

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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The vanishing Vista

Heritage buildings, always an endangered lot in our city, are faced with a new threat – being hidden behind modern high-rises, built on spaces surrounding them and originally intended to give an approach vista and an impressive setting. Thanks to realstate hungry owners, unimaginative architects and an indifferent administration, most of the familiar heritage structures we know are soon going to become lost to view.

Not many of our readers may be familiar with Moore's Pavilion, a handsome double storied tiled-roof structure that stood

quick demolition of the erstwhile Southern Railway booking office, which by any standard was a heritage building (but was not in the Padmanabhan Committee report and so did not qualify as one). There are many more such examples.

There are several reasons why new buildings have to be built, all understandable – ours is a space-starved city, institutions need to modernise and require space to grow, etc. We are not objecting to any of this. What we are concerned about is the manner in which it is being done. It sometimes

story at Ripon Buildings. The annexe built in the 1950s is a joy to behold while the later additions are terrible and falling apart.

From the point of view of a property owner not overly concerned about heritage, building a new structure to hide the old makes much sense. The hidden building can wither away due to lack of maintenance and even collapse, without anyone noticing, thereby making space for still newer buildings. A tough Heritage Conservation Committee can choose to object but in our case we have a largely hibernating and comatose committee, which prefers to look the other way. We can only hope for better sense among the owners themselves.



The SPCA building hidden by an arch and a new block.

• by The Editor

(or probably still stands) behind Central Station. Over the years, all its surrounding space has been built over and it is impossible to even catch sight of it now. Long admired the Quaide-Milleth Government Arts College as you drove by? A new block is rising fast and is going to hide the old building from view. The Egmore bungalows that were residences of the Superintendent and other officers of the Government Hospital for Women and Children now have several construction projects on their premises, some so close to the old buildings that windows in the latter are forever sealed. The CSI Rainey Hospital has a new block that, true to its name, completely blocks the old building from view. The old Kardyl Building, which has long suffered thanks to the Bharat Insurance Building built in front, now has a Metrorail structure coming up beside it. Space for the latter has been made thanks to the

appears that the new ones are built only to weaken the older buildings or at least hide them from view. Secondly, the new wings are built in styles that do not remotely resemble the heritage structures thus destroying the delicate fabric of the entire precinct. Perhaps the only two exceptions are the new extensions to the Central Station and the DGP Buildings on the Marina. And yet it was not always like this. The Presidency College campus has two later additions to the original Chisholm-designed building. The first, done in the 1930s by Jackson and Barker is so akin to the original that only the closest inspection can detect that it was constructed 70 years later. The next one, close to Triplacane High Road and built in the 1980s in a manner as to block all side views of the old college building, is shockingly ugly and, not surprisingly, the most dilapidated of all the buildings in the campus. Similar is the

The mosquito menace

Come the rains, and along come the mosquitoes. And they do not proliferate just when it rains, having become a year-long feature. Chennai now has the dubious distinction of being identified by the National Institute for Malaria Research as an 'endemic area' for the illness. The Union Ministry for Health has ranked Tamil Nadu as a state with a high incidence of dengue – another illness caused by mosquitoes. What has the city's Corporation been doing about it and, more importantly, are we citizens doing our best to help in the battle against mosquitoes?

There has been no dearth of solutions. In 2009 the great idea was the introduction of gambusia fish, a variety that feeds on mosquito larva. In 2010 it was the spreading of certain chemicals at strategic breeding spots. These were said

to trap the mosquito eggs and kill them. A year later came what was then touted as the best possible solution and one that had met with some success at what was then the Alandur Municipality (now a part of Chennai) – the eco-treatment

of sewerage so that it ceases to support larvae. This too was given up after some initial discussions. All three schemes, praised when considered, failed in implementation, thereby giving us an idea as to how our civic body works.

Mosquitoes had all along been believed to thrive in stagnant and dirty water. Then a few years ago we came to know

of a new variety that breeds in clean water- such as in overhead tanks. This caused the dreaded dengue fever. The Corporation has now taken on the task of educating the general public on the risks of keeping water stagnant – be it clean or sullied. But it is going about it in such a slow fashion that it has hardly made any impact. The move to penalise house owners who do not cover water tanks, sumps and wells has also been lethargic at best. Earlier this year, the Mayor launched 150 hand-operated larvicide sprinklers and 15 fogging machines, to be used in the various zones. These are now doing the rounds. Last heard, the Corporation appeared to have given up on mosquitoes – its much-touted announcement of giving

• by A Special Correspondent

(Continued on page 4)

Can corporates help improve Corporation schools?

There are 284 Chennai Corporation schools. The Mayor of Chennai, Saidai Duraisamy, himself a philanthropist, offers free coaching service for IAS. In 2012, 34 candidates from his Institute got selected for the Services. So he is only too aware of the value of education and the need for a strong foundation. He was receptive to a suggestion of involving large corporates in joining hands with the Corporation to upgrade the schools as a pilot project at the primary level.

With the kind reference from the Corporation, we visited five primary schools in and around Kodambakkam. In this part of the city the Corporation has 18 schools that offer from primary to secondary and higher secondary education. Thus the Corporation gives focussed attention to developing high quality education.

We observed good infrastructure already available in the form of land and building. The primary schools visited also had computers and class rooms with fans and tube lights. The headmistresses' rooms were also well-furnished. Another welcome feature was the quality of the restrooms and water supply. The schools had good sets of books in the library and children were allowed to use them;

• by
S. Viswanathan

some schools allowed them to take books home. Parent-teachers' meets were conducted every month and the parents were made aware of their wards' performances.

Yet another striking feature was the Activity Based Learning method that these schools employ. It is somewhat similar to Montessori-based learning where children learn subjects by doing group activities. The lessons were interactive and were done by the students as regular activity. Another feature was the Integrated Education for the Disabled (IED), where differently-abled students are taught in the main stream along with other children and many teachers expressed how well they were able to cope with others. The drastic change in their behaviour and the acceptance of the other students were an example of an inclusive approach.

What then is missing? The headmistress ruefully remarked, "Students"!

Can you believe demand for education in the metro teeming with around 50 lakh is not there? This is not true. There are people crying for admission to renowned private schools willing to pay a high capitation plus hefty monthly fees exceeding Rs.1000. In contrast, Corporation schools offer education free with nutritious meal, four sets of uniform, slippers, bags and books...yet, suffer for want of students!

A major issue relates to the absence of English medium from Class One. This is now being corrected with a couple of Chennai Corporation schools offering English. The second complaint relates to the absence of LKG and UKG classes. The provision of these classes would contribute to seamless entry to Class One. With a few Corporation schools already running creches, this issue is also not insurmountable.

Perhaps, Hindi may also be offered as an optional third language.

Private participation can take care of several essential requirements, like an analysis of the census of the population around, the number of children requiring primary education, their needs and aspirations. It can focus on the quality, training and management.

The objective could be to evolve these as community-run public schools with high standards. The facilities available can be integrated and put to optimum use.

We were also impressed by the passion and interest of the staff to leverage the facilities already created. The Vision 2023 of the Jayalalithaa Government is built upon nurturing a highly educated, skills-rich society. It is time the foundation for this is laid today and the children at the primary school are given the attention they deserve. 11 years hence they would ideally fit into the vision.

We suggest expeditious launching of a pilot project. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

The Fort where it all began...

...thus begins one of the Chief's magnum opuses (or is it opi?) and so whenever any friend or visitor arrives asking for the history of the city, *The Man from Madras Musings* takes the person to the Fort. And much like the city, MMM finds that the Fort too is steadily going downhill. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the place is now rather shabby and gone much to seed.

This impression was only reinforced during MMM's recent visit when he, along with a set of partially interested visitors, performed the pilgrimage. Rather carried away by the sight of the moat and the gates, MMM made the singular error of putting a toe into the hallored portals through the main entrance. There was an

That said, MMM has to confess that the moat and what lay below it were really the high point of the tour. Never again did the group display the same enthusiasm as they did when they all speculated about the provenance of the UFO and how it came to be there.

Once inside, MMM had to explain as to why the whole central quadrangle resembled a vast unkempt rubbish tip. Cars were parked hither and thither, garbage bins overflowed and in midst of it all was a shop that sold refrigerated drinks and snacks. Those who extended patronage to the outlet simply threw wrappers and bottle caps all over the place. To think that plastic bottles abounded where the immor(t)al Clive once siphoned off the best. MMM's motley crowd made a beeline

he came and rather reluctantly opened the case. MMM and group were shocked to know the prices – they were that low; the church obviously did not keep tab of inflation. The group, or at least a few from it, bought books and postcards all of which did not go down too well with pop-in-charge of the items, for it meant additional work for him.

The Fort Museum had MMM all excited but how was he in for a disappointment. This must be the only museum where the methods of display deserve to be kept in museums and preserved in amber. Printed paper stickers, laminated boards and rather dirty cloth curtains flapping in the breeze do not make for a world-class museum though, to be fair to it, the Fort Mu-

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

uproar immediately and diverse officers and security men surrounded MMM and friends. They were of course, courteous to the extreme and then escorted the group out and directed it to a small and most unprepossessing gate, which they said led to the museum. The group made its entry, MMM all the while thinking of how different the experience was while entering historic precincts elsewhere in the world. But, then, this was a working Fort as MMM consoled himself, not one of those dead monuments from the past. So you had to make some compromises.

Once inside, the group began clamouring that it was hot as hell. MMM was sorely tempted to inform them that this was not the Himalayas but refrained. He also desisted from telling them that it was only during the week that they had deigned to visit that the city was so hot. Leaving that aside, the group followed MMM down a longish footover-bridge that ran above the moat. "Don't look down, don't look down," chanted MMM's heart while his face kept a fixed smile on. And sure enough everyone looked down and began identifying the various items of garbage that lay in the moat. A particularly pesky kid, thanks to sharp vision, noticed an unmentionable feminine object (UFO) and wanted to know what it was and obviously decided that MMM would have the answer. The kid kept tugging at MMM's sleeve and, pointing in the direction of the UFO, kept asking what it was. It was thanks to yoga and communion with the soul that MMM restrained himself from pushing the child into the great world below the moat, in which also lay the UFO.

for the shop and that was the second high point of the tour. From there everyone could get a good view of a ten-storied modern structure undergoing what appeared to be a messy facelift. It was left to MMM to explain as to why and how this too was heritage. By now the chorus of complaints against the heat having reached a crescendo, MMM decided it was safest that everyone was taken somewhere indoors. And so, off everyone went to ...

St Mary's and the Fort Museum...

Both of which places the Chief waxes eloquently in public and also, as *The Man from Madras Musings* suspects, sings of in his bath. Of the church MMM has little to say other than that it was, well, a fine church. Not more could be said as, apart from one of those sculpted texts that gave the place's history in brief, there was no other source of information. MMM and group gaped at statues, looked into the baptismal font and tried deciphering some of the inscriptions on the tombstones. And within a few minutes the tour was done. How different a similar spot in another country would have been, MMM reflected – audio guides, booklets on sale and docents. There was a counter of sorts with a few picture postcards and books securely locked beneath a glass lid. It took quite a while and determined search to find a person who could unlock it. This involved going all around the building and finally discovering an alcove of sorts under a stairway, where a family was residing and if MMM was not much mistaken – cooking as well. A hunt for what MMM assumed to be daddy ensued and finally

seum does not claim anywhere to be world-class. Nobody can accuse it of higher aspirations. There was an audio guide, which had to be listened to within a booth. And this was not working when MMM visited. And even if it did, MMM doubts its purpose. Is the visitor expected to listen to all the facts and figures about the museum in one hearing, remember them all and then keep recollecting them as he/she walks around the place?

The ground floor has old Cornwallis looking rather lost and a couple of other Colonial Governors brought in from the roads and kept there. Then the stairway to a first floor, which is a long portrait gallery. The first floor takes the cake. Ostensibly dedicated to the freedom struggle, it has empty shelves that have here and there a poster or two and a small booklet. In the middle is a vast national flag that is rather worse the wear for want of proper preservation. And then you are back down again, to look at a few cannon and amidst them a rather hideous imitation one too.

It all reminded MMM of Oscar Wilde – the place, to paraphrase Wilde, is a work of art, but reflective of too many schools – the ASI and PWD predominating.

Clear Off!

That if *the Man from Madras Musings* recollects, was a favourite expression of a policeman from one of Enid Blyton's books. The Fort takes its cue from him evidently, for it has one sign everywhere – RESTRICTED AREA.

– MMM

More on a pioneering missionary



The photograph of Rev. Loveless accompanying the notes on him was surely a bonus to the contribution that appeared in *MM*, August 16th. Rev. Loveless was originally appointed by the London Missionary Society to establish a mission in Surat. He reached Madras in 1805. But an unexpected series of events had him settling in Madras.

At that time, the British East India Company was still hostile to the evangelisation of the natives. Hence, Loveless was practically compelled to devote himself largely to the needs of European residents. Though a non-Anglican, Loveless was chosen by Dr. Richard Kerr, the Anglican Chaplain at Fort St. George, to assume the overseeing of the Male Orphan Asylum meant for Eurasian and Anglo-Indian pupils. This institution, along with the Female Orphan Asylum, the Military Asylums, Waltair Orphan Asylum and the Gordon Orphan Refuge in later years, came to be amalgamated with the St. Mary's Church Charity School in Fort St. George, originally established in 1715. (An earlier school establishment 1672-1707 had also existed in the Fort. The merging of these institutions evolved into the St. George's Anglo-Indian School and Orphanage on Poonamalle High Road.) In 1903, when the Railway required for its new terminus in Egmore the land and the portions of buildings of the Civil Orphan Asylum there, the Asylum moved further down Poonamalle High Road. The old Military Female Orphan Asylum originally situated there became part of the Lawrence Asylum (now School) in Lovedale in the Nilgiris.

Rev. Loveless built the Davidson Street Church in Black Town for the London Missionary Society in 1810 (not in 1806 as stated). But it was not the first church to be built outside Fort St. George. St. Mark's Church, behind the Bharathiar Women's College, was the first church outside the Fort St. George. It was completed in 1800 and consecrated in 1804. However, the Davidson Street (William Charles Memorial) Church was a notable centre in missionary history.

In memory of M. Krishnan

The Madras Naturalists' Society has instituted a Nature Writing Award in memory of M. Krishnan to be awarded every year beginning 2014.

The Writing Competition is open to all those between ages of 18 and 30 and opens on September 1. The last date for submission of the **Original Work** is November 30, 2013.

Details and rules of the Nature Writing Competition, together with the Entry Form, are available on our website blackbuck.org.in

G. Vijayakumar
Hon. Secretary
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Ensure their use

I remember my schooldays in a village in Tiruchchirappalli district where there was a small temple tank (*MM*, August 16th). It was put to excellent use not only for temple needs but also for those of cattle, the fields closeby, and those who lived nearby. During rainy days, overflowing street/road water was carefully directed to the tank.

There are thousands of such temple tanks all over the State. Government departments should take suitable action to protect these tanks and put them to use for the good of all. The public should also take responsibility for making proper use of temple tanks and their maintenance. In cities like Chennai, such action is imperative.

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A correction

"Well, the natives seemed fairly friendly so I decided to stay the night."

"I made a mental note never to seem fairly friendly to an explorer. If you do, he always decides to stay the night."

MMM in his column (September 1st) has stated the above as having been said by (Jim) Corbett (of "ManEaters of Kumaon" fame). However, it needs a correction.

The statement appears in a golfing story by P.G. Wodehouse titled "A mixed threesome" and is uttered by Eddie Denton, a Big-game hunter in the story.

The "I" in "I made a mental note..." refers to the Oldest Member of the golf club who narrates the story in the first person.

I do, however, enjoy MMM's narrative in every issue.

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Memories of Kilpauk

Timeri Murari's narrative (*MM*, September 1st) brought back several pleasant memories of Kilpauk. As a cycling errand boy in my father's pharmacy in Kelly's, I have crisscrossed Kilpauk and its neighbourhood many a time. I remember not only the majestic Taylor's Road in detail, but also the tiny Kuttiappa Gramani Street opposite the Secretariat Colony behind the now-extinct Uma Talkies. Reading Murari's piece, all those big and small streets of Kilpauk came to mind as though in a flash. Every year, when I visit Madras to spend my annual holidays, I make it a point to either walk or ride a push bike to Purasawalkam (where I was born) from my house in Shenoy Nagar, via Kilpauk, at least twice during my month-long stay. This is in addition to at least two evenings I spend in the chokingly crowded Marina.

The photo of the interior of Our Lady's Votive Shrine (the Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) in the Kilpauk story left me wondering whether the leader of the Kilpauk heritage walk remembered Edgar Raphael Prudhomme. This merchant of Madras and Pondicherry donated his property, that included a bungalow on Hall's Road, Kilpauk, to the Archdiocese with a request that his bungalow be used to care for the destitute and abandoned. The then Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, the Most Reverend Louis Mathias, SDB, who was satisfied with the selfless service of the Sisters of the Society of the Salesian Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (SMMI), handed over this property to them to start what today exists as the Prudhomme Viduthi (the Mercy Home) celebrating the munificence of Edgard Prudhomme. The foundation stone was blessed and laid on May 24, 1957 by Archbishop Mathias. The home was officially inaugurated by K. Kamaraj, the then Chief Minister of Madras State, on January 8, 1958.

I hope that the leader of the Walk would have spoken about Ratnavelu Subramaniam of Balfour Road (and Guruswami Mudaliar of a slightly earlier period, but away from the Heritage Walk stretch), Madhaviah Anantanarayanan of Ormes Road, besides the distinguished Lakshmiratan and Venkatapathy Naidu families, whose descendants reside in Kilpauk even today. Of course, the greatest memorial of Kilpauk is Balfour Road, reminding us of that noble and multifaceted Scottish surgeon Edward Green Balfour of 19th Century Madras!

We can talk about Kilpauk endlessly: its name originated as opposed to Medawakkam that lies opposite Kilpakkam; the lake – including the elevated area – got the name Medapakkam (corrupted as Medavakkam), whereas the lake – including lower area – got the name Kilpakkam.

Shobha Menon and I have written in *Madras Musings* earlier on the Mental Hospital in Kilpauk. The Poonamallee High Road section of Kilpauk includes some of the great names in Madras medical history, starting from Lt. Col. K. Gopinatha Pandalai and P. Rama Rau's Radiology Clinic.

P. Rama Rau was the brother of P. Ananda Rau, the most articulate cricket commentator of yesteryears; not many would know that P. Ananda Rau, before he became the General Manager of Hotel Dasaprakash, worked in his brother's x-ray clinic and because of this experience he could read radiographs and interpret them meticulously.

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MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition. *Madras Musings* is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

THE EDITOR



(Current Affairs questions are from the period August 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Which team won the inaugural Indian Badminton League?
2. Recently scientists discovered the world's longest canyon (about 800 km long) beneath the ice sheet of which autonomous European territory?
3. Name one of India's most wanted men, the alleged head of the Indian Mujahideen terrorist group, who was arrested recently.
4. Around which famous natural park in the USA did a fire, more than the size of Chicago, create havoc recently?
5. Who is the latest recipient of the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, the nation's highest individual sporting honour for a season?
6. Name the country's first Indian defence satellite that was launched successfully by an Ariane 5 Rocket from the Kourou Spaceport of French Guiana.
7. What is the name of the newest element added to the Periodic Table recently?
8. What prestigious gallantry award was given posthumously to Andhra Pradesh Greyhounds inspector KLVSSNV Prasad Babu recently?
9. Scientists at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in the US recently created the most precise clock of the world (ticking rate variation of less than two parts in one quintillion) using which element?
10. Name the initiative of the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, recently launched to address the issue of violence in all its forms against women, through a mass movement.

* * *

11. Tyagaraja's composition 'Darini Telusukonti' is about which Chennai temple goddess?
12. India cricketers Sadagopan Ramesh, T. Kumaran, Hemang Badani and Sridharan Sriram have all played for which Mylapore school?
13. What establishment was started by Raja D.V. Appa Rao at Luz in the late 1940s?
14. Which 'public service' started recently in the metropolis has the tagline 'Chennaiyin Gouravam'?
15. Name the Hakim who was the first Indian to have acted Governor of Madras (in 1934).
16. Whose imposing statue can you see at the intersection of the erstwhile Chamiers Road and Mount Road?
17. What is the biggest example of a 'four leaf clover' structure in Chennai?
18. One of the famous mobile numbers, seen all over the city walls, was 9841072571. Who would have answered the call if you dialled the number?
19. Which film gave Ajith Kumar the nickname 'Thala'?
20. Which locality of Chennai has a 50-year-old SSI estate that is considered the biggest in South Asia?

(Answers on page 11)

Panigrabanam of a Panigrahi

The news of the passing away of the renowned Hindustani classical musician Raghunath Panigrahi on August 25 brought to mind memories of my and my brother Lakshmi-pathi's brief friendship with him some sixty odd years ago. We were respectively in our late teens and early twenties then, and residents of Pelathope Street in Mylapore. Raghunath was in a lodge at the junction of our street and Ramakrishna Math Road. There used to be a hotel named Amarjyoti Cafe operating from a two-storied building at the junction. It was essentially an Udipi style vegetarian restaurant; but it also provided a very basic dormitory type of accommodation for bachelors in rooms on the first floor at, what I presumed, must have been very cheap rates. Raghunath, then just out of Kalakshetra and a struggling young musician, had a dormitory bed in the *maadi* of Amarjyoti Cafe.

There was one celebrity resident in our street in those days, an Andhra stage actor, Kalyanam Raghuramiah, popularly known as 'Finger Flute Raghuramiah' (for his uncanny ability of rendering elaborate *raghas* to absolute perfection by whistling, with his right forefinger placed inside his mouth).

Raghuramiah also had a great singing voice and was famous for his rendering of Telugu *padayams*, with *raga alapanas* and *sangats* infused with stunning *bhrigas*.

Raghunath Panigrahi was perhaps taking music lessons from Raghuramiah at that time. I am not sure of that because we never got to talking about it at any time. But he would go to Raghuramiah's house regularly in the evenings and spend an hour or so there. I am sure of that because he had to pass opposite our house to get to

• by
G. Ram Mohan

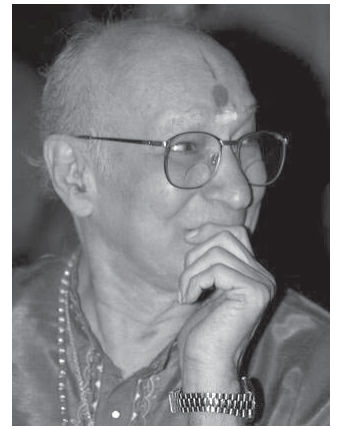
Raghuramiah's house and we watched him almost every day. It was not long before we started exchanging smiles and then became friends.

A very popular pastime of us Chennaiites in those days was to stand in street corners and indulge in endless chats. It was more popular as an after-dinner pastime, and every neighbourhood had its own chat groups that would gather every evening after dinner for a half-hour or so of friendly and sometimes not so friendly banter at

the street corner. Soon Raghunath, Lakshmi-pathi and I formed a chat group. Raghunath would come down to the street from his *maadi* and we would stand in our street junction and chat. Raghunath was fluent in English, and spoke quite a bit of Telugu and Tamil.

We mostly discussed Tamil music. Lakshmi-pathi was more into music than me – he was a decent singer himself – and was a great admirer of Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao. Raghunath thought very highly of A.M. Raja. We would have endless discussions about our favourite songs. Raghunath could do an excellent imitation of both Ghantasala and Raja. He would surprise us with his version of how he thought Raja would have rendered a song sung originally by Ghantasala. We became his great admirers.

In those days in Madras in general, and in Mylapore in particular, we hardly came across people from outside the four southern states, Tamils, Telugus, Kannadigas and Malayalis. And many of our friends were named Subramanian, Srinivasan or Venkataraman. So a young man with a different name, and with a sur-



Raghunath Panigrahi.

name, fascinated us. We could not believe that 'Panigrahi' could be a part of the name of a person. Lakshmi-pathi who has always had an impish nature in him (later in life as Dr. Lakshmi-pathi he has written three best-sellers on medical humour) asked Raghunath about it. In Sanskritised Tamil the term *panigrabanam* (literally meaning holding of the hand) means Lakshmi-pathi once joked with Raghunath about it.

"When is the *panigrabanam* of Panigrahi to be?" he asked.

"Very soon! Very soon, I hope," replied Raghunath, only half-smiling.

Now, viewing things in retrospect, I am pretty sure that thoughts of his friend Sanjukta from Kalakshetra must have crossed his mind at that moment.

Of course, as the art world knows all too well, that *panigrabanam* did take place.

The rest, as they say, is history.

The mosquito menace

(Continued from page 1)

free mosquito nets to slum-dwellers, by itself an admission that mosquitoes are here to stay, has failed to take off.

As a consequence, the city now abounds in a variety of mosquito repellants – a few electrical – a majority of them chemical based and therefore most harmful to users in the long-run.

What is forgotten in all this is that we as Chennai dwellers have contributed immensely to the proliferation of mosquitoes. The rising density of buildings and the cutting of trees have increased the surface temperature in the city, making it an ideal breeding ground for the insect. And the practice of violating set-offs, once unheard of but now most prevalent, has given rise to so many dark and damp corners where mosquitoes are practically welcomed in. The accumulation of garbage and the careless tipping of it into communal bins have also

added to the problem. Most residents in the city are unconcerned about what happens to their rubbish once it leaves their premises. They appear to think that the vast unsightly mounds that litter the streets are the Corporation's problem and not theirs. What nobody realises is that this accumulated garbage is ideal for mosquitoes to breed in, in their own neighbourhood.

Ultimately, we get the city we want and it may be best if we contribute our mite towards malaria and dengue control. For a start, can we ensure that our rubbish is put into the bin and not all around it? Can we design and live in homes that allow natural light and fresh air and, in the process, not take away what is our neighbour's rightful share? And can we please cover our wells and overhead tanks? Once this is done, we can confront the Corporation on what it is supposed to do or has not done.

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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Looking back on Madras Week

A four-page special feature

Learning about Royapuram

When you have a group of 50 enthusiasts looking to learn about the locality in the northern part of Chennai – which has been “heard” more of but not “visited” – and a person like Sriram V. who leads it, what you get is an outstanding educative tour with lots of fun and learning!

And what is nice about these walking tours is that it brings people together to learn the history of the city’s oldest neighborhoods and, more importantly, the information and conversation which gives an insight and discovering hidden treasures.

Places covered: Royapuram railway station – the first railway station of South India opened in 1856 and which is the oldest surviving railway station in India.

St. Peter’s Church built in 1799 by the local boatmen/fish-



Suma Padmanabhan sharing her memories of a 1962 storm and the story of a ship that sank off Royapuram.

ermen residents and consecrated in 1829. It is popularly called “Madha kovil” and has four Mada Streets around it. Royapuram derives its name from St. Peter, who was referred to as “Rayappar” in Tamil.

Royapuram was also a principal suburb to the Parsi and Anglo-Indian community and

the next stop was the Parsi cemetery – *Anjuman Bagh* – and the close by Parsi fire temple – the Jal Phiroj Clubwala Dar E Meher, where only Parsis and Zoroastrian Iranis are admitted into the *sanctum sanctorum*. This temple celebrated its centenary in 2010.

A brief walking tour followed, getting to know the streets of Royapuram – Maniyakara Chaultry Theruvu, via Lying-in Hospital, leading to the *dargah* of Hazarath Sheik Kunangudi Masthan Sahib, a sufi saint who visualised God as a female entity in his prayer songs and inspired Bharatiar to write “Kannamma” themes!

Robinson Park, a legendary park, now named Arignar Anna Poonga, is the place where DMK was founded.

All in all, an exemplary day!

– Sreemathy Mohan



Listening to Sriram V in the Royapuram station platform.



At the dargah of Hazarath Sheik Kunangudi Masthan Sahib.

The return of Unni

• When V. RAMNARAYAN spoke at a meeting organised by the Association of British Scholars during Madras Week on ‘Cricket, Carnatic Music and Coffee’ – a tale to be told in these pages one of these days – he responded to an introductory reference to the writings of Cardus on cricket and music, K.N. Prabhu on cricket and English literature, and N.S. Ramaswami on cricket, literature, history and archaeology, saying that he had written an article on P. Unnikrishnan for the *Economic Times Sunday* supplement in December 2000 using cricketing terms to describe a Music Academy concert of his. “In my opinion, the concert marked Unni’s return to form,” he added.

Every seat has been taken at the Music Academy auditorium in Chennai. The December season is at its peak and today’s vocalist is a star of the Carnatic music scene – one of its biggest crowd-pullers, thanks in part to his success as a film singer.

Today, I am waiting with bated breath for Unni to open a bagful of pre-Christmas gifts. This is Test cricket at its best. The venue is the Lord’s of Carnatic music. There is an air of expectancy very much akin to the tension of the first morning of a Test match. Handsome applause greets Unni and his team as the curtain goes up.

My instinct was right. Here’s a rejuvenated Unni, back at his best. Nicely warmed up with the *Nattai varnam*, his eye in, he

plays some delicate strokes in the *Charavakam* piece, like a wristy batsman relying on timing rather than brute power. His defence is sound, and he is rotating the strike well, enjoying great rapport with his accompanists.

By the time *Pantuvarali* comes round, he is really middling the ball, presenting the full face of the bat. *Dhanyasi* is a poem, elegantly executed, the strokes still flowing essentially in the V, no tickling to third man, no paddling to fine leg. The voice is now open, rich in glorious *akaram*. *Nayaki* is gentle and mellow. The batsman is now past his fifty and taking fresh guard.

Suddenly he plays a flurry of typical one-day strokes, with a brief *Padavini*, but is back to se-

rious Test match business, as *Sankarabharanam* unfolds in its majesty. Now he is cutting and pulling too, with courage and technical perfection.

Completing a well-earned century, Unni is back on the field with a brilliant *ragam-tanam-pallavi* in *Kiravani*. Once a close-in fielder and occasional wicket-keeper, Unni now proves he is just as good in the outfield. He chases, dives and slides, throws accurately like the best of them, as melody and rhythm merge in a perfect blend.

At the end of the concert, we come away knowing that the prodigal son has returned. He is as good at Test match cricket as he is in one-day internationals.

Here’s a champion who has learnt his lessons from cricket. I am convinced his cricket discipline helped Unni make this marvellous comeback. Cricket teaches you to take the ups and downs of life with equanimity. It helps you to deal with criticism and make course corrections if warranted.

In short, it gives you that invaluable quality, the sporting spirit. Well played, Unni!



All the finalists in the Madras Quiz 2013 held at the Ramada Egmore during Madras Week.



The best school team was from P.S. Senior, but it could not make it to the finals which was won by the team of Ramanan Vembu and Ram Kumar Shankar. The Quiz was sponsored by the Murugappa Group.





The birds still find a place at Pallikaranai despite development towering over them.



A rare view of Sri Parthasarathy temple, Triplicane.

Without Reserve

A surprise participant in this year's Madras Week programmes was the Reserve Bank of India's Chennai Region office which organised several events. An even greater surprise to this Madras Week correspondent, who was present at one of the events, was the Bank's house journal, *Without Reserve*, which he found one of the best in the country, whose July-September issue – conscious or not of Madras Week – carried two features on the city.

One was a photo-essay shot by the office's photographer of Madras's landmarks. It was titled *An Evening in Parry's* and included over a score of brilliantly shot (and printed) pictures, a couple of which we present here. The other was a feature written and photographed by Nalini Sankaranarayanan, an officer of the Bank. Her *Brushed by Feathers* featured here gives readers a peek into the wild life of Madras.



A view of Kalakshetra from a balcony.



One of Madras's feathered visitors.

Why Madras is special to Indian cinema

Several little-known facts and insights on Indian cinema and Madras cinema came to light at a talk given by K. Hariharan, director of the L.V. Prasad Film & TV Academy, as part of the Madras Week celebrations. He was addressing a joint meeting of the Rotary Clubs of Madras South and Chennai Coastal.

Hariharan said that as we celebrate 100 years of Indian cinema this year, we should bear in mind that cinema preceded industrialisation in India and is therefore one of India's first industries. When Dadasaheb Phalke showed *Raja Harishchandra* in Bombay in 1913, the industry was in its infancy. People saw skyscrapers and aircraft in movies before seeing them in real life. In this respect, India differed from the West. When the Lumiere Brothers exhibited the world's first film in New York in 1895, industrialisation had begun already. Automobiles created traffic jams on roads, skyscrapers pierced the sky, planes were ready to fly. Cinema arrived in the West as the bridesmaid of capitalism, to deliver the goods of capitalism.

In India, not merely did cinema precede industry, it also heralded political change. Mahatma Gandhi came back from South Africa, India's freedom movement began, and the clouds of World War I gathered. Cinema came to be associated in India with ferment and protest and rebellion and freedom. It was a voice of the people, a tool of dissent and protest, an instrument of democracy and popular culture. It was not seen as an art form that merited patronage.

After independence, India inherited three corrupt systems from the British – a corrupt political system, a corrupt legal system, a corrupt police system. Indian movies targeted all three. Politicians, policemen and lawyers figured as bad characters in Indian movies – they were castigated or lampooned, unless the hero played one of these characters. Our heroes berated existing systems and called for change.

This is perhaps one reason why Government saw filmmakers as trouble-makers and mischief-makers, not as pioneers of an art form, said Hariharan. "Every Tom, Dick and Harry is making films,"



Kodak Krishnan



K. Hariharan

leaders said disparagingly. They didn't remark that every Tom, Dick and Harry was making steel or leather. Result: Indian cinema suffered neglect, even ill-treatment from the Government and the corporate world. Centres of learning like the IIT taught everything from naval architecture to civil engineering to paper technology to leather technology, but not film technology. The Government set up a Sahitya Akademi to encourage literature, a Sangeet Natak Akademi for music and drama and dance, a Lalit Kala Akademi to encourage painting, but there was no talk of a film academy.

What the Government did do was to set up the S.K. Patil Committee to probe the ills and evils of the film industry. This committee turned in an atrocious moralistic report. Another committee recommended nationalisation of the film industry, a move supported by film critic Marie Seton who was close to the Government. She said the Soviets had nationalised their film industry. Fortunately India gave up this disastrous idea because the IAS pointed out that Government did not have expertise to manage the film industry.

In 1954, Dr. B.V. Keskar, then Information Minister, banned film music from All India Radio. Radio Ceylon benefited from this; all of India listened to its broadcast of Hindi film songs. The every-Wednesday 'Binaca Geetmala' became the rage and acquired cult status. Wiser counsels prevailed in the country after a few years, and film music returned to AIR, dramatising the fact that you can't ban popular culture.

Hariharan highlighted two unique features of the Indian movie industry: Unlike other countries where Hollywood movies dominate theatres, Indian cinema is wholly indigenous. Our movie industry depends almost entirely on Indian movies, and they come in many languages – Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, Punjabi... India makes more films than any other country in the world. India is the world's best movie audience, because its 1.2 billion people love cinema. The Indian nation is in fact a cinematic imagination. People grow up with memories of cinema, its stars, its singers and songs.

Its size apart, India's movie industry is a great tool of national integration and brings communities together like no other industry. You are a Hindu; but sitting next to you in a theatre could be a Muslim, a Sikh, Parsi, a person from any State in India. Vyjayanthimala brought South India to the homes of North Indians. Amitabh endeared North Indians to the South.

Hariharan pointed out a little-known paradox. Despite the 1,100 movies made every year in India (by far the largest number in any country), despite the 13,000 theatres and 1,400 recording studios and 25 laboratories, the annual financial turnover of the industry is modest – barely US \$ 1.2 billion or about Rs. 8,500 crore. "This makes the film industry a pipsqueak industry," Hariharan asserted. Individuals in India command a higher net worth. During his lectures in the US, he discovered that any book on world cinema devotes barely ten pages to the world's largest movie producer. Five pages go to Satyajit Ray, a few pages to Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Shyam Benegal, a few lines to Bollywood. There may be some mention of Rajnikanth or Kamal Haasan.

Had either the Government or corporate India been more enlightened in their attitude to movies, the Indian film industry today could have been a giant industry, something all of India would be proud about, said Hariharan. It could have been a formidable world player in art, education, commerce and entertainment, a huge cre-

(Continued on page 8)

The uninhibited role of youths

Madras Week this year (August 18-25) more or less settled into being Madras Fortnight and promised to become Madras Month, with more than 100 programmes/events/happenings across the city.

This year was particularly memorable for Harry MacLure, comic book illustrator, cartoonist, graphic designer, magazine editor and publisher. His film, *Going Away*, was screened to houseful audiences at the Press Institute of India and the Madras Club. The film, set in an Anglo-Indian milieu in St. Thomas' Mount, is about a fictional Anglo-Indian family coming to terms with the possibility of emigration to Australia and having to leave loved ones behind here. *The Anglo-Indians – A 500-Year History*, a book that is a must-buy for all those with more than a passing inter-



Harry MacLure introducing his film *Going Away*.

est in history, authored by S. Muthiah and Harry, was also released during the week before an audience of nearly 300 persons.

* * *

One of the high points at the Press Institute (there wasn't even space to squat on the floor) was when Nityanand Jayaraman made a presentation on Chennai's vanishing wetlands and its consequences. Development is all fine, he said,



Nityanand Jayaraman and photographer Shaju John (right) discussing garbage and Chennai's vanishing wetlands at the Indian Press Institute.

but not at the cost of destroying nature or by upsetting its laws. His presentation was complemented by some moving pictures (mostly depressing in the second part) taken by Shaju John, a well-known freelance photojournalist.

I finally breathed a huge sigh of relief when the final programme at the Institute went off without a hitch. Moderating a controversial subject, 'Madras newspapers – the good, bad and ugly', was S. Muthiah. The speakers discussed various issues confronting journalism today – paid news, corporate ownership of newspapers, credibility, citizen's journalism, advertising and the commercial

• by
Sashi Nair

aspect, as well as the quality of the fare on offer. What was best about this get-together was the uninhibitedness of the college students from various media courses who plunged into the discussion.

However, for me, the star during the four days of programmes at the Press Institute was Kadambari Badami, an active member of Transparent Chennai, who spoke about creating a pedestrian-friendly and 'walkable' city, through participatory planning, public-government partnerships, citizen empowerment, and the Nanga-



Active participation by youth at the seminar on the Madras Press held at the Indian Press Institute.



Panellists discussing the Madras Press at the Indian Press Institute. From left to right: R.V. Rajan, S.R. Madhu, S. Muthiah (Chair), Dr. Jaya Sreedhar and Shreeekumar Verma.

nallur and KK Nagar projects. She made an impassioned plea to the youth in the audience and elsewhere to do their bit for the city and make it more liveable. She even admonished them with a 'Shame on all of you!' outburst. It was probably her frustration coming out, finding little support for her initiative from people of her age. More power to her.

* * *

The Pupil Saveetha Eco School, Poonamalle, made a debut in this year's Madras Week's celebrations. And what a debut! The school organised weeklong programmes that it collectively styled 'Madras Memoirs'. There were a series of



Kadambari Badami making an impassioned plea to youth at the Indian Press Institute.

inter-school and intra-school events and competitions that highlighted the transition of the city from Madraspattinam to Chennai.

The person who made all this possible at The Pupil, almost single-handedly, was Dolly Mohan. She says she initially dreaded taking up the onerous task but as she got into the groove she began enjoying being a part of the old and the new. She's been in Chennai for more than two decades now but, like many, she was ignorant about how the city had evolved and grown. Once having been entrusted with the responsibility of organising the events at the school, she researched hard and found a magical path leading to the past. In the process she rediscovered a small part of the rich legacy of Madraspattinam. She knew it all amounted to only scratching the surface but she had made a great start. 'The quiz, the photographs, the relics – everything added to my personal knowledge of Madraspattinam. Wish we had a time machine that would take us back into those

SOS Village looks at temples

I had heard of SOS Village near Tambaram and the great work it has been doing since 1979 for children who, unfortunately, had no family support or protection. I had wanted to visit the place for long and when I was invited to deliver a lecture as part of their Madras Week celebrations, I was only too happy to do so. I had no idea it would be a learning experience for me.

I didn't earlier know that this home for children was spread across a vast expanse of five acres. Nor did I know that those children lived in groups of five or six in beautiful little houses, each unit with a hall, kitchen, bedrooms and bathrooms. Each home is run by a woman who is like a mother – 'amma' to the children – who buys groceries, cooks for them, helps with their homework and generally does everything a real mother would do. Backpacks arranged in a row, stuffed toys, a 'happy birthday' poster made for one of the children by others in a house – these were some of the signs I saw of a happy home and those of little boys and girls from diverse backgrounds, bonding and growing up together as brothers and sisters. There were cheerful faces all around making it obvious that the children have moved beyond a difficult past. A little temple for Lord Ganesha finds a place near the office and it is here that many of the children who had grown up in SOS Village come back to get married after completing higher studies and securing good jobs.

Lectures, music recitals, dance performances and all such functions are held in the auditorium, a beautiful structure in the centre of the SOS village, designed like a Koothambalam found in Kerala temples and even reminding of the Kalakshetra auditorium in

Chennai. The very peaceful and calm setting here is enhanced by the greenery all round, including a big banyan tree near the entrance. The chirping of birds, hardly any traffic – what a pity children in the city mostly don't get to experience anything like this either in schools or around their residences!

I spoke among the students and the adults there about the temples of South India with a special mention of those in Chennai – about their antiquity, sculptures, architecture and valuable inscriptions. The lecture focussed on the ancient Chola temple in Madambakkam near Tambaram and the four famous temples of Chennai along the coast – Adipurishwarar temple in Tiruvotriyur, Parthasarathy temple in Triplicane, Kapaleswarar temple in Mylapore and the Marundeeswarar temple in Tiruvanmiyur. These coastal temples existed in Pallava times and have witnessed architectural growth spanning many centuries.

Many in the audience had visited the Madambakkam temple, fairly close to SOS Village, and so could connect with what was being explained. It was heartening to see their interest in the subject.

Post lecture, there was enough time for interaction and there was a flood of questions – ranging from "Were animals used in the process of constructing temples?" to "How come we are told that the shadow of the Thanjavur temple never falls on the ground?" And the commonly asked query was "How long did it take to build a temple?" which was difficult to answer.

– Chithra Madhavan

(Continued on page 8)

Converting a dump into a tree park

“You can be an armchair activist and say ‘the government didn’t do this’, ‘the corporation didn’t do this’. But what have you done?” asked Shobha Menon, founder-trustee of Nizhal, an NGO dedicated to greening urban areas and regenerating biodiversity, speaking during a Madras Week event. Of concern to Nizhal is native trees disappearing from their original locations, as the unique flora and fauna that flourish around these trees also vanish. For example, there is

only one Purasai tree (Flame of the Forest, *Butea frondosa*) in the whole of Purasawalkam, in Gangadeeswarar Temple.

This concern led to the formation of Kotturpuram Tree Park through a persevering voluntary effort led by Shobha. And it was the heart-warming story of this Park that she narrated in her talk. Nizhal activists and willing volunteers, aged from three to seventy plus, developed the Park sapling by sapling, literally. After six years, the Park today is home to more



A view of the Park.

Madras & Indian cinema

(Continued from page 6)

ator of jobs and incomes and revenues for the Government, a source of global prestige.

Hariharan said that though Bombay is described as India’s film capital, it’s actually Madras that merits this label. When cinema arrived, Madras Presidency was the largest presidency in India. It was Madras that gave birth to such fine cinema entrepreneurs as S.S. Vasam, L.V. Prasad and A.V. Meiyappan. The ungainly-looking Sandow Chinnappa Devar was a genius. His films starring wildlife were hits nationwide. Devar could make films for the Tamil audience and for a national audience. Stars come from all over India to work in Madras.

Madras had pioneered the colour era in movies, Hariharan said. He pointed out that his own father, then vice-president of Kodak, had made a huge contribution to the film industry in India through the manufacture of colour negative film. Kodak Krishnan was a household name in the movie industry.

He said the biggest problem in Madras today is that of distribution. Because of piracy – pirated copies of a film begin to spread soon after its theatre exhibition – even an ordinary

Tamil film has to spend a minimum of Rs 2 crore on publicity; it has to release simultaneously in at least 120 of the 900-odd theatres of Tamil Nadu, else it can forget the idea of profit. Compounding the problem is the fact that film distribution in Tamil Nadu is controlled by a few players who lay down the law to serve their own interests.

The solution to the distribution problem lies in DTH (direct satellite telecast to home), Hariharan said. Kamal Haasan tried this for *Vishwaroopam*, but failed because of opposition by distributors. Through DTH, you can watch a new movie on your TV set from the convenience of your own home. You’ll end up spending much less money – you’ll save on cinema tickets, you’ll save on transport and popcorn and soft drinks and junk food!

Hariharan said that the future of cinema lies in information technology. The IT industry ought to take up cinema. Reason: the immense potential of Internet and Youtube and mobile and hand-held media such as cell phones and I-Pads for dissemination of movies. This could herald a phenomenal change for cinema. This development is inevitable, Hariharan thought.

– S.R. Madhu



A rare visitor to the Park.

than 400 trees belonging to over 100 species and teems with a diversity of insects.

Shobha had been writing on civic affairs for long and her vision of long-term care for trees “that supply us oxygen” led her to found Nizhal. In early 2008, a proposal came to Shobha from the Superintending Engineer of the PWD, who knew of Nizhal’s work, on doing something about the five-acre area of wild growth on the banks of Adyar river opposite the Madras Club. Situated on one side of River View Road, Kotturpuram, the area had earlier been used as a dumping yard. A small volunteer group was formed, under the guidance of the first Chief Urban Planner of the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority, the late G. Dattatri, to develop a tree park. “We were excited about the prospect of bringing back local trees,” recalled Shobha. The PWD, which proposed the Park to mark its 150th year, did not have funds and wanted the local citizens to maintain the Park. The Park project, therefore, became a volunteer-driven effort and activism of a persuasive kind won Shobha support from many, including the government.

To give a local flavour, saplings from Tiruvannamalai and Auroville, which had evergreen tropical dry trees, were brought in to begin the project. These included Tannaku, Purasai,

Veppalai, Karuvaali, Konji, Ulakkaipalai, and Kuttippirai. Community support as expected was not forthcoming initially and the volunteer group started with pitting a small area just after the monsoon in 2008. As only one hand pump in one corner was available as a water source, the saplings were planted in batches of ten. Sum-



The tussar silkworm on the Arjuna tree, which also has medicinal properties.

mers were testing times due to water scarcity. Dattatri proved to be a “godsend” when things weren’t moving and helped Shobha tide over low phases.

Four months later, volunteer support gradually built up. Funds were in short supply and the team had to fight limited physical resources as well. Every possible citizen, be it a child playing cricket in the vicinity or a senior citizen, who came to the park to walk, was roped in as a volunteer. Large volunteer support was needed to water the saplings and extend the area of tree cover.

After four years, with the

park sporting exquisite growing stalks, Chennai Corporation laid walking paths. By now, wheel barrows were used by volunteers to transport water from one end of the park to the other. The swelling volunteer numbers, comprising school-children, college students, corporate volunteers, and senior citizens, continued to contribute their wholehearted support. “This was not ad hoc volunteerism,” stressed Shobha. She commended volunteers from the core team of Nizhal (Dr. Babu, Swaminathan, Latha) and a few young volunteers (like Gajendran and Vinod) who came and helped to meet whatever the Park needed. Even Shobha’s mother, Thangam Menon, became an enthusiastic volunteer as was another septuagenarian neighbour, Radha Padmanabhan. Walkers began to throng the park and, a few months ago, active members from among the volunteers formed the Friends of Kotturpuram Park, which was registered as a society.

Poochi Venkat, the macro photographer who works on insects, discovered many insect species in the Park that the volunteers didn’t know of. Standing tall in the park are Arjuna trees (*Terminalia arjuna*) and a Wheeler tree (*Albizia amara*). Another attraction is the Helicopter Tree (*Gyrocarpus americanus*). Shobha was excited to see the tussar silkworm on the Arjuna tree, which also has medicinal properties.

Shobha is happy that students visiting the park learn the value of sustained action. “The idea is to inspire more urban biodiversity parks,” she said. Her activism has demonstrated how a caring citizen can make a difference. She regretted that some people have a mental block when it comes to getting involved with public spaces. She exhorted citizens to contribute in any way possible to improve their own neighbourhoods.

– K. Venkatesh

THE ROLE OF YOUTHS

(Continued from page 7)

days when life was so peaceful compared to the frenetic one we lead today,’ she says.

What was also significant at The Pupil was that Saveetha, who runs the school, was herself enthused and that enthusiasm helped motivate her team. The school is now looking towards focussing more on history

and geography in the lower classes. I would suggest devoting a period to Madras and its history in classes 5, 6 and 7. Nanditha Krishna has already done it at the school run by the C P Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation on Eldams Road, and Mrs. Y.G. Parthasarathy has said that the PSBB Schools would do likewise from the next academic year. All this bodes well for the future.

A book triggers memories of an Anglo-Indian childhood

I read S. Muthiah's fascinating book, *The Anglo Indians – A 500-year History*, released during Madras Week celebrations, with such interest that I could hardly put it down until I finished reading it. The subject was researched thoroughly and the book very sensitively written. The book brought back to me memories of my childhood and filled me with nostalgia.

I studied in St. Williams' European High School, Madras, where the Headmistress and her assistant were Irish nuns. The rest of the teachers were all Anglo-Indians. My father took me when I was about 4 years old

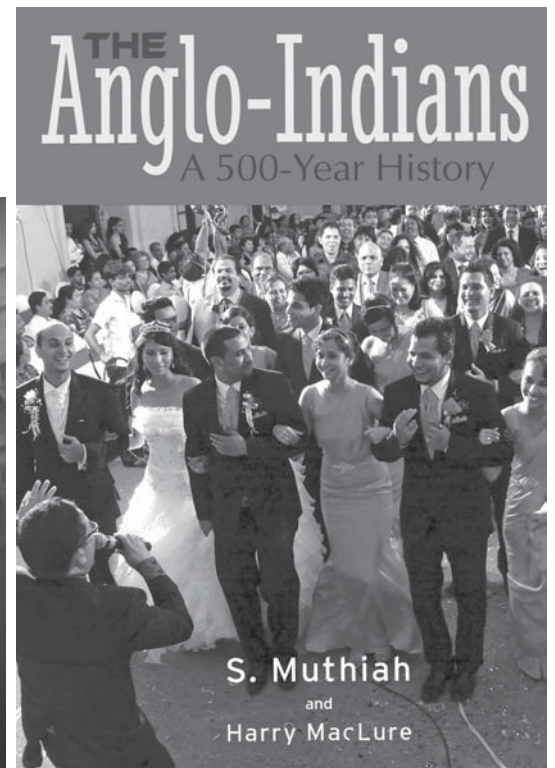
• by
Radha Padmanabhan

in 1930 to get me admitted to school. Mother Margaret, the Headmistress, shook my father's hand and planted a kiss on my cheek which I wanted to brush off but did not dare to. As was the case with all Europeans, they could never pronounce any name in any language but theirs. So I was named Peggy (short for Margaret, the Headmistress said). My two elder sisters, Indira and Hemalata, were named Hilda and Annie, my el-

der brother Niranjana was James and my younger brother Siddharth, simply Sid. As we siblings called each other by these names at home and we spoke mostly English, our relatives thought we were very snooty. Dressed in the school uniform, socks and shoes, and with a solar khaki *topee* (hat) and with a name like Peggy who would guess that I was an Indian!

Spare the rod and spoil the child was the maxim those days. As I recount the punishment we were subjected to, it would sound like a horror story. But we took it all in our stride. And our teachers no doubt thought that they were doing it for our own good. Children who did not understand a question were sometimes made to wear dunce caps for the day. They were made of paper and shaped into a cone. A cane was always on the teacher's desk, to be used whenever she wished to – like if you did not pay attention or if you scored 0 out of 10 for the sums done in class. If all the spellings of words dictated to you were wrong, the answer paper was pinned to your back and you had to wear it all day long.

Mrs. Martin, Standard 2 teacher, was one who was



The back and front covers of the book that triggered the author's memories.

feared most by all the students. We dreaded going to her class. Later I heard that she had led a tough life and took it out on her students. We all loved the gentle and soft-spoken Miss Soares and the quiet Miss Thomas. Miss Ormes made the students adore her because she was full of fun and made us often laugh in class. Miss Smith taught us music and was dignified and had beautiful classic features.

As a child I remember the difference in the way we lived

and the way the Anglo-Indians lived. I used to admire the way the dining table was laid, with plates and spoons and forks and drinking water glasses and napkins where the teachers had their lunch, while we at home sat on the ground and ate with our hands. They sipped water gently from the glasses while we at home had to hold the metal tumbler high and pour the water into our open mouths. My classmates spoke often of dances and parties that they as a community attended and I

listened longingly, wanting to attend one of them.

I do remember some of my classmates. The youngest was Lizzie who was the darling of the school. She had a crop of golden hair like Shirley Temple and, like the child star, could sing and do a tap dance. Unfortunately she died of typhoid at the age of 6 or so. I remember Merlyn Trimm and her sister Irene. They stayed with an uncle and aunt as they were, I think, orphans. Rosy Santa-
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Masters of 20th Century Madras science

– An occasional article in a series by Dr. A. RAMAN

The scientist who looked towards the wilderness

If India today is a leader in sugarcane research, it is solely because of T.S. Venkataraman, who was closely associated with the Sugarcane Breeding Station (SBS) (now Sugarcane Breeding Institute) in Coimbatore. He was born in 1884. He had a Doctor of Science degree from the University of Madras and belonged to the Indian Agricultural Service.

Charles Barber (Director-Superintendent of the Sugarcane Breeding Station, Coimbatore) and Venkataraman were the first in the world to attempt to evolve sugarcane varieties suited for the subtropical parts of the country, while similar stations in Java and Barbados were engaged in developing varieties for tropical conditions. Dealing with this task, Barber

and Venkataraman attempted crossing the tropical sugarcane, *Saccharum officinarum*, with an indigenous taxon cultivated in northern India, later named *Saccharum barberi*. The Barber-Venkataraman trials went on for a few years; they were, however, unsuccessful. Later, the Barber-Venkataraman team contemplated utilising the 'relatively useless' cane species *S. spontaneum* that was growing wild along the channel borders near the SBS to evolve the much-needed hardy varieties suited for subtropical India. The variety named 'C0 205' ('C0' standing for 'Coimbatore') proved a thumping success in northern India, especially in the Punjab, where it yielded 50 per cent more than what the indigenous varieties produced.

In the 1930s, Venkataraman succeeded Barber. As the first

Indian director of SBS, he perfected developing a range of hybrid sugarcanes that are used the world over today as genetic stock. He always looked at the wilderness as the gene pool for drawing germplasm to improve crop plants, especially sugarcane. C0 205 proved well suited to Indian climate and soil conditions because of its parentage going back to the hardy native *S. spontaneum*. This achievement of utilising wild plants in hybridisation was novel in plant-breeding efforts throughout the world.

Soon Venkataraman came up with 'C0 285' that proved better in performance than 'C0 205'. For the first time throughout the world, research aiming to combine desirable traits from three species (*S. officinarum*, *S. barberi*, *S. spontaneum*) was made by Venkataraman at SBS.

Out came the Coimbatore varieties C0 312, C0 313, C0 419, and a few others, which changed the complexion of sugarcane production and that of the sugar industry not only in India, but also in other sugarcane-growing nations with a similar climate.

A highly significant element that sparkled in Venkataraman's effort was to reconstitute sugarcane germplasm by hybridising the sugar-yielding cane species with the 'useless' wild cane species. Venkataraman's efforts reinforce what we today value as the vitality and vibrancy of biological diversity.

Venkataraman's two other passions were in preserving and utilising medicinal plants of India and stalling the rapidly growing human population in the country. Few would know that he was one of the earliest advo-

cates of family planning. He was constantly worried about losing our precious wild plant-genetic stock by irresponsible deforestation. He was convinced that unbridled population growth was a critical pressure point leading to destruction of India's forest wealth. He played an active role in educating people on the need for family planning and stressed the adverse impact of population growth on natural resources of the country.

Venkataraman died in 1963. He was one of a few Indian scientists who was way ahead of his contemporaries. He was knighted for his contributions to Indian agriculture in 1942, which changed India's sugar production status – from an empty begging bowl to an overflowing sugar bowl.

(Continued from the
August 16th Issue)

1885 – January

We are passing the Christmas holidays at Guindy, and I strolled, with the Chief Secretary, through the garden in the moonlight (which, for the last week, has been divinely beautiful). The notes of the band, which was playing one of our selections of Scotch airs (that which begins with “The lowlands of Holland”), growing ever clearer and clearer as we returned along the terrace, close to which the black buck had congregated in large numbers.

January 17: Parade on the Island of a little more than 2000 men – always a pretty sight. The last I attended was, I think, on 18th December 1883. To-day I rode Renown and my wife Ruby, Sir Frederick his little white Arab. The South Wales Borderers were amongst those on the ground, and the “March of the Men of Harlech” was characteristic of this occasion. On the last, the “Garb of old Gaul” had, if my memory serves me aright, the honours of the day.

January: All through the month of January the sunsets and after-glows have been of the most extraordinary beauty. I have never seen anything equal to them in Egypt or elsewhere.

The gubernatorial life

Third and final installment from the diaries of Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff (1881-1886)

The rising of the moon over the sea, the flood of silver light upon it, upon the great reach of the Cooum, and upon the pond where the lotus grows, have, as seen from the verandah where we dine, been, for the last few evenings, lovely beyond description.

February 16: My wife gave a Fancy Ball in the Banqueting Hall. She went as Anne d'Autriche; I as the Duke of Buckingham, who was Ambassador at her Court. Moore, Cavendish, and Bagot as Les-trois Mousquetaires; Mrs. Awdry as Madame de Motteville; her husband as my Secretary; J Evelyn as a gentleman and Agnew as a pikeman of the same period; Lawford as an English Officer of the last Century; Colonel Herbert as Clive – an admirable copy of the portrait (said to be the best of him existing) in the monsoon dining-room at Government House; Miss Martin as Julie d'Angennes; John Lubbock in a very becoming dress arranged by Colonel Herbert; Miss Gordon, grand-daughter of Sir Walter Scott's Secretary, who was stay-

ing with us, as the Cloud with the Silver Lining.

March 12: To a meeting in Pacheappa's Hall, where my wife presided and delivered a speech about the foundation of an hospital for women, who are at once too poor to have the attendance of female doctors at their own houses, and too highly placed socially to be able to go to an hospital managed by men.

The Guindy gardens were lit up after dinner, and my wife received such of the society as desired to take leave of her before she left for the Hills.

March 13: After Council on the loth, I returned to Guindy, and, late in the evening, embarked on the Buckingham Canal for the Seven Pagodas, close to which we found, on the morning of the fifth, our tents pitched.

After the heat of the day was over, I inspected the temples and other objects of interest, together with the recent encroachments which have given us some trouble.

It is a pretty spot, thanks largely to a grove of palmyra trees with a thick undergrowth of the Phoenix farinifera.

The buildings, excavations, and sculptures would be more interesting than they are, were it not for the thick darkness made only the more visible by rays of light from opposite quarters, which, as in the case of so many Indian antiquities, cross and perplex the vision.

What are these things? Who made them? Why did they make them? I consult Fergusson on the copy, which was given me on 27th July 1875 by Mr. Murray, of The Handbooks to be a guide for my first Indian journey, and I find the following, as to which I can only say, “It may be so”:-

“On the Coromandel coast, some way south of Madras, and near the village of Sadras, is a spot well known to Indian antiquaries by the name of Maha-Balipooram, or, more properly, Mahavellipore, familiar to English readers from the use Southey makes of it and its traditions in his *Curse of Kehamay*.

Of granite hills, the highest part rising, perhaps, 100 feet from the level of the plain. In these hills some half-dozen caves have been excavated, and several others commenced: some as excavations, others as monoliths. Between the hills and the seashore seven masses of granite protrude from the sands, which have been carved by the Hindus, probably about 1300 a.d. It is evident that the object on the right imitates a Buddhist monastery of five storeys. The lower storey is wholly occupied by a great square hall; the three next possess central halls, diminishing in size according to their position, and surrounded by cells on the outside; the upper one is crowned by a dome, or rather a dome-formed termination. Altogether the building seems to represent, with great exactness, all that we know and read of Buddhist monasteries. Nor is this a mere accidental coincidence. The time at which it was executed was very little removed from that of Buddhism in this part of India. Its being cut in the rock is obviously a peculiarity of that religion. There is little or none of the extravagance of later Hindu styles in the sculptures.

Neither the Jains nor the Hindus introduced anything like a new style of architecture. They adapted the Buddhist

style to their own purposes, and there seems little doubt that this is a very close copy of a five-storeyed Buddhist monastery, used as a temple.

Early on the morning of the 12th we proceeded by the canal to Sadras, walked over the old fort and the picturesque ruins of the house of the long-vanished Dutch Governor.

On a pond near this there grew most lovely blue water-lilies. I observed, too, for the first time in India, the precise effect described in the lines of Tennyson:

“A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,
And waves of shadow went over the wheat.”

Only in this case the crop that bent under the breath of the breeze from the Bay of Bengal was not wheat but rice.

From Sadras we returned to our camp at the Seven Pagodas, and, gliding calmly through the night on our homeward way, were next morning at Guindy.

March 22: I have heard much, since I arrived in Madras, of mango showers at this season when that fruit should be ripening, but never saw one till this morning, when it rained heavily, for some twenty minutes, while we sat in the garden house, where the Eucharis lilies grow, enjoying the unwonted freshness. We have not seen a drop of rain since the deluge of the north-east monsoon ceased a day or two before Christmas.

December 1: My wife, who, accompanied by Miss Moxon and Captain Bagot, arrived from Ootacamund on the 5th, this afternoon opened the Victoria Caste Hospital for Women, which has been established mainly by her exertions.

The concluding passage of her speech ran as follows:

“When we reflect that it is barely four hundred years – a mere moment in the history of mankind – since the great movement of the renaissance in Europe brought the re-awakening of medical science in its train, and that it is not four hundred years since the Inquisition, jealous of the eagerness after research of the great Vesalius, the Court Physician of Philip the Second of Spain, drove him to die a shipwrecked exile on a lonely Greek island, we ought to feel neither surprise nor impatience at the tardiness, with which the desire for medical aid has come in a country, where the advancement of all knowledge has been interrupted by incessant wars and ceaseless changes of Government. But the desire has come, all honour to those who are doing their best to gratify it, who have like so many of those whom I am now addressing, that noble ambition of mitigating suffering,

(Continued on page 11)

Rotary Clubs and Madras Week

Madras Week was celebrated by several Rotary Clubs, though under the guise of the “Madras 374”.

The various activities conducted by the Clubs during Madras Week are as follows:

The District Club Service launched its initiative “Madras 374” on August 1st to celebrate the legacy of Madras and also to bring in some fresh air to weekly club programmes. Many Clubs participated vibrantly.

- RCM South conducted multiple activities in the form of a Quiz conducted by S. Muthiah, Heritage speakers held joint meetings to promote Madras. Almost every week they had a programme.
- RC K.K. Nagar conducted quiz competitions and also had a meet on Madras Heritage addressed by Shashi Nair.
- RC Velachery conducted a joint meeting along with RC Thiruvanniyur on the subject ‘Eminent women of Madras’ addressed by Nina John.
- RC Madras Coromandel conducted the ‘Mylapore Heritage walk’ guided by Dr. Chithra Madhavan.
- RC Chennai Towers conducted a photo competition titled ‘I love Madras’ and also participated in a quiz on Madras organised by RCM South. An SMS-based quiz on Madras was conducted by them.

- RCM Midtown conducted a weekly meeting participated by Gopu who spoke on ‘Chennai Pattinathu Edison’.
- RC Madras Centenary Commemoration held a photo exhibition titled ‘Madras’ at the Pallazo Art gallery between August 21 and 31.
- RCM Central Aaditya held Madras Day celebrations on August 24th.
- RC Anna Nagar Aaditya held a meeting on August 26th where Ramanujar spoke on ‘I love Chennai’.
- RC Madras held multiple programmes to commemorate Madras Week celebrations.
- RC Ambattur celebrated Madras Day along with their Charter Day. They invited and honoured the models who posed for the ‘Triumph of Labour’ statue.
- RC Temple City participated in the Madras Quiz with three other clubs.
- RCM Chenna Patna organised a talk on Natural Heritage of Madras.
- RC Royapettah organised a dinner and fellowship meet to celebrate Madras Day and they conducted a quiz and Rtn.Kishore Kumar gave a speech on ‘Madras and its heritage’.
- RCM Ashok Nagar conducted a Family Fellowship dinner night and conducted a Quiz on ‘Singara Chennai’.

(Continued from page 10)

of promoting health, and with health the efficiency and the happiness of generations. Different faiths and different religions have varied widely as to their beliefs of what our lives consist in after death. What becomes of our personal consciousness is a question which each man must settle for himself according to his own creed. But, ladies and gentlemen, there is a life after death for the actions of each one of us, whatever our beliefs may be, in the shape of the permanent consequences of our good or evil doings.

"May those whom I see here to-day live in the blessings they will have caused to many, long after their own feeble lives will have passed away into the Great Infinite. In the name of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen-Empress, I pronounce the Victoria Caste Hospital open, and I invoke the blessing of that Mighty Power, who watches over us all, on its work."

1886 – January

The sentries at Government House mount guard, for the first time, in their Lancer full dress – scarlet with yellow fittings. Hitherto the Body Guard has worn a Hussar uniform – dark blue and silver.

January 6: My wife made a speech to-day to the children of St. Matthias' schools, in which there was a description of some parts of Madras, which seemed to me very correct.

It ran as follows:

You have a great advantage here in living in a very beautiful place. Madras does not possess the magnificent mosques and tombs which adorn many towns of Northern India, or the broad streets and wide pavements of European cities; but it has a very great charm of its own. With the extensive compounds and fine timber on the one hand, and the sea on the other, we, inhabitants of Madras, are never far away from nature, and to be near nature, with its helpful and soothing teachings, is one of the best privileges of man, and nature is never monotonous.

January 16: Strolled in the Park as I usually do between

seven and eight on Sunday mornings. We are in the midst of that brief paradisaical period, which is known as the "cold weather" at Madras but which is a very hot European summer, tempered by a delicious breeze from the north-east. The wild date (*Phoenix syhestris*) is in flower, and perfumes all the air near the corner of our domain, where the little very tame hares (*Lepus nigricouis*) live. In the midst of that pleasant tangle, I came upon a great wreath of *Abrus precatoriously* now flowering and robed in the most delicate green. I am more familiar with it in a later stage, when its beautiful black and scarlet seeds are its only attraction.

January 16: In the evening we drove to the Mylapore tank and saw, for, I think, the third time, the floating festival in honour of Siva. On this occasion, the effect of this intensely Indian scene, with its raft bearing the semblance of a temple, its dancing girls, its lights, its flowers, and its music, was heightened by the most lovely moonlight!

March 1: About half-past four p.m., the Viceroy Lord Dufferin arrived with a large party. We met him on the pier, and, after the usual ceremonials, returned together, through a great concourse, to Government House.

March 4: On the evening of the 3rd, I took Lord Dufferin to visit the Harbour, where we saw the working of the titan crane, which takes up blocks of concrete, thirty tons in weight, and gently drops them into the water to act as wave-breakers.

September 14: The Sun rose in Madras on the brilliant uniform of the Body Guard and their lances.

The rains have been exceptionally heavy, and the whole place is green. In the evening I rode with Bagot along the Marina. The Rotten Row, which I have created, is now finished as far as the Cathedral Road, and the fishing village, which five months ago was so great an eyesore, has not only disappeared, but disappeared so entirely that its site is already almost covered by vegetation.

A history of Tamil journalism

The first Tamil journal *Tamil Patrika* (1831), a monthly, was published by the Religious Tract Society. Although it had government support, it did not survive long and closed down after two years. Another journal of the period was *Rajavrittii Bothini* (1885), which specialised in publishing news items translated from newspapers received from England. *Dinavarthamani*, its contemporary, was a weekly edited by Reverend P. Percival and published by the Dravidian Press. It had government support and was reputed to have had a circulation of 1000 copies, which was considered large in that age.

A British-sponsored publication was *Jana Vinothini* which captured general public imagination by carrying a series on the *Ramayana*. It gave greater importance to literary and educational subjects than to current events and news. *Viveka Vilasam* appeared in

1865 its main object was to counteract the missionaries' propaganda. It was promoted by non-Christian Tamil scholars. Madras was the home of these journalists and it was also the centre from where newspapers in several other regional languages were published. In 1876, nineteen journals were published from Madras in four languages: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi.

The first Tamil newspaper in the real sense was the *Swadesamitran* which was started as weekly in 1882 by G. Subramanya Aiyer, who was also one of the founders of *The Hindu*. It became a daily in 1899 and dominated Tamil journalism until 1934. It was a pioneering effort for Subramanya Aiyer and very soon he was equally at home in Tamil journalism as he was in English.

The poet and patriot

December 1: I made my "Farewell Speech" to the Presidency at large at a great dinner given by the Maharajah of Vizianagram.

Pursuant to arrangements made at our dinner of 19th November, a meeting of the Madras Literary Society, which has, as a learned institution, been asleep, if not in a state of catalepsy, was held to-day at the Museum. I presided and spoke.

The band has, during the last

Subramania Bharati entered the portals of journalism through the *Swadesamitran* where he served as a sub-editor for a short period. He paid this tribute to Subramanya Aiyer in a letter to *The Hindu* from Pondicherry in December, 1914: "Unaided he (Subramanya Aiyer) had made Tamil journalism a fact of the world, in spite of his very imperfect early training in Tamil literature. Learn, says the Tamil aphorist, while you are yet young. In Subramanya Aiyer's youth he had wholly neglected his mother tongue like most people in this country who claim to have been 'educated' in English schools. But his mature patriotism had to realise later that for the elevation of the

strongest weapon was his editorials in which, in simple language and style, he explained to his readers political and economic issues which until then had remained beyond the cognitive reach of large masses of Tamil readers. In his hands the *Swadesamitran* proved to be both a teacher and a leader for the Tamil literates whose political consciousness was stirred by its relentless campaign for the social development and political emancipation of the country.

CRS, as he was affectionately known in journalists' circles, was a brilliant commentator in English too. His frequent contributions on men and matters appeared in *The Hindu* and were greatly enjoyed by its readers. The *Swadesamitran* declined after his passing away in 1962 and folded up some years later. It was revived under another owner but did not quite pick up. The old magic was

gone.

In 1917, V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar started a daily, *Desabhaktan*, which had a short life of three years. Its aim was to present a new and refined style in display of news and one of its editors was the revolutionary, V.V.S. Aiyer. It did not have much of an impact. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar's weekly *Navasakthi*, which was a political and literary magazine, was an instant success.

Another great name in Tamil journalism during the period was that of P. Varadarajulu Naidu, who published *Tamil Nadu*, a daily from Madras in 1926. It achieved significant success. Varadarajulu Naidu was a Congressman and an ardent supporter of Annie Besant's Home Rule movement. He carried on a campaign against the Justice Party through his paper and it added to his popularity. Varadarajulu Naidu, however, began to waver in his support to the Congress from 1926 and his critics said he was leaning towards the Hindu Mahasabha. *Tamil Nadu* daily closed down in 1930.

Some enterprising Congressmen started a paper, *India*, in 1931 but it did not make much headway. *Jayabharati*, a tabloid priced at 3 pice, came on the scene and had some initial success. A party newspaper started by the Justice Party was the *Dravida* edited by J.S. Kannappan.

(To be continued)

By MRINAL CHATTERJEE
Mrinal Chatterjee leads the Eastern India campus of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in Dhenkanal, Odisha.

Tamil race, the Tamil language would be not only the most rational but the indispensable medium. They win who dare; Aiyer dared and he has succeeded in establishing a Tamil daily journal which with all its faults is the most useful newspaper in the Tamil country.

After Subramanya Aiyer, A. Rangaswami Iyengar took over the editorship of the paper. He carried out mainly improvements in its format and contents and made it very influential in provincial and national politics. The *Swadesamitran* became the mouthpiece of the Congress party and it was also the Tamil version of *The Hindu* whose popularity and circulation it shared in fair measure. But the man who was its greatest editor and made it a household name was C. R. Srinivasan, who took over from Rangaswami Iyengar in 1928. His

ten days, has given us most of my favourites, and Stradiot selected, as the last thing to play at dinner to-night, a piece composed some time back in honour of Isleut.

When we had gone into the drawing-room they played, by a happy inspiration, Mozart's "Agnus Dei" and Schubert's "Ave Maria." Thereupon I stopped them. There could not have been a better end to the service they have performed so well.

(Concluded)

Answers to quiz

1. Hyderabad Hotshots; 2. Greenland; 3. Yasin Bhatkal; 4. Yosemite National Park; 5. Shooter Ronjan Sodhi; 6. GSAT-7; 7. Ununpentium (Atomic Number 115); 8. Ashok Chakra (highest peacetime gallantry award); 9. Ytterbium; 10. Ahimsa Messenger.

11. Tripurasundari (Vadivudaiamman) of Tiruvotriyur; 12. Santhome High School; 13. Kamadhenu Theatre; 14. Namma Auto; 15. Khan Bahadur Mohammed Usman; 16. Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar; 17. Kathipara Flyover; 18. 'Magician' P. James; 19. *Dheena*; 20. Ambattur.

● The eleventh in a series of profiles by V. RAMNARAYAN of cricketers who may have made an all-time Madras* squad.

A swashbuckling entertainer at the top of order

Few Tamil Nadu cricketers had captured the national – even international – imagination as Krishnamachari Srikkanth did in the 1980s, with his uninhibited aggression, unorthodox ways and literally over-the-top batsmanship. He came into the Indian XI as Gavaskar's opening partner at a time when the Little Master was in the middle of a successful partnership with Chetan Chauhan but, after a scratchy debut, Srikkanth quickly established his unique style as an impressive, destructive, if idiosyncratic, foil to Gavaskar's technical perfection.

I first came across Srikkanth's unusual gifts when I heard Dilip Vengsarkar describe his fireworks in the Moin-ud-Dowla Gold Cup match which he won for his side with a frenetic hundred against all odds. Vengsarkar who had watched the innings – I don't remember if he was at the receiving end or a spectator – with incredulity, predicted a bright future for the unrepentant young opener.

It was Srikkanth's 90 at Hyderabad against Pakistan in partnership with T.E. Srinivasan who scored a hundred that brought him into the limelight. While TE scored another century in the Irani Cup that season and booked his berth to Australia, Srikkanth had to wait till another season, before he made his debut against the touring Englishmen. Though he averaged only 19.83 in that series, his ability to score quickly and demoralise the bowlers with his irreverence and unor-

thodox ways, must have helped him to stay in contention for the opener's slot at the end of the season. His impressive 38 in the final, which played a crucial role in India's unexpected 1983 World Cup triumph in England, earned him many fans and his way back into the Indian team on a more permanent basis.

In fact, the World Cup in particular and one-day internationals in general proved decisive in shaping Srikkanth's career in international cricket. Though he was not a role model in terms of batting technique, his fairly simple batting principles included a preponderance of shots in the V, often clearing the infield, especially against the attacking fields of the early overs. He was a fierce hooker, unafraid against the best in the business and a strong cutter as well. Very quick between the wickets, he managed to win the confidence of his senior partner Sunil Gavaskar, once the master batsman unravelling Srikkanth's methods.

His brilliant batting against Pakistan during that country's visit to India in 1986-87 included his best Test innings of 123 at Chepauk, Chennai, where he pummelled Imran Khan & Co. to all parts of the ground, to the delight of his home crowd. His other hundred in Test cricket had come at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Australia in the 1985-86 season, perhaps his most consistent Test series. During that series, and the tour of England as a member of Kapil Dev's victorious team, Srikkanth was batting



Krishnamachari Srikkanth.

at his best, though in England he did not convert good starts into big scores.

Australia was where Srikkanth had grown to folk heroic status during the same season, running Ravi Shastri close in a thrilling chase for the player of the series and Audi car award. Many felt Srikkanth deserved the prize as much as his opening partner, as he played an invaluable role with his electrifying batting, superb fielding and enthusiasm in India's triumph in the World Championship of Cricket.

Srikkanth flourished throughout his career in limited overs cricket, not only as an attacking batsman and all-round fielder, but also as a very useful off-spinner, with two five wicket hauls in that form of the game placing him above many regular bowlers. In local cricket, he was also capable of rare bursts of medium-pace bowling, especially when he was fresh out of college.

Playing for Tamil Nadu, Srikkanth gave the team many

explosive starts. His partnership with V Sivaramakrishnan was often compared to successful pairs of the past like Johnstone and Nailor and Rajagopal and Belliappa. Like Nailor and Rajagopal before him, Srikkanth was the quintessential aggressor who unnerved the bowlers with his daring assaults and restless ways at the crease. (The Pakistan captain and bowling spearhead Imran Khan was once driven to such despair by his audacious batting and eccentric walkabouts at the crease, that he muttered loudly, "I can't even swear at this chap when he walks away towards the square leg umpire after every incorrigible shot" or words to that effect.)

Srikkanth was named India captain in 1989. Though unsuccessful with the bat, he managed to bring the team together as a cohesive and fighting unit, creating a record of sorts by drawing the series. It was quite an achievement, given India's earlier record in Pakistan. It was on that tour that the boy wonder, Sachin Tendulkar, made his Test debut.

Dropped from the team on his return, he spent a couple of years in the wilderness, and his subsequent form after he made a comeback was average. He could not reproduce his earlier success of the Australian tour and the 1992 World Cup, and within a year he was omitted from the South Zone squad in the Duleep Trophy. He announced his retirement from international cricket, but continued his association with the

game in several capacities, the highest of which was as chairman of the national selection committee. During his tenure, the Indian team came up with several creditable performances in India and abroad, peaking with the World Cup triumph in 2011, though he and his colleagues received more than their fair share of brickbats when India was trounced in England and Australia in recent series.

Srikkanth has also worn other hats in cricket, as an expert whose views TV channels frequently seek, for instance. In this and in his role as mentor to the Chennai Super Kings, he has often come through as an amusing and colourful personality with an original mind.

Srikkanth's career statistics read 2,062 runs in Tests, with two hundreds, and an average of 29.88, and 4,091 runs in ODIs with 4 hundreds and an average of 29.01. Strangely, his strike rate of 71.74 in ODIs was only marginally better than Rahul Dravid's 71.24. He will, however, always be remembered for the joy he brought to millions of spectators by his carefree batting and unbridled enthusiasm on the field.

*Madras Province/State/Tamil Nadu.

An Anglo-Indian memory

(Continued from page 9)

maria was a lovely looking girl. And then there were the Dalys. Marie Daly was a beauty and she knew it. I was told that the Dalys emigrated to Australia.

Do I regret my Anglo-Indian childhood? Not at all.

I am 87 years old and I know that the gentle Mother Margaret, the bright and young Sister Paula, all my teachers and many of my classmates are no more. I owe what I am to all of them.

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