

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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## INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- New hope for the Marsh
- City's green landmarks
- Keeping the record straight
- An early American connection

## A long haul yet for Metro Rail

The decks are cleared for Chennai's long-awaited Metro Rail system to roll out. Those in the know agree that these have been cleared for quite some time now, but who are we to cavil at the delay? Though a section of the media has gone to town over the inauguration and has written of it as the beginning of the end of all traffic woes in the city, we would advise a more cautious approach. For there is much that still needs to be completed if the service is to prove effective.

Firstly, this is only a part of the service – the line being used only connects Koyambedu to Alandur. The rest of the route which, when fully executed, will connect Central Station to St Thomas Mount, will take quite a while before it is completed. The second line, from Wimco Nagar to the Airport, also has

to be completed. It is only when this is done will the full benefits of the metro service be enjoyed by the commuting public.

The delay in the execution of the project owing to various factors has caused an escalation of costs as well. Much will depend on the continuous fund-

### • by The Editor

ing of the project by the State and Central funding agencies for speedy completion.

Secondly, the completed section has quite a few issues that need immediate attention if the service is to see good patronage. The major problem is of last mile connectivity. As is well known, one of the chief causes for the failure of the Mass Rapid Transport System (MRTS) was its complete isola-

tion from all other modes of transport. If this is to be repeated by the Metro, it would indeed be a futile exercise. At the initiation of the Metro project, last mile connectivity was one of the major promises made. Now it is not so clear. Certainly, there are no bus bays anywhere in the vicinity of the completed stretch that awaits inauguration.

What of parking facilities? If the Metro hopes to get car users to switch to public transport, it will have to provide parking bays, or at least make arrangements in the near vicinity for this. At present, no plans appear to be afoot to achieve this and those who live in the vicinity of the Metro stations fear that their streets will soon become unauthorised parking lots for the cars that await

(Continued on page 2)

## Are contractors bent on cleaning up PWD?

The first half of May was not as hot as it threatened to be when it came to the weather. But as far as the Public Works Department of our State was concerned, a considerable amount of heat and dust was generated. This had to do with the contractors who regularly bid for the PWD's work threatening to release a list of the 'most corrupt engineers' of the Department. The issue has since blown over to an extent, but it has lifted the cover off a deep malaise that everyone knew existed but refused to acknowledge so far.

The *modus operandi* of the Tamil Nadu Public Works Department Contractors (Engi-

neering) Association in bringing to light this problem had all the trappings of modern day protests. First came a flex banner outside the Chepauk premises of the PWD that said that the list of names of ten 'most

### • By A Special Correspondent

corrupt engineers' of the Department would soon be released. A couple of days later, the list was put up at the same spot and this was soon removed by the Police, an alacrity that they do not usually show when it comes to dismantling banners of other kinds. The list was, however, soon put up on social

media and went viral. Representatives of the Association then met senior officials of the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption and handed over the names. The matter is said to be under investigation.

What ought to be a fight against corruption subsequently descended into bathos. Questioned as to what prompted this drastic action, the Association claimed that it was quite fed up with the evil ways of the Department's engineers. It transpires that everyone was quite happy with a commission of six per cent that was the norm for all contracts. But a sudden hike in the money

(Continued on page 2)

## Know your Fort better



The moat as it is today, as seen from St George's Gate.

• Before we enter the Fort proper, let us pause for a moment and run our eye over the moat that surrounds the entire precinct, or at least was supposed to. Today it is entirely overgrown with weeds, barring a few places to the rear of the Fort where it still has stagnant water, but in its time this was a vital element of the defences.

There have been several versions of the moat in the Fort's long history. Arriving here as early as in 1673, Dr John Fryer noted that 'on the south side they have cut a ditch of a sufficient depth to prevent scaling the wall'. This did not evidently last long for, in 1676, when the Council at Fort St George wrote to the East India Company HQ seeking permission for strengthening the place, it raised the subject of a wet ditch. As this was in response to a stern missive demanding that the Madras establishment reduce its expenses, the tone of the request was somewhat submissive. The Council 'humbly presented for your consideration' the need to build, among several other things, a 'good Ditch'. This was evidently sanctioned, for, a year later, when the sea made great incursions on the land, a detailed note was submitted on the subject to the Company where there is clear mention of a ditch. Mrs Frank Penny, in her *Fort St George, a Short History of our First Possession in India* writes that this ditch was later extended to the eastern side as well. She, however, maintains that this was no moat but a dry ditch.

The original Fort, as we saw earlier, spanned what would presently include just the Assembly building and the Parade Square. As it expanded, the ditch vanished and the *Description of Fort St George or Madras* (published in 1747 in the *Gentleman of London's Magazine*) states that the "Fort is surrounded with a Rampart faced with a thick Wall of what they call Iron Stone, being of the Colour of unwrought Iron, and very rough outside like a Honey-comb but without any Ditch or Fosse on the Outside." But serious consideration was evidently given for the construction of a new moat that would surround the expanded Fort. As evidence of this we have *A Memorandum of the Early History of Fort St George* (published in 1847), according to which, in 1743 an engineer named Smith submitted plans for strengthening the Fort, and increasing its area by 15 to 30 acres; he defined this additional area by a wet ditch, which he dug and faced with bricks. Mrs Penny writes that this was

(Continued on page 7)

# A long haul yet for Metro Rail

(Continued from page 1)

passengers using the Metro service.

By far the biggest issue appears to be the lack of pedestrian access. The Metro had committed to building foot-paths extending to around 500 metres in the vicinity of each station. This appears to have been handed over to the Corporation of Chennai and there are no clear-cut target dates by when this will be completed. If passengers are unable to walk to the Metro Rail stations, the service is likely to remain underused.

While these are all issues pertaining to the first phase of the service, the Parrys-Saidapet line has run into problems of a

different kind. The Russian contractor who was responsible for the tunnelling along this line has vanished, leaving behind equipment and a host of unpaid vendors. The latter have since been petitioning Chennai Metro Rail to make their payments. The vendors have also been staging protests outside the CMRL office. Metro Rail will now have to identify a new contractor to complete the work, a task that is not easy given the procedures involved.

Taken overall, Metro Rail has a long way to go before it becomes the kind of service it has been touted as. Much will depend on speedy execution, the addressing of concerns of all stakeholders and, above all, efficient operation. Time alone will tell if it is up to all this.

# Cleaning up PWD

(Continued from page 1)

demand made the contractors see red. They also felt that the PWD, when faced with the contractors' refusal to pay up, had begun breaking up the contracts into small segments that did not have to go through the tendering process. These could be awarded to contractors who would be willing to oblige the Department officials.

The social media release also carried what purported to be an audio recording of an engineer of the PWD speaking to a contractor. In it he admonishes the latter for his lack of ethics in not answering phone calls which, as we all know, is something that all Government departments are experts at. In addition, the caller practically beseeches the contractor to pay up failing which his superiors would harass the caller.

The Association of Engineers and Assistant Engineers of the PWD has roundly condemned all this, and the release of names. This body is of the

view that the names could be made public only after an enquiry establishes beyond doubt the complicity of the officials concerned. Meanwhile, schisms have appeared in the Contractors' Association, a section of which has given the named engineers a clean chit and claimed that there is no such malpractice in the PWD.

There matters rest for the nonce. It is up to the State Government to look into the matter and clear it all up if it is serious about fighting corruption. If there is a political will, even the six per cent that has become standard practice ought to be done away with. But there are good reasons to doubt if such a clean-up will take place. It is not so long ago that a Joint Commissioner of the Corporation of Chennai was transferred when he tried to break the monopoly of cartels and questioned their business practices. That ended all further investigation in the civic body. Will the PWD go the same way? It would be a pity if it did.

## 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

# The tie that binds

Chennai is said to have an international airport by which term *The Man from Madras Musings* presumes what is meant is nothing more than that a certain number of aircraft take off for foreign lands each day from here and as many flights arrive from those exotic locales. Certainly there is very little in the view of MMM that makes this facility in any way international. Those who follow MMM's writings (and may their tribe increase) are aware that he has written frequently on the shortcomings of the place, beginning with its tendency to drop its ceiling tiles upon the floor beneath, rather like the quality of mercy. Those like MMM, who lack protective natural headgear, are advised to go in only if they are wearing helmets.

flourishes at the Chennai facility. By itself it is nothing other than one more queue, something that our airport specialises in. But its outcome, a plastic ring around the zippers of the suitcase or bag, is a major nuisance, for, in MMM's view, there is no scientific method of taking it off.

MMM has been advised by several that the process is fairly simple. All you need to do, they say, is to give it a powerful tug at a strategic spot and the ring snaps into two. As to where this weak link in that binder is, MMM has not been able to fathom. He has tried the tugging procedure only to find the ring tightening and clamping the two ends of the zipper as if it were a vice. What MMM has therefore taken to doing is to carefully pack in a pair of

There is, however, one prerequisite in the successful execution of this procedure – namely the packing in of the scissors. And last week, MMM having arrived at a hill station to take a temporary break from the Chennai heat, found himself devoid of scissors. The opening of the suitcase was an absolute must and, so, MMM had to come up with some creative solution. Knowing that previous attempts at tugging at the ring had proven futile, he attempted twisting it this way and that, only to have it recoil that way and this. MMM then tried inserting a teaspoon, provided rather thoughtfully by the resort where he was staying, into the ring and sawing at it. Nothing much happened other than the spoon becoming completely bent in the manner of Quasimodo.

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Another aspect of the place, which gets MMM's goat, is the necessity to have all checked-in baggages scanned before handing them over at the counter. This practice, now done away with in all but the most primitive of airports,

small scissors in an outer zipped enclosure of his suitcase. On reaching his destination, MMM simply pulls out his scissors and cuts the ring asunder, rather in the manner of Alexander the Great cutting the Gordian Knot.

Rather desperate by now, MMM put his finger into the ring and tried tugging. He leapt back with a howl for the spoon had serrated the inner edges of the ring and this caused a series of cuts on MMM's finger. At his wits' end, MMM rang for housekeeping and asked for a knife. But this was not forthcoming – the hotel clearly had its doubts when a guest suddenly called and asked for a knife, preferably a sharp one.

It was then that MMM discovered a candle and a matchbox left by the bed. This being one of those hillside resorts where power supply could be erratic if the weather turned nasty, such appurtenances were essential. On seeing these, MMM had a brainwave. It was the work of a moment to light the candle and hold it under the plastic ring. There was a cloud of smoke and a nasty smell but when it had all cleared MMM found the ring had given way. The edges of the suitcase zipper were somewhat charred but they could now be opened. Such then are the perils of travelling out of Chennai by air.

## Tailpiece

Now *The Man from Madras Musings* knows how the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board alias TANGEDCO works. The two photographs alongside were taken five hours apart. Ten men assembled to shift a vertical bobbin of electric cables. What they achieved after much shouting and many cups of tea is there for you to see.

– MMM



**OUR  
READERS  
WRITE**



**Seeing Jayakanthan**

I recall somewhat vaguely having listened to a fiery speech from Jayakanthan (MM, May 16th) at Pulla (Reddy) Avenue near my house. If I remember right he was espousing Indian nationalism vis-à-vis Tamil nationalism. On the same issue, at the same venue, I remember hearing another person, Viduthalai Virumbi, at a different meeting.

On Jayakanthan, the writer, all I can claim is having felt disturbed on his demise as I did following that of another mustachioed writer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. But regretfully I must admit. I haven't read the books of either of them.

I was among the audience at a function at *Vani Mahal* at the start of the Tamil month of Chithirai in 2011 where Jayakanthan among others relaunched the Tamil magazine *Kanaiyazhi*. At that time, a physically frail K. Kasturi Rangan, the founder of the magazine, must have been happy when his daughter (my wife) handed him a copy at home. The very next month, Kasturi Rangan died and the cover of the June issue of *Kanaiyazhi* was dedicated to my father-in-law.

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**Was there a goof-up?**

At NEB (aka TANGEDCO) (MM, May 16th), I wonder what is happening at Greenway's Road, one of the few boulevards in Chennai, tree-lined and well-maintained. Perhaps because it leads to a

couple of important destinations, good sense prevents me from pin-pointing!

Nevertheless, we enjoy its bounty and morning walks to the Boat Club area through this stretch are a pleasant exercise.

All of a sudden, TANGEDCO gets into the act and overnight one half of this nice stretch is mercilessly disembowelled. After a week, the betonoire of the pedestrian, the bobbins make their entry into the scenario and, happily, within a couple of anxious days of watching and waiting, the bobbins are unburdened of their endless coils of thick cables which found their way into the bowels of the trenches.

Even as we were about to sing the praises of TANGEDCO during our morning constitutionals about the alacrity with which the cables were rolled out and the trenches refilled with earth, we rubbed our eyes, comprehending why the trenches were re-excavated and the cables were about to be covered with proper casing!

Was there a goof-up on the job which resulted in the trenches being opened up all over again? After an agonising wait, the trenches have been filled with earth in a hazardous way.

This entire stretch of road remains unfinished and vehicles cannot ply on them. Pedestrians find it difficult to cross the road as a major portion is thus affected. Ours is not to protest but to endure in silence!

We will now have to wait patiently till the powers that be at TANGEDCO finally decide to bring this stretch back to its original shape.

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**Rochelle Shah recalls...**

*Two great influences  
in her life*

In 1961, I accompanied Sarah Paul and Parvathy Kailashpathy to a Seminar held at Mt. Carmel, Haifa, Israel, on The Role of Women in Third World Countries. Sarah Paul was the Chief Inspectress of Schools in Maharashtra, and Parvathy Kailashpathy (originally from Madras) was deep into social services working out of Calcutta.

There were about 60 delegates. Some English-speaking from Ceylon, Thailand, Nigeria and others from French-speaking African countries, all of whom have, since then, achieved their Independence and gone back to their original names.

Haifa is a beautiful city that looks over the blue waters of the Bay, and its skyline is dominated by the imposing Gold Dome of the Bahai Temple. There are strict rules in place about all new constructions – the view of the Haifa Bay cannot be blocked by any highrise building.

It was during this visit that all the delegates visited a kibbutz (a communal farming settlement with a lifestyle that is the backbone of Israel). At Kibbutz Daganian, we had a surprise hostess in Mrs. Golda Meir – at that time the Foreign Minister of Israel.

Mrs. Meir had been travelling back and forth to Jerusalem as an observer and witness at the trial of Adolph Eichman (a top Nazi and the brain behind the 'Final Solution' for Jews).

Mrs. Meir was tall, broad-shouldered (carrying the burdens of the fledgling state) and plain-looking until I looked into her eyes – full of suffering, love, compassion and my entire conception changed in that moment.

The first question she asked me: "Which part of India do you come from?" When I said Madras, she said: "I have two very good friends there. Mrs. Ammu Swaminadhan and Mrs. Mary Clubwala. Do you know them and will you carry two letters from me to them?" She wrote these out immediately. Her knowledge of India, its leaders, most particularly Gandhiji, our non-violent move to Independence, was vast. She had come to know them and Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit at conferences in New York, Zurich and other capitals.

Yes, of course, I knew of them, had met and been introduced to them also, but I cannot honestly say at that point that I knew them. They were women of distinction, two women I looked up to in awe.

The first thing I did when I returned home was to send the letters with a covering note to both of them. Within hours, I had calls from them thanking me, and inviting me to call on them.

Mrs. Ammu Swaminadhan lived in a huge sprawling mansion of red brick, on the corner



Mary Clubwala  
Jadhav



Ammu  
Swaminadhan

of Harrington Road and Gilchrist Avenue. I arrived promptly at 4 p.m. She was dressed simply, in starched white, and welcomed me with a smile. We sat on the wide veranda, where tea was served with a minimum of fuss. She could see that I was ill at ease. Very gently she led the conversation with a few questions, and then said: "Tell me about Israel. Describe it for me. All I know about that country is what I read in Leon Uris' book *Exodus*." My nervousness evaporated.

She was a social worker and a freedom fighter, along with Hannah Sen (whom I had met in 1948 when she was Principal of Lady Irwin College, Delhi). Her daughter was Dr. Lakshmi Saigal who fought alongside Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in the INA. (I eventually met Dr. Saigal in Madras when she was 91.) Her son, the late Govind Swaminadhan, was a legal luminary and the world-famous dancer/choreographer. Mrinalini Sarabhai was her younger daughter.

We spoke and met quite a few times after that, but she was never over powering or taking over. She passed away in 1978. A great personal loss to me.

When I called on Mrs. Clubwala, she insisted that I call her Mary. She wanted to know what had taken me to Israel, and as many details of her friend

Golda Meir. She told me how, apart from the conferences at the highest level where they represented their countries, they had a lot in common just as friends.

Mary was loved by all those she worked amongst and for. She had been given the high civilian awards by the Government. They did not stop her from working on and on. She didn't sit, detached, in an a/c cabin. She was there, in the field, listening personally to the problems of those in need and living in subhuman conditions. Doing her utmost to alleviate suffering, trying to get them at least one good meal a day. Her goal was not charity, but to train them to earn their own way with their own talents. To know self-respect and dignity. To this end, she started the School of Social Work on Casa Major Road (which still exists).

She had total recall. Never forgot a face or a name. I met her at informal parties – always on time, simply dressed and minus an entourage. I became close to her. She was deeply attached to her family, particularly to her son and only child Phil. She was shattered when he suffered a massive heart attack in February 1974, and was gone before help could be summoned. I could feel the pain behind her stoic manner. I visited and wrote her a condolence letter, to which she replied, "My heart is broken. I cannot say more..." I still have that letter.

A year after Phil's death, she passed away in 1975. Village Road, Sterling Road, Wheatcroft Road were blocked by the thousands of families who came to pay their last respects, weeping and totally bereft. Traffic was halted, cars made no headway. She and her beloved son are buried in the Parsi Cemetery in Royapuram.

I was about 25 when I met the two of them. Interacting with them influenced my life for the better. They did not lecture, give advice, point out my flaws. But in their gentle silences, their achievements and from what they said and the manner in which they said it, I learned a lot of important lessons about life, dedication, integrity and the strength of humility. Life for me has been enriched through having known them.

**OUR ADDRESSES**

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

ñ THE EDITOR

# New hope for the Marsh



The Marsh today – and construction that edges it. Pic by S. Krishnapriya

Wetlands are shallow aquatic ecosystems found throughout the world. All wetlands are subjected to seasonal changes in depth and water chemistry; as a result, the plants and animals associated with wetlands also change with the seasons.

Pallikarnai Marsh is a wetland in South Chennai. It is one of the few remaining natural waterlands in Southern India. Although coastal in orientation, Pallikarnai Marsh is not entirely saltwater. Half of the marsh may be saline in character while the other half is fresh.

The salt-freshwater balance is very dynamic, changing rapidly with the seasons. While it tends to be a predominantly freshwater marsh during and immediately after the monsoon rains, it tends to become saline as the summer progresses.

When the existence of this extensive wetland was first brought to the notice of the public in 2002 by Care Earth, it was not known as Pallikarnai Marsh. To some, it was known as 'Velachery marshes' and other locally called it 'Kazhuveli'. Care Earth christened it the Pallikarnai Marsh based on its location in close proximity to the Pallikarnai village.

After its discovery in 2002, Care Earth, with the support of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, initiated the first scientific study of the Pallikarnai Marsh. The first discovery, although discouraging, was that the nearly 600 ha of marsh that was extant in 2002 was just 10 per cent of its original extent. The discovery was more startling when it was learnt that the 90 per cent shrinking that the marsh experienced was in the past 30 years. Unplanned development in South Chennai, encroachment, and unscientific solid waste disposal were the three important reasons for the shrinking of the once extensive wetland.

The shrinking was accompanied by significant changes in hydrology in that the many channels that brought in the stormwater were blocked. The

channels that drained the marsh into the Arabian Sea were also blocked, leaving Okkiyam Madavu as the sole lifeline that linked the marsh with the sea.

The marsh that was once a continuous habitat was fragmented by roads and railways resulting in major changes in the depth of the marsh. Fragmentation led to permanent changes in the water-holding capacity of the



There's bird life again. Pic by C.P. Dhanasekar

marsh. While some parts of the marsh went permanently underwater, others that were exposed dried up during summer. Areas that dried up during summer were soon invaded by the non-native 'veli-kaathan' tree and invasive wetland plants, changing the character of the wetland from a marsh to a swamp.

Despite fragmentation and the resultant changes in the character of the wetland, Pallikarnai Marsh continues to play a major role as an ecological service provider to South Chennai and its residents. The major ecological services provided by the Pallikarnai Marsh include mitigation of floods, regulation of local temperature and sheltering valuable biodiversity.

The total assembly of micro-organisms, plants and animals in any habitat is considered its biodiversity. The biodiversity of

Pallikarnai Marsh is not yet fully documented. What is known at present is just the number of species in selected groups of plants and animals.

Of that which is known, birds are the most diverse class of organisms. Around 140 species of birds use the wetlands as their habitat and of them nearly half may be migratory. Migratory birds visit the Pallikarnai Marsh from parts of North India and beyond, coming from even the temperate regions of Eurasia, some travelling as much as 6000 km. These migratory birds spend the winter months in the marsh and fly back to their northern summer habitats to breed.

Some of the common birds that visit the Pallikarnai Marsh in winter are ducks such as the Northern Pintail, Northern



A sign of protection.

large ducks that resemble the domestic ducks and breed in the Pallikarnai Marsh. Apart from these, there are also pelicans. The species of pelican found in the marsh is the Spot-billed Pelican, a large fish-eating bird.

Fish-eating birds are important indicators of the health of wetlands. They are like tigers in forest. Fish-eating birds are carnivores and carnivores are higher up in the food chain. Pelicans, cormorants, herons, storks and terns that are found in abundance in the Pallikarnai Marsh are all more or less entirely dependent on fish for their food. When there are groups of many different varieties of these birds around, it indicates that there are lots of fish in the wetland.

Fish breeds abundantly only when the water is clean, well-aerated and cool. Pallikarnai Marsh has numerous fish in diverse varieties. Nearly 50 species of fish have been found in the marsh. Fish are important links in the aquatic food chain. When the number and diversity of the fish declines, so will the fish-eating birds. While it is not easy to monitor the population and diversity of fish in a wetland, monitoring the fish-eating birds is easy.

Fish-eating birds are 'flagships' of wetlands. We need to conserve them. Birds are also attractive to watch and these attributes have made the Pallikarnai Marsh a favourite destination for bird-watchers.

Bird watching is a form of recreation. There are other means of recreation too. A clean and healthy ecosystem is aesthetic. Clean and healthy wetlands are admired for their scenic beauty. Although Pallikarnai Marsh may not in its present state provide much scenic attraction, it is possible to restore the wetland and make it attractive in the near future. When it happens, it can become Chennai's most significant outdoor recreation site. However, a lot of effort and commitment are needed to achieve this.

The Government of Tamil

Nadu has taken considerable interest in restoring Pallikarnai Marsh since it was first brought to public notice in 2002. Although the process of restoration has been slow, the efforts directed towards achieving this end have been positive.

The first and foremost step taken by the Government was to formally announce that the marsh would be a protected area. Soon after this a chunk of around 300 ha of the marsh was handed over to the Tamil Nadu Forest Department. Following this several encroachments were removed and land notified for other uses were de-notified. Over the years more chunks of the marsh were brought under protection so that at present nearly 600 ha is formally protected.

Restoration plans have been drawn up. In order to implement and monitor the restoration plans the Government has established the Pallikarnai Marshland Conservation Authority (PMCA). PMCA works closely with the Forest Department and civil society. Several initiatives have been taken to create greater conservation awareness among people. Such initiatives include activities like awareness walks, bird watching programmes, and drawing and elocution competitions for local school and college students.

Care Earth Trust has prepared the master plan for restoration. Talks are on with the Chennai Corporation for the closure of the Perungudi garbage dump yard and restoration of the marsh completely.

The Forest Department has for the sake of better administration created an exclusive Pallikarnai Range and established a local office. The office premises also maintain an interpretation centre providing valuable information on the biodiversity of the marsh to visitors. A Forest Check Post monitors the marsh and controls poaching of animals. – (Courtesy: Adyar Times)

– R.J. Ranjit Daniels  
Care Earth Trust, Chennai

# The City's green landmarks

Living Landmarks of Chennai by Nizhal team (Published by Kalamkriya Limited, 2015)

Madras city and the Presidency have attracted several foreign plants for economic reasons in the last 300 years. James Anderson introduced many in his creations – the Marmelon and Nungambakkam Gardens. Thanks to the efforts of Clements Markham, *Cinchona* from South America was introduced into India and later established as large plantations in the Nilgiris. Emperor Akbar was a great fan of pigeons and he maintained a flock of 10,000 birds brought into India from Eastern Europe, which later spread throughout India, including Madras. In spite of such extensive introductions, plants of Madras are fascinating because they represent elements which can survive and perform successfully in a warm and humid environment that has monsoon rains in October-November.

The immediate impression of this colourful, slim book was that it is a worthwhile addition to the knowledge of Madras city plants. The Nizhal team had smartly approached the book's concept by calling it 'living landmarks', which struck me as brilliant. The Nizhal team lists the following as reasons for the choice of materials in this book: (1) trees of historical, cultural importance, (2)

indigenous trees seldom seen and recognised, and (3) exotic trees rarely noticed. These reasons seemed logical.

High quality colour images of the habits of chosen examples are the greatest strength of the book. Some of them are in black and white, but are, indeed, refreshing. Excellent close-up photos of foliage and flowers add value. Details are presented briefly in both English and Tamil set as parallel columns in a page. Descriptions of 40 tree varieties are supplied under their Tamil

colour change that occurs in flowers during blossoming, how fruits disperse seeds and the associated fibres (*ilavampanju*), and pharmacognostic notes referring to the use of this tree and its parts in traditional Indian medicine add value. I found the brief remarks referring to the featured trees as found in scriptures and *puranas* pertinent.

The cultural connections of the trees are splendidly exemplified to the extent that they would interest a person with limited biological knowledge but with unlimited passion to know about trees. Inclusion of details on some of the interesting exotics, such as the handsome *Guaiacum officinale*, originally from South America, and the imposing *Hura crepitans* from Central America is helpful.

As an ardent admirer of fig (*Ficus*) trees, I was delighted to read the pages on *Ficus benghalensis* (*al*) and see photos of some of the magnificent examples in Madras. But why no mention of *Ficus religiosa* (*arasu*) is made in this book left me non-plussed. Maybe, the Nizhal team thought that *arasu* is so common in Madras that it could be dropped; probably they have a point. But the cultural significance of *arasu* cannot be gainsaid. Trees of *Ficus mysorensis* are found plentifully in Loyola College campus and they are graceful trees too,



The 450 years old banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*) in the Theosophical Society campus.

particularly because of their large, leathery leaves. *Ficus krishnae*, presently known as *Ficus benghalensis* or *krishnae*, bearing astonishing cup-like leaves, grow in the Madras Presidency College campus, thanks to the relentless effort of the botanist, the late G. Masilamani, in propagating this taxon. I was hoping to



*Parkia biglandulosa*. Note the badminton ball-like flower clusters.

see a reference to *Parkia biglandulosa*. These African trees, known popularly as the 'badminton ball' trees (see image for the elegant resemblance of their flower clusters to badminton balls) too grow in Loyola College, Madras. I have always wondered during my teaching days in Loyola about their links to bats, only to realise later that some species of Microchiroptera feed on the nectar of the florets of this tree and pollinate them! A reference to the *palai* trees (*Alstonia scholaris*) is made in the book. Plenty of these trees are found along the western coastal plains of southern India.

This is a fascinating tree that usually bears seven, rarely eight or nine, leaves at one node. Because of this type of a leaf arrangement, this tree is *ezhilai-paala* (the seven-leaved *palai*) in Malayalam and *saptaparna* in Sanskrit. The book refers to its linkage to Indian tradition, representing a scholar (hence *scholaris* in its biological name). Although not concerned with Madras in any manner, one point of heritage significance of this charming Indian tree is that at Vishwa Bharati Vishvavidyalaya – the university that evolved from the rich mind of Rabindranath Tagore – students walk to the Chancellor to receive titles and diplomas on the graduation day holding a branch of *Alstonia scholaris*. Incidentally, Palghat, the anglicised form of *Paala-k-kaadu*, derives its name because this region included dense populations (hence forest, *kadi*) of *A. scholaris* (*palai*, *paala* tree). In North Canara, *A. scholaris* is *kerá*, which implies water (e.g. *Arsikéré* (the *arsi* lake). According to local knowledge, trees of *A. scholaris* indicate water in the lateritic soils of North Canara and hence the name *kerá*. In high likelihood, this word *kerá* later

The one priced publication by Kalamkriya is *Mosquitoes and Other Jolly Rovers*. Written by former State cricketer V. Ramnarayan, it is an important documentation, as it looks at the history of league cricket in the State, whose various divisions made it a true home for the sport. Priced at Rs 295, this was released in 2002.

You can ask for the books by sending e-mails to [kkriya1@sanmargroup.com](mailto:kkriya1@sanmargroup.com)  
– Sriram V.

• by Dr. A Raman  
ARaman@csu.edu.au

names followed by biological and common English names.

I will use one example to illustrate the style followed: Pages 8 and 9 refer to *Bombax malabaricum* (Malvaceae) (current valid name, *Bombax ceiba*) known as the 'red-silk cotton' and *ilavu* (Tamil). Photos and legends refer to their occurrence in various sections of Madras city, inviting any dendrophile to find the trees easily. References of *ilavu* in classical Tamil literature (e.g. Avvaiyar's *Aathichudi*) and citing of the oft-used Tamil metaphor *ilavu kaatha kili* make profound sense. Brief biological notes on the

## They're free – to create heritage awareness

Kalamkriya, the publishers of *Living Landmarks of Chennai*, has been nurtured by Chandra Sankar, who has been doing some silent but significant work in bringing to light our heritage – built, natural and cultural. Kalamkriya began life in in-house printing for the Sanmar group. Its main activity in its early years was the bringing out of several corporate brochures. It changed focus over time to the in-house publications of Sanmar. And somewhere along the way, it began to release a series of books that look at various cultural aspects of Chennai and Tamil Nadu. Each of these books is a labour of love, for they are distributed free of cost to those who are interested in reading them. They are also bilingual – in Tamil and English. The publications released thus far are:

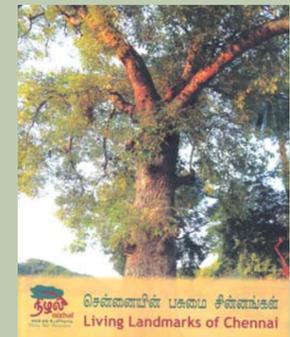
*Proverbs for the New Millennium* – Compiled from various traditional sources, this is a collection of Tamil sayings. A second collection has since been brought out.

*Siva Temples of Mylapore* – First published in 2002, this slim volume of 18 pages looks at the seven ancient Saivite shrines of Mylapore. It carries the names of the principal deities, route maps, sketches and the legends behind each temple.

*Grandma's Home Remedies* (3 volumes) – The first of these came out in 2004 with significant contributions from Leela Shekar and Srividya Moorthy. The second and third, written respectively by Haimavati Ammal and Annapoorani Viswanathan, were published in 2005. They bring out the simple medical recipes of Tamil Nadu that cure common ailments.

*Traditional South India Hairstyles* – First published in 2006, this book was the work of a team. It has sketches of various hairdos and detailed descriptions of how to do them.

*Stars and Trees* – First published in 2007, this book traces the link between the 27 asterisms of the Hindu constellation and the tree that is sacred to each.



Many a temple has one of these trees that is sacred to its precinct and some even have gardens with all these trees. The book has in many ways encouraged the protection of trees.

*Fifty Historic Residences of Chennai* – Written by Sriram V. and with sketches by V. Vijayakumar, the book was released in 2008. It studies the history behind some of the heritage bungalows of the city and the residents who made them famous.

*Temple Vahanas of Tamil Nadu* – Written by Pradeep Chakravarthy, and with sketches by V. Vijayakumar, this book was published in 2010. It focusses on the processional mounts used in various temples in Tamil Nadu.

*Living Landmarks of Chennai* – Released this year, this is the first colour production of the series. Conceptualised by the NGO Nizhal, it brings to light the various tree species that thrive in our city, their locations and their significance.

The one priced publication by Kalamkriya is *Mosquitoes and Other Jolly Rovers*. Written by former State cricketer V. Ramnarayan, it is an important documentation, as it looks at the history of league cricket in the State, whose various divisions made it a true home for the sport. Priced at Rs 295, this was released in 2002.

You can ask for the books by sending e-mails to [kkriya1@sanmargroup.com](mailto:kkriya1@sanmargroup.com)  
– Sriram V.

Quizzin'  
with  
Ram'nan

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

1. Name the daughter of Prince William, of the United Kingdom born on May 2nd. She is now the fourth in line to the British throne.

2. Who prevailed in the 'Fight of the Century' at Las Vegas on May 2nd?

3. Name the former CEO of IT giant Hewlett-Packard who recently became the first declared female candidate to seek the Republican Party's nomination for next year's US Presidential election.

4. Rishi Sunak, who won from the Richmond constituency in the British Parliament elections, is the son-in-law of which legendary Indian entrepreneur?

5. Which artist's painting *Women of Algiers* has become the most expensive painting to sell at auction, going for \$160 million?

6. Name the guitarist and singer, called the 'King of the Blues', who passed into history recently.

7. Name the ousted Egyptian President sentenced to death for his part in a mass jailbreak in 2011.

8. A type of fish called Opah, or Moonfish, was discovered recently. What first has it achieved?

9. The Union Government has given its assent for disinvestment of 10 per cent in which oil major? This could bring it Rs. 7932 crore.

10. In which Indian State capital is Google to build its second-biggest campus in the world and the first in Asia?

\* \* \*

11. Name the freedom fighter who climbed the 148-foot tall flagstaff in Fort St. George on January 26, 1932 and unfurled the Indian tricolour.

12. In Madras, Pully, Boatman, Trivatore and Ennore were all gates on the...?

13. Which academic institution is housed in a campus called *The Cloisters*?

14. The book *Four Score and More* chronicles the history of which venerable institution in Chennai?

15. Following which reforms of 1919 did Madras become the first province of British India to implement a system of diarchy?

16. Rajagopala Tondaiman was the last ruler of which kingdom in the Madras Presidency?

17. Why is Fort St. David in Cuddalore named after the saint?

18. Which was the first residence, apart from Chepauk Palace, on the beachfront between Fort St. George and San Thome?

19. The Krishnagiri and Sathanur dams are built across which river?  
20. *Yellaiikalai Vistharitha Yezhuthukalaigan* is a documentary on which Jnanpith Award-winning writer?

(Answers on page 8)

# Keeping the record straight

A separate Record Office was constituted in 1805, when Lord William Bentinck recommended the location of the records in a set of apartments of the old 'Fort Square' in Fort St. George, and placed them in charge of a Record-keeper assisted by 3 writers. In 1826, they were removed to the 'Pillar godown', known as the 'Old Banqueting Hall', the site of the present Council Chamber. In 1888, the records were shifted to the ground floor of the Secretariat buildings (vacated by the Government Press on its removal to the Mint buildings), and arranged in open record racks. The office was then known as the "General Record Office" (by reason of its being common to and serving all departments of the secretariat); and its establishment formed part of the Chief Secretariat. In 1902, the idea of centralising all important records of permanent interest in one place was started by S.C. Hill, officer in charge of the Records of the Government of India, during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon; and the Government of Madras in 1907 materialised the proposal, by sanctioning the construction of a separate building for the housing, of not only the secretariat records, but also those of the Board of Revenue and the Collectorates. The inauguration of the present office was carried out by C.M. Schmidt, the Registrar of the Chief Secretariat who continued in charge. In 1909, the Madras Record Office was constituted on an independent basis with a separate establishment; and in 1910, a full-time Curator was appointed, Henry Dodwell, M.A., an officer of the Educational Department, being the first incumbent of that office.

\* \* \*

The Madras Record Office contains the records of –

1. The Government Secretariat (except those of the last 5 years which are retained in the Record Branch of the Secretariat). The earliest date back to 1670.
2. The Board of Revenue – older ones.
3. The Collectorates, upto 1820.
4. Dutch and the Danish; Carnatic (in Persian); High Court (Select);

Accountant-General's Office (Select); and Specifications, etc.

It also contains sets of Gazettes of the Government of India and of the Fort St. George, Almanacs, Directories, Army and Civil Lists and department reports.

The main functions of the Record Office are as follows:

- (i) Preservation of records. – The records are arranged in open racks, either as volumes or bundles of loose papers between wooden planks. There is a specially

● To celebrate 375 years of Fort St. George, Sriram V, Associate Editor of *Madras Musings*, recently spoke at the Madras Book Club on 'Books on Fort St. George'. Much of the research for those books was done in the Madras Record Office, now the Tamil Nadu Archives. Ramineni Bhaskar Rao sent us this piece on the Record Office which appeared in the *Madras Year Book, 1923*.

trained staff to mend the older records.

- (ii) Supply of records. – Records are furnished to the offices concerned on requisitions; but applications from private persons for copies of records have to be made to the departments concerned and not the Madras Record Office direct. Research scholars are afforded special facilities.

- (iii) Publications – The following have been issued:

(1) Press Lists (brief abstracts) of all Government records from 1670 to 1800, issued in 35 volumes.

(2) Reprints (exact reproduction in print) of and selections from the ancient records of the 17th, 18th and the early 19th Centuries, comprising Consultations, Despatches, Letter-books, Sundries, etc. 112 volumes.  
(3) Calendars (i.e. chronologically arranged abstracts to facilitate historical research) of the Madras records subsequent to 1740, 2 volumes.  
(4) Translation of the Diary in Tamil of Ananda Ranga Pillai, Dubash of Dupleix, commencing from 1736. 8 volumes.

\* \* \*



Grassmere – home of the Tamil Nadu Archives.

As the repository of a continuous record, comprehending more than 250 years of British connection, the Madras Record Office affords ample facilities for research work. R. Clerk in 1789 and William Elliot in 1830 examined the records to compile their *Standing Orders*, Garrow in 1837 and Huddleston in 1856 examined them for antiquities and the latter produced his *Notes and Extracts* from the 17th century records in five small volumes. In 1860, Talbot Wheeler was deputed to examine the records with a view to shroff them. The result of his examinations is embodied in his *Handbook to the Madras Records*, and *Madras in the Olden Times* (containing interesting extracts from the very beginning up to 1748). He made a collection of Sir Thomas Munro's Minutes, afterwards published by Sir A.J. Arbuthnot. The next enquiry into the records was initiated in 1886 by C.G. Master (Member of Council, and a descendant of Sir Streynsham Master, Governor

of Madras from 1678); and C.D. Maclean, Under Secretary to Government, was selected to examine the records. The 'Disposal number system' was the one fruit of his labour. About 1894, A.T. Pringle, Assistant Secretary, undertook to continue the work of Huddleston, and produced four more annotated reprints of the 17th century records. The translation of Ananda Ranga Pillai's Diary was undertaken by Sir Frederick Price, and is continued by Dodwell. In 1908-11, A. Galletti edited and published 15 volumes of Dutch Records. Dodwell, as Curator, prepared a *Report on the Madras Records* and issued two volumes of *Calendars* of records covering 1740 to 1754. Among the outsiders who utilised the Madras Records for historical purposes may be mentioned: Professor Forest who made copious extracts regarding Clive, Colonel Love who produced in 1913 his monumental *Vestiges of Old Madras*, and Mrs. Frank Penny for her work on Fort St. George.

## The City's green landmarks

(Continued from page 5)

evolved into Kerala, although 'Kerala' is widely believed to derive from *nālikera* (the coconut).

On pages 80-81, references to *plaasa* (Sanskrit) or *purasa* (Tamil) occur. I would have liked to see the name of the suburb spelt 'Purasappakkam' and not by the corrupted name *Purasaiwalkam*.

My knowledge of Tamil grammar is less than average; yet, I felt that the words *pasumai* and *chinnangal* in the book title

need a liaison letter *ch* at the end of *pasumai*.

The book *Living Landmarks in Chennai* is an excellent concept with a wealth of details. Overall, the book meets its promise of being a plant handbook for popular readership, linking trees to heritage and culture of Madras for a common person, compressing many details in the short space made available for textual material. The author and publishers richly deserve our thanks and kudos for developing an attractive and useful handbook for the residents of Madras.

Dates for Your Diary

**Till June 30:** *Baramasa*, an exhibition of contemporary artists exploring the moods inspired by different seasons (at Apparao Galleries, Nungambakkam, and The Leela Palace).

**Till June 30:** *The Art of Chess*, an exhibition of chess sets created by contemporary artists (at Apparao Galleries).

**Till June 30:** Paintings by Raja (at DakshinaChitra).

**June 5-29:** Art exhibition by N.S. Manohar, Kumbakonam (at DakshinaChitra).

**June:** Photography/art exhibition by Gita (at DakshinaChitra).

**DakshinaChitra workshops**

**For Adults:**

**June 6-7:** Kasuti Embroidery

**For Children:**

**June 13:** Stencil-making and T-Shirt Printing (8-14 yrs)

# The Trust that helps a 300-year-old school

(By A Special Correspondent)

Anglo-Indians are an independent lot. They've had to be, because as a distinct minority community they have upheld separate traditions from those around them. For many, this spirit of free thinking and sometimes sheer bloody-mindedness has brought great success, but for others it has led to problems: irregular family lives, broken homes and neglected children.

In 1994, Alex Jacob came to

• **St. George's Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School, Shenoy Nagar, is celebrating its 300th year this year. One of the strongest supporters of the institution is the focus of this article.**

Madras from the UK to help the Anglo-Indian children at St. George's School in Shenoy Nagar. Several generations of Alex's military family had

served in India, so, in some ways she was following in their footsteps. On her return to England, she set up a charity called the Batemans Trust, to support children living in St. George's boarding home, to train teachers and to pay fees for children who otherwise probably would not go to school.

However, Alex was painfully aware that some children were being overlooked, not least Anglo-Indians from broken



St. George's School today.

homes who had missed parts of their schooling or were held back by emotional problems. So the charity set up an Open School with counsellors and progressive teaching to help them pass the exams needed for entry into further education or vocational qualifications.

Today, the charity also runs boarding accommodation for girls and a separate boarding fa-

cility for boys. It also pays fees for Batemans children to go to local Anglo-Indian schools, universities, colleges and vocational courses. Batemans admits some needy children from other backgrounds, but Anglo-Indian youngsters remain a priority.

These include children like Robert whose father and brother disappeared, leaving him and his illiterate mother living and working on a construction site. Then there is Eileen, who came to Batemans after her father disappeared, her mother later dying when she was at school. Batemans gave her a home and an education throughout a difficult childhood and today she is a confident graduate working for a communications company. Many others have suffered abuse, bereavement and neglect – but are now thriving thanks to Batemans.

In recent years, Batemans has operated separately from St. George's, but many of the old traditions still continue. For example, Batemans children attend St. Mary's Church at Fort St. George every Sunday, just as the children of St. George's have done for more than 200 years. And many 'old boys' from St. George's now support Batemans in recognition of the work they do for the Anglo-Indian community. As for Alex, she is married to an Anglo-Indian from Madras, with whom she has three children.

Batemans has successfully helped scores of children to become emotionally and financially independent and prepared for a life in modern India, whilst enabling them to hold on to their Anglo-Indian heritage: the children sing and perform, bake and make European food and learn to eat with a knife and forks as well as with their hands.

So what next? Alex and the Madras-based Batemans team are passionate about expanding this help to more children. However, increasing costs in Madras make this challenge more difficult. While development has brought rising wealth for some, it has also led to more poverty to many.

To secure its future and to expand, Batemans intends to build its own school on Madras outskirts with boarding facilities that will help 350 children and young people at any one time.

The plans include an open school, primary school, teacher training, boarding and roaming educational provision. For further details [www.batemans.org.uk](http://www.batemans.org.uk) – (Courtesy: *Anglos in the Wind*)

## Know your Fort better



Moat between St. George's ravelin and Pigot Bastion with High Court in the distance. (Courtesy: Ismena R. Warren, from *The Story of Fort St George* by Lt. Col. D.M. Reid.)

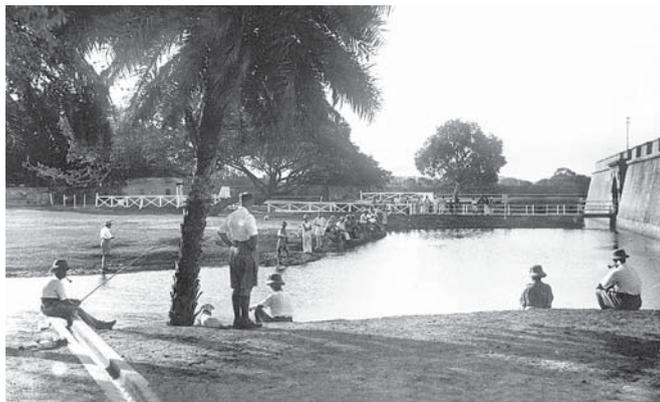
(Continued from page 1)

supplied with water from the Cooum but 'as no walls or bastions were raised above this moat, it was not of much use as a protection.' That this was not in any way a deterrent is attested by the historian Orme who observed that when the French came in 1746, 'the naked ditch remained neither an obstruction nor defence.'

The hectic construction activities of the 1750s, in the aftermath of the return of Madras to the British, saw attention being paid to the moat. When the French returned in 1758 under Comte de Lally, action was seen around the water body, which by then was complete along the western and northern faces of the Fort. Mrs Penny quotes from a letter of Henry Vansittart to Robert Clive, written in the final days of the siege, which the British successfully withstood, 'They had opened a narrow passage through the counterscarp of the ditch by a mine, and had beat down so much clay from the face of the demi-bastion, that there was a slope that a nimble man might run up, and that is what M Lally calls a breach; but his people were wiser than he, if he proposed to assault it, and they refused. This was probably near the St George's Gate of the Fort, located at the northwestern angle, for David Leighton in his *Vicissitudes of Fort St George* (1902) has all the action with the French in that area.

The present moat or ditch owes its existence to the extensive renovations to the Fort, commenced in the 1760s rather ironically after the last siege to be ever faced by it had ended. John Call, who was then the Chief Engineer, envisaged a wet ditch, 50 feet broad and seven feet deep, to be commenced from St George's bastion, which marks the northwestern angle of the Fort.

All accounts of the moat/ditch, except Leighton's, agree that the first versions did not have water. Dismissing the Leighton version as an error, we are left with the question of where the water for the moat came from, when it first became a wet, as opposed to a dry, ditch. The water initially came from the Elambore River that ran along the western side of the Fort. In the 1700s, when the Fort had become rectangular, the river had been diverted to form the moat. A few years later, the Fort had extended beyond the river, which divided into two, one arm ending inside the Fort and the other flowing along the west face and then into the sea. During the 1760s, when the final reconstruction of the Fort began, the river was partly filled to facilitate the present shape and the water was made to flow around to form the moat. The river was to suffer



The moat in all its glory in c. 1900 (Courtesy: Vintage Vignettes.)

several changes to its natural course, becoming a part of Cochrane's Canal, which eventually became Buckingham Canal.

That the water for the moat came from the river and later the Buckingham Canal is clear if you wander off in the direction of St George's Gate. There you will see a rusting lock, with most of its shutters having vanished. This was lowered and raised to regulate the tide in the moat. Now, with the Buckingham Canal and the Cooum both having lost their water, the moat has gone dry. But the part closest to the lock still retains some water and, therefore, plenty of vegetation and some bird life. When Mrs Penny wrote her book, the wagtail was apparently the most common bird in the moat, building its nests in the crevices of the wall, where the water plants afforded it sufficient privacy. Fishing in the moat too was a common recreation for the soldiers in the Fort, as evinced by photographs taken in the early 1900s. Another feature, long gone, is the wooden drawbridges that connected mainland to the Fort, across the moat. These were present at the Wallajah, St George's and North Gates and, according to Mrs Penny, these were 'a terror to the inexperienced horse when his ears are assailed by the thunder of his iron-shod hoofs on the wooden platform as he crosses to enter the low, deep gateway.'

In the 1990s, during routine conservation work in the Fort, a tunnel was discovered running parallel to the moat between Wallajah Gate and the northwestern point. This has regular openings at intervals at ground level connecting to it by flights of steps. The tunnel, with a height of 2m and a width of a metre, has since been interpreted as having been constructed for the facilitation of arms movement. The water in the moat kept the gunpowder cool and prevented it from heating up and exploding in the Madras summer. That this was no secret even in the 1940s is evident from Lt Col Read's *The Story of Fort St George* (1946). He calls the attention of the casual visitor to the regular openings that he terms as loopholes. The tunnel, according to him, was used to position sharpshooters who through the loopholes could shoot any enemy who came close to the walls.

The southern side of the moat was filled up in the 1860s to make way for the military hospital that stands in the shadow of the Fort amidst a clump of trees. The rest of the moat is still intact but it is in a state of decay. In October 2014, the Archaeological Survey of India and the Army announced a joint plan to clear the moat of vegetation, free it of the drainage from the Fort and restore it. This is yet to make headway.

– Sriram V.

# An early American connection

Arrived at Madras after a passage of 111 days from Salem (Massachusetts). Distance run per log, this passage, 14,240 miles.

On arriving at Madras, the Government Boat comes alongside. The officers come on board and receive such information as is required, respecting the vessel, cargo, passengers, etc. and on their return and report, a boat is sent off. No person is permitted to land before this is done, nor before the ship is brought to the proper anchoring ground, opposite the Custom House. On landing, report is made at the Custom House.

Madras (called by the natives, Chilli-patam) is the capital settlement of the English on the Coast of Coromandel. It consists properly of two towns – Fort St. George and the Black Town. In the Fort, which contains a regular built town, are all the offices of government (except the Custom House), the stores of the European merchants, etc. In the Black Town live the natives. All Government orders issued from Fort St. George – and the Europeans generally use the same, instead of Madras.

Madras... is a place of large

– As recorded  
in the Journal  
of the Belisarius,  
1799-1800

trade, which is carried on from hence to all parts of India – to Europe and America. There were 50 to 70 vessels here, loading and unloading, all the time of our stay. Many of them were small, and very few belonged here.

Rice is brought in large quantities from Bengal, some China goods from Canton, pepper from Sumatra, and European goods and liquors direct from England and Maderia in the (British East India) Company and India ships.

• By Dudley L. Pickman

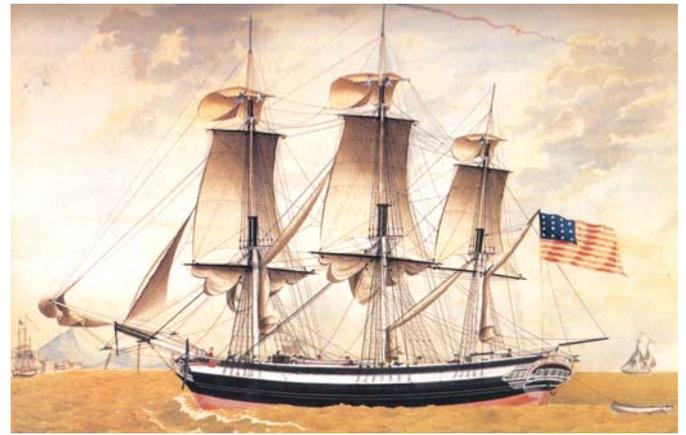
The principal exports are in piece goods, at Madras, Pulicat, and Ventepollam handkerchiefs, blue guineas, camboys or checks, nicanies or stripes, punjum cloths (white) etc. Pepper, spices, sugar, etc. imported from other parts of India are some-times re-exported. The finest goods of India are manufactured in the neighbourhood of Madras, and exported from

thence, such as long cloth, isery (izarrees), handkerchiefs of different kinds, and book muslin... In quality the manufactures of Madras far exceed those of Bengal.

Fort St. George is a handsome brick fortification. It appears very strong, but is probably too much extended to make as able a defence as might otherwise be done. It contains a regular built town, containing several houses, many stores, shops etc. besides an English Church, the Government offices, and accommodations for the troops. The buildings (are) of brick, generally lofty and spacious. No black is permitted to go into the Fort in a palanquin; they must walk in from the

gates. All the European merchants have their stores in the Fort. They generally live a few miles from the Fort in the country.

The town outside the Fort is called the Black Town. It is irregularly built. The streets are narrow and unpaved, many of them dirty, though not very generally so. The habitations of the poorest class of natives are made of mats – are about thirty or forty feet circumference and six or eight feet high – the door three or four feet by two. They cook in them – the smoke going out between the mats. In one of these dwells a whole family; there are but a small proportion who live thus miserably. Many have low one story houses, built of brick and plastered outside. The rich natives have large, handsome houses, with consi-



Belisarius of Salem, attributed to Guiseppi Fedi, Italy, c. 1797. Dudley Pickman sailed as supercargo of the Belisarius, owned by the Crowninshield family, on the voyage to Madras in 1799. (Peabody Essex Museum. Gift of G.S. Silsbee, 1898.)

derable gardens adjoining. One which costs 6,000 pounds sterling was not thought extravagant for a man not in the first class of wealth. The Portuguese and Armenians who live in Black Town have generally handsome houses, some of them three stories. They are all of brick or stone, and are built as airy as possible. The second story contains the drawing and dining rooms.

The natives are very dark, with coarse black hair, which grows to a considerable length. They are employed by the

Europeans in every capacity, from the lowest menial servants to head dubashes, where they have almost the entire direction of their business with the natives. As writers and accountants, they are very neat and correct. They are employed in all counting houses and public offices, but generally are overseen by an European book-keeper. (Excerpted from *Yankee India American Commercial and Cultural Encounters with India in the Age of Sail 1784-1860* by Susan S Bean)

(To be concluded)

## Answers to Quiz

1. Princess Charlotte of Cambridge; 2. Floyd Mayweather, Jr.; 3. Carly Fiorina; 4. N.R. Narayana Murthy of Infosys; 5. Pablo Picasso; 6. B.B. King; 7. Mohammed Morsi; 8. It is the world's first fully warm-blooded fish; 9. Indian Oil Corporation; 10. Hyderabad.

\* \* \*

11. 'Arya' K. Bhashyam; 12. The Black Town Wall; 13. Stella Maris College; 14. Music Academy; 15. Montague-Chelmsford reforms; 16. Pudukkottai; 17. Because the Governor of Madras at the time of its purchase in 1690, Elihu Yale, was Welsh and named it after the patron Saint of Wales; 18. *Capper House*; 19. Thennennai; 20. Jayakanthan.

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