

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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Did the newspaper say we have to charge for not wearing a helmet? If so, I'll have no option but to charge you!

### Eye of the beholder

The authorities have spoken. 'Wear helmets... or else.' Impressive – good rule, displaying a firm, fearless, no-nonsense attitude – just what you like to see in those in charge.

Except when it turns out that a few who're supposed to carry out these measures are a little under-informed of all these taking-things-up-a-notch changes.

A lack that tends to cause the lackadaisical.

Something a certain reporter from a local paper proved, when he darted about on a two-wheeler a few days ago, helmet deliberately conspicuous by its absence, right under the nose of authority, without getting pulled up even once.

You'd think the guy would have got caught at traffic signals at least – stationary vehicle, stationary miscreant, etc.

But – No. Typical of these times, photographs were promptly splashed all over the next day.

Red faces and tempers in official corridors.

However, the better-informed did pull up some 'err-ers', addressing them like kindly uncles, advising them to wear helmets, proving Authority doesn't always have a stony heart.

Learning is a perpetual process. Rule makers, take note – mere power apparently makes for brittle armour...easily broken, like something bought at a discount store that values appearance over quality. And – the 'eyes' are everywhere these days.

Ranjitha Ashok

# Monorail, Metro, MRTS, buses...

*...They'd all be successful only if they team together*

(By A Special Correspondent)

With a change in Government, there is, as is only to be expected in Tamil Nadu, a complete volte-face on several projects. Chief among these is the decision to revive the idea of a monorail system for Chennai, as opposed to the Metro rail under and over-ground network on which work is now underway. A saving grace is that the Metro is not entirely scrapped and an assurance has been given that Phase I of the project will be completed in its entirety. Now the focus shifts to what the monorail will entail. All schemes promise a multi-modal transport solution for the city, but much will depend on how this translates into reality.

The idea of a monorail for the city is not new. It was proposed in 2006 and was then touted as the ideal solution for a congested city like ours. The trains, being elevated, need less space on the ground for their supporting structures. The tracks can be easily structured to suit the narrow and curving contours of our roads. The construction is less complicated, thereby ensuring a shorter gestation time and less disruption of traffic on the ground while work is in progress. This also means that expanding the network to the suburbs will be simpler. Heritage buildings in the vicinity are unlikely to be impacted. The previous government, however, preferred the underground solution, probably on the same considerations that the present dispensation is favouring for an aerial solution.

Those in favour of the Metro argue that the monorail can at best be used in short stretches and that an underground system can carry a far greater number of passengers over longer distances. There is also the concern that the economic viability of the Metro was calculated on the presumption that at the end of a three-phased programme, it would run right across the city in two

(Continued on page 8)



Fort St. George, built by Tamil artisans with Tamizhagam materials.

# It's not Tamil, a sudden discovery after decades

In the ongoing exchanges over the new Assembly-cum-Secretariat versus the old one at Fort St George, several ingenious contentions and reasons are being put forward by both sides.

The latest and perhaps the most laughable one postulated by those who want the shift to be made to the new building is that the Fort is a symbol of British imperialism and so ought not to be the home of the State Government. All we can say to that is that it has taken more than 65 years for this wisdom to dawn. And at the end of such a long period, does it matter any longer?

If Fort St George is indeed a symbol of British imperialism, by the same token we ought to be abandoning a number of other buildings. The High Court, the Central and Egmore Railway Stations, the General Hospital, the Madras Medical College, the Guindy Engineering College, Senate House... the list is practically endless. Of course, by doing so, we would

make the real estate lobby very happy but we would be much poorer at the end of it all. Even Madras that is Chennai is a creation of the British. So, does that mean we must abandon the city lock, stock and barrel? What of our Constitution and our systems of bicameral legislature? Are these not based on Western models? Should we discard them whimsically?

And what of earlier imperialism? Our Prime Minister still

• by The Editor

unfurls the national flag on Independence Day at the Red Fort, which is the symbol of the subjugation of India by the Mughals. So, does this logic in the case of Fort St George hold water?

What is also interesting is that those who put forward this argument have been in power at Fort St George at least from the late 1960s. Is it, therefore, a case of *post facto* reasoning and justification?

Let's face it. Most edifices of power in India were constructed in the period before Independence. *Rashtrapati Bhavan*, *Parliament House*, several gubernatorial residences, State Assemblies and High Courts of Judicature are all Raj period structures and we are none the worse for it by continuing to use them. And even in instances where the shift has been made to modern buildings, the reasons have been purely convenience-oriented, with the older structure being taken care of.

Now let us look at the new Assembly building and see how Indian it is. Designed by German architects, it has virtually no bearing on any Indian element of architecture, no matter how many reams have been written towards explaining the essential Indianness in the design. And if the argument is made out that the new building was built by Tamil-speaking artisans, let us correct it to point out that the bulk of the labour came from North India. More Hindi was

(Continued on page 2)

# Green prisons now educate their inmates

The Green Prison concept (MM, June 1st) is only one of the significant changes sweeping across the State's prisons. Community colleges in prisons to educate the inmates and facilitate further studies is the latest initiative! Apart from even a remand prisoner who is in the campus for at least 15 days, those who cannot read and write can also pick up such skills. Those who stay longer are guided to take their 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> standard exams, or even the BA, MBA or MCA exams. In the vocational stream, about 20 core courses are provided, including four-wheeler mechanism, catering technology, DTP, etc. But a welcome precursor to all these is a basic course in communication, life-coping skills, self-development, and computing!

For women prisoners, courses in nursing care and beautician training are offered. The prison authorities link up with the ITIs and zero in on short- and long-term courses with good employment potential. Currently, there are mobile labs for experiential work, but prison authorities are liaising with NGOs to help set up permanent labs for vocational streams on campus.

Tie-ups for campus placements are on the cards but the primary focus is on courses that generate self-employment. TV mechanics, plumbers and electricians can be trained as service providers on call. And when a prisoner comes out with a skill, reintegration becomes easier.

Correctional services existed earlier, but were not guided or facilitated in a sustained and structured manner to generate future employment. In December 2010, a tie-up was initiated with community colleges outside, with the Indian Centre for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE) as consultant, and formalised frameworks and a mandatory number of study hours put in place. Specialised courses, like a diploma or degree in textile engineering, have been provided in the Coimbatore prison campus to cater to job opportunities in the flourishing textile industry in the region. In Vellore, leather technology courses are offered and a paper factory has been set up in the Palayamkottai prison

by Tamil Nadu Paper Limited (TNPL). In Madurai, a hotelier shares catering tips with inmates. Different programmes are tailored for different job opportunities in each area.

The Prisons Department has been receiving donations from several quarters – some sponsoring prisoners' education and others willing to help them become self-employed – by way of direct cheques to the Mahatma Gandhi Community Colleges in State prisons. In the future, even customised requests from corporates can be met, feel officials. The student-prisoners will be trained professionally, and companies can assess their skills and choose whom they want, on merit.

# A sudden discovery after decades

(Continued from page 1)

heard on the site than at a conference of pundits. As for the materials used, how much was Indian or true to traditional Indian materials? At least, Fort St George when it was built used local labour, guided by native maistries who would have worked under British garrison engineers. And it was local brick and lime and granite that were used.

The fundamental argument for ensuring that the new building is used should be that Rs.

1000 crore of public money has been spent on its construction.

Abandoning such a structure would be a dangerous precedent, for it would mean that in future too money on such a scale can be spent without any thought of the end-benefit.

Let those in power (and out of it) think on how the building should be best used in the circumstances. Why not as home to various government departments and quasi-Government organisations now in rented buildings?

# The Season of Knots

These are days when *The Man from Madras Musings* is rather short on topics, wondering how anything he says will be taken, given the roasting he received after writing on women's current daily-wear (oops! Did not MMM say that all correspondence had ceased on the subject?). But the Chief takes his role as Simon Legree quite seriously. "There are so many things left untouched," says the Chief looking quizzically at MMM, all the while, no doubt, wishing that he had better material than this to mould.

Anyway, what it all boils (what a painful word in this heat) down to is that MMM has to churn up something fresh and you will definitely understand the depths to which he had sunk when almost the first idea that came to mind was a lament on corruption. But what with better and more supple men handling that minor matter, MMM chose to think of bigger and better things and that can only mean cricket or weddings. Since MMM is not much of a buff for smacking leather with a willow – though the Chief talks of him bowling googlies, whatever they are – you are left with the latter as a subject.

Come June, and if you drop in at chez MMM you will find the letter box which usually is filled with missives from suppliers, banks and tax departments, all of them asking for amounts long overdue, taking on festive hues. Ochre, pink, green, orange and a variety of other colours fill it, for 'tis the wedding season. MMM may not be receiving a shower of manna but he definitely is flooded with invitations to watch various couples tying the knot and becoming man and strife (on second thoughts expunge that, Chief, we don't want a battalion of newly married women in nighties encouraging an army of bridegrooms in shorts to set fire to our humble office, do we?). MMM is not exaggerating when he says that it is quite possible for him to dine out at weddings practically every evening in June.

That thought fills MMM with a nameless dread and here is where you will see the truth of the statement that one man's meat is another's poison. For, such a thought revives MMM's good lady (also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed) like a watered flower and she goes about singing around the house, selecting sarees to wear and jewellery to match. MMM, who has nothing more than a shirt and a pair of trousers to slip into, is left brooding and, in Job-like vein, he has been

thinking of what he objects to most in these weddings.

The nadir, as far as MMM is concerned, is when you get on to stage to greet the young couple and find that you don't know them from Adam and Eve. MMM is now of that age when he is definitely a friend of the parents and needs them to introduce him to the newly weds. But given MMM's usual luck, he has noticed that the pater familias (or sometimes the mater), who was all along standing on stage and doing the honours, chooses to vanish just as MMM and lady make their appearance on stage, with MMM nervously clutching the gift. And from there on matters go steadily downhill, at least as far as MMM is concerned.

There have been occasions when the strain of making himself known to the couple (not that they cared two hoots) was so much that MMM forgot to hand over the gift and came away with it. There was one memorable occasion when he wished the bride "Best of Luck" as though she was just sitting for an exam. It threw a blight on

out, barely exists) and a dotted line is being painted along the middle. As to what purpose this exercise is in aid of MMM is not very sure. Is it a quaint ceremony, like the beating of boundaries as was practised in English villages in the past? Perhaps it is for the benefit of those who usurp footpath space for various purposes. MMM is of the view that the solid line indicates how much of public space can be taken over by these people (for the purposes of vending, political cut-out/banner erecting, extension of shop-front space etc, in short for all those things for which our roads exist). Thus far and no further, say our police, whose lightest word is law. MMM also suspects that this could be a case of someone blundering and the administration being stuck with surplus stock of white paint. The easiest way out would have been to send someone out to paint the boundaries.

It was with a similar frenzy that the cameras were fixed on various traffic signals a few months ago. What happened to them afterwards is anybody's guess. As MMM is typing these lines, he can't help glancing out of the window and noticing that the white lines are already looking somewhat faded. No doubt within a few weeks, this exercise will be repeated again. But that depends on whether the paint will be available in stock then.

Road-users, however, see these lines differently. Given that we are the only nation in the world which has adapted neither the left nor the right carriageway to drive on, but a technique of driving along the middle, most drivers have now begun to assume that their vehicles ought to be exactly over the dotted line in the centre. But with both up and down lanes assuming the same and what with most of the one-ways having become two-ways once again (another decision reversal by the new dispensation), chaos rules. But we are quite used to that, aren't we?

## Tailpiece

What with the new dispensation deciding to take a diametrically opposite stance to that of the previous one, it appears to *The Man from Madras Musings* singularly appropriate that a monorail which is elevated is being considered over a metro which involves digging into the ground. Going by the same logic, MMM looks forward to decisions favouring the pedestrian in preference to the vehicle user, as well.

– MMM

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

the rest of the rather short-lived marriage, MMM is given to understand. The obligatory photograph is another harrowing experience. MMM never knows when the smile can be switched off and the result is he has either remained beaming on stage long after everyone but he has fled or he has walked off too soon having had to be called back?

And what of the good lady, you may well ask. Well, she breezes through it all, rather like the Queen going walkabout. A gracious smile here, a word or two there, a dazzling beam for the photo and all this while keeping a watchful eye on the dining hall to choose the right moment to charge ahead at the trough. And so MMM opts to follow her leadership in these matters as in everything else.

## Bounding roads

The police (or is it the Highways/PWD?) have done it again. Yes, yet another step taken towards making our roads truly international. *The Man from Madras Musings* refers to the frenzy with which the city's thoroughfares are having their boundaries marked. A solid white line is being painted on both sides of the roads, close to the pavement (which, as MMM never ceases to point

# OUR READERS WRITE



## Madras again?

Moving back the seat of power to Fort St. George is all well and good, but one thing that needs to be got back is the name 'Madras'. I grew up in the city named Madras and somehow cannot identify with the city as it has been renamed now. Madras has all the glory and nostalgia associated with it; urban mess is what is synonymous with the city's present name.

Given the current mood of the newly elected government, this may be the right time to start a campaign to get the city its glorious old name back.

C.K. Jaidev  
ckjaidev@yahoo.com

## Calling all alumni

Radhya Padmanabhan has lamented about the sorry state of the buildings of Presidency College today (MM, April 16th). Other readers have mooted the idea of old students doing something to restore their glory.

In 2000, the College was 150 years old and a call was made to enroll old students. I became a life member at the time. One D. Roosevelt was president of the Association. With former Union Minister C. Subramaniam as head, they formed a committee and made several proposals, like scholarships, endowment, etc. There used to be annual meetings. I attended one of them some years ago. There were hardly 20 to 30 people present. I was thoroughly disappointed, as I had looked forward to a large gathering of familiar faces. The

programme was held in the dimly-lit English lecture hall.

While P. Chidambaram or N. Ram as VIPs can kickstart some work, the nitty gritty of regular work has to be done by others. I wonder whether the writer or other writers are members of the Association. Of course, most of us are scattered all over the globe. I myself am not able to attend the annual functions regularly since I am away from India at those times. We can all get together and make the college regain its glory.

Dr. R.K. Natarajan  
(now in SanDiego)  
natarajanrk@gmail.com

## Best boys' school

Reader Dr. D. Raman (MM, May 16th), known to his classmates as Raman D. (like Normandy) because that was how his name was read out at morning attendance, is off the mark when he says that Kuruvilla Jacob, the Headmaster, used to walk around MCCCHS cane in hand. In fact, it was Asst. Headmaster Mathias who was synonymous with the cane, his constant companion. His permanent frown, clenched teeth and pursed mouth together earned him a nickname which cannot be mentioned here. Whenever I see Karan Thapar on TV, I am always reminded of Mathias. Kuruvilla was, however, different, one of the kindest persons ever and loved by one and all.

I agree with Dr. Raman that the school and the grounds were in mint condition in those days. So good was the main playground that the South In-

dia All Schools Cricket Tournament was played on it. The Hyderabad All Schools Team was captained by the peerless Waheed Yar Khan who, later, with compatriot Asif Iqbal, migrated to Pakistan. Waheed was the coach of future Tamil Nadu player Abdul Jabbar and his brother Abdul Azeem (Hyderabad).

Britannia Amritraj Tennis Academy and Dennis Lillee Pace Foundation came up in the school premises in later years thanks to Kuruvilla Jacob's upkeep lavished on the school and his extraordinary attention to detail. Under his watchful eyes the army of gardeners maintained even the hedges with military precision. We lucky boys had better school days than even Tom Brown.

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

## Marina memories

During my college days (1945-1950) there was not a single evening that my friends and I were not loitering at the Marina (MM, May 16th) enjoying the cool breeze, standing in the waves, playing *chadugudu* or munching the monkeynuts sold by the *Kodhikudhu Nilakadalai* man. (He was identified even from a distance by the red-coloured *veshti* and a faded red towel on his bare body!) Sometimes we would sit on the small parapets (hardly one foot high and it is even now there) lining the walkers' pathway and chit chat, mainly making fun of various walkers – behind their back, of course!

Modern Cafe's mobile van used to come in the evenings and our favourite item was the milk-shake (just 4 annas!), but if you were late the stock would be finished! Generally, there wouldn't be much of a crowd except on Sundays, holidays and the summer months.

We Chennaiites are lucky to still have this valuable stretch of

# The snake shrine

The article on Snake worship (MM, April 1st) reminded me of *Sarpakav*, as it is called in Kerala, in our ancestral home (*Tarvad*). Although we have sold the ancient house and the land around it, the *Sarpakav* matter remains to be settled.

In 1989, we re-consecrated this place of worship with an elaborate pooja and a net cover was placed over the stone images. Immediately after the ceremony there was a lovely drizzle in the summer noon! A real surprise!

Now, after the sale of a small piece of land adjoining it, we, my cousins and I, hope to get the walls built and have another elaborate pooja done. Unlike other *Sarpakav* inmates, ours refused to move from this place. They are benign and are always blessing us.

I suppose the origin of a patch of green in every house with a figure or two of snake gods meant to indicate the preservation of the environment. The trees in that piece of land are not to be cut and hence there is always a lovely patch of greenery. In most places like this, the branches of trees look like huge snakes entwined all over the trees and surroundings! The effect is eerie as well as extraordinary!

It is also a wonderful experience to take a walk in the *Sarpakav* – dry leaves crunching under the bare feet, lovely cool breeze, and birds chirping among and around the branches. It is often dark and cool even at noon when the sun is shining brightly high above.

The local people are happy that we plan to preserve the old patch of green in the name of environment! We had no choice as the invisible residents of the *Sarpakav* refuse to leave their abode!

Parvati V. Menon  
1A, "Doshi Deepanjali", 1, East Mada Street  
Srinagar Colony, Saidapet, Chennai 600 015

natural heritage unscathed. And we should never let Government or any other organisation destroy or build over it for whatever purpose.

It was great reading Prabha Sridevan's article, especially every facet mentioned therein. I was able to savour having experienced exactly the same emotions!

Cdr. R. Ganapathi (Retd)  
116, Defence Colony  
Chennai 600 032

## Old pilgrimages

The article 'A Chola Temple in Chennai' (MM, June 1st) provided a lot of information on the history of the temple. It also stated that Sundaramurthy Nayanar lived in the 9th Century AD. His frequent companion on pilgrimage was said to be Cheraman Peruman Nayanar.

But, according to legends in Kerala, Cheraman Peruman visited Mecca, met the Prophet, converted to Islam, but never came back. The Prophet lived in the 8th Century AD. Adhi Sankara, Appar and Sundarar also lived in the 8th Century AD. According to certain historians, ancient Mecca was called Makheshwarapuri and was an important pilgrim centre for Saivites. Perhaps, more research is needed.

For exchange of more information, interested readers are free to contact me.

S.N. Mahalingam  
Superintending Engineer  
Tamil Nadu PWD (Retd)  
(Formerly Research scholar at the  
Indian Institute of Science,  
Bangalore)  
P.No.64-A, Kalamegam Street  
Extn., SBI Colony II Street,  
Kamarajapuram, Chennai 600 073

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Tenements near Foreshore Estate – (Picture: V.S. Raghavan).

I spent a couple of hours recently with forty-odd children at the Slum Clearance Board tenements facing the sea near Marina. A young man called Krishnamoorthy, who had grown up there, has this plan of giving quality hours to the children. He gathers the children, and they are taught yoga, dance, songs and *slokas*. After school, the children come to his place to learn, and they are there at weekends too during the day. His intention is to expose them to good values alone, protect them from the pernicious influence of TV and also the violence that is part of their lives, which could be due to a drunken father or an abused mother.

It was a real feel-good two hours. You know the kind when you feel, O.K., the world is not so bad, in spite of the depressing headlines in the newspapers and the audio-visual bombardment 24 hours a day. The children danced, did yoga, sang beautifully. Then it was question hour. I asked them to say a few words about trees. One child said it gives us fruits, one said vegetables, one said it gives us breeze, one said it gives us shade, then tiny, bright-eyed Rajalakshmi said, "Amma, trees give us rains". My jaw dropped. Wonderful! This little mite had made the connection between trees and rains, when even adults, especially those in power, do not. God knows how many Rajalakshmis there are, born to blush unseen in the Slum Clearance Board buildings that are deserts in our concrete jungle.

While I understand the laudable object and purpose of these Slum Clearance Board projects, take a look at all the Slum Clearance Board build-

# I have a dream, I have a story

– For children in Slum Clearance Board tenements and others like them

ings in Chennai. Is there one that kindles your imagination, one that tells the occupants, "I value your life, so I will not rob it of its colour?" No, each one of them is dreary, drab, made with third rate materials. The quality of construction tells you how much the State values the dwellers therein. How will a child growing up in those tenements have faith in the State as the protector of his/her right to live with dignity? A more eloquent evidence of what the State thinks or does not think about its poor is difficult to find.

So, perhaps, Krishnamoorthy has the right idea. It is our duty to colour the lives of these innocent children with activities, as an antidote to the drab wretchedness of their homes. At the end of my time with them, I told them some stories. They enjoyed them. For a short while they were in a Story-tale country, not in a Slum Clearance country. Stories do just that. They transport children to a magic world.

"Oru kaalathiley oru ooriley oru raja irundhaar (Once upon a time there was a king)." This is how a grandmother opens a magical wonder-filled world to her grandchildren. Children love stories. The children's channel on TV is a very poor

substitute. They do not mind hearing the same story over and over again. For a child, security comes from routine and certainty. So they love repetition.

I have made up a story for my little grandson about a brown dog and a Maama going to the zoo. They go by bus. The conductor will ask them to buy tickets, one ticket for "bow wow wow" and one ticket for Maama. It goes on in this vein. I will not tire you. But you

• by  
**Prabha Sridevan**

should see the excitement in my grandson's eyes when he must have imagined the bus stopping and they getting in. He knows that at this point I will ask him, "What did the conductor say?" With glee he will shout, "Thigeeths"(tickets). It is the same story repeated, with no twists, no turns, but the anticipation and the joy in the child's eyes when he has to say "Thigeeths" never abates. That is what a story brings to a child.

Storytelling fires a child's imagination, while TV viewing boxes it. Only when we become children can we freely take flights of fantasy. Stories create that space for the child. The

child can be anyone she wants to be, a queen, sorcerer, prince, just anyone. Story time is bonding time. The togetherness that children experience, when they crowd around the storyteller, is precious beyond measure.

Storytelling establishes a continuum of history, heritage and tradition. We see around us a depressing lack of interest in heritage and history. Maybe, it is also because there is a decline in storytelling. When Lord Curzon in his Convocation speech said that the Hindus had no sense of truth and morality, my great-grandfather, V. Krishnaswami Aiyer, one of the greatest sons of this great city, reacted in righteous indignation and published a book of stories. His preface is worth remembering: "No nation has ever achieved greatness with a contempt for its past ... The stories of heroes and martyrs, of sages and saints are necessary fuel to the flame of national life and national enthusiasm ... We Indians have ... to kindle in every Indian breast a new longing for national unity as a foundation on which may be built a new greatness." This was written on January 1, 1908! I can repeat it today with greater urgency, without sounding antiquated. I felt very sad when I heard recently that one of the cell callers (Ma'am, I'm from...) said that the only Bharati she knew was Bharti Airtel. A sense of history and the meaning it gives our life today is like an oxygen line. We cannot cut it.

In a recent issue of this journal, Gopal Krishna Gandhi raved, "We cherish our history, neglect our heritage ... We substitute the responsibility of caring by the exhilaration of celebrating. We decorate where

we should restore, we 'beautify' where plain cleaning is called for, preferring to renovate, refurbish, rename and even to replace, rather than repair, renew, restore. To the delight of realtors and developers, the Brahma in us remains active; so is the Siva. But not the Vishnu." I think the article was kinder to us than we deserved, when it said we cherish our history.

Stories fuel dreams, and children must dream, dream big. Many years ago, at a public hearing on child labour, near Palmgrove Hotel I think, I spoke to young child labourers who had been rescued. I remember little Hasina wearing a mauve *salwar kameez*. I asked her, "Hasinavukku enna venum?" (What does Hasina want?). With dreams in her young heart and a shy smile she said, "Oru balloon vidanum amma, appuram... baloonai pidichukitte uyara parakkanum" (I want to hold a balloon, and then holding it I want to fly high). Tears just filmed over my eyes and I hugged her. I am sure no one spared a moment of storytime for dear Hasina, yet the child's instinct was to dream. This is what stories do, they allow the child to fly sky-high and freely. Hasina must be 17 now. I wonder how life has treated her.

Maybe, every school should have a story hour. The State can mandate that at least State-controlled schools shall have a story hour. Children can learn so much from a well-used story hour. Believe me, even the child who creeps like a "snail unwillingly to school" will set off with alacrity to class if there was a story hour. I don't know how, but these travels on the vehicle of imagination help children.

Maybe, we should have a tell-a-story scheme, which will have a panel of storytellers to tell stories to children, especially to those coming from low income families, the Slum Clearance Board children, the children who gather around Krishnamoorthy. They all need a break from the buildings we have condemned them to. In parenthesis, can any paint company, as an altruistic measure, paint all these buildings in lively colours and give the children the feeling that they are precious to all of us? Just imagine, our city will wear a rainbow look and who knows the company may even get some tax benefit. At least once a week the children can be *ilavarasars* (princes) and *ilavarasis* (princesses) in their imagination. They deserve it. So many values can be taught through stories. The values of cleanliness, honesty, industry, national pride etc. can all be woven into story time. Children learn fast. There can be a story-a-week scheme. I am sure it will be a runaway success. I have a story, I have a dream.

## OUR ADDRESSES

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Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

# Kelly's Drain – Where was it?

I first came across the term Kelly's Drain while researching the history of the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Hilton Brown, in his wonderful book *Parrys of Madras* (Parrys, 1954), writes of a director of the company in the 1850s, Henry Nelson (also a Chairman of the Madras Chamber of Commerce for several terms) who kept badgering Sir Charles Trevelyan, Governor of Madras in 1859/60, to do something about Kelly's Drain. And such was Nelson's personality that the Government actually got around to doing something about it.

Now, where exactly was Kelly's Drain? Given its name, I assumed that it was somewhere near the area known as Kelly's and, therefore, surmised that it was probably Otteri Nullah. But, if so, why was Nelson so perturbed about it considering that, in his time, the area was very thinly populated and hardly likely to have had drainage problems? The answer lay in further research.

With the Tamil Nadu Archives nowadays being out of bounds for anyone who is not a scholar registered with a University, the only option was to search the web. That august body, if the internet can be assigned corporeal identity, has improved vastly in the past few years as a source of authentic information. This is partly due to universities in America which are doing a great job of uploading rare and out-of-print books which are out-of-copyright. These, as opposed to the policy of our very own Archives, are available free of cost and are accessible to one and all. And it was there that I found my information on Kelly's Drain.

According to Reginald Henry Phillimore (*Historical Records of the Survey of India*, published by the Survey of India, 1952), Kelly's Drain, also known as Kelly's Scent Bottle, commemorates Robert Kelly and was "a channel running through the heart of George Town." Kelly can in some ways be considered the father of the Survey of India.

Henry Davison Love, in his *Vestiges of Old Madras*, notes that Kelly joined the army as an Ensign in 1760. Love notes that on December 22, 1778 Kelly, by then a Major, wrote to Governor Thomas Rumbold that he had in 1770 "determined to put together the few Observations" he had "already made and to Continue Surveying every Road I should have occasion to march in future." He proposed a "General Map of the Decan and Carnatick, chiefly laid down from actual surveys, corrected by Astronomical Observations, and divided into Squares, or rather Parallelograms, each containing One Degree of Latitude and Longitude..." The matter was referred to the East India Company by the Gover-

nor of Madras. The Rev. Philip Mulley, who is a regular contributor to *Madras Musings*, had sent information when we were collating information on streets named after foreigners that Kelly fell at the battle of Arnee in 1790. Presumably, by the

the drain for The City (now George Town, then Black Town) before undergoing a makeover and emerging as Popham's Broadway. But wherever it was, it had become notorious, suffering the fate of almost all waterbodies that have

cept for about a couple of hours during the night. This is done too, at a time when the wind is blowing from the city, in order that the smell may be driven out to sea."

Topping the mouth of the drain, at the point where it met the sea, there was, apparently, a curious structure. This, according to *Our Chronicle*, was Kelly's Scent Bottle and was "a short, stoutly built chimney-looking structure, situated on the Esplanade close to the north-east angle of Fort St George, and not so far distant from the beach."

It probably stood on land that was later reclaimed for the Port. According to the publication, the structure was the idea of a Dr. Kelly (which indicates that it may have been the idea of Robert Kelly who over the time may have metamorphosed into Dr. Kelly – or it may be another Kelly altogether, the Irish being everywhere in the Madras of those days) who planned it as a ventilating shaft "to carry off the foul atmosphere of the drains of the Town. Unfortunately through want of confidence in the Doctor's theory or from other causes, the shaft was not carried to the original height it was intended it should, but remains curtailed to one-fourth of its intended dimensions. The consequence of which is that the atmosphere under certain circumstances, in its vicinity, is tainted with the vilest odours in the most concentrated form, it is possible to imagine.

Various efforts have been made to remove this nuisance but all have been unavailing. It seems sacrilege to meddle with it or disparage it in anyway." The article goes on to state that it was the regiment that was in the Fort that suffered the most and one gallant officer decided to bring it to the notice of the Governor in a rather dynamic fashion. He bribed the officer in charge of the scent bottle to open it when the Governor and "his council were transacting

business in the Council Chamber in the Fort, whereupon such a stench arose that the Governor broke up the Council with all haste and betook himself away as far as he could."

Another account, that of Isaac Tyrrell (*From England to the Antipodes and India – 1846 to 1902*, the ALV Press, Madras 1904), has it that Kelly's Drain was the main sewer north of the Fort and was also known as Kelly's Folly. According to him, everyone took good care to remain on the windward side when the drain was opened, except Bishop Fennelly who said "chaffingly that he did not think there was any harm in the smell, but that on the whole he rather enjoyed it!"

In 1906, Kelly's Drain appears to have covered itself in glory for it overflowed its banks. The stink, figuratively speaking, reached Westminster for *The House of Commons Report* for that year records that "owing to the nuisance caused by the overflow of sewage into the Kelly Drain, the matter was given preference to all other drainage proposals and a satisfactory scheme was under active preparation."

It appears that this scheme went the way of several of its predecessors and successors, for, in 1927, G.A. Natesan's *Indian Review*, Volume 28 was still lamenting that Kelly's Drain, "familiarily known as Kelly's Scent-Bottle", was not connecting with the drainage through the Cooum "rightly styled the Cloaca Maxima of Madras." Evidently by then, using rivers for discharging effluents and sewage was an accepted practice.

What happened subsequently to the structure known as the Scent Bottle is a mystery. Was it demolished or is it still there, hidden behind some structure or covered with posters? And does Kelly's Drain exist in some form even now? Where does the drain of George Town now go? I for one would not like to know.



Popham's Broadway – was Kelly's Drain here? (Courtesy: Vintage Vignettes).

## Lost Landmarks of Madras An occasional series by SRIRAM V.

time a decision was taken to go ahead with the survey, he was dead. The rest of the story concerning William Lambton and the Great Trigonometric Survey of India is well-known.

At the time of his death, Kelly was a Colonel and in charge of HM's 74<sup>th</sup> regiment, the 4<sup>th</sup> Madras European Infantry and the 21<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Madras Native Infantry, according to *The History of the Organisation, Equipment and War Service of the Regiment of Bengal Artillery* by Francis William Stubbs, published in 1877 by Henry S King & Co, London. It is still a mystery as to why such a well-decorated officer had to suffer the ignominy of a drain being named after him. Also, the exact location of the drain is still unclear though it must have most probably been a successor to the infamous Atta Pallam which had earlier officiated as

had the misfortune to exist in and around the city.

*Our Chronicle*, which was the monthly publication of the 67<sup>th</sup> (South Hants) Regiment stationed in Madras, in its issue of November 1, 1876, carried a humorous story of a conversation between an army officer and a rat that infested Kelly's Drain. It claimed that the sewer was "one of the oldest, most time-honoured and most cherished institutions of the city and materially aids in giving to Madras that pre-eminence it holds over the most odorous of cities". Submitting a proposal for a comprehensive drainage scheme for Madras, Captain Henry Tulloch, in 1867, without mentioning the name of the drain, states it was a "mere cess-pool, from which sewage cannot possibly escape" and laments "the abominable stench from the mouth of the sewer at the north-east angle of the Fort, which drains a portion of Black Town only... No description can convey to the minds of those who have never lived within the influence of the smell of this sewer, its overpowering offensiveness while the outlet is open. The Fort would hardly be habitable from October to February, or while the north-east winds prevail, if this outlet were kept open the whole day. Fortunately, the sewer is large enough to hold all the sewage which flows into it, for a day or two, so that it is unnecessary to open the mouth ex-

### Madras Musings now on the web

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

THE EDITOR

## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Name the highly-decorated EPL footballer whose injunction over an alleged affair caused a storm on Twitter.

2. Name the former head of IMF and a French Presidential hopeful who was arrested in New York on charges of attacking and attempting to rape a hotel maid.

3. For which coveted literary award was the American novelist Philip Roth chosen on May 18th?

4. Name the highest-rated talk show in American TV history with a world-famous host that came to an end on May 25th after 25 seasons and 4,561 episodes.

5. Which team won the UEFA Champions League in London on May 28th?

6. In a major decision, which European nation has decided to end all nuclear power by 2022?

7. According to a WHO statement on May 31st, which common activity in today's communication world can increase possible cancer risk?

8. The centenary of the launch of possibly the most iconic vessel to have set sail was observed in Belfast on May 31st. Name the tragically-famous vessel.

9. Grimsvotn is creating news just as something similar to it had done last year in its native country by going into action recently. What is Grimsvotn?

10. According to the UN, which is the second disease, after smallpox, to have been eliminated worldwide?

\* \* \*

11. Who was voted Player of the Match in the IPL final played at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on May 28th?

12. Which area in Chennai gets its name from the Tamil name for Peter?

13. The building on Broadway which housed Madras' first cinema is the home of a 111-year-old institution that did much for the city's stage performances. Name it.

14. What do the initials RSRM in Government RSRM Lying-In Hospital stand for?

15. Who are the Leader of the House and the Leader of Opposition in the present Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly?

16. Which inland district has the Vellar River in the north and the Kollidam River in the south?

17. What was founded in Vaisakha Sukla Purnima of the year Siddharthi with Adi Sankara as the first Acharya?

18. Which district on the Bay of Bengal was carved by bifurcating

# Make mine a 'Madras'

Recently, it occurred to me – while I was at a bar, of course – that my hometown has one thing in common with New York's oldest and most famous borough, Manhattan: both have decent cocktails named after them. But while the Manhattan, a classic, was invented in the Big Apple, the Madras certainly did not originate in its namesake city on the Coromandel Coast.

In its present form, the Madras is a highball: a vodka-based drink with cranberry juice and a splash of orange juice to top it off. The drink reminds me of cheap, brightly-dyed cloth bleeding in the wash. The older version, a visual stunner, which *Gourmet* magazine calls a "snow cone of a drink", calls for co-

• by  
**V. Vijaysree**

gnac and a variety of liqueurs. Poured on densely packed ice, the liquids evoke a turquoise-and-brown cotton plaid. Once upon a time that used to be Madras's best known export to the West: textiles with the 'Madras-checks' design. Starting in the mid-1840s, Madras began receiving consignments of ice, cut from the frozen ponds of New England; the frozen water trade went on for some forty years. Ships sailed from Boston harbour with this precious cargo.

Ice from ponds in New England travelled to several cities in the U.S., helping to make cocktails widely popular throughout America. "Iced drinks had always been available for the few, but in the 1830s, with the burgeoning trade in fresh, clean New England ice, delivered by horse-drawn carts from insulated central warehouses even in the hottest months of the year, ordinary people started getting used to the stuff, expecting it, calling for it in their drinks. Suddenly, the bar-tending game was entirely transformed," says David Wondrich, cocktail historian, in his book *Imbibe!*

In 1856, the research-oriented bartender who could con-

the composite Thanjavur District in mid-October 1991?

19. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which is the only extant Tamil Buddhist literary work?

20. Which famous librarian used the collection of the University of Madras for the creation of Colon Classification?

(Answers on page 8)

jure up innovative mixed drinks acquired a new name: mixologist. Modern mixologists work with a dazzling array of tools and ingredients. In some high-end bars, experts use liquid nitrogen to chill cocktail glasses, so that ice can stay in the drink longer without melting. Ice continues to be at the core of the cocktail: it chills the drink and dilutes alcohol in it to an acceptable level. The clink of hard ice against glass, that musical sound-effect, is pure *la gniappe*.

When ice arrived from New England, packed in pine sawdust, classifications like chilling ice and drinking ice simply didn't exist. Natural ice was considered good enough to be dropped directly into drinks. At the Marina Beach in Madras, shore hands must have moved swiftly to remove the gelid blocks away from the glare of sunlight and into the windowless *Ice House* for storage. Back then, a simple cold drink, any sundowner, must have seemed magical, even without embellishments.

A good century and a half later, I still marvel at the fact that crystalline water could survive a journey of 3-4 months to arrive at a distant tropical destination, more or less intact. The transport of ice that made cocktails possible boggles the mind.



## A MADRAS IN OREGON

How many of us in Madras (India) are aware that a 'Madras' exists in Central Oregon, USA? Madras (Oregon) began modestly on the initiative of farmer and homesteader John Palmehn in 1902. Palmehn came to the region in 1893. The town was formally established in 1911, coinciding with the construction of the Oregon Trunk Railway. Today, it exists in Jefferson County, OR, and has a population of about 6000 people.

According to oral history, the town was to be named after Palmehn, the founder. But a spelling error in the formal registration process ('Palmehn' spelt as 'Palmain') led to the rejection of the name by the Postmaster, the registration authority in Central Oregon, because 'Palmain' sounded closely to 'Palmer', a name already existing elsewhere in America. As the story goes, a by-chance noticing of a 'Madras' fabric prompted the proponent to register this 'new' town as 'Madras'.

Other unsubstantiated stories indicate the name 'Madras' was chosen because of the early settlers' connections with Madras (India). In the 1930s, Madras (Oregon) appeared briefly in print. Erskine Caldwell, novelist of the rural South, visited the town and, in *Some American People*, wrote about Madras's (Oregon) progress through the Great Depression:

"At ten o'clock in the morning all the stores in the town of Madras that were going to open had opened. Half of them have been vacant and boarded shut for nearly a year; the hardware merchant and the dry-goods merchant couldn't get by on just taking in each other's washing."

Madras (Oregon) grew as an agricultural market town. However, novelist Caldwell blamed Madras's poor economy on dry farming which, he felt, was inappropriate for the area. (Source: Ward Tonsfeldt & Paul G. Claeysens, *Telling Stories, Oregon History Project, Oregon Historical Society, 2004*, <http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/narratives/>).

Pity that Madras (Oregon) has not secured a sister-city relationship with Madras (India).

– Dr. A. Raman

## Tamil Nadu heritage briefs

The Coimbatore Clock Tower, with its clock specially imported from England, was built in memory of philanthropist and social activist Rao Bahadur A.T. Theroovengadaswami Mudaliar (1855-1923). INTACH's Coimbatore Chapter has restored the Clock Tower and a plaque engraved with its history was unveiled recently.

\* \* \*

The Udagamandalam Head Post Office was recently declared a Heritage Post Office. A Divisional Training Centre was inaugurated at the Post Office to celebrate its heritage status and a Heritage Walk was organised as part of the celebrations, with white caps with 'Ooty Heritage' printed on them being distributed to the participants.

\* \* \*

The representations made to the authorities by INTACH about the deplorable condition of the Government Museum and Mahatma Gandhi

Philately Museum in Salem were of no avail, as there was no space available in Government buildings. Artifacts lie unprotected in an open space without walls, inviting vandalism. The Philately Museum is one of the best in the country. It has a collection of stamps on Mahatma Gandhi released both in India and other countries.

INTACH also raised concern over the sudden disappearance of a historic lamp post installed at the intersection of the Shevaipet roads. The lamp post was erected in 1885 to commemorate the founder-editor of the *Madras Law Journal* Ramasamy Mudaliyar's visit to London as the leader of a delegation seeking redressal for the people's grievances against the British Government.

The *Mani Koond*, an old clock tower atop an Indo-Saracenic building, has long

been the pride of the people in Salem. It was built by the noted Mysore architect Sir Vishveshvaraya in 1924. It has a historic past associated with its first occupant, the Salem Bank, and has hosted visitors like Gandhiji and Rajaji during the days of the freedom struggle. Later, it was taken over by the Indian Bank whose management has readily agreed to the Salem Chapter's suggestion that steps should be immediately taken to preserve this heritage property. A technical study and feasibility report has resulted in restoration work being initiated with cleaning and barricading at this site in the heart of the city.

\* \* \*

The Thanjavur region is a treasure trove of paintings, many decorating the vast pillared halls of its numerous temples. These have fascinated renowned Indologists. Prof. David Shulman, for instance,

(Continued on page 8)

# When India tuned to Radio Ceylon...

Most people switch off their mobiles or put them on silent mode when they go to sleep. I don't, because I set my alarm for 4.00 am every day on my multipurpose one. This means I am often woken up by the sound of an incoming SMS – invariably an advertisement for some product or the other, and mostly about some weight reduction programme, promising me that I can lose upto 10 kg in a month without going on diet or exercise. They don't realise that at 70 I don't care about my 'overweight' any more!

Today, thousands and thousands of advertising messages are sent day and night to gullible customers through a variety of media. Television, internet and mobiles are the most common weapons of the advertising mafia these days to attack consumers at home!

I am reminded of a time when the consuming public was exposed to much fewer messages through newspapers, outdoor (hoarding, posters, wall paintings) and radio advertising. You were exposed to cinema advertising only when you went to the theatre to see a film – which would be once a week if you were a young man and once a year if you were a family man! Television had not entered the scene yet.

In the absence of television or internet, most youngsters were glued to then popular Radio Ceylon, belting out the latest film songs both in Hindi and Tamil. In Tamil, it was the melodious voice of Mayilvahanan, both announcer and radio jockey, whom we heard. In Hindi, it was the golden voice of Amin Sayani, the younger of the Sayani brothers who ran Radio Advertising Services, representing the business interests of Radio Ceylon in India. They had a branch in Madras, managed by S.V. Venkatraman, father of actor and politician S.V. Sekhar.

For my generation of radio listeners, Amin Sayani and Binaca Geet Mala were inseparable. They became household names, thanks to the reach of Radio Ceylon which covered the length and breadth of the subcontinent. Every Wednesday night, between 8 and 9, young and old, rich and poor, from Kashmir to Kanniyakumari were glued to Radio Ceylon, listening to Binaca Geet Mala. It was a programme which presented 16 popular Hindi film songs, in the ascending order of popularity, with the

No.1 rated song presented with a lot of sound and flourish, much to the delight of the listeners. Many music directors of yore were made or unmade, depending on their songs being featured in the top 16 songs of the week in BGM!

Apart from other popular programmes based on film music, I still remember some of the popular radio spots of the time. Most of them were simple in terms of ideas, but memorable in terms of presentation, like the spot for Gopal Palpodi (tooth powder) with its straight announcement format. Another spot, for T.P. Sokkalar Ramseth Beedi, used a conversation between two people and was one of my favourites.

Gopala! Engey porey? ... Kadaikku poren ... Enna vanga? Beedi vanga. Enna beedi? T.P. Sokkalar Ramseth Beedi! ... Indrey vangungal T.P. Sokkalar Ramseth beedi!

Ponvandu... Ponvandu ... was a very catchy jingle for a popular soap. It was produced by L.R. Swamy Advertising, who also represented Radio Ceylon in the South.

A spot which used the voices of three generations of mothers (daughter, mother and grandmother), each claiming that her mother gave Woodward Gripe Mixture to her baby whenever it had a stomach problem, was an interesting idea. The product continues to be a popular remedy among young mothers, especially in the South. And the idea too has been repeated in more recent advertising for it.

Who can forget TAS and NS Pattinam Podi, the popular

**Down  
Memory Lane  
with  
Advertising**

brands of snuff powders! Or Cow & Gate, the baby food which was an integral part of the diet of babies in the well-to-do families of those times!

Before the advent of television, press was an important primary advertising medium for most of the brands. Newspapers and magazines were full of advertisements for all types of products, including Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) – both local and national brands.

Alvitone and Maltova, health drinks from Madras, tried to provide local competition to the nationally popular Ovaltine and Horlicks. While Horlicks has survived and continues to be a market leader, Ovaltine lost out its premier position long ago to Bournvita from Cadbury's. Alvitone and Maltova made a silent exit from the market like many other popular local brands of their times.

Some of the other brand names that come to mind are McLean's and Kolynos toothpastes (Kolynos – the only toothpaste with fluoride); Gibbs Dentifrice; Peps, Brooklax, Philip's Milk of Magnesia and Andrew's Liver Salt for stomach problems, Cibol and Nixoderm among the skin care products

and Raja, Afghan Snow, and the Remy range of cosmetics.

Among the consumer durables were Pye, Marconi and Murphy radios, the last with a beautiful baby face as its mascot, and Solidaire, Dyanora, Sears and ECIL – the popular television brands from the South. All became victims of globalisation, when MNC brands with deep pockets arrived on the scene! I am sure readers can come up with names of many more older brands made memorable by good advertising!

While the advertisers of the yesteryears had limited choice of media and were very clear about what they could expect from each medium, today's advertisers are confounded by too much choice – thousands of publications, hundreds of radio and television channels, a multitude of new media opportunities – resulting in enormous wasteful expenditure! Wise guys are spending less and less on expensive mass media and more money on BLA (Below the Line Activities) involving direct marketing efforts focussed on specific target audiences! Now, could that be the subject of another article?

– R.V. Rajan

## ... & planters turned to their Directory of South India

I was always interested in historical documentation, a habit inculcated in me by my father. I still have his testimonials dating to 1925.

I was recently looking for the background on Walter Seton Scott, my first Periya Dorai (PD) in Katary Estate. I worked with him from 1957 to 60. I was also looking for information on Seward Brice (his brother-in-law) with whom I worked during 1960-65 in Sutton Estate. And in my research I found the 1924 *Planting Directory of Southern India*. And found it fascinating.

What is so interesting about the 1924 Directory? Well, I would think it has all the qualification to find a place in a museum of rare documents. When you go through the pages you walk back into a period of time and history nearly 90 years ago.

The Directory has 247 pages and has as many pages between them for writing notes. The advertisements are not included in the page numbering.

The imposing signature of H. Waddington, Secretary of United Planters' Association of Southern India (UPASI), decorates page 1 and most pages of notes are filled in with his own handwriting of changes of managerial personnel or company structure. The first advertisement is of Harrison & Crosfield Ltd. and is half blocked with UPASI's label and the Madura Company Ltd. It proclaims, "Twenty years reputation in India – Imperial Tea Chests are the best, cheapest and most efficient." Other advertisers are Aspinwall & Co., Coorg Coffee managed by V.L. Wynyard-Wright and proprietors of Consolidated Coffee Estates Limited, and then we have Pierce, Leslie & Co Ltd trying to sell Ford cars, Michelin tyres and tubes as well as Monkey brand 1250 kerosene oil, while proclaiming "Why buy 'P.L' fertilisers? Because they are good, sound Manures". Then comes an honest ad: "Correspondence Kept Strictly Confidential, Enquiries solicited. Liberal Commission on all orders to canvassers and securers of orders from Estates and Firms." This from a company selling Cooly Cumblies, Cooly Clothing etc.

For the sports lovers there is an ad "by John W. Roberts (Son of the late Champion), 1, Commander-in-Chief Road, Egmore, Madras." "Billiards tables of various sizes costing Rs. 535 to Rs. 1085 depending on size of Table" are offered.

Konar Dairy is a premier house for butter and cream – Re 1-4-0 per pound and 1-8-0 in tins. 'Try us', they say in a quarter page ad.

There is an ad for Remington portable typewriters – which now have an antique price – and an ad for the sale of Citroen cars. The 11.4 H.P. five seater, it proclaims, gives 35 to 40 miles per gallon. The 7.5 H.P. one is a two-seater giving 50 miles per gallon and has electric light and starter. Interestingly, there is an ad showing a page of *The Madras Mail* dated Monday evening, May 14, 1923, costing annas two. The ad in that is for Durante cars and shows a price tag of Rs. 3000.

There are so many other ads, but the one which caught my eye was for Standard Inks – it promised "Fluid penetrative, permanent, non-corrosive. Write a beautiful blue black, rapidly turning full black. Testified to be excellent. Used in Government offices," and also an ad from the South India Nursing Association having Her Excellency Lady Willingdon as its President. It offered "Fully trained and experienced Nurses for all cases of illness, both among Europeans and Indians, always available."

Finally, the Secretary, UPASI, Coimbatore, takes half a page to advertise:

	Rs. A.P.
Book of proceedings of all recent Annual Meetings of UPASI per copy	2-8-0
<i>Practical Coffee Planting</i> by F.H. Sprott	8-0-0
<i>The Planter's Chronicle</i> . Bound Volumes per year (1918 out of print)	5-0-0
<i>Brown Bast</i> by A.R. Sanderson. Issued free under the instructions of R.G.A., and will be sent in return for 8 As in stamps to cover postage and packing	
<i>Planting Directory of Southern India</i>	7-8-0

Today, the *Planting Directory* sells for Rs. 485.00, and subscription to *Planter's Chronicle* is Rs. 400 a year. I counted to see how many expatriates were listed. There were some 740 in the planting districts, and about 100-odd companies in 1924. By 1960, this figure dropped to 550 personnel and today we do not have any. It is said that not one is around.

I was checking the Directory to see how many of the people listed in 1924 were known to me. There were just a handful. They were W.S. Scott, P. Beaver, D.M. McIntyre, W.F. Imman, and C.J. Madden. I last met Madden in 1968 when he toured South India.

– K.V.S. Krishna

# The film photographer

"I still can't believe my father let me pursue my interest in movies," says that veritable storehouse of information on the Tamil film industry, 87-year-old 'Film News' Anandan who got his prefix after he started giving his working stills (not what producers offered) to the monthly *Film News*. Earlier, he had trained with cinematographer C.J. Mohan whose project failed to take off. Then he became a still photographer with the Rs. 3000 Reflex camera gifted to him by his father.

Reminiscing about the past, he recalls that in 1956 he saw one person in an old man's get-up on the campus of the studio and learned to his surprise that it was none other than Sivaji Ganesan waiting for his scenes for the movie *Raja Rani*. Warily approaching the actor and asking him in Tamil if he could take his photo, the reply he received was in English: "Of course, you can take it."

For the 1958 MGR-starrer *Nadodi Mannan*, the stills he offered were widely published, and he became the Tamil industry's first PRO. He continued as such for hundreds of movies, the last one in 1991.



'Film News' Anandan.

But there is a lesser known side to 'Film News' Anandan who has chronicled Tamil film history from 1931 to 2003 in his 738-page magnum opus *Sadha-naigal Padaitha Thamizh-thirai-pada Varalaru* (Milestones in the history of Tamil cinema) which includes 1500 pictures. And that he has acted in eight films, one in Telugu, the rest in Tamil.

His first foray as an actor was as a police photographer in the 1962 film *Policekaran Magal*, a successful film directed by C.V. Sridhar based on S.V. Sahasranamam's drama. He acted in the same role in the Telugu remake, *Constable Koothru*.

Then, in 1964, the multi-faceted Veena S. Balachander asked him to don the grease-

paint for the movie *Bomma*, for which Anandan was the PRO. A thrill-a-minute film about a bomb planted in a walking doll, he appears as a doctor who assures the patient, a taxi driver, that all will be well and refuses to take his fee because the patient and his family will have to incur expenses on medicines.

In the film *Nakshatram*, produced by actress Sri Priya and directed by Dasari Narayana Rao, he plays the role of a press reporter, posing questions to the actress who plays the role of a disillusioned star, and who announces her retirement. Many actors appeared in guest roles when they paid their respects to the heroine who met with a tragic end.

In the 1986 crime/action film *Oomai Vizhigal* produced by Abhavanan, he plays the role of a press photographer who, at the request of a police officer, played by Vijaykanth, gets the permission of his newspaper editor to postpone the deadlines because there is important news breaking for the morning papers.

In *Sugamana Sumaigal* (1992), he plays the role of the heroine's father in the film directed by actor R. Parthiban. Anandan's son 'Diamond' Babu and grandson Vikram Sagar also acted in the film.

In the commercially successful *Indian* (1988) directed by Shankar, starring Kamal Hassan in a double role, Anandan's scenes were deleted as was the case in *Aasai*, written and directed by Vasanth and produced by Mani Ratnam but in the latter's credits, however, the caption, 'Thanks to Film News Anandan' rolled on the screen.

— T.K. Srinivas Chari

## TRANSPORT INTEGRATION

(Continued from page 1)

corridors. Now with just one phase planned, it is unlikely that the Metro will ever become financially viable. That does not appear to worry those propounding the idea of a monorail and a 300 km stretch covering 18 corridors in the city as mentioned.

Whether it is a mono or a Metro rail network or both, what is important is that the city gets an integrated transport system where all modes of transport merge seamlessly into each other. At present that is not the case with the MRTS, the suburban rail network and the bus transport services, which completely disconnected from each

other. This has ensured that those who would prefer to commute using public transport are still forced to use private vehicles. Which in effect has brought all these schemes to nought. Of course, on paper, every scheme has its proffered aim to provide a multi-modal system, but in reality none has managed to achieve this.

The number of private vehicles in the city was 16 lakhs in 2005 and it has doubled in six years. With that kind of growth it is imperative that an integrated public transport service is designed and implemented at the earliest, failing which we may be hurtling towards a permanent gridlock.

## TN heritage briefs

(Continued from page 6)

visited the temples year after year but saw these paintings virtually disappearing before his eyes! In an act of desperation he brought photographer V.K. Rajamani who lay on his back to capture each panel mapped by Shulman at the Thyagarajaswamy Temple.

After eight years of seeking help from various sources for their restoration, Ranvir Shah, Founder-Trustee of the Prakriti Foundation, responded positively and funded the work undertaken by the Chitrakala Parishath Art Conservation Centre which worked for three years on the 17th Century paintings of the temple's Devasiriya Mandapam. It was opened to the public recently.

A book was released on the occasion, explaining the paintings and chronicling their restoration. *The Mucukunda Murals*, with stunning photographs by

Rajamani, takes readers from the Ocean of Milk to the Heavens and to Tiruvarur. — (Courtesy: *Virasat* — the journal of INTACH.)

## Answers to Quiz

1. Manchester United's Ryan Giggs; 2. Dominique Strauss-Kahn; 3. The Man Booker International Prize; 4. The Oprah Winfrey Show; 5. FC Barcelona; 6. Germany; 7. Cell phone use; 8. RMS *Titanic*; 9. It is a volcano that has erupted in Iceland spewing ash into the atmosphere; 10. Rinderpest or cattle plague.

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11. Murali Vijay; 12. Royapuram from Rayappan; 13. Sukrutha Lakshmi Vilasa Sabha; 14. Rajah (Sir) Savalai Ramaswamy Mudaliar; 15. O. Panneerselvam and Vijaykanth respectively; 16. Ariyalur; 17. Kamakoti Peetha at Kanchi; 18. Nagapattinam; 19. *Manimekalai* (The Girdle of Gems); 20. S.R. Ranganathan.



**Till June 22:** Solo exhibition by Nityam Singha Roy from Mumbai (at Ayya Art Galleries).

**June 22-30:** Weaving and basketry exhibition (at DakshinaChitra).

**June 26:** Miniature Model House workshop for children (at DakshinaChitra).

**July 1-9:** The *Little Festival* presented by The Little Theatre features three English musicals. The Little Theatre's *Atita* (July 1, 11

am and 3 pm; July 2-3 (6 pm), Theatre Seoul's *Heungbu Nolbu* (July 7, 7 pm); July 8, 11 am) and Theatre Werkstatt Hannover's *Troi* (July 9, 11 am and 3 pm) — (at the Museum Theatre).

**Till July 16:** *Between One Shore and Several Others - V*, an exhibition by Vivek Vilasini (at Gallery Sumukha).

**January 2012:** A 3-day *Artists' Residency* at SPACES, Besant Nagar, Chennai. Young artists between the ages 30 and 40 wishing to participate contact: 044 42188989 / e-mail: prakritarts@gmail.com

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