

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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The sorry state of our Fort

(By The Editor)

We as a publication have always maintained that Fort St George needs to be the administrative headquarters of our State. It, after all, symbolises the beginning of modern history for the whole country and has been the seat of administration of Southern India and, later, our State for 374 years. What is, however, forgotten is that the Fort is also a historic precinct that draws visitors from the city, the State and the world over. Their interests are not considered at all by the administrative juggernaut. In the process, the Fort is increasingly becoming a disappointment.

Take the very process of entry. The north and south sea gates are closed to the general public who need to access the Fort from a

side entrance that has to be searched for and located. Names have to be entered in mouldy registers. Visitors then need to be frisked, the women in a makeshift shelter that only the hardiest of sightseers would like to enter. Once inside, there are no maps, brochures or routes. The average tourist simply wanders around, the Church of St Mary and the Fort Museum being the only two fixed landmarks.

Where a person can wander around is also highly dependent on official whims. Thus, on a normal day, walking down St Thomas' Street (also known as Snob's Alley) is allowed, but on certain days this can be blocked

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The Mylapore Festival Kolam Competition, 2014, as sent by Mylapore Times (Also see page 8).

What the Law proposes the hawkers duly dispose

It is barely a month since the opening of the much-touted and, may we also add, much-delayed shopping complex to rehabilitate hawkers from T'Nagar Usman Road. And yet the hawkers are back on the pavement, much to the chagrin of the residents in the locality. The failure of what was praised by everyone as a well-thought out solution has led to sharp

criticism of the Corporation officials and the police. It also leads us to the sad conclusion that despite the best laws possible, just about everything in India fails in its implementation.

It was in 2006 that the High Court of Madras had, as part of a judgement covering several petitions concerning the hawking problem, formulated a new scheme. This involved the enumeration of hawkers and the issuing of licences to them by the Corporation. These licences were to be renewed each year and could be passed on to those who wished to carry on the business should a licensed hawker retire or pass away. The civic body was then asked to build/identify specific areas to which these hawkers could be moved and from where they could continue plying their trade. To ensure that this was done quickly, a Hawking Zone Implementation Committee chaired by Justice A Ramamurthy was set up. The scheme was to apply to ten zones iden-

tified as having problems of congestion owing to indiscriminate hawking.

Matters moved slowly thereafter and it was only after a Public Interest Litigation was filed a couple of years ago that the issue was once again brought to the notice of the

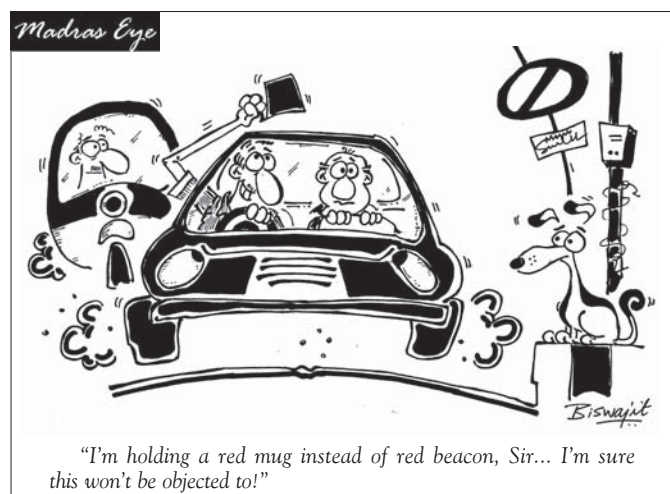
• by A Special Correspondent

High Court. The Hawking Committee in its report lamented that the lack of speed in implementation was mainly due to official lethargy and apathy. The report also hinted at official connivance in allowing the hawkers to stay where they were despite alternative accommodation being ready. The Chairman of the Committee observed that none of his observations had been taken seriously by the administrative machinery. That was when the Court set a deadline and everyone had to comply.

Everyone was happy with the solution provided, except the hawkers themselves. They were reluctant to move in due to a mistaken belief that shoppers would not bother to come to the complex. It is obvious that not enough time has been spent in counselling the hawkers before the shift. Despite having a good facility, their apprehensions persisted. They have, therefore, begun moving out in large numbers and occupy the sidewalks and service lanes. And it is alleged that the local Corporation officials and the police are turning a blind eye to this development, because it is in their interest that the original chaos continues.

The residents of the area have, however, decided not to accept the situation as it is. They have sent a series of letters to the Corporation asking as to why the orders of the Court are being violated. These questions have been raised and answers sought under the Right

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The last house on Snob's Alley.

The state of our Fort

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off without reason. More consistent is the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) which, seated in *Clive Building* (really *Admiralty House*), has a placard at the reception table, which categorically forbids visitors beyond that point. As for its own excellent initiative, 'Clive's Corner', which served as an information centre on one of the Fort's most colourful occupants, this is kept locked all the time.

When it comes to upkeep, it cannot be denied that the areas under the control of the State Government are the worst off. Haphazard parking of vehicles, litter from juice and tea shops and, above all, the continued and seemingly endless renovation of *Namakkal Kavignar Maligai*, the ten storey tower, add to the chaos. Posters on the walls contribute still further to the poor image that the Fort presents. What is the point in putting up signs that warn everyone against littering, when this practice is routinely carried on with impunity by the occupants themselves?

The ASI has put up its standard blue boards at various places declaring that the building alongside is a historic monument and that those caught defacing or damaging it

will be fined or punished. But what about the monuments that have already collapsed or are very near to that? What is the purpose in putting up these signs next to *Wellesley House*, for instance, part of which fell in the 1980s and has remained rubble ever since? There are some other buildings that the ASI is supposed to be forever restoring. One of these, the last house on Snob's Alley, is in the picture above. It is anybody's guess as to what restoration is going on.

As for any information on any of the buildings, just forget it. Barring St Mary's and the Fort Museum, buildings that have their histories inscribed on marble, none of the other structures has any detail. You are expected to walk around and form your own theories as to what each one stood for. As for the ravelins that form the Wallajah and St George's Gates, the space beneath them has been made over for debris. The gates are at least kept clean as they provide access to the Fort Station. But the North Gate perhaps is the worst off, completely littered, with the road leading to it doubling up as a bazaar where vendors sell flowers and other things.

If this is the way we present one of the best known monuments of our city, what price the other historic structures?

What the Law proposes...

(Continued from page 1)

to Information (RTI) Act. The reply received is a classic case of bureaucratise. The responses, and they are the same to all queries, simply have it that, "under RTI Act 2005, reply other than the information on record cannot be furnished", whatever that is supposed to mean.

The T'Nagar Residents' Welfare Association then represented the matter to the Chairman of the Hawking Committee, supporting its claims with photographs of hawking that continues unabated on the streets despite alter-

native facilities allocated. The Chairman has in turn written to the Corporation seeking an explanation. Whether the same, or a similar, answer as was received by the residents of T' Nagar will come his way is anybody's guess. If the response and action by the Corporation are not satisfactory, the residents propose taking the matter to Court once again. Which is where the matter was referred to in the first place.

It is sorrowful that the best of schemes come undone at the hands of petty officials who care for their own benefits, thereby ignoring the interests of the citizenry.

Mega invitations for mega weddings

'Tis the season of wedding bells. In the considered view of *The Man from Madras Musings*, the season's population can be divided into three groups – the first which is getting married, the second which is in-charge of conducting the weddings, and the third which is attending them. Of the third variety, there are sub-groups: the ones that love attending weddings and cannot be kept away from them short of imprisonment, the second that takes them as a matter of duty and breezes in and out, and the third that grumbles and groans. The last one is rather like the wedding guest in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, beating his breast over what is a joyful occasion.

But what MMM has chosen to ponder over in this missive of his is not so much the wedding but the invitation card which, rather like the events themselves, have become bigger and bulkier, though not any way better. There was a time when invitation cards were two-sided, oblong, pink on the outside and yellow on the inside, and when folded twice, could slip into a small envelope. These were none too great on the eye, and as for reading the text, which was blue on the pink and green on the yellow, you had to have near-perfect vision to manage it. But they were functional. You could identify a wedding invite from a distance though you may not have been able to read the text at close quarters. The printing process was simple as well. You rushed off to the nearest alley and identified a one-room printer in whose backyard an assistant operated a treadle press. One proof later, the cards were with you. Then all that was needed was to write the addresses on the envelopes, daub the corners with turmeric and then, ho, to the post office.

The whole thing has become hugely complicated now. These days, an invitation card is not one unless it is half the size of a window, as thick as a telephone directory and is borne in by a staggering set of postmen. Entrusting it to the postal system, which must be still handling mails in sacks, is clearly out of question. What would happen to the tinsel, the gilt edgings, the tassels and the pasted colour stones if these were unceremoniously dumped in sacks, hauled around by postmen and then pushed into letter boxes? The mind boggles.

These extra large cards, with a whole lot of shiny additions (MMM understands that the technical term for these iridescent things is 'bling'), when opened, become several cards, each one colour coded for a particular auxiliary event, all of them adjuncts to the wedding proper. If this is not enough, some cards have a book explaining most unnecessarily the entire process of the wed-

ding. Seriously, who is interested in knowing all this, apart from some research scholar in the United States of America? The bride and bridegroom have other things on their minds, the parents are probably calculating the expense and the guests are interested in the food.

What most of these new bling cards overlook is plain readability. By the time you manage to evade the gold-splattered gods, the ornate borders, and the pietra-dura inlay work to locate who is marrying whom, the wedding is probably over. And as for storing these cards till the actual day of the event, forget it. There was a time when invitations used to comfortably fit into mail-holders. The ones of today don't fit into any receptacle including desk drawers. And woe betides you if the thicker ones fall on your toe accidentally.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Discovering credit-worthiness

Given the exhaustive process the system goes through, *The Man from Madras Musings* has always wondered at the way credit card companies lament about defaulters. In all his innocence, MMM thought that these due diligence assessments are done by gimlet-eyed detectives who can identify a potential fraudster with ease. But the process of verification (or verification as MMM has heard it referred to) is so ham-handed that MMM is fairly certain that it is done with only one objective – to irritate the applicant.

MMM has all along been happy with just one credit card. He is not one of those men who have wallets bulging with plastic money. But came a day when having seen an advertisement for a new card, MMM succumbed. He duly filled in the form and signed at as many as 57 different places on it. At the end of it, the tied and heavily cologned representative smiled and assured MMM that that was all and the card would be on its way after a simple verification. Little did MMM know that he was embarking on something that would make Odysseus journeys simple in comparison.

It all began with a phone call where the caller, after wishing MMM a 'very good morning', asked MMM's name. This after having begun the call with the words 'Very good morning Mr MMM'. A day later came yet another call that wanted to have MMM's address. MMM had just given the door number when the caller rang off, having thanked him for the information. A day later came yet another call, asking for the

street name. When MMM asked as to why the caller of the previous day could not have taken down this information, there was a stunned silence at the other end as though nobody had ever thought of this.

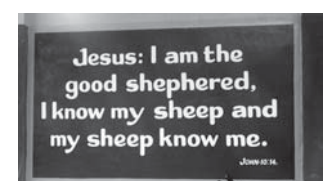
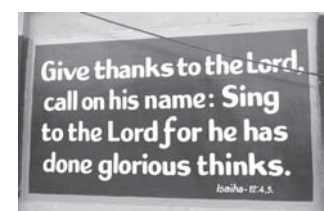
A couple of days later, when MMM was out earning his daily bread, there was a fourth call. The caller, this time a stentorian male voice, wanted to know 'at least two prominent landmarks' near MMM's house. When asked why, the voice said it was on its way to call on MMM and was actually on the road where MMM's house stood but could not locate the building. When MMM replied that he was not at home just then, the voice was disappointed. Meeting MMM was apparently the ambition of a lifetime for the voice and by not being at home, MMM had clearly broken the voice's heart. When MMM asked rather tartly if the voice expected MMM to be at home at all hours, the voice rang off without an explanation.

The last straw was the fifth caller. This one after having cheerily wished MMM a 'very good morning' asked MMM if he was sure of all the facts that he had furnished in the application form. It then said it, the voice, was bound by rules to get verbal confirmation from MMM for a few random entries in the form. MMM asked it to go ahead. The first question, without the batting of an eyelid, was whether MMM had entered the 'correct father's name'.

Educationist, educate thyself

The Man from Madras Musings often walks by an education institution run by a Holy Order. The walls are now inscribed with biblical quotes, no doubt to keep posters at bay. But someone ought to have paid attention to the spellings.

– MMM



OUR READERS WRITE



Unabating auto menace

Aside from the points stated in the article 'If Chennai is to be a tourist destination' (MM, February 1st), an important point which needs mentioning is the fleeing by auto drivers. Even after fixing the revised auto meters, complaints of over-charging are abundant. When the drivers take even the veteran locals for a 'ride', you can very well imagine the fate of newcomers.

It was recently reported that a person from Assam who came to Chennai for medical treatment was charged Rs. 1300 from Central Station to Thousands Lights, a distance of 6 kilometres, by an inhuman auto driver, and that when the visitor objected to the demand, he was threatened with dire consequences. Following the very bitter experience, the visitor decided never to visit Chennai again.

In order for tourism to thrive in Chennai, the authorities must first and foremost discipline the auto drivers. The gateways like railway stations and airport must be 'sanitised' and monitored by the authorities so as to ensure that the auto drivers behave properly.

Adhithi Devo Bhava must be preached and practised by all. Even if we are unable to help the tourists, we should in no way be a hindrance or a threat to them..

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Madras English

I would like to share some of the observations that I have made about the influence of English on the city's lingua franca. It is my surmise that we South Indians are more faithful to that legacy, English language, than certain other Indians.

While 'sir' may have become 'saar' here, elsewhere it is 'sir-ji'. I have always wondered how, in the earlier days, bus conductors in the city would have shouted 'hold on' or, for that matter, 'right' or 'right-right', but in the recent past the words I have heard are 'tension' and 'back-up'.

Conversely, it is common knowledge that 'mulligatawny' and 'catamaran' from Tamil entered the English lexicon years ago.

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When will we ever become quality conscious?

• On January 16th we had wondered whether concrete roads were the answer to our road conditions. On February 1st, a reader wrote about the quality of these roads. Here, readers can see for themselves the sad lack of quality to be found in newly laid concrete roads in the city.

Correct usage?

In the article on Concrete roads (MM, January 16th) the Latin expression 'et al' is used. I wonder whether *et al* can be used for other than people, in place of 'etc'.

Chambers dictionary does define *et al* as referring to people and things. However, *The Good Word Guide* edited by Martin H. Manser from Bloomsbury says as under:

"*Et al* is an abbreviation of *et alii* and means - 'and other people'. It is used particularly in writings of a formal technical nature to indicate the omission of other names. * Similar findings have been recorded by Jones, Bernstein, *et al*. Alternatively, it is sometimes used in-

formally in ironic or humorous contexts:

* Here comes Bill *et al*. It should not be used in ordinary writing or in speech, and should be used only when a list is specific and does not start with *for example* or *such as*."

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Tourism destination

Although most of our metropolitan cities present ugly scenes, Chennai tops them all. Mumbai with all its handicaps is a better administered city.

Living in Chennai, if garbage is the worst offender, the dirtying of the city's walls by innumerable ugly cinema and other kinds of posters comes second. The authorities think that keeping certain VIP roads clean is enough.

Many local corporation playgrounds too have been handed over to contractors to dump their materials and they vandalise them. This is a new phenomenon.

Complaints to the Corporation or to MLAs bring no relief. Is this a city being listed as a world class destination (MM, February 1st)?

T. Santhanam
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Till February 20: *Group 4* an exhibition of the work of Achuthan Kudallur, Amitabh Sengupta, Dhiraj Choudhury and R.B. Bhaskaran (at Focus Art Gallery).

Till February 23: *Attachment*, an exhibition of collection of work by Ganesh Selvaraj, Narayanan V. and Yuvan Bothisathuvar (at Cholamandal Artists' Village).

Till February 23: *Reflections On Grace*, an international photo fest (at Indian Institute of Technology, Madras).

Till February 23: *Squaring The Glass Circle: Art and Artisanry* (at DakshinaChitra).

Till February 26: *Anatomy Of Forking Paths* by Reena Kallat (at Art Houz).

Till February 28: *Words Need Words* an exhibition of work by C. Douglas (at Gallery Sri Parvati).

Till February 28: *Signals, Signposts. Voyages: 4 From The Madras Movement*, C. Douglas, Muralidharan, Nandagopal and Palaniappan (at Artworld).

Till March: *Raghu Rai's India* by *Raghu Rai* (at Gallery Veda).

Till March 9: *Stains Of Stimuli* by Sujith S.N. and *Interface*: a group show (at Forum Art Gallery).

OUR ADDRESSES

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No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

- THE EDITOR

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I hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd. S. MUTHIAH
(Publisher)

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A mistress-maid case of long, long ago

The newspapers have been full of the story of Devyani Khobragade, the Indian diplomat who recently faced charges of ill-treating her maid in New York. Whatever be the truth in the reports, it brings to mind the first ever trial by jury in India, which took place in our very own Madras. This too was a mistress-employee case. On trial for the murder of her native slave girl Chequa, alias Francesca, was her mistress, Ascentia Dawes. Ascentia was the wife of an East India Company employee.

Arthur Mitchell Fraas, in his 2011 dissertation submitted to Duke University (*They Have Traveled into a Wrong Latitude: The Laws of England, Indian Settlements, and the British Imperial Constitution 1726-1773*) writes that she was Luso-Indian (of mixed Portuguese and Indian blood).

At the time this episode took place, there was a William Dawes who by 1656 was Secretary of the Council. In 1657, found guilty of corruption, he was imprisoned for over a year. By the 1660s, however, he had bounced back and was once again in the Council, a trusted right hand of Sir Edward Winter, the Agent for Madras, who was later responsible for the first coup in the Settlement. When by 1664-65 Winter incurred the displeasure of the EIC, an investigator was sent out, whereupon Winter retired in high dudgeon to Madapollam, a village in the West Godavari District, and from there sent letters of protest to England all of which were signed by Dawes as well.

Sometime in 1664, Chequa died allegedly at the hands of Ascentia Dawes. The Agent, George Foxcroft, and his Council were uncertain of their powers to try a capital crime and wrote to England seeking guidance from the Company. The EIC too was uncertain of the powers vested in the heads of its outposts and, so, referred the matter to the Privy Council, which in turn passed it on to Sir Heneage Finch (afterwards the first Earl of Nottingham), then Solicitor

General of England, and much later the Lord Chancellor. Finch in due course pronounced that the Company had the jurisdiction to try such crimes, taking its powers from the Charter of 1661 issued by Charles II.

While matters progressed slowly in the trial of Ascentia Dawes (and we do not know if she was placed under arrest during this time), things were hotting up on the Winter front. By early 1665, the Company, not waiting

A Turing and a Reverend too!

There are at least two more instances in the early history of Madras, of domestics/slaves being killed by their employers. Both of them are mentioned in Dodwell's *Nabobs of Madras* (1926).

The first was Mrs. John Turing (one of a long line of Turings in Madras that culminated in James Matheson Turing whose son Allan is said to be the father of modern computing), who in 1761 had several 'Coffree girls' in her service. In 1769, according to Dodwell, she came "into painful prominence, being indicted for causing the death of one of her slaves. Though acquitted, she withdrew from the settlement for some time."

The second was the Rev. St. John Browne, who in 1775 was appointed Parson of St Mary's by the Court of Directors without, as the Church of England was careful to add later, "reference to the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London." Browne was disgraced when his servant, while trying to escape his master's blows, fell from a terrace some twenty feet high. "The wretched man was left lying there all night and died two days later." Some were of the view that the Rev. Browne had to be pardoned as he committed the crime under the influence of alcohol. But he was tried and found guilty of 'homicide through misadventure'. He was sent back to England.

for its investigator's report, sent George Foxcroft to supersede Winter as Agent. The composition of the Council remained otherwise unchanged, Winter becoming Second-in-Council. Foxcroft began a detailed investigation of Winter's transactions and discovered incriminating evidence. With the balance of power shifting, Dawes abandoned Winter and became a confidante of Foxcroft. Dawes was appointed Magistrate in Black

supporters. Two days later, the Captain of the Guard ordered Winter as Agent. The composition of the Council remained otherwise unchanged, Winter becoming Second-in-Council. Foxcroft began a detailed investigation of Winter's transactions and discovered incriminating evidence. With the balance of power shifting, Dawes abandoned Winter and became a confidante of Foxcroft. Dawes was appointed Magistrate in Black

Winter became Agent once again and, according to a letter

written by Foxcroft to the Company on September 6, 1660 while in prison, "seized on Mr Dawes his house and all that he had, leaving his wife destitute wherewith to feed her family." From this it can be seen that Ascentia, assuming that she was the wife of William Dawes, was not under arrest even a year after she was charged with murder.

Meanwhile, the Company, having received legal opinion in the Ascentia Dawes matter, wrote to Foxcroft (unaware that Winter had taken over the government) stating that the respective "Governours and Councils Established by us in any of our fortes, Townes, etc., have power to exequite Judgment in all Causes Civill and Criminal." It also pointed out that this was arrived at after consulting the King's counsel. To clarify matters further, a letter to this effect had been obtained from the King, a copy of which was enclosed. To vest the Agent with proper authority, it was deemed fit to "Constitute you Governour of our Towne and Forte where the fact was Committed, as well as Agent, and to appoint you a Council under our Seale, which together with some Instructions and directions how to proceede in the Triall of this woman, and of such as were Assistants to her, if any were, we have likewise herewith sent you."

But Winter was not without

patches from Madras ever since he took charge and it was only on January 18, 1667 that the EIC got to know of the coup, thanks to a letter from another Foxcroft sympathiser, Sir George Oxinden, the Chief at Surat. The King asked the Lord Chancellor to investigate. Consequent to this, a commission was issued on December 4th, ordering the reduction of Fort St George and the restoration of Foxcroft to his office. A fleet of five ships and a frigate, fitted out for "warfare or trade", sailed for Madras. The vessels arrived on April 21, 1668 and after a protracted negotiation with Winter, got him to yield. Foxcroft was made Governor by October, and permission was granted to Winter to stay on in Madras. All was now set for the trial of Ascentia Dawes.

Following the procedure set out by the King's Counsel, 24 persons were summoned to form a grand jury. It returned the indictment as it was, confirming that she had to be tried for murder. It was decided that the jury for the trial would comprise twelve men, six English and six Portuguese, and 36 people were summoned, the large number necessary in the event the accused objected to some of them sitting in judgment. As it happened, she objected to just three – Sir Edward Winter (which prejudice is quite understandable), Robert Fleetwood (a Winter man) and Hugh Dixon, Gunner of the Fort and probably a participant in the coup. The foreman of the jury was Edward Reade, a son-in-law of Thomas Winter, the brother of the erstwhile Agent and whom, surprisingly, Ascentia does not appear to have objected to.

The trial was held in April 1669. The examination of witnesses went on for about two hours at the end of which the foreman sent in a note to the Governor and his Council, who constituted the Court. It said that the jury found Ascentia guilty of murder but not in the manner and form described in the indictment. It also sought further instructions from the Court which responded stating that it was the duty of the jury to bring in a verdict of guilty or not.

Winter had held back all des-



A portrait of Sir Edward Winter

An Indo-Ceylon dream of the 20th Century

February 24th, being celebrated as the inauguration day of the Pamban Bridge, is really the opening of the Indo-Ceylon rail connection with the Boat Mail. But that was only the beginning of what had been planned as a permanent link between the two countries. It was a dream never fulfilled.

According to mythology, Lord Rama, when he wished to invade Ceylon to recover his consort Sita, who had been carried away by Ravana, the Demon King of Ceylon, crossed the Pamban Pass from Mandapam on the mainland to the large island on the Indian side and got as far as Dhanushkodi only to find his further progress barred, but – so the story goes – a causeway known as Adam's Bridge came into being, making it possible for Rama to cross the sea and reach Mannar Island and from there the Ceylon mainland where he recovered his queen. Such a crossing has been discussed often in more recent times.

The possibility of connecting India and Ceylon by a railway across the bank of sand extending the whole way from Rameswaram to Mannar was explored from time to time in the second half of the 19th Century. It picked up momentum from 1895 and various schemes were suggested.

In 1907, Sir Henry Kimber, the Chairman of the South Indian Railway (SIR), on an inspection trip to India, received a deputation of Ceylon planters who urged that improved means of communication should be provided, to enable Indian labour to reach the plantations safely. Sir Henry later met Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Elgin, the Colonial Secretary, in London. As a result of these discussions, the Ceylon Government Railway (CGR) agreed to construct a 67-mile branch railway track from Madawachiya on its main line to Talaimannar on Mannar Island. On the Indian side, the Madurai-Mandapam railway was to be extended across the Pamban Pass by a bridge to Rameswaram island and thence to Dhanushkodi.

When these two extensions were completed, the two countries were only about 21 miles apart across a narrow and shallow strait. The project was again investigated with the idea of connecting the two terminal sta-

tions by a railway constructed on a solid embankment raised on the sand bank known as Adam's Bridge, to supersede the ferry steamer service which was to be established between the two points.

In 1913, the SIR made a detailed survey and a project report was prepared. The report contemplated the construction of a causeway from Dhanushkodi to Talaimannar, a length of 20.05 miles of which 7.19 miles would be on the dry land of the various islands, and 12.86 miles in the water. The sections on dry land

consisting of low banks of sand pitched with coral presented no difficulty. The section through the sea was to be carried on a causeway constructed on a double row of reinforced concrete piles driven into the sand. The piles were then to be braced together longitudinally with light concrete arches and chains and transversely with concrete ties, struts and chains. Behind the piles, slabs of reinforced concrete were to be slipped into position, the bottom slabs being sunk well into the sand of the sea bottom. Lastly, the space enclosed

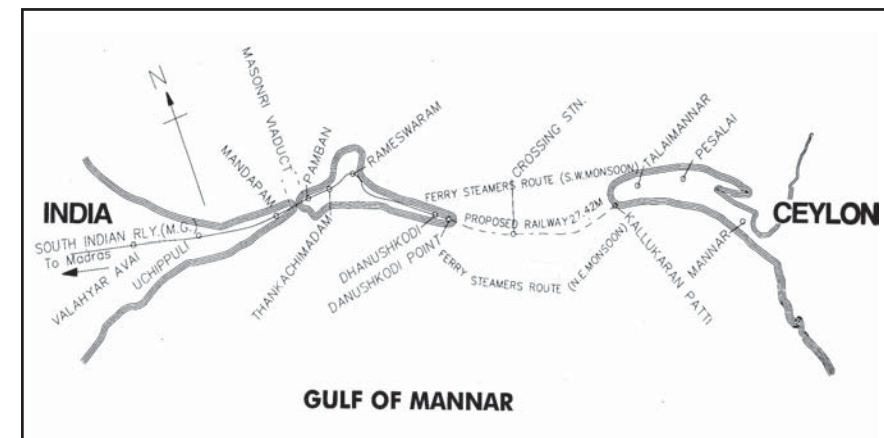
by the slabs was to be filled in with sand.

The top of the concrete work was to be carried to six feet above high water level, and the rails were to be laid at that level. The causeway was to cause the suspended sand brought up by the currents to settle on either side, bringing about rapid accretion and, eventually, making one big island of Rameswaram and Mannar Islands. The total cost of the causeway and work at the two terminal points was estimated to be about Rs. 111 lakh.

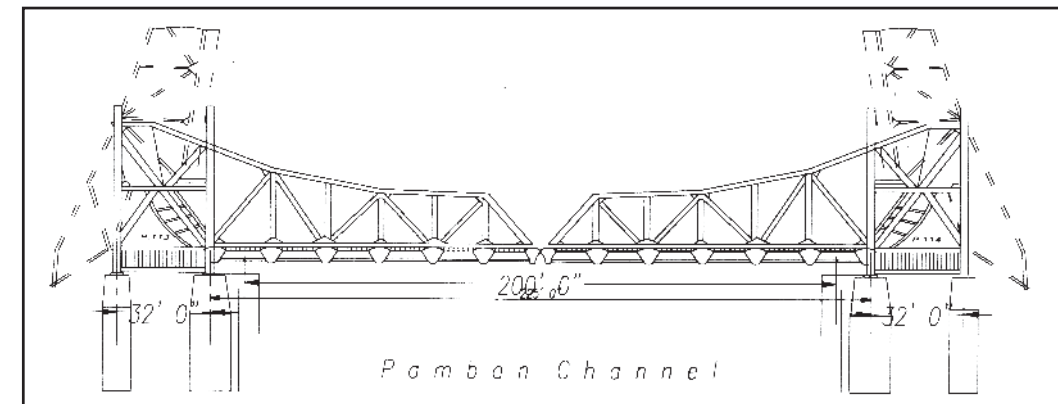
This scheme was given up in favour of a simpler one. At Dhanushkodi and at Talaimannar two piers were built, one on the north side for use during the southwest monsoon, and one on the south side for use during the northeast monsoon. Between these two points a steamer service was to be provided. This was originally intended to be a train-ferry, whereby the trains were to be conveyed bodily, without transshipment, from Rameswaram to Mannar, and, so, provide through carriages between India and Ceylon. A modified scheme was, however, agreed on, whereby the sea passage was to be made with passenger-carrying steamers. On February 24, 1914, the Indo-Ceylon connection was opened. The opening ceremony was attended by the three Governors of Madras, Ceylon and Pondicherry and other dignitaries.

Of all the work on the Indo-Ceylon connection, probably the most interesting was the spanning of the Pamban Pass. Commencing from Mandapam, the railway extension follows for

(Continued on page 7)



The proposed rail link.



The Scherzer Bridge.

The steamers for the 21-mile crossing

The South Indian Railway had a major marine department headed by a Marine Superintendent posted at Dhanushkodi. For the Indo-Ceylon connection, they ordered as ferries three turbine steamers, which the *Railway Gazette* of May 9, 1913, described as follows.

"The vessels have a length overall of 260 ft. a breadth of 38 feet, and depth to promenade deck of 18 ft. 9 in. and a mean load draught of 6 ft. and are built of steel throughout, the registered tonnage being 688 gross, 562 under deck and 278 net. They are about 800 tons load displacement.

"They are fitted with 40 ft. top-gallant forecastle and promenade deck extending nearly the whole length, and affording good accommodation for passengers. At each end of the promenade deck is a light sun-deck of teak and amidships a portable awning is fitted. On the promenade deck is placed the chart house with navigating bridge overhead. Under the prom-



s. s. Elgin (left) and s. s. Hardinge at Dhanushkodi Pier.

enade deck forward of boiler casing a large deck saloon or lounge has been constructed for first class passengers, with convenient lavatory accommodation, and below this is the first class dining saloon. Both of these apartments are fitted in teak. The promenade deck above the saloon, sheltered as it is by a light sun-deck and fitted with side screens, will furnish a valuable

supplement to the other accommodation for the first class passengers. The Officers' cabins are situated on the upper deck aft of the first class deck saloon.

"The details of lighting and ventilation have been carefully studied in connection with the locality and climate in which the vessels are to be employed. Electric light has been installed through-

out the vessels, and electrically-driven fans assist the ventilation. Suitable provision is made for Indians as well as European first class passengers; the accommodation for a large number of third class passengers, who will usually be Indians, is extensive and well arranged. A cabin for their exclusive use is provided on the lower deck aft.

"Provision is made for carrying cattle and sheep on the after part of the main deck, and arrangements are made forward on the main deck for the carriage of motor cars...

"The lifting appliances have been so arranged that motor cars can be lifted on board by the ship's own derricks and carried on the fore deck...

"The leading condition with regard to speed was that the vessels should start from rest and reach the end of their journey 20 nautical miles distant, in about 72 minutes; instead, the journey was completed in 65 minutes during trials."

(Continued on page 6)

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

● Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), Madras Musings has been priced at Rs.5 a copy. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100.-. Please make out your cheque only to CHENNAI HERITAGE and send it, together with the COUPON, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014 or C/O LOKAVANI SOUTHERN PRINTERS PVT. LTD., 62/63, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

An ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of just Rs.100 covers only a part of our costs. Corporate support and YOUR support will continue to be essential for Chennai Heritage and Madras Musings to play a greater role in creating awareness about the city, its heritage and its environment. We therefore look forward to your sending us your contributions IN ADDITION TO your subscriptions.

If in the coming year Chennai Heritage receives repeated support from those of you who have already made contributions, and if many more supporters join the bandwagon, we will not only be able to keep Madras Musings going, but also be able to continue awareness-building exercises on ongoing projects as well as undertake one or two more such exercises.

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs. 500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to Madras Musings for 2014-15 and the remaining Rs. 400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

We look forward to all readers of Madras Musings, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions.

— The Editor

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period January 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Which community recently became the sixth to attain minority status in our country?
2. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin, who passed away recently, was the spiritual head of which community?
3. Name the probe which was 'awoken' recently from a hibernation of 31 months to ready for an unprecedented mission to orbit and dispatch a lander to the surface of a comet.
4. Which 'robot-headed' musical duo won the record of the year and album of the year at the annual Grammy Awards recently?
5. The RBI has decided to withdraw all currency notes issued prior to which year?
6. Name the two people who have been honoured with Padma Vibhushan this year.
7. January 31st was the beginning of the Chinese New Year of the....
8. Name the Telugu cinema icon, a Dadasaheb Phalke awardee, who passed away recently.
9. Who was the Chief Guest at this year's Republic Days Parade in New Delhi?
10. Who are the new Australian Open singles champions?
* * *
11. Name the Scot, whose name is synonymous with a Madras business house of yore, and who started his career as a doctor with the Nawab of Carnatic in the late 18th Century.
12. Mayavaram Vedanayakam Pillai is considered the 'Father of...'
13. Which two legendary architects built two versions of the famous pavilion at the Madras Cricket Club that stood between 1866 and the 1980s?
14. Which American, whose name is synonymous with 'being rich', was instrumental in the WCC buying the Doveton House?
15. By what name is Muhammad Ismail, the first President of the Indian Union Muslim league, familiar to most of us?
16. Where could you recently come across Harry Potter, Nelson Mandela, Kavingar Vaali and Ma Po Si together in Chennai?
17. Jaya-Hindustan's 'Vimochanam', released in 1940, commemorated which political decision taken by the then Premier of the Madras Presidency?
18. Which old centre of learning is located in 'Conway Gardens' on Poonamallee High Road?
19. What was the great contribution of R.M.S. Sundaram Iyer to render into posterity the work of saint-composer Thyagaraja?
20. Which Tamil evening paper was founded by Subbaraya Kamath in 1917?

(Answers on page 8)

Tales from history to degree coffee

At first glance, the title of Nirmala Lakshman's new book, *Degree Coffee by the Yard*, seemed like some kind of literary device. However, on further reading, I found a whole chapter devoted to the much loved brew which Tamilians expertly transfer from tumbler to *dabara* and vice versa, either to reduce the heat or to create frothness or both. Needless to say, this is one of the lighter chapters in this brief biography of Madras.

In this 'biography', Lakshman weaves personal anecdotes about the city of her childhood and the city where she grew up in the 1960s and 70s, with a chronicle of historical and sociological facts about a city that has kept changing over the years to what it is today. It is a story that begins with finding among excavations in the Pallavaram area a hand axe (the first discovery of an Old Stone Age tool in the Indian Subcontinent) by British geologist Robert Bruce Foote in 1863-64. Going on from there, in relating the story of Madras (Chennai), Lakshman says, "What is perhaps most interesting about the region is that archaeologists and historians both affirm the continuous presence of human beings in the area since the Palaeolithic Age. If we leap forward a million years or so, Roman coins and painted pots found in areas like Egmore, Kilpauk, Chetpet and Mambalam are a sign that there were flourishing communities and people living in the region were involved in trade with lands across the seas. In fact, the town of Mylapore was known even to the Greek geographer and astronomer Ptolemy (who lived at the end of the first Century CE and into the second Century CE) and figures in his writings as 'Mylarphon'."

Going beyond references to the Chola, Chera and Pandya dynasties and to the Kalabhras and Pallavas are mentions of two present-day landmarks, the Parthasarathy Swamy temple and the Kapaleeswarar temple. The former is the only Vishnu temple where the deity has a moustache and the punnai tree in the outer courtyard of the latter temple is said to be the oldest in Chennai. Mylapore (where the Kapaleeswarar temple is located) also witnessed the coexistence of the early Buddhists and Jains and was called Mayura Sabda Pattinam. Fearing persecution, many of these people might have converted to Islam. The Kapalees-

warar temple's tank was built on land donated by the Nawab of Carnatic and, till today, Muslims are allowed the use of the tank on Muharram day.

Moving ahead to 1639, Lakshman points out that "Fort

dhi, sitting with his associates on the sands. She pointed this out to her older son who went up to him and said, "Hello, my name is Narayan" to which the Chief

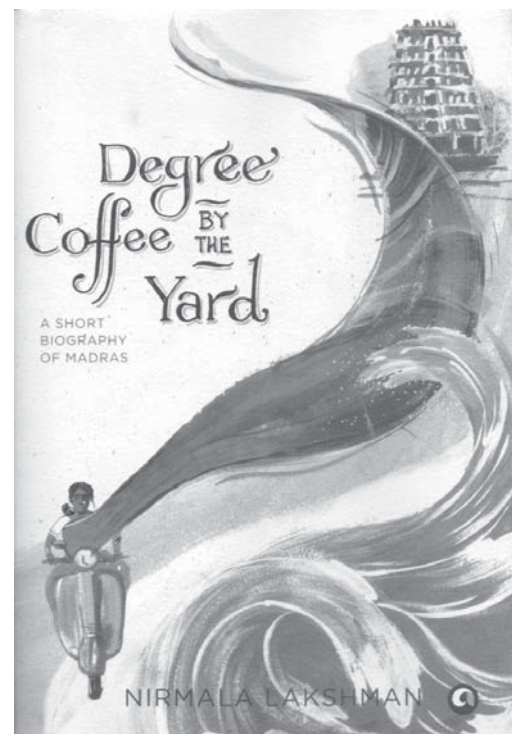
• by T.K. Srinivasa Chari

St. George (Madras) became the citadel of British administration in India long before the Crown acquired Bombay or founded the city of Calcutta. It was the first Corporation to be granted a seal by the British East India Company in 1687."

Striking an anecdotal note elsewhere in the book, Lakshman tells us about her connection to the much-loved Tamil idol Subramania Bharati through her maternal grandfather, to the freedom movement through Mahatma Gandhi's visits to her house, the simplicity and administrative ability of Kamaraj and the rise of the Dravidian movement. She recalls a visit to the beach with her children many years ago when she spied the Chief Minister of the day, M. Karunani-

Minister replied, "Hello, my name is Karunanidhi." And as though being politically correct, she mentions the prodigious memory of Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha which the late veteran stage actor R.S. Manohar told her about. When he challenged her to answer questions from a tome she seemed to be skimming through, she was equal to the challenge, answering about a dozen of them, quoting even the page numbers.

As a journalist whose mandate is a wide range of interests, she also looks at the arts and at sport. She offers an insider's view of Chennai's 'December Season' where over 2000 music concerts are held during a couple of months, mentions the rise of the colloquial *gaana paattu*, and offers much information on cinema and theatre.



She also emphasises that though Chennai, like all other cities, has an enormous appetite for cricket, it stands out by displaying a rare knowledge of the game and a sense of appreciation for home and opposition teams alike. She recalls "the response from the crowd when Pakistan dared to take a lap of honour (after winning a match) in Madras, to thank them in 1999. The crowd greeted and cheered and gave them a standing ovation."

Lakshman may conclude by asking the question 'Is home the outer world, the neighbourhood (Alwarpet in her case) or the inner world, our aspirations?' but she has already answered it earlier when she observed: "A sense of community, mutual dependence and a common dream that the city is the answer to our dreams and is the glue that holds the city's many layers together."

The book, a part of an Aleph series on Indian cities, will strike an enjoyable note with many a reader who knows Madras that is Chennai, but is an all too brief introduction of it to others.

THE MISTRESS & THE MAID

(Continued from page 4)

The jury went into a huddle again and after a short while Reade declared that the accused was not guilty. As this was contrary to all expectations, the Court thought he had made a mistake and asked him again, whereupon he repeated that Ascentia was not guilty.

The Court then asked the members of the jury, and they agreed with the foreman. With that Ascentia Dawes was set

free and passed from the pages of history forever.

The case of Rex vs Dawes, however, set a precedent. The Governor and Council, in their letter to London on April 15, 1669, lamented that the case had come to such a conclusion because "we found ourselves at a loss in several things, for want of Instructions, having no man understanding the Laws and formalities of them to instruct us..." This was to mark the beginning of a process of judicial reform in Madras which,

after several stages, culminated in the formation of the High Courts of Judicature in 1862. It also saw the upgrading of the post of Agent of Madras to that of Governor, who remained the executive head till 1947. The note from the King's Counsel on how the trial was to proceed was to serve for years as the basis on which the EIC settled cases in its possessions in India.

What was not new then, and continues even now, are conflicts over the treatment of domestics.

MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition. *Madras Musings* is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

THE EDITOR

The early days of Koothu-P-Pattarai

It was a fashion in the early 1970s to drop names like Che Guevara and Pablo Neruda to project yourself as different and progressive. It was a kind of branding in a soft form. In recent times, Koothu-P-Pattarai has become a sort of brand for many. Many new actors in movies these days make it a point to declare their association with Koothu-P-Pattarai or their training there. I am indeed happy about the publicity it generates for the organisation, but it amuses me when I reflect on its beginnings.

It was sometime in 1976-77 that Na. Muthuswamy, supported by 'Pragnai' Rangarajan (aka Veerachamy), was crusading for *Terukoothu* with the cooperation of Cre-A Ramakrishnan. Their immediate task was threefold – first, to mobilise resources to rehabilitate *Terukoothu*; second, to work towards gaining acceptability for *Terukoothu* in the

'cultural space' of Chennai; third, to persuade Purisai Kannappa Sambandham to return to his village and learn whatever he could from his father Purisai Kannappa Thambiran instead of driving an autorickshaw in Madras for his livelihood. Na. Muthuswamy and Cre-A Ramakrishnan provided the financial cushion for Sambandham during that period.

cism that Muthuswamy was trying to remove the rustic element and raw beauty of *Terukoothu* and that he was killing the true spirit of the form. Others, however, have hailed and compared his endeavour with Dr. Shivarama Karanth's efforts in reviving *Yakshagana* in Karnataka.

* * *

I first came to know about the activities of Koothu-P-

• by E.R. Gopalakrishnan

A former actor/director of Koothu-P-Pattarai.

It was a wonderful gesture, given their personal constraints. Their efforts were not wasted, going by the recognition Purisai Kannappa Sambandham enjoys today as a leading *Terukoothu* exponent and the recognition gained by *Terukoothu* in the classical milieu of Chennai.

There has been some criti-

Pattarai in 1977 through a pamphlet given to me while I was sharing a room in a narrow bylane in Karolbagh, New Delhi. The pamphlet was an appeal for donations to support the activities of Koothu-P-Pattarai in reviving *Terukoothu*. There was no indication that the organisers were also in-



Na. Muthuswamy and P. Krishnamoorthy.

involved in contemporary theatre activities.

This was the time when Venkat Swaminathan, in his writings, was highlighting the lack of initiatives for new experiments in the field of art and literature in general, and in the field of theatre and cinema in particular in Tamil Nadu. In his book *Paaliaiyum Vaazhaiyum* (Desert and Oasis), he laments the Tamil environment that lacked the urge to improve its quality in artistic expressions, and the lack of will to strive to be at par with works presented in other regions of India and abroad. He was also critical of the lethargy of Tamils in making efforts to expand their in-

ventiveness in artistic expression. His observations were the result of his exposure to varied works of art (fine arts and performing arts) facilitated by his living in Delhi for nearly four decades. He used to express similar sentiments at the meetings of the Delhi Tamil Writers' Association.

Venkat Swaminathan introduced me to the plays of the National School of Drama presented at NSD's small indoor auditorium and at the Purana Qila. There were plenty of programmes at other venues too. Street plays were staged in the university area or in Connaught Place. As I had lived in the 'sabha culture' as a resident of Triplicane for over 20 years, my exposure in Delhi convinced me that there was truth in Venkat Swaminathan's concern. I too began to feel that we had not moved any further in the field of theatre and cinema, compared to the works of people from West Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka and even the works from a small State like Manipur were simply overwhelming. Most people working in the field of theatre in Tamil Nadu do not make sincere efforts to know or experience what is happening the world over. Stagnation by itself is not a problem but not being aware of it should definitely be a matter of concern.

* * *

I returned to Madras in 1978 and found the theatre scenario by and large unchanged. The Street Plays of Gnani and 'Veedhi' Ramaswamy were the only new additions. Dr. Rajendran was part of the Veedhi Nataka Iyakkam. He went on to qualify from NSD, where he is now Director-Research. During this time, Na. Muthuswamy's *Naarkalikkarar* was translated by Alfred Franklin and staged by students of Guindy Engineering College.

This was also the time Na. Muthuswamy was working on forming a modern theatre repertoire. He brought in K.C. Manavendranath and P. Krishnamoorthy, an artist from the College of Fine Arts, Madras, is one of the early entrants in cinema as an art director. I too joined the group.

(To be concluded)

THAT INDO-CEYLON DREAM

(Continued from page 5)

about 2 miles the narrow sandy promontory, on which this township is situated, to its end at Thontiturai Point, and then across the sea on a viaduct, about 1¼ miles long, constructed on the sandstone reef connecting the mainland with the island of Rameswaram. Although a portion of the reef is awash, yet there is an average 6 or 7 feet of water over it. The Pamban Channel is an artificial channel, used by coasting vessels having a draught not exceeding 12 ft.

The viaduct that was built is 6,776 ft. long and consists of 145 openings, 143 of 40 ft. span, one of 43 ft. and one of 44 ft. There are 113 spans on the west side and 32 spans on the east side of the Pamban Channel, and the latter is spanned with a two-leaf Scherzer rolling lift bridge. This bridge is 289 ft. between the piers and leaves for vessels a clear way 200 ft. wide and 14 ft. deep. The bridge was designed by the Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company of Chicago, and was constructed by Head, Wrightson & Co. Ltd. of Thornaby-on-Tees, UK.

The piers of the viaduct are of granite masonry in cement, with cement concrete foundations enclosed in steel cribs or caissons, the tops of the cribs being fixed at mean sea level.

Much of the work on the cribs was done by skin divers who had to contend with rough seas from time to time that caused damage and subjected the work to interruptions.

For the sea service between Dhanushkodi and Talaimannar three fine steamers were specially designed. They were built on the Clyde by Messrs. A & J Inglis from the designs of the late Sir William White and named the *Curzon*, the *Elgin* and the *Hardinge*, after three Viceroys of India. (Editor's Note: They were later replaced by the *Irwin* and *Goschen*)

The Indo-Ceylon connection completed in 1914 gave rise to competition between the South Indian Railway Company and the British India Steam Navigation Company that offered regular sailings between Tuticorin and Colombo. There were also country boats, that offered passage, but the inconvenience and risks attendant on transport by such means were great.

The Indo-Ceylon connection was open for quite a number of years. The South Indian Railway and, later, the Southern Railway continued operating the I Up/2Dn Ceylon Boat Mail from Madras to Dhanushkodi Pier, where passengers were transhipped to a ferry steamer to cross Adam's Bridge for Talaimannar and thence to

Colombo. The crossing used to take 1½ hours.

Alas! This rail route is now no more, tragedy having overtaken it in 1964. Amit Garg, in an article 'Journey to Death' published in a Southern Railway Women's Welfare Organisation publication in 2002, gave this vivid description of the tragedy:

"The six-coach Pamban-Dhanushkodi Passenger (No. 653) left Pamban at 11.55 p.m. on December 22, 1964 with 110 on board, including a party of school students and five members of the railway staff. The signal at Dhanushkodi Outer went dead and the train stopped for a while. The driver then gave a long whistle and decided to take the risk. A giant 20-foot wave rose from the turbulent sea and smashed the train. Though the initial reports put the casualty figure at 115 based on the number of tickets issued at Pamban, it was suspected that the toll would be around 200 as more passengers were said to have travelled ticketless on that night.

"The tragedy came to light only on December 25th when the Southern Railway issued a bulletin based on the information received from the Marine Superintendent, Mandapam. It said: 'The train was caught in the cyclonic storm and was presumably hit by high tidal waves as a result of which the whole

train got submerged in water while entering Dhanushkodi station. Information has been received that a portion of the engine is visible six inches above water.' There were reports that huge pieces of the train's wooden carriages had been washed ashore on the Sri Lankan coast.

"Another major victim of the cyclone was the Pamban Bridge, built by an Irish engineer exactly 50 years before it was washed away by the tidal waves... As many as 126 girders collapsed. Only 19 girders and the lift span, named after its designer Scherzer, were spared.

"The restoration work began immediately. Almost all the girders were salvaged from the sea. 'Emergency girders' were brought from as far as Assam. The work was completed within three months." The metre gauge line now has a terminus at Rameswaram.

The Scherzer Bridge is a very special steel structure. It opens from the centre, the two arms lifted up from the huge mechanical devices at the two piers. The Bridge has always been a very special structure of the South Indian Railway and later of the Southern Railway.

(Excerpted from: *Southern Railway – A Saga of 150 Glorious Years 1852-2003*, by R.R. Bhandari).

The Mylapore Fest

The annual Sundaram Finance Mylapore Festival's 2014 edition came to an end, with Sundaram Finance's 'Spirit of Mylapore Award' being presented to tennis legend Ramanathan Krishnan. The award was presented on the fourth evening of the Festival.

Sundaram Finance had in January 2009 instituted its annual award to recognise one longtime resident or institution of Mylapore who/that has contributed significantly to the culture and heritage of Mylapore. Previous recipients have been roadside bookseller R.K. Azhwar, the legendary musician S. Rajam, Dubba Chetty Kadai, Rasi Silks, and Lady Sivaswami Girls School.

A variety of events was enjoyed by at least 25,000 people during the four days of the Festival, which has come to be the city's one-of-its-kind celebration. Some of the events during the Festival as reported by *Mylapore Times* were as follows:

- A few days before the fest, the Kapali Temple office organised another event at the Navarathri *mandapam* where the classical dance events of the Festival were planned. So a makeshift stage was created on the eastern side, next to the Saneeswarar *sannidhi*. A nice change: the dancers could also look up at the moon-lit skies and lit *vimanas*. Kuchipudi dancer Madhavapeddi Murthy and his *sishtyas* performed an item on the brass plate adjusting their movements to the space.
- Young *nadaswaram* artiste Mylai R. Mahendran and his team of artistes began the four-day proceedings on the first day on the main stage in front of the 16-pillar *mandapam*. The team arrived on time, performed to time and kept a low profile.

- The open space inside Lady Sivaswamy School was a riot of colours on all four days. This was the arts contest space. The judges were chosen from the audience. The children didn't really care about the toffees that were distributed by the volunteers; each one only wanted a prize!
- Young singers seated on a gallery at the Nageswara Rao Park this year let the music swirl. Some bright voices, some still sleepy. Misty mornings, but the mosquitoes didn't seem to spare anyone.
- It is a challenge to run a festival of this magnitude in open space. Artistes reaching the venue on time, the props that need to be brought in, all depend on the traffic and the criss-crossing of many in the audience. You need to literally float in the crowd to reach backstage. This was the story of the Krishna image that couldn't reach the stage for the Thiruvadira Kali dance by artistes from Kerala.
- The band of 55 young artistes in the dance drama *Sura Samharam* had travelled from Virugambakkam. These *sishtyas* of guru Sheela Unnikrishnan just smiled and went about touching up their make-up, after squeezing into a small house. Partly renovated with glossy tiles, the house of Venkataraman played host to the artistes on all days of the Festival. Seetharam of Kanchi Weavers' Saree House was another gracious host to performers who needed some privacy.
- The Festival realises that people want to compete in games, irrespective of their

age. There was the chess contest at Nageswara Rao Park and Dayakkattam and Pallankuzhi at Lady Sivaswamy School. A surprise fun event was the 'Karumbu kadi' contest held at the *theradi*. The sugarcane stick had to be peeled using hands and teeth! Seven rounds of five participants each took part in the event. And still there were people waiting for their chance.

- The Kolam contest, the Festival's flagship event, continued to receive huge participation. Foreigners also took part; an Aurovillean won a prize and so did two men. The Fest team was not sure if children of this generation could draw *kolam*. But two dozen plus children who participated in the *kolam* contest proved the organisers wrong. The *kolam* area in front of the eastern *gopuram* looked beautiful with children in traditional attire drawing *kolams*.
- Three hosts treated guests to *elai sapat*. Lakshmi of Devadi Street and Jayashree of Kesava Perumal West Street were not new to the concept; they had hosted *elai sapat* last year too. For Padma Sankaran, this was a new experience.
- When C.A. Raja's *Pranavam* took the stage for the vintage film music concert, the audience sat glued to their seats. Many sang along, some danced and a couple was in tears and enjoyed the rewind, talking of the days they had seen MGR films for 40 paise!
- The Tank Street was a bazaar zone teeming with shoppers.

Pitchu Pillai Street had space for students from the College of Fine Arts, led by Sakthivel, and the Chennai Weekend Artists. The organisers have a dream: to make this an exclusive Art Street.

- Who could think that the *mandapam* leading to the *ther* can be a place for performance? When the lights were turned 180 degrees and beamed on the *mandapam*, the audience too turned their chairs towards it. Young dancer Sumitra Subramaniam danced to music by young singer J.B. Keerthana.
- The exhibition – '100 years of Indian Cinema' – on the first floor of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan could be set up only a little late. The display boards didn't arrive on time. The team of collegians working on the project conceived by director A.L. Venky was more than happy to later see a steady stream of visitors. But they were disappointed by an unknown fan of MGR who kept taking away the pictures of the legend they had put up!
- The idea of having a small snacks kiosk at the *theradi* worked well. A team of bubbly young mothers along with their children sold traditional snacks like *uppama*, *kozhakkattai* and vegetable *poli*. They made it 'no onion-no garlic' on Vaikunta Ekadasi day. Idea worked.
- The food street was packed. Unmanageable on Sunday. From the traditional *dosas* to Mangalore *kadubus*, *kozhakkattais* and North Indian snacks on offer, the foodies had their fill.
- The venue for the two week-

end talks was Lady Sivaswamy School. Pradeep Chakravarthy moved to a classroom when he found the curious Dayakattam players still playing in the hall. The listeners attending his talk on *Devadasis* took over the chairs, benches and desks! Ram Mohan spoke about his great days in Pelathope in Mylapore.

- Shivananda Hegde and his 15-member *Yakshagana* troupe gave two back-to-back shows. Photographers shot hundreds of pictures of the artistes doing the make-up and getting into their costumes in the *mandapam*.
- While Sriram V. strolled down Kutcheri Road taking along two dozen people with him and sharing stories, Ramanujar's team cycled down the Mylapore area. The Cycling Yogis had ten Americans who were here to attend a yoga camp. And the foodies filled up on Sridhar's well-planned Food Walk – from Rayar's Mess to Janal bajji kadai. (Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*)

Answers to Quiz

1. Jains; 2. Dawoodi Bohras; 3. Rosetta; 4. Daft Punk; 5. 2005; 6. Scientist R.A. Mashelkar and yoga guru B.K.S. Iyengar; 7. Horse; 8. Akkineni Nageswara Rao; 9. Shizno Abe, Prime Minister of Japan; 10. Stanislas Wawrinka (men) and Li Na (women).
* * *

11. John 'Deaf' Binny; 12. Tamil novel; 13. Robert Chisholm and Henry Irwin; 14. John H. Rockefeller; 15. 'Quaid-e-Millat'; 16. At the Chennai Book Fair where there were lanes named after these luminaries; 17. Introduction of Prohibition by Rajaji; 18. St. George's Orphanage and Higher Secondary School; 19. He single-handedly got the *kritis* of Thayagaraja carved in marbles at his *samadhi* in Tiruvaiyaru; 20. *Deshabhaktan*.

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