

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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## Are concrete roads the answer?

(By The Editor)

The roads of our city are being put to great pressure and a very few of them manage to stand the strain. In the light of this, the present Council of the Corporation announced a couple of years ago that it would look into the alternative of concrete roads as the panacea. It was resolved at that time that within the next five years, Rs. 2500 crore would be spent on laying 1100 km of concrete roads in Greater Chennai. This would be a long-term solution, said the Government, claiming that concrete roads have an average lifespan of at least 25 years. The new roads, it was promised, would be world-class.

The advantages of switching over to concrete roads are many. Apart from their long life, they also save on fuel, provide for better driving comfort and use cement, a plentifully available commodity in the country. Maintenance costs are also lower. Concrete roads have a small 'green' advantage as well. Being white-topped, they reflect light at night which means the intensity of street-lighting can be brought down in terms of wattage.

But there are several drawbacks as well. Bitumen roads also cost only one-fourth of what is the outlay for concrete roads. But more importantly, concrete roads require a long-time period for laying and setting, as much as 28 days for a one km stretch as opposed to a bitumen topped road that requires one-fourth the time. And during the time they are being laid, traffic will have to be completely closed, something that is unthinkable in this city. This became clear when a small stretch on Velacherry Main Road was closed for a month. The road may have had the

(Continued on page 2)



A Chennai street corner, the picture speaking louder than words.

## A dubious first - Chennai tops garbage creation

Our city of Madras that is Chennai has had many firsts to its credit. But this is one that it may not be proud of. If the report by the Waste-To Energy Research and Technology Council (WTERT) is to be believed Chennai generates 0.71kg of waste per capita, with Kolkata and Delhi at 0.66 and 0.65kg respectively coming a distant second and third. It does not make for edifying reading.

The details are even more frightening. Around 6,404 tonnes of garbage is generated every day by the city, with every household contributing 30 per cent recyclable, 60 per cent organic and 10 per cent hazard-

ous waste. This is in addition to 9,898kg of bio-medical waste from the 730 hospitals in the city. The Kodambakkam, Adyar, Anna Nagar and Teynampet zones of the Corporation are the highest contributors.

The city's garbage collection job is divided between the Corporation's own staff in 12 zones and a private agency in the remaining three, these being Kodambakkam, Teynampet and Adyar. The problems with the Corporation's direct collection are the usual ones that face any Government operations - lackadaisical and excess staff (many of them on leave) and indiscipline. The private operator has problems of low staff strength and a very poor performance record, especially in night conservancy. With around 88 sq km in its ambit, it is learnt that it faces a shortage of over 500 workers. What needs to be pointed out is that the Corporation has staff in excess and could well contract them out to the private agency. Meanwhile, the city's civic body continues to dither on two other crucial aspects - waste segregation at source and waste disposal.

The former has remained a non-starter and all garbage is now indiscriminately mixed. This is despite several schemes

- including the rewarding of households with gold coins. Apart from several photo opportunities for our elected councillors with green and red bins, the idea of garbage segregation at source has simply not gained ground. Garbage is therefore collected and sent to landfills in areas such as Kodungaiyur and Perungudi. The latter, incidentally, abuts the Pallikaranai Marsh, which is a reserved and protected natural habitat. Residential areas

careful enough to put their waste into the bins. They just strew it around the area and leave, hoping that conservancy workers will take care of the rest. Since that does not happen with the frequency which it is supposed to, the litter often fills entire street corners. Secondly, most of the city's population has no clue about recycling and limiting waste.

The Corporation, if it is serious about this problem, will have to begin outreach programmes on how it is necessary for residents to minimise the garbage they produce. And it has to do this repeatedly and continuously. Most of the civic body's efforts fail because there is no follow-up action beyond the initial publicity. Local councillors will have to be assigned targets in their respective wards for reduction in garbage output. And there has to be a measurement system by each ward on whether there is reduction and compliance of segregation at source. The Corporation has to also introduce punitive measures for worst offenders, particularly if they are corporate institutions. These statistics need to be made public. All this, if done over a period of time and consistently at that, will bear fruit. If not, we are sitting on a ticking time bomb.

• by  
**A Special  
Correspondent**

that are exposed to unscientific methods of disposal, including burning, which releases toxic gases, now encircle both landfills.

But perhaps the biggest threat is the insensitivity of the citizenry itself. There is firstly the attitude that handling garbage is someone else's business. All over the city you see nothing but mounds of garbage, feasted on by flies, pigs, dogs and cattle. The animals are attracted to the rubbish chiefly because the citizenry are not

Madras Eye



Happy, may be, but don't know what's New about the Year... when my friends, toys, cell phone, pet, school and even my parents are the same!

# Are concrete roads the answer?

(Continued from page 1)

honour of being the first major thoroughfare to have concrete topping in our city, but it is doubtful if commuters who were forced to take detours felt any joy in this. But it did lead to an important outcome – the Corporation did a rethink on the grade of concrete it is using. It has now decided on a much higher grade, which will set in a day. The downside is that it costs 20 per cent more than the earlier grade of concrete.

The third disadvantage is the impossibility of ever cutting the concrete roads to access drains and cables, something that is common practice in our city. The avoidance of such road-cuts entails proper planning before the roads are laid, with ducts for drains and cables that can be independently accessed. Past experience (MRTS et al) has shown our officialdom of being completely incapable of such coordinated activity. The Corporation in its web site openly names agencies such as Metro Water, BSNL and TANGEDCO (TNEB) as the chief perpetrators of road cuts. To what purpose then are concrete roads?

Next, is concrete a solution for a city like ours? These roads have no dust absorption capacity and so this will only increase the particulate content in the atmosphere. Also concrete being white in colour will radiate heat causing ambient temperature to go up. Is this desirable in Chennai that is already witnessing a steady increase in temperatures during summer?

As to the promise of world-class, it would do our officers and ministers a world of good to drive around and see what is ground reality. Once they see the fashion in which the concrete is being poured and allowed to set, they may pause to think over whether concrete roads may not be complicating an already difficult situation. A photograph (see page 1) shows the usage condition of a recently-laid concrete road corner in T Nagar area.

## READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **hand written** letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i-s' and crossing the 't-s'. Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a post-card space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

– THE EDITOR

## CHENNAI HERITAGE

No. 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014

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# Running in Royapettah

**T**he *Man from Madras Musings* had to take a decision and pretty soon at that. Years of having others such as the Chief and MMM's good lady (also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed) do this for him had robbed MMM of the ability. But for how long could he be infirm of purpose, as Lady Macbeth would have termed it?

MMM was at the intersection of White's Road and Westcott Road in Royapettah recently. His destination was the Express Avenue Mall and separating him from it was a vast stream of seemingly never-ending traffic. MMM's past and fairly blameless life flashed before him and he recollected his kindergarten teacher's instructions that you needed to look left, right and then left again before crossing any road. MMM did accordingly. He looked left and saw that there was no traffic coming his way from that direction and that was all to the good, as the good book has a habit of

ens the intellect and so it was with MMM. He recollected vaguely that Mahatma Gandhi had once said something about how you needed to win battles with humility. And what better sign of that than the traditional Indian greeting of holding the palms pressed together, in a Namaste. MMM stepped forth, his arms stretched and palms pressed together. He was like a suffragette throwing herself before the horses at Ascot.

That did the trick. Buses, cars, motorcycles, autos and cycles, not to forget vans, screeched to a halt. Many drivers smiled at MMM, some laughed and others cheered as he made it to the other side. The only ones who were not amused in the least were the guardians of the law. They formed a reception committee of four on the other side and, as MMM waded ashore, duly scooped him in and conducted him to the base of a nearby tree.

Did MMM realise that what he had done was extremely

A couple of weeks ago a political outfit took over the spot, erected a makeshift stage, put up microphones and high decibel speakers and entertained everyone, MMM included, for an evening. This was one of those rationalist entities. Everyone was clad in black, the posters announcing the event being of the same hue. A few raunchy songs were sung, all from the latest films, and then the main speaker of the evening took over. Having thanked each one of the organisers (of whom there were fifty or so) and the vast numbers that had turned up to hear him (around five), he proceeded to attack God tooth and nail. The doings of the Hindu pantheon, by which he meant the divine beings in heaven and not those who run a beloved newspaper, occupied most of the speech. The blue God who wields the flute, and his amorous doings, came in for due censure. Then came a blistering attack on a God-on-the-hill who in mythology

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

saying rather quite often. He then looked right and that was where the problem was, for it being a one-way, all the traffic was coming from that side and at high speed.

Buses, autos, cars, motorcycles, vans and cycles volleyed and thundered. Under similar circumstances, though hardly as hazardous, the Light Brigade had charged ahead; but not so MMM. He was pusillanimous at best and kept hovering at the edge. He looked at the clock tower, which appeared to be sympathetic. After all, reflected MMM, it ought to feel much worse, having to be in the thick of traffic, day in and day out.

Across the road, four policemen were having a relaxed time. This being the balmy Chennai winter, they relaxed in the sunshine, leaning on a motorcycle that they had appropriated from its hapless owner by the simple expedient of stepping forward together as one man, stopping the vehicle in mid-stride and taking away its key. The unfortunate biker was standing by, smiling ingratiatingly at the representatives of the law and hoping no doubt that they knew all about the quality of mercy.

MMM tried attracting the attention of the quartet but they remained blissfully unaware. Time was getting on and if MMM did not take the plunge he would have been late for his appointment. Thus it was that MMM put his foot forward only to rapidly retract it as a motorcycle almost ran over it. Peril, they say, sharp-

dangerous, they asked. The sudden darting forward of pedestrians, they said, was extremely dangerous for vehicles. MMM could almost imagine that the buses, cars and the rest were horses that shy and rear on seeing a human figure. The law was of the view that MMM, vide his stupidity, could have caused the worst of accidents. MMM explained that he had no other option. He then mustered enough courage and asked the four as to why they did not come forward to help. That was not possible, they said. They were not traffic police. They were posted there to check seat belt and helmet violations!

In God's name

**H**as *The Man from Madras Musings* ever invited you home? Unlikely. But you must come and look him up sometime. Chez MMM, as those of you who have faithfully read this column over several years (and may your tribe increase) know, is the only surviving house in what was once a residential area. But that is neither here nor there. What MMM wishes to highlight now is an intersection of three roads just abaft the house (if you can call it that), and practically below the window of the room from where MMM churns out his immortal prose. This intersection is a busy one, frequently prone to gridlocks. It is, therefore, considered an ideal spot by political parties for holding public meetings. The police, who give permission freely, appear to be of the same view.

was born to two male Gods, albeit when one of the parents was in female garb. Towards the end he dwelt on the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and the last named in particular came in for spirited badinage. The assembled throng of fifty-five applauded and cheered. Some of the more conservative elements in MMM's neighbourhood were outraged. But MMM advised them to keep their peace.

A couple of days later, the same corner was allotted to a religious group. A band of the faithful was leaving to visit the God-on-the-hill, born to two male Gods. Everyone was back in place – the makeshift stage, the microphones, the speakers and the men in black. MMM noted that several of the organisers and attendees were the ones who had respectively organised and attended the earlier 'rationalist' meet. They wore the same black and nothing could have exceeded their piety when they sang the devotionals in a raucous chorus. On Christmas Day, carols were sung from the same spot.

Tailpiece

**T**he newspapers of the city carried on the 1st of January reports on New Year Eve celebrations around the urb prima in Indis, viz Chennai. Just above this was the schedule for loadshedding for the month, neatly divided area-wise. *The Man from Madras Musings* realises that life goes on and has to go on.

– MMM

# OUR READERS WRITE



## Imperial authority

I fully agree that we should treat and preserve our built heritage with more respect (MM, December 1st). Without prejudice to what I do, I may even agree to a large extent on whether the current architecture styles, materials and technology are Indian or appropriate. But why chafe when *Ripon Building* is called British?

Architecture was one of the most potent cultural tools for stamping imperial authority and wasn't it the *raison d'être* of much of our colonial architecture? Which is exactly what this building set out to do. Reading *Ripon Building* as anything else is difficult. To claim anything else would be akin to saying that the intent of Lutyen's design of New Delhi was to celebrate the *chatri* as a design element or to showcase the Dholpur stone as a cladding material.

In 1913, Churchill was still serving in the British Government of the day, Gandhiji was experimenting with 'satyagraha' in South Africa, and Nehru had just come back to India after qualifying to practise law. Though Europe was simmering, few would have anticipated the World Wars or the horrific destruction that they resulted in. Delhi had just then become the colonial capital and probably not yet recovered from the hangover of the George V's Delhi Durbar. The imperial sun was at its zenith and this was when *Ripon Building* was conceived and built.

Some day this too will yield to a newer building – hopefully more relevant to our aspirations. Until then we can debate

our choices and try to figure out why so many still wear suits and ties, or why Manchester United is the most popular sports club in India?

L. Venkatesh  
lvcrn@yahoo.com

## Changing times

The blast from the past (which is now a popular expression) viz. V. Sriram's 'The Wooing of Isabella Druiit' (MM, December 16th) was just what the doctor ordered for an unusually chilly Chennai evening. In the olden days, a man like Araboun pressing his troth to a vastly younger lady was called a 'sugar daddy' and it was never taken seriously. The affliction was called 'Indian summer'.

Nowadays such afflictions by a senior citizen could land him in soup, as in a recent case which has become highly controversial. Times have changed.

C.G. Prasad  
9, C.S. Mudali Street  
Kondithope  
Chennai 600 079.

## Heritage awareness

Your articles on heritage have helped me so much in doing my project work on Indo-Saracenic architecture in Madras. I always used to feel that people, especially in our country, do not bother about heritage buildings and sites. I hope that your articles will create awareness and people will get to know the value of our past.

Kalpna  
3/277, Ananda Nagar  
Santhoshpuram  
Chennai 600 073

## SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

● Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), Madras Musings has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to CHENNAI HERITAGE and send it, together with the COUPON, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014 or C/O LOKAVANI SOUTHERN PRINTERS PVT. LTD., 62/63, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

An ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of just Rs.100 covers only a part of our costs. Corporate support and YOUR support will continue to be essential for Chennai Heritage and Madras Musings to play a greater role in creating awareness about the city, its heritage and its environment. We therefore look forward to your sending us your contributions IN ADDITION TO your subscriptions.

If in the coming year Chennai Heritage receives repeated support from those of you who have already made contributions, and if many more supporters join the bandwagon, we will not only be able to keep Madras Musings going, but also be able to continue awareness-building exercises on on-going projects as well as undertake one or two more such exercises.

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to Madras Musings for 2013-14 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

We look forward to all readers of Madras Musings, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions.

– The Editor

# No flyovers, please

At a meeting of the residents of T'Nagar convened by this Association, the members discussed the proposal of the Chennai Corporation to extend the South Usman Road [SUR] flyover and construct a new one on North Usman Road [NUR] at an estimated cost of Rs. 260-Rs. 350 crore.

The SUR flyover begins barely 50 metres from the T. Nagar bus terminus and ends in front of GRT Thangamalgai. The Corporation and the public have since long given up on flyover, considering it as useless and more of a hurdle than a means to ease the traffic congestion. Flyovers have also made roads on either side very narrow as they were constructed without acquiring land on either side for proper roads, many existing roads always remaining congested. Then, why a new one at this place?

Moreover, this flyover only helps commuters to skip the Panagal Park junction. It does not even help skip Ranganathan Street junction, which is the most congested part of the locality.

Considering the above, the members were unanimous in their view that there was no need to construct any more flyovers and there was no point in spending good tax payers' money as lots have already been spent on the present ill-conceived flyover. The best option would be to demolish the existing flyover on South Usman Road; that would solve all issues in the most cost-effective manner, instead of trying to spend more money without any benefit to residents.

The members are of the unanimous view that the SUR flyover, built hoping to ease traf-

fic, has only created traffic chaos and a host of other problems for residents by effectively choking free movement of vehicles, particularly ambulances and fire engines. The flyover has only encouraged illegal parking and hawking, with very little action by the police and Corporation to remove them. With encroachment on both sides of the service-lanes of Usman Road, the free movement of residents has been further restricted.

Having realised that the SUR flyover is redundant and ill-conceived, the authorities, in order to make it appear busy, have made vehicles, including the public transport system, to take a circuitous route and use this flyover. In doing so, vehicles are forced to spend more on petrol/diesel and further pollute the environment.

Various court orders obtained by the residents have not been implemented by the police or the Corporation on the removal of hawkers and for the utilisation of space beneath the flyover.

The present proposal of the Chennai Corporation to extend the Usman Road flyover and construct a new one on both sides will only compound the woes of residents.

As a measure to de-congest the area, the members request the Corporation to construct Y-shape pedestrian subways at Pothy's junction with Duraiswami Road at Burkit Road-Madley Road-SUR (near T'Nagar bus-stand) and at Ranganathan Street-Usman Road junction.

T'Nagar Residents' Welfare Association  
30 Rangan Street  
Chennai 600 017

## Another look at trees

I read with interest the article entitled 'A further look at our trees' (MM, January 1st).

The biological names (see column 3 in the list below for correct names) have been badly spelt (see column 2 in the list).

Neem	<i>Azardicta indica</i>	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
Coral tree	<i>Erithrira</i>	<i>Erythrina variegata</i>
Tamarind	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	<i>Tamarindus indicus</i>
Mast tree	<i>Polielthia longifolia</i>	<i>Polyalthia longifolia</i>
Mahogany	<i>Swietimea mahagoni</i>	<i>Swietenia mahagoni</i>
Mango	<i>Mangefera indica</i>	<i>Mangifera indica</i>

Authors should be careful before submitting articles for publication.

Also, referring to *Polyalthia longifolia* as Asoka is unfortunate. The Asoka tree is *Saraca indica* (Leguminosaceae: Caesalpinaceae). In Tamil, *P. longifolia* is known as *nettilingam*.

Further, I cannot agree with the author's comment: "So this is not an eco-friendly tree for animals or humans". Does the author suggest that only those tree plants that are useful to humans are eco-friendly? If that is the case, all those trees that have not been found to bear use should have been destroyed long ago. By their sheer biomass, these trees use carbon-dioxide, the gas which humans and animals release in large volumes, and provide the most important oxygen. Let's not forget that.

In the same issue, the call for a Tree Act to be legislated urgently reminds me that during a recent visit to Loyola I was saddened that many new buildings have come up in the campus at the cost of many trees 50-70 years old.

Loyola was built on reclaimed land and the vegetation there is not a natural one, unlike that of the MCC Tambaram campus. I have been told that Fr Alfred Rapinat SJ had planted many trees (some native, and many introduced) in the campus. Many of these trees have now fallen victim to the builders. Must trees in Madras suffer such a fate?

A Friend of Trees  
Chennai 600 017

## 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](http://www.madrasmusings.com)

THE EDITOR

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

– THE EDITOR

# Resolving to make Natya respectable

(Continued from last fortnight)

Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar, who supported the resolution, said: "I am strongly of opinion that not only females but males should practise the art if they want to attain perfection in music itself... I am sure it will not be a very difficult affair for males to practise this art of dancing side by side with the greater art of music."

V. Varaha Narasimhacharlu, who was a member of the Academy's Experts' Committee, said: "If there is any defect in the morals of these persons [devadasis], steps should be taken to remedy that defect, but to destroy the art itself on that ground is neither an effective remedy nor a wise step."

Mrs. M.R. Ramaswami Sivan made a statement "as [one] be-

longing to the sex which takes to this art in greater numbers." She said that, in her younger days, she used to observe devadasi children being taught dancing by the nattuvans, and added: "Having become accustomed to see them dance, I began to imitate them in my own house. My attempts were

knign greater interest in it. I am hoping that they will be enabled to practise the art."

Dewan Bahadur N. Pattabhirama Rao Pantulu, who served as the Dewan of Cochin and was the father of Rukmini Lakshmi pathi, said: "To take a common illustration, it is an ad-

• by ARUDRA

appreciated by my people so long as I was a child; but later, when I came of age, the elders in the house began to check me and I had to drop the practice. The interest in the art, however, has been lurking in me all these years and it is now great pleasure to me that, though I have not had sufficient training in the art, I have lived to see my grandchildren

mitted fact that ghee is a necessary article of diet for our nutrition. Simply because it gets spoiled by being stored in a brass or copper vessel, we do not think of giving up the use of ghee altogether, but we try to secure its purity by taking care to see that it is stored in a better vessel." He wanted the rancidity to be eliminated and purity restored.

## Murdoch's Madras ancestor also faced charges

Rupert Murdoch, the media mogul from Australia, had an ancestor, Robert Sherson, who served with the East India Company in Madras in various capacities. Sherson was the great-great-grandfather of Rupert's mother, Elizabeth Joy Greene.

The Murdochs were of Scottish origin. The great-grandfather of Rupert, Rev. James Murdoch, was a Minister in the Free Church of Scotland. It was Rupert's grandfather, Patrick Murdoch, who immigrated to the State of Victoria in 1884. A son of Patrick, Keith Arthur Murdoch, married Elizabeth Joy Greene, Catherine Jemina Sherson's grand-daughter. A daughter of Robert Sherson, Catherine Sherson, had married Frederick Forth who was, in turn, Lt. Governor of the West Indies, and Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. The Forths seemed to have eventually settled in the Australian State of Tasmania. A daughter of theirs married a Greene. It was Keith Murdoch who actively took to journalism and later went on to become a newspaper proprietor. The son followed in the footsteps of his father and the rest is, as they say, history.

Rupert Murdoch not so long ago faced many charges for unethical actions. His ancestor, Robert Sherson too faced similar charges in a case of fraud during his tenure with the Company's establishment in Madras nearly two centuries ago. He was, however, found innocent.

Records list Robert Sherson as a senior merchant with the Company. He was appointed Post Master General of Madras in 1793. A marriage record in St. Mary's in the Fort mentions the marriage of Sherson with Catherine Taylor (daughter of Captain John Taylor, later Colonel) on May 22, 1798.

It was during the governorship of Lord William Bentinck in 1807 that Sherson was put in charge jointly with one Mr. Cooke to manage the receipt and disbursal of imported grain to the natives as part of famine relief, instead of Mungo Dick, Trade Board member and a Mr. Balfour, Collector of Customs. Personal animosity seems to have existed between Sherson and Dick before and had

grown multifold after the former's appointment overseeing the latter.

A hurricane struck Madras in December 1807 and most of the granaries that were unroofed suffered heavy damage. A grains committee was formed to investigate the loss and it included Dick as a member and Cooke as its secretary. Sherson ordered a survey of all the affected granaries to prepare a statement of loss after being ordered by Dick to submit the report at the earliest. Succumbing to pressure, Sherson submitted a report solely relying on the estimates provided by one of his subordinate officers. This proved to be a slippery slope for Sherson, as the estimates provided were all deliberately falsified. An explanation provided by Sherson fell on deaf ears where Dick and Cooke were concerned, though the rest of the committee were satisfied. But Dick and Cooke would not let go.

Dick, a friend of George Barlow, later Governor of Madras, seized the report submitted by the committee and kept it under guard in Fort St. George, without following due procedure, namely, bringing it to the Government's notice. Another committee was set up in which Dick was one of the investigators. As was only to be expected, Sherson was dismissed in February 1808 from all offices, on the charge of fraudulently selling the grain and embezzling 29,509 pagodas derived from the sale.

The case excited much in the settlement as it involved a servant of the Company, who before the trial had borne excellent character. He was under suspension for seven years. During this difficult phase, Alexander Novell, a member of Parliament, liaised with the 1st Earl of Lonsdale and Sir James Graham to clear Sherson's name. Finally, Sherson was acquitted, as the case was found framed on false grounds.

Sherson, in 1816, named his son Alexander Novell Sherson in gratitude to his friend who stood by him during his time of trouble. The Court of Directors went further, recommending Sherson for re-employment.

— Bharath Yeshwanth

C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar, uncle of Congress leader M. Bhaktavatsalam, said: "In my younger days, I remember, there was an Anti-Nautch party formed. The object with which it was formed was that prostitution, which generally prevailed among the class which practised this art, should be eradicated. But I am afraid the result has been that Nautch had undoubtedly gone to a great extent, but that prostitution still persists. This clearly shows that prostitution has nothing to do at all with the practice of dance as an art."

Dr. Tillaisthanam Srinivasaraghava Iyengar, noted authority on Thyagaraja's compositions, said: "The immediate task of art-lovers should be to encourage the fine arts, particularly among the reclaimed members of the devadasi class, especially as their heredity in the art will be valuable... As for the question of family ladies taking to the art, it is enough, for the present, they are induced to cultivate a sympathetic and an appreciative attitude towards it. Time will work out the rest."

At the end of the debate, the resolution was passed unanimously. The final text of the resolution read, in part:

1. Bharata Natyam as a great and an ancient art being unexceptionable, this conference views with concern its rapid decline and appeals to the public and art associations to give it the necessary encouragement.

2. This conference requests the Music Academy, Madras, to take steps to disseminate correct ideas regarding the art and to help the public to a proper appreciation thereof.

3. This conference is of opinion that it is desirable that, to start with, women's organisations do take immediate steps to give proper training in the art, by instituting a course of instruction for the same.

4. This conference is of opinion that, in order to make dancing respectable, it is necessary to encourage public performances thereof before respectable gatherings.

Thus it was that the Music Academy laid the foundation for rescuing Bharata Natyam from the danger of extinction and reviving it. Another achievement of the Academy was the naming, with the approval of this conference, of Sadir as Bharata Natyam. The idea was to remove the unsavoury connotations of the priorly existing names like Sadir, Dasiattam, etc. Sadir, which had entered a 'respectable' home, had been given a new lease of life under a new name, just like girls given in marriage.

In the opinion of Krishna Iyer, the renaissance of Bharata



Smt. Kalanidhi, a pioneering dancer.

Natyam may be said to have begun on January 1, 1933, the date of the second dance recital of the Kalyani Daughters at the Academy. On this second occasion, there was a large audience, probably because of the attention focussed on the art form by the debates at the Academy's 1932 annual conference and elsewhere. The impact the recital made on the public was therefore much greater.

Following this recital, the Academy organised several more in what may be termed its first decade of dance.

The seventh conference was a conference of consolidation. One of the resolutions presented at it read: "Resolved that the Academy do represent to Hindu Religious Endowments Board that steps should immediately be taken to see that Tevaram, Vaishnava Prabandham, Bharata Natya, nagaswaram and other temple musicals are again made part of the daily offering to the God in all temples."

In the years that followed, the dance recitals rather than discussions about the art and its future held centre stage. An academy, to remain true to its ideals, should always be discriminating and present only the best artists. Artistes from families who considered dance as a hereditary profession dominated the stage until 1936. The first non-professional dancer at the Academy was Balachandra, a Brahmin girl about whom not much information is available. She danced in December 1938. In the following year, two other girls of similar background, Lakshmi Sastri and Kalanidhi, danced.

Since the prestigious platform of the Music Academy could not be made available except to a few outstanding artistes, many who had taken up Bharata Natyam in right earnest and wished to perform in the public had to stage their recitals under the auspices of various sabhas and associations. And so Bharata Natyam spread to a wider stage.

(To be concluded)

# The 'Emperor of the Tamil Stage'

He was acknowledged as the Nataka Chakravarti, or Emperor of the Stage, in an era when music was king, queen and courtier. His dramatic singing was recognised as the high point of the musical values of the Tamil theatrical renaissance. Such was the power of his song that even the common man developed an ear for classical music. His on-stage and off-stage romance with his adoring partner, the inimitable K.B. Sundarambal, set a million hearts aflame in the Tamil-speaking world — from Madurai and Kumbakonam to Colombo, Rangoon and Singapore. His sudden and sad passing away made Sundarambal don sackcloth and ashes with the pledge that she would act with no other male partner, a pledge that she kept for the next half century of her life.

S.G. Kittappa has been all but forgotten by the Establishment down the decades. His birth centenary in 2006 did not excite as much as a whisper. The 'Lion of Shencottah' is an almost forgotten man even in his home town. Had he not got over his antipathy to the gramophone in the last few years of his life and recorded some sixty songs, and had his friend and admirer, the freedom-fighter and Gandhian, Aakkoor Ananthachari, not recorded the highlights of his career, the life and exploits of this vocal Pied Piper might have been the stuff of old wives' tales.

It was on the afternoon of December 2, 1933 that a bedridden Kittappa covered his face with his hands and turned away from the world forever after battling the ravages of alcoholism. The mikeless times of Kittappa's dramatic days, when men had to sing like sopranos to reach audiences at the end of the North Pole, are now truly history. The energy, exhilaration and effortless mastery that Kittappa brought to a song have still not been equalled or excelled. And when the listener left the confines of the gramophone record for the living moments of the stage, Kittappa was magic.

According to legend, after bathing in the Tamraparani, eight-year-old Kittappa (named Ramakrishnan, he had been called Bongappa and Kittan till he universally became Kittappa) had worshipped with his brothers at the beautiful Kurukuthurai Murugan temple situated in the middle of the river on

a rock known as Tiruvuruvalmai. Suddenly, he swooned and fainted. Kittappa's brothers were agitated, but the priest was confident that the boy had had a vision. Kittappa soon regained consciousness. According to him, he had just completed singing a Tamil hymn on Murugan when he felt that the deity was

indeed seemed to have opened His treasures to this boy, for those who met Kittappa have had experience of his 'divine' dimension. Sundarambal herself at her first meeting with him would speak of him as a *gandharva*. The cognoscenti looked upon him as an incomparable musical titan.

• by Vamanan

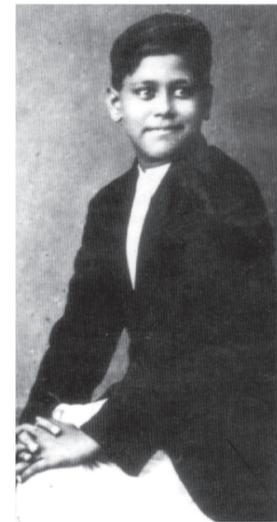
calling him. "I am not aware what happened," he said. This experience would have been brushed aside if it had not marked a new musical flowering. Before the Kurukuthurai experience, the young Kittappa indeed sang sweetly, but his singing had limitations, his musically talented elder brothers noticed. After the swooning incident, some unseen inner springs seemed to have opened for Kittappa. Rich and nuanced ragas like *Todi* and *Saveri* burst forth from him in all their abundant splendour. Murugan

Alwarkurichi, in the Ambasamudram taluk of Tirunelveli District, was the village of Kittappa's ancestors. In the 1830s, Kailasa Iyer was a pious man who owned a small piece of land near the fertile village. He found the stars favouring him through his wife Subbulakshmi of Shencottah. Suryanarayana Iyer, his father-in-law, was a rich man and Kailasa Iyer settled in his wife's village. The couple had four children, the second being Gangadhara Iyer (1856), Kittappa's father. A few years after his marriage, Gangadhara Iyer's parents died, and very quickly he lost all his inherited wealth, thanks to his so-called friends.



Kittappa the actor.

\* \* \*



The young Kittappa.

The brood of children in the family stood at a lordly ten with Kittappa being, born on August 25, 1906. Gangadhara Iyer had begun to write the accounts of a landowner, but earned hardly enough to keep the wolf from the door. Two of his sons, Subbiah and Chellappa, had to beg from door to door for food. Very soon they would join boys' companies, professional drama troupes consisting almost wholly of boy actors who could sing. They were the ultimate refuge for poor but talented boys for half a century from the last two decades of the 19th Century and, at the same time, a protest movement against the general indiscipline and wanton lifestyle of senior actors. The salary of 18 rupees a month the boys earned was the first step towards showing them the way out from utter penury for the family.

Gangadhara Iyer accompanied his two elder sons as they toured with their drama company and Kittappa travelled with him. The family had no means to send Kittappa to school. When he was five, Kittappa's real education began. He was all ears as the troupe's director, Vadyar Sankaradas Swamigal, a seminal personality of the Tamil stage, taught his elder brothers to sing and speak dialogue, watching them intently as they acted on stage.

Uncannily alive to the talent of children, Sankaradas Swamigal had the six-year old Kittappa first sing a prayer song in a play in Madura. Thereafter, Kittappa sang a variety of prayer songs. One day, when he acted in the play, *Ali Badusha*, as a tragic Muslim king's pathetic son begging in the streets of a strange town, Kittappa's soulful singing in the role wrung the hearts of the audience who flung gold and currency on to the stage. A similar role in the folk tragedy *Nallathangal* also had the audience in tears. Kittappa seemed

to have been made for the stage and Sankaradas had set off another exciting career on its magnificent course.

With Kittappa their vanguard, the brothers struck it out on their own. At six years of age, Kittappa took Singapore by storm and acted there for months. This was followed by a whirlwind tour of South India and Ceylon. Colombo was to play a vital part in Kittappa's life; he would later meet his heartthrob Sundarambal there and pair, to mesmerising effect, with her on stage for the first time in that city.

\* \* \*

Enter C. Kannaiah Naidu — a minor stage actor who had gone broke running a drama company and was finally said to have been inspired in a dream by Andal, the saint poetess, to stage plays on Hindu themes. His Chennai Hindu Vinoda Naadaga Sabha staged plays like *Dasavataram*, *Sri Krishna Leela*, *Sri Andal Tirukkalyanam* and *Sri Ramanuja Vaibhavam*, all vehicles of the spectacular in Tamil drama.

When Kittappa joined him, he alone was projected in posters and drama notices, while the rest was relegated to the background. Kittappa's musical dimension swung these visual extravaganzas to celestial heights. Imagine the histrionics needed for a male to portray Andal and carry a full-length play on his shoulders! Kittappa seems to have pulled it off effortlessly. People went to these plays as they would troop to temple festivals, camped in the vicinity of the theatres (or what passed for them), and waited for days to get tickets.

(To be concluded)

## A big 'Thank You' to 11 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.11.13 and 15.12.13, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *Madras Musings*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

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## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period December 16-31, 2013. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Name the Russian general known for designing the AK-47 rifle who passed away recently.

2. Name the new national singles badminton champions.

3. Why was the senior bureaucrat Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in the news recently?

4. Name the bowler who, during the South Africa tour, became the fourth Indian to scalp 300 Test wickets?

5. Name the unmanned space observatory of the European Space Agency that was launched recently to compile a 3D space catalogue of approximately 1 billion astronomical objects.

6. Which legend has been selected for the BCCI's prestigious Col. C. K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement award for 2013?

7. Name the head of the royal family of erstwhile Travancore who passed away recently.

8. *Unbreakable*, released recently, is the autobiography of which Indian Olympic medallist?

9. On December 31, 2013, which country became the 18th EU member state to adopt the euro?

10. Name the celebrated World War II code-breaker who has been granted a posthumous royal pardon 59 years after he took his own life following a conviction for homosexual indulgence.

\*\*\*

11. Name the Tamil work and the writer honoured with the Sahitya Akademi award.

12. Name the playwright of *Rathakkamner*, who passed away recently. The play was successfully made into a film starring M.R. Radha.

13. Where was the statue of Maharaja Balarama Varma, now in Gandhi Nagar, originally installed?

14. The Basin Bridge power station was modernised by which business entity before it was commissioned in 1998?

15. Of which common herbivore is there a variant called 'Madras Red'?

16. Wimco Nagar is named after a brand at present belonging to which Indian business giant?

17. Which political party's weekly journal is called *Sangoli*?

18. Which *sabha* in Chennai was founded in 1929 by A.K. Ramachandra Iyer, M. Loganatha Mudaliar and K. Natesa Iyer?

19. Which magnificent Chennai edifice, designed by G.S.T. Harris, spans an area of 81x41m and encompasses a floor space of 10,000 square metres over three floors?

20. Which detective's spouse is Indra and has servants called Kathrikai and Manickam?

(Answers on page 8)



The Jagdish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah.

# The Banyan and the Bo

(Continued from last fortnight)

## Banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*)

The Great Banyan Tree in the Indian Botanical Gardens, Kolkata, reported to be 200-250 years of age, was struck by lightning in 1925. The middle of the tree was excised to keep the remainder healthy. Long before this tragedy, the tree was damaged in 1884 and 1886 by cyclones. Yet, it looks like a forest rather than an individual tree. The area covered by the tree is 1.5 hectare or 3.7 acres. At present it has 3,300 aerial roots reaching down to the ground to support it. The present circumference is one kilometre. Fortunately the tree has a lot of open space around it and can grow larger with ease, particularly if it is well cared for.

The Banyan tree at the Theosophical Society in Adyar is considered to be over 450 years old. Its main trunk was damaged by a cloudburst in the 1980s. This tree has had several meetings held beneath it. Dr Annie Besant used to address gatherings of over a thousand people and J. Krishnamurthi too used to give talks there as

well as meditate. Besant also presided over a marriage of the Principal of the Theosophical College, Madanapalle, beneath the tree.

In the last few decades, the tree's growth has been restricted due to the Pavlova theatre being built near it on one side, other trees growing close to it and weeds and undergrowth not cleared. The tree

regenerate and develop into a massive tree that would attract world-wide attention.

When the main trunk of the Banyan is damaged due to aging or disease or lightning or storm as in the case of the tree at Adyar or that at Kolkata, its clonal form grows and grows, if not restricted for space. The Kolkata tree is fortunate that plenty of space is still available

in India. The strangler fig can often be seen encircling a Palmyra tree in and around Chennai and several other parts of India. But in the Western Ghats it is even more virulent, strangling big trees in the forests.

The Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia were abandoned for several centuries and when they were rediscovered, not long ago, several temples were fully engulfed mostly by the *Ficus* species and to this day the temples are preserved in this amazing style.

The Buddhist shrine in Adyar has the scion of the Bodhi Gaya tree. It was planted in December 1950 by C. Jinarajadasa, the then President of the Theosophical Society. A Bo tree, as it is commonly called in Sri Lanka, was sent there with Mahinda, the son of Emperor Asoka, some 2300 years ago. It was planted at Anuradhapura. Worship at the Bo tree has continued unbroken for all these years and it is considered the oldest historically documented tree in the world's. The Bo tree is considered sacred by Hindus and Jains as well.

(Concluded)

• by K.V.S. Krishna

has spread to about 42,000 square feet and its canopy's circumference is just 753 feet.

The world record for a Banyan tree belongs to a tree in Anantapur District, 35 kilometres from Kadri. Named Themamma mari manu, it covers 2.1 hectare or 5.18 acre and has 1100 prop roots. The Forest Department spent over Rs. 7 lakh to develop a protected environmental complex unit which hosts an aviary and is enriched by beautiful landscaping.

550 years ago, Themamma predicted that the tree would

around it. The saying 'The King is dead, Long live the King' is quite apt for the Banyan tree.

## Budhi, Peepul or Bo tree (*Ficus religiosa*)

Bo tree or Peepul tree belongs to the same family as Banyan or the fig tree and the famous strangler fig.

The Peepul tree grows in lime-rich conditions and its seedlings grow in crevices in walls and buildings. It is no wonder the *Senate House* was a victim of this tree. This is a characteristic of the *Ficus* genera, which has 16 species listed

# A Chief Merchant who "ruled Madras from without"

He had extensive mercantile investments and connections with the overseas trading world. He conducted significant trade

mosque in the new settlement called Madras. The mosque was built in Black Town in Moors' Street (now Second Line

foreigners. He started his business along with Thimmanna but had more business acumen than him, dealing shrewdly with both the English and the Dutch, as well as the Golconda administration and building his own trading empire. His closeness with Golconda could also be a reason for him to be known as Hasan Khan. Viranna eventually became a major landowner in Madras. In 1678, the Council granted him the right to pay only half customs on goods at Madras, a privilege he received also from the Golconda Nawab.

Viranna teamed with several merchants to form his joint

(Continued on page 7)

• by K.R.A. Narasiah

with the English East India Company.

Viranna was also known as Hasan Khan, as he built the first

Beach), but there is no evidence of its existence now. He was a shrewd trader, and knew how to manage the trade with the

# The pioneering woman doctor

What stands today as Kasturba Gandhi Hospital for Women in Triplicane and prides itself as a hospital with specialist services in uro-gynaecological problems was the brainchild of Mary Anne Scharlieb, who came to Madras as the wife of William Mason Scharlieb in 1866.

Born Mary Anne Dacomb Bird, she grew up with her grandparents because of her mother's early death. When she was 19, she met William Scharlieb in London, where William, a person of German descent, was studying law. Mary and William married much against the wishes of her parents in December 1865. William decided to practise law in India and soon after their marriage they sailed to Madras where William set up his practice. In Madras, they had a son in 1866, a daughter in 1868, and a son in 1870.

While in Madras, William edited the *Madras Jurist*, a journal for practising lawyers. Mary Anne helped him in this task. On one occasion, she had the opportunity to read Sir Joseph Frayer's article on the plight of Indian women during childbirth. They were restricted from seeking medical help during complications, mainly because the medical practitioners then in India were men. (Frayer was the President of the Medical Board of the India Office, London.) Reading the article affected Mary Anne deeply. Her interest to study medicine was whipped up. She joined midwifery training. In addition, she offered voluntary service as a 'nurse' at the lying-in hospital in Madras, (Madras General Hospital?). This was when Ed-

ward Balfour pioneeringly decided to open the gates of Madras Medical College for women. Mary Anne was one of the first four women to take advantage of this opportunity. She was admitted to pursue a Licentiate in Medicine & Surgery (LM&S), a three-year programme then offered at Madras Medical College. In her own words: "I explained my views and desires as to the medical education of women to Dr. Balfour. He most kindly offered to take me to the Lying-in Hospital and to commend me to the practical teaching of its Superintendent, Surgeon-Major Cockerill..."

She graduated in 1878.

That same year, she returned to England with her children, travelling in a small ship, her eyes fixed on a degree in medicine. On her return to England she met \*Dr. Elizabeth Anderson, the only qualified medical woman until 1877\*, who had just then started the London School of Medicine for Women (LSMW). Mary Anne's extended stay in India and her frail physique did not impress Anderson. She thought that Mary Anne was physically unfit to pursue a stressful degree programme. Mary Anne persevered and was finally accepted as a student at LSMW in 1879. In November 1882, at the age of 37, she was awarded her MB degree by the University of London, with Honours in all subjects and a gold medal in obstetric medicine. Mary Anne was the first woman to win this distinction in the annals of the University of London. Winning the gold medal entitled her to a scholarship to further enhance her skills in surgical obstetrics. She availed herself of the opportunity and went to Vienna (Austria) to train in surgical obstetrics.

Her perseverance impressed

Sir Henry Acland, a leading name in English medicine at the time. Sir Henry enabled her to meet Queen Victoria, who raptly listened to Mary Anne on the state of Indian women who, she explained, were denied help from male doctors due to their

● **'Pages from History'**  
by **DR. A. RAMAN**  
*Charles Sturt University*  
*Orange, New South Wales*  
*Australia*

faith and who were relegated to the ignorance of the native midwives who attended on them during childbirth. Queen Victoria warmly approved Mary Anne's interest in the need to train women medical doctors in India.

Mary Anne and William returned to Madras in 1883. She was keen on establishing an exclusive women's hospital in Madras. With support from the then Government, largely influenced by Edward Balfour, who was the Surgeon-General at the time, the Queen Victoria Hospital for Caste and Goshia Women was founded in *Moore's Garden*, Nungambakkam. (Moore's Road, connecting *Moore's Garden*, celebrates the name of George Moore, who belonged to Madras Civil Service, was the Civil Auditor until 1814, and died in Madras in 1834).

Lady Grant Dufferin, along with eminent local persons such as Kasturi Bashyam Iyengar, R. Raghunatha Rao, the Raja of Vizianagaram, (Justice) S Muthuswamy Iyer, the Raja of Venkatgiri, and Raja Sir Savalai Ramaswamy Mudaliar, played a key role in developing this facility. The government donated a site in Triplicane (Chepauk) in

1890 and also donated a sum of Rs.10,000. The main building was constructed through the munificence of the Raja of Venkatgiri who donated Rs. 1,00,000. The hospital moved to this location in June 1890 and remains there. The Madras Government took over the management of the hospital in April 1921. That this hospital established a name for itself through the sustained efforts of pioneering women doctors of yesteryears of Madras, such as Mary Beadon, Hilda Mary Lazarus and E Madhuram, has already been narrated in these pages.

Mary Anne returned to England in 1887. On her return she secured her MD and MS

degrees from the University of London, earning the rare distinction of being the first Englishwoman to secure these academic titles. She rose in the ranks and presided over the annual meeting of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology section of the British Medical Association in 1910.

She wrote several books and papers on the importance of the mother's health in the context of children's health. She was decorated with a CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in 1917 and made a Dame of the British Empire in 1926. She died in England in 1930 at the age of 85, leaving an admirable legacy.



Mary Scharlieb (1908) by Hugh Goldwin Reviere.

As I was writing this piece, I was struck by an amazing, coincidental, parallel that both Mary Anne in Madras and Ida Scudder in Tindivanam were stimulated to study medicine by an identical trigger factor, although Ida's professional life in North Arcot started 30 years later, by when Mary Anne had returned to England.

Mary Scharlieb explains the purpose of *Reminiscences*, her autobiography (1924), as follows:

"... my object is to convince medical women students and junior practitioners that a successful, happy, and useful career can be, and ought to be, the guerdon of their toil, though inasmuch as we can never get more out of any enterprise than we put into it, they are likely to find that success and opportunities of usefulness will vary directly with the vigour that they put into their studies and the love that they bring into professional practice. It is impossible to do the maximum amount of good to one's patients if one attempts to serve their bodies only. The real success and value of medical and surgical work is in proportion to the degree with which physicians and surgeons recognise the threefold nature of those whom they desire to serve."

I felt these words inspirational. I am confident that many women doctors and those aspiring to become ones too would experience what I felt.

\* Elizabeth Garrett (Anderson) in 1865 got a Society of Apothecaries certificate to practise medicine. She qualified as a doctor in France in 1870.

## THE MAN WHO "RULED FROM WITHOUT"

(Continued from page 6)

stock company. He also had his own trading house, a flourishing one. However, his main business was supplying cloth to the Company procured from different sources – but chiefly from south Andhra.

Revenue farming was a system adopted by the English and under it Indians rented land. Thus, Viranna became the renter of Armagaon (Durgarayapatnam) and Kothapatnam (north of Madras), paying the Company 1200 pagodas a year. Though he was not making money from this – in fact, he was losing as he was not able to make that amount through collection from taxes – he remained a renter, since that gave him social status. In fact, the Company was happy with

Viranna as he was able to deal with the local Nayaks who troubled the Company. Viranna was so powerful that the Company turned a blind eye to complaints against him. He wielded so much power that one of the severest critics of the Governor, Sir William Langhorne, said (1670), "Sir William rules from within the Fort and Verona from without."

When Kasi Viranna died early in 1680, he was given a 30-gun salute at his funeral. As his body was being carried to the cremation ground by local Hindus, some Muslims intervened saying that Viranna was a Muslim and therefore should be buried according to their religious rites. As he had been instrumental in building the mosque, he had converted to their religion, they asserted. The

Company officials were drawn into the dispute and after a long discussion ruled that he had never changed his religion, though he befriended the Muslim community. His cremation took place according to Hindu rites. He had a daughter, his only child, then just eleven years old. His wife had predeceased him. Though he had married again, the second wife had borne no children. Some elders suggested that she should commit *sati*. But the Company officials would have nothing of it; it is believed that the Governor himself prevented such a thing happening.

The Company had planned to present a gold medal with a chain to him in appreciation of his services, but since this could not be done during his lifetime, his widow was paid its value.

# When 'Varsity cricket reigned

When I first saw the news on NDTV 24X7 news channel that it was, along with Toyota, sponsoring and organising an inter-university cricket tournament, I was greatly thrilled and delighted. It brought back to my memory the late 1950s, and early 1960s when we played the All-India Inter-University Cricket Tournament for the Rohinton Baria Trophy. Mind you, those days all the matches were played over three days and were all classified as first class matches.

In my first year (1959-60) four university teams played in the South Zone. Matches were all played in Madras at the University Union grounds in Egmore and the Marina grounds. Both had matting wickets. The teams that played were Madras, Mysore, Osmania and Ceylon university teams. We (Osmania) beat Madras in the finals at the Marina grounds and this match is most remembered for the classic hundred that Asif Iqbal (later Pakistan captain) scored. For Madras

University, P.K. Bellappa got a hundred in the second innings.

We played Bombay University in a semi-final at Pune. Those who played for Bombay were S.G. Adhikari, Ajit Wadekar, Dilip Sardesai, S.J. Diwakar (captain), Baloo Gupte and Ramakant Desai, to name a few. Bombay piled up 500 plus runs and we were bowled out for less than a hundred and conceded the match.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a majority of the cricketers who played for India literally graduated from the inter-university tournament. Though there was not enough money in the universities to provide excellent facilities, the importance of the tournament drove the players to bear all the inconveniences

• by P.R. Man Singh

and hardships. When we were playing, Jaisimha was the captain and had already played for India in a Test match. But he stayed with us in the pavilion and slept on the floor and never grumbled at the Rs.4.50 that we got as meal allowance. Similarly, Ramakant Desai of Bombay had also played for India but stayed with the Bombay team with six in a room.

It is a pity that the Rohinton Baria Tournament has lost all its sheen and the universities are not giving it enough importance and, over the years, with umpteen universities coming up, the attraction for a budding cricketer to play in Rohinton Baria is lost. I understand now it is played just to complete the formality as a part of an annual feature. It is just a ritual and for-



Asif Iqbal.

mality that has to be gone through. I also understand that the system of enrolling talented sportsmen in various disciplines under the sports quota is not properly used or applied. Thus, talented sportsmen do not join the universities.

Talking purely for cricket, the moment a talented cricketer performs at some level, the kind of media attention that he gets makes him disinterested in pursuing any studies. Instead, he concentrates on the game full-time in the hunt for a lucrative contract somewhere. Also, the corporates have virtually stopped employing cricketers in their organisations.

Associated Cement Company of Bombay was the first to provide employment for cricketers. Players of the calibre of Polly Umrigar, Ramakant Desai, M.K. Mantri, Babu Nadkarni, and Dilip Sardesai were all with ACC. And, for a while, even Ajit Wadekar and Sunil Gavaskar were with ACC. Then came State Bank of India in a very big way. They employed cricketers all over the country and, there was a time when the whole of the Indian team was from SBI.

Tata's were another corporate and so were Nirlons and Mafatlals. The whole process was to give and take. The corporate provided security to the players to concentrate and play the game and, in return, the corporate got all the mileage in the media. The question arose as to how the corporate picked these players. Yes, by their respective performances in the inter-university tournament.

The game flourished. India did well at the international level and, when the players retired from active cricket, they retired to plum positions in their respective corporates.

Though I am not a fan of the T/20 format, since it is the order of the day, I accept it. I am of the old school and for me the longer format of the game is real cricket. That is a battle between bat and ball. But moving with the times, I am willing to accept the T/20 format, now that a beginning has been made for an inter-university T/20 tournament.

The BCCI and the University Sports Control Board should liaise with each other and work towards rebuilding the Rohinton Baria Trophy tournament of the past. The BCCI in future should also schedule a fixture for a Combined University team against visiting teams as was done in the past. Universities too should look out for talented sportsmen as they emerge from schools and enrol, encourage and promote them to bring laurels to the university to which they represent and belong to. (Courtesy: Straight Bat)

Dates for Your Diary

Till January 31: Village Festival at DakshinaChitra, as follows:

Till January 20: *Mayilattam*, *Karagam* and *Poikkal Kudhirai* by Thanigai Raju and troupe, Tamil Nadu.

Till January 27: Lambani dance by Visvakarma and troupe from Andhra Pradesh.

January 29-31: *Thappattam* by Adi Vishnu and troupe.

Till January 25: *A Journey in Solitude* – solo show by Yusuf Arakkul (at DakshinaChitra.)

January 22-February 3: Kerala Murals. Group show by Naveen, Sunil Kumar and Baburaj (at DakshinaChitra.)

January 22-February 23: Water Colours by Gayathri (at DakshinaChitra.)

February 8-16: Glass Sculpting by Anjali Srinivasan (at DakshinaChitra.)

February 26-March 10: Paintings by Dakshinamurthy (at DakshinaChitra.)

February 28-March 9: Puppet Festival 2014. Three groups – Calcutta Puppet Theatre, Tripura Puppet Theatre and Ramakrishna Kottabommattam – will hold performances for visitors. The groups will also hold a workshop that will focus on developing creativity and improving folk media skills (at DakshinaChitra.)

Workshops at DakshinaChitra For Adults

January 25: Numismatics/coin collection.

February 8-9: Macrame Wall Hangings.

February 20-21: Glass sculpting  
February 23: Saree draping

For Children

January 25: Wheel and coil pottery (8-14 years).

February 25: String Art – puppets made with jute coir (8-14 years).

For details: 98417 77779.

## Answers to Quiz

1. Mikhail Kalashnikov; 2. Kidambi Srikanth and P.V. Sindhu; 3. He is the new Ambassador to the USA; 4. Zaheer Khan; 5. 'Gaia'; 6. Kapil Dev; 7. Uthradom Tirunal Marthanda Varma; 8. M.C. Mary Kom; 9. Latvia; 10. Alan Turing.

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11. Joe D Cruz's *Korkai*; 12. Tiruvarur Thangarasu; 13. At the Travancore Maharaja Park in Esplanade; 14. GMR; 15. Goat; 16. ITC; 17. Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam; 18. R.R. Sabha in Mylapore; 19. *Ripon Building*; 20. Shankarlal.

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