

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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To many, heritage is a mere facade

We have had occasions to write about this in the past and we still feel it is a matter of greater relevance even now. There appears to be a mistaken notion among those who matter – Government officials, those in real estate and some architects – that heritage preservation is all about retaining the façade of a building while the rest can be changed in any fashion. This, if allowed to continue, will create a set of pastiche fronts and that will be all that we can claim as our heritage. It would be best if this trend were corrected at the earliest.

Take the case of the Bosotto's building on Mount Road. A landmark of the city, it has had a history of more than a century, beginning life as D'Angelis hotel, once one of the best hotels in the city, and continuing to remain a hotel under various owners till the 1970s, when it became viewed as a prime piece of real estate (for further details see MM, May 1, 2014, 'Landmarks of Madras' series). It has been listed as a heritage building worthy of preservation by the High Court of Madras. And yet, as the photograph below will testify, work on the demolition of its interiors has begun. This is indeed a pity, for, apart

from fire damage, most of this building was structurally intact and could have been put to creative alternative use.

According to the judgement delivered by the High Court of Madras on April 29, 2010 on Writ Petition No 25306 of 2006 which, incidentally, is the only protection that heritage buildings have in our city, "No development or redevelopment or engineering operation or additions, alterations, repairs, renovations including the painting of buildings, replacement of

• By The Editor

special features or demolition of the whole or any part thereof or plastering of said listed/heritage buildings or listed/heritage precincts shall be carried out except with the prior written permission of the Member Secretary, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority. The Member Secretary, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority shall act in consultation with the Heritage Conservation Committee to be appointed by Government (hereinafter called 'the said Heritage Conservation Committee').

Such being the Court's or-

der, it is to be assumed that in the present instance, approval has been sought from the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) and the CMDA before demolition work was begun. It is, however, in the interpretation of this judgement that there is necessity for greater clarity, for several parties have begun to assume that all that it protects is the facade of a heritage building. This is because, the court has relied on a listing of heritage buildings put together by the Justice E Padmanabhan Committee in connection with another case which related to outdoor hoardings. That committee's report was mainly concerned with facades as it focussed on preventing heritage structures from being hidden by large outdoor hoardings. However, when judgement was delivered in connection with WP 25306, the list was taken as one on heritage buildings as a whole and did not deal with simply protecting the facades.

The fact remains, however, that there is at present scope for a wrong interpretation of the

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Madras Landmarks – 50 years ago



• One of the most handsome edifices on NSC Bose (formerly China Bazaar/ Esplanade) Road is the National Insurance Building. Built in 1938 in the classic art deco style, it is one of the earliest structures of that genre in the city, its construction being more or less simultaneous with that of new (and present) Dare House further down the road. It also holds significance for being the first art deco building of the city to be designed by an Indian – L. M. Chitale.

The property itself is much older, for it forms half of what used to be the Esplanade branch of Spencer & Co, the other half still surviving in its original form and now home to a popular eatery. From the latter we can gauge that what stood in the place of the National Insurance Building was an Indo-Saracenic structure.

(Continued on page 2)



D'Angelis/Bosotto Building, now under the wreckers' hammers.

What's achieved by changing road names?

There was recently a report in the city newspapers which probably went unnoticed. Halls Road, it was announced, has been renamed Tamizh Vazhi Salai. A new signboard to that effect would soon be put up, the report went on. It is not clear from the report as to who or which body had taken this decision or whether it was final. If it is, then it is high time the authorities realised that such acts are nothing but empty gestures that are unlikely to cut ice with the general public. On the other

hand, they are likely to cause a lot of irritation among the residents of the re-named thoroughfare and its users.

The rules are quite clear about change of names for roads and streets. These need

• By A Special Correspondent

resolutions to be passed by the relevant civic body. However, the decision needs to be ratified by the State Legislature before the change can actually take effect. There is no clarity on

whether in the present case the Corporation and the Assembly have assented to the change.

This is not the first instance of re-naming. The earliest spree was in the late 1960s when a change in regime saw several streets getting new names. But that was a different era. A new party had won power largely on the basis of a language issue and such an act was very much in keeping with the prevailing public mood. But now the average citizen has moved on. Only

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WHY CHANGE ROAD NAMES?

(Continued from page 1)

the political parties of the State do not appear to have woken up to the fact. This became evident in 2010 when the then Corporation Council announced that all streets in the city that commemorated British personalities would be re-named after Tamil scholars. What followed was a spirited protest from the residents. They pointed out that in the event of a re-naming, they had to go through the pain of informing several statutory and other corporate bodies, with whom they had dealings, about the new name.

On its part, this journal approached the matter from another angle. We published a list of all such streets and brought to the fore the reasons for their old names. We also argued that at least those among the British whose work had benefited our city ought to be remembered, while the others could go. Whatever be the reason, the proposal to change names was dropped.

The present exercise appears to be a more insidious one. A bulk renaming would attract public attention and large protests. On the other hand,

taking up one road at a time would pass by unnoticed. At least that appears to have been the thinking behind the present change.

While we are all for commemorating and honouring the language of our State, we cannot help wonder as to why this name has been given to Hall's Road. It is not as though any Tamil scholar has lived on that stretch. And if at all the name had to be given, why was it not bestowed on a thoroughfare in the newer parts of the city? Is the mother tongue honoured only if an existing street name is changed? Also, given our love for abbreviations, does Tamizh Vazhi Salai not run the risk of being branded TV Salai? We have plenty of similar instances – RK Salai, TTK Road, T'Nagar, JJ Nagar and KK Nagar, etc.

And lastly, what does a name change achieve? Does it solve parking issues, potholes, overflowing drains, illegal occupation of footpaths and encroachments – all common issues our thoroughfares suffer from? Would our civic body not be better off focussing on such matters and not on non-priority issues such as change of names?

Madras Landmarks

(Continued from page 1)

Spencer's had a presence in North Madras since 1894, the first outlet being on First Line Beach and going by the name of the Beach Branch. This in 1906 moved to 362 China Bazaar Road, which was a property of Eugene Oakshott, the Spencer Chairman of the time. The shift was evidently quite an event, for it was reported in The Madras Mail, the newspaper that would eventually come to be owned by Oakshott's son-in-law E.O. Robinson, a later chairman of Spencer's (and later Amalgamations). This is what The Mail had to say:

Messrs Spencer and Co's George Town Branch was yesterday removed (from near the Customs House) to the fine new premises recently built on the Esplanade, opposite the Law Courts. The building consists of two storeys. The main show room downstairs is after the model of the large show room in the Mount Road premises of the firm. The reserved stock is kept upstairs, where there is also a storeroom. The new building is in a very convenient and accessible part of the town.

In 1908, Spencer's bought the property from Oakshott for Rs 65,000. The branch did well till the 1930s when the Great Depression necessitated changes. Under Chairman L. C. Nicholson, Spencer's was to embark on cost cutting and improving liquidity. The first to be axed was the Esplanade building, which was sold to the National Insurance Company Limited of Calcutta for Rs. 2 lakh in 1933.

The new owner, one of the largest insurance firms of that time in India, moved into one wing of the building, allowing Spencer's to rent the other. But in 1938, it was time to remodel at least a part of the edifice in keeping with the new style that found favour in particular with insurance firms, hotels and cinema theatres. The company chose L. M. Chitale for the task. His life and that of his eponymous firm has been covered in detail in Madras Musings some time back.

Under Chitale's hand, the new-look four storey-building emerged with the first two floors still retaining their Madras terrace and the two new floors being roofed with cement concrete, again a first or at least an early instance for the city. Interestingly, Spencer's was to move into the new building shortly after its construction. The National Insurance Company became a part of the General Insurance Corporation (GIC) of India in 1956 and with that the latter firm became the owner of the property. It is still put to good use and is maintained fairly well though the clutter of signboards on it detracts considerably from its architecture. Strangely, what was once a lovely red and cream coloured façade was a few years ago painted a dull blue and it remains so till date.

Motor registration madness

There was a time when getting a number plate for your vehicle was a simple matter. *The Man from Madras Musings* speaks of a not so distant past when each time you bought a new vehicle (which was not so often, no matter how well to do you were), you took it to the Regional Transport Office, applied for a number and got one eventually, along with the number plate, this being the RTO's responsibility. There was a standard for the number plate and that is what everyone followed.

Then came this craze for customised number plates. Some wanted them to be in outlandish fonts. Others had strange ways of depicting the number. A third felt that ze-

to using them. Only it now transpires that the Government never sanctioned these. As to who sanctioned them, we shall never know and it will rank among those all time mysteries such as the Man in the Iron Mask and closer home, the Bhawal Sanyasi case.

The upshot is that the police have swung into action with what can only be termed as glee. They lurk behind trees and jump out at cars thereby causing nervous drivers to shy and rear. In fact, were it not for the seat belt law, many could fall off their saddles. But this is no concern of the police. They are after the IND plates with holograms and their duty being their sole concern, they have

when it comes to the two-wheelers. The hoi polloi are easy pickings. And so they pounce on this unfortunate category of road-user with what in the old days would have been termed as gay abandon. A quick pounce, a jerking off of the ignition key with a deft flick of the wrist, and the victim is at your mercy.

The other day, MMM was walking by (he finds that he is happiest using this natural form of transport) when he espied a group of policemen lurking behind a few lamp-posts at a sharp bend. The moment a two-wheeler rounded the corner two or three of the cops would step out and apprehend the alleged of-

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

rees before any number were useless anyway. The Government vehicles wanted a 'G' to indicate that they were ferrying Gods on earth and so were above any and all laws.

Then came doctors who had a plus put on their vehicles and in case that did not make it plain to the meanest intelligence as to who was driving or travelling in the vehicle, a 'Dr' was also added. MMM is not sure if the Drs expect the police to believe that they are on emergency services and so need to be waved on at all traffic lights. But he would assume that if this were to be the case, they could also add 'Er' (short for Emergency) on their number plates.

MMM also assumes that the Drs would have done this had it not been for the Engineers who rather nimbly stole a march and usurped those letters. Now why should an engineer need to jump signals? But they were not alone, for along came the lawyers who put up stickers depicting collar bands. That can have only one implied message – don't mess with me on traffic rules or I will see you in court.

Be that as it may, number plates now come in all shapes and sizes. Like many other things in our country, the making of number plates has been privatised and so there is really no standard. The latest craze was sold on the basis of patriotism. Apparently many countries have number plates that have the initials of the nation on the side with a hologram below. Those who travelled abroad would often lament about how India was lagging behind on this. And then one day, presto! The Government okayed those number plates with IND followed by a hologram and many, including MMM, took

been apprehending motorists and fining them. Some, who later unburdened their feelings to MMM, also informed him that they made bold to ask the police as to what their crime was. To this they were told that the police were not so sure themselves but this they did know that something was being violated and so a fine would have to be paid. And that, as they say, was that!

When MMM lamented about his IND number plate to his chauffeur he was told not to worry, the matter was in capable hands. It was only later that MMM got to know what had been done. It was a typical Indian solution – a piece of paper had been pasted over the IND and the hologram. When MMM protested, he was told to remain silent, for, said the chauffeur, you never knew when the IND number plates would become legal again. This way, he said, you did not incur the cost of changing number plates twice.

Two-wheeler travails

If that be the problems of the motor car owner, the two-wheeler users are not better off in any way. They can be hauled up by the long arm of the law for not using helmets, giving someone a ride on the pillion, not having certain documents (as to what these are MMM is not certain) and not adhering to number plate rules. In the last-named category it is the style of lettering that the gendarmerie is finicky about. In number plates they would like everything to be just so.

Unlike cars where you can never be certain as to who is seated inside (minister's mother, MLA's maid, bureaucrat's brother, etc), the police are on much firmer ground

fender. But this is an era when even mosquitoes and viruses have acquired new survival skills and the two-wheeler users have also become wiser. They rarely drive along a kerb, preferring to be in the middle of the road, which is really the safest spot in any Chennai thoroughfare. This being the case, the police sometimes miss their prey. And that is precisely what happened at least on three occasions on that day, at least as far as MMM could observe!

The seniormost among the policemen was not happy. He then whispered something to one of the juniors and, therefore, more agile specimens, by which MMM means some of them whose paunches did not reach their knees. The next time a two-wheeler user came around and tried to evade the embrace of the law, the young policeman was to run after and apprehend him. It worked very well in theory but not so much in practice. For one, there were other and bigger vehicles on the road and these hindered his catching up with a truant two-wheeler. The young cop was putting himself to great risk, and all for some minor violation, which would not have happened if there was greater clarity on the law in the first place.

Tailpiece

All that stated above made *The Man from Madras Musings* wonder whether in this age of smart technology such primitive methods of law enforcement were really necessary. After all, we claim to be living in a world-class city. Have you ever noticed such police behaviour in any other part of the world?

– MMM

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Street art

Propos saving our walls (MM, February 16th), I find that there has been a renewed interest in street art in the city recently. A street art festival, 'Conquer the Concrete', was recently conducted by the Goethe-Institut in association with Chennai City Connect for a week.

Metro railway stations were targeted by artists from Germany, the United States and Spain, who worked in collaboration with Indian street artists from Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai. Cinema hoarding painters and art enthusiasts were also included in the effort.

An old woman (from the low income group) so inspired the street artists that her portrait came up on the Greenways Railway Station. But she claimed she derived nothing out of it. The ones that drew most attention of the Press were the paintings that adorned the Platforms 3 and 4 of the Egmore Railway Station. One of the pillars of the 'flyover' near the Airport was adorned with graffiti.

As mentioned in the *Madras Musings* report, a series of murals and statues depicting ancient Tamil culture and customs came up all over the city during the tenure of the previous government. Though not holding much of visual appeal or rich in aesthetics, they at least sought to instil in our minds a consciousness of the past.

Does the present street art make the city better in any way? The answer would be a hesitant 'yes'. Before street art arrived, the walls were only political spaces, used by political parties for propaganda or celebrating birthdays of their leaders. Creativity on the walls is welcome to save them from getting defaced in other ways. But could it be made more meaningful?

K. Venkatesh

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A matter of concern

The list of Fellows admitted to the prestigious Indian Academy of Sciences for 2015 is just out.

A quick browse through the list disappointed me thoroughly, as I could not find one

name from Madras (or even from Tamil Nadu), whereas Bangalore registers 5, New Delhi 4, Bombay 4 and Calcutta 6.

Where is Madras science, which was pioneered by remarkable men such as GNR (G.N. Ramachandran), heading to?

What is the quality of science in Madras today?

I felt miserable and share my concern with your readers.

Dr. A. Raman

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Teachers remembered

The February 1st issue of *TMM* brought me some sweet memories. Prof. Ignatius Absolam whom Justice S. Mohan remembers was also my professor (no, he was a lecturer, only Presidency College had professors). He was known for his immaculate sartorial discipline, baritone voice, reading of poetry with modulation and his love for students.

I was privileged to attend some lectures of Prof. Alladi Ramakrishnan. At one of the meetings, his wife presented a dance performance. Minister C. Subramaniam was instrumental in founding of several institutions of excellence – the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Taramani, being one of them. His passion for providing higher education through Tamil medium saw many standard works in different subjects being translated and published. If that had been pursued with the same fervour, education would have reached great heights. Once convinced of the efficacy of any project, CS would pursue it till it was successfully launched.

Dr. A.R. Irrawathi was a teacher totally devoted to her subject and when she was Professor of Geography in M.K. University, she took great pains to identify the Kadamba tree mentioned in Sangam classics and developed a Kadamba forest with great passion. She took me around when I was there for a seminar. Alas, the forest was done away with to make way for concrete structures.

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Errata

In the article on Caroline Chisholm (MM, February 16th) the image at the top was not that of a postage stamp, but the image of the now defunct \$5 currency note. These paper notes are no more current in Australia and we use plastic notes. The present \$5 bill does not include Chisholm's portrait, but that of the Queen of England, Elizabeth II.

Dr. Anantanarayanan Raman



Time such toilets were installed

I saw reader Thomas Tharu's letter (MM, February 1st). In this connection I had phoned the present manager of the tea estate in Kerala. He sent a number of photos of these eco-friendly toilets. Unless the local initiative of the workers is forthcoming they may not be fully utilised efficiently. However, the women workers fully appreciated the effort of the management.

Subsequently, the management made individual toilets for each house and they are now functional, but those field toilets are still in use after 45 years.

Rural people need to be educated on how to use toilets and this was the problem with estate workers some 45 years ago. Then there was water scarcity for flushing and bore holes made by augurs was the answer, and perhaps this can be the first step for rural India.

Today there are several companies who are making prefabricated toilets and houses in India as well as in China.

A Chinese manufacturer of a high quality portable toilet states that glass reinforced mobile toilets can be used to deal with temporary large gatherings and temporary constructions or in homes. It is easy to clean, conforms to hygiene requirements, and is light weight. No visual pollution and no smell pollution.

It has enough space, is easy and comfortable to use. Can make full use of natural light during the day. It is equipped with a water tank, with less dependence on water from outside. Small in size, light of weight, it is easy to carry by 3 or 4 people when being moved.

It comes with options: Squatting or pedestal type. Deodorisation device, wash basin, urinal. Indication lock for somebody inside.

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The headline to our main story on page 1 of *Madras Musings*, February 16th, should have read 'Law College's home', NOT 'house'.

'Youth make Lit-for-Life vibrant' (MM, February 16th) was written by Sriram V. and not as acknowledged.

We regret the errors.

– The Editor

Some pipes may save the marsh

Chennaiites are perhaps aware that the Pallikaranai freshwater swamp is the only surviving wetland ecosystem in their metro. It is also one among the last surviving wetlands in South India and is also categorised as one among the most significant wetlands in the country in Government conservation programme/projects.

The aquatic ecosystem of this marsh supports a wide variety of life forms, including rare and endangered species, and acts as breeding ground for many bird species, both inside and outside the country. It is also reported that bird sightings in Pallikaranai Marsh are higher than in the bird sanctuary at Vedanthangal.

At present, Pallikaranai Marsh is a fraction of its original size because of rapid and unplanned urbanisation. In this regard, the contribution of the Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam Road, that cuts right through the marsh, is a matter of concern and should be examined.

The living and thriving ecosystem of this marsh has been reduced to vast cesspools on either side of this road. By blocking the natural flow of life, this artificial barrier, in the form of a road, has perhaps unwittingly hastened the demise of the marsh.

It is true that a fine balance has to be struck between the need to foster development, on one hand, with the necessity to conserve nature, on the other. Ideally, an overbridge, instead of a surface road, would have achieved this balance. This road cannot be removed now. However, re-establishing continuity of the marsh land, on either side of the road, can still be attempted by laying large diameter pipes in a perpendicular direction under the road along its entire stretch.

I believe that re-establishing continuity of marshland in itself can contribute to its regeneration and will complement the other conservation measures here. The cost of this exercise may well be worth the benefit of preserving what is left of this precious natural gift. A concerted voice by caring Chennaiites can make this happen.

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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

The National Anthem & the Cousins

Jana Gana Mana, now the National Anthem, was written by Rabindranath Tagore as early as 1911 and was sung at the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta on December 27th that year. But it was in Besant Theosophical College, Madanapalle, where Tagore stayed for a few days in February 1919, that the now familiar tune was set.

It was Margaret Cousins, wife of educationist James H. Cousins, who composed the tune for *Jana Gana Mana*. Dr. James Henry Cousins was then the Principal of the Madanapalle College that was founded by Dr. Annie Besant.

Tagore was on a tour of South India and was very tired when he reached Bangalore in the last week of February 1919. On the advice of C.F. Andrews, he decided to rest at the Theosophical College in Madanapalle, about 120 km southeast of Bangalore.

Besides several firsts of national importance, Madanapalle also had a first grade college started by Annie Besant in 1915. Besant's involvement in the freedom movement prompted the Government to cancel its affiliation to Madras University. Undaunted, Dr. Besant named the college "Wood National College," after Prof. Ernest Wood, educationist and a close follower of Dr. Besant. She got it affiliated to the National University at Madras, which was newly organised by the Society for the Promotion of National Education, (SPNE). Rabindranath Tagore was the Chancellor of the University. When it was suggested that the quiet atmo-



Rabindranath Tagore

sphere at Madanapalle College as the right place to rest, Tagore was only too happy, for he felt that he would be with the staff and students of the College affiliated to the National University. Tagore also felt happy to be in the company of Dr. Cousins, whose poetry in English he always admired.

During Tagore's stay in Madanapalle, *Jana Gana Mana* was given the melody to which it is now sung all over the country. Till then the song never had a uniform tune. It was sung with many different regional variations.

It was the practice of Dr. and Mrs. Cousins to hold informal meetings called "sing-song, fun sessions" with the college community every Wednesday night after dinner. Tagore, who joined the gathering, asked if he might sing one of his poems.

Writing about how the song was first heard by them as sung by Tagore himself, Dr. Cousins recounted, "In a voice surpris-

ingly light for so large a man, he sang something like a piece of geography giving a list of countries, mountains and rivers; and in the second verse a list of the religions in India. The refrain to the first verse made us pick up our ears. The refrain to the second verse made us clear our throats. We asked for it again and again, and before long we were singing it with gusto: *Jaya hai, Jaya hai, Jaya hai, Jaya Jaya Jaya hai* (Victory, victory, victory to thee)."

Mrs. Cousins, who was pleased with the rich thought-content of the poem, decided to give a suitable tune to it. She was herself a musician, having taken a degree in music from the University of London. The next day,

● by
K.S.S. Seshan

she discussed with Tagore the notations and the general theme of the song. Tagore explained the nuances of the poem and indicated broadly the *suara* for the song. With the help of the girl students of the College, whom she used to teach music, Mrs. Cousins worked on the tune for *Jana Gana Mana*. She carefully studied the meaning of each line of the song and composed the musical notes.

When she was ready with the final version of her composition, she spoke to Gurudev and briefed him on the *swara* she composed. With the staff and students assembled in the same classrooms, where Tagore had sung, Mrs. Cousins, with the help of her students, to the accompa-

niment of a few simple musical instruments, rendered the entire song in the presence of Tagore. Tagore responded, saying he appreciated the melody and the efforts of Mrs. Cousins in composing it. Thus, the final musical form of his popular Bengali song, *Jana Gana Mana* became the universally accepted version.

About this event, Dr. Cousins in his autobiography states: "It made literary history and carried the name and thought of Tagore into the minds and hearts of millions of young in schools and colleges and outside them and ultimately gave humanity the nearest approach to an ideal national anthem. It happened, as so many great events of the spirit do, without anticipation and without collusion."

It was during his stay at the College that Tagore also translated *Jana Gana Mana* into English. For a few days, early in the mornings, basking in the winter sun, Tagore sat on a stone-slab under the Gulmohar tree in front of his cottage and went over his Bengali song line by line, finding the equivalent words in English. He wrote the words in his own beautiful handwriting and named it the *Morning Song of India*. At the bottom of the translated version, he signed his name, dated it February 28, 1919, and presented it to Dr. Cousins.

Later, when the College was in a financial crisis due to the withdrawal of grants by the Government of Madras, consequent to the participation of the faculty and students of the College in the Home-Rule agitation started by Dr. Anne Besant, the *Morning Song of India* document in an American collector for a fabulous but undisclosed price. The money collected was added to the College fund.

However, a photocopy of it was made before the original left the country forever. This copy is preserved in the Madanapalle Theosophical College.

Tagore, having fully refreshed and recouped, left Madanapalle on March 2, 1919 to continue his South Indian tour. It is said that before leaving, he called the Madanapalle College the 'Shantiniketan of South.' In 1937, when a fierce controversy raged over the selection of the National Anthem, it was James Cousins who fervently pleaded that *Jana Gana Mana* should be confirmed officially as the National Anthem of India. He wrote, "The poem would become one of the world's precious documents... From Madanapalle, *Jana Gana Mana* spread all over India and is admired in Europe and America." *Jana Gana Mana* was declared the National Anthem when India became a Republic on January 26, 1950.



The Theosophical Society's headquarters buildings.

● NOSTALGIA

Growing up in Adyar

"Vasundharana vishala patapara viraja tun Vaikhunt!"

We used to sing this song in school. We didn't understand all the words – in the 1950s Hindi was far less spoken than now and the words were sounds, not meanings. We did, however, recognise it as a paean of praise to Adyar.

Adyar in those days really meant the estate of the Theosophical Society (TS), for there was little else but paddy fields, casuarina plantations, our school – the Olcott Memorial School – and the Tiruvanmiyur temple, at this end of town. Living within the TS grounds was indeed a privilege.

The estate covered two hundred acres or more. Held in the sweeping arms of the Adyar river and the Bay of Bengal, from above it was a malachite jungle, set in a filigree of sand by the jade coloured sea. Beneath its overarching green canopy were well-maintained roads, thoughtfully planned gardens, ancient trees, coconut and casuarina plantations, fruit orchards and meandering pathways.

The mansions that were scattered about (nearly all early acquisitions) gave a certain genteel graciousness to the place. The Headquarters Hall was always

well-maintained, manicured and groomed within and without. The others - *Blawatsky Bungalow, Olcott Gardens, Bell Bungalow* – were like dowagers past their prime, somewhat unkempt, even shabby, but with a certain dignity and class that neither mildew nor peeling paint could completely destroy. Best of all, as housing was allocated according to family sizes and needs, they were not empty shells, monuments to their previous prestige, but homes that some of our playmates and their families lived in. This gave them a warm, human dimension.

More recent dwellings were built by members of the TS, I believe, on the understanding that the properties would revert to the Society when their owners died. My grandfather Ranganatha Mudaliar built *Ranga Vilas*, near *Bell Bungalow*, under one of these agreements. These houses were of styles as varied as the backgrounds or the imaginations of the owners and builders. *Sevashrama* had onion-shaped domes that could have graced a Russian roofscape. One of my favourites was a neat, uncluttered house probably built post-war, in 1920s, Art Deco style. Another dear little place was a faceted oval with a double stair-

case on the outside – like a grand staircase to a public building or an Italian villa, but this was but a tiny gem of a house. And the most unusual one of all was a War-time relic from when troops were housed within the grounds: three Nissan huts around a central sandy square, and in it, deep among the casuarinas, lived one of the largest and most delightful families.

Many homes, like the one we lived in (not *Ranga Vilas*, that had already been bequeathed to the TS), were lime-washed variations of traditional Indian dwellings: a welcoming verandah, a cluster of rooms, one arm of the L-shape housing the kitchen and bathroom, a walled courtyard with a well squaring it off. Each had its own little garden. However, these paled into insignificance amidst the well-kept gardens of the entire estate. Immediately next to us was a banyan tree (the *Chinna ala maram*), the slate-covered platform around it a designated meeting place for us children and countless others.

Under the *Chinna ala maram* was often seated a petite, eagle-eyed, Brahmin woman with shaved hair, her widow's garb, a rough textured saree, covering her head and pulled tightly back. We sat with her while waiting for friends. A stranger might have seen her as a forlorn figure. In fact, all or most of the people riding past would stop to talk to her or wave and 'Paatti', as all knew her, would wave back. This interaction of *Paatti* and the disparate community around us did not strike us as being unusual. It was just a humdrum daily occurrence. We were living in a salad bowl, if not yet a melting pot. Social change was washing over us as waves over fish but we were oblivious to it all!

Many years later in Delhi I heard a story that reminded me

● by Ganga Powell

of *Paatti* under the banyan tree. A friend of mine had married a White Russian. She narrated how she and her husband had both her mother and her father-in-law living with them for many years. Her mother was a conventional Brahmin who dressed in sarees worn in the traditional South Indian style. Her father-in-law was, I imagine, a silver-haired aristocrat with, let's say, a beard, cravat, cane and impeccable manners. Every evening when the family gathered together, he raised and kissed his dear wife's hand with a grand flourish. And her mother, said my friend, blushed like a bride but never refrained from extending her hand out for him with a beaming smile! I need scarcely add that this family too had links with Adyar and the Theosophical community.

There was a tradition of making foreign names Tamil-friendly. Annie Besant was always spoken of as Vasantamma. In the same vein there were also 'Tomato' Amma, and 'Calendar' Amma, The former was Madame D, an Italian, who had fled an unhappy marriage (I think!) and made her home in Adyar. Her house was dark with heavy, draped curtains, beaded silk shades and terracotta colours. To my 10-year-old eyes it seemed the height of sophistication. 'Calendar' Amma's American-styled home was quite different – light and airy. Here you sank into fluffy, feather-filled floral cushions on deep rattan sofas and chairs. And there were always nibbles aplenty – bowls of dried figs and nuts on glass topped tables.

A Parsi doctor taught me card tricks. A Spanish exile who had fought against Franco in the Civil War and, therefore, couldn't go back home to his wife and children, played board

games with us. Our neighbour who ran the Dairy was either German or Polish. She went to bed early to be up at dawn and our boisterous family was too noisy at night for her liking. I remember Grandfather listening to the All India Radio (AIR) 9 p.m. news bulletin with his ear glued to the radio so as not to disturb Miss S——berg.

Checking tripadvisor on Google for recent impressions of visitors to the TS, I came across one complaining about the security guards or 'watchmen': "... we felt hounded by the guards ... one in particular following by bike with a stick ...!" says one disgruntled visitor. Too true! But it was the presence of these ubiquitous watchmen that allowed our parents to let us children roam unrestrictedly. We girls es-

pecially could explore on our bicycles the whole sweep that was the TS grounds, with never a worry about safety or social strictures current elsewhere at the time.

The only rule enforced by our parents was that, wherever we were, we had to start for home when the 'gong' struck at six p.m. The 'gong' was the huge Japanese bell that hung in the forecourt of the Buddhist temple, its deep tones reverberating twice a day throughout the grounds. Since nowhere was more than half an hour from our homes, we were home soon after six.

The coconut plantations and fruit orchards had footpaths and bicycle paths meandering under the trees. The casuarina groves were large enough to lose your orientation somewhat, so venturing in was always an 'Adventure'. There were trees to climb or play under, bumpy paths to ride on, trails to explore, the riverbank and the beach to enjoy. The exhilarating freedom and camaraderie of those days still light up like X'mas lights in my memory. When I think how my mother had gone to school under purdah in Benares, I can only marvel at what a leap of faith our parents took with our upbringing. What a change the TS had wrought in one generation!

We even ventured into the river, through the narrow fringe of mangroves, to the islands near the bank. Shoeless, squishy, squasy mud between our toes, we didn't think of water snakes, the sharp stakes of mangrove roots or slugs. We did clean up carefully before heading home; in fact I can't recollect ever telling our elders about these excursions.

One day the incoming tide caught us. This excursion was

not just to the islands, but diagonally across from the beach, towards the Chettinad Palace, on the other side of the river. We didn't really think we could make it, but when we did, we couldn't get back because the tide had turned. A long walk on the main San Thomé Road across the Adyar Bridge and to our homes took an hour or two. Well past our curfew time we came home bedraggled indeed.

Although our parents must have been worried, there were no traumatising recriminations, that was how much latitude we were given and, I should add, how relatively secure the TS, Adyar and Madras were in those days. South of the river, it was like living in a village rather than in a metropolis.

Our school was co-educational and our friendships were with boys and girls, as were our games and adventures. These bred a special mateship born out of shared experiences and similar upbringings. I didn't think of how different our growing up was until in my 40s my friend Indra said to me, "The experiences of your childhood are nothing like those of the rest of us" – and she was from a liberal household!

Was it the 'land that time forgot'? Hardly, for members of the TS were involved in the social, educational and political changes sweeping the country. Was it 'a fleeting wisp of glory called Camelot'? Not fleeting – for so many of the ideas we grew up with have entered the mainstream, both within India and without. A random list would include gender equality, education for the underprivileged, the Montessori methodology in teaching, ethical treatment of animals, the irrelevance of caste, a revival of interest in Indian art and textiles, cross-cultural tolerance, inter-faith dialogue, global perspectives, New Age movements, the Age of Aquarius, if you like – and much else.

"Sagara saritha sangama ghatе adbhuta yeh Adyar"

No wonder we belted out the words so lustily at school!



The Japanese Bell.

Now you can visit Adyar Park

(By A Special Correspondent)

Adyar Park, which was developed on more than 50 acres land, is now functioning as a Centre for Environmental Education and Research and is open to public and students.

For visitors, it is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays (except public holidays) from 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Since visitors will be taken on a guided tour, online booking is a must as the tour group must be within manageable numbers, say the park officials.

The park also offers various Environmental Education Programmes for school students from Monday to Friday from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Students should be accompanied by teachers. The students will be taken on a guided walk, during which they can familiarise themselves with plants and trees native to Chennai. Basic principles of ecology with an emphasis on coastal ecology and watershed rehabilitation and how human activi-

ties affect the environment will be explained. Free educational programmes, along with transport facilities, are provided to Corporation school students.

Facilities in the park include arrival and orientation zone, solar lighting system, Environmental Education Centre, Interactive Learning Space and a nursery with medicinal and indigenous plants; demonstration on recycling processes of waste and wash water. A film show on how the entire park was reclaimed from its previous condition, nurturing the flora and helping bird migrations, are additional features of the park.

Entry fee for public is Rs. 20 per head and Rs. 5 for school student. Parking charge is Rs. 50 and for hand cameras Rs. 50. For online booking visit www.chennaiivers.gov.in. For details call: 24614523. – (Courtesy: *Adyar Times*)

A T'Nagar dream!

Can we make it a world-class shopping area?

Theagaroya Nagar (T' Nagar) is today the foremost commercial hub for shopping in Chennai. It is also a major hub for intra-city bus services. Historically, it was a planned residential neighbourhood with roads and streets radiating from Panagal Park. Its adjoining regions include Teynampet, West Mambalam and Azeez Nagar, all residential areas. The area has today shed its original character and has huge stand-alone shopping centres, a variety of business establishments, accommodation providers and other commercial enterprises as well as a sizeable informal business sector leading to traffic and congestion problems.

Congestion in T'Nagar is due to land use change, rapid re-densification, unplanned public transportation systems, poor traffic circulation pattern, little pedestrian space, hawkers encroachment, inadequate parking facilities as well as other environmental issues.

These issues are discussed in some detail below and a 'Vision T Nagar' is suggested, urging decongestion of the area through pedestrianisation, skywalks, multi-level car parking, hawkers zones, feeder system and other initiatives, to make the area a world-class shopping centre.

* * *

Until the early 1900s, Chennai's western boundary was the villages to the west of Mount Road and the Long Tank. The Long Tank was drained in 1923. (Lake View Road exists devoid of the lake.) This marked the origin of Theagaroya Nagar or T' Nagar (named after Sir Pitti Theagaroya Chetty, Raja of Panagal, a stalwart of the Justice Party which was then ruling Madras) and initiated the expansion of the city beyond its western limits. A residential suburb was conceived in the middle of this reclaimed land. A park was developed in the centre of this new locality and named Panagal Park.

Historically, it was a planned residential neighbourhood with roads and streets radiating from Panagal Park. Its design is believed to have been inspired from a hand. Panagal Park was the palm and the main roads radiated from the park like five fingers. The main roads were: North Usman Road, South Usman Road, Theagaroya Road, Venkatnarayana Road and G N Chetty Road, all lined with large avenue trees.

When designed, the residential plots in T'Nagar were at least eight grounds in size. Initially G N Chetty Road and Venkatnarayana Road were developed with large plot bungalows. The minimum plot size was eight grounds. The plots were divided as half acre and one acre. Later, these bungalows paved way for commercial developments. At present, there are hardly any residences that fall into this category.

Nalli's showroom was the first prominent shop; it opened in 1928. Soon, small shops began to make a presence. In the 1930s a shopping complex was developed by Chockalinaga Mudaliar. It consisted of ten shops. This was the first bazaar in T'Nagar. He named it Pondy Bazaar.

Pondy Bazaar is named after W.P.A. Soundarapandian Nadar, the noted social activist from Pattiveeranpatti. It stretches for around a kilometre on Theagaroya Road. Pavement shopping is part of the excitement of T'Nagar. Everything from safety pins to shower curtains is available on the sidewalks.

The area around Panagal Park is known for its silk saree shops. Many prominent jewellery stores are also found here. The variety in shopping options makes T'Nagar one of the most crowded areas in Chennai during the festival seasons. Deepavali, Navaratri and Pongal bring additional congestion due to the crowds drawn by the heavy discounts and reductions offered by stores.

Ranganathan Street is one of the busiest streets of Chennai. Till 1985 the streets off it were mostly residential. Now Ranganathan Street, once an approach to the Mambalam railway station, is closed to motor traffic as it is so crowded with shoppers hoping to buy products at heavily discounted prices.

T'Nagar had a population of 214,878 according to the 2001 census. On a typical weekend, the number of people visiting to shop in the T'Nagar area might soar to 200,000. During festival seasons, this number might reach a million. Shoppers come not only from all parts of Chennai as well as from Tamil Nadu but from all over the

world with a major contribution from Sri Lanka. It is believed that close to 70-80 per cent of the gold sold in Chennai – the most important gold market in the southern region – is in T'Nagar. The southern region contributes approximately 45 per cent of the 800-tonne annual national offtake.

Silk saree and gold jewellery shopping has been synonymous with T'Nagar for the last 50 years. During this period, T'Nagar has evolved as the centre for silk sarees, gold jewellery and stainless steel utensils – paraphernalia of a typical Indian wedding. Today, a family can finish its entire wedding shopping with two or three visits to this central business district, as there are shops that sell everything from wedding invitation cards, jewellery and sarees to household articles.

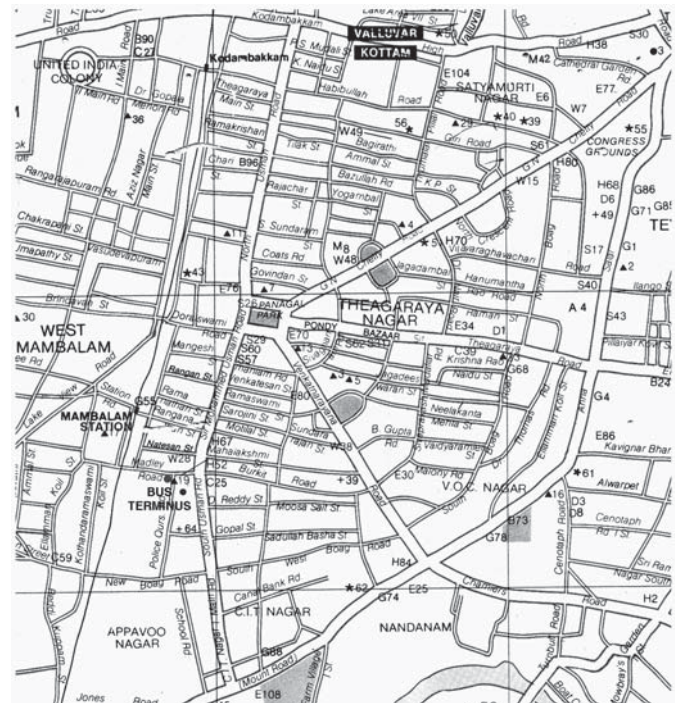
Conversion of T'Nagar from residential neighbourhood to a shopping destination has spiralled land rates sky-high over the past 80 years. What was Rs. 200 per ground in 1930 is approximately Rs. 50,000,000 (Rs. 5 crore) per ground or

approximately Rs. 20,000 per sq ft.

* * *

The five radial avenues all leading to one main central main space, Panagal Park, divided the area into clearly separated neighbourhoods. As T'Nagar was planned in a time when cars were a rare luxury, walkability was very important. Civic facilities, retail outlets and public parks were planned for easy access from adjacent neighbourhoods in clusters along the five main avenues. This planned residential neighbourhood has changed character very rapidly and is making way to become the Central Shopping District of Chennai. The MTC Bus Terminus and Mambalam Railway Station made T'Nagar easily accessible for everyone.

The Theagaroya bus terminus is a major one in the southern region and operates nearly 600 bus services a day that originate and terminate there. The location of the bus terminus is mutually detrimental and beneficial. The terminus attracts about 130 buses during its peak hour which in turn clogs South



Usman Road and the Burkit Road-South Usman Road intersection, causing severe congestion at the current bus terminus location itself.

The impact of this is traffic congestion up to 500 m in both directions of South Usman Road as almost 50-70 per cent of road space is occupied by buses during the peak hour. There is also absence of planning for pedestrian and bus movement within and around the bus terminus and poor integration of Mambalam station and bus terminus. No formal feeder system is available to connect the terminus with the retail/residential areas.

The traffic from residential areas in the western regions of Chennai moves towards the business areas in the eastern and central regions of Chennai through T'Nagar. This West to East traffic is in the morning and East to West traffic in the evening. A similar pattern is observed in the North-South direction. These movements, in combination with the retail/shopping area-oriented traffic, coupled with local residential area traffic, create a mix of traffic-related problems along all the major arterials of the area. The problem is especially felt along North Usman Road, South Usman Road, G N Chetty Road, and C I T Nagar First Main Road. All the intersections along Anna Salai and Arcot Road also get congested. Nandanam intersection, Panagal Park, Duraisamy Subway and Kodambakkam flyover are examples of the problems caused by the transit traffic.

There are hardly any pedestrian-friendly facilities in T'Nagar. Pavements have been utilised for informal shopping activities by street vendors. The lack of space for pedestrian movement because of encroachment by hawkers is an acute problem along Ranganathan Street, the western side of

South Usman Road and the eastern part of Theagaroya Road. According to a hawker survey in the central area of T'Nagar, around 850 permanent street vendors can be found on its pavements.

There is an acute demand for parking. Market research has indicated that T'Nagar has 2,668,311 sq.ft. of retail space. This translates to a requirement of 2668 car slots. The parking availability in T'Nagar is only around 800 slots. About 1,400 four-wheelers and 3,000 two-wheelers park in the T'Nagar area and approximately two-thirds of these vehicles are parked in the streets.

The exponential increase in vehicles, especially in the last decade, has resulted in emission from automobiles increasing manifold. The air pollution problem in the T'Nagar area from the automobile sector is further compounded because of the availability of a very low percentage of road area in proportion to total city surface area for plying such a large automobile fleet. Other sources of air pollution include construction activities, re-suspension of road dust, and burning biomass.

T'Nagar may have grown into a very successful shopping district, but times are changing and for T'Nagar not to lose its middle class and high-end clientele to posh malls coming up elsewhere in Chennai, it is important to stay ahead of that competition. At the same time, residents of T'Nagar and neighbouring areas would welcome a more diversified range of retail and leisure developments that suits their needs and in a more inviting 'city centre' where they would want to spend quality time with friends and family on a regular basis.

Some of the solutions to decongest T'Nagar will be discussed next fortnight. (Courtesy: *Our Building & Construction*)

(To be concluded)

● by A. Shankar

Head – Strategic Consulting, JLL, India

A vision comes true

(Continued from last fortnight)

R.A. Gopalaswami, Chief Secretary of the Government of Madras, who had a strong leaning towards the mathematical sciences, asked Father on December 5th to formulate the aims and objectives of the proposed institute, at the suggestion of Minister C. Subramaniam. Father was ready for this crucial moment and supplied the requested document the next day. Meanwhile, in New Delhi, the Prime Minister had begun seeking opinions on initial proposal which Father had sent him through C. Subramaniam soon after the meeting with the Prime Minister at *Raj Bhavan* on October 8th.

There were two aspects in which C. Subramaniam played a crucial role in the ultimate decision: The first was to convince the Prime Minister that a new institute was necessary, as had been proposed by Father. The second was that it should be in Madras. C. Subramaniam later wrote:

“The Prime Minister referred the matter to Dr. Homi Bhabha for his advice. Unfortunately, Dr. Bhabha was not very enthusiastic. His contention was that the available limited resources would have to be utilised for the existing institution, namely the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR).

“When the Prime Minister passed on the opinion of Dr. Bhabha to me, I requested him to arrange a meeting between me, Dr. Bhabha and himself to discuss this matter. The meeting was arranged and I argued



Professor Alladi Ramakrishnan.

my case for a separate institution in the South, particularly when talented students in the South were not getting opportunities for pursuing their interests because of the limited number of students admitted to TIFR. I also emphasised that mathematical sciences did not require heavy investment. Panditji also showed his inclination to accept my point of view. So Dr. Bhabha also gave his consent. Thereafter steps were taken to establish what is now well known as the Institute of Mathematical Sciences....For the purpose of emphasising the importance of this Institute, and for its proper funding, I thought we should have Jawaharlal Nehru himself as the Patron of the Institute. When I mentioned this to him, he gladly agreed. I requested Dr. Bhabha to be a member of the first Governing Body of the Institute (and he agreed).”

With the approval given by the Prime Minister, steps were taken at a rapid pace to create an Institute in the next two weeks. Prof. Ramakrishnan later wrote:

“December 7th was a significant day. I met Mr. Subramaniam and the Chief Secretary, both of whom agreed to the creation of the Institute. Meanwhile seminars were going on with unabated vigour in *Ekamra Nivas*....

“On December 20th, I met Mr. Subramaniam at the Madras airport on his return from Delhi. What a thrilling moment it was when he informed me that the Prime Minister had agreed to be the Patron of the Institute! On December 22nd at 1:30 pm, I

KRISHNASWAMI ALLADI concludes the story of the birth of MATSCIENCE, the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, the efforts of his father, Professor Alladi Ramakrishnan, and the role of his Theoretical Physics Seminar in the creation of this Institute in Madras on January 3, 1962.

was called by the Education Secretary, K. Srinivasan, who issued an order of appointment to me as the Director of the Institute. What a providential coincidence that it should be the birthday of Srinivasa Ramanujan! I met the great astrophysicist Subrahmanyam Chandrasekar (of the University of Chicago) the same evening to inquire whether he could inaugurate the Institute on January 3, 1962. He agreed to do so provided we obtained suitable air reservations for him (to return to the United States) the next day. What a simple request from so great a man!”

On December 22nd, there was a music concert in the Seminar Hall of *Ekamra Nivas* for the delegates of the Annual Symposium on Cosmic Rays. The concert originally intended for the symposium delegates turned out also to be a celebration of the news about the launch of MATSCIENCE!

The next day, Father tendered his resignation to the University of Madras.

Time was short, with barely ten days for the inauguration. Overnight, more than a hundred letters were typed and sent to scientists all over the world announcing the launch of MATSCIENCE, the Institute of Mathematical Sciences. From December 27th onwards, telegrams started pouring in from Nobel Laureates and other



The MATSCIENCE Institute in Chennai.

eminent scientists heralding the creation of the new Institute and congratulating Father on his appointment as its Director. These congratulatory messages included several from Nobel Laureates.

The speech was delivered extempore, as was his style, and later reproduced from a recording.

The academic work of the new institute began immediately with a lecture by Professor Chandrasekhar on gravitation in the physics lecture room where he and his illustrious uncle Nobel Laureate Sir C. V. Raman had studied as undergraduates. MATSCIENCE was initially given two rooms in the Presidency College where it functioned for two years before moving to the Central Polytechnic Campus in Adyar in April 1964.

All members of the Theoretical Physics Seminar as of January 1962 joined the new Institute at various levels – R. Vasudevan, N.R. Ranganathan, T.K. Radha, G. Bhanumathi, S. Indumathi, R. Thunga, V. Devanathan, G. Ramachandran, K. Venkatesan, A.P. Balachandran, K. Ananthanarayanan, K. Raman, and R.K. Umerjee. They all continued to give seminars vigorously in the new premises of the Institute. But from time to time, Father and his students held seminars in the evenings at *Ekamra Nivas* for a few years after the creation of the Institute.

Perhaps the first few years of the Institute were the finest in terms of vibrancy of the Visiting Scientists Programme. Professor Rosenfeld who visited the Institute in 1963 expressed wonder on how so much was being done in such modest surroundings and with an even more modest budget. He also said that in every place in Europe where he had earlier been, there was someone who had visited, or was intending to visit, MATSCIENCE. The Institute was formally registered on Friday, July 13, 1962. The Institute moved to more spacious accommodation on the top floor of a building in the Central Polytechnic Campus in 1964 and, finally, to its own premises in 1969 where it continues to function today.

(Concluded)

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Manuel Aaron – an inspiration for Madras chess players



When the Aaron family re-located in India from Burma, it was the opening move of Manuel Aaron's chess career. India's first International Master, nine times National Champion and an International Arbiter, 79-year-old Aaron is a repository of facts on the history of chess in India. He started an exclusive magazine for chess as early as in 1983, has authored several books on chess, and has shared the nuances of the game with players who later became celebrities.

Manuel Aaron is from a family of chess players and was introduced to the game by his grandfather. Now his son Aravind is a National Champion, chess journalist and a chess trainer and the game goes on. Manuel Aaron talks about the game in response to **M. Rajini's** questions.

● *A game of chess is actually a simulated war. Tell us about chess in early times.*

You know, Buddhist monks in the 6th Century were actually encouraged to play chess to keep them away from war. Playing the game actually quenched their thirst for fighting a battle. Later, parents let their children play chess so they can keep them out of mischief outdoors (laughs). Now India has made it to the international arena.

● *How tough was it to learn the technicalities of the game when books and newspapers were the only media available then?*

The challenge made it more exciting. I used to constantly read the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the library. Newspapers used to carry chess problems and also publish the names of those who solved them. We used to avidly read all the literature available on the subject. Then there was correspondence chess which kept us pondering over moves and strategies.

● *Oh! What is correspondence chess?*

We played chess with other enthusiasts by sending a postcard recording our move. The game went on through cards being sent back and forth. Sometimes it took months to finish a game. We would be playing with several people simultaneously. The pace was slow, but for every game we had time to analyse our moves and predict the outcome. It was a great opportunity to hone our skills. Even now we have Correspondence Chess Clubs.

There is an exciting category called 'Blitz' chess where players can set the timeframe for finishing the game. A clock is set beside the player to clock the time taken for every move. Both players hustle to make a move and hit the clock simultaneously. The player who exhausts his/her time first is the loser. The standard rules of movement, capture and game ending apply to his game.



One of the most appealing pictures we have seen in a long time. This is the front of a postcard invitation for Rta Kapur Chishti's recent exhibition at Apparao Galleries, Sari: celebrating the unstitched garment.

Analysing a game is a tradition. I used to analyse games played by Russian players, give lectures and demonstrate on the board. Even parents used to attend those sessions.

● *You are a FIDE rated (2300) player. Who decides the ratings?*

FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs) is the organisation that governs international chess competition. Women are rated together with men. Rating is a method for calculating the relative skill levels of players. If two people with the same rating compete, the chances of a win are 50-50. A system called the law of probability is used to determine your chance of winning a game. If your expectancy curve is high and you lose, your rating will take a dive, whereas the other person, who was not expected to win but did, will get a high rating. Vishwanath Anand's rating is 2792. FIDE also decides the title 'Grandmaster'. It is a title for life. India has 38 Grandmasters at present.

● *Do children flood into classes only when India is in the international arena?*

No. Chess is listed in the games which get you admission to professional colleges under the sports quota. Many parents are keen on introducing the game to their children. It is left to the child and the academy to sustain its interest.

● *About Chessmate and the club...?*

Aaron Chess Academy is the first of its kind in Chennai. It is a hub for all chess lovers and aspirants of the game. We offer opening advice and strategies, a chess library and information on forthcoming open tournaments. We also conduct classes through Internet Chess Club and Skype at US \$30 an hour.

Chessmate is our monthly chess magazine, a gateway to world chess. (Courtesy: *Adyar Times*)

To many, heritage is a mere facade

(Continued from page 1)

judgement by vested interests to suit their ends. This has been taken advantage of in several instances such as P Orr & Sons and the Saidapet Teachers' Training College buildings where Metro Rail has bulldozed structures. It would be best if the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) represents the matter in court once again and seeks a clarification in this regard. When it comes to heritage structures, mere restoration of facades will not do. It is vital that CMDA, the HCC and the owners of properties adhere to the High Court's orders in the full spirit of the law.

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