

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Metro rail continues bulldozing heritage

(By The Editor)

The Metro Rail project is on a fast track and has rightfully earned plaudits for the speedy execution that is underway. Unfortunately, in doing so, it is exacting a heavy price on the city's heritage. In the past we have had occasion to highlight the potential for damage to historic structures as drilling and other work continues in their proximity. Now, for the first time, Metro Rail has completely demolished a heritage building in full – one of the structures in the Government Teachers' Training College campus, Saidapet.

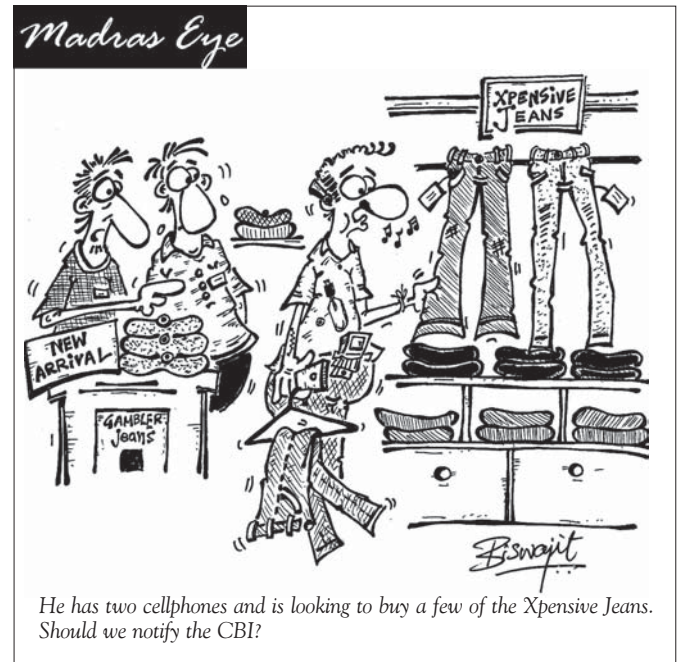
The two-storeyed structure, to an unusual semi-circular plan, with arched windows right along its periphery, was reminiscent of the *Ice House* in several ways. It was part of the more than 150-year-old campus and was easily its most visible building as it was closest to the road. Chennai Metro Rail has claimed that this is not a heritage structure as it is not listed specifically in the Justice Padmanabhan Committee report. It therefore asserts that the demolition did not need permission of the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) which was formed by the Government and undertook to protect the buildings listed by the Padmanabhan Committee.

That this is not a correct interpretation of the High Court's ruling will be made clear to anyone who reads the Padmanabhan Committee report. Listed in page 653, the notings cover the entire campus. The report has it that the buildings (note the plural) are of the British period and "located within a campus. Few buildings are maintained fairly, while one is in serious deterioration." The last named is a building with a spire and now houses the Mother Teresa University.

Ironically, the structure that has been demolished is one that was in a good condition and which had been recently restored after a fashion by the PWD. The Padmanabhan Committee had also considered this campus to be of Grade 1 importance which meant it is a stretch, complex or area of State or National importance... "They are characterised by their size, length or number of build-

ings that form a group – which is usually large; with special architectural character or features; and of a certain position in history which assigns them that importance." By its very ranking, it is clear that the Teachers' College campus was considered as a whole and Metro Rail had no business to

(Continued on page 6)



He has two cellphones and is looking to buy a few of the Xpensive Jeans. Should we notify the CBI?

Departmental unity necessary for people's comfort

The cries of adulation with which the Corporation of Chennai's budget were received have hardly died down when conflict of authority among various departments and ministries in the State have begun to put paid to several plans. Among the casualties is the proposal to create cycle tracks and pedestrian pathways, both of which were the more creative elements of the budget.

It will be recalled that the Mayor in his budget proposal had envisaged a cycle track all along the beach, beginning from Beach Station and terminating at Foreshore Estate. This was to be extended later to the southern limits of the city, based on the success of the prototype. It is now learned that the Police has objected to this idea, stating that it is not feasible given the current traffic situation.

It is reliably learnt that the pedestrian zones too are also likely to be vetoed. If such conflicts are left to go unresolved there may be no improvement

in our traffic situation in the near future.

In such a scenario, what is urgently needed is an overall authority that can be an umbrella body over all stakeholders. It can take into account diverse points of view and then come to a decision which, when announced, will be binding on all parties, irrespective of what their original views were. And Chennai already has such a

body in the form of the Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority, CUMTA. Why not assign pedestrian and non-motorised transport issues also to it?

The Tamil Nadu Assembly had in November 2011 approved the setting up of a Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA). It was a development that was rather late in the day and which ought to have perhaps been set up in the 1980s when the MRTS was planned. Still, it

was better late than never and it was hoped that, unlike its rather unwieldy name, it would live up to what was expected of it. Since then, however, not much has been heard of CUMTA or its activities.

Chief among CUMTA's responsibilities was the preparing of a comprehensive and integrated public transport plan for the city, which included all modes – train, bus and the

port) of the CMDA as its Member Secretary. Others on board were the Chief Secretary and the Vice Chairman, CMDA (both ranking as Vice-Chairpersons), the Secretaries of the Departments of Finance, Transport, Home, Housing & Urban Development, and the General Manager of the Southern Railway.

Given such a heavyweight composition, CUMTA could ideally take on the sorting out of the present conflict between the Corporation and the police. It also ought to realise that motorised or rail transport need not be the sole solutions to Chennai's transport problems. It would be best if one of CUMTA's objectives were the improvement of pedestrian safety and comfort. Studies have shown that a large chunk of road traffic could be eliminated if short journeys could be accomplished on foot. If so, why not look into this aspect seriously and see if some solution to accommodate pedestrian and cyclists' interests can be arrived at?

• By A Special Correspondent

Metro. It was to also look into the setting up of a common ticket and fare structure to facilitate seamless commuting, something that is in existence in most world-class cities today. Like the CMDA, the CUMTA was to, chiefly, have a planning function and oversee the work of several agencies involved in the running of the transport systems. It would also periodically revise and upgrade its plans. To be headed by the Transport Minister, it had the Chief Urban Planner (Trans-

City's heritage trees in need of help

Volunteers of Nizhal, a Chennai-based Trust that works for tree conservation, get many distress calls from across the State. They recently heard that a venerable old institution was planning to bring down a 100-year-old tree to raise a modern facility – and the tree was not even shown in the plan sent for approval! All this from an institution regularly visited by the elite of the city – a well-educated group given to repeating how wonderful heritage conservation was in the countries they visited. Could Nizhal do something about it? Another plea came all the way from Thanjavur: “Please come in your Green Cross ambulance and save the trees being cut mercilessly by the roadside!” Yet another request was, “On the private campus adjoining my home are some of the most beautiful heritage trees and the owner wants to remove them

the Public Properties Prevention of Destruction Act (and who cares about public property?), while trees on private property are ‘privately owned’ anyway!”

Unlike Tamil Nadu, where we live on promises, several States have Tree Protection Acts. Comprehensive and well-drafted acts that sensitively look at protection of trees within urban areas and which are being implemented include the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Protection and Preservation of Trees Act, 1975, the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976, and the Delhi Tree Preservation Act, 1994.

‘No person can fell any tree or cause any tree to be felled, whether of ownership or otherwise, in an urban area without seeking the permission of the Tree Authority (TA)’, (‘including all citizens, officers

• by
Shobha Menon

for the most flimsy reason; can you please help?”

While lakhs of saplings continue to be planted and promised through green schemes, mature trees across the State, many of them heritage trees, continue to lead a precarious existence – either threatened with removal or subjected to insensitive pruning by government/other agencies – for want of adequate legal protection. And with trees on private properties falling solely under the owner's control at this point, tree lovers fervently hope that the much awaited Tamil Nadu Tree Preservation Act for Urban Areas, announced by a State Minister many months ago, will soon see the light of day!

In Tamil Nadu, there are at present two kinds of restrictions on the felling of trees. Species of trees marked as royal trees – teak, black wood, ebony and sandalwood – even if standing on private land cannot be felled without the permission of the Chief Conservator of Forests. The second restriction is primarily hill area-specific. Which means almost all trees in urban areas are virtually defenceless! A senior forest officer says, “Unfortunately, trees in public areas within municipal corporation/local body limits fall only under

of the urban local authority, State or Central Government officials’), states the Maharashtra Act. The application to bring down a tree in this context must include the description of the tree, its location, a site plan and reasons for wanting the tree to be felled. ‘Felling of a Tree’ refers to burning/cutting or any activity such as lopping that causes substantial damage to the tree.

While the Act provides for a Chairman for the Tree Authority and appointing corporators as members, representatives from non-official organisations experienced in the field of planting/preservation of trees (with voting rights too!) are also to be included. Officially appointed Tree Officers (one or more) will serve under the Act in urban areas. Within 30 days a Tree Officer will personally inspect the tree for whose felling the application has been made and report to the TA. Public notice will then be given in the local newspapers that permission has been sought to fell a tree and a notice will be fixed on the tree itself.

The TA must give/refuse permission within 60 days from receipt of application with/without conditions. Permission

(Continued on page 7)

Asking for more

The Man from Madras Musings is certain that you have all heard of the six-faced, spear-wielding Hindu God of War. In recent years, as you also doubtless know, He as lent his name to a chain of eateries that became famous for serving what is known as fast food – of the South Indian variety. Coffee was the beverage for which the outlets were best known and it was said that most patrons stepped in for coffee and stayed on for more. MMM was one of the faithful.

There were certain drawbacks, of course. Most of the branches had standing room only. And in the few where you got seats, the serving staff would hurry you over your food with word and gesture. The idea was that the food was relatively inexpensive and of a high quality and so the chain survived by making sure it had a high turnover of patrons, throughout the day. No leisurely browsing and sluicing here, if you get MMM's meaning. On certain bad days, those waiting to be seated at tables would be let loose into the dining area and take strategic positions behind the occupied seats. From there they would glower at those already seated and all except the most hardy (or short-sighted) would wilt under these glares. Most finished their meals in record time. But it was all taken in good spirit; after all, this was fast food.

Then the prices began to rise. This too was understood by most. Inflation was to be blamed, they said, as they sipped the still delectable coffee. It is only when the portions began to become smaller that most of the devout following saw red. Does ‘fast food’ also mean pulling a fast one over customers, they have begun to wonder. And none more so than MMM. The coffee tumblers are becoming smaller by the day and as for the coffee inside, it is only those with exceptionally good eyesight who can locate it.

The smallness of the helpings hit MMM rather hard on the day he travelled by the double-decker train and of which journey you got a full description in the last instalment of this column. Knowing full well that catering on board was by the Railways and whose culinary skills had not exactly impressed MMM, he decided to buy his breakfast at the six-faced spear-wielding God of War's eatery which has an outlet at the station. Pongal was what MMM ordered and, he was gratified to be given a fairly large packet. How wrong they were, those who cavilled at the small helpings, MMM reflected. Once on the train and with an appetite sharpened by those around eating continuously, MMM opened his packed breakfast. He did so with a

rather supercilious air, for those around were making do with ordinary railway fare while he was feasting on a take-away breakfast from one of Chennai's best-known eating-houses.

The packet when opened revealed a bulging plastic bag of *sambar*. There was an equally large one filled with chutney. All very gratifying. It was just that the pongal was nowhere to be seen. MMM poked around with the thoughtfully provided plastic spoon and discovered two measly blobs of pongal, hidden under the *sambar* packet. A magnifying glass would have been a more appropriate item of cutlery. MMM made a meal out of the *sambar* and chutney. Not that anyone asked, but if they had, MMM would have replied that it was the quality that counted and not the quantity.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Library lore

Come summer and *The Man from Madras Musings* finds his thoughts increasingly straying towards these storehouses of books. The cool interiors, the hushed silence and the presence of similar knowledge-seeking minds fill MMM with a sense of calm. And that is needed in larger doses when it comes to summer when the heat, ruffled tempers, and the dust make for heightened stress and distress. But MMM is sorry to say that libraries, like nostalgia, are not what they used to be.

Take for instance this bibliotheque funded and run by Old Blighty. MMM was a member from the time he was a child, and a singularly cherubic one at that, in case he has not mentioned it before. In that era, and for many years after, this was a sanctuary of sorts. Even the most boisterous of children would be awed by the tomes and postpone the inevitable coughs and sneezes for a more appropriate time. But, alas, all that is a thing of the past. Some intelligent soul decided that the place needed to be livened up and the first thing that was done was the installation of bright yellow wooden flooring. Not a soul evidently bothered to consider that footfalls on wood can make for loud noises. And that is precisely what occurred. Those wishing to read in peace and quiet now have to do so amidst a continuous grating noise in the background and several members walking around, making sounds over which they have no control.

The next addition was a meeting space and conversa-

tion area. In the middle of a library! Talk shows became frequent affairs and it was most disconcerting to read, say, a Wodehouse while a voice in the background intoned about the economic crisis. The last straw was when the old staff was replaced with new ones who had no idea about library etiquette. There are now phones installed within the reading area and the staff has to frequently answer calls and talk into them for long periods of time. That puts paid to silence of any kind. And, as a consequence, members now think they can answer calls on their cell phones as well!

Because of all this, MMM let his membership lapse, after almost four decades during which he had transferred it to whichever city he had lived in. A sad parting, but then you need to move with the times or if not at least move away from them. But that is not the end of the story.

The other day, MMM was in a library of a hallowed club in the city. A member who appeared to be in communion with his immortal soul for over thirty minutes with eyes shut suddenly sprang to life and began talking into his cell phone. “I am in the library,” he roared and continued talking. Unable to bear it any longer, MMM walked up to him and indicated by gesture that he ought to go out to speak on his phone. “The club rule is that my phone should be on silent mode when I am in the library,” he said. “Which it is. It does not say anywhere that I too ought to be silent.” So much for civilisation. MMM walked away with the consolation that at least in this library, unlike the library in another hallowed club, breakfast is not served to members!

Wake up, Chennai

The Man from Madras Musings was at the Central Station for but a short while, may be half an hour. But the picture below shows the volume of garbage that accumulated in one platform during that time. Where are we going, wonders MMM.

– MMM



**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Marina mess

Marina Beach was Madras' pride and joy when the city was modestly populated. How salubrious and balmy the evenings used to be, with only the sound of the AIR news coming from the the loudspeakers and the boys hawking their 'Thenga, Maanga, Pattani, Sundal...'. In short, the perfect ambience for the late P.B. Srinivas' song *Manithan Enbavan...*

That tranquillity is now non-existent. The ignoble strife of Chennai spills over in the evenings onto the Marina sands. The mess and litter of the surging crowds foul the beach. There is menace in the air, with the last straw being our moral police hounding romantic couples sharing a few harmless moments.

I had not visited the Marina for well over a score of years. Recently, however, I had occasion to do so. The place resembled an open lavatory. I had to step gingerly to avoid the muck. It occurred to me that, instead of empowering our puritan police with IPC section 294 to harass couples, why not the police patrol the beach and arrest those dirtying it? Should Chennai wait for the next tsunami to clean the Marina mess?

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Colour needed

Chennai city is dotted with flyovers intended to ease traffic movement. But the upkeep of these flyovers leaves much to be desired. Apart from unbearable distraction by posters of various hues, dirt and rubbish lie beneath these mammoth structures which, in some places, as in the case of

Royapettah flyover, are used as urinals and parking areas.

The Chennai Corporation should keep these places clean, barricade them and plant plenty of greenery there. Moreover, all these concrete monsters look so dull, with the drab cement colour hitting the eye. How nice it would be if these flyovers were painted blue/green underneath, which will be pleasant to the eye. The flyover opposite Cancer Hospital/School of Architecture in Guindy is a case in point. Its belly is painted blue and there is greenery which is cordoned off by harricades. Can't all flyovers look like this?

The flyover opposite the Airport has 'Palmyra trees' embedded on the side walls. It would be nice if the flyover is painted green and the other areas in a contrasting colour.

Come on, Chennai Corporation, let's make Chennai. 'Singara Chennai' with a little imagination and effort.

M. Fazal

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Failed project

Regarding the article on Dr. R.P.V. Indiresan (MM, April 16th), I was present at the meeting in September 1979 when, amidst fanfare, the experiment, in collaboration with Canara Bank, was launched. The project, setting up the Centre for Rural Development at Narayanapuram near IIT Campus, was not a success and ultimately closed down in August 1984 due to severe financial losses. The employees took up the case for compensation with the Supreme Court and it dragged on for many years.

It was a tri-party tie-up which could not be managed through technology alone; it needed commitment to rural values.

The fault lay in Dr. Indiresan claiming knowledge in another field – economics.

Dr. R. Parthasarthy

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Any good done?

Fail to understand what good is expected to be derived from the exploits of Lord Connerama (MM, May 16th). My immediate reaction was that a request be made to rename the library standing in his name

Ways to harvest rainwater

The article 'Rainwater harvesting a forgotten solution' (MM, May 1st), has rightly stressed the urgent need for wider practice of Rainwater Harvesting (RWH). The two main factors for the 2003 mandate not having had the desired effect are: 1. The lack of effective enforcement of the mandate, and 2. Lack of information to the public on effective methods of carrying out the harvesting. As a person who has done RWH in over 200 four-storey complexes in Chennai, I offer some guidance on the second aspect.

RWH is extremely efficient and cost-effective for those who happen to have a traditional dug-well in their premises. They just have to connect the various down-take pipes from the terrace directly to the well. The down-take pipes can in many cases be connected to one another at a height along the wall and brought down as one bigger pipe and connected to the well. The horizontal connection can be above ground in places where there is no vehicular movement or concealed just below the ground.

The inlet pipe projecting into the well should have an elbow connected to it so that the rainwater hits the walls of the well and the water runs smoothly down the walls. Otherwise, the momentum of the water falling directly can disturb the mud at the bottom of the well and render the water muddy, particularly in the dry season when the water level tends to be low. Once in two or three years, the well may have to be desilted to remove the deposition of mud at the bottom.

The terrace must be swept clean of mud and leaves once in May and again in September. If there are any overhanging branches on the terrace, these should be pruned. If not pruned, grills have to be fixed at the out-flow points to retain the leaves. This however necessitates the need to periodically check the grills during the rains, as otherwise the leaves will block the grills and cause water stagnation on the terrace. In the case of complexes with more than five stories, neither dust nor leaves will be found on the terrace. If any food is served on the terrace, the floor should be swept and the food droppings collected. If the terrace is merely washed, the food droppings would end up in the well and contaminate it.

If only borewells are available, a safe but not a very efficient method of charging a borewell would be to dig a pit of 3 or 4 or 5 ft dia around the borewell to a depth of 8/10/12 ft (depending on the volume of rainwater to be handled) and stabilise it with RCC rings. When the casing pipe becomes exposed in the pit, replace the exposed section of the pipe with a machine slotted pipe (leaving the bottom and top one foot portions as it is), and cover the slotted section with fine nylon mesh and tie it with polythene cord. Alternately, make horizontal slits on the exposed section using a hacksaw fixed with double blades. This will result in the rainwater entering the casing pipe after filtration and reaching the bottom

of the borewell. Although the area for the infiltration of water through the casing pipe during the duration of the rain will be limited, the tank will act as a holding tank for the rainwater which can go into the casing pipe even after the rain has stopped. You can also replace this section with a pipe of bigger diameter provided with slots or slits and covered with nylon mesh. This will increase the area of the openings in the pipe for entry of the rainwater.

A four-inch layer of blue metal at the bottom of the pit will prevent the mud there from being disturbed by rainwater falling with force. This can also be reduced by fixing an elbow to the inlet pipe and extending it close to the wall. Once in a while, the nylon mesh cloth will have to be hosed with water to free it from any fine mud which may clog it.

The well, as also the pit, should be covered with an adequately reinforced concrete cover in several sections so that it can be removed easily by one or two persons for any maintenance. A small service manhole should be provided in the cover for periodic inspection of the well or the pit.

Builders are advised to go in for at least one traditional dug-well in each of their projects as this, generally, will have a good quantity of water and can be sustained by efficient charging of rainwater into it. Electricity consumption for pumping of water will also be much less, compared to deep borewells, because of the shallow depths of these dug-wells.

Persons having only borewells can also think of tapping the shallow water table by going in for a tubewell to draw the water from shallow depths and could provide a pit around it, as detailed above, with the casing pipe having slits or slots and diverting all the terrace water into the pit to charge the tubewell and sustain it. Alternately, they can have a shallow well dug around the borewell and provide the exposed section of the casing pipe with slots or slits as detailed above.

There are suggestions that the terrace water can be first filtered and then put directly into the borewell casing pipe. This is safe only if the filtration is regularly monitored. Otherwise, extraneous matter may get into the borewell and spoil its very functioning.

The rainwater falling in the open spaces around the buildings can also be harvested efficiently and charged to the shallow water table by providing a water trap between the columns of the gate (like the cattle traps of the old days) and connecting it to an absorption pit.

Those needing more information or any clarifications can contact me at isragade@yahoo.com or Dr. Sekar Raghavan, Director, Rain Centre, Mandavalli, at sekar1479@yahoo.co.in.

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**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

after any distinguished Indian scholar or statesman.

Please don't turn *Musings* into a yellow gossip pamphlet. Foreign rulers and cricketers are not the only interesting contributors to the rich tradition of Chennai.

Dr. S.S. Rajagopalan

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Editor's Note: Variety is the spice of a journal – and MM aims to provide that variety. Often, it is the more entertaining variety that sets readers to at least notice some of the more meaningful contributions.

OUR ADDRESSES

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: CHENNAI HERITAGE, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 14.

Madras Musings now has its own email ID. Letters to the editor can be sent via email to editor@madrasmusings.com. Those who wish to intimate change of address can also do so provided the subscription number is quoted. For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: Madras Musings, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006. On editorial matters: The Editor, *Madras Musings*, No. 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014.

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

Nature Notes

Some rare sightings



Black Capped Kingfisher.



Black Stork-Underwing.



Chinese Pond Heron.

The return migration season always springs a lot of surprises every season. Following the Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) is another species which sulks around mangroves and scrubs close to the backwaters hunting crab/fish/frog/insects. It is less often seen and seldom photographed. We sighted a Black Capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*) in the scrub near Kelambakkam backwaters. As it

belongs to the Tree Kingfisher species, we spotted it perching on trees and avoiding man-made structures. The 'Bird with a Black Cap' surprised us with its colours.

We also spotted in March a lone Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) soaring above a dry lakebed close to Kancheepuram. It could have possibly been migrating, as we saw it moving from south-to-north direction. It looked more a

sub-adult/immature, based on the bill colour and the overall plumage.

According to the published records for Tamil Nadu, there is only one record of a sighting near Madras – a juvenile was spotted in Pondicherry. And that was in January 1988.

Gnanaskandan K

Another very rarely seen and photographed bird was the Chi-

nese Pond Heron in its breeding plumage at Kelambakkam lake. I saw only one of this species there. I suspect there were more but not in breeding plumage. The species is almost similar to the Indian Pond Heron and difficult to identify in non-breeding plumage.

There are no prior records in Chennai of such a sighting. (Courtesy: *Madras Naturalists' Society Bulletin*).

Samyak Kaninde

• Living with nature – III

(Continued from last fortnight)

• This is the third of the three articles that comprise the opening chapter of a book titled *Footsteps through the Salad on the wildlife of Auroville*, by longtime Aurovillian Tim Wrey. For more information: e-mail prisma@auroville.org.in

There have been – and continue to be – many other interactions with nature. To give some examples, I have had a Rat Snake slither over my foot and nearly trodden on a Krait – one of India's most venomous snakes – while walking to *Gratitude* in the dark; had a semi-wild cat urinate on me through the mosquito mesh of my open windows as I slept below; had a rat run over me one night while sleeping in a friend's house; and several times had huge bandicoot rats dig up my potted plants, or shrews nest in my storeroom; been bitten by a venomous cen-

tipede as I slept (nowhere near as bad as a scorpion); had countless problems with ants, ranging from stings of well named 'scorpion ants' and multiple bites from columns of small ants that occasionally got into my bed, on my towel(!) or into the open jamptot, to invasions of a 'night-marching' variety that come during the night in battalions to occupy some dark place in the house, usually the clothes cupboard; rarely had less than a dozen-or-so gecko lizards in my rooms, constantly challenging, chasing and mating with each other, and then laying their eggs in hidden places; have more than once been driven half mad with itching, and on investigation found a tick digging into me for a meal; encountered freshwater

crabs walking cross country during the monsoon rains, and once briefly played host to a freshwater turtle; had difficulty several times getting into my residence at the end of the day, because a predatory wasp had stuffed the lock with rolls of cut leaf full of caterpillars; had a nest of five mice in my motorcycle seat, which poured out one after another at a mechanic's place in Pondy when I called in for servicing (one of them got so panicked as it fled across the hot street in blinding sunlight that it decided to bolt for the first dark hole it spotted. Unfortunately it was the 'rear end' of a reclining bullock!).

To a typical foreign visitor, unaccustomed to the profusion of wildlife we experience in Auroville, life here may seem a bit bizarre, and perhaps it no doubt is. There are even times when I think you must be a bit of a masochist to live here. But when I reflect how I have delighted at the discovery of all-gold chrysalises hanging in trees or seeing so many beautiful butterflies, and have marvelled at the splendour of peacocks in my garden, or birds like the Paradise.

Flycatcher flying past my window. have lain in bed at night enjoying the calls of crickets, frogs, owls and jackals; and have seen flocks of flamingos in flight over nearby Kaliveli Lake or watched spellbound as skein after skein of what appeared to be wild duck flying overhead in the pre-dawn semi-darkness, I cannot also help

thinking how lucky I am to have such an abundance of nature all around me.

To end this series and justify the title of the book, let me relate one final experience at *Gratitude*, involving a feisty young orphaned owl Dietra was rearing to release named 'Cardigan' (so called because he reminded us of Lord Cardigan of the Light Brigade fame, charging unhesitatingly at any food he saw offered).

We were having lunch, when 'Cardigan', who was standing on the table with us, spotted something of interest on the far side of the table and set out to investigate. He strode forward, reached the edge of my plate, and stepped up onto the rim.

For a moment he hesitated, then proceeded to walk straight through the lettuce and sliced tomato, circumnavigated two boiled potatoes, placed one foot in the mayonnaise, another on the far rim, and stepped down to continue towards his destination. Dietra seemed completely unperturbed; I was dumbstruck!

That was many years ago. Nowadays, like 'Cardigan', I tend to take such things in my stride, realising as I do that it's a rich and wonderful natural world that we are surrounded by here in Auroville, and there's much more to be enjoyed than to be feared or get upset about in our constant interaction with it.

(Concluded)

The sporting Civilian who became a don

Alfred McGowan Coomarasamy Tampoe was born on June 25, 1881 in Jaffna, Ceylon. His father, T.M. Tampoe, a solicitor, was a Hindu who became a Christian. The rest of the family were Hindus, whose family temple was dedicated to Lord Coomarasamy.

After attending a village school and a Mission school, Alfred Tampoe became a boarder at St. Thomas' College, Colombo, which was modelled on the lines of an English Public School. No vernacular language was either taught or officially employed at the College. Furthermore, its use was forbidden to all students during school hours, and to all boarders throughout all hours in the College premises. Latin was compulsory.

Obtaining several double promotions, he reached the top class of the College at the age of 16 and was considered by his parents to be fit for Cambridge University. But on arrival at Cambridge, he was advised to go back to school in spite of his academic qualifications. Being already in England, he joined an old English Grammar School, one of the famous Alleyn schools, at Stevenage, Hertfordshire. He gained his 'Cricket Colours' at Stevenage, and was even chosen to play for Hertfordshire County in his first year in Stevenage.

At Cambridge, he took his degree in Mathematics, and then moved to Frankfurt University, Germany. While a student there, he appeared for the ICS open competition examination in 1904 in London and, as he expressed it, "much to my surprise", he passed through.

He was assigned to the Madras Presidency and joined as Assistant Collector at Masulipatnam. His first assignment was as Head Assistant Collector, Narasapur, in the then Kistna District. He held the usual routine posts, but it is worthy of mention that his services were lent successively to the PWD to study and report on the discharge of water for irrigation purposes through sluices and canals in certain parts of the Kistna Delta, and then to the Department of Agriculture to report on certain agricultural practices connected with paddy cultivation in the Western Godavari Delta. The highlight of his tenure as Head Assistant Collector, Tinnevely District, is related below.

* * *

During his entire Government service, Tampoe spent all his furloughs at Cambridge where the University gave him an academic appointment during every visit.

On his premature resignation from the Indian Civil Service, he settled in Cambridge where he held the post of Reader in Dravidian Languages.

During World War II, he was an adviser in the Citizens' Advice Bureau headed by John Hilton, Professor of Industrial Economics, at Cambridge. He was later appointed a member of the Panel for Oriental Languages of London University, and then was a First Grade Officer on the staff of the BBC's Eastern Service.

His health being affected by the climate, he resigned from all these positions to return to India where he was asked by the public-spirited founders of Kavali College to join a pioneer venture in academic education, "an effort with a definite degree of idealism behind it," as C.D. Deshmukh described it. Tampoe, during retirement, insisted that his four-year association with the college was perhaps the most valuable opportunity to come his way during his life.

* * *

His fondness for sport received a severe setback early in his second year at Cambridge, when an injury to his knee while playing hockey led to his remaining out of active participation in any sport for four years and may have cost him a Blue. But he continued to ride.

Always fond of horses, he rode with the famous Yellow Uhlands, during his stay in Germany. He also attended the British Army Riding School in Woolwich.

In those spacious days when the European members of the superior services in India believed not only in hard work but also in plenty of exercise in the open air, nearly every District Headquarters boasted of a 'Hunt', generally with a very miscellaneous collection of hounds with which, once a month, they hunted either jackal or an occasional fox. Tampoe regularly rode in these Hunts.

While in the Districts, he actively participated in District Cricket, Tennis and Hockey as well as, in the case of Rajahmundry, where there was a polo ground, local Polo. He was a member of the District teams wherever he served. He attributed his health and mental vigour throughout his long life to his participation in sport.



Alfred McGowan Coomarasamy Tampoe by his close friend Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhury.

When a judge became the prisoner's friend

In 1911, when the Collector of Tinnevely, Robert Ashe, was assassinated in his railway compartment at Maniyachi Station, Alfred Tampoe was appointed to try, under the provisions of the Indian equivalent to the English Defence of the Realm Act, the conspiracy case which arose out of the murder. He committed the accused to trial by the High Court, which sentenced the leader of the conspiracy, Nilakanta Brahmachari, to imprisonment.

During his imprisonment, Brahmachari jointly with Tampoe wrote a detailed history of the underground political movement in South India up to the date of the assassination of the Collector of Tinnevely. This treatise received the full approval of the Government, and remained a standard work on the subject. In recognition of this contribution, a remission of his sentence was granted.

During the course of their joint literary effort in the prison cell, magistrate and prisoner became friends. It was a friendship that was to last over half a century.

While serving his sentence, Brahmachari subjected his outlook on life, and on the world, to a critical examination, which convinced him that the use of physical force, even if effective at the particular time, was unworthy of the dignity of human personality. When he was freed, the former political anarchist became a *sadhu*, Sri Sadguru Omkar of the Nandi Hills. The Sadguru was to later write:

"It must be unique for two persons who first met as accused and magistrate to become fast and intimate friends and continue to remain so for more than 50 years with the greatest mutual regard possible between two human beings. Such was the contact between me and Alfred Tampoe.

I was arrested at Calcutta in the first week of July 1911 in connection with the Ashe Murder Case, otherwise known as Tinnevely Conspiracy Case, and brought to Tinnevely and, with a large police escort, taken before Mr. Tampoe, who was then Headquarters Assistant Collector. I was brought to his bungalow on July 10, 1911. The European Superintendent of Police

who was in charge of the escort suggested that I be taken on foot to the Palamcotta District Jail, a distance of one mile from the bungalow, evidently with a view to parading me through the streets of the town to impress on the people the might of the British Government and also to humiliate me. I lost my temper at this further humiliation and spoke some angry and very uncomplimentary words about the Superintendent, the British Government and its menials, the Collector and others who were present. The reaction of Mr. Tampoe to my outburst was characteristic. He said, "Calm yourself, Nilakanta (My name was Nilakanta Brahmachari and I was the first accused among 14 charged). You have come all the way from Calcutta in a train with

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Alfred Tampoe, the Civilian and magistrate.

bunal of three judges of the Madras High Court appointed for the purpose, he did not show me any favour. After recording and analysing the evidence of nearly two hundred witnesses, he, as an impartial judicial officer, saddled me with the full weight of all the offences charged. One sentence in his committal order, which he probably meant as a compliment, worked much to my disadvantage in the High Court. That was, "He is the only man among the whole lot."

I used to meet him every day in his room in the bungalow which was his court, as I was kept separate from the rest of the prisoners, and have tea and cigarettes with him and discuss all sorts of things. I was 22 years old at the time and he was about 29 and still not married. For an Indian officer, though of I.C.S. cadre, he was bold, independent and just. When once I asked him as to what he thought would happen to me, he said very casually that I might get 10 years. I did get seven years after a protracted trial in the Madras High Court.

After my release from jail in 1919, I contacted him and we became dear and devoted friends. He sometimes called himself my *sishya*, though I never accepted this position. We met often during those years, stayed together at various places, ate together and he visited my ashram on the hill-top with his son. I have also stayed with him in the Principal's room in Kavali College.

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more hand written letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i-s' and crossing the 't-s'.

Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a post-card space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

– THE EDITOR

A big 'Thank You' to 40 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16-04-13 to 15-05-13, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *Madras Musings*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses. – Chennai Heritage

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Till June 16: Painting exhibition by Rupak Munje.

A very special 16-year-old who was born autistic, Rupak got his training under the American art therapist Melissa Enderle and has 63 paintings to his credit (at DakshinaChitra).

June 19-30: Exhibition of portraits and abstracts on Nature by Alagesan, a Chennai-based artist (at DakshinaChitra).

DakshinaChitra workshops

For children

June 22: Paper quilling or paper filigree art.

For adults

June 8 & 9: Lac handicrafts.



(Current Affairs questions are from the period May 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. On May 1st, IBM released *A Boy and His Atom*. What record has it set in the world of films?
2. Name the Indian whose death, after being attacked by fellow inmates in a Pakistani prison, created outrage recently.
3. Harvard scientists recently unveiled RoboBee. What is its claim to fame?
4. Which glamorous Oscar-winner recently revealed the stunning news that she underwent an elective double mastectomy due to her family history of breast cancer?
5. Which Amitabh Bachchan-starrer opened the Cannes Film Festival on May 15th?
6. Which Indian pharma company was recently fined \$500 million by US authorities after it pleaded guilty to selling adulterated drugs in that country?
7. On May 15th, the instructions for the recipe for one of the most famous concoctions were sold on eBay for \$15 million. Name the product.
8. Name Dan Brown's fourth book in his Robert Langdon series. It was released on May 14th and has zoomed to the top of the bestseller charts.
9. Who was recently elected for a third term as the Prime Minister of Pakistan?
10. What new index was launched by the BSE on May 1st based on the wide-measure S&P BSE 500 index?

11. Give the family name of siblings Alexander and Peter who took over the business establishment George Gordon & Co in 1849 and renamed it after their family?
12. Smith Stocking & Co., which began operations in April 1913, is the city's oldest...?
13. *Chandragupta Chanakya* (1940) had which iconic Carnatic musician playing the queen?
14. Which institution has had its genesis in the institution that was started on the suggestion of Michael Topping, the earliest astronomer and geographical and marine surveyor in Madras, in 1794?
15. Who made his debut in films by writing the screenplay for the cinematic adaptation of his first play *Rattha Paasam*?
16. Which church was ministered by a succession of descendants of Cuddalore Arumugam who, in 1733, became the first Indian to be ordained a Protestant pastor?
17. Which theatre had the first 70 mm screen in Madras?
18. Name the first President of the Madras Pinjrapole whose statue under a canopy can be found in a corner of Napier's Park (or May Day Park)?
19. Which road in the Alwarpet area is named after an insurance company founded in 1943 by S. Parthasarathy Iyengar?
20. This graduate from the University of Madras in 1881 was awarded the Bharat Ratna after Independence and has a tower named after him in Chennai. Who was he?

(Answers on page 7)

The change wrought by John Sullivan

• The final part of a look at the British in India taking to the Nilgiri Hills.

(Continued from last fortnight)

Shopping, another time-consuming activity, was more advanced here than one might have supposed. Sears Roebuck had produced their first mail-order catalogue in the United States in 1888. Within a decade several large department stores in Bombay and Calcutta had followed suit; and in Ootacamund you could order objects as large as a motor car or as small as a bottle of coloured ink by going through their catalogues and then simply writing a few lines to these companies.

The Christian faith flourished in these hills although, unlike the hills of Mizoram, Christians were never a large proportion of the total population. Two missions in particular sought converts here for a very long time: the Basel Evangelical Mission, a Swiss-German organisation that was more or less Lutheran, and the Missions-étrangeres de Paris, which was Roman Catholic. The latter group tended to work in the towns and on large plantations, while the former group was especially active in Badaga villages, and had their local headquarters in Ketti village.

There were other groups here too: the London Missionary Society, for example. Today, there may be about 4,000 Christians in a total population of three-quarters of a million, testament to the fact that the evangelical effort yielded scant results in terms of numbers. Yet the three organisations just mentioned were critical for the introduction of literacy to the district through their network of schools, a network that made the very first efforts at the education of girls and set up the first teacher training school; all this in the middle of the 19th Century.

Whatever we may think about the overall impact of the British on India, there is no doubt that they had a positive impact on the development of this particular district, for it was they who built the first towns and vehicular roads, the first markets, the first courts and post offices and administrative buildings.

But perhaps nothing is more evocative of the British impact on this one district than the way

that they literally inscribed their names on the map. The *Encyclopaedia** details 192 places that were given English names. Mostly these were minor features of the landscape: hills, copses (*sholas*), bogs, riding paths, lookouts, etc. But one such place is known across South India, and that is the military cantonment at Wellington. It was sited on land belonging to the Badaga village of Jagatala and, like many basic features of 19th Century deve-

lopment in this district, the idea had originated with the founder of Ootacamund and local Collector, John Sullivan (1788-1855), a Londoner of immense energy and far-sighted vision who transformed the entire Nilgiri Plateau with his many innovations.

The name given to Wellington is of obvious origin, for the Duke of Wellington was a national hero, an Anglo-

Irishman who had won the Battle of Waterloo against Napoleon, and in later life had become the Prime Minister of Great Britain. What is not widely known about him is his intimate tie with the Nilgiris, for by some strange chance he was probably the first of the British we know of by name to have visited, indeed to have fought for several months, in the Nilgiri Wynad. This was in 1800-01, long before Waterloo, when he was still known as



John Sullivan

In a technical sense the district was still prehistoric two centuries ago: it had no documents, no literacy, no schools, and scant connection with the outside world. So far as we know it had never been an integral part of any South Indian kingdom, and had certainly never been a princely state in its own right. All that changed with remarkable rapidity in the years that followed John Sullivan's arrival in 1819. Even the princes arrived to build their summer palaces there.

**Encyclopaedia of the Nilgiri Hills*. (2 volumes. Edited by Paul Hockings. Manohar Publishers, New Delhi. 2012.)

(Concluded)

• by A Special Correspondent

METRO RAIL CONTINUES BULLDOZING HERITAGE

(Continued from page 1)

selectively decide which buildings could be demolished.

The deed has been done. But what we are left wondering about is the complete silence of the HCC and its parent body, the CMDA, both of which were mandated by the High Court to protect heritage buildings. In fact, the arguments that we have presented above ought to have been put forward by the HCC so that the demolition could have been prevented.

But it is a well-known fact that this body chooses to remain silent on most matters and has, at most, stirred itself only to give approvals for demolition.

In this context, it is worthwhile quoting from the Padmanabhan Committee report. "The committee with heavy heart points out that neither the public nor the administration nor the authorities are conscious of the value of maintaining the heritage buildings, places of historic importance or aesthetic value and popular places of worship, which is a disappointment. All of them will

have to be educated and informed of the values of such historical and monumental buildings. The administration has to change its attitude on these aspects, by appropriate and stringent measures. The committee members are also pained to note

that several heritage and ancient buildings have been brought down by the public as well as the authorities and they continue unabated."

Sage words indeed, which unfortunately have fallen on deaf ears.

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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● Smile-a-while with Ranjitha

BOOKED

You know what's heartbreaking?

And really annoying?

A bookshop that's lost its way.

And how do you identify a befuddled bookshop?

Well, if you have to fight your way through confectionery, jewellery, 'gift items' (whatever that means), statues and statuettes, a smattering of 'electronics', couture accessories, perfumes, after-shave and a whole bunch of trivia to get to that large area filled with what looks suspiciously like books – chances are you are in a bookshop that has indeed lost its way.

There's a word that's much in use these days – 'Fusion' – defined as 'the process or result of joining two or more things together to form a single entity'.

It works great – sometimes.

With cuisine, with music, and certain art forms.

But some things are best left alone to do what they do best, for they, like the cheese in that old poem, stand alone.

Like books, for instance.

You want to 'fuse' books with coffee and comfortable seating?

Great.

With ear-rings?

Not so much.

Not that you have anything against bric-a-brac.

Wading through a veritable Aladdin's Cave of may-buyables – what a great way to spend time and money.

(Long live retail therapy!)

All you are saying is don't bring books into this mix.

'Going to a Book-Shop' has to be a stand-alone experience. Walking into a bookstore means entering a world that's both familiar, yet bursting with the promise of new experiences, fresh surprises, and sheer adventure. You meet old friends; you make new ones. You browse; you buy... and when you think no one is looking, you bury your nose in a new book because that fragrance, like that of the earth after a shower of fresh, new rain, contains the essence of all the living you have done so far, and all those expectations and dreams that stubbornly refuse to die.

How can you stand any attempt to dilute this?

Equally, why would anyone

decide to start a bookshop – a decision so wonderful, so Humankind-friendly, you just cannot praise it enough, only to suddenly turn around and conclude that what the bookshop needs most is ... cologne?

As for staffing in these places...?

Now, you hate taking pot shots at those who are trying to earn an honest living.

You want to respect their workspace, and appreciate their efforts.

All you ask is that they do the work they are supposed to do.

People-in-charge-of-training-people-who-sell, please note: Staffers in bookshops don't need couture-level uniforms or smartly designed IDs. They don't even need to know each book.

What they do need is a working knowledge of their workplace – that's it.

Looking at a customer with an expression of total incomprehension when asked about an author or a title has the worst possible effect of making potential buyers feel they had no business coming to a bookshop... asking for books.

Wandering around certain bookshops these days is becoming a little like being a bit player in a particularly un-funny farce... a feeling that intensifies when you find they've moved the books around yet again, something they seem overly fond of doing.

You walk in, turn sharp left and head straight because that's where they've had 'Humour' for some time now – and find yourself looking at something that looks perilously close to Self-Help. A second to re-orient, then you swing around and bravely negotiate the rows...with little success. So, given that there seem to be lots of staffers around...number is apparently not an issue...you ask for help.

First, it takes a few minutes for you and these young people to understand each other. "Humour?" a couple of them ask, looking at you suspiciously. Clearly, they think you've made up that word this instant just to harass them. Then, the light bulb switches on, and one of them asks you to follow him, the two of you setting a brisk, promising pace...only to run smack into the Sports section.

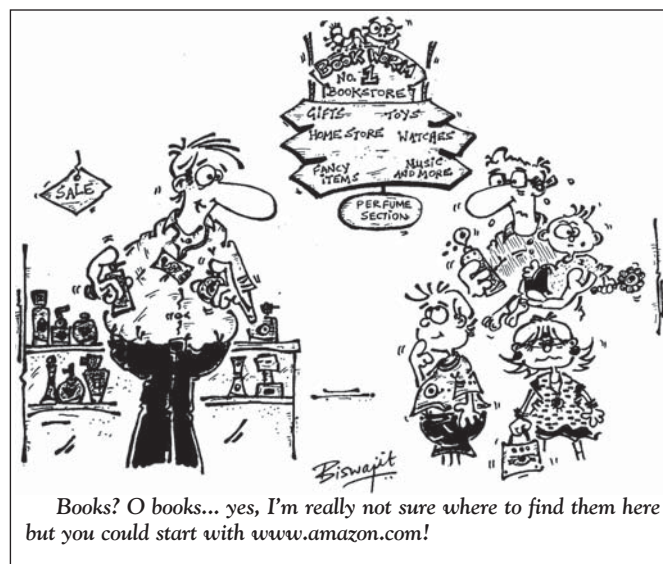
Having gazed at these books for a few seconds, he takes off

again, with you galloping determinedly behind. Along the way, you run into another group, being similarly led by a young lady prone to nervous giggles and a slightly distressing habit of screeching for help across the rows to some invisible colleague she obviously has faith in. You look a query, and are told that this group has been searching for Romance – literally – for the past twenty minutes. No one has a clue where these books have gone.

Strange – this utter lack of information, given that there are bunches of staffers lounging around, most of them with enough time to chatter, giggle, attend to personal calls on cell phones, or conduct conversations over the shelves like they are calling cows home at twilight.

If finding books is challenging, it gets even crazier when you mention authors. Nobody seems to know who these guys are.

Even staples of Indian bookshops, like, say, Agatha Christie, elicit responses beginning with a clueless (bit of irony



Books? O books... yes, I'm really not sure where to find them here but you could start with www.amazon.com!

there) 'Huh?', followed by a "Can you please spell name, please?" and by a rapt gazing at mute computer screens, while holding seven simultaneous discussions with an equal number of colleagues on who this author is, where to find him/her, (yes, really) and whom to ask for instructions.

Sometimes you get moved from staffer to staffer, feeling a bit like the parcel in a game of 'Passing the Parcel'.

Oh, by the way, do watch yourself when you go past all those perfumes.... enthusiastic young staffers tend to spray stuff randomly....so you could get zapped inadvertently by generous doses of elixirs that not only give you a distinct pong that makes the family

wonder what you've been up to, but can also bring on impressive sneezing fits of about 57 sneezes per minute.

At the 58th sneeze, accepting with resignation that this visit has been a wash-out of truly impressive proportions, you decide you've had enough.

Going rogue, you hasten home to TV serials.

Very sad – this increasing confusion in defining what a bookshop actually means; what it needs; and what it is supposed to be about.

See, the trouble with losing your way is that you invariably end up losing your soul.

And that's always bad – for books... and Humankind.

City's heritage trees

(Continued from page 2)

will not be refused if, in the opinion of the TA, the tree is dead, diseased, windfallen, poses a danger to life or property, and/or obstructs traffic, but no tree can be felled within 15 days after such permission. This is to allow time for objections. A decision is taken within two weeks after giving a hearing to the persons raising objections.

Permission is subject to the condition that the applicant shall plant three trees of the same or suitable species on the same site or another suitable place within 30 days from date on which the tree is felled, or within the time given by the Tree Officer. The individual will be asked to deposit Rs. 2000 for each tree felled and periodical inspections will be carried out thereafter. The amount will be refunded after two years, if the trees grow satisfactorily. Individuals/corporate bodies/institutions can get permission from the TA to adopt any tree for a specific period and be responsible for the tree's maintenance and preservation. The trees to be adopted

must be less than a year old, and must not be less than the number of trees required to be planted.

In Chennai, issues of non-adherence by various government departments to matters regarding trees, with neither timely response nor required action, are common. In fact, experts affirm that supervision during lopping procedures is imperative, since unguided pruning may affect a tree's chemistry and its root-shoot ratio. Felling or cutting a tree, which is home to birds and other creatures, hits many other cycles in nature.

Rapid urbanisation is inevitable, but that only means that we have to make better provi-

sion for the protection and preservation of vital green cover in urban areas for our own benefits! A sensitively drafted Tree Act (with a clear implementing system in place!) will do wonders for trees across Tamil Nadu by regulating the felling of trees and providing for planting of adequate number of new trees in those areas.

Better representation of civil society in framing of policies and programmes to protect the green cover will certainly help add to the general health of the trees and to the citizens' support of the cause.

N.B: Replanting of old trees is also a possibility. Tata's have been doing it for years in Bombay and Bangalore.

Answers to Quiz

1. It is the smallest movie ever made, created by manipulating individual carbon monoxide molecules with a scanning tunnelling microscope; 2. Sarabjit Singh; 3. It is the smallest man-made device modelled on an insect to achieve flight; 4. Angelina Jolie; 5. *The Great Gatsby*; 6. Ranbaxy; 7. Coca-Cola; 8. *Inferno*; 9. Nawaz Sharif; 10. Islamic equity index.

11. Orr (as in P. Orr & Sons); 12. Pharmacy; 13. N.C. Vasanthakokilam; 14. College of Engineering, Guindy; 15. Sridhar; 16. The Chintadripet church (now the Zion Church); 17. Anand; 18. Hungerford Tudor Boddam; 19. Prithvi Avenue; 20. Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya.

● **The fourth in a series of profiles by V. RAMNARAYAN of cricketers who may have made an all-time Madras* squad.**

To Cotah Ramaswami (1896-1990) fell the distinction of being India's second oldest Test debutant at 40 as well as, briefly, the world's oldest living Test cricketer, before he went missing from his Chennai home in 1985.

Seen regularly at the Madras Cricket Club, Chepauk, till his disappearance, Ramaswami looked almost as fit as his sons Ram and Lakshman who were, and still continue to be, users of the Club's sporting facilities.

Even in his eighties, the tall, well-built veteran always had a smile and a good word for young sportspersons. Listing him as "presumed missing" since 1985, *Wisden* first acknowledged his death in 1990.

Ramaswami came from one of the leading sports families in India. He was the youngest of the famous 'Bhatt' brothers, sons of Buchi Babu Nayudu, the 'Father of Madras Cricket'.

Buchi Babu's purchase and occupation of *Luz House* in Mylapore (off Luz Church Road) meant that his family took cricket to the Brahmin aristocracy of the locality.

In time, the two communities – of Andhra men of leisure and Tamil intellectuals – forged an unlikely combination that led to "unbridled talent finding joyous expression" on cricket grounds.

Many members of the Buchi Babu clan played for both the Madras United Club, the club Nayudu founded, and the Mylapore Recreation Club, which they later adopted as their home team.

Ramaswami's two brothers, his son Ram Swaroop, and four nephews played first class

A sage presence at Chepauk

cricket. Baliah's son Suryanarayan figured in unofficial Tests for India, and the left-handed opener P. Ramesh, Baliah's grandson, had enough talent, and performances to show for it, to be regarded as a Test prospect, albeit briefly.

C. Ramaswami was one of the members of the Madras team that defeated Mysore within a day in the inaugural Ranji Trophy match in December 1934. In an extremely low scoring match on a wicket left open to the rain, he was the top scorer in the match, with 26 in a Madras total of 130, which proved good enough for an innings win! Ramaswami was a natural left-hander who, true to family tradition, played several games with almost equal felicity and enthusiasm. His autobiography was titled *Rambblings of a Games Addict*.

Born into affluence, but having, later, to adjust to relatively straitened circumstances, Cotah Ramaswami (he was given in adoption to his own grandfather, and hence the surname different from that of his brothers M. Baliah and M. Venkataramanujulu) began his cricket at Wesley High School, scoring his first hundred in 1909 against Kellett High School.

A memorable performance for Wesley College against Engineering College was by young Ramaswami, when he put on more than 200 runs for the last wicket to win the match for his



One of the last photographs of C. Ramaswami taken before his mysterious disappearance.

side, which had been 50 for nine. He made 188 not out to his partner Neeroji's unbeaten 28.

He later joined Presidency College, where he became a popular, hard-hitting batsman who obliged spectators whenever they demanded a six.

Joining Cambridge University in 1919, Ramaswami became an instant tennis hero when he casually beat 'Half Blue' Sundar Das in straight sets (in a best of seven!) and won the singles championship the same year.

In his second year, he was awarded his Cambridge 'Blue' and went from strength to strength, even defeating the Dutch champion in a five-set final. He also won the doubles final of the same tournament partnering Hyderabad cricketer S.M. Hadi, beating a Dutch pair

that went on to win the Wimbledon doubles title!

These performances won Ramaswami a place in the Indian Davis Cup team. Playing only the doubles, he finished on the winning side with Dr. Fyzee, beating the Spanish doubles team. He then proceeded to enjoy considerable success in tennis in England and the USA, where he went at the invitation of Yale University.

Incredibly, Ramaswami made his Test debut at the age of 40, "bulky and slow" and "selected for reasons other than cricket", in his own words in his autobiography. He was overly modest, whereas his achievements in international tennis and cricket were wholly worthy of an accomplished sportsman.

His inclusion in the Indian team to tour England in 1936 was perhaps as fortuitous as his appearances in the Davis Cup. If in tennis his break came because he was at the time in Cambridge and India saved the fare of one player by inducting him, for the cricket tour of England he was preferred to younger players like A.G. Ram Singh, as the Indian captain, the Maharajkumar of Vizianagaram, a fellow Andhra, had seen Ramaswami in action only weeks earlier and been impressed.

Ramaswami was good enough to average 56.67 in the two Test matches he played at

Old Trafford and the Oval, aggregating 170. He made 60 and 40 on his debut, and 29 and 41 not out in his second (and, as it turned out, his last) Test, besides accumulating 737 first class runs on the tour.

One of Madras's finest sporting sons, Ramaswami played both cricket and tennis with a positive approach and entertained spectators with his aggressive style of playing.

Not known for style or grace, "he used his over-heavy bat like a sledgehammer to smash sixes and fours."

After his playing days, he continued to be in touch with the game, though by profession an employee in the Agriculture Department. He was the manager of the Indian team that toured the West Indies in 1953, a popular side that earned a reputation as a brilliant fielding combination, among other things. Later, he played a quiet role as a selector, during a time when Indian cricket team selection was sometimes a cruel joke on the nation.

During Ramaswami's selectorial stint, he was an unhappy participant in the mockery responsible for the appointment of four captains for a five-Test series against the West Indies in 1958-59.

Ramaswami nevertheless continued to watch the game with keen interest for decades afterwards, ever willing to discuss cricket with other genuine cricket lovers young or old. His was a sage presence at Chepauk.

* Madras Province/State/Tamil Nadu.

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