

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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August 1-15, 2013

## INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- From a Governor's notebook
- The Brother Generals of Madras
- Another one bites the dust stop
- An aristocrat among cricketers

## Are courts the last refuge for heritage?

A public interest petition has been filed in the High Court of Madras last week, seeking an order to prevent demolition of the historic Royapuram railway station. With this, the oldest surviving rail terminus of India has joined a long line of heritage structures that have sought legal protection from the wreckers' hammer. As to whether the building will survive or not is therefore now dependent on the verdict, which will not be an easy one to deliver.

There is really no law in the State under which demolition of structures such as the Royapuram station can be prevented, especially when the owners, in this case the Railways themselves, are keen on razing it to the ground. The earlier judgement by Justice Prabha Sri-devan in the *Bharat Insurance*

ity would be in the same architectural style. In the old Madras Club buildings case that involved INTACH and the owners, namely Express Estates, the judgement went in favour of the owners and permitted demolition on the grounds of there being no law that they were transgressing. In the *Bharat Insurance* and *Gokhale Hall* cases while the court ordered that there should be no demolition, there was no directive to restore and so both structures have remained mere shells, facing an uncertain fate.

Litigations involving public buildings, especially those that are to be demolished to make way for modern amenities, are perceived to be anti-people. They are often criticised as wasting public time and money. While not going into that aspect, it cannot be denied that

their various other properties, a dialogue with them may have produced better results. That now is in the realm of idle speculation for the matter is sub judice. While the end result may go either way we cannot help repeating that a Heritage Act legislated by the State will go a long way in avoiding such litigation. And such an Act is taking a long time in coming. Meanwhile, can the HCC not press for at least notifying the 400-odd structures already identified by the Court?

• by  
The Editor

*Building* case had listed 400-odd buildings of which Royapuram station is also one. It had asked the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) formed by the Government to study each of these buildings in detail and notify them as heritage structures. That has not been done so far. In the absence of notification through a Government Gazette, there is really no protection for these structures other than the claim that they have been protected under the *Bharat Insurance* judgement.

Thus far, there have been very few instances where court judgements have brought about protection and, more importantly, restoration. The sole shining example is the Directorate General of Police buildings on the Marina where the police has not only protected and restored but has also been true to its commitment that extensions and new buildings in the vicin-

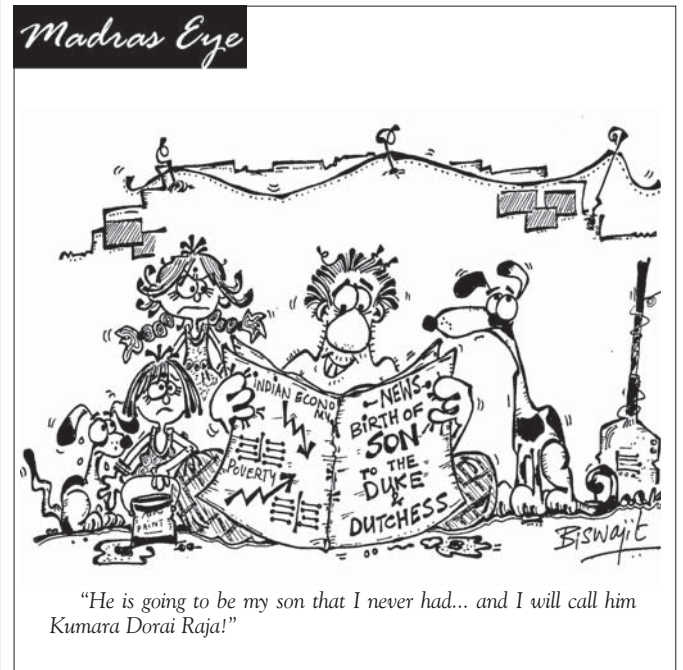
ity is also a point of view and it has influenced judgements in the past.

Lastly, directly jumping into litigation without discussion and debate, particularly with the owners with a view to getting them to see alternative routes to development, is a self-defeating exercise. It merely hardens attitudes. And irrespective of whether the judgement is in favour or against demolition, it proves detrimental to the structure in the long term. If it is for demolition, it makes sure that the owners completely and immediately raze the structure to the ground for fear of further time spent in appeals. If it is for preservation, the owners simply let the building be sans maintenance and let it fall into ruin over time. In the present instance of Royapuram, particularly when the owners have displayed sympathy to the cause of heritage in respect of

## Who guards our temple icons?

The woefully inadequate protection that exists for our sculptures and icons was once again exposed in the last couple of weeks. A national daily revealed that an icon from the Vriddhachalam temple near Neyveli had been secreted away a few years ago and had made its way to a museum in Australia. What is worse, the theft could have gone undetected as a fairly faithful replica had been put in place of the original and was being worshipped. Is this the way we safeguard our heritage?

The switch of the carvings – one priceless and several centuries old and the other a near worthless replacement – has caused great concern. It would have never been exposed had it not been for a sharp-eyed blogger who found that the icon in worship was not identical to what had been photographed in the 1940s. For one, the idol had grown an arm that was earlier missing. And then the original with broken limb surfaced in a museum's collection, thereby making it clear that there had been an ingenious plot to rob the temple of some of its sculptural wealth.



"He is going to be my son that I never had... and I will call him Kumara Dorai Raja!"

This particular theft has come to light. There may be several that may never surface. This is because we have no continuous system of cataloguing what is present at our various temples and monitoring their well-being. The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Board, which is responsible for maintaining our shrines, is run as a ministry and is peopled with bureaucrats. It may have contracts with temple craftsmen and sthapatihis but it does not have

damage over centuries are replaced with new ones on the plea that chipped idols cannot be worshipped. Even the switch at Vriddhachalam may have happened that way. The old icon may have been replaced with a new and intact one, and then the old one may have simply been sold. Then there is the craze for sand-blasting and pasting of glazed tiles which destroy the inscriptions. And lastly we now have this sudden epidemic of building *gopurams* where none existed previously. In the process, as in the case of the Virupakshiswarar Temple in Mylapore, stones bearing inscriptions from the time of the Cholas have vanished.

• by A Staff Reporter

archaeologists and historians. And that those whom it nominates for rectification and renovation of shrines have no knowledge of conservation and preservation was made clear in the recent instance of repair work at the Vishnu temple in Pulicat. Centuries-old laterite slabs were removed and replaced with concrete.

The practice of renovating and re-consecrating our shrines every few years has only added to the risk our sculptures face. Ancient ones that have suffered

Temples that are under the control of the Archaeological Survey of India have fared better. These are documented and preserved well but of late there is a growing body of opinion among the religiously minded people that handing over temples to the ASI causes a setback to ritual practices. Nothing could be further from the truth but this attitude has ensured that the ASI taking over any temple is fraught with long-

(Continued on page 3)

# The Brother Generals of Madras

The legacy left by the British in Chennai continues to linger in the form of institutions, grand buildings, infrastructural schemes and plans that have been the foundations for various modernisation initiatives that are being envisaged for the city's growth and development. There are also the various street names that connect us to our colonial past. Several of these are of men long forgotten, their contributions buried in time. But now with the internet, information on some of them is available, literally a fingertip away.

Ritherdon Road in the Purasawalkam-Vepery area has long intrigued me. The question of who this Ritherdon could be and what was his connection to Chennai kept recurring. A search on the web for a clue led my trail to Major General Augustus Ritherdon. No more information on the life and times of this gentleman was readily available. By an intensive hunt for information, I found that Ritherdons were from Devon and Somerset in England. At the end of the 16th century, migration seems to have happened to the city of



General Augustus Ritherdon; and (right) Maj. Gen. Augustus William Ritherdon.

Second Anglo Burmese War in 1852-53. Soon after the war, he was made in-charge of various stations throughout the Madras Presidency. From 1861, he served with the Madras Staff Corps winding up as General in 1891. He died in 1899 at Isle of Wight aged 76. He seems to have had an Indian born daughter Annie Louise and appeared to have been widowed in 1881 as per census records. However, he seems to have married Kate Elizabeth Cleeve in the year 1882, to whom he left a bequest of 3942 Pounds in his will.

The other cousin was Major General Augustus William

• by M. Bharath Yeshwanth

London and the surrounding areas. A number of Ritherdons served in the English East India Company but notable among them were two cousins who rose to hold high positions in the military in Madras. Both the cousins shared a common ancestor – Robert Ritherdon, a goldsmith in the city of London.

So, this brings us the question as to after which of these cousins the road would have been named. There are a number of photos of these two men in the "Hulton Deutsch Collection", now in the ownership of Getty Images. Most of the family photos with references to Madras are to be found around a house. There are notes of a grand palatial mansion named "Ritherdon House" that used to be a landmark building. Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar, one of the legal giants of the Madras High Court, was one of the later owners of the residence and he is the grandfather of yesteryear Tamil actor and producer K. Balaji. The road leading to this family house of the Ritherdons was hence named after the occupants as it was the general practice in those times.

General Augustus Ritherdon (born 1823) joined the 28th Regiment of the Madras Native Infantry in 1840. He rose in the army ranks and voluntarily opted to serve in the

Ritherdon (born 1825) who had an equally distinguished military career. He followed the footsteps of his older cousin by joining the Madras Infantry in 1843. Maj Gen Augustus served as an Executive Engineer, Class III, in the Department of Public Works at Secunderabad. He seems to have returned to England on a twenty months' furlough in the year 1862 and rejoined the Madras Infantry on his return in 1864. He went on to become the Officer Commanding of the infantry's 10th regiment before returning home to England again on a two years' leave of absence on account of private affairs. He retired from active military service in 1879. In 1880 he was decorated as Major General of the Madras Staff Corps. His marriage to Flora Ellen was solemnised in the Secunderabad Catholic Church on December 6, 1853. Before he died in 1888, he left his widow an estate worth 2313 Pounds.

While plans are being floated by the Corporation of Chennai time and again to rename roads named after British personalities, Ritherdon Road has eluded them. I hope it remains that way. But then in our city where old habits die hard, name changes hardly have any impact and, even if they do, the process takes ages.

# Physician, heal thyself

The Man from Madras Musings, as you are aware, is not getting any younger. And as he advances in years, parts that he never knew existed have suddenly begun to make themselves manifest by niggling aches and pains. There are some others that begin moving whenever MMM stops to rest but of those he will not dwell on, for it is the niggling achers and painers that demand attention.

One among these had become particularly vociferous in the last few months and even MMM's good lady who sternly believes that all illnesses are a state of mind had to admit that something had to be done about it. Several years earlier MMM had been afflicted by back-trouble and had taken to going around looking like a clothes-hanger

and as to what MMM's profession was, where he lived, what car he used and which clubs he was a member of. By the third session, by which time the pain was in its third degree, MMM's financial status was an open book at least as far as the doctor's clinic was concerned.

On the fourth session, MMM had barely hobbled in when he was asked as to whether he would like to run a marathon. Now this had always been one of MMM's secret ambitions. But age makes you wary and so MMM said that he would think about it. Whereupon the trainer, rather in the manner of P James, suddenly produced a pink brochure that had on its cover a series of before-and-after pictures of men and women who had been barrel-shaped and

lier on this topic and so this time he will contain himself to writing on the toilets alone. Before you hurriedly move on, let MMM assure you that what follows is not a graphic description of what MMM saw. Writing on that can fill several columns but MMM will desist.

Firstly, the toilets are immense. They are meant more for communal easements and not solitary communion with nature. The water closets are already missing fittings – here a flush knob, there a broken handle and everywhere stained pans. The layout of the toilets is so poor that the closet is at one end of the immense partitions and the toilet rolls are at the other end. You literally need to make a long arm to access the rolls, if they are ever there that is.

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

and a particular doctor had set him right. This time too it was decided that the same person ought to be contacted.

But time the great healer also does other strange things. In the interregnum between the time when MMM was bent double and when he was standing straight but walking with a hobble, this physician had expanded manifold. By which MMM does not mean in terms of avoidpoups but in terms of clientele. This therefore demanded the opening of several branches and to one of these MMM was directed. What about the main doctor, asked MMM whereupon he was looked at pityingly and told that his services were reserved only for very advanced cases. In comparison it was implied that MMM was in the kindergarten of ailments.

The stripling that gave MMM the once over declared that it all had to do with MMM's posture. A set of exercises, said the young 'un, would set MMM right in no time at all. He had to come for a series of training sessions at the end of which MMM could give Rudolf Nureyev a run for his money. The money for this series of lessons was paid in advance and MMM duly joined in.

A couple of sessions later, MMM found that he was physically in the pink and so was the nagging pain, which awoke bright and early and compellingly demanded attention. On MMM's mentioning this he was told that it was always that way in these sessions and then, one day, the pain would vanish. The exercise sessions were always accompanied by some pleasant conversation during which the trainer carefully elicited infor-

later become svelte runners. The trainer fixed MMM with a compelling eye and said that he ought to sign on the dotted line. The programme was for one year, or 300 sessions, at the end of which MMM would be the reincarnation of Phidippides. The fee, said the trainer, all the while keeping a searchlight-like look on MMM, was Rs xxxxxx (six digits in all). Payment could be made in one shot or in easy instalments, and in the latter case it would be Rs xxxxxx plus compound interest.

It was left to MMM to point out a small obstacle. What of the pain that prevented MMM from walking normally? Would that not have to be cured before MMM could run? "Oh that," said the trainer waving his arm airily, "it was all a state of the mind."

MMM has since not gone back to the trainer. The pain has subsided to manageable levels and MMM and it have entered into an arms-length relationship, each respecting the other's space. There have been calls from the clinic asking whether MMM is interested in training for the marathon but nobody has asked as to why MMM dropped out for days into the training and how his original complaint was. MMM's good lady has had the satisfaction of saying that she had told MMM so. And that is that.

### Airport abominations

The more The Man from Madras Musings travels to and from the new Chennai airport terminal, the more convinced he is that it has taken the city further away from its avowed goal of becoming Singapore-on-the-Cooum. MMM has written in detail ear-

And then you come across what are euphemistically termed EWC – (Eastern Water Closets?). These are the squatting variety and today it is perhaps only the very elderly or traditional who use these. Even they would find the task difficult, for the EWCs are built on raised platforms that are of immense height. You need to be a colossus if you have to climb on to these for fulfilling certain bodily functions. Taken all in all, a bad job and makes you almost pine for the old airport with its peeling doors, creaking escalators and slow-moving baggage carousels.

Leaving the toilets aside, MMM also had the immense satisfaction of finally locating an electric socket that worked. This being an 'international' airport terminal, it has row after row of electric sockets for charging your gadgets. But perhaps because Chennai is power-starved, supply has been restricted to very few of them. MMM had barely located one and plugged his laptop in when he noticed a queue forming behind him. Get on with it was the unspoken message from everyone in this line.

### Be Indian buy foreign

How do you know that Chennai's domestic terminal is truly international? Well, The Man from Madras Musings has the correct answer. The only outlet selling Indian food is outside the terminal. All the food counters inside sell only pizzas, milkshakes and pastas. There is also a restaurant whose prices are flights of fancy but of that less said the better.

– MMM



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

1. The 150th anniversary of which decisive battle in the US Civil War, and known for the then President's famous address, was observed on July 1st?
2. Which European nation with Zagreb as the Capital became the 28th nation of the European Union recently?
3. In the world of astronomy, how did Kerberos and Styx make news recently?
4. Which music maestro has been chosen for the prestigious Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony 2013 worth Rs. 2 crore?
5. How did the former Popes John Paul II and John XXIII make headlines recently?
6. By winning at Wimbledon, which siblings became the first doubles team in the Open era to hold all four Grand Slam tennis titles at the same time?
7. Which UNESCO World Heritage Site in our country was rocked by powerful bomb blasts on July 7th?
8. Name the Nobel Laureate who has been named the interim Prime Minister of strife-torn Egypt?
9. Which North Indian State has been declared the first 'smoke-free' State after achieving 85.45% compliance with the relevant parameters as per the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003?
10. Douglas C. Engelbart, a technologist best known for idealising a very common computer peripheral, passed away recently. What did he invent?  
\* \* \*
11. How does one better know T.S. Rangarajan, a literary giant with a five-decade association with the Tamil film industry, who left us recently?
12. Which K. Balachander comedy was based on Crazy Mohan's play *Marriage Made in Saloon*?
13. What did the London Mission Girls' School become in 1915?
14. In the mid-1990s, apart from Kilakkarani near Maraimalaganur where it is located now, which place near Sriperumbudur did Ford consider for its plant?
15. In world of cricket, who was the first Test captain to stand as an umpire in Test matches?
16. What decade-and-a-half-old cultural initiative on the ECR was the brainchild of Deborah Thiagarajan and Gita Ram of the Madras Craft Foundation?
17. Known as 'Pinther Kuruvai' in Sangam literature, which dance form is devoted to 'Thirumal' and is performed by villagefolk belonging especially to Nataka community?
18. Which natural wonder that gets its name from Kannada is called Marikottayam by the people of Tamil Nadu?
19. In the politics of yesteryears, which 'opponent' party was described by the Congress as the 'Sarigai Thalappa Party' because most of its members wore silk turbans?
20. Which former Chief Minister of Madras was responsible for establishing the College of Indian Medicine at Kilpauk that has now become the KMC?  
(Answers on page 8)

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Then and now

I refer to MMM's take on libraries (MM, June 1st).

He is spot on when he says that libraries are not what they used to be.

The British Council Library, Mount Road, used to be my second home in the 1960s notwithstanding getting chased out once by the librarian there for the simple fun of using the mobile bench (meant for reaching the upper shelves) as roller skates.

Recently a friend of mine invited me for high tea and video show organized by him at the Library. After I attended the function as a guest, the parking attendant asked me to pay the parking charges for my vehicle! This only goes to show that things are not what they used to be!

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### Satisfaction delightful

Reference the testimonials of Ramachandra Rao, the first Indian ACP of Madras Police, the diction is quaint and delightful to read. T. G. Taylor, Hon'ble Company's Astronomer, says that Rao's conduct and attention to duties gave entire satisfaction. W. Shelley, Captain, Secretary of Military Fund, writes, "Rao as Accountant and Writer gave every satisfaction."

In the 1960s there used to be the famous Scissors cigarette ad, "For men of action, satisfaction." Nowadays, this descrip-

tions is found only in the massage ads, "We guarantee satisfaction from head to foot"! The original and still relevant satisfaction remains the satisfaction of mind.

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Kondithope, Chennai 600 079

### Colourful look

Propos my write-up in the recent issue of *Madras Musings* (June 1st) about the upkeep of flyovers, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the flyover near Koyambedu Bus Terminus has since been painted blue in its belly. I was happy Chennai Corporation has acted on our good suggestion immediately. The city will look colourful in future. Thanks to Chennai Corporation.

M Fazal  
11, Mosque Street  
Hasthinapuram  
Chennai 600 064

### Jolly Rovers

In the MM's issue dated May 1st, there was an article regarding Jolly Rovers Cricket Club. Now, it is being managed by Sanmar group. In the article, it was mentioned that the club was founded by Rangarajan of *The Hindu* and taken over by K.S. Narayanan of Sanmar.

In this connection, I would like to mention that the club was started by a group of college students in 1947 and it was helped to join the league by R. Srinivasan, who was with K. S. Ranga Rao, the then Secretary

of Madras Cricket Association. The name 'Jolly Rovers Cricket Club' was suggested by K.K. Shanmuganathan who was one amongst us and the name was finalised. Shanmuganathan could not play for Jolly Rovers Cricket Club as he was successful in the All India Forest Services exams and had to leave Madras for the Officers' training.

The students had no sponsors to run the club and it was run with the pocket money of the students who started it.

The club won the III Division 'B' Zone Championship in the very first year of entering the league.

In this regard, in fact, an article appeared in one of your issues a few years ago written by a retired IAS Officer, Prabhakar, who was a founder member of Jolly Rovers Cricket Club.

The students who started the club slowly moved out seeking careers as they were not professional cricketers and the club changed hands. The club was finally taken over by Sanmar group, running it successfully.

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## Who guards our temple icons?

(Continued from page 1)

drawn tensions, often ending in failure.

What is needed therefore is a dedicated team of curators and archaeologists within the HR&CE. The team members need to renew the practice of documenting our vast sculptural wealth.

A database has to be maintained for each shrine. While the larger temples can have teams exclusively for themselves, the smaller ones can be handled together based on location with responsibility being assigned to a team.

This approach will not only benefit the temples but is also likely to encourage students to take to archaeology as a subject for graduation in universities. Currently it is a well known fact that seats in this particular department are almost unwanted. That means fewer archaeologists and historians in our midst each year and that in turn means our sculptures are only going to be neglected further.

The recent expose needs to be treated as an opportunity to realise what we are lacking in and improve ourselves. We need to act soon if we are to save what we are still left with in our age-old shrines.

### 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

## Madras Week contacts

For any assistance or information regarding 'Madras Week' programmes please contact:

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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



# MADRAS WEEK PROGRAMMES

## August 18-25, 2013

August 22nd is the birthday of Madras. It was on that day in 1639 that the grant was signed and given to Francis Day of the East India Company for the piece of no man's sand from which the city has grown. This day, Madras Day, has been commemorated during the last few years by celebrating a Madras Week around it. Madras Week, proposed and catalysed by a small group of volunteers who value the heritage of the city, encourages individuals and organisations to arrange Madras-

focussed activities during the Week to create a greater awareness about Madras that is Chennai's proud heritage. Madras Week this year is from August 18th to 25th and many programmes have already been arranged by volunteering individuals and organisations. Judging from the programmes lined up, it is likely to run from early in August into the first week of September.

Here is a list of some of the scheduled programmes.

**August 6: Talk:** Nina John on *Women of Chennai: Where are they now? Where are they going?* Organised by Rotary Clubs of Madras South, Madras North, Madras West, Madras East. Venue: Hotel Saveria. 6.30 p.m. For Rotarians only.

**August 11: Walk:** *Waves of conversion! Tiruvanmiyur in 7-8th Century.* Led by Pradeep Chakravarthy in the Marundeeswarar temple. 7.30-8.00 a.m.

The 30-minute walk will explore the sadly modernised Marundeeswarar temple and understand how religion and politics mingled for mutual benefit in the 6-9th Centuries. Please dress appropriately for a house of worship. No shorts please!

Participants above the age of 40 cannot register unless they are accompanied by a school (class 8 and above) or college student. No more than 30

participants, registrations on or before August 1st noon with Pradeepandanusha@gmail.com No transport/food arrangements for the walk.

**August 17-31:** Exhibition: A photo exhibition on Madras by photographer S. Kanakaraj. At Studio Palazzo Art Gallery, 14, 2nd Avenue, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai 600 031.

**August 17: Talk:** An illustrated talk on *Natural Heritage of Chennai* covering diverse flora and fauna by Dr. R. Bhanumathi.

Venue: Gallery Sri Parvati, 28/160, Eldams Road. 6 p.m. Organised by ELAI.

**August 18:** Presentation: Y.G. Mahendran and A.R. Srinivasan will present a dialogue presentation on *Tamil theatre - history and landmarks.*

At Tag Centre, Chennai 9.30 a.m. Note: Private gathering. For members only.

**August 21:** University of

Madras's Music Department organises *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* and Multilingual Compositions on Lord Parthasarathy of Triplicane. Venue: F50 - Thanthai Periyar Hall, Time: 11 a.m.

**August 24: Puppetry Session for Children on Wildlife.** An interactive session on Wildlife of Chennai and their importance with puppets for children conducted by Dr. R. Bhanumathi of Pavai. At Nageswara Rao Park, Mylapore. 4.00-4.30 p.m.

**August 24: Competition:** Quiz Competition for school children from 6th standard to 9th standard. Theme: Heritage of Madras. Organised by Amravathi Nagar Residents Welfare Association.

Venue: Ambal Matriculation School, Arumbakkam. 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. For details contact Dr. Kr. Thooyavan, Chennai. Cell: 9840645855

**August 25: Nature Walk:** The Madras Naturalists' Society (MNS) will organise a Nature Walk for the public at Pallikaranai Marsh on Sunday, 25th August.

6.15 a.m. Reporting place: Forest Dept. Office on Velachery-Thoraipakkam Road. Group size: 30. For assistance please call Vijay: 98400 90875

(When coming from Velachery, take the service road along the 2nd Flyover on the Velachery-Tambaram Road and turn left at the junction under the Flyover onto the Velachery-Thoraipakkam Road, travel around 300 metres. and take the U-turn after the Toll Plaza sign and the Office is on the left immediately after the turn. When coming from OMR, the Office is 200 metres after the Toll Plaza.)

**August 25: Talk:** Ravi Varma and his Engagement with the Madras Presidency (1878-1906) by Rupika Chawla. At Hyatt Regency, Mount Road. 4:30 to 6 p.m. Organised by Chennai Art Club.

**August 27: Talk:** K. Hariharan, film-maker and director of the L.V. Prasad Academy on *Chennai, Chennaiites and Cinema.* Organised by Rotary Club of Madras South. Venue: Hotel Saveria. 6.30 p.m. For Rotarians only.

### Nizhal Tree Walks

Nizhal is organising tree walks in English and Tamil. The walks will last for about an hour. Rediscover the verdant parks and magnificent trees in your neighborhood with friends and family! The Azhinji at Kotturpuram Tree Park, the Thaandri at Semmozhi Poonga, the Putranjiva at Panagal Park and many more such gems!

**August 16:** Kotturpuram Tree Park. 5.00 p.m. (Tamil)

**August 17:** Nageswara Rao Park, Luz Church Road. 4.30 p.m. (English)

**August 18:** Anna Nagar Tower Park. 4.30 p.m. (English)

**August 18:** A Special Musical Tree Walk will be held in Kalakshetra. 8 a.m. The walk will be led by the Nizhal team (Latha Nathan and Dr. Babu) and Carnatic musician Dr. Sowmya along with her disciples. Meeting and assembly point will be the Kalakshetra Road entrance to the campus.

**August 23:** Panagal Park, T Nagar. 5.00 p.m. (English)

**August 24:** Semmozhi Poonga, Cathedral Road. 4.30 p.m. (English)

**August 25:** Nanmangalam Forest Park. 8.00 a.m. (English)

**August 25:** Sivan Park, K.K. Nagar. 4.30 p.m. (English)

**Registration for all the walks: Please call Usha at 97910 29568 between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Online through [www.facebook.com/Nizhal.shade](http://www.facebook.com/Nizhal.shade)**

### Madras Week Programmes by Madras Heritage Lovers' Forum

At Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan Sr Secondary School, KK Nagar: PSBB, KK Nagar, and Madras Heritage Lovers' Forum have organised the following for students of the Central Cluster and neighbourhood schools:

**August 12:** Music Competition: Papanasam Sivan songs. 10.30 a.m. to noon

**August 13:** Oratorical Competition. Topic: *How I Visualise Chennai Ten Years from Now and Impact of Metro/Monorails on Heritage.* Duration: 3 minutes each. 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

**August 14:** Philately Quiz on Chennai. Each team of 2 students. 10.30 a.m. to 12 noon.

**August 19:** On-the-spot Painting Competition. Topic: *The Place I Like in Chennai.* 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Materials to be brought by the participants. Chart paper will be provided by school.

**August 19:** *Katha Kalakshepam: Alwar or Nayanmar.* 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

**August 21:** Pulli Kolam Contest. 30 minutes. 13 dots. Materials to be brought by the participants. No colour allowed. 11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

**August 27:** An exhibition conducted by Madras Heritage Lovers' Forum and 'Reflections of Our Heritage' by PSBB students. Prizes for all the competitions will be distributed on the same day. Venue: Silver Jubilee Hall 10.30 a.m. to 12 noon

The neighbourhood schools include PSBB Millennium, Gerugambakkam; PSBB Siruseri; Kendriya Vidyalaya, Ashok Nagar; Springfield, KK Nagar; MAK, KK Nagar; Devi Academy, Valsaravakkam; AVM School, Vadapalani; Karthikeyan Matriculation School, Vadapalani; Government Cariappa School, Vadapalani; and Government School, MGR Nagar. For details: Shanthi Chandrasekhar: 23663165/ 23664251 (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.).

(Continued on page 7)

## Madras Musings Walks and Talks

### Talks

**August 18:** *The Superstar of Tamil Cinema - Rajinikanth* by Mohan V Raman at Grand Chola, 6.30 p.m.

**August 19:** *Advertising in Pre-Independence Madras* by A.R. Venkatachalapathy at Chamiers, 6.30 p.m.

**August 20:** *FM in Chennai* by Rajeev Nambiar (CEO Hello FM). The Park, 6.30 p.m.

**August 21:** *Dialects of Madras - Badri Seshadri* at Amethyst, 6.30 p.m.

**August 22:** *Panel discussion on changing professional profile of Chennai - chaired by Chandu Nair, Park Sheraton,* 6.30 p.m.

**August 23:** *Creating a tree park in Kotturpuram* by Shobha Menon at Saveria, 6.30 p.m.

**August 24:** *Motorsports in Madras* by Eji K Umamahesh, Hyatt Regency, Anna Salai, 7.00 p.m.

**August 25:** *Chennai Weekend Artists and their works - exhibition and talk.* GRT Convention Centre, 3-5 p.m.

### Tours

**August 17:** *Adyar and around* led by Sriram V. 6.00 a.m.

**August 18:** *The Islamic Heritage of Mount Road* led by S. Anwar. 6.00 a.m.

**August 24:** *A half day at Pulicat* organised in collaboration with ARDE. 6.00 a.m.

**August 25:** *Roaming around Royapuram* led by Sriram V. 6.00 a.m.

All tours are partly by van and partly on foot. All tours end with breakfast except the tour on the 24th which will have breakfast during the tour. All tours are charged and prior registration is necessary by email at [srirambts@gmail.com](mailto:srirambts@gmail.com). Payment details will be emailed on receipt of registration.

(Continued from page 6)

### Roja Muthiah Research Library Programmes for Madras Week

**August 18: Exhibition:** Inauguration of exhibition of C.L.D. Gupta's "Line drawings of Madras, Queen of the Coromandel". 5.00 p.m. Inauguration by P. Chellapan.

Public lecture by S. Muthiah.

(Exhibition will be open on all days from the time of inauguration till 24th August)

**August 22: Film:** Screening of documentary *Sekkizhar Adi-p-Podi* by T.N. Ramachandran and Ravi Subramaniam. 5.00 p.m.

**August 23: Public lecture:** *Re-inscribing religion as nation: Naveena Saiva (Modern Saivites), Tamil nationalism and the Dravidian movement* by Prof. Ravi Vaitheeswaran. 5.00 p.m.

**August 24: Public lecture:** *Thiru Vi Ka's Chennai* by Prof. A.R. Venkatachalapathy, Madras Institute of Development Studies. 5.00 p.m.

### British Council Programmes for Madras Week

**August 14-20: Blog Competition.** Blog on a topic each week and win a Tablet. The topics are:

August 1-6: Madras to me is...

August 7-13: An Iconic Symbol of Madras...

August 14-20: Greatest British contribution in Madras to Modern India...

Send your blog entries to [madrasweek@britishcouncil.org](mailto:madrasweek@britishcouncil.org) with your name and date of birth. Blogs in Tamil are also welcome. Watch our Facebook page for weekly winners.

\* \* \*

**August 17-22:** Walk into the British Council. Answer our Trivia questions on Madras to win daily prizes.

**August 19-23:** Identify this iconic place in Madras. Log into [www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilIndia](http://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilIndia). Be the first to identify to win daily prizes.

**August 22:** Seminar: *Wallajah, Pigot and Tanjore: Did they transform trading to expansionism?* An all-day seminar. Speakers: Stephan Roman of the British Council, S. Anvar and S. Muthiah. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Amir Mahal. For invitees only. Organised by the British Council and hosted by Prince of Arcot.

### Madras Week Programmes by INTACH

#### August 1: Short Play

Topic : Choose a historical personality of Chennai from the list below and portray a small part in his/her life through interaction with one or more of his/her contemporaries. Maximum 5 members per school

Venue: AMM Matriculation Hr. Sec. School, Kotturpuram. Time: 9.00 a.m. 5-7 minutes.

1. Thatikonda Namberumal Chetty
2. Beri Thimmappa
3. Sister R.S. Subbalakshmi
4. Durgabai Deshmukh

#### August 1: Presentation

Topic: Choose any area of Chennai and through an audio-visual presentation show the evolution of the area over the course of time. You can use photographs and videos of people, areas and maps. Team of 3 members per school.

Venue: AMM Matriculation Hr. Sec. School, Kotturpuram. Time: 12 noon. Duration: 5-7 minutes

#### Essay Competition

Topic: Choose any 5 top heritage sites in Chennai and write about their significance. Number of pages: 2-3 foolscap size. Last date to submit: August 10.

Email us at [youngintachchennai@gmail.com](mailto:youngintachchennai@gmail.com) to confirm participation.

### Madras Week Programmes by Madras Book Club

**August 27: Book launch:** *The Anglo Indian – A 500 Year History* by S. Muthiah, Harry MacLure and Richard O'Connor. Hotel President, 6.30 p.m. For members and guests only.

**August 27: Book launch:** *Master of Arts – A life in dance* by Tulsi Badrinath. Chief Guest: Gopalkrishna Gandhi. Hotel Savera, 11.30 a.m. Sponsored by the Duchess Club and Madras Book Club. Only by Invitation, and not for members of both Clubs.

**August 31:** Memorial meeting for K.S. Padmanabhan. Taj Connemara. 6.30 p.m. For members and guests only.

**September 4: Book launch:** *Degree Coffee by the Yard* by Nirmala Lakshman. Taj Connemara, 6.30 p.m. For members and guests only.

# Another one bites the dust stop

July 15, 2013.

A photograph on the front page of *The Hindu* captures the essence of saying goodbye – tears, pathos, and the heart-breaking acknowledgement that that list of 'what was...' just got a little bit longer.

There was a sad-smile element to that day – the day that saw the ending of one of the nation's oldest forms of communication – the telegram.

Now, the Dictionary, so used to baldly deadpanning its way through words, defines a telegram as: 'a message that is sent by electricity or radio and then printed and delivered to someone's home or office.'

In reality?

A telegram was a piece of paper that constantly made you oscillate between two extremes: You love Life; You've lost faith in Life.

It was a piece of paper loaded with Destiny, often carrying the weight of human hope and emotions and, more often than not, capable of seriously messing with the even tenor of your ways.

Whenever the doorbell rang, and a voice announced that a telegram had arrived, a frisson invariably ran through the house.

Of course, no one understood the dramatic potential of telegrams better than our movies.

Which was why the telegram was always placed right up there as a harbinger of 'breaking news', along with those other shock-value favourites – the slow removing of glasses by the doctor outside a door bearing the sign 'Operation Theatre' (words which, for some strange reason, always looked as if hastily scribbled), topped by a red light that ominously switched on – then off; and that other favourite, the flickering lamp, which you watched in fascinated horror, knowing something deliciously dreadful was about to happen.

The other memory?

Those 'greetings' telegrams that always poured in during special events. For a little extra, these telegrams would be delivered on special illustrated forms, in colourful envelopes,

Remember that perennial favourite?

No 16: 'May Heaven's Choicest Blessings be showered on the Young Couple'. For some reason, that always raised a laugh among the soulless lower echelons in the family circle, who always insisted on opening all telegrams that arrived during in-house 'joyous occasions', just to see how many people had

chosen to send this particular one. The fifty-first was usually met with loud cheers, much to the irritation of the 'elders'.

You always wondered if anyone ever got mixed up between the numbers and sent No 100 instead of No 16, and can't help grinning at the thought – even now.

Reaching out – communicating – the telegram was a significant milestone in the human race's efforts to establish contact.

You recall how, when your children took flight, your mother looked at you with that unique blend of compassion and sternness perfected by Mothers the world over, demanding to know what exactly you were whining about, in this day and age of cell phones, emails, Facetime, Skype, etc? "How do you think your grandmother handled it, when your uncles and aunts left – and all we had were very expensive trunk calls, and, only occasionally, telegrams – should the need arise...which, thank God, it never did?"

She had a point, and you stopped sniffing.

• by

Ranjitha Ashok

There's always been a certain mystique to a message. It has character, a personality of its own; it reflects both the sender and receiver.

And if you think about the history of messaging in general, it is a pretty fascinating, even moving, story of how Human-kind, with its inborn need to communicate and stay in touch, has worked its way through perfecting the process... an on-going story, with the tools of communication growing, reaching higher, with greater intensity, than before, altering the 'scape and scope of Time and Distance forever.

There have been some famous high spots in the world of telegrams: Samuel Morse's telegram, sent on May 24, 1844, from Washington to Baltimore saying: "What hath God wrought?" What, indeed. Dr. Crippen, one of the first criminals to be convicted with the help of the telegram; Mark Twain, in 1897, using a telegram to issue a rebuttal to the announcement of his death, stating, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated".

The shortest telegram in the English language was Oscar Wilde's. Then living in Paris, Wilde cabled his publisher in

Britain, asking about the fate of his new book. His telegram read: "?". The publisher's reply was equally brief: "!".

A thought pops into your head... that whole (possibly apocryphal) 'Peccavi' story. How would Napier have dealt with... say... today's world of auto-correct? Just to find out, you mischievously type in the word, and sure enough, good old auto-correct ...er.... corrects you like a great-aunt, and suggests sweetly that you made a mistake, dear ... you probably meant (hold your breath) 'Puccini'. Now wouldn't that have made history ... on several levels, given dates involved?

As far as the sub-continent is concerned, the first telegram message was transmitted on November 5, 1850.

One hundred and sixty-three years later, it's taken a good look around and ruefully accepted that its day has come – and gone – and in so doing, has stepped into the world of Nostalgia, along with some other notables...

Like trunk calls... (Ever noticed how really old people still yell over the cell phone? Old habits die hard.)

Or inland letters, in which your grandmother always wrote 'safe' on the top left hand corner. So many old friends – transistor radios, gramophones, tape recorders, typewriters – all gone.

For those of us who live in a Wodehousean world, the departure of telegrams is of particularly painful significance. Can you imagine 'text messages' flying between Brinkley Manor, or Totleigh Towers, and Bertie?

Nope – imagination boggles.

It's funny though, in a world where new verbs are being invented everyday – 'sms-ed', 'skyped', 'facetimes', 'Facebooked' – no one ever seems to have 'telegram-ed' anyone.

A reflection of an older, more lexically-particular time, perhaps?

The way the nation said goodbye was pretty touching. So many turned up at various telegraph offices all over the country, some of them first-timers, sending last-day messages. Diverse people, putting everything else aside for a moment, wanting to be, and becoming, part of history, linked by the simple sharing of a poignant moment. You applaud that sense of unabashed soft sentiment that keeps us human.

So the telegram, even as it said goodbye, did what it has always done best – it brought people together, again.

We'll miss you, old friend.

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

C.D. Gopinath was the aristocrat of the Madras team of the 1950s. Not only was he from an elite social background – his father C.P. Doraikannu was general manager of Indian Overseas Bank – his cricket too was quite regal. He batted with panache, and seemed to have the kind of time to play his shots that tends to invest batting with an air of majesty. Of erect stance and equipped with a range of shots all around the wicket, he averaged over 50 in Ranji Trophy cricket during an era of uncovered turf wickets and matting.

He scored two brilliant hundreds in the year Madras won the national championship for the first time under Balu Alaganan's stewardship, sharing the batting honours with his younger teammate A.G. Kripal Singh. He scored 122 against Bengal in the semifinal and 133 against Holkar in the final. Remarkably, those were the only two Ranji matches he played that season, and they also happened to be his first two hundreds in the championship.

He had debuted as far back as the 1949-50 season, starting most inauspiciously with a pair against Mysore. His 74 and unbeaten 53 against Mysore at Bangalore in the 1950-51 season should have cemented his place in the side, but he did not seem to have clinched his place till his maiden hundred and Madras's maiden Ranji Trophy triumph.

The late Alaganan who lauded Gopinath's role in that success – along with those played by Kripal Singh, indubitably the star of the season, M.K. Murugesu, A.K. Sarangapani and others – also credited Gopinath with vital tactical in-

# An aristocrat among cricketers

puts. He said, "In the semifinal, C.D. Gopinath plotted Pankaj Roy's dismissal on the hook shot off the bowling of B.C. Alva with his fastish offbreaks. We had a fielder about halfway to the boundary, Alva bowled short and Roy could not resist the temptation." (Alaganan and Gopinath had played for college and club together as well. In an interview, Alaganan once related with much delight an anecdote involving young Gopinath, who did not see eye to eye with the Madras Christian College principal's view that his cricketers could not play for other teams. According to Balu, Gopinath played for a club under an assumed name and scored a hundred once.)

Gopinath who became State captain the very next season following Alaganan's retirement, came to be known for his capable leadership, but could not repeat Alaganan's success, though he continued in his role till 1963. He had been much more successful as captain of the Madras Cricket Club in the local league, leading the team to the Palayampatti Shield title in his very first season as captain in 1957-58. He repeated the feat the following season, and twice again in 1960-61 and 1965-66. As captain of Madras, Gopinath relied on his spinners led by the champion leg spinner V.V. Kumar, and played a key role in the development of his bowlers. In the league, however, he had to rely on swing and seam, with N. Kannayiram, all-



C.D. Gopinath.

rounders M.K. Balakrishnan and M.M. Kumar, and Burmah Shell's H.W. Joynt leading an effective pace attack.

As a batsman, Gopinath had an impressive record of nine first class hundreds including a highest of 234 against Mysore in the Ranji Trophy and a grand 175 versus the touring New Zealand team in 1955.

He had made an impressive Test debut in 1951-52, playing two lovely innings of 50 not out and 42 against England in a drawn match at Bombay. It must have been a daunting experience for the young man to bat at No. 8 in a line-up that had Roy, Mantri, Umrigar, Hazare, Amarnath and Sarwate and Adhikari bat ahead of him in the order and Vinoo Mankad after him! He seemed to have coped very well, scoring a fluent half-century in a first innings total of 485. The story was different in the second innings. India were 77 for 6 when Gopinath went in, and soon 88 for 7, before he and Mankad put on 71 for the eighth wicket. He

made 35 in the final Test at Madras, which India won, its first Test victory over England.

Gopinath fared quite well in an unofficial Test series against the touring Commonwealth team, a fighting unbeaten 67 that helped India to ward off an innings defeat the highlight of his performances. He made a few runs in the limited opportunities that came his way in Pakistan in 1954-55, after declining an invitation to tour the West Indies a couple of seasons earlier! Those days, it was not unthinkable for a player to make himself unavailable for Test cricket for business reasons.

Gopinath was in the tour party to England in 1959 but did not get to play a single Test. Brought into the team again in the final Test against Australia at Calcutta in the next season, he played a fighting knock of 39, topscoring in the first innings as India collapsed, but made no run in the second innings – when India fared much better. He was Richie Benaud's victim in both innings. He never played for India again.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion after studying Gopinath's career record of intermittent opportunities, and having watched him bat with great style and confidence, that he did not receive a fair deal from the selectors. His was certainly a talent worth nurturing. In domestic cricket, he continued to bring joy to the Madras partisan, with several top in-

nings of great authority. This writer had the pleasure of bowling to him in a local match in the 1960s. None of his skill had left him, though he was by now essentially a Sunday cricketer.

After his playing days, Gopinath became a national selector and toured England in 1979 as the manager of the Indian team. Today, he comes across as a thoughtful commentator on the game, when approached for his views. At a recent function to launch the Wisden India almanac, he gave the audience some amusing glimpses into the past by recalling the infinitesimal "smoke allowance" Test players received in his days, and the nature of the accommodation they enjoyed in Pakistan: a railway compartment! He also suggested that 20-20 cricket be renamed as something else than cricket, just like billiards, snooker and pool.

Nowadays, 83-year-old Gopinath and his wife Comala, a champion golfer in her day, live at their Coonoor residence.

\* Madras Province/State/Tamil Nadu.

## Answers to Quiz

1. Battle of Gettysburg; 2. Croatia; 3. They are the names given to the last two discovered moons of the dwarf planet Pluto; 4. Zubin Mehta; 5. They are to be simultaneously declared as Saints; 6. Mike and Bob Bryan; 7. Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhi Gaya; 8. Mohamed ElBaradei; 9. Himachal Pradesh; 10. The Mouse.

\* \* \*

11. Lyricist Vaali; 12. Poikkaal Kudhirai; 13. Bentinck Girls' High School; 14. Katrambakkam; 15. S. Venkatraghavan; 16. Dakshina-Chitra; 17. Sevai Aattam; 18. Hogenakkal; 19. Justice Party; 20. P. Ramarayaningar, the Raja of Panagal.

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