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Pondy pushes for heritage

— while Chennai lags

Chennai would do well to learn a lesson or two in heritage conservation from the town in its own backyard, namely Puducherry. The latter has launched major Government-supported heritage initiatives in the last month or so. In a scenario where Chennai's administration has done precious little in this direction, it is to be hoped that someone in power does look at what is happening elsewhere.

Towards the end of last month, the Puducherry Government listed and notified 21 buildings that it owns in the French and Tamil quarters of the city as worthy of preservation. With this, that city joins a select group of Indian metros that have notified some of their structures as heritage buildings. Chennai is not one of them.

The heritage movement in Puducherry is far younger to its counterpart in Chennai and yet it appears to have notched up a singular achievement.

A noteworthy feature of the struggle to conserve heritage in

● by A Special Correspondent

Puducherry appears to be that the Government there is willing to listen to champions of heritage. This despite the fact that the former came in for widespread criticism from the latter for allowing the historic Mairie building to collapse in torrential rains a few months ago. The Government of Puducherry has viewed the episode as a learning moment and roped in conservationists to prevent other

such structures from going the same way. The reconstruction of the Mairie is also being planned, in collaboration with the Puducherry chapter of the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). The PWD has also begun the restoration of some buildings in Puducherry with the help of INTACH.

One of the reasons for this attitude of cooperation is the Puducherry Government's understanding that a bulk of the city's revenues comes from tourism. That is not the case with Chennai where with a vast industrial base and medical tourism income, heritage tourism gets the back seat. There has also been a history of confrontation between conservationists and the Government

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Know your Fort better



West Face of Fort St George, and Parade Square by Francis S. Ward, 1785.

● One of the predominant features of Fort St George, and which shows that the Fort always had a strong army presence, is the Parade Square, known variously in history as the Parade, the Parade Ground, Barracks Square and Conwallis Square. You just cannot miss it. As you walk to the rear of the Assembly building, it immediately strikes the eye. Cordoned off and now macadamised, its emptiness cannot be ignored for it presents a sharp contrast to the rest of the Fort which is mostly taken over by cars, police vans and two wheelers. Surrounding the Parade Square are some very handsome buildings.

That some kind of a parade ground existed in the Fort from at least the 1670s is evident when you read the accounts of various ceremonial occasions. Thus when Elihu Yale hoisted the king's flag for the first time on the Fort ramparts, the garrison soldiers performed an "orderly march round the Fort" and then "drew round within the Fort." In his *Story of Fort of St George*, Lt Col D.M. Reid throws some light on the initial days. The Fort was restricted to what was called Fort Square, the area currently occupied by the Assembly and Secretariat. To the rear of this developed the Parade, a long and narrow piece of ground that was hemmed in by houses on all the other three sides. Parade Square acquired its present contours following extensive renovations to the Fort in 1762 by which time most of the houses surrounding it were demolished. These had in any case suffered extensive damage during the French siege of the 1750s.

We get a reasonable view of how Parade Square looked in 1785 from Francis Swain Ward's depiction of it in his *The Parade and the West Face of Fort St George*. The notes accompanying it state that the right side of the picture is the western face of the Fort. The tall domed structure, almost a Catholic cathedral in its design, no longer stands. It was in fact a street away and marks the location of Portuguese Square where the Namakkal Kavignar Maligai presently stands. This domed multi-storied structure was once the Court House in which civil and military prosecutions were carried on. In the same picture, the southern and the northern faces of Parade Square have colonnaded and pedimented buildings, all built in the classical style, and these have survived till date. The army and its various functional units occupy all of these.

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Can the Metro be Chennai's pride?

The inauguration was long delayed as was the very process of commissioning. Some heritage buildings have been sacrificed and so have, very unfortunately, some human lives. A couple of contractors turned tail and abandoned the project midway. What is in operation is merely ten kilometres of the promised complete track, and the fare is high. Yet, the very fact that our city has a running metro rail service is undeniably a matter of pride for all of us.

The question is, will it prove worthy of it? Or will it go the way of all public utilities - the bus transport, the suburban service and the MRTS - all of them operating in a humdrum fashion with poor maintenance, rickety

rolling stock or vehicles and a public that cares two hoots about their upkeep and often contributes wilfully to their damage? Please, can at least the Metro be treated differently?

Here's how things can be different with the Metro

For starters, we wholeheartedly support the authorities in

● by The Editor

their decision to disallow any eating of food in the carriages. At least one of the city newspapers has taken umbrage over this and has reported on it as though it infringes the rights of the commuters. What has been conveniently overlooked is that this is the rule in most metro

services across the world. The shut in nature of the facility is not conducive to food wastes remaining on board and this has to be prevented.

The provision of public conveniences at railway stations has always been low in the priority of the railways and their maintenance is avoided as a subject. Suffice it to say that the railways fare poorly on both counts. Given this scenario, it is a matter of concern that the Metro appears to have not made sufficient provision for toilets. The authorities have taken comfort in the claim that most international Metro services and that includes Delhi,

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Food for thought

There were two vital triggers for the green revolution in the 1960s. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, who invited C. Subramaniam to handle agriculture, provided the first. The severe drought of 1965 and 1966 resulted in a steep fall in the output of foodgrains from 89.36 million tonnes to 74.23 million tonnes in just two years. CS arranged massive import of wheat, around 10 million tonnes, from the US each year. Brilliant administrators like B Sivaraman, ICS, then Agriculture Secretary, managed these ship-to-mouth years with great efficiency. A third person, also from Madras, M.S. Swaminathan, worked with them to sow the seeds of the green revolution that took India from food shortage to food surplus.

Subramaniam was impressed with the wheat revolution brought about by Dr. Norman Borlaug in Mexico. He arranged to import the wonder hybrid seeds. The dwarf variety helped in preventing falling of the wheat grains due to heavy winds and saved precious crops raised through hard labour. He brought together scientists, administrators and built an extension network of government departments and universities to help farmers understand, adapt and assimilate the new technology.

Of course, there were doubts on the efficacy of the new technique. CS selected 1000 demonstration farms and supplied them with hybrid seeds. These included the one around his house in Lutyens' Delhi, spread over an acre!

In later years, Ford Motors India made large investments. After a gestation period of over ten years with massive sops from the government in the form of tax concessions, low-priced land, etc., it turned profitable. In agriculture, with modest investments, a new idea can be experimented and established in a crop cycle of around four months to a year. Thus, the rabi wheat crop sowed in Novem-

● by S. Viswanathan

ber in the demonstration plots witnessed a bounteous harvest. Many farmers reaped three tonnes per acre against the average of one tonne earlier! It was certainly exciting.

Farmers hesitant to switch to the new seeds now demanded them. CS sent a SOS to Dr. Borlaug who then dispatched 18,000 tonnes of seeds. Promptly, the Customs Department sat on the seeds and quarantined them, saying seeds cannot be imported! CS once narrated to me the special efforts he made to get the seeds cleared, hoping that they had not deteriorated nor lost their virility during the detention and inspection process!

These imported seeds worked! Average wheat production jumped from 827 kg per hectare in 1965-66 to 1103 kg per hectare in 1967-68. The green revolution had begun!

The second major factor related to the construction of Bhakra Nangal dam and the canal network that ensured water to the then composite state of Punjab.

Subramaniam foresaw the potential of Punjab raising rice as a kharif (summer) crop. Earlier, Punjab was content with raising wheat during winter and the land was heavily under-utilised for the rest of the year. At the break of the green revolution, Punjab produced just 4 lakh tonnes of rice. CS set up the Food Corporation of India under T.A. Pai, assuring farmers to buy whatever quantity of grains they offered at fair prices determined by the Agriculture Costs & Prices Commission. In a short time, Punjab emerged a large producer of rice. In five years the average production of foodgrains shot up from just a tonne per acre to five tonnes per acre. The techniques spread rapidly to other grain-producing States. In just four years, foodgrain production of the country shot up from 72.35 million tonnes in 1965-66 to 108.42 million tonnes in 1970-71.

* * *

I have had the opportunity to look closely at agriculture in different parts of India. Over the years I also observed different States focussing on crops suited to their agro-climatic conditions though not to the extent I observed in developed countries. In the US, for instance, the midwest States around Chicago concentrate on corn and soybean and have emerged large producers of these crops for domestic and global consumption. California excels in the production of almonds, grapes and tomatoes. Florida is known for its oranges. This trend is observed to a limited extent in India. Gujarat excels in the production of cotton and groundnut; UP, Punjab, Haryana in wheat and rice; West Bengal, UP, Andhra Pradesh in rice; Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan in soybean; MP, UP, Rajasthan in pulses; UP, Maharashtra, Tamil

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Bonding over a boarding pass

The Man from Madras Musings grew up in an era when several aspects of life had a glamour of their own – upper class railway travel, eating out and going to the cinema being some of them. All of these have now become commonplace and, between you and MMM, rather stressful outings given the difficulties that our city's infrastructure puts you through. MMM would like to add to the same category the strains of air travel.

When MMM was a Cherubic Child of Calcutta, he would have various relatives flying in and out and they portrayed it to him as rather pleasurable experiences. Coming to man's estate, MMM also looked forward to being airborne but of late he views such opportunities with less enthusiasm. The first of the deterrents is an sms that is received from the

frugality but having turned the sheet this way and that, took their baggage in and asked them to proceed. All hell however broke loose at the security check point where, as you know, they separate the sexes, the women being shepherded into an enclosure while the men have it all in the open. The female in the duo had made off with what MMM can only describe as the boarding pass (bp) sheet leaving the male, as it often happens, high and dry.

She managed to pass through security but when the officer in charge of the men discovered that her partner did not have his bp with him, his (by which MMM means the officer's) bp shot up to stratospheric levels. Having counted till ten, even as the passengers behind were well into their hundreds, he politely asked the man to wait and then went off

scope for improvement in what has put our country on the move. One of the many savings it can achieve though it may not amount to much is its tendency to distribute free travel passes to all and sundry. MMM's memory goes back a decade or so when he had to travel frequently on a particular route to and from our city. And one of the regular travellers on the same route in the AC two-tier coach was an elderly man of vaguely nationalist aspect. His companion would, however, be a different person on each journey and it was clear that these people were not in any way related to each other.

MMM was naturally curious but refrained from asking until one day the patriotic man struck a conversation with MMM. He had noticed MMM travelling often on the

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

airline stating our world-class airport is subject to congestion and so all passengers should better come over at least two hours before departure. Considering that most of the destinations that MMM flies to are just about a couple of hours away, this always strikes him as a preposterous demand. And it is not as though our airport offers anything by way of entertainment beyond falling ceilings, rusting railings and leaky toilet taps. MMM has tried being defiant and landed up once or twice with just an hour to spare for the flight only to be told that the counter has closed and he ought to have known better.

And so MMM does leave as early as he can. An early morning flight therefore means a sleepless night and stepping out of chez MMM just as the cat comes back and the milkman starts on his journeys. These days, the airlines ask you to print out your boarding passes at home as well and MMM strongly suspects that a day will come when they will ask you to bring your own seat. So it was that last week MMM found himself at the entrance queue to the airport, complete with boarding pass, baggage and identity card. The process of entry was taking longer than usual and on enquiry it transpired that a couple of passengers up front, man and wife, had printed their boarding passes, front and back, on the same sheet of paper. The guard at the entrance was rather taken aback and after some humming and hawing, let them through.

It was MMM's misfortune that he had to stand behind the same couple at the baggage drop counter. The booking clerk was astounded at this

to where the woman was standing, brought back the precious sheet and, having stamped it, waved the man through.

That was not the end of the story. When it came to boarding the aircraft, as most of you will be aware, the boarding pass is torn into two, the main part being retained by the airline staff while the counterfoil is returned to the passenger. Only in this case, the sheet could not be torn as the two boarding passes, front and back, were on the same sheet of paper, the airline had to perforce retain the counterfoil of one passenger and the main part of the other. By then the other passengers had had enough. They surged ahead as one passenger, were attended to by other staffers and let into the aircraft. MMM does not know how the bp imbroglio was sorted out, but the couple did make it to the flight, without turning a hair. The satisfaction of having saved paper and, therefore, a tree amounts to much.

Railways freebie

The Man from Madras Musings read the newspaper reports concerning reformation of railways with much interest. It would be no exaggeration to state that the railways are close to MMM's heart, both his grandfathers having worked for that behemoth. In short, MMM is filled with railway blood.

But having said that, he is quite aware of the fact that there is much

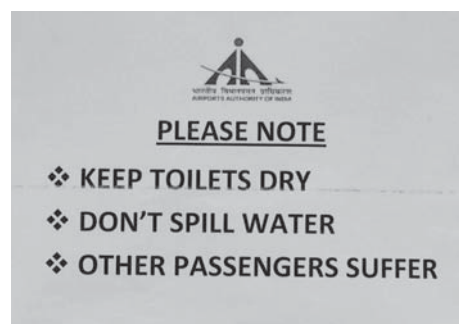
route, he said, and so would like to help MMM. When MMM asked how, he explained his modus operandi, which stunned MMM so much that he has never forgotten it since. The man was a freedom fighter and was entitled to a railway pass under the category. This entitled him to travel a certain number of times each year with a companion, both tickets being free of cost. He therefore sold the free ticket to anyone wanting to travel at short notice, he said, and so if MMM was at any time needing to travel at short notice, all he had to do was to call him up and everything could be arranged before MMM could say Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

This, as MMM said, may not have made much of dent in the railway budget but if every rupee counts, these freebies could be curtailed somewhat.

Tailpiece

There is something almost karmic about Chennai's airport, which several of you who follow this column must have realised by now. *The Man from Madras Musings* brings visible proof of this through the photograph reproduced below.

– MMM



Changing the lives of poor women

Destitution to Leadership* is a collection of published articles and messages on the Working Women's Forum (WWF) and the leadership provided by Dr. Jaya Arunachalam. An ardent crusader for working women's welfare, working with poor women, she has found, despite all the four conferences focussing on the women's movement world-wide, gender-based deprivation and discrimination continue not only in poverty groups but also in other classes.

Coming from a family of devoted Gandhians, Jaya Arunachalam chose to work for working women as she felt politics neither allowed power sharing nor dignity to women. Jaya, a Brahmin herself, broke the shackles and married a Chettiar as early as 1955, setting an inter-caste example. She, along with some like-minded women, in 1978 organised a group to provide a platform for poor working women. As President of the Forum, she wanted initially to empower 800 underprivileged women with financial literacy and micro-credit. In thirty years, the Forum has reached out to 13 lakh women in 3,800 villages in the southern states. WWF did this by combining economic development with nutrition, health and general awareness. In its three decades, the network has empowered women in 270 occupational groups. They include vendors, hawkers, weavers, lace-makers, agarbatti rollers, and fisherwomen.

According to a 55-year-old woman field worker there is space for both educated and uneducated women in the Forum, and she guides and trains local area leaders in organising groups to achieve the goal. Over the years, the Forum has expanded its activities to include programmes for reproductive healthcare, sanitation, access to water and land,

social security, human and labour rights. It fights child labour and prostitution and women exploitations in all forms. Jaya believes that providing skills and confidence to women is far more beneficial than mere charity. She does not believe it is the duty of the rich to provide charity or the right of the poor to receive it. She declares, "Go out and change the circumstances in which poor people are living."

Jaya Arunachalam believes that the low socioeconomic status of women in India is the greatest barrier to development. Around the same time as the women's movement was picking up in the West, Jaya went a step ahead by seeking to empower Indian women through micro-finance. Using case studies she taught women the impact of educating their

● by
K.R.A. Narasiah

children and the importance of health care. Many of her network leaders make greater change by representing their villages in Panchayats and a large number hold positions in them, thus becoming the largest political representation of women in local administration in the world. The 2011 World Development Report on Gender says, the women's representation on Panchayats – where the representation is 33 per cent of the seats – has led to greater development in infrastructure like roads, clean water and education, and less government corruption and waste. Arunachalam believes that once a woman is empowered she is changed forever. And she realised that for change, she needed to have women from the grassroots and not from the middle class.

As Jaya's contributions towards poverty eradication

have been globally recognised and have led her to many an international forum for pro-poor strategies and models, she says that she did not become an agent of social change by choice. When she was on a mission of rehabilitation of flood-affected areas in 1977 and distributed relief materials, she realised there were many untold problems for the poor woman. In fact, she found that the poor were only waiting for such disasters as only then that they got some relief! Distressed by their ignorance and since poverty was imposed on them by society, she realised the need to give them a social platform. Though she was a Congress Party member, she left politics and engaged herself fully in ways to empower women. She taught them to come out of the shell of superstitious beliefs and look at life with a positive attitude. For members of the Forum she started the microcredit programme to strengthen their economic power.

During an award presentation ceremony for the Forum in The Netherlands, Ten Cate, President, Business Club Rotterdam, highlighted the ability of the credit institution of the WWF to achieve a repayment rate of 98-99 per cent, which few institutions can boast of. Hillary Clinton, talking about the WWF during her visit to India in July 2011, said, "We also want to continue working with the WWF on the very serious problem we just heard about, violence against women." Hillary appealed to all to follow Jaya's model, especially in empowering women and giving everyone a chance to live up to her God-given potential.

While delivering a lecture on the concluding day of *Prajnya*, a campaign against gender violence, Jaya said that suppression of women's right is as old as Manu. She said, on the role of the media, that though importance is given to gender injustice, instead of covering women's daily problems, the media resorts to sensationalism and dramatisation of repulsive events. For her single-handed effort in popularising micro-financing for the poor, the Jannalal Bajaj award was given to her and the citation said that the experiment of the WWF spelt success and proved that poverty is not a barrier for the poor to become an agent of the social change.

Melanne Verveer, US Ambassador-at-large, Global Women's Issues, interacted with WWF members in Chennai in September 2010 and promised



Former First Lady Hillary Clinton with Jaya Arunachalam.

to inform her government that it had a lot to learn from WWF.

Marco Visscher wrote in a Dutch magazine in March 2007 that Jaya felt the need to do something rather than talking as most politicians do, and "rolled up her sleeves and got down to work on behalf of the underprivileged women... She believed that change came from the bottom up rather than top down."

Encouraged by the success of micro financing that became an instant success, WWF in Tamil Nadu went on to promote a series of women's co-operatives in the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnata-

taka. In 1994, the co-operatives were brought into a single administrative network called the Indian Co-operative Network for Women (ICNW). Adopting the co-operative as a way to credit extension, the ICNWs are being successfully run and managed by the poor women workers themselves. They act as shareholders, field personnel and even directors.

Jaya Arunachalam was awarded Padma Sri in 1987 for her distinguished service in social work.

* Edited by Srividya G. Ammanur and Dr. R. Asha (T.R. Publications Pvt. Ltd.)

Food for thought

(Continued from page 2)

Nadu in sugarcane; and Maharashtra and AP in cotton. This focus needs to be sharpened and expanded to help derive the best out of natural endowments.

In 2005, I had occasion to look closely at farming operations around Davis, California and the mid-west US. It was the peak season in Davis. Dr. Lux Lakshmanan, consultant to several progressive farmers, drove me through miles upon miles of tomato, almond, grape and other farms. There was huge production. The scientific methods of cultivation, nursing, harvesting and handling being practised made a deep impression. The large farms had high productivity of around 80 tonnes of tomato per acre. Likewise in midwest US, corn yields were at a whopping 10 tonnes per acre.

Back in India I looked at the work done by Tata Chemicals Ltd through their Tata Kisan Kendras in western UP. The blending of science, technology and management was extremely effective in the spread of cultivation of basmati rice in this region. Yields and returns expanded.

The late S. Balasubramanian, son of the legendary movie mogul S.S. Vasan and head of the *Ananda Vikatan* group of publications, was a specialist farmer of vegetables. At the Gemini Farms in Padappai near Chennai, he raised vegetables alongside his other farm rearing exotic birds.

Over the previous decade Balan had been experimenting and successfully promoting scientific agriculture. He had been sending soil samples from his farm to Lux Lakshmanan. These were analysed and test reports, along with the recommendations for enriching these through required doses of NPK and, more importantly, micro nutrients were provided by Lakshmanan. Thanks to the IT revolution, Balan could also use e-farming to an extent not practised by others. He used to send digital images of crops at different stages along with reports through the net. Lakshmanan helped him with the needed corrections and advice on enrichments, from testing and correcting the soil. The next stage was to go for high quality seeds and optimum fertigation. Lakshmanan trained farm assistants on these aspects. I witnessed steam bath of soil to make it sterile and special concrete seed beds to raise seedlings in sterile soil. These helped reduce seed mortality: from the earlier survival of around 45 out of 100 seeds, survival shot up to 96. Balan invested handsome amounts on mechanical equipment and implements. Tomato production in his farms shot up to over 40 tonnes per acre and capsicum to 25 tonnes. The special long bajji chilli, Chinese cabbage and other vegetables were produced in plenty. With sharp business acumen Balan arranged for marketing these profitably in T' Nagar. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

(To be concluded)

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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The story of storytelling's revival

The storytelling scene here in Chennai is evolving rapidly. The Chennai Storytelling Association (CSA) has approximately 250 members. It is a group of mostly Chennai-based people who have demonstrated some serious interest in storytelling.

In the late 1990s (about 17 years ago), Geeta Ramanujam founded Kathalaya in Bangalore. To the best of my knowledge, this was/is the first organisation in India dedicated to the Revival of Storytelling.

Also around that time, Cathy Spagnoli from the USA (www.cathyspagnoli.com), a

(www.laurasimms.com) in his hometown, New York City, in the early and mid-1980s.

Laura is one of the founders of the global Storytelling Revival, which began in the late 1960s. In 1986, she presented the New York City International Storytelling Festival. Miller first visited India in 1988-90, and returned in 2002. In 2003-2004, he did his doctoral in folklore verbal arts-related fieldwork with members of the Kani tribe in the southern end of the Western Ghats in Kanniyakumari District. In 2005 he came to Chennai, and has been here since.

The World Storytelling Institute was founded in Chennai in 2007 by Miller, Jeeva Raghunath and Magdalene Jeyarathnam. (Magdalene is a psychological counsellor, and is helping to develop "Therapeutic Uses of Storytelling". Magdalene and Miller were married in Chennai in 2006.)

Jeeva eventually decided to work independently, so she is no longer formally a part of the WSI – but they often collaborate. In 2012, Dr. Sandhya Ruban (a dentist, WSI Storytelling Workshop attendee and trainer, and founder-director of her own communication-and-soft-skills-training organisation, Eloquens) travelled to Singapore to attend an edition of the Singapore Storytelling Festival.

professional storyteller (and author of numerous books about storytelling), came to live in Chennai.

Cathy met Jeeva Raghunath, who had been a teacher. Cathy encouraged Jeeva to become a professional storyteller. Jeeva has become the leading Storytelling Revival storyteller in Tamil Nadu, performing and teaching in both Tamil and English. (Cathy now lives in Washington State, USA.)

Eric Miller studied with, and did office work for, professional storyteller Laura Simms

A window to the past and the future

The culture of India features a strong awareness of the educational value of storytelling. The frame-story within which the animal fables of the *Panchatantra* are related communicates this awareness clearly:

Once there was a king who had three sons. These princes seemed dull. They were unable to learn by conventional educational methods. Their father, the king, was very anxious about their futures and, as a consequence, also about the future of the kingdom.

Finally, an aged scholar named Vishnu Sharma was called upon. He promised to help the princes become intelligent and bright within six months. His method: he would tell stories to the princes, and draw them into discussions about the stories. Sure enough, after six months, his plan succeeded.

The *Panchatantra* is one of the most popular collections of animal fables in the world. These stories, along with the *Jataka Tales* (which illustrate principles of Buddhism), episodes from epics, and folktales in general – also known as *Grandmother Stories* – help to make India one of the richest story and storytelling centres in the world. This is a resource the rest of the world calls upon.

Any topic can be presented in story form. This can make the material more meaningful and memorable.

History, for example, is often taught in terms of great events, their dates and locations, and the names of the people involved. Or, it is taught in

Upon Sandhya's return to Chennai, she said to Miller, "We should do a Storytelling Festival here in Chennai also!" He agreed and the WSI presented the first annual Chennai Storytelling Festival in February 2013 (theme: "The many applications of storytelling"). This has been followed by CSF 2014 (theme: "Storytelling and Healing"/"Therapeutic Uses of Storytelling"); and CSF 2015 ("Storytelling for Teaching and Training"). The theme of the not-yet-finalised plan for Chennai

terms of economic, sociological, or cultural factors. Potential learners often find these approaches to be "dry".

Teaching with stories may involve finding or composing characters that embody facts and abstract ideas. If listeners can relate to these characters and their adventures, the listeners tend to pay attention to the story, think about the issues that the story raises, and absorb and retain the information the story contains.

Regardless of whether a story's characters may be humans, animals, divinities, aliens, etc – all stories are about situations. Participants in storytelling events – both tellers and listeners – may project themselves into story characters, and imagine themselves in story situations. The participants may find reflections of themselves in stories.

Participants can consider if they might do things the same way or differently from how the story characters are doing things. This gives the participants imaginative practice for living their own lives.

Storying can offer a window to the past and to the future – while it also always presents options for behaviour in the present. Storying can help participants to understand and empathise with other individuals and cultures. In the storying process, connections and understandings are formed, both within and between people. Upon hearing stories, similar experiences from their own lives often spontaneously come to listeners' minds.

Storytelling Festival 2016 (Friday 5-Sunday 14 February 2016) is "Storytelling and Inter-cultural Communication" and will include Travel, Tourism, Translation, Visiting other lands and worlds.

Two years ago, Geeta Ramanujam said to Miller, "Let's start an Indian Storytelling Network!". The result is www.indianstorytellingnetwork.org

A couple of months ago, Asha Sampath (a WSI Storytelling Workshop attendee and trainer, and founder-director of her own

storytelling organisation, Tale Spin) decided a group might be formed in Chennai of people actively doing storytelling performing (and instructing) work.

This group has come to be known as 'Chennai Storytellers' (www.facebook.com/chennai-storytellers). So far there are 22 of us. Anyone who publicly performs as a storyteller at least "once in a while" in Chennai is invited to join Chennai Storytellers. Please contact Asha (ashasam@gmail.com, 98408 33953).



Flora & fauna at the Adyar poonga

As I stood outside the huge gates of Adyar Poonga on a hot summer afternoon, I was curious and excited all at once. Having heard so much about how a wasteland was converted into a forested zone. I couldn't wait to get inside. At the gates. I was directed by a security guard to go inside and wait near the ticketing counter. A family of 15 with a few eager children, middle-aged women and giggling teenagers were waiting there along with our guide, Gomathi.

Gomathi led us to a small shaded place in the park (with stone benches) and gave us a ten-minute talk about how the wastelands were cleared and how the poonga was created. She said that preserving the life forms here and allowing them to grow and flourish was their first priority. Now I understand why they refused access to neighbourhood walkers.

The concept of 'Reuse, Reduce, Recycle' was implemented everywhere – from prohibiting plastics and food inside the campus to converting vegetation gar-

bage to vermicompost and using solar power for their energy uses.

I was looking for seasonal birds. I had seen some feeding in the backwaters. So we let another guide Rajan lead us on our two-hour walk. Our first stop was a water hole. Pelicans delicately wading in the water was a sight to see. In the distance, I saw a painted stork and a few egrets flying around. Rajan explained, "About 80 pelicans and 20 storks have made the park their home

While listening to him talk about the benefits of the station. I spotted a grey heron gracefully lifting off from the water and settling on top of a tree.

Had we had more time, we might have spotted more birds. Maybe I should have taken binoculars. Maybe my sketch book too. They do not allow you extra time at the poonga – so you need to find ways to extend your communion with summertime birds.

The flowers are in full bloom in the Adyar Poonga. You will be surprised by how many rare varieties of flowers you find here.

The small, white, stalkless flowers of the Orangeberry tree will grab your attention as soon as you start the tour. Take a closer look and you will find a few berries too. Walk a few more steps and you cannot miss a bloom of blue flowers – *Clitoria ternatea* (*sangu pushpam* in Tamil) on a shrub nearby or the *sennalata* or Candle Bush (*seemai agandhi*) with its yellow flowers standing tall and straight.

Touch the flower, feel its texture, smell it. Take a video of the



Poonga info

The Adyar Poonga is open from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursday for public tours. Entry is allowed for 20 people only and the tickets can be booked online at www.chennai-rivers.gov.in or at the ticketing centre at the park. The tour costs Rs. 20 per person.

There is a fee of Rs. 50 for a camera and Rs. 100 for a video camera.

flowers swaying in the wind. Sit down for a quick sketch.

Continue walking and in the distance you will spot pink lilies in a pond. A satellite pond carefully maintained and cleaned regularly, explains Rajan. Cross a bridge and you will find a red hibiscus plant with drooping flowers, a tree loaded with bright yellow flowers (*cassia fistula* – *sara konnai* in Tamil), a ball-shaped

cluster of tiny blue flowers of the

delek air tree (*kaya*) and the red flowers of the Indian Coral tree. A small Rose Periwinkle plant (*nithya kalyani*) on your right marks the end. The tour ends too quickly? Can the timings be extended, maybe for senior citizens and the disabled. While the need to preserve the eco-system is appreciated and the poonga has rules for a purpose, keeping it open for longer periods for hobby groups may help.

KNOW YOUR FORT BETTER

(Continued from page 1)

The western face, diametrically opposite the rear of the Assembly, has barracks that were built late in the 19th Century. With that, Parade Square opened out to barracks on three sides and it came to be known as Barracks Square. The Cornwallis cupola and its statue of the Governor General stood close to the rear wall of the Assembly building on Parade Square and faced west from the early 1800s till 1905. Parade Square was therefore also referred to as Cornwallis Square. The unveiling of the statue here was a gala event, as we have noted earlier. So also was the arrival of Cornwallis in 1805 when, having assumed charge for the second time as Governor General of In-

dia, he visited Madras, en route to Calcutta. On that occasion, he addressed the troops and Madras citizens at Parade Square.

The ceremonial that accompanied these events was in marked contrast to the night of August 23, 1775 when Sir Robert Fletcher, Commanding Officer, gave instructions for the arrest of the Governor Lord Pigot. The latter was imprisoned by Col Stuart and conveyed to St Thomas Mount. Pigot's sympathies and son-in-law, Claud Russell, also a member of the Madras Council, records that Parade Square that night was a picture of confusion. Lit by a full moon, it had army officers, Europeans and natives walking hither and thither even as carriages blocked the entrance to the Square. The garrison was sharply divided and

the troops mutinous but eventually the anti-Pigot faction had its way. The Governor died a mysterious death a year later at St Thomas Mount while still a prisoner.

Parade Square was never paved over till at least the 1950s. It remained a well-beaten piece of earth and, given that a regiment had always been quartered in the Fort for over two centuries, was used for marches and parades. P. Unnikrishnan, the former Managing Director of Binny's, remembers Parade Square in the 1930s when his father was Law Secretary, Government of Madras. He would often walk up to the Fort from the Madras Christian College School, then in George Town, to go home with his dad in the latter's car. He states that a pa-

rade was held every alternate day in the Square and it was a grand spectacle. Despite it being used for parades, the residents of the Fort cut across the Square as and when needed and this led to a clearly demarcated track emerging over the years.

Several accounts of ceremonial parades conducted here have survived over three centu-

• by
Sriram V.

ries. A ceremonial parade was held in August 1801 to welcome "His Excellency Meer Alam Bahadar, ambassador from His Highness, the Subahdar of the Deccan". The visitor came in through St George's Gate and was received with presented arms by His Majesty's 51st regi-

ment, "which then formed a street from the gate to Parade Square". Thereafter, a street was formed by the 2nd Division 1st European Regiment and the Madras Militia under Major Taswell. A salute of seventeen guns was fired and the troops continued to present arms till the distinguished visitor left the Fort. Another account dates to September 13, 1807, when the appointment of William Petrie to the post of Governor was announced. A salute of 19 guns and three rounds of "musquetry" were fired from the troops of the garrison, all of whom had assembled on Parade Square.

Mrs. Penny in her book wondered as to how the Englishmen "ever survived such an ordeal by fire, as a parade in full dress under an Indian sun must have been." Evidently most did, but there are several accounts of backsliders as well, all of whom were court-martialled. On July

14, 1837, Capt. John Mahon of HM 63 Regiment of Foot was tried by order of Maj. Gen. John Doveton for having absented himself from parade on June 22, despite having been admonished by his senior officer for a similar misdemeanour on an earlier occasion. He was exonerated on all charges on a technicality much to Doveton's distress. Far worse was the charge against Capt. John Arnaud of HM 34th Regiment. He had been arrested for some indiscipline and, while under incarceration, "appeared in an un-officer like dress when the regiment was on parade" and stood there and looked on. He too was acquitted of this charge.

Being drunk on parade was clearly an unpardonable crime. The trial of Lt. John Winrow was held from January 13, 1817 and dragged on for some time. He was of the 1st Battalion of the 30th Regiment and was tried for "shameful and unofficerlike con-

duct, in appearing on the general parade of the Battalion, in a state of intoxication, on the evening of the 30th December, 1816." Clearly, his New Year celebrations had begun early.

The judgement was curious to say the least. While it found him guilty of irregular and improper conduct at the Parade... when not perfectly free from the effects of liquor, it acquitted him of the charge of "shameful conduct in appearing there in state of intoxication." Lt. Winrow lost two steps and was asked to take his place immediately behind the two lieutenants who till then had stood next to him. The order, though entered into the book, was never implemented, for Winrow had died even when the trial was in progress.

Parade Square is now cordoned off for its own safety, for if opened up it will be filled with Government vehicles and, perhaps, even high-rises.



A view of Parade Square from the west, looking towards the Secretariat.

Building Kodai's Observatory

(Continued from last fortnight)

Soon after his appointment, Michie Smith started planning for establishing the observatory, its layout, domes, etc. The first structure to be started at the Kodaikanal site, after acquiring the land (89 acres), was the astronomer's house, for which foundations were laid at the end of April 1895.

In October 1895, the foundation stone of the new observatory was laid by the Governor. Michie Smith laid the north-south line for the building in July 1897 and handed over the work to the consulting Government architect in December hoping that "if no unforeseen trouble arises, the buildings would be ready to receive instruments in less than six months." The unforeseen trouble did arise in the form of the Norman Lockyer, a leading British astronomer who was leading an expedition to Madras to study the solar eclipse.

In the Annual Report of 1898-99, Michie Smith writes, "The Government of India requested the Astronomer Royal, and Sir Norman Lockyer to report on the various Indian observatories. The former after visiting Kodaikanal approved generally of the plans for the observatory there and made some suggestions for minor alterations (dome diameter to be changed from 15 feet to 18 feet, etc.) which were at once adapted. Sir Norman Lockyer, on the other hand, without visiting the place (spent some hours in the drawing room of the Astronomer's house in Madras) objected entirely to the plans and on his return to England represented to the Secretary of State for India that the buildings were 'too costly and too permanent' and were badly designed and unsuited for their purpose. He went on to point out that 'the South Kensington Solar Physics Observatory thus equipped with temporary structures is the most powerful in the world. It does more and better work than



Painting of Charlie Michie Smith.

the similar institution at Potsdam where the buildings cost £250,000' and urged that the new buildings at Kodaikanal should be like those at South Kensington shanties, built of wood and canvas. As a consequence, the Secretary of State telegraphed that the work on

known, but the result was that no reference whatever was made to the buildings thereafter. But a long delay resulted from the antagonism between Michie Smith and Lockyer."

Michie Smith complained to the Astronomer Royal, "... Lockyer wished to turn the whole of the Kodaikanal buildings with a series of 'shanties' and now you probably know that he has got the Secretary of State to telegraph out to stop all the buildings except the two domes. ... Of course I know that Lockyer's action is taken mainly out of spite against me and I am sure that if the Secretary of State had known of the position he has taken up ever since my appointment he would have asked your advice before taking this action... ." The 'spite' which Michie Smith mentions

• It has been about 115 years since the establishment of Kodaikanal Observatory as an extension of the original Madras Observatory, which has evolved into the present Indian Institute of Astrophysics at Bangalore. It is also the first mountain observatory in India. Charles Michie Smith was the man who selected the site, established the observatory and directed it for the first 12 years. He was also the man who recruited John Evershed, discoverer of the famous Evershed effect, and established Kodaikanal Observatory as a major centre for solar physics. Michie Smith, the person, and the establishment of Kodaikanal Observatory are looked at here in the context of the early studies in physical astronomy (observational astrophysics) in India.

the observatory was to be stopped till the reports of the Astronomer Royal and Sir Norman Lockyer had been fully considered. To anyone acquainted with the climatic conditions existing in Kodaikanal, the proposal to house valuable instruments in such 'shanties' as Sir Norman Lockyer recommends seems as strange as his estimate of the relative values of the work done at South Kensington and Potsdam and the Government Astronomer protested against this proposal. Whether or not this protest was forwarded to the Indian Observatories Committee is not

in his letter might partly be due to the fact that Michie Smith lacked proper training in solar physics. Lockyer, on the other hand, was so thoroughly impressed by the work of his "former student", Naegamvala, "who, so far as I know, is the only person in India particularly familiar with Solar Physics work", that he was unable to appreciate the effort put in by Michie Smith at Kodaikanal. He had visited Naegamvala in Poona before he arrived in Madras and Naegamvala had shown him "the results he had obtained (of the Total Solar Eclipse) and I found them of a high order of excellence, while the programme of work he undertook showed a large grasp of the various solar problems which await solution at such a time." (quotes from Lockyer). While he saw an enthusiastic effort being put up at Poona, where he was not expecting any, on the contrary, at Kodaikanal where Lockyer was expecting to see lot of progress, he did not find enough to his liking. As a result, Lockyer was critical about the functioning of Kodaikanal.



The Kodaikanal Observatory today.

While Lockyer was keen on solar physics work to start at Kodaikanal as quickly as possible with as little investment as possible (the idea he was harping on with the Solar Physics Committee from 1893), Michie Smith, on the other hand, was concerned more with establishing a proper observatory. In an earlier letter to Christie, Michie Smith remarked about Lockyer's intentions: "My interview with Lockyer was trying but we both kept our tempers. His chief object was to try and get me to at once start spectrophotographs of the Sun on the Hale-Deslander plan with an apparatus made up of odds and ends from other instruments set up in a 'shanty which would not cost £5'. I pointed out that I had neither the necessary apparatus nor at present the time to take it up on which he offered to lend me his son or one of his assistants from South Kensington! I did not jump at the offer. He would like to turn Kodaikanal Observatory into a series of 'shanties'."

Anyway, as it turned out, the feud died quietly and things continued (maybe through the intervention of Astronomer Royal) at Kodaikanal with some delay. Officially, the observatory started functioning from April 1, 1899.

During the first few years, the work of the Director was naturally concerned mostly with lay-out, planning the organisation. Smith, the first Director of the Observatory, did much pioneering work in this direction. The construction works were done under his personal supervision. He planted trees for improvement of the solar image, installed the instruments for routine observational work and formulated daily observations.

Systematic solar observations commenced at Kodaikanal from early 1901. Magnetic, meteorological and seismological observations were in progress at Kodaikanal from the very beginning.

Nominations for the position of an assistant to Michie Smith and also a possible successor to him as Director of Kodaikanal, after his retirement, was solicited by John Eliot, the then Director General of Indian Observatories, from the Astronomer Royal and the Indian

Observatories Committee in 1902. The position was to be filled, in due course, by John Evershed, by then a well-known practitioner of solar physics and an 'irresponsible amateur' (as he describes himself).

1909 was an eventful year in the history of the Kodaikanal Observatory because of the discovery of 'the Evershed effect'. Both Smith and Evershed observed Halley's Comet from mid-April to mid-May of 1910, which put up a memorable display with its tail extending for 100° far up towards zenith.

Michie Smith retired in January 1911 as Director of the Kodaikanal Observatory but continued to live in Kodaikanal. Although he did not participate in the scientific

• by
N. Kameswara Rao,
A. Vagiswari and
Christina Birdie

activities at the Observatory thereafter, nevertheless, being in Kodaikanal, he kept in touch with the Observatory till his death.

Michie Smith not only established the observatory, its buildings, instruments, etc. but also took care to plant trees which would provide a proper environment for astronomical observations.

It was Smith's inspired initiative that resulted in the planting of pine and oak trees in the observatory surrounding the domes and observing facilities that were helpful to improve the steadiness of the images. "A large number of young trees have been raised from seed and planted out whenever the weather is suitable. These young trees were largely pines of various kinds from the hills of Southern California for which the Director (CMS) is indebted to Mr Lukins of Pasadena."

Evershed, in a letter to the then Director General of Observatories, written in 1912, comments, "These trees are mostly Pines planted by my predecessor Mr Michie Smith at his private expense, and in addition to their ornamental use are of great value in protecting the soil and rock surfaces

(Continued on page 7)



Astronomer's residence in Kodaikanal Observatory.

No Mahakavi without Pondicherry?

(Continued from last fortnight)

Among Bharati's long poems *Kuyil Paattu* occupies pride of place. Some hold that it was published in 1912, others claim it came out in 1914-15. Be that as it may, we know from it that Bharati spent a great deal of time in the mango and coconut groves situated outside Pondicherry town. One day, when he was on one of his usual strolls through a grove, he heard a cuckoo singing. Overwhelmed not only by the melody of the cuckoo's sound, but also by its beauty and the beauty of the nature that surrounded it, he wrote *Kuyil Paattu*. Through this poem Bharati sought to demonstrate the essential unity of life and nature.

In 1913, Bharati's friend, Subramania Siva, after his release from prison, started a Tamil journal called *Gnanabhanu* in Madras. It was Subramania Siva who started republishing Bharati's works and poems in Tamil. Thus, Bharati's Pondicherry works like *Yoga Siddhi*, *Oliyum Irulum*, *Kannan en Thai*, *Paapa Paattu* and *Puthiya Athichudi* were published in *Gnanabhanu*. The last two were written for children. Some hold that the manuscript of Bharati's story *Chinna Sankaran Kathai* was lost during the police raids on his house in Pondicherry. But parts of it appeared in *Gnanabhanu*. For some unknown reason, the story remained incomplete. Bharati never said why.

From 1914-15, he started contributing articles to journals and newspapers in Madras once again. He even wrote in English; his work appeared in journals like Annie Besant's *New India* and *Commonweal* and *Arya* in Pondicherry. In 1914 or

sometime before that, a satirical fable of his called 'A Fox with a Golden Tail' caused quite a flutter. His English work received much recognition, but Bharati regretted that he never received such felicitations for his works written in his mother tongue, like *Panchali Sabatham*.

During the 19th Century, many Tamils had been taken as coolies by the British and the French to work in the plantations in colonies like Fiji, Mauritius, Reunion, South Africa and the Caribbean Islands. Bharati, while in Pondicherry, was overwhelmed by their plight. Gandhiji had been wag-

in October 1917. Of all the Tamil poets Bharati alone welcomed the revolution. He wrote a poem titled *Puthiya Russia* (New Russia) that praised the Revolution, supported the abolition of private property, and condemned the tyranny of the Tsar. Bharati knew about the writings of the French socialist Proudhon who was against private property. Bharati was always in agreement with Proudhon's views. In 1918, he translated five essays of Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate, acknowledging the greatness of Tagore and regretting that Indian newspapers were



Subramania Bharati is one of the great nationalist poets, social reformers, writers and revolutionaries of modern India. His works were mostly in Tamil, his mother tongue. Besides Tamil, he has also produced some wonderful poems and prose in English. Bharati was recognised as a Mahakavi, i.e. Great Poet, only several years after his death.

In this article, I adopt a step-by-step chronological approach to unravel the special features in his life that enabled Bharati to emerge as a Mahakavi.

— J.B.P. More

ing a non-violent struggle against the racial discrimination practised by the Whites in South Africa. Bharati watched this struggle and the sad state of Indian labour abroad. This prompted him to write his famous poem *Karumbu Thottathile* (In the sugarcane plantations), in which he depicted the living conditions of the Tamils in the plantations and the hardships and atrocities that the Tamil women had to undergo in foreign lands at the hands of White masters.

Bharati was himself in poverty and want when the Russian Revolution broke out

not giving adequate importance to him. At the time, he also wrote a history of the Indian National Congress in Tamil, but it was published only later.

While in Pondicherry, Bharati produced several other poems ranging from the devotional to songs in praise of nature. Some of them were *Kavitha Devi Arul Vendal* (1908), *Guru Govinda Simha Vijayam* (1909), *Thisai* (1909), *Annai Nee Seivathene* (1909), *Kadal* (1909), *Mahasakthikku Vinnappam* (1910), *Thelivu* (1910), *Sadharana Varusha Dhumakethu* (1910), *Oliyum Irulum* (1913), *Yoga Siddhi*



Bharati honoured in Pondicherry.

cherry. He used to walk fearlessly on the beach road, head held high and chest thrust forward, singing the French national anthem *La Marseillaise*, which he even translated into Tamil.

When the Great War ended in November 1918, Bharati and his family were permitted to return to Madras and he decided to leave Pondicherry at the end of the month. He once again joined *Swadesamitran* but his health had deteriorated very much by then. He passed away on September 11, 1921, uncared for and unsung by his countrymen.

Pondicherry proved the most productive place for Bharati's literary creations. If Bharati had not written *Kuyil Paattu*, *Panchali Sabatham* and *Kannan Paattu* there, he would never have become the Mahakavi that he became.

This article is based on J.R.P. More's book *Puducheri Valartha Bharathiar*, published by Leon Prouchandy Memorial Sangam, Pondicherry, in 2011.

(Concluded)

BUILDING KODAI'S OBSERVATORY

(Continued from page 6)

from excessive heating by the sun. In this way they tend to improve the solar observations by preventing atmospheric disturbances near the instruments, and it follows that the Director in charge of the observatory will always endeavour to promote the growth of these trees and preserve them as far as possible from destruction." The same letter continues about other trees (wattles, blue gum, etc.). "In the Assistant Director's compound the land was not cleared when taken over from the Forest Depart-

ment and the trees were purchased by Mr Michie Smith from the forest Department privately... They proved very useful for providing temporary buildings in the observatory and tripods, etc. for the erection of heavy instruments ... part of the equipment of Poona observatory when transferred to Kodaikanal was erected by the observatory staff at practically no cost to Government because timber was at hand for the work."

Michie Smith maintained his own horse 'Jerusalem' to get about in Kodaikanal. Being the President of the English Club

(Kodaikanal Club) Smith used to spend time there. Apparently "on one night in April 1910 Mrs Peachey and her husband, the late Canon Peachey, were walking home in the evening from Tinnevely settlement, when they saw a comet and stopped at the English Club to ask Mr Michie Smith about it. He came out to look at it, said it must be Halley's Comet, and immediately jumped on his horse and galloped up to the observatory to consult Mr Evershed."

Michie Smith was for a number of years a member of the Municipality and was even its

chairman for some years. He was well known in Kodaikanal as the energetic and careful secretary and three-time President of the Boat Club, devoted to the protection of its property and rules. He also took interest in planting trees in the town and other places.

His younger sister Lucy, a nursing matron, came out to Kodaikanal in 1911 to keep house for him. Smith had a beautiful home and garden. There were domestic animals too in plenty for Lucy to care for and talk to.

In 1919 Smith's physical and mental health started to dete-

riorate. Nursing him, Lucy became sick and passed away six months before her brother's death at the end of September 1922.

Kodaikanal Observatory is still an ongoing research facility living its 'raison d'être', whereas other solar (stellar) physics centres in India have disappeared as soon as the main motivator (who started it) was no longer active or disappeared from the scene. The success of Kodaikanal has mainly been due to its continuing motivated Directors and astronomers. (Courtesy: *Current Science*)

(Concluded)

A partnership of 50 years

— nurturing talent from humble backgrounds

The association between the Sanmar family and the Jolly Rovers Cricket Club is now entering its 50th year.

This is certainly unique in the annals of cricket history, as rare indeed would be another example of such continuous, decades-long sponsorship of a sporting institution by one family. By doing this, the late Chairman Emeritus of the Group, K.S. Narayanan, his sons N. Sankar and N. Kumar, and grandson Vijay Sankar have created a record of sorts.

The new Chennai cricket season will start in July 2015, and it was on July 29, 1996 that KSN officially adopted the Club, and made it a star-studded combination that went on to annex the First Division league title in grand style the same season. He and his successors have steadfastly supported Jolly Rovers and cricket in general ever since.

The family not merely supports one cricket team but, in fact, two teams – Alwarpet CC being the second one. It has also developed a world-class cricketing infrastructure, by maintaining the IIT-Chemplast Sanmar

cricket ground, providing excellent coaching, practice and training facilities for some 30 players year after year. It can take pride in its ability to spot talent, often from humble backgrounds, and nurturing and polishing it into a winning combination. This is clearly reflected in the extraordinary number of titles Jolly Rovers has won – 62 so far.

T. Natarajan, Basil Thampi and D.T. Chandrasekar, all

employees of Chemplast donning the Jolly Rovers cap, have come from humble rural backgrounds. All of them have climbed the ladder swiftly from street cricket in their villages to big league tournaments, includ-

ing the Ranji tournament.

Eldest among five siblings, T. Natarajan is a son of a labourer, S. Thangarasu. "My father is a daily-wager while my mother owns a small meat shop at Chinnampatti, a tiny hamlet about 35 km from Salem," says Natarajan. His raw talent earned a name for himself in Chennai. "I will always be grateful to 'Sweetie Suresh', and Bharath Reddy 'Sir'. For a cricketer with my background,

guidance was crucial. They were always there for me," says Natarajan. Born to unlettered parents and hailing from a village T. Natarajan has been named in the Tamil Nadu Ranji squad, having climbed the ranks in the TNCA league over the last few seasons.

The 21-year-old Basil Thampi's journey in league cricket happened at a fast pace. Hailing from Perumbavoor, a small town about 40 km from Kochi, Kerala, he too, like Natarajan, is from a very humble background with his parents running a small condiments and catering shop. On his debut in One Day cricket for Kerala against Goa, he claimed 6 wickets for 51 runs and this earned him a place in the Kerala Ranji Squad in the 2014/15 season. Starting from tennis ball cricket about two

years ago and moving on to the big stage, his rise has been rapid. Last year, Basil joined Chemplast to be a Jolly Rovers player.

Left-arm spinner D.T. Chandrasekar is from Arani village in Tiruvallur District. "My parents are daily wage labourers who don't really have an idea of what I am doing. Despite our financial constraints, my father encouraged us (me and my elder brother) to go for our dreams," says Chandra who has done various jobs at a stone quarry in Arani. Chandrasekar's biggest moment came last year when he played for Alwarpet CC in the TNCA first division league, bagging 36 wickets from 10 matches. He is playing for Jolly Rovers this season. (Courtesy: Matrix, the house journal of the Sanmar Group)

• by A Special Correspondent

Chennai's pride?

(Continued from page 1)

do not have such facilities in the trains or at stations. We agree with that. But what has been forgotten is that most Metro services abroad have toilets placed, and maintained by, the local civic body, just outside the stations. This has not been planned in Chennai.

We assume that like all similar public transport services in India, the Metro will also soon have unionised staff. These must be prevented from pasting posters and painting graffiti on the walls of the stations. This has sadly never been put down in any of the other transport services and it is quite ironic that the staff could deface their own property with such nonchalance. If the Metro prevents this, it could be quite a feather in its cap. The same goes for preventing political posters and graffiti as well.

We know that it is fashionable to claim that ours is an inclusive society and so vendors and hawkers need to be provided space. That may be truer of traditional areas and services such as those attached to temples but let us not forget that the Metro is a modern creation that does not provide for vagrants, vendors and hawkers anywhere across the world. These elements need to be kept out of the service except as passengers

Lastly, how do we get our beloved public to toe the line on discipline? The Metro needs to get tough on vandals. It has to utilise the security and surveillance cameras that it places in the trains to detect acts of wilful damage. If the authorities are prepared to be indifferent and let such acts pass, then we are soon going to have a massive problem on our hands.

Pondy pushes for heritage

(Continued from page 1)

here, beginning with the attempt by the latter to demolish the Directorate General of Police building in the 1980s. Government officers have frankly expressed a disinclination to work with heritage enthusiasts in Chennai and the matter is at a deadlock.

The listing at Puducherry has been done with coordination between INTACH and the State Level Heritage Conservation and Advisory Committee (SLHCAC), which is an advisory body with no legal or statu-

tory powers. Compare this with the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) in our State, which is also similar in character but chooses not to justify its existence in any way. The Puducherry team has produced a list of 21 buildings within six months of the Mairie's collapse. The HCC was given a ready-made list of 468 structures by the High Court of Madras and is yet to take action on listing any of them. It has decided to embark on a fresh listing of buildings, a wholly superfluous exercise, and is taking forever in doing even that. In the mean-

while, at least sixteen buildings, nominally protected by the High Court's listing, have already vanished and so we are staring at a list of 452. Several more are in an enfeebled state and may soon collapse or make way for highrises. In the light of all this inaction, the recent decision by the State Government to illuminate some heritage buildings during the Global Investors' Meet seems nothing more than lip service to the cause of conservation. Will the Tamil Nadu State Government study the Puducherry model and take action?

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