

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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The Stat(us)E of being

You open your email.
Let's see now....delete, delete, boorrning, delete immediately.
Your eyes stray to the left hand corner.
Wow - lots of green. You obviously know a whole bunch of cyber-space goof-off-ers.
Then you see it.
A 'status' message peeping out from under a name, stating: 'Stepping on eggshells of thin ice...'
Offered such delightful hokum, you abandon email for this far more promising avenue for imaginative speculation.
Status messages can be such fun - and intriguing.
Like the one that goes: 'I'm the lost cause I was warned about...'
A line like that offers some fascinating opportunities to rethink long held opinions, especially of people you think you know.
Another preaches: 'Reach for the moon, you may at least bag some stars'.
Hmm....this has addicted-to-self-help-books all over it.
A martyred one sniffles: 'I'm going just so you'll miss me.'
Now that's just sad - silly sad, at that.
Status messages may have begun as a mere means of instant indicators, but they're turning into an art form.
Is it a little like peeping into someone's mind?
Or offering people deliberately tantalising glimpses of your life?
Perhaps.
But hey - it's a whole new world of 'speaking', 'seeing' and 'talking' these days....and 'reaching out to touch someone'.

Ranjitha Ashok

As Biswajit, our cartoonist, is out of town, his cartoon does not appear this fortnight.

Still no solutions to woes caused by parking

(By A Special Correspondent)

Chennai adds around 400 new vehicles each day to its roads. While this may be heartening for those who consider it an index of prosperity, it is a matter of worry for those concerned with congestion and its accompanying problems of pollution. And above all, there is the issue of parking, for which there appears to be no solution in sight. The Government has once again dusted and put out its idea of multi-level parking at five spots in the city. But is this to be followed up with action? Past experience does not indicate this.

A recent meeting of town planners saw discussion on the subject and it is reliably learnt that a consulting firm, which has been involved with many infrastructure projects in the city, has recommended revival of the multi-level parking schemes.

These are to be located at the MUC Ground, the Broadway Bus Stand, Government Estate, T'Nagar and Gandhi Nagar. The last two will be single-level parking lots while the others will vary between five and seven floors. Overall, these will have capacity to accommodate around 1500 cars and 600 two-wheelers. It is a mere drop in the ocean when you compare it with the number of vehicles plying in the city.

What is more, there is no guarantee that these projects will ever take off. The Broadway parking facility saw the tender process being repeated four times over as many years and successive relaxing of norms before a bidder emerged. There are considerable doubts over the commercial viability of such lots. However, there has been some progress in the past couple of months with soil-testing being concluded and work expected to begin shortly.

In a related development, the CMDA relaxed its norms for multi-level parking spaces in highrises. The concession to build multi-level parking which was available for IT buildings has now been extended to all highrises and this constructed space will not be included in calculation of FSI. This has

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How to cross a road!

How do we curb cell-phone use on the roads?

No country has taken to the cell-phone the way India has. And it would be no exaggeration to say that Chennai is a true representative of that trend. It has been a great convenience leading to its rapidly penetrating all strata of society. But at the same time, it has proved to be one of the major causes of road accidents. The temptation to answer a call, no matter in what situation a person is, appears to be irresistible, resulting in mishaps which have on several occasions caused avoidable casualties.

This report is, of course, prompted by the recent toppling over of a bus as it rounded a curve on the Gemini Flyover. While the exact cause of the accident is yet to be established, rumours are flying thick and fast that the driver had a cell-phone in one hand while trying to steer the bus round a sharp curve at high speed. This may not be true, but the likelihood is quite high, given the past record of several accidents in the city. It is time to take stock of what damage irresponsible usage of

the cell-phone can cause and see what can be done to avert such tragic happenings in the future.

The rules are all in place. The Madras Motor Vehicles Act, Rule 250A, clearly states that usage of cell-phones while driving is a cognisable offence that can be penalised by the RTO. The Motor Vehicles Amendment Act of 2007, enacted by Parliament, enhanced the fine for usage of cell-phone

• By A Special Correspondent

while driving to Rs 500 for a first-time offence. Subsequent offences were to be fined at rates varying from Rs 2000 to Rs 5000. Yet, there appears to be no abatement in the usage of phones while on the go.

What is interesting is that this is done by users across the whole cross-section of society. Car drivers are perhaps the most visible offenders as are probably two-wheeler users.

(Also see page 3)

The imbalance caused to cycles and motor-cycles when the user is trying to cradle a phone and talk into it is a very common reason for accidents. It is also very often seen that those driving two-wheelers hide their phones inside their helmets and continue talking into it. The most recent trend is the use of headphones. There is a view that this is safe enough. But what is overlooked is that the volume of sound is often set very high and this drowns out the warning signals that are coming from surrounding vehicles. This is also the reason why pedestrians overlook speeding vehicles and walk right into them.

The police have been doing what they can to curb the menace. Campaigns have been conducted. Counselling sessions at street corners after apprehending a certain number of defaulters is a common sight across the city. But none of these has had the desired effect. There appears to be a general feeling among individuals that such

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It's fascinating to catch up with local history

Every summer, I am coaxed to take a group of holiday makers on a tour. A summer of 40 plus degrees is certainly not the best time of the year to go on picnic tours. But then the outdoors always beckon you when it is holiday time for young people.

This year my offer was a tour of the neighbourhood forts. And though history is not everybody's favourite subject, my theme seemed to delight the group.

There are a string of forts you can explore from a base in our city if you set aside a weekend for this tour.

Start in the north, with a tour of Pulicat to explore the remnants of Dutch history, with traces of Portuguese presence here.

A cemetery, churches, old houses and a huge waterbody by the sea are must-see places in Pulicat.

Fort St. George in north Madras is Stop No. 2. To me this is a fascinating place waiting to be explored many times over and it is best done on a Sunday. This was the seat of the English East India Company and the fort of the British.

San Thomé is Stop No. 3. In the 16th Century, it was the hub of the trading Portuguese and they built their own little fort looking out on to the sea. Nothing remains since the British flattened the place to end all headaches of challengers. But if you sneak in the sea side of the Leith Castle area, you may be lucky to see fragile remnants of what must have been the walls of a fort.

The campus of Taj Vivanta Fisherman's Cove in Covelong off the ECR preserves a slice of a wall of what was once a little fort.

Further south, Stop No.4 has to be Sadras, a fort of the Dutch and another trading post. Located on the seaside, it lies in the village at the end of a road that branches off from the ECR in the Kalpakkam Atomic Power Plant region. Chambers, tombstones, tablets and the ramparts must be explored here.

And if you still have the energy, then your final stop can be Fort Alambarai, some 40 minutes from the Kalpakkam point on the ECR. Muck, tourist waste and massive fortified walls greet you. The fort, built in the 17th Century and in the Mughal era, was gifted to the French for services rendered by them to the local Nawab but was demolished by the British after they defeated the French.

It offers spectacular views of the sea that washes into a lagoon and the local *kuppam*.

There are lots of places to explore in our city and on its fringe. Basic info and how-to-do guides and rough guide tips on the Web are required for the wanna-be city travellers.

* * *

Narasingapuram is a small colony off Mount Road, now called Anna Salai.

Its more famous landmark is Ritchie Street. Once the biggest radio market, it is now a buzzing hub of the electronics, computers and peripherals trade.

Prof. Paul Montgomery from the UK is keen to know lots more about Narasingapuram because he has an Anglo-Indian ancestry and this will be part of his book on his family.

One thread in his genealogical spread leads to this little colony which has been over-run by the computers market.

Prof. Montgomery assumes that the lady who married a Scots soldier, the male progenitor, must have been born in 'Nursingpooram' and that her dad got pensions from the FINS (Friend in Need Society), located on the busy Poonamallee High Road.

FINS is yet another vintage institution of our city. Started in 1822 by the merchants and community leaders of the city for the less abled, it has provided shelter to mostly Anglo-Indians.

FINS and the Anglo-Indians who once resided in Narasingapuram may provide leads for the professor's research.

And since I had written about Narasingapuram in an earlier column, the World Wide Web made the connection and I have been relooking at a colony that was once my backyard.

Revisiting the past in small neighbourhoods can be a fascinating exercise.

To help the UK professor, I will also make a trip to Christ Church and try to delve into the wedding registration records there.

This Church, which has for its neighbours the Devi Cinemas complex (it celebrated its 42nd anniversary in May) and Cosmopolitan Club, also has a unique history.

(Continued on page 6)

Of turmeric baths, nuptials & birthdays

The *Man from Madras Musings* is not a snob. He believes in mingling with the prols (short for proletariat) as often as he can and when they invite him for events, he usually makes it a point to attend. But of late, given the kind of invitations that do land on his desk, MMM has been sending out regrets left, right and centre. For, there is much in the conduct of these events that MMM objects to.

The first concerns an obnoxious anachronism that is referred to rather euphemistically as the 'turmeric bath'. This is celebrated when a girl attains puberty. MMM is always at a loss to understand as to why he is invited for what is evidently a women's event. And when he does pass by venues where such events are held, MMM does notice that there are many men in attendance.

But is it really anyone's event? Does a girl's physical process of growth need to be celebrated with such public gusto? What does the child feel like to see her photo put

ground. Some photographer is clearly laughing all the way to the bank and a couple has just made a complete ass of itself. Too often these pictures are then compiled into an album which is brought and exhibited to those who did not attend the event in person.

From the wedding to babies is but a hop, assuming the bride had her turmeric bath at the right time. Babies means ear-piercing ceremonies and birthdays and these too have become big events. Cakes are cut, posters pasted in the surrounding areas, raucous music is played, and banners invoking the proud father's favourite film star/political leader are put up. The last-named sometimes attribute the birth of the child to the film star/political leader! A Freudian slip?

Crisis of domestics

The *Man from Madras Musings* believes in casting his bread on the waters. He does not expect them to be returned. That is his attitude, at least as far as the pieces he

dinner, MMM's pal replied that he and his brood had taken to living at the Club until his household acquired its domestic staff, the earlier incumbents having exited *en masse*. Apparently it all started with the cook and the maid who did not see eye-to-eye. Both quit at the same time, but not before the cook publicly accused the maid of er... going out regularly with the chauffeur, who immediately felt it necessary to resign, not out of any sense of honour, but out of fear that his wife, who was not on the rolls, would get to know of it from the watchman who was within earshot. That cleared the place of all the staff barring the watchman in whose custody the house was placed even as everyone moved into the Club.

We live in difficult times.

Such road names!

Regulars of *Madras Musings* will doubtless recall the Chief and some of his assistants putting up a case for

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

up on outside banners around the venue announcing to the world that she has come of age? MMM put this question to some of his close friends and the stock reply was that the child probably delights in the attention. MMM begs to differ. He also strongly objects to the invariable positioning of the photos of leading political figures just above the picture of the heroine of the hour in all the banners. And sometimes, there is even a line which attributes the girl's coming of age to the politician! Wonder how our leaders feel about this prowess that they are credited with? In their position, MMM would have squirmed and vanished from public sight. But that is why MMM is not in politics.

From the turmeric bath to the nuptials was but a step in the old days. Thankfully, that has now changed. But these days, weddings have become grander and noisier than ever and those who are of financially straitened means invariably have the most garish and sound-filled bashes. MMM often wonders as to where the finance comes from. Cards get bigger and bigger and, as for the venue, unless it is decked out in the best cinematic tradition, everyone is disappointed. A recent trend is the putting up of pictures of the betrothed and to-be-weds in all kinds of suggestive and intimate postures, set against an impossibly sylvan back-

writes for this column are concerned. Some, which he feels will see a flood of rejoinders, are met with stony silences. Others that he just shoots off the cuff, hoping nobody will notice, sometimes raise the hackles of or touch a ready chord with some of the faithful and then the letters never cease until the Chief applies the guillotine by way of a stony statement to the effect that all correspondence on the topic will cease thereafter.

In recent days, one topic that has caught the fancy of many is the shortage of domestic servants. MMM, if you recollect, wrote about it. Several people, varying from captains of industry ensconced in their corner offices to the lowly being who drives his own car to work, have expressed their feelings on the subject. All agree that the domestics are now rising above their stations and soon a time will come when the average Chennaiite will have to perform his/her own domestic chores. The only task that will be spared will be that of mowing the lawn and tending to the garden and that is because of the fact that there won't be any lawn or garden, what with our constructing highrises on every available plot.

But to come back to the subject. The other day, MMM was at his Club and perceived a fellow-member who was driving up *en famille*. Upon being asked as to whether it was for

retaining some street names that commemorate our erstwhile British masters. That plea was heard and the names remained. But none can protect them from the mangling they undergo at the hands of the Electricity Board. That august body publishes its power shutdown schedule in the dailies and *The Man from Madras Musings* reads the list just to get a good laugh out of the names. And so have you heard of the following?

Makkees Gardens –
Mackay's Gardens
Prathapat Road –
Breithaupt Road
Tadandar Nagar –
Todhunter Nagar
Jermaiya Road –
Jeremiah Road
Everady Colony –
Eveready Colony
Cirucular Road –
Circular Road
Ammer John Street –
Ameer Jan Street
Stingkar Road –
Stringer's Street
Iron Manga Street –
Ironmonger's Street
Border Thorram –
Borders Thottam

Also have you heard of the Pachchayappa's Thrush? Must be quite a bird!

And so on... The list (and the humour) is practically endless. Let this be a lesson to you, Chief, to let them well alone.

– MMM



The cell phone culture is something that well-meaning people should fight against.

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Cell-phone menace

It is gratifying that the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly has banned the use of cell phones by MLAs in the Assembly premises. This has been long overdue and others should emulate this example.

The cell phone has become a menace. Its use in workspots including factories and offices is affecting the smooth flow of work and work culture. Even in places of worship, where people are supposed to go and pray to get mental solace, the use of cell phone is increasing at an alarming rate. The priests doing *poojas* in temples and homes are often seen suspending the *poojas* in the middle to attend to their cell phone calls, causing great distress to the devotees. Some places of worship have now put up notices that cell phones are banned. Before commencing meetings and workshops, requests are made to switch off the cell phone. But, people rarely listen. During meetings and conferences, chatting over cell phone is not uncommon, disturbing the proceedings. I wonder what these cell phone enthusiasts did in earlier days when cell phones were not available!

There is no difference between the educated and the not so educated, the rich and the not so rich people, men and women, the young and the not so young. All use cell phones without bothering about the location, unmindful of circumstances, causing disturbance to those around.

It is not as if unavoidable discussions take place. Most of the calls are for trivial matters and exchanging pleasantries which can well be postponed.

The conditions have deteriorated to such an extent that many organisations think that disciplinary proceedings should be initiated against employees who use cell phones during office hours and in workspots.

Auto answers?

The letter in MM, June 1st, contains commendable suggestions towards solving the current autorickshaw impasse. However, two of the suggestions evoke some comments.

The suggestion to compel the sale of autos to drivers is impractical. Why should the present owners kill their goose, which lays them golden eggs when, on a single outlay, they are gaining a sizeable (tax free) cash return year after year? There is no legislation/authority to compel them to do so.

Second, the suggested constitution of the 6-member Empowered Fare Fixing Board, widely variant in its membership as suggested, does not lend itself to frequent meetings to change rates.

Having said that, this apparently elusive problem that has been plaguing the *aam admi* all these years (including frequent octogenarian auto-users like yours truly) is not insoluble. The solution lies only or mainly with the government.

As a first step, with resolute determination, it should, in consultation with auto drivers' associations and the public (including the suggested 6-member Fare Fixing Board, if necessary), fix reasonable rates, taking into consideration the current living costs and reasonable returns to the auto drivers/owners, acceptable to all. Having done so, the law enforcement agencies, including traffic police and magisterial authorities, should then regularly monitor and rigidly enforce compliance by the auto drivers with a warning of stringent penalties, including suspension of driving licences and auto permits. A few examples, to start with, will help bring offenders quickly to book. A responsibility also vests with the user-public, who must not fail to help bring violators

Only true in parts

In MM, April 16th, you reproduced what the late N.S. Jagannathna had forwarded on Tamil Brahmins. When I first came across this a few months ago. I sent it to my friend S. Krishnan, himself a Tambrahm and who was the former Director of Finance, BEL. He, while acknowledging the contribution of Tambrahms, cautioned against stereotyped characterisation of communities by narrating his own experience when he joined the Railway Accounts Service. He has approved its publication.

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The Tambrahms article is interesting. As is usual with such articles, it is only true in parts.

Regarding the discussion about intelligence and intellect, I would only point out a few facts. Of the four Indians who have won Nobel Prizes in Science, three are Tambrahms. The only Indian who figures in the list of the world's greatest mathematicians is a Tambrahm. The only Indian who has won the world championship in Chess (and that too in all its three different formats) is a Tambrahm. And the Indian who was ranked highest in the world in Tennis (No.3) was a Tambrahm. I think that for a community that is 0.01% of India's population, that is a fantastic record.

Another fact that is relevant is the overlap between Tamil Brahmins and Telugu Brahmins and between Tamil Brahmins and Kerala (specifically Palghat) Brahmins. There is so much intermingling that it is difficult to pinpoint the foci of excellence, particularly in the Arts. For example, two out of the three members of the Carnatic Music Trinity are Telugu Brahmins. While the Telugu pedigree of Tyagaraja is well known, not many are aware of the Telugu pedigree of Shyama Sastry. That is because of the dates of immigration of their families.

Here is an article I had written for the IRAS Golden Jubilee Souvenir. It gives my views on the subject of ethnic stereotypes.

The Unified Gauge of IRAS

I would like to highlight an aspect of IRAS that is perhaps not unique to it but is nevertheless of great importance to me personally. My

batch of IRAS, the 1955 batch, consisted of 19 officers. It had a highly skewed linguistic distribution. It consisted of six Punjabis, a Kashmiri, a Sindhi, a Bihari, an Oriya, a Keralite, an Andhraite and six Tamils.

Like so many of us, I too had been fed several prejudices based on the supposed qualities of particular linguistic groups. I was told that Punjabis were go-getters but often tended to sacrifice scruples in their quest for success. I had also an impression that they were not as religious as some other groups. (I found that my own group, the Tamils, were no angels in others' eyes. We were supposed to be a bit more cunning and calculating than others!)

But my experience with the fellow members of my batch exploded these myths. I found that Ved Prakash Dang, with whom I shared my lodging at Calcutta, was perhaps the most upright one among us. And when I accompanied the mother of Prithpal Singh Bami to the Harmandir Sahib almost every day during my week's stay at Amritsar, I was moved by her genuine devotion and her transparent goodness.

My Bengali friends had led me to believe that the Oriyas did not have particularly great artistic and aesthetic sensibilities. But when Nimai Charan Mohapatra revealed to me the sublime beauties of Gita Govinda and the spiritual heights of Sri Aurobindo during a long moonlight walk by the riverside at Garden Reach, I felt ashamed that I should have allowed my mind to be polluted by baseless prejudice.

I can go on and on about this subject but I think I have made my point. In the very first session I take while teaching any course for MBA students I make it a point to tell the students that if they wanted to become good as well as successful managers, they should not allow stereotyped group prejudices to influence them at any time in their career. I would tell them that they would be interacting with Banerjis, Zahiras and Johnsons in their career, not with Bengalis, Muslims or Christians and each one of them was as likely to have the virtues and vices they themselves had in them.

This awareness, I think, is the greatest gift that IRAS has given to me. I also feel that it is of special relevance, particularly for our post nine-eleven and post seven-seven world.

to book by taking the trouble of reporting the violations promptly to the enforcing bodies.

It is only thus that this long-pending vexatious issue of fleecing by auto drivers can be solved. If trouble-free, honest metering can work in other metros, why can it not be made to do so here with some efforts by the authorities?

The other suggestions of the writer are worthy of implementation.

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Implementation needed

Reader K.R. Baliga (MM, June 1st) has scripted rules for Chennai autos. We have enough ordinances to keep auto drivers in check. But there is hardly any implementation. 'Meter podu' is a non-entity in Chennai.

When fuel costs are different, Government must fix rates according to fuel utility and enforce them. Corrupt traffic police personnel must be booked

for their behind-the-screen support for auto drivers. Strong government machinery alone can make auto drivers behave better.

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Yaanaais in Sangam times

Propos the review article on Elephants (MM, June 1st), I wish to point out the following:

1. It is incorrect to say that *aanai* of Tamil Sangam times has become *yaanai* of contemporary usage. Sangam texts actually contain no less than 350 clear references to *yaanai*. Separate references to *kaliru* (male pachyderm) and to *pidi* (female pachyderm) have not been included in this count.

2. One particular Sangam text (*Akam* 169) is of some interest. The text says that the left-over flesh of an elephant after being devoured by a tiger is said to have been carried away by the Maravar of Paalai zone for their own consumption.

3. The *veryattu* referred to in

Sangam texts has nothing to do with elephants.

4. No Sangam text to date has been corroborated by any copper plate grant!

5. John Sullivan, Collector of Coimbatore (which then included the Nilgiris), in one of his notes (1821) has distinguished between South Indian elephants and the Ceylon ones.

Rev. Philip K. Mulley

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Kotagiri 643 217, The Nilgiris

Another overlooked

Your pieces on Iyengars and cricket seem to have overlooked the granddaddy of them all – K. Seshachari who was the wicket-keeper of the Indian team that went on an unofficial tour of England in 1911. T.V. Parthasarathy kept wicket for India in the Calcutta Test against the Australian Services team captained by A.L. Hassett that toured India in 1945 after the World War. While I am not sure, he too was probably an Iyengar.

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

– THE EDITOR

• Looking back

A newcomer's search for a home

(Continued from last fortnight)

From 1953 to 1957 I was very busy with the foundation work for **ALVITONE**, the brainchild of Thangaraj Nadar, a person from the rural interior who brought out a food product equivalent to Ovaltine!

Thangaraj Nadar's interest in establishing an energy beverage factory was due to an unhappy incident in his life. In 1952, when one of his children was seriously ill, he went to purchase a tin of **Ovaltine** and couldn't get one as the product was in short supply. A friend suggested that if he were to visit Spencer's he could get a tin. On reaching Spencer's (the old building), which started with a Post Office on the eastern side and ended on the western side with the Bakery Section, he hesitated to enter the complex and stood by the Post Office. A person who came out of Spencer's enquired why he was waiting and on hearing what he needed informed him that if he were to give him the amount he would procure a tin for him from the relevant department. Nadar gave him ten rupees and was told to wait for an hour or so when he would return with the product. After waiting for over an hour, Nadar realised that he had been duped by the trickster. He returned home dejected, but immediately vowed to start a small factory to manufacture a product similar to **Ovaltine**.

Kamaraj, the then Chief Minister of Madras State, did his best to help us start Alvitone Laboratories. So did C.T.

Devaraj (CTD), proprietor of Jayalakshmi Industries at Basudev Street, T'Nagar. He had been the Private Secretary of S.B. Athithan (founder of the *Dina Thanthi* group of publications), when the latter was in Singapore. Athithan was a strict disciplinarian and had all details with him whenever he visited a Government office! Devaraj was trained by him. Devaraj's father, C. Thangavel Mudaliar, was in Singapore during the 1940s. They had a house in Arcot Mudali Street in T'Nagar, next to the late MGR's house. The AIADMK party was inaugurated in Devaraj's house. CTD had a number of industries in Ma-

not prepared to give us the NOC even for this building. In fact, we were sent running from pillar to post. We felt that someone must be causing trouble for us!

Eventually, we met Chief Minister Kamaraj. Thangaraj told him that he was completely engrossed in the work of commissioning the various equipment of the laboratory and that Theetharappan, who contacted officials and private concerns, would provide full details. I pointed out that we had applied for a Trade Mark on 23.7.1955 and had been given the No.170, 133. We also provided all the test reports, including those from the Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore. I then

• V. THEETHARAPPAN recalls his days with ALVITONE

dras and in Dindigul. He purchased a big unit owned by K.C.P. Ltd. in Virugambakkam, developed a mini-industrial estate in the land that came with it and called it Paramount Gardens. He also had a big nursery in this garden. He was our mentor.

We contacted two brothers in Triplicane who had a palatial building in St. Thomas' Mount Cantonment just opposite the Area Commander's Quarters. We applied for NOC permission to the Cantonment Board but our application was rejected. Then, near the Asarkhana Corner in St. Thomas' Mount, we found a big building with a large open area. The Cantonment was

mentioned that we felt representatives of rival products in India were influencing the Cantonment authorities to refuse us the NOC for a building. Kamaraj promised to help and advised us "to distribute the invitations for the inauguration of the factory."

Before setting out to distribute the invitations, we had lunch at Geetha Café in T'Nagar, then the leading café there. Those days, Geetha Café would always be full of Telugu film personalities. After lunch we went to Jayalakshmi Industries to meet our mentor, CTD, and briefed him on developments and got his advice for our future actions!

ALVITONE Laboratories was inaugurated by Kamaraj on July 7, 1957 at *Asarkhana*, a bunga-



low in St. Thomas' Mount. Twenty years later, it moved into its own building in Pallavaram, next to Lakshmi Talkies and opposite TTK's Maps and Atlases.

To the great relief of Thangaraj Nadar, Govindaswamy, Naidu and Theetharappan, the VIPs from the Area Commander's Office and St. Thomas' Mount Cantonment on reaching ALVITONE Laboratories immediately went up to Chief Minister Kamaraj and stated that the relevant NOCs from the Area Commander's Office and the Cantonment Office would reach ALVITONE Labs in a couple of days. Kamaraj had advised us to also invite the distributors of rival product, and they all attended and went around the factory along with the VIPs!

In those days there were beverages like **Bournvita**, **Ovaltine**, **Barlova**, **Nestomalt**, **Ovomalt**, **Potsum** and a few more. Except **Ovomalt**, all the others were imported products. **Ovomalt** was manufactured by one Ramanujam of Omalur (Salem) and each batch of the product took nearly a month to manufacture as it used fermented pulses and the process of the germination took nearly a month. It was indeed a very good energy beverage, but as Ramanujam had certain difficulties, a leading press baron took over his concern, but somehow failed to make a go of it. The foreign products were costly and were also in short supply. The Defence Minister of India at the time, N. Gopalaswami Aiyengar, helped **Ovomalt** and **ALVITONE** find a place in the Defence Department Stores as they were the only Swadeshi products in the energy beverage category!

It took from 1954 to 1957 for Alvitone Laboratories to be inaugurated after all the stumbling blocks in its way were overcome.

When the first Director of the Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore, V. Subramaniam, along with a few scientists, visited Alvitone Laboratories at St. Thomas' Mount, Nadar took them around the laboratory and explained to them in Tamil the salient features of the machinery (all made by him). When I accompanied them to Central Station after their visit, they

spoke about the ingenuity of Nadar making such machinery even though he was not a technically qualified person!

Nadar's lack of knowledge of English and any other language except Tamil, was no great impediment for him! He was a regular visitor to the Kirana Merchants' Association at Sowcarpet to make purchases of raw materials for **ALVITONE** manufacture. The *kirana* merchants in the 1950s were all North Indians and the main languages they spoke were Hindi and Gujarati. But Nadar had no problems communicating with them.

Nadar, till his death at 62, was constantly on the go, looking for new opportunities.

Footnote: In the middle of 1956, when **ALVITONE** was doing well, my father, for no reason at all, decided to sell our Orme's Road bungalow and asked me to resign from the partnership of **ALVITONE** Laboratory. I tried my best to convince him that **ALVITONE** would be a success and it would be better if I were to continue. When Father attended a function at Dasaprakash, M. Bhakthavatsalam, then the PWD Minister, to whom I had mentioned about Father's decision, advised Father to let me stay on with **ALVITONE**. Later, during one of his meetings with Kamaraj, Thangaraj Nadar told him about Father's decision. A couple of days later Kamaraj surprised Father by calling on him. My parents and a cousin, S.T. Thiagarajan (Secretary of the George Town Co-Operative Bank) were astonished by this sudden visit. Before broaching the subject which he wanted to speak with Father on, he enquired from Thiagarajan about P. Natesan's method of working as Bank's President. Dr. Natesan was a leading venereologist in the State and was a prominent figure in the co-operative movement also. A few decades later the State Co-Operative Training Institute at Anna Nagar was named after him. But when he returned to the main matter for which he was visiting us, Kamaraj was not successful with Father (who was a few years older than him) who bluntly refused to allow me to continue with **ALVITONE** Lab.

(Concluded)

Search for another formula

Once, Thangaraj Nadar and I, after inspecting some work at P. Natesan & Co (Triplicane), drove to Egmore Station so that Nadar could travel to St. Thomas' Mount. On our way, we stopped at Shama Bhatt's Udipi Hotel, which was next to the old Egmore Post Office and the then famous Account Test Institute on Commander-in-Chief Road, to have our breakfast. Shama Bhatt's restaurant was famous for its Mangalore *bonda* and Mangalore *khshayam*. I had known Shama Bhatt during my school days, in the early 1940s, when he had a very small restaurant near the Madras Veterinary College (Periamet). Later, he shifted to Commander-in-Chief Road and then he built handsome premises on Egmore High Road, which housed the restaurant called *Matsya*. Most of the Udipi and Palghat Brahmin restaurants served the *khshayam* drink in the mornings.

I also recall that on Bunder Street in George Town, there used to be a small kiosk (during the 1950s) where a portly middle-aged man used to sell a very tasteful yellow-coloured cool drink from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Many of the British firms on First Line and Second Line Beach, Thambu Chetty and nearby streets used to send their orderlies (mostly Telugus who used to be always busy with their *thakkalis* drawing out cotton thread from balls of cotton during their spare time) to this shop to bring them the yellow milk in flasks. Thangaraj Nadar knew this vendor well, as they used to meet at the Kirana Merchants' Association when they went to purchase their raw products.

Nadar tried his best to get the secret formula behind the yellow drink from the vendor but, despite all his cajoling, failed. The vendor, due to his ill-health, closed the shop in 1962 or so, and a wonderful secret was lost.

- V.T.

When Madras went on the AIR

The first regular broadcasting station in the world is believed to have opened in Pittsburgh, USA, in 1920. In England, programmes were successfully broadcast by the Marconi Co. from Chelmsford on February 23, 1920. In November 1922, the BBC, with John Reith as its managing director, went on the air with regular programmes.

The Madras Presidency Radio Club was formed less than two years later, on May 16, 1924, by a group of dedicated amateurs led by C.V. Krishnaswamy Chetty. It broadcast daily programmes from July 31, 1924, using a 40 watt transmitter. It was later replaced by a 200 watt one, with which a 2½ hour programme of music and talks was broadcast every evening (with a special morning transmission on Sundays and holidays). The Club was located in *Holloway's Garden*, Egmore.

When it had to close down in October 1927 due to financial difficulties, the transmitter was presented to the Madras Corporation which launched a regular service on April 1, 1930 from *Ripon Building*. The Corporation Radio Station broadcast entertainment programmes every day between 5.30 and 7.30 p.m. In addition, it also aired music lessons and stories from 4 to 4.30 p.m. for children on school days. 'Gramophone music' was broadcast from 10 to 11 a.m. on Sundays and holidays, and 'European music' on one Monday every month from 5.30 to 7.30 p.m.

Six loudspeakers were installed at the Marina, Robinson Park, People's Park and the High Court Beach, to be operated in the evenings. Small indoor receiving sets were also provided in 14 Corporation schools. This service continued till June 16, 1938, on which date the station was taken over by AIR on its starting its operations. The AIR station, located on Marshall's Road, Egmore, was inaugurated by Lord Erskine, the then Governor of Madras Province. *Nagaswara* maestro Tiruvengadu Subramania Pillai gave the inaugural concert.

The Madras station on that inaugural day also had a concert by D.K. Pattammal. S. Rajam gave a concert on the second day, with Govindasami Naicker (violin) and Madras A. Kannan (mridangam). He gave a concert on AIR's golden jubilee celebration with the same accompanists. And, as desired by AIR, he sang the same items he had sung 50 years earlier.



Victor Paranjoti

When AIR started its station in Madras it had the good fortune to have Victor Paranjoti as its first director. He had a good knowledge of Western music. He introduced Western music in the programme, mostly played by members of the Anglo-Indian community. This was before Handel Manuel joined AIR. Paranjoti was responsible for developing broadcast in its totality.

Paranjoti was deeply committed to the cause of music and to the maintenance of high standards. He used to visit the

service to broadcasting in Madras.

Madras Province's second station was the Trichinopoly Station opened by C. Rajagopalachari, Prime Minister of Madras, on May 18, 1939. He inaugurated the station with the following announcement: "Good morning, Trichinopoly. This is Rajaji. You are hearing the first broadcast of AIR from Trichinopoly." The station functioned out of a single room on William's Road in the Cantonment area. During its initial days, the station covered just 20 km and transmitted only for a few hours a day, with a five KW medium wave transmitter.

The first director of the Tirchy station was S. Gopalan. P.G. Sounderrajan, better known as 'Chitti', worked in the Tirchy station during its initial period. He described Gopalan as follows: "The station director Gopalan had trained himself in wireless by sheer genius... The workers there proudly equated him with Marconi. Though there was an engineering section with a chief as its head, Gopalan's technical expertise

as education, health, hygiene, home remedies, sports, science and cookery.

Music lessons were broadcast two or three days a week, with many stalwarts taking classes. In order to help interested listeners follow the teaching, all the details of the song – its *raga*, *arohana avarohana*, *tala*, notations, the lyrics – and also names of the composer, teacher and the students were given in *Vanoli* for the corresponding period. Noted litterateur Chitti edited *Vanoli* for several years.

* * *

A few words about how AIR came about. In March 1926, the Government of India entered into an agreement with a private company called the Indian Broadcasting Co. Ltd. (IBC) to operate two radio stations – in Bombay and Calcutta.

When the Government decided to draft the services of experienced personnel from BBC to run these stations, Lionel Fielden assumed charge as Controller of Broadcasting in August 1935. Within a short time he took complete control of the Company and he persuaded the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to discard the name Indian State Broadcasting Service and adopt the name 'All India Radio'. In spite of vehement opposition from his own Secretariat, the Viceroy accepted the name with effect from June 8, 1936. It became the official date of birth of All India Radio.

According to one version, the signature tune of All India Radio was composed by John Foulds, Director of Western Music in Delhi, together with Walter Kaufmann, his counterpart in Bombay. Another version had it that it was composed only by John Foulds. It is also said that it was played by noted violinist V.G. Jog. The instruments played were the tambura and violin.

On October 24, 1941, AIR was placed under the newly created Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. In February 1943, AIR moved to *Broadcasting House* on Parliament Street.

On April 25, 1942, the Director General (DG) of AIR issued instructions to all stations that 'All India Radio' should not be translated into any of the Indian languages. What promp-

ted the Ministry to issue that order is not known. In 1946 the DG received a letter from G.T. Sastri, Station Director, Trichy, requesting that 'Vanoli Nilayam' be allowed to be used to identify and describe his station. The matter seems to have rested there.

In December 1957, the DG conveyed the view of the Ministry to use 'Akashvani' in all announcements in Hindi and other Indian languages, and to retain 'All India Radio' only for use in programmes (and announcements) in English. The Trichy Station Director informed the DG that the order had been complied with, but pointed out that there were vehement and violent agitations, and even hunger strikes, against the use of Akashvani in Madras Province. It was then clarified to the Trichy Station Director that the word 'Akashvani' had been taken from Kannada – the Mysore station which, when started, was originally known as 'Akashvani'. The matter went up to the level of Union Home Minister Govind Vallabh Pant who spoke to Madras Chief Minister K. Kamaraj in this regard. Eventually, the Ministry communicated that it had no objection to the use of 'Vanoli' to denote radio.

The touchy issue was raked up again in May 1982 by the Hindi Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which recommended that the name All India Radio be changed to Akashvani in all its non-Hindi and English programmes as well. Unaware of the earlier stormy history, Minister of Information and Broadcasting Vasant Sathe accepted the recommendation. Anticipating serious trouble in Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran took up the issue with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who was then abroad. And she promptly rang up Sathe and countermanded his orders, restoring the status quo!

Tamil Nadu stations continue to say 'All India Radio' and 'Vanoli Nilayam' – for example, "*All India Radiovin Chennai Vanoli Nilayam.*" – (Courtesy: *Sruti*)



● Excerpts from an article by S. SANKARANARAYANAN

homes of many listeners to get their feedback. In those days, listeners used to throng places like Mylapore beach, T'Nagar Park and the Marina opposite the Fort to listen to AIR broadcasting through kiosks. Paranjoti would frequent even these places to get listeners' feedback! Such was his devotion and commitment to his work.

AIR had an audition system in place as early as the 1940s. Music supervisors were appointed "to assist the station directors in auditions, rehearsals and training of artistes". According to that scheme, Vidwan S. Rajam held that position in Madras from 1944 till his retirement in 1977.

AIR was shifted to its own newly constructed building on South Beach Road (now Kamarajar Salai) near San Thomé on July 11, 1954. The programmes in the first transmission on that day from the new studios commenced at 6.55 a.m. with a short *alapana* in *Todi* by T.N. Rajaratnam Pillai. At the silver jubilee celebration of AIR in 1961, Krishnaswamy Chetty received a commemoration award in recognition of his pioneering

made him an ideal boss."

Gopalan later served as station director in Madras and then Calcutta. He retired as Deputy Director General of All India Radio.

When AIR took over the Madras Corporation Radio and started its own broadcasting, the Madras station began bringing out two programme journals – *Vanoli* in Tamil and *Vani* in Telugu. *Vani* was discontinued after six issues, but was restarted on May 22, 1949. Unfortunately, these journals ceased publication on April 1, 1987.

Each issue of *Vanoli* covered the programmes relating to a fortnight – one issue for the period 1st to 15th and the second for the period 16th to 30th/31st of the month. It gave detailed information on the programmes for Chennai A and Chennai B, Tirchy and Pondicherry, besides giving highlights of programmes of some other stations in the South. It also devoted two or three pages to provide brief information on important programmes, the text of talks given on the radio, and several interesting articles on community and family welfare, such



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

1. Which African nation's ousted President was sentenced to life imprisonment on June 2nd for his complicity in the killing of demonstrators in the 2011 revolution?
2. For what occasion was a flotilla of 1000 ships seen on the Thames on June 3rd, the largest on the river in 350 years?
3. On June 4th, which sports personality was sworn in a Member of the Rajya Sabha?
4. The last such instance of which astronomical event in the 21st Century was witnessed between June 5th and June 6th?
5. Name the celebrated author of such Science Fiction classics as *The Martian Chronicles* and *Fahrenheit 451*, who passed away recently.
6. Which country has become the second country after the UK in the world, to introduce binding targets on climate change?
7. What aviation feat was achieved by *Solar Impulse* on June 6th?
8. The size of which coveted century-old global award is being reduced by 20 per cent in order to avoid an undermining of its capital from a long-term perspective?
9. Whose record of six titles at Roland Garros did Rafael Nadal overtake by winning his seventh French Open title recently?
10. Oxford University researchers have dated to the first century AD the remains in Bulgaria of which influential Biblical character?

* * *

11. Who is credited with compiling *Tevaram* which comprised the first seven volumes of the 12-volume *Tirumurai* during the 12th Century?
12. Sujatha's *Kandalur Vasantha Kumaran Kathai* deals with which incident in Chola history?
13. What sensational incident took place on General Collins Road in Vepery on November 8, 1944?
14. If Azim Jah Bahadur was the first in the 1850s, then who is the current one?
15. Which edifice in Chennai was originally built for Whiteaway, Laidlaw & Company?
16. Where in Chennai is the National Centre for Ultra-Fast Processes, meant for 'the use of researchers in academic institutions for time resolved emission and absorption studies in the pico-second time scale'?
17. Name the holding company of Simpson & Company and nearly 40 other group companies?
18. Which initiative on the outskirts of Chennai has been described by *National Geographic* magazine as "...probably the only successful example of the sustainable use of a wild species in India"?
19. By dropping which rowdy's name does Cho make his entry in the play *Madras by Night*?
20. Where can you watch a performance in the quaintly designed *Koothambalam*?

(Answers on page 8)

Growing from the Suzuki to the boom

(Continued from last fortnight)

• When the car market was opened up to foreigners, there was a flood. Ford, Hyundai, Honda, raced into India with FDI money. Today, they are perceived as being more Indian than the good old sturdy Amabassador.

Sanjay Gandhi, once heir to the throne, may have been guilty on several scores. But he wasn't guilty of lacking in vision. Thanks to him, the first major break came in the 1980s. He dreamt of a small car with high volumes. Enter Maruti. The dream did not make much progress. After his untimely death, Indira Gandhi entrusted the task to V. Krishnamurthy (VK).

In collaboration with Japanese Suzuki Motor Company, VK raced ahead in setting up production facilities for 100,000 800 cc small cars. Like E. Sridharan for Delhi Metro later, VK was given a *carte blanche* on liberal foreign exchange for imports and wide discretionary powers. VK, with his hand-picked team of brilliant managers, many from BHEL, delivered on the promise of releasing the 800 cc car by December 1983, under three years.

With it, India truly entered the era of contemporary automobile technology.

In an interview with VK in early 1994, I asked what gave him the confidence to market an additional 100,000 cars when the annual Indian car sales were just around 40,000. His reply was classic: "The Maruti 800 is priced Rs. 47,000. The car will be very low on maintenance. The owner can save at least Rs. 1000 per month on maintenance. Thus, in 48 months, he will save the price of a car and will go for a replacement!" Brave words, well said.

How true it proved to be! There was an unprecedented scramble when bookings were opened with a deposit of Rs. 10,000. 130,000 applicants deposited around Rs. 130 crore. The experience was repeated when the company opened bookings a second time for Maruti 800 and later for Maruti

Omni. Each time the collection was a staggering Rs. 140 crore. The frenzy hit the roof when Maruti opened bookings for the Maruti 1000 cc cars: 250,000 applications each with a deposit of Rs. 25,000 aggregating to Rs. 625 crore!

True, many bookings were speculative, with banks offering the deposit monies at attractive rates of interest!

Finance managemnet at Maruti was of a top class. The company paid around 7 per cent on the deposits but lent it to public sector corporations at 15 per cent. S. Natarajan, then Director - Finance, Maruti, joked: "For several years in the beginning, the company made more

• Driving Down Memory Lane with S. VISWANATHAN

money by financial engineering than on product sales!"

VK and the leaders from Japanese Suzuki transferred the Japanese work culture, production systems and productivity norms that helped in a Hanuman-like jump in automobile technology. The 1980s also witnessed the advent of the Japanese LCVs - Nissan, Toyota and Mazda and the European Eicher. These products also marked a big jump in technology. The Indian consumer started looking for better quality and service in automobiles.

* * *

The 1990s heralded liberalisation. After some initial hesitation, global leaders seized the opportunity to enter India with 100 per cent ownership. Except Tatas and the Mahindras today, the industry is dominated by the leading manufacturers of the world. I recall the reservations expressed by a foreign expert.

In 1995, I spent a few weeks looking at several manufacturing units in the US, including the Boeing plant at Seattle and Ford headquarters at Dearborn. At the Bank of Baroda office in New York I had an interesting discussion with Dr. Robert B. Hegeman, a senior economist advising the Bank. He expressed surprise over the plans of India to

Our Cars, 1962-2011

	1960-61	Update for 2010-11
Total production of automobiles	54,800	2.9 million
Commerical vehicles	28,200	566,600
Cars, Jeep & Land Rovers	26,600	2,335,100
Two-wheelers	900	10,510,300
Tractors	NA	383,400

emerge as a significant producer of automobiles (that was the time Ford Motor Company announced its interest to set up a production facility in India and other global players too were thinking on similar lines).

Dr. Hegeman pointed to the low level of production in India and to the absence of a strong R&D. He was right: at that time: total production of automobiles, including cars and commercial vehicles, was less than 0.25 million, while the US was consuming around 15 million cars annually.

But I pointed out to him the cost advantages which would make India extremely competi-

the USA 12 per cent of sales, it was a piddling 2 per cent in India.

Dr. Hegeman wouldn't believe it. He said: "This looks like coffee expenses!" I reaffirmed that in the previous year Maruti spent around Rs. 800 million on employee costs on a turnover of around Rs. 42 billion.

After 2000, India witnessed a rapid growth of its automobile industry riding on the prosperity enjoyed by the middle class and on facile financing by banks and finance companies. Japanese, Korean, American and European car manufacturers set up shop in quick time and expanded volumes. Today, India produces around 3 million vehicles annually and is slated to double this over the next five years.

A welcome feature of this is the attention paid by Indian manufacturers to research, development and innovation. The volumes gained and the stiff competition have aided this. Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra have focussed on designing, engineering and producing newer models of cars and commercial vehicles that help them compete effectively with reputed global manufacturers. Ashok Leyland has assembled a team of over 1500 engineers and scientists to work on newer designs and products.

And components manufacturers, particularly in Chennai, are thriving. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

(Concluded)

LOCAL HISTORY

(Continued from page 2)

It was built in the 1850s on land which housed the stables of Englishman Waller when the Eurasians (later called Anglo-Indians) sought a church for the growing community of Protestants in the Mount Road area.

Christ Church also shared space for an Anglo-Indian school which survives today. For youngsters who lived in this area, the 'must do' thing at this school in the 60s and 70s was to attend the annual Shakespeare play put up by its senior students.

Will any of these past students provide a link that the UK professor will be glad to have?

For me, though, revisiting these places and jotting down fascinating threads of people is engaging.

Would it not be a worthwhile effort if a small group in each locality recorded local histories? (Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*)

- Vincent D'Souza

The actor in the shadows

“Can anyone claim to have seen a film 100 times? I do,” said lawyer and actor Charuhasan referring to the 1959 film *Kalathur Kannamma*. The film had brought his much younger brother Kamal Haasan (Charu is older than Kamal by a good 24 years and was married before Kamal was born) into the limelight as the slightly precocious but well-behaved 4-year-old son of actors Savithri and Gemini Ganesan in the AVM production. And, in real life, following the success of the film it was given to Charuhasan, as a father figure, to escort the child actor to the theatres around the State where, during the intermission, the audiences could see the child ‘star’ in flesh and blood.

Recently, speaking with a hint of humour on the ‘supporting role’ he has played to his family members over the years, Charuhasan said at a film awards function in the city that, as a junior lawyer in Paramakudi in 1952, he was introduced as the son of advocate D. Srinivasan and, then, in 1959 as the brother of child actor Kamal Haasan, still later, in 1980, as the father of National Award winning actress Suhasini, then as the father-in-law of noted director Mani Rathnam, and now, after 2008, as grandfather of Nandan who released a pamphlet *Contours of Leninism* at a CPI(M) summit!

It is not as if Charuhasan himself has no claims to fame. He is the eldest of the sons with the Hassan suffix which their father D. Srinivasan gave them to remember his jail-mate Yakoub Hassan who saved him from the blows of fellow-prison-

ers when they were imprisoned during the Indian freedom struggle.

The second in the family is Chandrahasan (born 1936, six years after Charu) who acted in the 1981 film *Raja Paarvai* as the hero Kamal Hassan’s father. Kamal plays a blind violinist in the film. The film was the 100th film of Kamal and the first production of the Haasan brothers.

Nalini, the only sister (born 1946) of the Hassan brothers, is the sibling immediately older than Kamal, the youngest of the four, who was born in 1954.

Now in his eighties, Charuhasan recalls that he was an av-

Paramakudi and even appeared against his father in a case.

In 1957 he moved a bail plea for the All India Forward Bloc leader, the iconic Muthuramalinga Thevar, in a case consequent to followed the murder of Dalit leader Immanuel Shekaran. He had represented Immanuel in an earlier case too. During Charu’s days of legal practice, rebelling against his parents’ mindset, he was attracted by the honesty of the iconic atheist leader Periyar E.V. Ramasamy Naicker who used to refer to Charu as his *sishyan*.

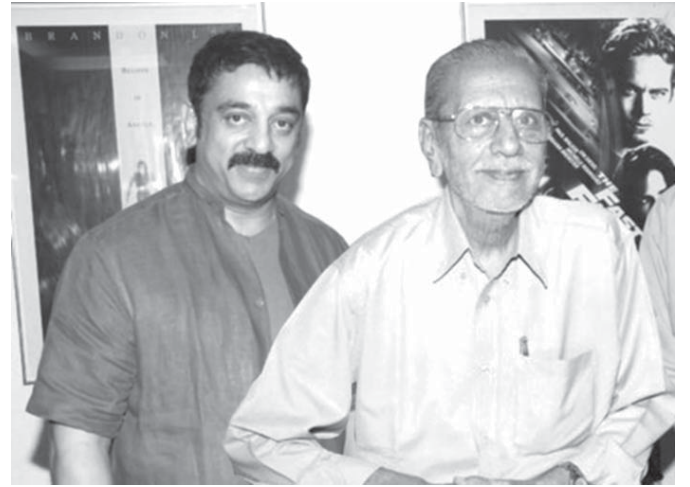
Meanwhile, while Charu was building a practice, their father,



A still from *Kalathur Kannamma* (1960) with Kamal Haasan, Gemini Ganesan and Savithri.

erage student, joining Class 5 directly at the age of nine without being schooled in the basics. He started studying law in 1949 and was one among the few youngsters in a group of 200 working people in class in the then Bombay State. After qualifying as a lawyer in 1951, he started practising law in

Srinivasan, decided that the 14-year-old Kamal would join movies, discontinuing his studies, notwithstanding Charu’s view that Kamal should qualify for the IAS. Between 1962 and ‘63, the child Kamal acted in five films including one in Malayalam and one each of MGR’s and Sivaji’s films. Srinivasan felt that as an actor his son Kamal would earn more fame than as the Collector of a



Charuhasan with brother Kamal Haasan.

district. Providence proved him right. Later, when Charuhasan was 46, he was sent to Madras by his father to assist the actor-sibling. A few years earlier, Charuhasan did get a chance to influence Kamal when he dissuaded him from turning a full-time writer and director at the age of 20. At 17, Kamal Haasan worked as an assistant director in the film *Annai Velankani* in which he also acted in the role of Jesus Christ.

Charuhasan’s debut in films came when he was 49, in the 1979 film *Udiripookal* made by the acclaimed director J. Mahendran based on a story by Pudhumaipithan. During the shoot, a not-so-confident Charu was not sure if his role would see the light of day, but that was not to be. Incidentally, the same director helmed the film *Nenjathai Killathay* which won for Charuhasan’s daughter, Suhasini, the National Best Actress Award.

In the 1987 Kannada film *Tabarane Kathe*, directed by noted director Girish Kasaravalli, Charu’s role won him the National Award for Best Actor, and the movie won the Best National Film Award. The story is about the struggle of a watchman, Tabara, who is seeking his pension dues from Government to treat his suffering wife. Towards the climax, he runs to the local butcher for help in amputating the diabetes- and gangrene-affected foot of his

wife. The pension finally arrives, but Tabara’s wife dies. Tabara berates the staff of the post office and others for the delay and the loss of his only companion. The movie made an all-India impact when it was telecast on the National Doordarshan channel. It is said that R.K. Hegde, who was then the Chief Minister of Karnataka, influenced by the film which won eight State awards, passed a law cutting red tape and hastening the process for retired government employees to get their pensions.

Charuhasan has directed two movies, *IPC 215* (as he was against this law) and *Puthiya Sangamam*. As an actor, he has played roles in more than 120 films in six languages, including two English films. Charuhasan has had more than his share of surgeries, including more than one he had to undergo when he rolled down 39 steps of a building in Paris. When health permits, he drives to the Chennai beach at 5 a.m. for his constitutional, stopping at the Hotel Saravana Bhavan on the way for a coffee.

Others in the Hassan family to make a mark in films are Anu Hassan, Chandrahasan’s daughter, who also hosts the TV show *Koffee*, and Kamal Haasan’s elder daughter Shruti who has starred in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil films.

— T.K. Srinivas Chari

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

— The Editor

No answers to parking woes

(Continued from page 1)

been hailed by the real estate lobby as a major step forward, but what about the buildings that have already been constructed with hardly any space around and for which there is no scope of any new construction?

Lastly, there was the much-hyped unveiling of automated parking meters at select locations in the city. Two years later, several of these do not work, and there are no punitive measures for those who simply do not pay and, above all, the

few meters that do work have not been upgraded to accept the new coins in circulation. All this is not indicative of an administration keen on solving its parking woes.

Perhaps what is needed is some tough measures akin to what the Rajasthan High Court has decreed. It has said that cars cannot be sold to those who do not have allocated parking space for their vehicles. Chennai would do well to consider such an option. It will depress vehicle sales, but it may go a long way in improving the quality of life. Of course, it is unlikely that such a

stringent norm will ever be followed.

Another option would be to increase parking fees to a much higher amount by way of a congestion surcharge. This too would prove a deterrent for people to travel in private vehicles for destinations that could be covered by public transport or on foot.

Ultimately, the best solution would be to improve the quality of public transport and provide better conditions for walking – easily the healthiest option. Can we look at some out-of-the-box solutions in that direction?

There's urgent need to list heritage in 800 towns

INTACH Chairman L.K. Gupta recently told Union Minister for Culture, Kumari Selja, about the urgent attention needed by thousands of unprotected sites and monuments in the 800-plus cities and towns of India, in only 152 of which documentation of their heritage assets has been done to date, "which is like the tip of an iceberg." Unless more sites are notified and heritage regulations put in place, most of these precious sites are bound to disappear over time, he said. He requested the Minister to consider making it obligatory for every State to list its heritage properties and involve local communities in their management effectively. Protection of heritage – not for the people, but with the people – he emphasised, could be a new policy approach to managing India's vast heritage repository more effectively.

During the Minister's visit to INTACH's Central Office, Vice-Chairman Tasneem

Mehta announced the establishment of the Conservation and Heritage Management Institute proposed to be set up in New Delhi. It will train a cadre of skilled professionals to address the issue of current national knowledge and skills deficits which are negating the sustainable development of India's cultural resources. The Centre, the Minister stated, will boost INTACH efforts to sensitise

INTACH to set up Conservation & Heritage Management Institute

and involve a large national audience in conserving, protecting and documenting the country's precious heritage. An NGO like INTACH, with its extended network of Chapters across States, is well positioned to reach out to the people more effectively than Government bodies which function under

several systemic constraints. The Minister also pointed out the many gaps that needed to be filled, like absence of heritage management professionals in most 2/3 tier-cities, and the lack of Master Management Plan even for the majority of India's 28 World Heritage Sites. The bulk of 65,000 heritage sites listed by INTACH remain unprotected, except for 3675 monuments and 41 museums

looked after by ASI, and an additional 3500 administered by State Governments. Most States do not even have urban heritage protection laws, nor are they governed by any heritage regulations. That includes even the capital city Delhi where flood plains are being ravaged by the land lobby.

The proposed INTACH Training Centre will collaborate with the University of York and the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden Museum. It is planning to offer short-term courses, field work, research and internships under a faculty comprising national scholars and visiting international teachers to create a pool of trained professionals in the field of heritage conservation. The courses will cover preparation of management

plans, analysis of cultural landscapes, display of art objects and museum management, interdisciplinary studies, documentation methodologies, intangible cultural heritage, etc. thus filling up a major lacuna existing in the educational system, and facilitating creation of new job streams.

The Minister for Culture, responding, said, "The more you discover, the more you realise how much remains to be done in the heritage field." She reiterated her full support for INTACH activities.

A month later, addressing a Conveners' Conference, the Chairman shared his thoughts on the major issues that he had come across during his past 16-17 years' association with Chapters, like inadequate involvement of members and communities in Chapter discussions and activities. He also stressed the basic work that all new Chapters must under-

Dates for Your Diary

July: Sakti Burman Retrospective, a travelling show by Apparao Gallery on Sakti Burman, a well-known contemporary artist who was born in India and lives in France. There will be over 100 paintings, water colours, drawings and lithographs (at DakshinaChitra).

Till July 16: *The Interior Landscape*, an exhibition of selections from the collection and drawings by American artist Grace Weaver. She is a young figurative artist visiting from the United States. During her time at DakshinaChitra, she has assembled eclectic selection of folk art objects from the Museum's collection, and responded to them in charcoal drawings and collages (at DakshinaChitra).

take, i.e. listing and documentation of built and natural heritage, utilising local volunteers and architectural college students; protecting intangible heritage that promotes arts and crafts, tourism, and rejuvenates local economy; and, being the eyes and ears of INTACH, reporting heritage at risk. (Courtesy: INTACH Virasat)

Answers to Quiz

1. Egypt's Hosni Mubarak; 2. Diamond Jubilee of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II; 3. Sachin Tendulkar; 4. Transit of Venus; 5. Ray Bradbury; 6. Mexico; 7. It became the first solar-powered plane to complete the world's first intercontinental flight; 8. Nobel Prize; 9. Bjorn Borg; 10. John the Baptist.

* * *

11. Nambi Andar Nambi; 12. The situations leading Raja Raja Chola to invade Kandalur, a sea port; 13. The murder of the 'yellow journalist' Lakshmikantham; 14. Mohammad Abdul Ali, the eighth Prince of Arcot; 15. VGP's *Victory House* in Mount Road; 16. University of Madras campus in Taramani; 17. Amalgamations Group; 18. The Irula Snake Catchers Industrial Cooperative Society (ISCICS); 19. 'Jambajaar Jaggu'; 20. Kalakshetra.

CURBING CELL-PHONE USERS

(Continued from page 1)

accidents happen to other people only. What is overlooked is that by diverting attention, injuries or even death can be caused to innocent bystanders for no fault of theirs.

Clearly, need for some introspection and self-discipline is indicated, something for

which we are not known as a nation. At the same time, the police need to be more active in bringing to book offenders and not letting them off with a light penalty or warning. Given the risks involved, it may be best to resort to something drastic such as the cancelling of driving licences. But in the end, it is voluntary adherence to the rule that is ideal. And that is up to us, the people.

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