

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- U.Ve.Sa. remembered
- The Munro statue
- Inscriptions lost
- Losing nature heritage

Why do we lag on civic needs?

(By The Editor)

Chennai probably has more money than it ever did for public projects. Our Corporation's budget is bigger than ever and as for infrastructure, there is a lot of money being poured into it, thanks to special purpose vehicles and funds from schemes such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). Why then does the city rather ironically have less infrastructure than before – poor roads, non-existent pavements, endless traffic jams and, above all, a dysfunctional public transport system that makes commuting the most painful experience?

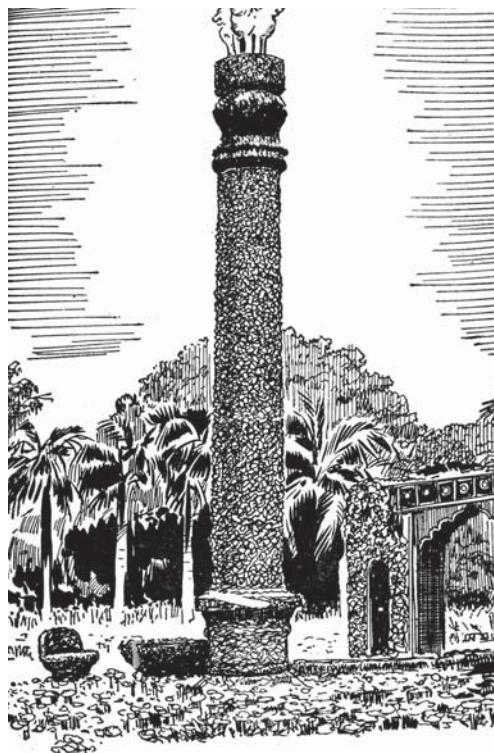
The Economist, one of the most respected international journals, recently conducted a study of several Latin American capitals, all of which are facing problems similar to ours. And like Chennai, they too have an abundance of funding. It came to the conclusion that the principal causes are two – “the shortage of people in the public sector with the training and experience to design, evaluate and

supervise complex engineering projects” and “well-intentioned but labyrinthine procedures designed to eliminate corruption in procurement... which often end up causing delays instead.” Both these statements hold good for Chennai. The tragedy is that very little is being done to correct the situation. And, what is worse, very little can be done in the short term, for these are problems that need a long-term vision and political will to resolve.

The second of the two problems is a well-known fact and does not merit elaboration. The first, however, is the deeper malaise and the sooner it is recognised as such, the better. We have had infrastructure projects executed in our city with more emphasis on immediate solutions rather than long term impact. Take a look at some of our flyovers and you need go no further. Whole areas beneath them have become uninhabitable, serving more as

(Continued on page 3)

Madras Landmarks – 50 years ago



• My Lady's Garden is the sole remnant of what was once People's Park – the brainchild of Governor Sir Charles Trevelyan. Its entire management was transferred to the Municipality in 1866. At the geographical centre of the city, some of its portions housed “zoological and ornithological collections, five lakes, a bandstand, reserves for football, tennis and other games.” By 1878, a gymnasium was started inside the Park near the Vepery gate. A band played twice a week at the bandstand, with attendance on Saturdays being “invariably numerous”.

That year went down in the annals of the Park as being that of the first Madras Fair; it was managed by a Committee of Municipal Commissioners and commenced on December 30th. From 1921, its management was vested with the Health Officer. The Park's heydays were undoubtedly in the 1920s and during Christmas Week, when numerous events would take place in its commodious

grounds. The Music Academy held its annual conferences here between 1930 and 1935.

Far more noisy and attracting huge crowds was the Park Town Fair and Carnival organised by the South Indian Athletic Association which occupied the Moore Pavilion and, later, the Victoria Public Hall for several years. The SIAA's Fair, notwithstanding a devastating fire in 1886, was an annual feature in the city's social calendar. Chief attractions were Gunboat Jack who performed daredevil stunts on a motorcycle in a barrel-like enclosure, wrestling bouts with King Kong and, last but not least, a local attraction – rekla (two-wheeled cart) races. The Fair was discontinued in the 1970s.

By 1979, the large nursery maintained in People's Park on “72 grounds had to be handed over to the Southern Railway for expansion of the suburban railway system.” Most of the green cover in the park has been taken over by constructions such as sports stadia and the new Moore Market shopping complex. The Corporation's nursery, however, has been revived since 2007 in various parks in the city.

The park had three main attractions – the Ashoka Pillar lawn, the tea party lawn and the Royal Bath. The last named was sponsored by the Rajah of Kirlampudi and thrown open to the public in 1922. It remained in use till the 1970s. What is missed today is Ashok Vihar, the recreation and family welfare centre that once functioned from here.

My Lady's Garden in the middle of People's Park was and continues to remain the Mayor's official garden. Quaintly named, it still exudes a charm that is unparalleled, with several age-old trees and a few statues executed in the 1930s by a student of the Madras School of Art. People's Park as a whole and My Lady's Garden in particular were film-makers' favourites and several were the classics of the black and white era that had at least one song sequence shot in the area.

Between 1933 and 1973, My Lady's Garden was the venue for the Mayor's civic receptions and tea parties. It was also the place where the annual flower show was held for over a century, at a time when the city had more gardens than buildings. It was part of the Mayor's duties to inaugurate the flower show. The Ashoka Pillar, unveiled in 1948 by Mayor Dr. U. Krishna Rau, was the centrepiece during those flower shows and was lovingly bedecked with flowers (as our sketch from the past shows). My Lady's Garden survives gloriously. Maintained lovingly, it is a paradise for birds and early morning and late evening walkers and joggers.

Decongesting stations in city necessary

The recent blast at Central Station has seen the authorities take several half-hearted attempts at improving security in the station. This has also been repeated at Egmore. Rather than enhancing safety, all that these steps have achieved has been the creation of bottlenecks. And with vast crowds descending on the stations every day, the maintenance of even these levels of security will soon prove impossible.

Rather than taking such steps, the railways could have done better by decongesting the two stations by creating other boarding and disembarking points further down the line, within the periphery of the city. This plan, announced a long while ago, appears to have been given up halfway through.

Can the Central Station be made more secure by simply closing all entrances and exits barring one? Can a solitary baggage scanner detect explosives

• by A Special Correspondent

being secreted in a piece of baggage? Will two x-ray scanners (only one of them working) be able to check every passenger and other people who enter the stations at all times of the day and night? These measures are laughably feeble, when you consider that 350,000 passengers use the Central Station every day. Probably a similar

number of people use Egmore Station as well.

Even if there was no security threat, decongesting the two stations is a good exercise that should be taken up straightaway. One of the chief reasons why the stations are so full at any point of time is that passengers from all over the city have to come to only these two terminals to board trains. Trains coming into the city mostly stop at stations such as Perambur, Tambaram and Mambalam, but

not so trains that are leaving Chennai. Consequently, people are left with no choice.

There was a time when the railways claimed that Perambur and Tambaram were being developed as alternative terminals for Central and Egmore respectively.

That, they said, would ease the pressure on the two principal stations. But this was never implemented in full. Passenger

(Continued on page 3)

How about Art, not banners?

Many, many years ago we at *Mylapore Times* supported for about a year a few small projects at the Corporation school behind our office complex.

The schools run by Chennai Corporation are now called Chennai Schools in wake of the branding make-over carried out by the city's civic body.

When the school reopened after the summer holidays, we gathered a few students to paint the outer wall of the school with images of their choice. Tigers and cats, flowers and the sun, grass and peacocks.

Our link with that school snapped for various reasons but every time I used to drive down the road where the school is located I stared at the works of art which survived the grease of the streetside auto shops and the stains of uncouth men.

Recently, I broke journey on Cathedral Road to watch the students of Stella Maris's College give the final touches to a series of paintings they had created on a section of the college wall.

You too should do the same. For, the girls have done a wonderful job. Each piece stands out and draws us in – if we care to look long and deep.

Now these works are part of the Art Chennai season. Art Chennai is a big effort by an art collector and businessman, Sanjay Tulsyan, to showcase the best of Indian artists in our city and to take art into the city so that more people begin to soak in it.

This season, I managed to be at a few Art Chennai shows. But my focus was on how the shows in the public spaces engaged people. The art mela held at Cholamandal on a weekend was a big hit – people could watch 30 artists create small works and offer them for just 500 rupees. It wasn't the cost of art that mattered; what did was artists willing to interact with people.

Having theme shows on Elliot's Beach also worked. The large space allowed people to take in a set of old images of our city or the images of women screaming which were part of a theme show.

Looking at the Stella Maris's work took me to the time when the civic body under one regime got artists to paint the walls alongside arterial roads and paint them extensively. And the next regime had most of these works whitewashed – and these were mere scenery images – folk artistes, hills and dales, countryside and musicians.

Does the State tolerate art? Or does it want us to be suffocated with vinyl banners? – (Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*).

– Vincent D'Souza

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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Dragon by the beach

A fortnight ago *The Man from Madras Musings* had written about the chaotic traffic arrangements on Beach Road. Now, MMM is glad to report, these steps to ease vehicular flow have all been reversed and the bottlenecks have also reduced. But what is slowing down traffic is a huge and colourful dragon that has come up on the premises of the Lady Willingdon Institute for Higher Education. In its scale and size it is so enormous that passersby cannot but help stopping and staring.

MMM had his eye on what initially looked like a roller coaster made out of bamboo almost from the time it was first put up. He initially assumed that it was one of those contraptions on which members of the public could undertake hair raising rides (hair raising for those not challenged in that department in the manner of MMM) accompanied by blood-curdling cries. But that this was not so soon became evident when the bamboo scaffolding began to get covered with canvas and coloured paper. And soon thereafter appeared the

Unkempt grounds, a graceful building that is rather indifferently maintained, and plenty of neglect was what MMM could see. If this was the state of an institute for advanced education, what of the lesser ones in the neighbourhood? Well, enough and more has been written in this publication about at least two age-old institutions that stand within stone's throw, both now doomed, sorry deemed universities (and both aptly domed as well), which are equally shabby. The populace that came to enjoy the entry of the dragon, not that there were many, also added to the mess at the Lady Willingdon Institute.

And that brings MMM to two other points. The first, as to what exactly is an institute for higher education doing lending its grounds for a low quality entertainment fair? The place has in the past been used as a dumping area for Republic Day floats and also as the venue for a rather shoddy book-fair with heavily political undertones (the argument being that the other and bigger one in January had political overtones of the opposite

why thanks when all that they did was perform a duty? Is it gratitude for having voted in the other party, thereby giving the defeated lot some time to sort out other and more pressing internal matters?

The Chief, as MMM knows, frowns on references political and so MMM will stop with that. He will, therefore take his lyre and now sing of the poster industry itself, which, in his view, comes out in flying colours in this entire thanksgiving process. Just imagine... the election results come out on a particular day, and within a few hours of that, the posters are all out. Perhaps it is time for our Election Commission, which takes a long time to conduct and complete the polls, to learn from the poster industry. "Do it now" appears to be the motto of the poster printers.

Closer inspection, however, reveals that it is all more involved than that. True, there is a flurry of printing activity the day the results are announced. But, apparently, everyone who contested has invested in posters declaring victory, long before the results

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

dragon, complete with fiery mouth, bulging bloodshot eyes, scales and lashing tail.

'Entry of the Dragon' was the rather strange name of the jamboree, whatever that meant. The more prudish readers of this publication will forgive MMM for first thinking that it was all an advertisement for a locally made aphrodisiac. But on closer inspection (and NOT because MMM thought it was one of THOSE things), the whole arrangement turned out to be a rather low key and tacky entertainment fair. Inside were a couple of merry-go-rounds and other what's-their-names, all of them of a uniform sadness. The dragon was, however, a work of art. Those who wanted to visit the fair entered through its gaping mouth and came out presumably from the rear end in a rather alimentary fashion. But of that MMM did not pause to take a look. He also noticed that after the entry of the dragon, there was not much to do. A quick affair it turned out – just a couple of thrills maybe?

But leaving that aside, all this gave MMM some time to wander around the campus named after a First Lady of Madras and later Vicerine of India who was known for her pushy nature and pursuit of the best in whatever took her fancy. And MMM must mention here that the place does not do her memory any good.

camp), but such an event with coconut shies and hoopla-hoops did not do it credit. Secondly, why does the police, which is constantly belly-aching (a rather apt expression, given the paunches of some of our policemen) about traffic congestion in the beach area, give permission for such events?

Thanksgiving

That, as you all know, is an American term. But here, in our very own Chennai, there has been a thanksgiving of sorts. *The Man from Madras Musings* alludes to the rash of posters that has broken out in the city, all thanking the general public for having voted and made victorious various candidates in the general elections. One group has stuck to expressions of loyalty and fealty, and it is better that way, for MMM is told that retribution is quick and grinds exceeding small otherwise. "Send her victorious, happy and glorious..." appears to be the message here and MMM is sure his readers know the rest.

That in a way is understandable, for the cavaliers or royalists have done very well. But what puzzles MMM is as to why the roundheads, who have been trounced, have also put up posters. These, to be seen in certain parts of the city, thank the general public for having voted and stop with that. But

actually come out. Those who win plaster the walls with them and then take out victory rallies. Those who lose consider it a part of the necessary investment in what could have been a profitable enterprise. And, presumably, they use the surplus sheets to warm themselves, the electorate having left them out in the cold.

What all parties appear not to realise is that the electorate would rather not like to have these posters defacing the walls. But then, what is Chennai without its posters? People like MMM and the Chief are in a minuscule minority, and not even of the kind that gets special status mind you.

Tailpiece

With the Chief's permission, *The Man from Madras Musings* will make one more political statement. All of Chennai is now divided into two groups. And, no, MMM does not mean the parties affiliated to the Lady or the Daddy. Rather, he writes of the third variety for whom there were and more opponents than proponents. Overnight, however, MMM sees several of the former have switched sides and begun singing hosannas to the man they consider the new messiah. As to how that pans out, watch this space five years from now.

– MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Four responsible

There are four hospitals in Chennai which have mainly contributed to Medical Tourism (MM, May 1st). They are Sankara Nethralaya, the Cancer Institute, Madras Medical Mission, and Apollo Hospital.

While the first three are not-for-profit hospitals, the last is a Public Ltd. Company hospital with profit in mind. None of the hospitals was built with Medical Tourism in mind. Each one concentrated on its area of speciality.

Dr. Badrinath wanted to make Sankara Nethralaya the best eye hospital in the country. He achieved it.

Dr. Shanta wanted to make the Cancer Institute the best hospital for cancer care in the country. She achieved it.

Dr. Cherian and his team of doctors wanted to make Madras Medical Mission one of the best hospitals for heart ailments. They achieved it.

In the process of achieving excellence, their name and fame spread all over the country and abroad. Patients started coming to these institutions of excellence from all over the country and even abroad. And Medical Tourism in Chennai was born.

The term Medical Tourism was not coined when these hospitals were started. The only aim of the founders of these hospitals was to provide excellent treatment in their areas of specialisation at minimal cost to the patients, irrespective of their economic status.

This dedication and single minded pursuit of service to society by the dedicated teams of doctors created a brand image for these hospitals. Thus, Medical Tourism as we know it now was born.

I agree with the author that the Government should take steps to encourage Medical Tourism in Chennai. Some of the suggestions given by the author are noteworthy and worth implementing.

Prof. V. Chandrasekhar
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A music shop

There was yet another 'musical' association with the building occupied by the Everest Hotel (MM, April 16th). At least from the 1960s there was a musical instruments shop (Everest Musicals?) in a two-roomed portion on the ground floor. The owner was one Raja and he was very skilled at repairing musical instruments, especially the violin. He

later specialised in manufacturing acoustic guitars, since electric ones had not yet arrived.

He had a windfall when he was asked to supply, in short time, fifty guitars for a scene in a Tamil movie, *Madras to Pondicherry*. Although he received payment for the work, his happiness was short-lived as the actors had not only to 'play on' but also 'to play with' the instruments. By the end of the scene, almost all the instruments were in pieces and on hearing about this Raja was broken-hearted for some time.

He later 'invented' a 'guitar-veena'. Primarily a guitar, it had deep concave curves between the frets to facilitate pulling of the string. Towards the end of the 1970s he shifted his establishment to Chromepet and not much has been known or heard of him since.

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Academic too

After reading the three excerpts from Manohar Devadoss's book *From the artist's perspective*, I bought a copy of the book. It is not only interesting reading but is also brilliant academically and can be used for 1st year of Civil & Mechanical Engineering students for their engineering drawing subject.

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Alternative?

In the letter from an eminent educationist about the big-hearted hotelier and the narration how those who came to value English language school final papers remained to praise his hospitality and generosity (MM, April 16th), I found the use of 'alternate arrangement' for 'alternative arrangement' in the letter a bit jarring.

Alternate and alternative connote different concepts and the words are not interchangeable, having as they do different shades of meaning, even though, regrettably, many people including even some dailies, indiscriminately use them as a matter of course.

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What's the source?

I have read somewhere (I cannot recall exactly where, perhaps in Srinivasachari's *The City of Madras*, 1939) that the name 'Armagaon' – used exten-

sively in literature on Madras, both in the context of the Dutch East India Company and the English East India Company – derives from 'Arumuga Mudaliar', who is referred to in Dr. P. Sanjeeva Raj's piece (MM, ???). Are there any thoughts on this etymology? I have long been searching for the etymology of 'Armagaon' and have never been able to track down the details.

Some of the terms used in Madras are indeed curious and hard to derive. One example is 'Pinjarapole', a gesture of the early Gujarati community in Madras to look after the destitute cows of Madras. For long I could not explain this term. Now I know that it comes from a Marwari [Rajasthani] term (not Gujarati), where *pinjara* means cage and *pola* means bulls (curiously, not cows). It is curious that the term *pinjara* is used, for *panjaram* (with an 'a' and not an 'i') is extensively used by the rural people of Tamil Nadu to refer to a large basket-like structure used to cage domesticated birds like chicken.

The words 'panjara kozhiye vittu' were used in the popular film song *Porale Ponnuthayee*, rendered by the late Sujata, and scored by Ilayaraja in a Bharatiraja hit (cannot remember the film's name).

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Lagging on civic needs

(Continued from page 1)

cesspits and refuse dumps. The traffic has moved on (or has it?), but the debris and the garbage have remained. The MRTS is a story by itself. Ill-connected with other transport systems, it is underutilised and, worse, has destroyed what was once a navigable waterway – the Buckingham Canal. The elevated road from the Port to Maduravoyal now threatens to do the same to the Cooum. All this points to just one thing – someone higher up, invariably after a jaunt abroad, takes a fancy to a particular project or solution and a team below simply executes it in a bumbling manner, with delays and no thought ahead of its impact.

It is not as though the statutory bodies – the Corporation and CMDA being but two – lack the necessary posts and the incumbents for them. But as to their competence to handle such tasks, that is another matter altogether. The recruitment process, the training given and, most importantly, the freedom given to think and work for themselves are all flawed. It is fairly certain that none in our town planning and infrastructure project departments has any long-term vision on how

their work will impact the future generations in the city. To overcome the weaknesses in the system, the Government has on occasion opted to form committees to which outside experts are drafted. But these too are invariably from Government-backed institutions and agencies, resulting in a uniform way of thinking.

When there are private organisations involved, they are selected on the basis of the most opaque considerations. And these have mostly meant the Government agency completely handing over all its responsibilities to the private agency. It is, however, the Government that has a social angle to its portfolio and not the private contractor. It is, therefore, necessary that the State agencies remain accountable and alert as to how a proposed solution impacts society at large.

All this calls for an atmosphere of debate, dialogue and discussion in Government circles between the elected representatives and the bureaucracy. The latter needs to keep itself abreast of the latest developments the world over in areas that concern it. It is highly doubtful if officialdom in its present state is anywhere near such preparedness.

DECONGESTING STATIONS

(Continued from page 1)

amenities, which are not satisfactory even at Egmore and Central, are practically non-existent in Perambur and Tambaram. Both the suburban stations have badly maintained platforms, no facilities for the physically otherwise abled, and have terrible access.

Those who live in the distant suburbs also complain that travelling to Egmore and Central beats the very economics of train travel. Taxi fare from, say, Tambaram to Central is now Rs. 500 or so. A railway ticket from Chennai to Bangalore in an AC chair car costs only Rs. 800! True, the railways provide feeder services by way of the local trains to help people residing in far-flung areas to come to the centre of the city, but given the conditions of the trains and the overbridges to be negotiated, how many people, especially those who are elderly or with baggage, choose to travel by local trains?

Bangalore, a city with even more traffic problems than ours, has now a system where several trains stop at the suburban stations of Cantonment, Krishnarajapuram and Bangalore East. This is both while entering and

leaving the city. Even the Shatabdi Express from Chennai to Bangalore halts at Cantonment Station. However, it does not do so at Perambur!

The plan to develop Tambaram as a third terminal for the city failed for a simple reason – the authorities wanted to make it an alternative to Egmore. Trains would terminate at Tambaram and not come into Egmore. That was an impractical idea, as those who lived in the northern areas of the city

would have to travel long distances. What is, on the other hand, needed is that trains should halt at Tambaram and then terminate at Egmore. More importantly, all trains leaving Egmore need to halt at Tambaram. A similar arrangement has to exist between Central and Perambur as well. Only if these arrangements are in place will our city's principal railway terminals have less congestion and, therefore, less risk.

OUR ADDRESSES

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

– THE EDITOR

Remembered when U.Ve.Sa. celebrated 81

About six feet in height his figure is well proportioned; his features are suffused with the culture of ages; his moral expression is only equalled by his cultural, for there is a softness, a gentleness, and delicacy about it, and that air of profound religious veneration which characterises supermen. Verily, Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer is one without a second in the field of Tamil research and scholarship.

For over two generations Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer has been devoting his best talents and energies for Tamil research. He will be celebrating his 81st birthday on the 6th March, 1935. He was born in 1855 of respectable parents in the village of Uttamadanapuram in the district of Tanjore. His father Venkatasubramanya Iyer was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Early in life Swaminatha Iyer was initiated into the study of Tamil literature and music by his dutiful father whose proficiency in those two subjects was of no mean order. Swaminatha Iyer possesses even to this day a good voice and his knowledge of music is full and complete.

His old students remember even now the sonorous cadence of his voice with which he used to read Tamil poems in class. He was very fortunate indeed in respect of his early year teachers. He studied Tamil literature dealing with Saiva and Vaishnava cults at the feet of the exponents of the respective schools. Unlike the present day students, young Swaminatha Iyer lived with his teachers and studied the whole gamut of Tamil literature. To give a finishing touch to his studies, his father apprenticed him to the celebrated Tamil scholar of the day, one Meenakshisundaram Pillai of Mayavaram, who seems to have influenced the life of the young protegee in an extraordinary manner. Swaminatha Iyer was then a lad of barely 16 or 17.

Pillai had a host of disciples, all of them taking up advanced study in Tamil literature. He did not at first know that his new acolyte had attained very high proficiency in Tamil which is not ordinarily associated with young colts of his age. Naturally, Pillai entrusted the supervision of his studies to one of his assistants. As days wore on, the assistant found he learned more from his ward than he could teach him. He felt helpless to clear the doubts raised by his ward. In

good time, Pillai came to know of this and very gladly agreed thereafter to supervise the studies of Swaminatha Iyer.

The disciple never for a day even absented himself from the presence of his guru. He was present with his guru when great scholars carried on discussions on Tamil literature and dialectical disquisitions. He used to accompany him during his travels. Whenever Pillai taught him, he listened to him with great attention and respect. Pillai himself was very proud of his new disciple and spared no pains to shape him well. Swaminatha Iyer's love and respect of his guru have taken the shape of a biography which was published last year. As a biographer, Swaminatha Iyer has, perhaps, excelled even that prince of biographers in English, James Boswell.

Meenakshisundaram Pillai was highly respected by the Thambirans of the Thiruvavaduthurai Mutt. He used to pay frequent visits to them, accompanied invariably by Swaminatha Iyer. The head of the Mutt, Srilasri Subramania Desikar and the Thambirans were equally im-

part. They examined him in grammar, in prosody, and in extempore poetry. Swaminatha Iyer came out with flying colours in the examination and was appointed to the post. This was in 1880.

As a teacher of Tamil, it is said that Swaminatha Iyer touched the high watermark. Students used to flock to his class and scramble for seats. It is said that the then Principal, Rai Bahadur T. Gopala Rao, who guided the destinies of the College with great success and distinction at the time, used to stop for a few minutes and listen to the lectures of Pandit Swaminatha Iyer.

In 1903, Swaminatha Iyer was transferred to Presidency College, Madras. He too was anxious to go to Madras as he was at the time engaged in research work and in editing the Tamil classics. He felt that his transfer to Madras would facilitate his publication of the Tamil classics.

He retired from service in 1919 at the age of 64. After retiring, he was persuaded by Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar, the founder of the Annamalai University, to

and at great cost. You will find the disciples engaged in deciphering these manuscripts and helping their Kulapathi in editing them. If you sit for a while and watch the great scholar at work you will really marvel at his memory power and scholarship. The way in which he gives cross references to similar words in other classics of Tamil literature, quoting chapter and verse and giving the special sense in which it is used in each of these classics, is nothing short of an amazing feat of memory.

The Mahamahopadhyaya's title to lasting fame as the greatest scholar that the Tamil world has seen within the last two generations rests on his bringing to light the great Tamil classics. It may surprise many to be told that the Tamil classics *Jivaka Chintamani*, *Silappadhikaram*, *Manimekalai* etc. were known to scholars fifty years ago only through references to these classics in other pieces of Tamil literature. Nodody had ever read these classics fifty years ago, as their existence was not at all known. It is even said that the great guru of Swaminatha Iyer,



Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer

rectly represent the religious import of the works. He consulted Buddhist and Jain scholars and studied their philosophy and religion along with them. If Buddhists and Jains hold Swaminatha Iyer's commentaries on these works as authoritative and correctly representing their faiths, it only speaks of Swaminatha Iyer's German-like thoroughness in his work.

In his publication of *Pathupattu*, Swaminatha Iyer has touched the highest plane of research scholarship. At first he could not get original of the book. A rare manuscript, a commentary of the *Pathupattu*, fell into his hands and the commentator had dealt with its peculiar prosody and grammatical construction. Taking these technical suggestions as the basis, like the expert jeweller who makes an ornament of beauty and brilliance out of ill-shaped diamonds, Swaminatha Iyer, exercising his scholarship and imagination, was able to reconstruct the whole of the original of the book. In a similar manner, he has improved the commentaries on *Silappadhikaram*, *Puranamuru* and *Manimekalai*.

Besides this, Swaminatha Iyer has played a distinguished part in the cultural life of the Tamils. He has attended invariably almost all the important conferences of the Tamil pandits and religious leaders and has contributed not a little to the promotion of Tamil learning. He played the role of a University lecturer in 1927 and delivered a series of lectures on the topic "Tamil of the Tamil age and the Post Sangam age". The Government also honoured him by conferring on him the title of "Mahamahopadhyaya" for the solid and lasting contribution he had made to Tamil literature. The Madras University also honoured itself when two years

ago it conferred on him the Doctorate in literature. He is a member of the Boards of Studies of the Madras, Benares, Mysore and Annamalai Universities.

Quiet and unassuming, compassionate and charitable, as he is, Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. V. Swaminatha Iyer is a type of superman, always returning good for evil. He remembers small helps with gratitude. His charity is not known to the public. He is even now helping the widow of the Satagopachariyar of Ariyalur, under whom he read Tamil at the very outset. He is, to this day, helping the grandson of his guru, the late Meenakshisundaram Pillai. He has endowed a scholarship in the Government College, Kumbakonam, in the name of the late Thiagaraja Chettiar who was responsible for inducing him to accept the post of Tamil Pandit in that College.

The significance and importance of Swaminatha Iyer's services and contribution to Tamil literature cannot be over-stated. Before Swaminatha Iyer published his works very little was known about the culture and civilisation of the Tamils. Now he has made the glorious past of the Tamils live in these books of his. As a commentator he is superb and unrivalled. He has tried in his works to always give the views of the author instead of foisting his own views on him.

He has made the lot of the Tamil pandits much better than what it was before. He has induced the Pandara Sannidhi of the Thiruppanandal Mutt to give a prize every year to the student who passes first in the Vidwan's examination.

In any other country Swaminathaiyer would have been raised to the peerage; statues would have been erected to honour him;

PAGES FROM THE PAST

Thus was made the statue of Munro

• Some time ago (MM, October 16 and November 1, 2012), Sriram V. wrote a detailed story about the Chantry statue of Thomas Munro. Now, to add to that, reader A. Raman sends us excerpts from a letter written by 'C' in 1840 but published in the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* in 1844.

The great object of Sir Francis Chantry in all works of this nature is to combine simplicity in the outline and drapery with dignity in the attitude and expression: it is only necessary to look at the figure recently erected on the island to be satisfied as to how completely he has here succeeded in attaining this happy union.

The horse may be looked upon rather as the Artist's *beau ideal* of the animal than as the representation of any particular species, although no doubt the Arab blood will be found to prevail in its composition, and fortunately so when we consider the country where it was to find its final resting place. The pains which Sir Francis took with this part of his task are almost incredible; the whole of the royal stud... then in all its glory – was submitted individually to his inspection – he consulted the best veterinarians – and finally kept it in the model for a space of nearly four years, in order that he might be able to avail himself of any improvements which time or reflection might suggest. The preserving of the clay for so long a period in a proper state of moisture was alone a work of no

ordinariness would have been established to continue the useful work in which he has been engaged for more than fifty years.

The Celebration Committee that has been formed in Madras would do well in the first place to make arrangements to continue the work that he has been carrying on for over half a century. We should have an institute named Dr. Swaminatha Iyer Institute and it should be subsidised by the Government like the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute in Poona. Attempts ought to be made to publish a commemo-

ordinary difficulty and anxiety, for unless the greatest care be taken, it is sure to bake dry in summer and freeze hard in winter, either of which by distorting the form will in one day ruin the labour of months. When at last however he was completely satisfied, a mould was taken in plaster of Paris, and a cast in the same material took the place of the enormous mass of clay which was immediately broken up to be moulded into other forms.

The horse being thus fixed in somewhat more permanent materials, Chantry then proceeded to the figure of the rider, which had to be gathered from the most incongruous sources – the chief of which was the admirable portrait by Sir Martin Archer Shee; but when we reflect that a painting gives only one point of sight and that a piece of sculpture has to be viewed in every direction, it forms of itself no mean tribute to the Artist's skill, that in a place when every body is familiar with Munro's face and form, not one objection has been raised to the fidelity with which he has caught up the likeness of a man whom he never even saw. The drapery is a happy compound of

raton volume with a fairly good biographical sketch of Swaminatha Iyer. His birthday should be observed all over Tamil Nadu in every important town and village, and attempts ought to be made to start a reading room and library in each village, named after him. It is high time that the Madras Committee issues necessary instructions to such of the local committees as are willing to celebrate the day in their own places. In conclusion, let us all join hands to honour one that has done yeoman service to Tamil literature.



the ancient and modern, and though perhaps it would scarcely pass muster with the fastidious authorities in the Adjutant General's Office, it is still sufficiently military to satisfy ordinary persons and at the same time not offend the taste of the lovers of the antique, whose prejudices founded as they are in nature must always find favour with a true Artist.

When the whole work was cast in plaster of Paris, the next step was to form moulds of such a material, as would be at once sufficiently fine to preserve the delicacy of the workmanship; and yet strong enough to bear the heat of melted bronze. This object is effected by a mixture of brick-dust and plaster in nearly equal proportions, and ten or twelve inches thick. Inside of this again, in order to regulate the thickness of the metal, a core was constructed of the same materials and about half an inch smaller in every proportion than the true size of the figure. These moulds when completed were placed in immense ovens and slowly baked dry, for had the slightest moisture remained when the metal was poured in, the mould would have been burst to pieces. In order to ascertain this important point with certainty a small hole was bored into the thickest part of the mould, and some grains of the material extracted, which were immediately placed in a pair of Dr. Wollaston's scales and their weight ascertained with the utmost nicety – they were then exposed to considerable heat and once more put into the scale, after which if their weight was less than on the first trial, it was evident that the mould had still some moisture remaining – the

experiment was repeated till all was thoroughly dry. The mould of the horse was divided into five and that of the rider into three pieces. A pit close to the furnace was then dug sufficiently deep to bury each of these parts – one was placed in it and all around was rammed tight with fine sand leaving two or three runners of channels for the metal to pass through – the bronze entered from below the mould and gradually ascended to the top, had it at once been poured in from above the bronze would have been honey-combed and full of bubbles when allowed to cool. After some time the sand was dug away, and the mould having been broken up, the metal was brought out black and rough – a few days' hard rubbing with files and sand paper soon removed this outer coating and left it bright and shining, which appearance in its turn was deadened into its present hue by an application of muriatic acid and potash.

The various pieces were joined together in the following manner – half an inch was sawed off the edges of the parts to be connected, and the interior was filled with sand; a small crucible of melted bronze was then prepared and poured along the interval – the heat of this metal was sufficient to make the rims of the solid part become liquid, and when the bronze became cool, the whole was found burned into a solid mass.

Though the process is liable to many accidents, I am not aware that more than two failures were made in the whole number of meltings. The sword, the bridle, and the lower part of the tail were also formed in separate castings.

Quizzin'
with
Ram'nan

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

1. Recently, the World Health Organisation declared the spread of which acute, viral disease, (which India has declared as eradicated) as 'an international public health emergency'?

2. Which cinematic legend debuted on Twitter recently with the tweet "Salutation to the Lord. Vanakkam anaivarukkum! A big thank you to all my fans? Excited on this digital journey"?

3. An US investigator recently claimed to have found the wreck of the *Santa Maria*, the flagship of a famous explorer, near Haiti. Name the explorer.

4. Which Oscar-winner is, starting as the protagonist in *Grace of Monaco* which kick started this year's Cannes film festival?

5. Name India's own payment gateway, developed by the National Payments Corporation of India, that was launched recently to compete with networks such as Visa and Mastercard.

6. The Supreme Court has given permission to Tamil Nadu, rejecting the objections raised by Kerala, to raise the height of the 116-year-old Mullaiperiyar Dam by how many feet?

7. Name India's first indigenous air-to-air Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile, that was tested from a Sukhoi-30MKI, recently.

8. Who is the next Army chief?

9. Which India-born siblings have emerged as the richest in the UK with 11.9 billion GBP?

10. Scientists recently announced that a new element named Ununseptium is about to join the periodic table. What is the proton number of the new element?

* * *

11. By what more famous name is Madras-born singer Arnold George Dorsey known to fans around the world?

12. What do the initials TT stand for in the name of the illustrious TTK and his family members?

13. What first in Tamil cinema does the 1985-release *Annai Bhoomi* claim to have?

14. Which place near Chennai Central gets its name for 'a bank sloping down from a fort which exposes attackers to the defenders' missiles'?

15. The first school in Madras was a little 'public school for children, several of whom are English', started in a priest's house in White Town. Name the priest.

16. According to Rudyard Kipling, in *The Song of the Cities*, who kissed Madras on her mouth, eyes and brow?

17. Which is the latest working station added to the list of MRTS stations?

18. Name the MPs from the three Chennai constituencies.

19. Continuing known the previous question, name the only two constituencies in the State that the AIADMK did not win.

20. In the days of the Madras Presidency, how many fanams would two rupees get you?

(Answers on page 8)

An ancient temple that's losing its inscriptions

Crowded Purasawalkam has an ancient Chola temple for Siva right in its centre, whose tall, five-tiered *gopuram* is visible from the main road. It is dedicated to Gangadeeswara, the form of Siva who received the River Ganga on her torrential descent from the heavens.

This area gets its name from the *Purasai* (*Palasha*) tree, or Flame of the Forest, which must once have grown in abundance here. Perhaps it was a sacred grove of these trees. Our ancients knew it had a number of medicinal uses other than religious significance and wanted to preserve it. Alas, there is but one *Purasai* tree here today. Luckily, it is the sacred tree of the Gangadeeswarar temple and, being inside its precincts, is well protected.



A view of the Temple-tank.

This temple is said to be one of the oldest in Chennai; it is certainly one of the better-known shrines in the city. The *mandapa* opposite the main sanctum, from where you can also see the shrine for Goddess Pankajambal, is very modern. Apparently it was constructed in 1964 when the temple was renovated. A rare stone image

• by
Chithra Madhavan

here, not usually seen in temples, is of Bhagiratha, a king who performed penance to Siva for bringing the River Ganga to earth from the heavens. A wonderful sight is the very well-maintained temple tank full of



Gangadeeswarar temple, Purasawalkam.

water. The temple itself is clean and well maintained.

All this is there, and more. But, is something missing? The ancient inscriptions are missing. A temple of the Chola times it certainly was. A few stray Chola pillars are mute testimony to the temple's antiquity. The best way to date a monument is by reading the stone records etched on the walls, replete with many a date and nugget of information. Sadly, they are not there in this temple, having been wiped away during one or perhaps many renovations. By a stroke of luck, a few of the inscriptions that had survived earlier renovations were spotted in the past, and copied. If not for them, no one would know that this is an ancient monument.

Only one Chola inscription has been discovered in the Gangadeeswarar temple. This

lithic record in Tamil etched in the ancient Tamil script of the Cholas, dates to the 13th Century CE. Interesting but perplexing is the fact that this epigraph registers a donation made by a man named Neelakankaraiyan to the temple in Tiruvannamiyur (probably referring to the Marundeeswarar temple).

A few other inscriptions have also been found in this temple and these belong to the reign of the Vijayanagara emperors. One such inscription can be dated to the 15th Century CE and perhaps belongs to Deva Raya I or Deva Raya II. It is written in the Tamil script of Vijayanagara times, but is unfortunately in a damaged condition, with only some portions readable.

On a stone slab found in this temple is another inscription belonging to the Vijayanagara times of the 16th century CE. It too is in Tamil. Unfortunately, this too is slightly damaged. It records that a person was employed in this temple to light the lamps daily. Another Vijayanagara inscription of the 16th Century CE found on the north wall of the sanctum sanctorum (*garbha griha*) is also in Tamil. This fragmented epigraph mentions devotees praying at the temple and giving gifts to the shrine.

The inscriptions in the temples of Chennai are very important to students of history and archaeology and to those interested in our city's past. But, over time, a sizeable number of inscriptions have been lost because of mindless renovation. These epigraphs are now few in number and most of them are fragmentary. We have lost and are losing much history by way of defacing our inscriptions. When will we ever learn?

'Two States' in 1923

• A tale from the past by
GANGA POWELL

In 1923, a wedding took place under the famed banyan tree in the Theosophical Society in Adyar. It was between Jayalakshmi, daughter of Ranganatha Mudaliar of Arcot, and Bhagat Ram Kumar, son of Hukum Chand Kumar of Quetta in the North West Frontier Province. The bride was 19, the bridegroom 26.

It was in July, traditionally an 'auspicious' month for weddings in South India, so undoubtedly there must have been many weddings being celebrated on that day. But this one was different, for the bride was South Indian and the bridegroom was from the North. Contrary to what might be expected, given the social mores in India at the time, it was not a runaway affair. It had the blessings (indeed, had been arranged) of the fathers who were both Theosophists. There were no mothers, for both the bride and the groom had lost their mothers when young. Many leading Theosophists were there to bless the couple, including Annie Besant and George Arundale.

Annie Besant gave them an ornate silver vase as a wedding present and Arundale a clock.

Looking back on the event now, it occurs to me that both mothers, by dying, had set in motion the events leading to this union. For Jayalakshmi was sent to study in far-off Benares (as it was then known) when she was eight years old because she was a motherless child; Bhagat Ram, likewise, was sent to Benares for schooling because, it was hinted, his step-mother was not good to him.

The school in Benares was the Theosophical School in Kamacha. It was a rocky start for my mother who was fresh out of Kurnool and spoke neither Hindi nor English. But she was deter-

(Continued on page 8)

● Endangered natural heritage

An evening with a Short-eared Owl

If only I had known what my friends would sight that evening I wouldn't have said no to that birding trip. For, it was a species that I had last sighted over a decade ago in the wetland close to the Alambara Fort ruins. It was a Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*, which my friends had sighted in the wetlands of Siruthavur. I had been looking out for this species for so many years. So when I learned of the presence of this species, I decided to go to the spot the next day. However, I was also certain that the probability of sighting the bird was almost nil.

● by
T. MURUGAVEL

The next day, along with my friends, I reached the spot around half past three. To my surprise, I found three other friends of mine already there. They were also in search of the bird, but they couldn't locate it. We joined them and scanned the landscape. We could see several other birds, like skylarks, pipits and plovers, but not the owl. We then decided to split and search in two groups. Patient search yielded results.

My friends were lucky enough to sight it. The owl was on the ground, close to the high, brown grass tufts, well camouflaged, its pale fawn colour with heavy dark brown streaked underbody blended perfectly with the background. Its blackish-brown erect ear tufts were short, and black bristles dominated its pale white facial disc. It did not bother much about us, but it kept looking at us with its beautiful, bright, lemon yellow eyes, following our movements.

As we watched the owl, a few crows landed close to it and it



A Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). (Sketch by the Author.)

was obvious that the owl didn't like their presence; it took off, escaping from the mobbing birds. Followed by the crows, the owl flew with its deliberate flap of

wings, going in circles, and it went up high, until the crows stopped their chase. After a brief stay in the air, the owl landed several metres away. There again, it settled in the safety of the grass. We observed the bird through our scopes for some time and, as the sun started sinking, we left the place with a lot of satisfaction of sharing some precious moments with a magnificent bird.

Back home, I referred to Salim Ali's *Compact Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* (Volume 3, page 315) and was amazed by Ali's keen observation and accurate documentation. His description of the owl's flight pattern, especially when mobbed by crows, is an exact portrayal of what we had observed: "...flight irregular, rather rolling and wandering, punctuated with glides. Either flops into the herbage again after a hundred metres or so, or covers long distance before alighting, sometimes very high up in the air, and flying in wide circles, especially when mobbed by crows and other birds..." I then called Dr. Santharam, the ornithologist, and mentioned the sighting. He said he had sighted this species way back in the 1980s in the Adyar Estuary.

This news really surprised me, considering the present status of the estuary, which has lost its grasslands to tall buildings. I couldn't stop worrying about protection of the wetland we visited, as almost all the land around the lake was marked for sale and small huts had been raised. It is disturbing to note that quite a few projects, like power plants and ports, are proposed along the coast. It is common sense that these so-called 'developmental projects' will wipe off the biodiversity of this fragile ecosystem. It is up to us to think sensibly and minimise our interference with our environment so that local as well as migratory birds can sojourn in peace.

SPEED, thy name is Blackbuck

Blackbuck, *Antelope cervica-pra*, *Cervus* is 'deer' and *capra* is 'she goat'. The figure may remind you of a goat, lean and nimble-toed with a tiny tail. Blackbuck are considered second only to the cheetah in their speed, they literally fly over ground as they gallop, as I saw over three decades ago when I visited Point Calimere.



At the end of my first year working towards a B.Sc. graduation in Zoology in Tiruchi, when I was busy cramming information about the various invertebrate phyla, I was asked, along with some two or three senior students, to volunteer in counting blackbuck. I doubt if I knew what they were, but my Professor convinced me that this was a not-to-be-missed chance of a trip to Point Calimere (Kodaikanal).

This trek was the idea of the Forest Department, Tiruchi. A wonderful idea with the double purpose of sensitising youth to wildlife and carrying out a census of animals. Definitely it worked, at least in my case. It had not been for them, I doubt if I would have developed an interest in the 'life' part of life sciences; I would possibly have gone into medicine or microbiology instead and, who knows, may have continued to be blind to the biodiversity around.

We reached Point Calimere at night and even as we entered the protected area through a narrow road, we saw eyes of various animals reflected in the headlights of the bus. A small group of feral horses was grazing not far from the forest guest house. Feral? 'Feral' refers to

animals that have descended from domesticated animals but are now living wild, explained one of the forest officials with us. After an early morning lecture on migratory birds by the resident BNHS scientist, we were divided into groups, each assigned one area to count the blackbuck. That is when I first got to see them. We first learnt to identify the various animals in the herd and I wrote this in a note about the trip.

"The fully grown adult bucks had a black coat on their backs and had horns with three rings. The sub-adult males did not have so dark a coat and had horns with one or two rings. The females were light coloured and the white stripe across their belly was prominent. There were fawns too. The first group that we saw consisted of an adult male, a female and a fawn. They appear to have sensed our approach though we were at quite some distance. Through the binoculars we saw the majestic splendour of the male, standing erect and tense, poised to run if we approached closer. The female and the fawn were grazing quietly nearby."

Later, we did see some animals trotting and then galloping. An unforgettable sight indeed!

Blackbuck are bovines. Bovidae, or bovines, are animals with cloven-hoofs and characteristic unbranching horns covered in a permanent sheath of keratin. The term 'Antelope' is used to describe all members of the family including Bovidae that do not fall under the category of sheep, cattle, or goats. Wikipedia tells us that the English word "antelope" first appeared in 1417 and is derived from the Old French *antelop*, itself derived from Medieval Latin *ant(h)alopus*, which in turn comes from the [Byzantine Greek] word *antholops*. It is also possible that the word is derived from the Greek *anthos* (flower) and *lopos* (eye) indicating beautiful eye or alluding to the long eyelashes. There are many references to 'doe eyes' in Indian literature too but, interestingly, antelope are merely 'a type of deer' in Tamil; looks like they don't have a special name of their own. Like all ruminants, they digest food in two steps. First they chew and swallow in the normal way, and then regurgitate the semi-digested cud to re-chew it and thus extract the maximum possible food value. That is because they feed largely on grasses.

While many antelope species are native to Africa, blackbuck are native to the Indian subcontinent. A couple of centuries ago, they were found in large herds all over the country. Today, the blackbuck is listed as 'near threatened'. It is protected under Schedule 1 of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

So what made this animal that once was seen in large herds across the country to be listed as a threatened species? The primary reason is its speed. In fact, the swift movement of the antelope has been recognised from ancient times in our scriptures. Nandita Krishna in her book, *Sacred Animals of India*, tells us that the antelope was considered the vehicle of Vayu, the Wind God. It was the mount of the Maruts, the storm deities. Lord Shiva is seen in many sculptures holding a horned stag, representing control over the restless mind and thoughts, for "thoughts are like the antelope, flying swiftly as the wind."

From time immemorial, antelope have been hunted by kings. In nature, their chief predator was the cheetah. Trained captive Asiatic cheetahs, now extinct, were used to hunt this graceful animal. Soon, the large herds began to shrink. The killing of antelopes was so rampant that a movement developed to protect them with the birth of Guru Jambheshwar (Jambaji) in 1485 CE in Bikaner, Rajasthan, and the establishment of the Bishnoi who follow his 29 principles of which eight are about preserving biodiversity. The Bishnoi are strong protectors of blackbuck as they revere them as Jambaji. They share their crops with

(Continued on page 8)

SPEED, thy name is Blackbuck

(Continued from page 7)

blackbuck and other antelope and even bring up orphaned fawns. They are also strong protectors of the trees, a lifeline in the desert.

It is not just in Rajasthan that these graceful animals are protected by locals. In Ganjam

district of Odisha, locals in the Balipadar-Bhetnoi area protect the blackbuck that range freely, sometimes even eating part of their crop. It seems that over a century ago, the locality was hit by a long spell of drought. During this period, a small group of blackbuck appeared in the area. Soon after, it began to rain and the drought was broken. Subsequently, the locals began to associate their prosperity with the blackbuck and, now, actively protect them.

Despite such instances, the blackbuck population is shrinking as they are under threat from poaching as well as being at risk from inbreeding because of the isolated populations, apart from the loss of habitat as open areas are taken over for agriculture and other activities. There are, of course, a number of protected areas. In Chennai, you can see some blackbuck in the IIT campus too, a part of Guindy National Park. It was a lovely surprise to see a young buck trotting out from behind some bushes as we walked out from the Humanities Block one day. I quickly pulled out my cellphone and took a picture but all that I got was a blur. Speed, thy name is blackbuck. (Courtesy: Sri Aurobindo's Action)



Till June 16: Art exhibition by Brijesh Devarreddy (at Dakshina-Chitra).

Till June 30: Photographs by Kushboo Bharti – art in public spaces of Jaipur (at Dakshina-Chitra).

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

'Two States' in 1923

(Continued from page 6)

mined to stay, she later told us, because she hated her teacher in Kurnool so much!

The next ten formative years were spent at Kamacha in the Theosophical School and College. Undoubtedly they were a very special part of her life, for she never ceased telling us tales of her school friends, teachers and escapades. She was troop leader of the Girl Guides when Lady Baden Powell visited. She and her classmates, who were a heady mix of Bengalis, Biharis, Burmese Indians, Kashmiris, Mahrattas, Punjabis, Sindhis and other South Indians, would have been one of the earliest groups of women graduates in India.

Father would have been six years ahead – and that is a big difference when you are still in school. He never recalled Mother from this time. By the time he completed high school, he was one of a select group of young Indians chosen by Arundale to be sent to England for higher studies. The group included, amongst others, J. Krishnamurti and his brother Nithya. They left India in 1913. My father went to Oxford. World War I intervened and most of them did not return till 1918.

Around 1922, upon re-visiting Kamacha. Father saw Jaya 'running in the rain' and decided that this was the girl he wanted to marry. All his life he wore an enamelled ring in the shape of a shell with a blue band in the centre, with JAYA on it in gold letters. As a girl I loved this romantic slant to the way Father and Mother had come together. Mother was more cir-

cumspect. Questioning her embarrassed her, and she always brushed off my attempts to get her to open out the story. This dichotomy in their characters was a part of our family ambience.

Father the stereotypical 'sentimental' Punjabi. Mother the more 'down-to-earth' Tamilian. Their shared Benares experience and Theosophical background were a bond resulting in shared interests. For both, friendships forged in school were lifelong ties and these friends often visited our home.

The marriage, if not quite as romantic as I imagined, was nevertheless groundbreaking. It was an 'arranged marriage', but an arranged marriage pre-empted by a young man who had fallen in love after a passing glance. The wedding broke conventions of caste, religion (Father was a Sikh), and the restrictions of geographic region. There were not many such marriages in India at the time. One of the handful of places where it could possibly have happened, was Adyar under the spreading banyan tree in the gardens of the Theosophical Society.

Education was an important aspect of Theosophical work in India in the early 20th Century. With some breaks over the years, Father's working life as an

educator was in association with the Besant Theosophical College in Madanapalle, for most of the time as Principal. In this role he succeeded eminent educationists like Ernest Wood (the founder), Dr. Cousins and C.S. Trilokekar. The College, founded in 1915, will celebrate 100 years as an educational institution next year.

Mother, during the early years of her marriage went to Shantiniketan where she studied painting with Nanda Lal Bose. She also completed the Montessori Teachers' course with Dr. Maria Montessori in Adyar. My memory of her role in Madanapalle is as the mover and shaker behind cultural events. She conducted painting classes on campus, organised exhibitions, and produced plays when she was not running the girls' hostel or supervising the College gardens.

The banyan tree is a strong, standing symbol of continuity, change and regeneration. My parents' union lasted sixty years. The family that started with Jaya and Bhagat now includes Andhras, Konkans, Mahrattas and Tamilians as well as Americans, Australians, Chinese and Canadians, and is spread over five countries. – (From: *South of the Adyar River* by K.V.S. Krishna and K. Ravi Menon.)

Answers to Quiz

1. Polio; 2. Superstar Rajinikanth; 3. Christopher Columbus; 4. Nicole Kidman; 5. RuPay; 6. Six feet; 7. Astra; 8. Lieutenant General Dalbir Singh Suhag; 9. The Hinduja, Srichand and Gopichand; 10. 117.

* * *

11. Englebert Humperdinck; 12. Tiruvellore Thattai; 13. It prides itself on being the first 3D film in Tamil; 14. (Fort) Glacis; 15. Father Ephraim de Nevers; 16. Robert Clive; 17. Mundakanni Amman Koil; 18. Dr. J. Jayavardhan, S.R. Vijayakumar and T.G. Venkatesh Babu; 19. Dharmapuri and Kanniyakumari; 20. 24 fanams.

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