

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XXIV No. 7

July 16-31, 2014

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Infrastructure the first need

(By A Special Correspondent)

The latest Union budget has, in keeping with the political equations, not singled out the Chennai area for anything exceptional but it has held out two promises – the development of Ponneri as a satellite town and Kanchipuram as a heritage town. Both of these are exciting prospects that can do much good, provided they are planned and executed on -different lines as compared to what has happened in the past. The question is, are we capable of that?

Let us deal with the satellite town first. The Union Budget has called for the development of 'smart cities' and has identified Ponneri as one of the areas capable of such development. The choice of this locality has been dictated by the

fact that several Japanese companies have set up base there, given its proximity to Ennore Port. A visit to the town will reveal that while it admittedly holds potential, it presently lacks even the most basic infrastructure, road connectivity being the first. And so development has to begin from scratch.

In the past we have had developments of satellite towns – Tambaram was supposed to be one, Siruseri was yet another. In the case of the former, growth happened in a laissez faire fashion. Private developers acquired land and sold plots and a town came up. It has the narrowest possible roads, the worst drainage systems and

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Moolah for statues, morsels for heritage!

(By The Editor)

The latest Union Budget includes a provision for Rs. 200 crore to be spent on a statue for a great leader of the past. We do not have anything to say on that beyond wondering whether the Iron Man of India would have wanted such amounts to be spent on his deification. The same budget also has provision for Rs 200 crore

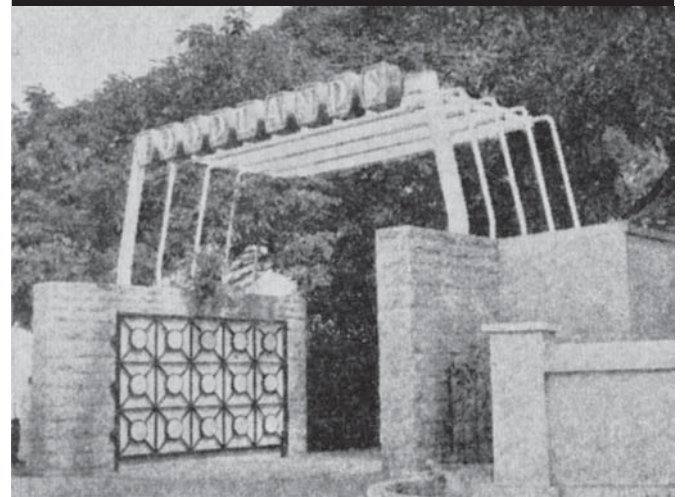
to be spent under the rather oddly named National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana, which is abbreviated for some reason to HRIDAY. This is praiseworthy. But the amount is to be shared by six cities – Mathura, Gaya, Amritsar, Ajmer, Velankanni and Kanchipuram – that comes to Rs 33 Crores per city. In

other words – Rs. 200 crore for one statue, Rs. 33 crore for each of the historic cities that need support! That essentially sums up the importance given to heritage in our country.

There are plenty of other examples within the country and closer home as well. The newspapers carried a story recently about the historic Town Hall in Shimla, which is to be restored at a cost of Rs. 8 crore, out of which Rs. 6 crore was to come from the Asian Development Bank. In Chennai, the VP Hall restoration project, which is dragging on interminably has a budget of Rs. 3 crore. Ripon Building, another structure that is undergoing restoration, has a budget of Rs. 7.7 crore. Here again, the bulk of the funds has come from the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The National Art Gallery in the Museum complex has had Rs. 11 crore allocated for its restoration, though work on it has

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Madras Landmarks – 50 years ago



Completely cut off from public view and located at the end of a curving drive is a sylvan property that is now on its last legs. It is reliably learnt that the place has changed hands and developers will soon swing into action.

One of the prominent landowners of Madras Presidency was Shanmukha Rajeswara or Naganatha Setupathi, Rajah of Ramnad, and among his many properties was Woodlands, Royapettah, a stone's throw from the erstwhile Madras Club property that became Express Estate and is now a mall. Set in the midst of 16½ acres. Woodlands was the city residence of the Rajah before he moved to Cenotaph Road. Woodlands was purchased by Muni Venkatappa, a building contractor, in 1937, for a hotel business. Not finding the going easy, he offered it on rent in 1938 to K. Krishna Rao (1898-1990).

Krishna Rao had worked as a dishwasher, waiter and flour-grinder before he got his big break, when he was asked to manage a restaurant on Acharappan Street in George Town. Having made a success of it, he struck out on his own and set up Madras's first Udipi hotel, 'The Udipi Sri Krishna Vilas' on Mount Road in 1926/27.

He leased the Royapettah property and established the eponymous Woodlands Hotel here, the first of what is now an immensely popular worldwide chain. The hotel had 45 rooms at a rent of Rs. 5 a day. Krishna Rao would himself solicit guests by waiting at Central Station! The Music Academy's annual conference in 1938 was held here under the leadership of Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar, which proved a strong advertisement for the hotel. It became the place where the glamorous stars of the 1940s – M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, N.C. Vasanthakokilam and others-stayed. The War years brought difficulties, including the crashing of a light plane in the garden! In 1947, Rajaji hosted a tea party on the lawns here to celebrate India's independence.

In 1952, Krishna Rao moved Woodlands Hotel to Edward Elliot's (Dr. Radhakrishnan) Road, where it became the New Woodlands Hotel, to distinguish it from the old at Royapettah, which continued as a hotel. Despite the outstanding success of the former, the latter remained popular as a venue and, in 1959, it was from here that Rajaji launched his Swatantra Party. The place was also a favourite location for photo and film shoots.

In 1966, Woodlands, and especially room number 32, shot briefly into notoriety. 750 bars of gold were discovered under the mattress following a tip off. The consignment had been brought by car from Bombay and was hidden here by a guest who, having locked the room, went off to the Dasaprakash Hotel to stay. Investigations led to the arrest and trial of Kotumal Bhirumal Pihlajani and several others. In its time, it was a sensational instance of gold smuggling.

Till the mid-1970s, Woodlands continued to remain one of the well-known hotels of the city. It then went into a decline. The property itself now houses a hotel and a theatre under different managements and both share its name. The hotel building, with a portico that was probably added later, is of the typical Madras roof type. It has some fascinating and beautifully maintained period furniture and fittings. A few plaster statues adorn the vast gardens. Apart from the cheap lodgings it provided, the hotel was till recently known for its lunches, which were of the traditional South Indian variety.



"No sign of a new train coming our way?"

Yet another Madras Week

Let there be Madras Week, said the Chief, and there was Madras Week. *The Man from Madras Musings* can almost imagine the Chief, bare toes and knee caps and all, being wafted through the sky in a billowing cape in which are also carried the team of evangelists of the Week, MMM being one of them. In front leans Madras itself, suitably clad, of course, and the Chief ignites it by the touch of a finger. At least that was how MMM visualised the scene, falling into a light doze after a heavy dinner and while reading a book on Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel.

And, so, here we are with yet another Madras Week. And may it be a success as has been its wont in the past many years. MMM, as always, looks forward to it, for apart from the hustle and bustle of celebrating the city, it also gives him enough and more for this column. In the past, MMM has written about the freeloaders (and has been roasted in letters to ye ed) and the critics (who anyway roasted MMM) who surface suddenly during the Week. This time, MMM would like to take his lyre and sing of the over enthusiastic under-achievers who too surface suddenly during the Week and then vanish as abruptly as they came.

the sun (with information usually plagiarised from the writings of the Chief and a few others) and demands to know why he/she has not been invited to speak during the Week. The second variety chooses to be maudlin and declares that he/she has not been invited to participate owing to a conspiracy of some kind to keep him/her away. These self-centred people are placated very simply by telling them that there is always a next year. If not, they can be told to organise an event by themselves (such voluntary organising is what Madras Week is all about) after which nothing much will be heard from them till the subsequent Madras Week.

Far more numerous is another variety of caller – the one with strange ideas, all of which they would like someone else to implement. These can range from declaring the Beach Road a pedestrian plaza for one week, lighting up all the heritage monuments of the city every night for seven days, declaring a holiday for schoolchildren for a full seven days so that they can enjoy the Week, and, above all, getting those in the highest echelons of Government to participate in the celebrations. Answering these is tricky. A ‘no’ would mean being branded a naysayer for life. A ‘yea’ would mean taking on

mires the company and the way its founder, after retiring, came back to turn the organisation around, rather in the manner of a local head honcho who, after declaring himself mentor or vision-holder or some such thing, came back, son in tow, to mentor and vision hold the company he founded as it was slipping into a morass. Now both Pop and Son have gone away once again, Pop to mentor and Son to a land across the seas. The stellar cash head in the manner of all American bosses, and unlike the local vision holder, wrote a rather good book on the process of turnaround and MMM read it with great interest as well.

But what MMM dislikes about stellar cash is its coffee – namely its multiple variants. To MMM and his kind, coffee is just decoction, milk and sugar and it was to have just this that he and his good lady charged into a stellar cash outlet several years ago on their maiden visit to the US of A. There they were subjected to such an interrogation regarding size of coffee, flavour, milk, sugar, syrup add-ons and, last but not least, “ere or to take away” that thoroughly confused them. They nodded to everything and came away with two elephantine mugs of coffee. These, on being open-

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

This band fancies itself to be volunteering for the Week. It is not to be confused with those who really volunteer and do the many unseen acts of kindness that make the Week a success – conducting events in the neighbourhood, spreading the gospel of heritage, and generally broadcasting sweetness and light. Of that lot MMM has nothing to say beyond the fact that he would like to kiss the hem of their garment as they pass by shedding light. Of the first lot, however, MMM has quite a bit to write.

This is the kind that usually calls MMM just around the time that action for the Week begins. After the usual opening gambits (Oh, MMM! How are you? We must meet soon for dinner etc), to none of which MMM responds for they mean nothing, the caller gets to the main subject – the pet idea for Madras Week. The concept is usually of two kinds – the first where the caller wants an event arranged for himself/herself, where he/she is the centre of attraction with all the work to be done by MMM and his ilk. These people are once again of two kinds – the aggressive or the petulant. The first one declares himself/herself to be an expert on every topic under

more than can be handled. Here again, MMM has discovered that it is best to let them do the implementation, which ends the discussion. After all, MMM recalls, Madras Week is all about volunteering to organise events, is it not?

Coffee international

Every day, *The Man from Madras Musings* sees fresh evidence to indicate that Chennai is truly an international city. We have already seen it become Chengapore (after all we too have signboards indicating that those who litter will be punished) and Chengai (there are always attempts at converting the sea face into commercial land). Now we become Chenninatti or Checago, for the great American brand of coffee, which can roughly be translated into ‘stellar cash’, is here. Or is nearly here. Or is planning to be here.

MMM is aware that there is a certain variety of the local dweller who plans to welcome this arrival here. However, MMM is not going to be one of that ilk. Before you run away with the idea that MMM has something against stellar cash as a company, let him disabuse you of that notion. MMM, on the other hand, ad-

ed and sipped, tasted just like rat poison or so the good lady claimed, MMM having never tasted the rodent pesticide. Not that the good lady had, but she does have a sixth sense about these things. There was no option but to dump the liquids down the nearest drain and walk away, thinking wistfully about the coffee served at Hotel Six-faced-God Boudoir or the Adyar Abode of Bonhomie in this, our city.

Ever since then, MMM and good lady have harboured a deep distrust about the stellar cash product. They wish it well, but their custom is strongly plighted to other and more traditional outlets.

Tailpiece

Chennai could very well have become Rio, given the way its populace has chosen to stay awake each night to watch several people from across the world gather to kick a ball hither and thither. *The Man from Madras Musings* has chosen to remain aloof. Consequently, he was rather taken aback when he was informed by his chauffeur that he, the chauffeur, was sleepy during the day because he, the chauffeur, had remained awake the whole night watching the PIPA World Cup.

– MMM

Hard to stomach

I fully understand our total lack of public sense and consideration for others in all respects (MM, July 1st). Dogs’ excrement was a big problem in Europe, even in cities like Paris and Brussels, because they used to do the same thing as our friend does now in Chennai. But, as MMM has rightly portrayed, they have changed now. Even the Chinese, who were like us once, have changed, I believe. Will we change?

Please read the article below which I received from the former Cabinet Secretary of the Government of India, T.S.R. Subramanian, together with his comments and also the comments of another senior official, Anand Sarup.

– Dr. G. Sundaram

* * *

T.S.R. SUBRAMANIAN: All or nearly all that Kelley says is true; needs to be remedied. But I am not ashamed to be an Indian on the contrary.

ANAND SARUP wrote: One has to acknowledge that though this sounds like a chapter from the much reviled *Mother India*, it is the kind of truth nobody is fighting to reform but is mostly answered by reviling the author and blaming it on Western prejudices.

Reflections on India by Sean Paul Kelley*

If you are Indian, or of Indian descent, I must preface this post with a clear warning: you are not going to like what I have to say. My criticisms may be very hard to stomach. But consider them as the hard words and loving advice of a good friend. Someone who is being honest with you and wants nothing from you.

These criticisms apply to all of India except Kerala and the places I did not visit, except that I have a feeling it applies to all of India.

Lastly, before anyone accuses me of Western Cultural Imperialism, let me say this: if this is what India and Indians want, then, who am I to tell them differently. Take what you like and leave the rest. In the end it doesn’t really matter, as I get the sense that Indians, at least many upper class Indians, don’t seem to care and the lower classes just don’t know any better, what with Indian culture being so intense and pervasive on the sub-continent. But, here goes, nonetheless.

India is a mess. It’s that simple, but it’s also quite complicated. I’ll start with what I think are India’s four major problems – the four most preventing India from becoming a developing nation – and then move to some of the ancillary ones.

First: Pollution. In my opinion the filth, squalor and all around pollution, indicates a marked lack of respect for India by Indians. I don’t know how cultural the filth is, but it’s really beyond anything I have ever encountered. At times the smells, trash, refuse and excrement are like a garbage dump.

Right next door to the Taj Mahal was a pile of trash that smelled so bad, was so foul as to almost ruin the entire Taj experience. Delhi, Bangalore and Chennai, to a lesser degree, were so very polluted as to make me physically ill. Sinus infections, ear infection, bowels churning were all a too common experience in India. Dung, be it goat, cow or human fecal matter, was common on the streets. In major tourist areas filth was everywhere, littering the sidewalks, the roadways, you name it. Toilets in the middle of the road, men urinating and defecating anywhere, in broad daylight.

Whole villages are plastic bag wastelands. Roadsides are choked by it. Air quality that can hardly be called quality. Far too much coal and far too few unleaded vehicles on the road. The measure should be how dangerous the air is for one’s health, not how good it is. People casually throw trash in the streets, on the roads.

The only two cities that could be considered sanitary, in my journey, were Trivandrum – the capital of Kerala and Calicut. I don’t know why this is, but I can assure you that, at some point, this pollution will cut into India’s productivity, if it already hasn’t. The pollution will hobble India’s growth path, if that indeed is what the country wants. (Which I personally doubt, as India is far too conservative a country, in the small ‘c’ sense.)

The second issue, infrastructure, can be divided into four subcategories: Roads, Rails, Ports and the Electric Grid. The Electric Grid is a joke. Load shedding is all too common, everywhere in India. Wide swathes of the country spend much of the day without the electricity they actually pay for. Without regular electricity, productivity, again, falls.

The Ports are a joke. Antiquated, out of date, hardly even appropriate for the mechanised world of container ports, more in line with the days of longshoremen and the like.

Roads are an equal disaster. I only saw one elevated highway that would be considered decent in Thailand, much less Western Europe or America and I covered fully two-thirds of the country during my

(Continued on page 3)

OUR READERS WRITE

The elitist way

I too have seen the reprehensible conduct of the so-called 'elite' who let their dogs defecate on the public road (MM, July 1st) with nary a thought or concern for hygiene. At the same time, they have the gall to talk about the unhygienic habits of slum-dwellers.

The 'educated' upper and middle classes are expected to be role models, but they fail miserably. Take saving energy – the need for which is self-evident. Walk into any of their homes. You will find ACs on at full blast even when nobody is in the room. Ditto for lights. I hope I am wrong, but I have observed a curious commonality in these homes. It seems there is an inflexible rule that all lights – 100 watts, no less – should have energy-guzzling, inefficient incandescent bulbs, the only 'lip-concession' to energy saving being a fluorescent light in the kitchen. I don't know why. Is it that if you practise energy saving more effectively, you cease to be 'in' at the Club? Perhaps, in these circles, a dwelling lighted by 'cheap' energy-saving lights is considered really 'cheap'!

The same goes for water. No buckets and mugs for baths,

thank you. And while brushing your teeth or washing your face, the tap must keep running not in a gentle stream but in full flow.

I have tried to encourage energy and water-saving measures with some people of the aforesaid groups, but failed. I have even tried to persuade them by making appeals through their children. Again, a blank.

Have you noticed a curious thing? These are the very same people who enthusiastically, and demonstratively, observe the annual charade of 'Earth Hour' by switching off lights for one hour on the designated day as though that is all they owe society and themselves.

G. Sankaran

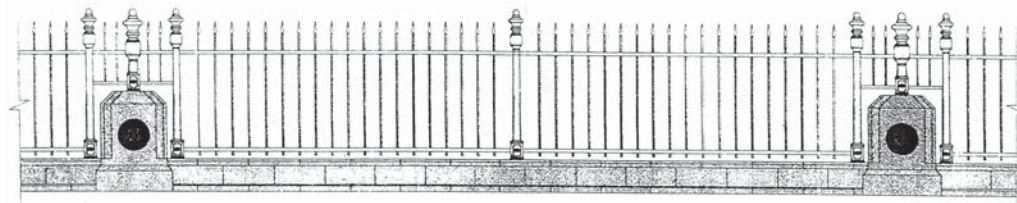
T43A, 7th Avenue

Besant Nagar, Chennai 600 090

New heritage wall?

In a letter the Corporation of Chennai has addressed to the University of Madras as well as to other institutions on the Marina, for whom an ancient compound wall forms a common border for their buildings, it is stated:

"Plan to beautify the western side of Kamarajar Salai by demol-



Hard to stomach

(Continued from page 2)

visit. There are so few dual carriage-way roads as to be laughable. There are no traffic laws to speak of and, if there are, they are rarely obeyed, much less enforced (another sideline is police corruption). A drive that should take an hour takes three. A drive that should take three takes nine. The buses are at least thirty years old, if not older and, generally, in poor mechanical repair, belching clouds of poisonous smoke and fumes.

Everyone in India, or who travels in India, raves about the railway system. Rubbish! It's awful! When I was there in 2003 and then late 2004 it was decent. But, in the last five years, the traffic on the rails has grown so quickly that once again, it is threatening productivity. Waiting in line just to ask a question now takes thirty minutes. Routes are routinely sold out three and four days in advance now, leaving travellers stranded with little option except to take the decrepit and dangerous buses.

At least fifty million people use the trains a day in India. 50 million people! Not surprising that waitlists (each) of 500 or more people are common now. The rails are affordable and comprehensive, but they are overcrowded and what with budget airlines popping up in India, like sadhus in an ashram, the middle and lower classes are left to deal with the over-utilised rails, and quality suffers. No one seems to give a shit.

Seriously, I just never have the impression that the Indian Government really cares. Too interested in buying weapons from Russia, Israel and the US, I guess.

The last major problem in India is an old problem and can be divided into two parts: that have been two sides of the same coin since government was invented: bureaucracy and corruption.

It takes triplicates to register into a hotel. To get a SIM card for your phone is like wading into a jungle of red-tape and photocopies from which you are not likely to emerge in a good mood, much less satisfied with customer service.

Getting train tickets is a terrible ordeal: first you have to find the train number, which takes 30 minutes, then you have to fill in the form, which is far from easy, then you have to wait in line to try and make a reservation, which takes 30 minutes at least and if you made

A garden and a tree

Two items in MM's June 1st issue interested me especially.

The note on My Ladye's Garden (People's Park). Even in the early 1980s this garden was impressive. The most remarkable inclusion here was the floral clock, which indeed worked (how accurately I am not sure, though). In the 1960s it was managed by one Krishnamurthy who was the Chief Horticulturist for the Garden.

As a former resident of Purasawalkam, I was delighted to read the piece on the Purasawalkam Siva temple by Chithra Madhavan. I remember the period when the sanctum area of the temple was locked for several years due to renovation work in the 1960s, when I was a school boy in Purasawalkam. I am not sure whether the name of the principal deity is Gangadeeswarar. As well as I can recall, it is Gangadaréswara. I was very pleased to read that the Gangadaréswara-Pankajakshi temple is genuinely linked to the later Chola period; hearsay stories used to float around that it was so. Nice to hear this point from the authoritative voice of Chithra. By saying that *purasa tree* (*plasa vrksa*, *Butea frondosa*) is the sacred tree of this temple, does Chithra mean that this tree is the *stala-vriksha*? I am not sure. I have heard that the *lianos Hiptage benghalensis* (= *H. madablota*, Tamil: *Vasanthakala Mallikai*, *kurukati*; Sansk, *Madhavi Lata*; the 'old' species name *madablota* is a derivative of its Sanskrit name *Madhavi Lata*), which produces attractive winged fruits (*samara*), similar to an aircraft, is the *stala-vriksha*. One shrub of *Hiptage benghalensis* still



grows in the temple precinct, but it may not survive long, unless some effort is made to conserve it.

I send herewith a beautiful sketch done by the Madras artist Rungiah, who did the illustrations for Robert Wight for his *Illustrations of Indian Botany*, 1840, of *Hiptage benghalensis*, then referred to as *H. madablota*. In the figure numbered 9 the elegance of the fruit (*samara*) of *H. benghalensis* may be seen.

Dr. Anantanarayanan Raman
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ishing the existing compound wall from Napier Bridge to *Vivekanandar Illam* (Ice House) and build a heritage wall..."

The existing wall, which is over 100 years old, is a heritage wall. How can the Corporation make a statement to the effect that it is planning to build a heritage wall by demolishing the real heritage wall? It is really funny.

In the name of beautification of the west side of the Marina, which is the only side available at present for any rework, the Corporation has proposed to pull down the existing wall and reconstruct it. The sketch of the new design is attached. The eastern side had already been 'beautified' during the previous regime.

It is learnt that the Syndicate of the University of Madras has rejected the request on grounds of the heritage value of the standing compound wall.

Dr. T.D. Krishnamachari
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The Lord's name

Lord Siva in Purasawalkam temple (MM, June 1st) is not Gangadeeswarar, but Ganga-dhareswarar.

P.S. Ramamurti
75/15, Vellala Street, Purasawalkam
Chennai 600 084

Correct title

In Prema Nandakumar's article (MM, June 16th), the title of S.K. Chettur's book is mentioned as *Street Frame and I*. It should be *Steel Frame and I*.

Rev. Philip Mulley
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a single mistake on the form, back you go to the end of the queue, or what passes for a queue in India.

The Government is notoriously uninterested in the problems of the commoners. Too busy fleecing the rich, or trying to get rich themselves in some way, shape or form. Take the trash, for example, civil rubbish collection authorities are too busy taking kickbacks from the wealthy to keep their areas clean that they don't have the time, manpower, money or interest in doing their job.

Rural hospitals are perennially understaffed as doctors pocket the fees the Government pays them, never show up at the rural hospitals, and practise in the cities instead.

I could go on for quite some time about my perception of India and its problems, but in all seriousness, I don't think anyone in India really cares. And that, to me, is the biggest problem. India is too conservative a society to want to change in any way.

Mumbai, India's financial capital, is about as filthy, polluted and poor as the worst city imaginable in Vietnam or Indonesia and being more polluted than Medan, in Sumatra, is no easy task. The biggest rats I have ever seen were in Medan!

You would expect a certain amount of, yes, I am going to use this word "backwardness", in a country that hasn't produced so many Nobel Laureates, nuclear physicists, eminent economists and entrepreneurs. But, India has all these things yet what have they brought back to India with them? Nothing.

The rich still have their servants, the lower castes are still there to do the dirty work and so the country remains in stasis. It's a shame. Indians and India have many wonderful things to offer the world, but I'm far from sanguine that India will amount to much in my lifetime.

Now, you have it, call me a cultural imperialist, a spoiled child of the West and all that. But remember, I have been there. I have done it and I have seen 50 other countries on this planet and none, not even Ethiopia, has as long and gargantuan a laundry list of problems as India does.

And, the bottom line is, I don't think India really cares. Too complacent and too conservative.

*Sean Paul Kelley is a travel writer, former radio host, and before that, an asset manager for a Wall Street investment bank. He recently left a fantastic job in Singapore with a software company, to travel around the world for a year or two. He founded *The Agonist*, in 2002 which is still considered the top international affairs, culture and news destination for progressives. He is also the Global Correspondent for 'The Young Turks', on satellite radio and *Air America*.

Verse... and 'verse' (Well, kind of...)

(On the occasion of the release at a Madras Boat Club meeting of Kevin Martin's *Double Cream, Memsahib?*, published by Anglo-Ink and with profound apologies to Poetry in general)

The Madras Book Club comes to Connemara
Deep love for the written word draws them,
They came that day for a story told
And found instead a Poem.

It was the launch of *Double Cream, Memsahib?*
By Podanur-born Kevin Martin,
An entire story written in verse
Spanning fifty years, and rhymin'.

S Muthiah, stern Captain, MBC
Took mike, called all to order,
Confessed he disliked poetry,
But praised the blushing author.

"I never read the stuff," Mister Madras said,
"But this book I really liked....
I read it through at one shot,
It really had me psyched."

• by **Ranjitha Ashok**

(Now you, just before the event,
To him had expressed a careless opinion,
And now you learnt the cost of offhand words,
As a Guru, he's one in a million.)

For 'twas then, with mischief aforethought, he
deliberately added,
"Here's one however (meaning you) your book
just didn't work with..."
Realising this, albeit playful, was a gauntlet being flung,
You resolved, with narrowed eyes, to call his bluff forth-
with.

So here, in attempted verse (only 'attempted', please
note!),

Are the events of that day,
As Kevin Martin walked us through
The rhymes that paved his way.

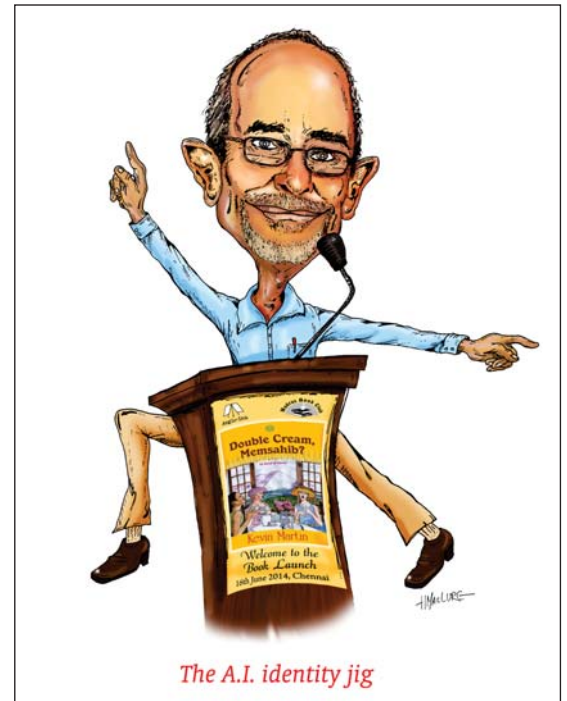
"Do buy the book," the author twinkled,
"For who knows what might be;
(In the years to come you may be the only one)
To own one of this 350."

"Such a strange word: 'Launch'"
The author said,
"Shades of a stern judge launching,
Whole books into the Universe
By the simple act of throwing.
So, should you read, and getting judge-y,
Attempt to throw this book at me,
I live in Australia, remember,
So I'll be as far as far can be."

Let me tell you about my mother," Kevin said,
"A great ear for the Word she had.
Life has a way of changing, sometimes squishing,
dreams
Yet can make you miss even what
You never really had.
And let me tell you about my grandmother,
And her 'Book Box', a glittering trove of gold;
Filled with courtrooms, wily lawyers, and dashing cow-
boys,
A magical world
For a book-hungry, twelve-year-old."

"This book today is as much," he said
"For Mom as it is for me."
The years marched, but love affairs with books,
Once begun,
Stay constant, as you will all agree.

Then, one day, while wandering through
Pavement bookshops at Delhi's Connaught Place,
That mysterious force, Kevin's own McFate,
Directed him to Vikram Seth's *Golden Gate*.
And Kevin felt those 'perfumed pages'
Fill his mind with grace.



The A.I. identity jig

Writer Sreekumar Verma described Kevin's book
A rollercoaster ride, not for the faint of heart,
The words gather you up, they fling you down,
This, he said, is an example of fine art.
For when the essence of poets and writers mingle,
He said...
It's crazy pyrotechnics
In the reader's head.
Shades of Nabakov, Sreekumar saw
In Martin's work, and you accept his expert opinion,
Yet your mind, riding those verbal waves,
Sensed a whiff of the old H Hatter tradition.

"Why verse?" came the inevitable question
While 'in-conversation',
"Muses come in all forms," Kevin said,
"Verse stared me in the face;
Prose just wasn't in my vision."
Some may have been puzzled by this choice
Of this particular horn of cornucopia
"But Rhyme and Rhythm," Kevin explained,
"Best describe my world of Anglo-India."

Like all new authors, he was soon
Threatening to outdo Forsythe in rejection slips.
Writing, harsh Mistress, soon teaches us all
Of the chasms that yawn between cups and lips.

(Continued on page 7)

...and after the launch, everyone spoke poetry...

It's a rape and crime story,
In parts quite nice and gory.

Remember, it's inspired by Vicky Seth,
And this genre is not done to death.

The ladies on the cover wear bonnets
That have nothing to do with the sonnets!

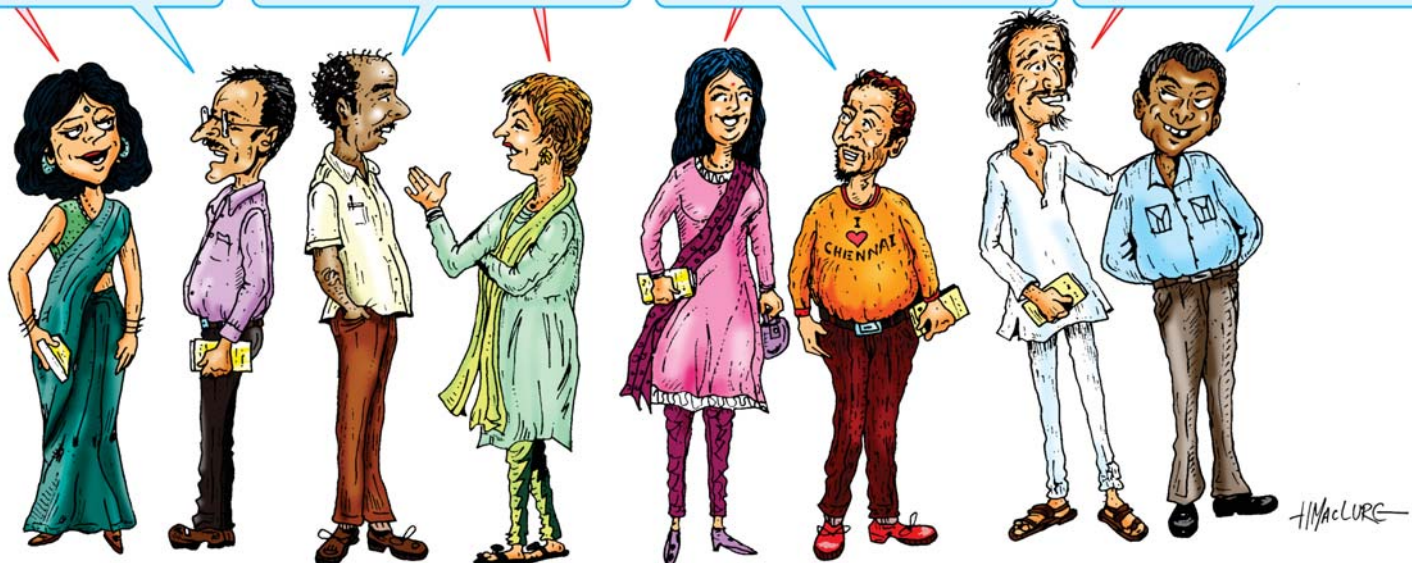
Oh, so, are you an European
Born and brought up as an Indian?

A sequel then, you think so?
Would readers come back for more?

But... but...no one likes poetry;
They'd rather climb a thorny tree!

With all that, I say kudos to Anglo-Ink,
This book gives us something to think.

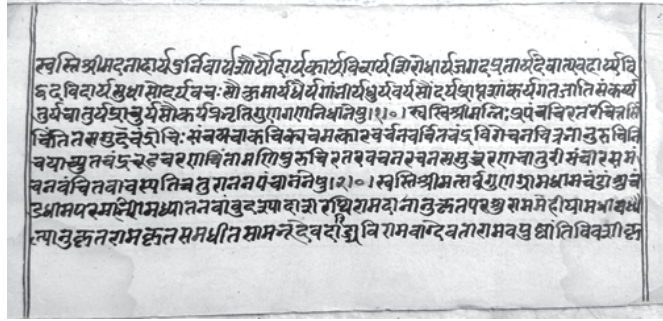
Nope. I'm only a day dreamer,
Dreaming of being a double creamer.



A Sanskrit letter of Dara Shukoh

The Adyar Library and Research Centre situated in the sylvan gardens of the Theosophical Society in Adyar is a well-known repository of rare books and manuscripts. Few know that this library, founded in 1886 by Col. Olcott, also has a long list of its own publications, including a pamphlet series.

One among these pamphlets is a very interesting one titled 'A Sanskrit Letter of Mohamed Dara Shukoh' and published in 1943. Interesting, indeed, for it is a letter in Sanskrit written by



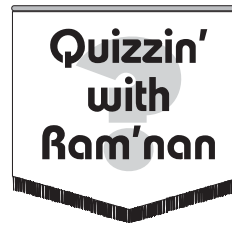
a Muslim prince of the 17th Century. He was the favourite of his father, the Mughal ruler, and chosen heir-apparent, but destined not to become the

next Emperor. Dara Shukoh, also spelt Dara Shikoh (1615-1659 A.D.), was the eldest son and heir-apparent of the Mughal

monarch Shah Jahan. He was an erudite scholar and a strong advocate of the harmonious co-existence of the different traditions in India at that time and held liberal religious views. Fond of painting, architecture and the performing arts, Dara was defeated by his younger brother, Prince Muhi-uddin (later Emperor Aurangzeb), and subsequently put to death.

This letter by Prince Dara Shukoh was addressed to Goswami Nrisimha Saraswati, a great scholar and saint and identified with Brahmendra Saraswati, a resident of Benares and a contemporary of Shah Jahan. In a way, it is more of an address than a letter, praising this great personage.

The introduction to this pamphlet, penned by Prof. C.



(Current Affairs questions are from the period June 16th to 30th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. What is the name assumed by the new King of Spain who ascended the throne on June 19th?
2. Name the veteran actor, famous for his role as Tuco aka Ugly in *The Good, Bad and Ugly*, who passed away recently.
3. Name the two Indian sites that are the latest to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.
4. The lyrics for 'Like a Rolling Stone' recently set a record for a popular music manuscript when it sold at an auction for \$2 million. Who wrote and sang this classic?
5. How did Italy's Giorgio Chiellini create one of the biggest news items at the FIFA World Cup?
6. Name the noted Hindi poet who has been chosen for the prestigious Jnanpith Award for 2013.
7. Name the Islamic militant group which is at the centre of the ongoing crisis in Iraq, creating major global concern.
8. Which Indian actor was recently made an Officier de la Legion d'Honneur (Officer of the Legion of Honour), the highest Civilian and Military honour bestowed by France?
9. Google's new design reference platform initiative, that will enable manufacturers to build ultra-cheap smartphones, is called the ...?
10. Which bustling city has been declared the first kerosene-free city in the country?

* * *

11. Pandit Subramania Sastri is credited with naming which respected 'teaching' institution of Chennai?
12. How is V. Kennedy, whose name is synonymous with a famous wall graffiti advertisement, better known?
13. Which famous chain of stores was founded by Muthuswami Mudaliar in 1905?
14. The bells of which Chennai church are called the 'Belfry Six'?
15. Appointed in 1661, Edward Winter was the first ...?
16. What was the dimension of the land deeded by the Damarla Brothers to the East India Company in August 1639?
17. What natural feature is the word *pattanam* said to refer to?
18. Of the four main rivers crossing Greater Madras, two are the Cooum and the Adyar. Name the other two.
19. Which animal found in the metropolis is called *maramai* by the locals?
20. Which area was called Tiruvilithayam in the days of yore?

(Answers on page 10)

Verse... and 'verse' (Well, kind of...)

(Continued from page 6)

Then, Angels of Opportunity appeared
Albeit in different sizes;
That useful creature
(As every Wooster knows!)
An Aunt...
Told him of publishers 'Anglo-Ink' –
Thus averting crises;
And, by placing him on the path
One both true and sure,
She helped bring into his life,
The redoubtable Harry McClure.

The book begins with an act of violence,
Metaphor for a nation's birth
Through turbulent history.
It is also, Kevin said, a paean
To the Anglo-Indian's constant search
For that sense of Identity.

"They call us hybrids," Kevin said, with a smile
neither sad nor angry,
For a minute you were back in Bangalore – in
school,
With Marilyn, Susan, Caroline, Sandra,
And that redoubtable teacher – Miss Berry.

"They assume our loyalty is confused", the book
says,
"They think our women are fair game...."
Your mind recalls a film you once saw,
Chattakkari was its name.

So many stereotypes, struggling to breathe
Through a rich, colourful, cultural tapestry,
Filled with fun, music, dance, struggle, glory –
One mustn't leave out the unique
In matters culinary.

"I planned the book in my head," said Kevin
"The ideas grew like a banyan tree."
And you figure letting imagination roam
(While swimming in Shelley's 'harmonious
madness')
Is perhaps the key...
It took golden-haired girls down rabbit-holes, re-
member?
It took people down those less travelled roads,
When you mingle ideas, emotions, and punishing
hard work
You coax poetry to tell a story.

'Double Cream'....
The title is a red herring, you are told....
You agree this particular dish is pretty potent
Deceptively soft, apparently sweet,
Yet with biting, unanswered questions
As its chief component.

"It's best to keep your words soft and sweet,
For you never know when you'll have to eat them;
I only wrote 85 a day...." the author disclosed,
Adding: "But then even a single mosquito can be
So effective in causing mayhem."

"So who am I?" the book persists,
"Whose Independence do I raise a toast to?
They say we're a bit of this and that,
Then what 'label' should I choose to hold on to?"

Those who are the sum of many parts,
Needn't see in them a restrictive wall....
Kevin smiled, like all who've vaulted boundaries,
"For ultimately, I am I...." he stated,
The best identity of all.

MBC members listened that day
To a poem that tells a story whole....
And, in the end, saw that this book reflects
A People's collective soul.

Disclaimer: No real poets were hurt during, or because of, the writing of this piece.

Note: All Anglo-Ink books can be purchased only through its website: www.angloink.com

• by
Dr. Chithra Madhavan

Kunhan Raja, a Sanskrit scholar, prolific writer and curator of the Adyar Library for several years, mentions that the manuscript of this letter was deposited in the Adyar Library and mentioned in the Library catalogue of 1928. It was first published in three instalments in *Brahmavidya*, the Bulletin of the Adyar Library and later issued as a separate pamphlet "in the belief that having regard to the position held by the author of the letter in the field of Sanskrit learning during the Mughul period, this publication will be of great interest to the students of Sanskrit literature."

A copy of this letter is also in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal and the India Office Library in the U.K.

This manuscript is dated 1805 Samvat (1748 A.D.), but this, as Dr. Kunhan Raja states, cannot be the correct date of the letter since Dara Shukoh died almost a century earlier. It is either the date of the transcription of this manuscript or else the date should have actually been 1705 Samvat (1648 A.D.) when Dara Shukoh was alive.

About this letter, Kunhan Raja says, "If Dara Shukoh had the command of Sanskrit to draft such an address, then certainly his equipment must have been of a very high order; and there is no reason to believe that he had it drafted by someone else."

This rare manuscript (picture above) in the Adyar Library and Research Centre is just one of the many precious possessions in its priceless collection.

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

Discovering Nicholson, pioneer co-operator

For no good reason, the other day I happened to remember the long kerosene queues outside the Nicholson Cooperative Stores* in Bedford. The man from the store would have the metal kerosene barrel dispenser on the roadside and would be measuring out each cardholder's ration. Sad to say, we would just walk past not in the least concerned about the trials and travails of the people standing there. One celebrity who took pride in standing in the queue was the Field Marshal.

Once in a long while, my siblings and I were asked to pick up something or the other from this store, which I did with ill grace. The store had nothing to recommend it by, because it was dark and dingy inside, quite unlike the other stores in Bedford. Once, when he heard the rather disparaging comments I was making, my father told us that my grandfather was one of the founding members of this cooperative store in Coonoor. I didn't quite understand how significant that was.

Recently, as I was researching something different, I came across a rather interesting story about the cooperative movement in India and why the store was called Nicholson Cooperative. To get a full picture, we will have to take a step back in history.

Nineteenth century India was a dismal place, I think. Famines and epidemics ravaged the land while the British Administration struggled quite ineffectively against these ills,

overwhelmed by the sheer enormity of the tasks involved. Agriculture was largely dependent on the monsoons (as it still is) and when the rains failed, starvation and famines ensued.

There were famines in 1861, 1873 and 1876. Farmers who had borrowed heavily from the moneylenders were in a bind and a great majority of them forfeited their land to moneylenders. The oppression was so severe that in many parts of the country, farmers became violent, so much so that the money-lenders in Poona and Ahmednagar were attacked.

NINA VARGHESE tells a tale from the Blue Mountains

The Government took a number of steps, including setting up a Famine Commission, none of which was very effective.

It is at that time that there was talk of setting up an agricultural bank in the Bombay Presidency. This was turned down by the Government of Bombay as it did not want to take on the duties of the *soukar*.

In 1892, the Governor of Madras, Lord Wenlock (remembered because the Downs in Ooty is named after him) directed Frederic Augustus Nicholson, then Collector of Madras, to study the problems of the farmers and to submit a report on them.

Nicholson, who had earlier been the Collector of Tinne-

vely (Tirunelveli), had already proved his knowledge of the subject through a series of articles on agricultural finance in *The Madras Mail* between 1890 and 1891. He was also acknowledged as an expert in agrarian economy in the Madras Presidency. The report took five long years of research and writing and was finally published in 1895. By that time, Lord Wenlock's governorship was nearing the end of its tenure. So the report was presented to Lord Wenlock's successor and the Madras Board of Revenue

You would imagine that it

would be welcomed and appreciated for its depth and research. But it proved to be otherwise. The Nicholson's report, which was rather repetitive, faced opposition verging on the abusive from the Government. The Madras Board of Revenue made patronising statements about the "408 closely printed quarto pages" of the report which "showed an absence of definiteness in conception."

No doubt, Nicholson found all this criticism disappointing. When he was asked to sum up the burden of the 408-page report in a few words, Nicholson is said to have muttered two words, "Find Raiffeisen."

So who or what was Raiffeisen?

Raiffeisen was the burgomaster of Heddesdorf, a village near Neuwied in Germany. He was not a rich man, but an inspired Christian. After the famine in 1848 had caused great distress to farmers in Germany, he experimented with various kinds of agrarian cooperatives to eliminate the moneylenders and middlemen. By 1864, he had the model of a cooperative funding society. This model gained popularity all over Germany and spread to Austria and Italy.

The Raiffeisen societies were self-governing associations of borrowers who contributed to the capital of the society and who made use of further capital which the society attracted. These societies were limited to a specific locality or village. The aim of the societies was to instil a feeling of confidence, self-help and thrift in the farmers who were suspicious and enfeebled. This was the model which Nicholson wanted to transplant from the villages on the Rhine to the Madras Presidency.

Though discarded in Madras, copies of Nicholson's report circulated in other parts of India. It was greeted with enthusiasm. The phrase "Find Raiffeisen" was soon a topic of conversation in the clubs, on the polo fields, in the drawing rooms across the country and from there it spread to the bazaars and the highways. The poor farmers talked about the farmers' banks even while they sheltered from the sweltering heat under the shade of the banyan trees and around the

Adyarites explore new frontiers

(By Dipankar Ghosh)

35 sailors, young and old, enriched and inexperienced, from Adyar cast off from the Chennai harbour in seven sail boats to Pulicat.

Each boat had a professional skipper and a crew of 3 to 5 novice sailors. With trolling lines out, they were lucky to land a variety of fish.

From Chennai port they moved northwards to the hamlet of Karangali on the Kattupalli-Pallaverkadu Island, to camp out in tents.

The next day dawned with the chirps of birds and the whirring of outboards on fishing boats. Both were scouting for their catch.

Later in the day, the curtains were brought down on the 2-day expedition, with the sailors' timely return.

Similar voyages and trips for 'Madras 375' along the east coast of Adyar are being coordinated by Adventure 'n' Nature (Details: +91 99403 55521, Dipankar Ghosh) (Courtesy: *Adyar Times*)

campfire on moonlight nights. And soon the Indian National Congress, which was often accused of not caring for the common man, took up the cause. By 1904, cooperative agricultural credit societies and cooperative banks were to be established in many districts.

Nicholson could well be the pioneer of the cooperative movement in India.

*Nicholson Cooperative is today a part of the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation and is located in Cash Bazaar in lower Coonoor.

HEALTHCARE FOR THE COMMUNITY

(Continued from page 4)

and accepted by the Tamil Nadu Government in 1977 as a model for voluntary agencies and has served as a model at the national level. Dr. N.S. Murali, Head of the Department of General Surgery, VHS, from 1964 took over as Medical Superintendent in 1972, and in March 1985 he became the Honorary Secretary of the VHS. He continued to manage VHS affairs, with Dr. Sanjivi's active support till 1994, when the doyen passed away, and thereafter too (till he himself passed away in May 2009).

During that period, in 1980, the M.A. Chidambaram College of Nursing, was established. M.A. Chidambaram was the Managing Trustee at the time. A new surgical complex was

also established with four operation theatres and the latest equipment.

By 2008, the VHS was a 405-bed tertiary teaching hospital, with a wide range of speciality departments. This included a De-addiction Ward and a separate ward to treat AIDS patients.

Today, 15 MHCs covering a population of 10,000 serve rural communities in the eastern part of Kancheepuram District. The VHS also runs a Senior Citizens Centre and a Palliative Care Ward. It has research units in General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Neurology, Diabetology, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Psychiatry, Community Health, Leprosy and Tuberculosis. The Dr. A.L. Research Centre focusses on Ayurveda.

In 1983, the Medical Aid Plans were:

Plan I – a lump payment of Rs 12,000 for a man and Rs. 10,000 each for his wife and any other dependent throughout life.

Plan II – Subscription varying from Rs. 12 per annum to Rs. 300 per annum for entire family. With benefits including maintenance of health records and several concessions for treatment at the Centre.

Plan III – Medical check up and records maintenance for a person.

The 2012-2013 Annual Report records 465 beds across different departments. Of the 60,451 out-patients treated, 32,995 were treated free. Of the 6,115 in-patients treated, 4,129 were treated free.

As of March 31, 2013, subscribers numbered:

Income group	Family Subscribers	Individual Subscribers
FreeUpto Rs 2000	1126	1621
LIG 2001-5000	331	1438
MIG 5001-10,000	84	123
HIG 10,001 and above	29	nil

About 70 per cent of the patients (those with a monthly income below a certain limit) are treated free of cost. Dr. S. Suresh, the current Secretary says, "This hospital, a remarkable example of the exemplary role of voluntary non-government organisations in assuring quality health services for the common man, and, even more remarkably, an example of community effort, continues to be managed by a Board of Trust-

ees, a Central Committee and other functional Committees with eminent public personalities, community leaders, social workers, and philanthropists. It will forever be a standing monument to one stalwart's dedication and ability."

The VHS has kept growing year by year – but without ever losing sight of what the founder had envisaged.

(To be concluded)

Carnatic flash mob makes a splash

It was a riot of colour as young girls in *pavadais*, teenagers in half-sarees or *salwar-kameez*, and women draped in sarees stepped into the atrium of the Citi Centre mall some time ago. They mingled with the shoppers and hung around the kiosks enjoying their ice-cream, or snacks and hot drinks, or simply window shopping.

At 5.30 p.m., the music flowed in from the audio system placed strategically near a kiosk. Taking the cue, a few senior dancers casually walked to the centre and broke into *adavu* movements. As the music palyed on, more and more dancers joined in groups of five or six.

In a trice, there were as many as 75 classical dancers on the

floor. And what did these Bharata Natyam dancers perform was only the centuries-old *Ganesa kavuthvam*. Shoppers crowded in, and spectators watched from every floor as they clicked on their cell-phones, television cameras rolled and the event was even telecast live on NDTV.

● by S. Janaki

The flash mob was organised by the Association of Bharata Natyam Artistes of India (ABHAI) to mark World Dance Day. It was a delight to watch young students dance alongside senior artistes. At the end of the *kavuthvam*, the audience was asked to join the dance to instrumental music and many did

so with enthusiasm. The artistes joined hands with the audience and danced in circles, even as some of them performed solos in perfect harmony with the rest. Holding a banner proclaiming 'Viswa Natya Dinam' two ABHAI members danced their way through the crowd. And as the music faded away, the dancers struck poses and the crowd cheered. It was a joyous celebration. "We want classical dance to reach more people. We want to de-mystify it and share its celebration," said Chitra Visweswaran, President of ABHAI, minutes before she was swept into the swirl of colour and movement.

The objective of World Dance Day as declared by the International Dance Council in



1982 is to reach out through dance to places where it is not usually performed. At the end of the presentation at Citi Centre, the message had been successfully and artistically communicated.

"It is the first time I am seeing a flash mob by so many classical dancers. It is beautiful to watch them," said an onlooker. "It is such a delight to watch so many of them in traditional attire in a swank mall, performing classical dance," said another.

"It was amazing to dance in a mall to a mixed audience. I am happy to be a part of it," said a young dance student. "We demonstrated that classical disciplined dancing can also give so much joy," said a senior dancer-teacher.

How did it all happen? It was an instance of putting social media and technology to good use. The idea of a flash mob, mooted in a casual group conversation among dance lovers on Facebook, was formally placed before the President of ABHAI by a board member of AAT. Enthused by the idea, the committee swung into action and initially thought of the

Kapali temple in Mylapore as the venue, but younger members came up with the idea of performing in a mall.

With barely a few days to go, arrangements were stepped up. Emails were sent out, and the Youtube link of the *Ganesa Kavuthvam* was sent to the dancers who had registered so that they could learn the item. The entire group met just a couple of hours before the event, when the ABHAI committee members tweaked the action into place. The dancers then proceeded in small groups to the Chennai Citi Centre, and what followed made everyone sit up and take note. The AAT crew led by its CEO Rathish Babu and film director and producer Sharada Ramanathan played a major role in facilitating the action. The flash mob event was filmed, edited and posted on Youtube by a tem of AAT students.

In the midst of election fever, classical dance caught the attention of the media which generally shies away from coverage of things classical! The flash mob made a splash.— (Courtesy: *Sruti*.)

OF STATUES AND HERITAGE

(Continued from page 1)

not yet begun. Given that the latest budget has established Rs. 100 crore as the lowest denomination for projects, most of our heritage requirements appear to be measly. And given that the amounts needed for restoration are so small, why make such a song and dance stage show about their allocation when they can be handed out across the table? After all, the disbursement of such small amounts probably falls within the purview of lower level bureaucrats.

Now that we have established that what is required for heritage restoration is infinitesimally small compared to what is needed for new grandiose new

developments, can we hope for faster allocation of funds? And if at all money is still a constraint, why can't the Government rope in private sector participation or public subscription for heritage restoration? Our city has already established such a trend with the *Senate House* project that took place in 2006/2007. Old students, corporate bodies and foundations donated to the cause and the work was undertaken quickly. That despite its satisfactory renovation, the building was not put to the use that was promised was due to petty university politics is another matter altogether.

Perhaps it is time for the Government to throw open conservation of heritage build-

ings in its control to private participation. This is the practice all over the world. With Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) norms becoming more generous, companies will be more than willing to contribute for such projects. And the figures that we are talking about are not much. Such an exercise will not only speed up restoration, it will also make corporate houses or other institutions think twice before demolishing heritage properties that they themselves own.

Infrastructure the first need

(Continued from page 1)

what little support infrastructure there is – hospitals, schools and transport – has come up owing to sheer serendipity. And the same story has been repeated when it came to developing other localities – Thorai-pakkam, Perungudi and Velachery. In the case of Siruseri, which was planned as an IT city, the offices came up far ahead of the support infrastructure. As a consequence, what was to be a self-contained area has become one to which people spend hours commuting from Chennai during the day. And at night it is practically dead, barring companies that operate night shifts, thereby giving rise to other problems.

If these are to be the models for development of Ponneri, then we have plenty of problems ahead. What is needed, on the other hand, is proper planning of the infrastructure before the land is thrown open for development. It is just not

enough to hand over the space to private developers after drawing up a rudimentary layout and expect that time will take care of the rest.

In the case of Ponneri, the Government could do no better than seeking out Japanese help for this, given that that country has been working on sustainable and smart infrastructure for its cities for quite some time now. Since 2012, it has also launched what it has termed the Future City Initiative, whereby it has committed itself to building sustainable cities with superior environmental technologies, core infrastructure and resilience. Can Ponneri be the first of that kind in India?

Kanchipuram has other issues. Being a heritage town, it needs to be developed as one on the blueprint of what is being done in newer cities. Too often, Madurai, Thanjavur and Tiruchchirappalli being prime examples, our idea of develop-

ment has been to build the most ugly and space-wasting bus terminus in the heart of the town, allow for rampant commercialisation of the core area, and destroy every vestige of built and natural heritage in the town. The only survivors are invariably the temples and they too end up losers for, thanks to the availability of funds, they embark on massive and, sadly, unscientific restoration projects.

This is not what is needed in Kanchipuram. It is best that the Government looks at European cities for help, for they have some of the best instances of heritage town development. Pedestrianisation of the core areas, building of support infrastructure in close proximity but not within the city centre, protection of historic buildings, the education of the local residents about the business potential in heritage, and the marketing of the city have been some of the steps taken there. Are we ready to go along those lines?

Dates for Your Diary

July 26-August 3: *Adiperukku* and *Ayyanar Festival* featuring folk performances (*kavadi*) by the Sukra dance troupe (at DakshinaChitra).

Till August 31: Children's Mela. Special programmes for school-children (at DakshinaChitra).

July 26 and 27: Workshop at DakshinaChitra.

Till July 31: Exhibition on Contemporary Art from Museum Collection; and Exhibition by Sirpi Jeyaraman (at DakshinaChitra).

Till July 19: The Goethe-Institut celebrates the World Cup with an exhibition of cartoons from *Caricatura Kassel*. The cartoons feature sharp satire, profound humour and nonsense all at once as they looked at football, a favourite subject in

Germany (at Goethe Auditorium, 6 p.m.).

July 18-20: *Indian Hip-Hop Fest* organised by 'Catalyst 28'. The festival will feature all the four elements of Hip-hop: Graffiti, Djing, B-Boying and Rapping. Catalyst 28 will also have workshops in all categories for basic and advanced levels by both local and international artists. (at Goethe-Institut).

July 24-25: (6-9 p.m.) and **July 26:** (3-9 p.m.) *Reel Desires:* Chennai Queer International Film Festival, featuring films, shorts and documentaries showcasing sexuality and gender diversity issues. It is a reminder of a common humanity that transcends boundaries of sexuality, gender identity and culture (at Goethe-Institut).

July 26: A panel discussion on 'Inclusion: The Way Forward'. The panellists will discuss strategies to ensure greater inclusion of LGBTQI people within education and other mainstream institutions. (at Goethe-Institut, 5.30 – 6.30 p.m.).

The Chandhoks of Chennai – 3

Champions on the race track

(Continued from last fortnight)

“Motor sport is an expensive sport! Only people with deep pockets can indulge in it. Fortunately for me I was born in a family which was running a successful automobile spare parts business and also a garage, with over 75 mechanics working in it. So I did not have to invest in this sport. With a father who was already a name to reckon with in the world of motor sports, it was easy for me to convert my passion for motor sports into a hobby,” says Vicky Chandhok, the third generation Chandhok of Chennai, sitting behind a huge table in his office in *Chandhok Centre* off Anna Salai.

Vicky's first race at Sholavaram was in his modified Ambassador in the year 1972. He spent all his spare time from college tinkering with all models of cars in the family-owned garage. This experience was to help him develop an indigenously built racing car, his *Carex Special*, in which he participated in the Formula India Race introduced in 1975 for the first time by the Madras Motor Sports Club (MMSC). Vicky was 18 years old and finished second in the race!

According to Vicky, “Hosting a Formula India Single Seater Race was the dream of S. Karivardhan, the then MD of Lakshmi Mills, Coimbatore, a visionary who did all he could

to put India on the international motor sports map. Unfortunately he died in an air crash at the young age of 41. I lost a very good friend and mentor who was a great source of inspiration to me.” Over the next five years Vicky participated in all the races held in Madras and other Indian centres, winning several prizes.

In 1982, the year Vicky married Chitra, a Tambram girl from Madras, he flew down a

• by R.V. Rajan

Formula Ford Car from England in which he raced at Sholavaram that year. The expenses involved were partly sponsored by MRF Tyres, for whom it was their first foray into motor sports. Later, the company was to support the game in a big way.

Buoyed by the success of his experience in 1982, Vicky flew in a Chevron Formula II, a thoroughbred car, to contest in the 1983 Sholavaram Race; this was also sponsored by MRF. “Even today this car is on display at the corporate office of MRF.”

Besides racing, Vicky also started participating in rallies, including the Himalayan Rally, a gruelling test of both speed and endurance. Over the



Vicky Chandhok.

next 17 years he was to participate in over 100 national rallies and races. “My last rally was the South India Rally held in 2000. Driving a Mitsubishi Lancer, I signed off as a winner,” Vicky recalls proudly. During his long stint as a racer, Vicky won over 350 trophies.

Though he was active in MMSC, Vicky did not get involved in the Federation of Motor Sports Club in India till 1999. Vicky remembers with sadness the years 2000-2008 when the Federation went through a dark phase. After a protracted legal battle, the Federation got back on track.

Vicky's first stint as President of the Federation was between 2003 and 2005 when the legal battle was being fought. However, in 2005 Vicky led 60 vehicles from eight ASEAN countries in an ASEAN Rally held on the roads connecting several cities in the ASEAN countries. It was a CII show flagged off by the Prime Minister of India in Siliguri in West Bengal.



In 2010, Karun became the only second Indian and the first of the 'Racing Chandhoks' to compete in Formula 1.

His next stint as President was between 2010 and 2014 when he firmly put India on the international map. Supported by the Jaypee Group of Delhi he brought to India Formula I races, the most prestigious motor sports event in the world. The event was conducted for three consecutive years from 2011 to 2013 at the Buddha International Circuit (BIC) in Greater Noida, built by the Jaypee Group. Vicky was advisor to the Group and helped not only build the infrastructure but also run the events successfully. “It is a pity that the event is not being held in India in 2014 because of lack of support from corporates who are unwilling to underwrite the huge costs of sponsoring the drivers,” says Vicky.

At present, Vicky is not only helping his son Karun in his foray into international events but is also concentrating on the ‘Wallace Sports & Research Foundation’, which he founded in 1989 to train drivers who are interested in participating in races and rallies.

Talking about his son Karun, the fourth generation Chandhok, who has already made a mark in the world of motor sports, Vicky says with pride, “Karun has surpassed me in terms of his skills. While I concentrated on national events, Karun dared to go international and has been successful. While for me and other mo-

tor sports enthusiasts of my time it was a hobby, for Karun it is a profession.”

Karun became the second Indian driver after Narain Karthikeyan of Coimbatore to compete in Formula One races for a while. Recently he finished No.6 at the legendary Le Mans for the second time. Le Mans, held in France every year, is a gruelling 24-hour race, covering 5400 kms on the race tracks and is considered the biggest motor race event in the world. Karun has also joined the Formula E Drivers Club, a new world championship being competed in ten cities.

While Indersain Chandhok sowed the seeds for motor sport in his children's minds, his second son Indu Chandhok helped lay a solid foundation for the sport in India. His grandson Vicky made a big name by winning hundreds of national rallies and races, and his great-grandson Karun is making waves in the international motor racing circuit. The Chandhoks can truly be considered the first family of motor sport in Chennai, nay, in India.

(Concluded)

Answers to Quiz

1. King Felipe VI; 2. Eli Wallach; 3. Rani-ki-Vav in Gujarat and Great Himalayan National Park; 4. Bob Dylan; 5. He was the one bitten by Luis Suarez; 6. Kedarnath Singh; 7. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/S); 8. Shah Rukh Khan; 9. Project Android One; 10. Delhi.

* * *

11. Kalakshetra; 12. P. James (of Magic Show fame); 13. Nilgiris; 14. Armenian Church; 15. President of Madras; 16. 5 km long and 2 km wide; 17. A port at a river mouth; 18. Araniar and Korataliyar; 19. Asian Palm Civet or Toddy Cat; 20. Padi.

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