoganand, and released for public viewing in 1960. Maniam handled each of his artworks as a composite mosaic, similar to an enchanting verse composed by a skilful poet, communicating every detail as aesthetically and as powerfully as possible in a 2-D context.

Obsessed with a quest for detail and perfection, he painstakingly created large-size artworks, although finally they were reproduced on the smaller pages of weeklies. He travelled to Hampi, Badami, and the Elephanta Caves, searching for historical relics and deriving inspiration from them, usually accompanied by his wife, Saraswathy, who professionally supported him as an assistant, and even posing as a model when required for him to 'create'. Saraswathy also enabled him to get homely meals, which she ardently and devotedly prepared with the materials available on site.

Until the end of his short life of 44 years, Maniam grappled with an unquenching thirst to push the boundaries of creative art. In 1968, Maniam had to pass the baton to his only son Loganathan, who rechristened himself as Ma Sé for Maniam Selven (implying 'son of Maniam'), when Maniam's body refused to cooperate any further.

Maybe that was the Divine will to pass on all of Maniam's aspirations to Ma Se, my appa, at a young age. Appa took his father's aspirations further and etched a name for himself in the last 50-odd years in fine arts, with a strong conviction of representing his appa through his creative works and quest to learn. Ma Se's artistic journey continues to set new milestones. Ma Se has carried the Maniam legacy through the barriers of time. Maniam's passion for delicate art lives in the hearts of many of the present. The year 2023 will mark the start of the year-long birth centenary of Maniam culminating on 26 January 2024. Art lovers of Chennai can eagerly look forward to a visual treat of Maniam's original and unseen works, which will be displayed at an exhibition to be held in Chennai, at the end of this year.

Kannan – A Karma Yogi for Art, Literature and Heritage



Aindu Karangal Kannan, Natyarangam Kannan, TAG Heritage Kannan who passed away a few weeks ago was a man of action. His passion for literature, heritage, Carnatic Music, Bharathanatyam and Vaishnavism manifested in several courses of action to propagate them and bring to the fore the artists, writers and speakers. And all done in the most self-effacing manner as a true Karma Yogi described by the Geeta. Very few knew the extent of his contribution in each of the fields.

Three decades ago, I met him at one of the meetings of Ilakkiya Chindhanai, where he came forward and introduced himself. That again is a Kannan trait. He wanted to know and befriend anyone associated with the arts and literature. And closely follow their progress. When I invited him to join our Natyarangam team as a committee member, he confessed that he did not know much

about dance, but was eager to help. Very soon he became quite a connoisseur and we were surprised when he spotted a young outstation dancer and recommended an opportunity to perform a solo thematic dance choreographed by her. Not only was it a stellar creation, but it also won an award for her from Natyarangam.

He had a large personal library of rare books in Tamil and English, collected over decades and he had read everyone of them and could discuss them at length. Whenever I was working on a topic Kannan would bring books, urging me to go through them and quote significant lines from them. He once brought a work of historical fiction by Masti Venkatesa Iyengar when I told him that the author Prapanchan had mentioned it in his preface to his novel. He treated his books with love and care like his children and whenever he lent one of them he inserted a slip of do's and

don't's for the borrower. One of them I remember was that the book should never be taken to the dining table.

With Carnatic music he had a unique equation. Bypassing the razzle dazzle of front line performers he would seek out

● by Sujatha Vijayaraghavan

less popular artists of sterling quality and up and coming youngsters who showed promise. He would try to spread the word among other rasikas about these unseen gems and fledgling newcomers. One of the rare occasions when Kannan showed impatience and annoyance was when his friends did not bother to attend concerts of such artists. He would also use his voice to recommend them to organisers and ensure exposure to these musicians.

His friends in the literary

field were many and with his help Natyarangam was able to bring several of them to collaborate with dancers. Thematic festival Bharatham Kathai Kathaiyaam, where Thamizh short stories were presented in Bharatha Natyam, saw Kannan in his element. From finding collections of several authors for scrutiny and choice, helping to coordinate with them, reading stories for the audio CD, to watching the rehearsals of the dancers, Kannan participated with joy and enthusiasm.

He was happiest when he could be of service. A true thondan, expecting nothing, not even an acknowledgement of his contribution. At Natyarangam's annual camp at Thennangur, he would be everywhere, attending to the needs of the participants, faculty members and even us, the committee members. A senior dancer once wanted to visit the unique Vishnu temple at the nearby town of Uthiramerur.

Kannan was her guide and she was awed by the kind of knowledge he had about the temple and lore and philosophy of Vaishnavism.

The annual series of heritage lectures he organised, dealt with a variety of topics and had an array of speakers known for their erudition and communication skills. Spreading of knowledge was the key factor, whether it is the raga reckoner booklet or a compendium of Vaishnavite vocabulary compiled by him single handed.

In spite of his indifferent health, he would be flitting from venue to venue on his two-wheeler, trying to catch up with as many events as possible in an evening. He was always the friend in need, looking out for ways to help quietly, unobtrusively. He found beauty and joy everywhere and could not rest unless he could share them with others.

THE ROUND TANA

(Continued from page 4)

which will be completely exposed to the sky. Altogether 20 shops are proposed to be constructed. A six-foot wide arcade will be provided in front of the shops all around adjacent

to the pedestrian walk of about ten-foot width leading to the sub-ways. A pedestrian barrier will separate the shopping crowd from the pedestrians, thus eliminating any inconvenience to pedestrian traffic. There will be three sub-ways,

leading to the centre, one near the Elphinstone theatre, the second from near the Ellis Road and the third from the entrance to the Government Estates at the beginning of Wallajah Road. Public conveniences are also proposed to be constructed at suitable places as the present ones will have to be demolished. A parking space capable of accommodating around 40 cars will be provided above the shopping centre.'

The actual execution of this project remained pending till well into the 1960s. Time and again questions were raised in the Legislative Assembly about it but to no avail. Eventually, work began in 1965. In an arti-

cle to commemorate 50 years of the commencement of work on the 'Round Tana subway', Deepa Ramakrishnan in *The Hindu* dated June 16, 2015 writes that a large crowd gathered to watch the work. Traffic was diverted as tunnelling went on and three RCC boxes with arched roofs were pushed in. The subway was inaugurated by Chief Minister M Bhaktavatsalam in January 1967, in the presence of V Ramiah, Minister for Public Works. Somewhere along the way, the shopping arcade was given the go by.

With a new and the first DMK Government in place, there was change afoot. On January 1, 1968, Dr Sir A Ramaswami Mudaliar unveiled a statue of the Chief Minister CN Annadurai at the Round Tana. The car park had to go. A few years later, the roundabout too went, leaving just the Anna statue behind. The

area around too changed considerably – gone were New Elphinstone and other such hallowed names. Even Government House does not exist and what was a green lung is a concrete jungle named Omandurar Government Estate. The subway however flourished. Once it was a byname for streetwalkers and a physically challenged beggar who controlled an entire gang of pickpockets. But now all that has changed for the better. The subway is locked up at night and during the day handles 15,000 pedestrians.

Round Tana has not existed for around 150 years but its name has rather incredibly survived. What is more, it has proliferated for there are now 120 round tanas in the city of Chennai as per Corporation records.

Far left: C.N. Annadurai Statue on the day of its unveiling. Left: Dr. Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar unveiling the statue

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– THE EDITOR



When TN pulled off a totally unexpected victory

Exactly fifty years ago Tamil Nadu pulled off a truly glorious victory in the Ranji Trophy. Glorious because it was totally unexpected, achieved as it was against formidable opponents who were considered too strong and with the added benefit of home advantage. But displaying a never say attitude under the inspiring leadership of S. Venkatraghavan, the team shocked Maharashtra in the semifinal at Pune (then Poona) to make it to the title round for the first time since 1967-68.

During the league stage Maharashtra was unstoppable in the West Zone. They had

defeated Baroda and Gujarat by an innings, had got the better of Saurashtra by nine wickets and had even taken first innings points against Bombay to top the table. Their dominance was even more pronounced in the knock out stage when they crushed Vidarbha by an innings and 157 runs in the pre quarterfinal and then stormed into the semifinal with a nine wicket win over Bengal. While their bowling was pretty strong, it was the batting that was Maharashtra's trump card. This was best symbolized by the 405-run first wicket partnership shared by Chetan Chauhan and Madhu

Gupte against Vidarbha, which was a new Ranji Trophy record. In the process the featherbed pitch at Pune became their fortress and they notched up three successive victories at the venue on their way to the semifinal.

Tamil Nadu too had performed creditably on their way to topping the South Zone table. They conceded first innings points to Hyderabad but innings victories over Kerala and Andhra along with a meritorious

victory over Mysore (now Karnataka) saw them make the knock out rounds with confidence. In the quarterfinal they got the better of Railways in a low scoring game at Chepauk by 110 runs thus booking their passage to Pune for a clash with Maharashtra.

The problem with Tamil Nadu however was their batting. Time and again, it failed leaving the spin duo of Venkatraghavan and V.V. Kumar to bail them out. Given Maharashtra's batting might it was

inadequate in the face of the Maharashtra run machine. However Venkat, supported ably by Kumar and medium pacer B. Kalyanasundaram saw to it that Maharashtra would by no means run away with the game. The home side was restricted to 227 and much now depended on the TN batting. However they again came a cropper being dismissed for 187 with only A.G. Satwender Singh (67) passing the half century mark.

By now it was the third morning of the scheduled four-

all got into the wicket-taking act as Maharashtra slid sharply to 72 for nine. It was all quite unbelievable as wickets fell in a heap much to the disappointment of the home crowd.

Suddenly Tamil Nadu were on the verge of a great upset victory but there was one final twist. The tenth wicket pair of fast bowler Pandurang Salgaonkar and wicket keeper S.B. Talim put up a last minute defiance and at tea Maharashtra were 95 for nine. Having added 23 runs could they add 26 more was the discussion at the interval. However in the first over after the break, Venkat had Salgaonkar leg before, Maharashtra were all out for 96 and Tamil Nadu had completed a dramatic 24-run victory. The news was received back home with incredulous disbelief and after five years TN had made the Ranji Trophy title round in a most unexpected manner. When the team arrived back the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association arranged a worthy reception for the heroes at Central station and Venkat received the most praise for the self-belief he had installed in his lads to pull off the impossible. Half a century later it remains one of Tamil Nadu's most significant victories besides being one that is fondly remembered.

● by Partab Ramchand



S. Venkatraghavan.

thought that even Venkat and Kumar would be up against it unless the batting came good. On the eve of the game however Maharashtra were firm favourites to make the final and the story went around that the players were already looking ahead to playing the title clash in Bombay given that the reigning and oft crowned champions were expected to get the better of Hyderabad in the other semifinal.

The script on the first two days went along expected lines. The TN batting failed again and a total of 160 seemed woefully

day game and Maharashtra required only 121 runs for victory. There seemed no way back for Tamil Nadu and the Maharashtra players were already thinking ahead towards the final at Bombay. But now came about a miraculous turnaround that no one could have envisaged. Kalyanasundaram gave an early breakthrough by bowling Chauhan with just two runs on the board. Still at 53 for two Maharashtra appeared to be coasting to their meagre target. Then things changed all of a sudden. The trio of Venkat, Kumar and Kalyanasundaram

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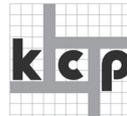

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