

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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● Temples, churches and mosques

Restoration, sans any regulation

(By The Editor)

These are religious times, at least judging from the vast numbers that throng all places of worship. Several new shrines are coming up all the time, and those that existed for long are being modernised thanks to the continuous inflow of funds from the faithful. That the donations have not reduced a tithe is evident from the way our temples, churches and mosques are expanding. But, sadly, these restorations, repair works and enlargements are happening with not a thought being spared for the fabric that existed earlier. The result? A well-meaning but misguided set of changes that result in creations that are completely out of place and, what's more, firmly edge out the older elements that needed to be preserved.

Right across the city, there are several temples whose *gopurams* are being brought down to build new ones. Sanctum sanctorum are being covered with polished granite or glazed tiles, thereby irretrievably covering the valuable inscriptions. Temples' interiors are being air-conditioned with walls being pierced to make way for cooling ducts. Liberal usage of sandblasting of sculptures continues regardless of such procedures being banned. In the name of security, collapsible shutters and grille-gates are being put up at any convenient spot with no thought to nearby pillars and sculptures that may suffer permanent damage.

When it comes to churches, it appears that the Sistine Chapel is the ideal for every shrine undergoing renovation, irrespective of what space is available. Thus it has come to pass that a church in Nungambakkam has emerged after its restoration as a completely different structure to what it originally was. If it were not for the steeple, it would be impossible to recognise it as the same church. It now has a few domes, and a tableau that appears wholly inspired by film sets. Interestingly, those in charge of this church were very keen on its demolition in order to make way for a modern shrine.

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Adding domes to steeples. (Photo courtesy: Malar Stills.)

Banners – the bane of our city

Ours is a city that has seen footpaths shrink and vanish. Most pedestrians, those still brave enough to walk on our roads that are, have to make do with whatever space is left on the periphery, often competing for it with two-wheelers. In such a situation, how justified is permission being granted by the authorities to erect banners on the edges of roads? Most decidedly not, but yet the menace continues unabated.

These banners have in recent times proliferated. There are now banners announcing deaths, weddings, coming-of-age ceremonies and births. There are others that announce temple festivals. By far the worst offenders are the political parties that aggrandise entire stretches, blocking them all with large banners hailing their political leaders. On certain roads, well known for regular VIP movement, the scaffoldings that support these banners are more or less permanent structures, with only the vinyl sheet changing periodically. That there are more such nuisances

to come was made clear last week when a revolving and illuminated kiosk was put up at the Gandhi Statue intersection near the beach. The police, which is objecting to a statue that has been there for almost a

hands off the whole matter. The reason cited is that the Collectorate lacks the manpower to monitor these banners.

The rampant misuse of footpaths for putting up banners was recently brought once again to the notice of the High Court of Chennai. The judiciary has directed the Collector to take stringent action against banners and digital hoardings that have been put up without prior permission. Faced with an order that it will have to implement, the Collectorate is keen that some other department takes it over.

The authority to permit the erection of temporary banners is now likely to revert to the Commissioner, Corporation of Chennai. Interestingly, it was

(Continued on page 2)

● by A Special
Correspondent

decade now, kept silent about the kiosk, perhaps because it was in honour of those in power.

The banner menace, long in the public eye, but rarely debated in the media as it is likely to ruffle the feathers of the powerful, was out in the open recently. It transpires that the Collectorate of Chennai, which is apparently the permitting authority, wants to wash its



**Madras Musings wishes all its readers
A Very Happy & Prosperous New Year**

Restoration, sans regulation

(Continued from page 1)

Inclusion in the Heritage Conservation Committee's list prevented that. But one look at the church will convince anyone that those in favour of demolition might as well have been allowed to do what they wanted. Short of completely razing the church to the ground, everything else has been done to it.

It is not so very long ago that another church, this one on NSC Bose Road, underwent a similar restoration. As for a church in Egmore, the 160-year-old building was demolished because "it leaked during rains and did not have a car park facility." The new structure, built at a cost of Rs. 10 crore and declared open recently, is all Palladian. But new additions in other churches are *gopurams* and *sthambams*.

Even mosques, perhaps the most traditional among all religious structures, have come in for rampant changes. The latest designs of the Middle East appear to be the sole inspiration. Mosques on Moore Street and in Thousand Lights have all come in for reconstruction as per plans that are wholly alien to traditional architecture. If these were to be the yardsticks, it would be difficult to even imagine that there was a local template for mosque design.

Where do we go from here? It is clear that those in charge of temples (the HR&CE), the churches (the CSI and Roman Catholic dioceses) and the mosques (Wakf Board and other such bodies) need to be sensitised about the necessity of preserving the old. The Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has talent that can provide suitable guidance. Perhaps it can help. There can be no immediate change but, in the long run, at least some of the old can be saved.

Banners, the bane

(Continued from page 1)

this office that was vested with the necessary powers around ten years ago when, for no particular reason, the Collector of Chennai was given control of the subject. It is learnt that the Corporation has decided to resume its authority once more and has sent a proposal to this effect to the State Government. The latter is yet to decide on the matter.

Handing over this responsibility to the Corporation makes sense from one point of view, namely, that the civic body being in charge of most of the roads, barring those that come under the Highways Department, can be effective in monitoring the banners. But that is more likely in theory than in practice. Given that the Corporation is unable to detect wholly illegal buildings when they are

being constructed, can it in any way identify banners?

But why at all have banners? That is something that nobody wants to address. After all, we claim to be a city that wants to be of international standard. Which world-class city has banners announcing celebrations and praising politicians? It is a wholly third-world country habit. And its continuance shows that we are not really serious about our global aspirations. As to who is not for change is clear from the wording of the transfer of power from Collector to Commissioner. The banners to be monitored are mainly those publicising cinemas, jewellery, food products and motor vehicles. The worst offender, the political class, is not even mentioned and is, therefore, above such trivia as permissions.

MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

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

THE EDITOR

Bouncing in Perambur

The Man from Madras Musings had taken the left when he ought to have turned right. This was a regular beat of MMM's and he was fairly sure of his route and yet he had taken the wrong turn. This was at Perambur, the land that God and the Corporation have largely forgotten. And having taken left, MMM drove on, fairly sure of his destination, which was the pristine and verdant campus of a hallowed industrial house of the city.

It was only after MMM had driven quite a bit that he came to realise that he was lost and the time had come to make enquiries. Now, Perambur is not one of those localities where you can stop at any place, for the roads are so narrow that chances are that someone or something or the other will be at your back, hooting and encouraging you to move on. And so it was quite some time after realising that he was lost that MMM was able to ask anyone for the correct route. But a blameless life of good deeds always has its benefits. MMM was assured that all was not lost and that he had only to do an about turn and drive down yonder street to arrive at his destination.

The U-turn was an adventure by itself, but on that MMM will not dwell, for he has much to say on what transpired thereafter. The thoroughfare that MMM was asked to take after the U-turn rejoined in the name of Raghavan Street and one look at it told MMM that to live/drive/walk there you did need the grace of the bow-wielding God who did demons in.

Raghavan Street, it appeared, had begun life as a fairly respectable rue. There were signs to indicate that at some stage in its life, it had had a decent coating of macadam. But, thereafter, Nature, it appeared, had moved in and was refusing to vacate. The road bore traces of not only the present monsoon but also all of its predecessors, dating back to prehistory. There were large puddles, small puddles, deep puddles and long puddles. Their relative ages could easily be identified by the colour of stagnant water. The older ones were a Nile-green with housing colonies for mosquitoes being located in them. To MMM it appeared that these mosquitoes must have booked themselves into their version of gated communities, with swimming pools thrown in.

True MMM reflected as he lurched and tossed about in his vehicle, Chennai's streets and roads are not free of potholes and ruts. But Raghavan Street was in reality a series of potholes with a few patches of road in between. As to the potholes, we may have heard of bumps and troughs, but whoever has heard of hills and

dales in a city street? After diving deep into every abyss, MMM's car would emerge and begin climbing up what appeared to be a minor mountain. And all the while there was the fear of what lurked on the other side. It could be sloping valley, but it could also be cliff.

Among the various complaints that MMM suffers from (and all of which are brushed aside as states of the mind by his good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed), poor eyesight and a bad back are but two. (He also suffers from a weak stomach but that is neither here nor there.) If the multiple levels on the road were bad enough on the eye, the jerks and jumps were tortuous to MMM's rear. The local residents were, however, unlike MMM, a resilient lot and encouraged him with word and gesture. The thought did occur to MMM that they were perhaps hoping that MMM's car would do what road rollers ought to have done.

After a heroic struggle, MMM did emerge successfully

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

and the first thing that struck his eye was a signboard that said 'Singara Chennai, world-class city'.

Of MMS & GPS

The Season for Music is gathering steam and *The Man from Madras Musings* is bracing himself for an onslaught – not of music but of invitations to attend concerts. These come from what is known as the band of 'young and upcoming musicians' which, in Carnatic music, can mean those up to the age of sixty or so, after which they are labelled veterans.

MMM, being of a sympathetic nature, tries to oblige as many as possible. But of late, the number of invitations has grown to unmanageable numbers. This is because the methods of sending invitations have also multiplied. There was a time when these would come by mail and MMM could get away by saying that he never received them and put the blame on the postal system. Then came the e-mail wave and MMM could still get by saying that somehow these never reached him and could the sender have perhaps sent the invites to a wrong ID? But nowadays many put up event notices on Facebook and occasionally

Tweet or use Whatsapp to publicise them. These are a little less possible to avoid. But what can never be missed, and which MMM has come to dread, are the MMS – Mother Mail Service and GPS – Grandfather Plaguering Service.

MMS is where the mom of the musician is tech-savvy, phone-savvy, personal-contact savvy, post-savvy and is savvy enough to use all these to get you to receive an invitation in some form or the other. If all these fail, then MMM would not be surprised if even the pigeon post were employed. The GPS believes in direct attack. It lurks in places where MMM and others of his kind, known to be culture vultures, flock and waits for a suitable moment. Then, having identified its prey, the old GPS advances, fixing its victim with a paralysing gaze. Having arrived up close, it then begins digging deep into the innards of its costume, all the while holding its prey by sheer eye-power. Then it coos like a dove, beams like a searchlight courtesy the latest in denture technology and holds out a printed invitation. The apple of its eye, says the GPS, is performing at such and such location and it would be good if MMM attended. It does not mention it, but its tone of voice indicates that since it had uncomplainingly changed MMM's diapers when MMM was young and also stood MMM the occasional bar of chocolate, it is time MMM paid back. And so MMM capitulates, grits his teeth and attends the concert of the apple.

The reward is another invitation for yet another performance by apple. And thus it is that MMM becomes wary and shiftily eyed as he goes from *sabha* to *sabha*. Watching out for MMS/GPS is tough work. The season has its drawbacks.

What's this?!

Walking around Mylapore, *The Man from Madras Musings* was brought to a dead halt on seeing the message below. Is it really what it is or is it just a case of someone using an '&' in the mistaken belief that it is a short form for an alias? On that happy note, here's to a Happy New Year.

– MMM



OUR READERS WRITE



Roads & congestions

The 'Pits'burgh condition (MM December 1st) is due to non-execution of road works according to SSRB of Highways Department. I have observed that concrete roads in our panchayat area have developed pits within a year.

Also, T. Nagar was conceived as a residential area, with some stretches set apart for commercial activities. The expansion of commercial activities we see now is happening with the connivance of politicians and civic authorities. Legislation alone cannot prevent this for it will never get enforced.

S.N. Mahalingam

email: santhri@rediffmail.com

The 'Bs' and 'Ps'

As usual I was chuckling over the Short 'N' Snappy piece from MMM in Madras Musings (December 1st).

The news announcer with his RIBBON building is not the only one of his kind.

I have noticed that many of us are unable to pronounce the English letter "P" and this letter

is always pronounced by some with a "B" sound.

Often, the much mispronounced "Parotta" (transformed from "Paratha") is always pronounced as "Barota".

Similarly Padma becomes "Badma"... poor thing!

Years back there was a drama running in Chennai, called Soorapadman.

It was always pronounced as "SooraBadman"!

At Tambaram railway station, the universal cry at 9 am is an agonised "Bast Poyiduch-chaa?"

This "Bast" refers to a fast local to Chennai Beach. 'Fast' transformed into "Past" local and from there "Bast" is another jump.

The inability to sound B interested me so much that I once tried an experiment on a friend of mine, asking him to say "P.B. Srinivas".

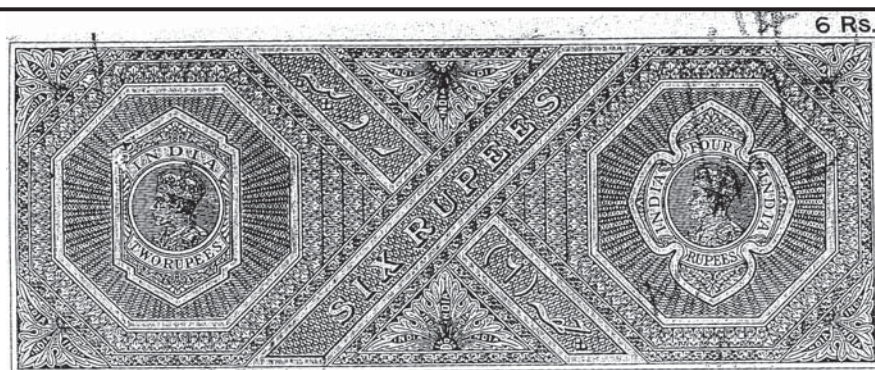
Even after numerous attempts, poor fellow, he could not get it right. He could only pronounce it "B.P. Srinivas"!

S. Rajaram

62/1, Tamarai Flats

M E S Road

Chennai 600 059



180 191
7-7-1947
रुपय छह
Rupees Six only
Sri M. Svarajan, 86, Mundakkanni Amman Koil
Street, Mylapore, Madras
V. Parthasarathy
S.V. Triplicane
No endorsement of agreement relating to deposit of
titles dated 1947 in 1947
No endorsement was taken for this 8th day of July
1947 No. Svarajan son of Mungara Naicker Varma
Kula Kothayya Temple, Mylapore, Madras
Amman Koil Street, Mylapore, Madras
has deposited with Logambal ammal wife
of R. Kandasamy Sridhar, residing above
2, Vempachiar Kovil Street, Mylapore, Madras. the
to be included in the Schedule hereto.

Split value

Here is a scanned copy (above) of an old and cancelled house document on a six-rupee stamp paper purchased on 7.7.1947 in Triplicane. This was dated just a month before Independence.

What I specially noticed in the stamp paper was that for its six-rupee face value, the stamp paper was printed as two rupees on the left and rupees four on the right side and in the centre Six Rupees!

Was it a common practice at the time for all denominations to be split or was there any significance behind splitting the stamp paper value?

M.D. Chander

5/12, 5th Block, Mogappair West, Chennai 600 037

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

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

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

— THE EDITOR



Masters of 20th Century Madras science

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

His aim: To take science and technology to rural India

Chetput Venkatasubban Seshadri (April 14, 1930-September 17, 1995) conceptualised the M.M. Murugappa Chettiar Research Centre (MCRC) in Taramani, Madras, and directed it from 1976, when it was established, until his untimely death in 1995, cherishing his dream of taking science and technology to the rural people of India.

C.V. Seshadri (CVS) came from a distinguished family of Madras and studied in Bombay and the U.S. He got his Ph.D. (Chemical Engineering) from the Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, which was followed by a research position at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston. On his return to India, he joined the chemical engineering faculty of IIT, Kanpur [IIT (K)]. In 1965, while at IIT (K), he, with S.V. Patankar, wrote the textbook *Elements of Fluid Mechanics* (1971). CVS left IIT (K) in 1974 to join Industry in Bangalore, where he set up India's first fodder-yeast plant.

From the time he became Director of MCRC, his emphasis was on the technology that would be appropriate for India in the context of the then Indian economic scene and the country's burgeoning needs. At MCRC, CV's passion for Gandhian science blossomed. By choosing to walk on untreaded paths, he blazed new trails in developing several appropriate technologies, including that of exploring the benefits of a microscopic photosynthetic cyanobacterium, *Spirulina*. In the 1980s, CVS and his team studied *Spirulina* (the present valid name is *Arthrospira*) and its strengths as an excellent nutrition supplement that included vitamins B1, B12, B16, C, E, besides several proteins.

The world's largest *Spirulina*-based nutrition trial on 5000 children was completed by MCRC in 1992, with support from the Government of India. Children were supplied with 1g of 'processed' *Spirulina* for 150 days. This tiny quantity provided the minimal daily requirement of vitamin A (B-carotene), which

prevents blindness and other eye diseases. In this extensive trial, CVS *et al*, noteworthy established that Bitot's spot, a symptom of vitamin A deficiency that scars the conjunctiva of the eye, dropped from 80 to 10 per cent. One preferred goal of the Madras *Spirulina* trial was to determine an alternative to the vitamin A therapy, which involved providing massive doses of purified vitamin A, imported from developed countries, every six months to children.

Most vitally, CVS's Madras trials on *Spirulina* not only were transparent, but also were developed indigenously with a social purpose. For this effort, CVS in 1987 received the Jannalal Bajaj Award for Science & Technology for Rural Development.

While in Madras, he actively sought answers to questions on the philosophy of science. He argued that the laws of thermodynamics are enunciated in a way that betrays a deep cultural bias and encourages a specific manner at looking at the world. He was hypercritical of the practitioners and administrators of Indian science for being passive receivers of the science and technology declared obsolete by the developed world. His remark, "I could say no one except Indian scientists believe that science is value free," is profound and students of science should consider this remark seriously. He reiterated that the kind of science and technology he saw around him was a disastrous failure and would never solve India's problems.

In mid-September 1995, this brilliant science thinker and an avid sea swimmer never returned from the sea. According to Rajni Bakshi (*Bapu Kutu*, 1998, Penguin Books India, Bombay), "CVS's youthful zest and enormous energy made it easy to forget the linear dimension of this mortal frame. Yet this is all the sea snatched away. The man's bequest remains awaiting the nurturing care of fellow-travellers in this and other times."

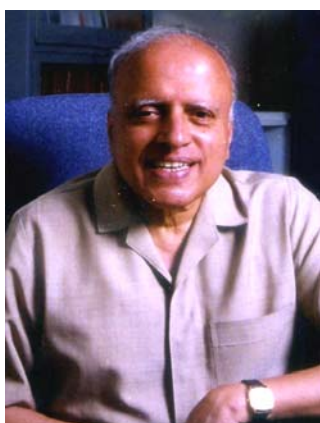
A landmark year for M.S. Swaminathan

• 2013 is a landmark year in the life and times of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, established to promote integrated and sustainable development, completed its 25th year.

Conferred with the Indira Gandhi Award for national integration, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan recalls in an interview the time he and Dr. Vikram Sarabhai went to meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi at her home. "She suddenly asked how soon we could build a foodgrain reserve of 10 million tonnes. I was taken aback, but it became clear to me that India's dependence on imported food was a major concern of hers." This triggered the green revolution and production doubled in quick time. "C. Subramaniam, then Food and Agriculture Minister, took the administrative leadership to make this a reality. It is the synergy between science and public policy that reversed the ship-to-mouth situation to implementing the food security bill today," said Dr. Swaminathan.

The M S Swaminathan Research Foundation was launched in a modest, rented building in Kotturpuram, Chennai. Today, its sprawling campus is tucked away in Taramani, a silent corner in the city. There it focusses on R & D in the areas of mangrove forest restoration, fisheries, medicinal plants, maintaining a gene bank, development of salt and drought tolerant varieties of rice, eco-villages that are self-sustainable, and spreading the knowledge of information technology to the rural masses. The Foundation has adopted the 4C model for sustainable management of agro-biodiversity involving attention to conservation, cultivation, consumption and commerce.

Dr. Swaminathan is today particularly concerned over the



Dr. M.S. Swaminathan

poor demographic dividend in agriculture. With the younger generation opting to move to cities, agriculture is in neglect. Fragmented land, lack of scope to implement technology, and a market disconnect in selling the produce deter youth from choosing agriculture as a career. "For young people to take to agriculture, farming must be

take off as expected, but if such an approach is followed it would open a new sustainable dimension of agriculture for the youth," said the agriscientist.

Dr. Swaminathan pointed to four main challenges that today's agriculture faces: prime farm land is not being used for agriculture, hard to attract and retain talent for agriculture, changing climatic conditions, and the market connect.

With natural endowments for agriculture shrinking, genetically modified crops are considered the way forward. "I believe that the current concerns of bio-safety and the impact of GM on biodiversity will soon give way to an appreciation of the potential benefits of this new genetics to humankind. Agricultural science and genetics together have fed the world and will continue to feed

• by Jayanthi Raghunathan and S. Viswanthan

both intellectually satisfying and economically rewarding. Our agriculture universities should enable every scholar to become an entrepreneur," stressed India's leading agroscentist. A few years ago, the Indian Government had launched a programme to enable farm graduates to set up agribusiness centres and agri-clinics. The programme visualised a group of four or five students specialised in various disciplines, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, marketing and home science, joining hands and setting up business centres. Agri-clinics could provide the needed advice for crop health and nutrition during the production phase. Such a multi-disciplinary approach would help in developing the rural economy in a holistic manner. "This did not

the world," said Dr. Swaminathan.

With his vision to get rid of hunger and poverty from the world, Swaminathan was listed in the 'Time 20' list of most influential Asians of the 20th Century in 1999. He had earlier received the prestigious World Food Prize (1987), considered equivalent to the Nobel Prize. And he has been awarded the Padma Shri (1967), the Padma Bhushan (1972), the Padma Vibhushan (1989).

Dr. Swaminathan was born and brought up in Kumbakonam where his father, Dr. M.S. Sambasivan, was a prominent public figure (he also served as Municipal Chairman, Kumbakonam). M.S. Swaminathan pursued higher studies at the Tamil Nadu Agriculture College, Coimbatore. But his service years were spent at the

From begging bowl to bread basket...

For those born after the 1990s it must be amusing to hear that there was once a ship-to-mouth food situation in India. Such was the intensity of the food shortage that large quantities of wheat had to be imported and sent immediately for consumption. Thanks to the continued efforts of the then Union Agriculture Minister, C. Subramaniam, Dr. M. S. Swaminathan and able administrator B. Sivaraman that situation is history today. India was transformed from a begging bowl to a bread basket. For spearheading the introduction of high-yielding wheat and rice varieties to India's farmers, Dr Swaminathan was awarded the first World Food Prize in 1987. With the award funds, he set up the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in Madras in 1988. The U.N. Environment Programme described him as the 'Father of Economic Ecology'.

— SV

Agricultural Research Institute of the ICAR in Pusa, where he worked on genetic modifications of wheat and was closely associated with the green revolution, and in the Agriculture Ministry.

Dr Swaminathan once mentioned the preparation of the blueprint for the green revolution in the early 1960s. With C. Subramaniam taking charge as the Union Minister of Agriculture in the Lal Bahadur Shastri government, the focus on agricultural research, combined with efficient administration and policy back-up, triggered the green revolution.

Dr Swaminathan was actively involved in delineating an agriculture policy and was at the helm of affairs when India turned from a net importer to an exporter of foodgrains. In the 1970s, he functioned as Secretary in-charge of agricultural research and actively promoted intensive research through the dozens of ICAR labs. Later, he shifted to Manila as the Director of the International Rice Research Institute.

It was Chennai's good fortune that Dr Swaminathan decided to establish his research foundation in the city. With his

suave nature, he was close to all government administrations. With his reputation known far and wide, he organised visits of top scientists and administrators in the food and agriculture sectors from across the globe, including the renowned Dr. Norman Borlaug, the father of the Green Revolution in the world. Chennai never had it so good with receiving and hearing a galaxy of international experts involved with food and agriculture.

President Pranab Mukherjee specially came to Chennai to participate in the silver jubilee celebrations of MSSRF. He complimented Dr Swaminathan for initiating the concept of "nutri-farms" to address hidden hunger caused by micronutrient deficiencies and praised his valuable recommendations as Chairman of the National Commission on Farmers for converting the green revolution into an ever-green revolution.

The world owes a great deal to Dr Swaminathan for the focus he has brought on agricultural research and issues of global concerns relating to food and agriculture, gender equality, nutrition, etc. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.....) / I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

• I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to **CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS**, as **subscription** to *Madras Musings* for the year 2013-14.

• As token of my support for the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that *Madras Musings* espouses, I send Chennai Heritage an additional Rs..... (Rupees). Please keep / put me on your mailing list.

Name :

Address:

.....

.....

All cheques to 'Chennai Heritage'. DD/Cheque should be sent by Speed Post only.



The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation headquarters building.

A search for identity

Kombai S. Anwar's *Yaadhum*, a documentary recently screened, is, he says, his search for his Tamil Muslim identity, a who-am-I tour. At the end of the search for truth, there is always a revelation. So it was with the audience if the interaction at the end of the film was any indication.

All of us want to belong, and we know, at a deep instinctive level, that we “belong” at home, the first and basic social unit that we get to know. This need expands to the neighbourhood, community, society, and our country. There was a time when a Tamil poet sang that “all the world is mine and all are my family,” and Anwar picks his title from here, because today we have degenerated into different circles of “Us” and “Them”. In his search for himself, he discovers the connect and shares his discovery with us.

We too drive in the car with Anwar in his search for Tamil Muslim history in Calicut and in Kayalpattinam, in Pulicat and in Madurai, in Alwarthirunagari and in Keezhkattalai. Anwar strokes with wonder the carvings on the Big Temple, Thanjavur, moved by the thought that he is a part of the same civilisation. He plunges into the joyous bustle of Madurai, the city that never sleeps, with its colourful street dancers, the fragrant rows of jasmine sellers (Madurai Malli which got its G.I. recently) and the strains of the *nadaswaram* and takes us with him,

We enter the *pallivasals* (as Tamil Muslims call their mosques) with their pillars based on local architectural tradition. In one *pallivasal* the woodwork in green and gold in the centre is breathtaking. Islam has nothing akin to the *Agamas* that dictate how a temple shall be built, and so, in China, an 8th Century mosque blends with the local architectural landscape and in Africa and here too. Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan, an acclaimed historian and former Chairman of the Indian Council for Historical Research, tells us that in the Malabar region you cannot distinguish between Muslim and Hindu places of worship or residence, as both have used the same architectural style.

Once inside the *pallivasal*, we hear the songs from the *Mirhaj Malai* and *Seerapuram* in traditional *ragams* like ‘Kapi’ and ‘Bageshri’. The singer, Seera Aboobakker, is wonderful. Yes, the two faiths are like rivers flowing side by side, as

● by Justice Prabha Sridevan

the opening shots establish. Sri Ranganatha on the Garuda is carried in procession along the streets of Kombai at a mosque and then the evening prayers commence in the *pallivasal* standing there.

It all started more than 2500 years ago with the pepper trade which connected the arid deserts of West Asia to the verdant slopes of the Western Ghats. The ships on the Spice Route brought the message of Islam to India in the 7th Century CE, and it took root. The kings of South India showed their munificence to Islamic places of worship as the Cheraman Jumma Pallivasal is testimony to.

The kings of South India, the Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas, as well as the Naiks, like Achyutappa, and the Ramnad Sethupathis have held the Muslims in high esteem. One of the oldest *pallivasals* in Kodungallur is the *Cheraman Jumma Palli*. The land on which the dargah in Nagore stands was endowed by Achyutappa Naik. The Zamorin of Calicut trusted his Muslim sailors who served in his navy to protect his kingdom from the Portuguese. The navy was solely manned by them (as the Hindus were generally reluctant towards sea-travel), and to strengthen the navy the Zamorin is said to have decreed that at least one member from each fisherman's family in Calicut had to embrace Islam. Kunjali Marakkayar was warrior non-pareil. We see inscriptions referring to ‘Sonagarn’ used mainly to refer to Muslims and also ‘Anjuvannam,’ a term used for West Asian Trade Guilds all along the coast of Tamizhagam. In Pulicat, a scholar reads to us from a historical record in Tamil written in Arabic script. The film also points to the Anaimangalam copper plate of the great Rajendra Chola which records the grant of land for the building of a Buddha Vihara. One of the signatories to this royal order is Turukkan Ahamed. There is a bass relief at the Alwarthirunagari temple showing a ship carrying a horse, obviously from Arabia.

In Muziris the excavations show the various influences that flowed in to India, and Dr. P.J. Cherian, Director, Kerala Council for Historical Research, says that trading does not bring in goods alone but ideas, technology, traditions and so on. And when these influences have flowed in and blended, how does one separate them into individual strands?

Culture is one of these poorly understood words in the English language. Culture is not monolithic. My culture is not a single-sided culture; I speak Tamil and, there-



Kilakkarai Jumma Palli is one of the finest Dravidian style mosques. It was built by Seethakathi Maraikayar in Kilakkarai in the late 17th Century.



The Miskal Palli (mosque) built in the 14th Century in Calicut in the architectural tradition of Kerala.

fore, there is the Tamil culture; I profess a certain faith; and I am a woman, and so on. Each of them contributes to what shapes my culture. Therefore, it would be difficult to say that my culture is static and one-sided. It is not easily definable. It conveys a sense of permanence and stability. It can be used positively to mobilise people in the struggle for their human rights or abused by persons exercising a certain power, which could be social, religious and so on. As a Tamil, I share a side of my space with one, and as a woman with another, and my faith is similarly another shared facet. Thus my space of ‘belonging’ is intertwined with all humankind and the artificial line dividing a ‘Them’ and an ‘Us’ blurs, and it is indeed ‘*yaadum oorey*’ as Anwar passionately tells us in his *Yaadhum*

Tamil literature was enriched by Tamil Muslims and Kavikko Abdur Rahman says that there are contributions by them in practically every literary genre and some more. Interestingly, in Umaru Pulavar's *Seerapuram*, which is about the life of the Prophet, the landscape described is the Tamil landscape and not the desert at all! It is natural, isn't it, to locate a tale of my own faith, so dear to me in my own land?

The social inter-relations between the two communities were so close that one called the other Maama or Chacha. In fact, the writer Joe D'cruz says the word ‘Muslim’ is alien to him. He would rather prefer to use the words ‘Chacha’ and ‘Chachi’ as terms of address or reference and not ‘Muslim’ which sounds alien to him. In Uvari (Tirunelveli District), where his grandparents lived, the *muscoth* seller chacha would just walk into their house as if it was his own. The writer Poncee too has a similar tale to share about the Muslims and Hindus of Theni District. Tamizhagam linked everyone together.

In the Puttukoil, which combines both the Hindu and Muslim styles of architecture, there is Maideen Pitchai, whose family has for generations built the fence around the *yagasalai* for the *pittukku man sumakkum* festival. He says that before him his father's grandfather, his grandfather and his father had done this. His little son stands close to him. He puts his arm around this child saying “God willing, my son will do it after me.” Tears blur my eyes. Truly, God willing.

“Singing in *kapi* and *bageshri*, is it a special instance or quite common, Anwar?”. It is not uncommon at all; in fact we also had *kathakalakshepams*. “*Kathakalakshepams*, really?”

“The contribution to Tamil literature...there is so much more, isn't it, Anwar?”. “Yes, there is, may be in my next part.”

These were the voices heard at the end of *Yaadhum*. A note of wonder and the happiness of discovery and perhaps a tad of embarrassment too that you did not know...that you did not know ‘*yaadhum oorey yaavarum kelir*’. Thank you, Anwar, for starting this journey!

(The website of the film, www.yaadhum.com, offers videos and information.)

The Wooing of Isabella Druitt, “surely the queen”

In 1872, Dr Robert Druitt, author of the best-selling treatise *Surgeon's Vade-Mecum*, sailed for Madras. Accompanying him was his daughter, Isabella. He was stricken by haematuria, a disease of the kidney. Popular medical opinion had it that this was cured by living in warmer climes and when that year, his close friend Lord Hobart was appointed Governor of Madras, Dr Druitt decided to go with him as his personal physician.

The doctor was welcomed by the local medical fraternity and made a member of the Madras Club. He wrote home a series of articles on the suitability of Madras as a winter residence, all of which were published in journals such as *The Lancet* and *The Medical Times & Gazette*. He praised the local climate sky-high and declared it to be better than that of the French Riviera. His daughter in the meanwhile determinedly set about finding a husband, and learning Tamil.

Described as plump and in good condition though dreadfully bitten by mosquitoes, she had no dearth of male company. One of the ADCs, Capt. Foot was “young, handsome and very merry” and “sang, acted and in fact did everything to perfection.” The most ardent however was Mr Araboun, an elderly and wealthy Armenian jeweller. The day after a ball he called on her and “with many gallant speeches,” pressed his suit with a poem inscribed on scented paper.

*“In the assemblage of beauties where many are seen,
Isabella Druitt is surely the queen.*

*Her head so beautiful with loveliness crowned,
Embellish a face with mildness adorned.*

*Her figure so graceful with complexion bright
Shows her at once a perfection at sight.”*

Struggling hard not to laugh, she expressed her thanks. A few days later, he gifted her a diamond ring. Her father allowed her to keep it. “I think India is a nice place,” she declared.

The problem of throwing off Araboun solved itself in 1875 when Lord Hobart died of cholera. The funeral, the last of those for a British Governor of Madras, was a solemn one with hundreds lining the street and following the cortege to Fort St George where the Governor was buried at St Mary's. Dr Druitt led a committee to investigate the death and declared the drains of Triplicane and Chintadripet responsible. He recommended that the sewage of the city must be prevented from falling untreated into the rivers, something that we are still fighting against!

Back in England, Dr Druitt was once again fighting haematuria but Isabella was in for a surprise. Among the ADCs of Lord Hobart had been his younger brother, the Hon. Maj. Horace Miles Hobart-Hampden. A good 17 years older than Isabella and a crusty veteran of the 1857 uprising, he and she had hardly interacted in Madras. But he had all along been a secret admirer. He now proposed and was immediately accepted. The wedding no doubt involved the exchange of rings. Whether Araboun's gift was one of them is not documented.

– Sriram V.



The Theosophical Publishing House, all of whose work is done at the Theosophical Society's Vasantha Press.

A printing press in a garden

When Adyarites take a walk from the Aavin park junction towards Elliot's Beach, through that avenue beautifully lined on both sides with greenery, they can see Vasantha Press on the right, set a little off the road. This is a printing press with its own story.

During the early days of the Theosophical Society, the students of Theosophy used to get their lessons in cyclostyled form from England. As the number of learners increased, there was need to have the copies printed. It was also necessary to have some important papers of the institution printed for distribution to its members. One Sitarama Sastri was asked to find a suitable printing facility. It is recorded in the *Adyar Notes and News* of May 24, 1928, that he reported non-availability of a suitable press. It was then decided to set up a printing facility in the campus itself.

Sitarama Sastri and his brother Narayanaswami Iyer were asked to scout for a printing machine. They came across

a hand-press and hired it. This equipment was brought disassembled and re-assembled in the premises of the Society. They purchased the necessary accessories and commenced work in a space of about 10 square feet in what was called the Vasantha Institute. The two men were employed to work in what was named the Vasantha Press.

• by
K.R.A. Narasiah

When Mrs. Besant came back from Europe after a visit in 1908, she saw the value of the press for the Society and purchased it from the Vasantha Institute, retaining the name. In fact, Vasantha is also an Indianised way of saying Besant! With the increasing work load and the establishment of a publishing house, the Press continued to grow both in quantity of work done and in qualitative improvement technologically.

In the years that followed, a garden was developed round the Press. Jinarajadasa (Vice-President of the Society from 1921 to 1928, when Dr Besant was President, and later President himself) was someone with a great taste for natural beauty. During his tours to Central and South America, he brought several seeds and saplings which were planted in the garden of the Society. Soon, the Society became a botanical garden by itself.

During the Silver Jubilee year of the Theosophical Society, Jinarajadasa arranged to plant mahogany seedlings to form an avenue through the centre of the estate. He arranged it in such a manner that there was one plant for each National Section and, to make it authentic, soil from the different countries was brought for each pit prepared for a plant! This came later to be called Founders Avenue. The avenue was later extended to receive more saplings from more countries! (Courtesy: *Adyar Times*)

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– THE EDITOR

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

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to Madras Musings for 2013-14 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses. We look forward to all readers of Madras Musings, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions.

– The Editor

Tamil theatre, a lost legacy

Na. Muthuswami's path-breaking work with 'Koothu-p-pattarai', a fertile training ground for Tamil actors, is an oasis in the desert of Chennai's serious theatre scene. In the mainstream, not even a handful of amateur theatre groups offer more than fluffy comedies. And unlike the vibrant atmosphere in the English theatre world of Chennai, albeit often of dubious quality, its Tamil counterpart does not enjoy much audience support.

Things were much better for the stage industry in the last century. While entertainment (other than films) in the Madras of the 1950s and sixties consisted mainly of Carnatic music, the city also offered a monthly dose of amateur theatre. If your earliest ideas of classical music were fashioned by the voices and instruments of the stalwarts of the day – Ariyakudi, Sem-mangudi, Madurai Mani, Maharajapuram, GNB, MS, MLV, Pattammal, Palghat Mani, Lalgudi, Krishnan and many more – Tamil drama offered considerable variety too.

Such dramatisations of the novels and novellas of Devan as *Mister Vedantam*, *Tuppariyum Sambu* or *Kalyaniyin Kanavan* were popular hits. A Tamil version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, in which the lead roles were played by the towering C.G. Seshadri, was so

frightening that the walk home afterwards could be a nightmare. *If I Get It* by YGP was a thriller all the way with never a dull moment, at least to an impressionable pre-teen fan. Unforgettable was Koothapiran (N.V. Natarajan), who is still going strong, with some six decades of experience on radio and stage behind him.

The great dramas of the period were staged by the TKS Brothers, with T.K. Shanmugham and T.K. Bhagavathi playing major roles in all their

their ever-green hits, some of which were filmed successfully.

R.S. Manohar was as much known for special effects and gigantic sets as for unconventional perspectives on well-known myths and epics. His plays had Manohar in roles such as Ravana in *Lankeswaran*, *Sukracharya* and *Naganandi*.

The stage decor was predictably theatrical in most of these productions, with palaces, streets and temples painted on

• by V. Ramnarayan

lavish spectacles. Shanmugham was so convincing as Avvaiyar that when the wonderful K.B. Sundarambal played the sage-poetess on the screen, it was initially disappointing seeing the role taken away from TKS.

The eponymous *Kappalottiya Tamizhan* and *Veerapandia Kattabomman* were both runaway successes. Both eventually had Sivaji Ganesan essaying the star roles in his inimitable style on screen.

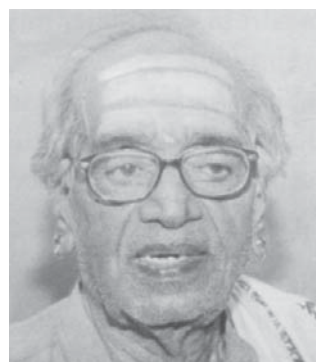
Another veteran theatre personality was S.V. Sahasranam whose Seva Stage was a well respected troupe. *Nalu Veli Nilam*, *Policekaran Magal* and *Nawab Narkali* were among

scene-specific drop-down-roll-up backdrops. Comic relief was mandatory and actors like Sarangapani, Sivathanu and Sambandam drew the most laughs.

The 1960s also brought to the fore such larger than life theatre personalities as United Amateur Artistes' YGP, whose son Mahendra is still going strong on stage and in films, and K. Balachander. In Balachander's Regini Recreations flourished such future stars of the screen as Sundarrajan and Nagesh. Sundarrajan's stirring performance as Major Chandranth prefixed the title of the army officer permanently to his screen name. The brilliant



TKS Brothers



Koothapiran N.V. Natarajan.

comedian Nagesh's *Server Sundaram*, adapted for cinema, became an all-time classic.

Viveka Fine Arts 'Cho' Ramaswamy's plays, a complete departure from the prevailing genre of 'social' drama, lampooned the political classes and their corrupt way of life that was increasingly pervading Indian society.

A later development was the growth of light drawing room comedies of the strictly Madras variety, the handiwork of natural humorists but with no hidden depths or subtlety. 'Kathadi' Ramamurthi, S.V. Shekhar and Crazy Mohan belong to this category.

When Poornam Viswanathan, originally famous for his work on radio and the play, *Under Secretary*, moved from Delhi to Madras, he found a well-run outlet for his acting ability in the productions of Kala Nilayam, in which, along with committed amateur artistes of the calibre of Chandrasekhar (of the musically talented Sikkil family) and others, he was able to take part in such super hits as Savi's *Washingtonil Tirumanam* and Marina's *Tanikkudittanam* and *Oor Vambu*. Kala Nilayam is still going strong despite the odds stacked against it.

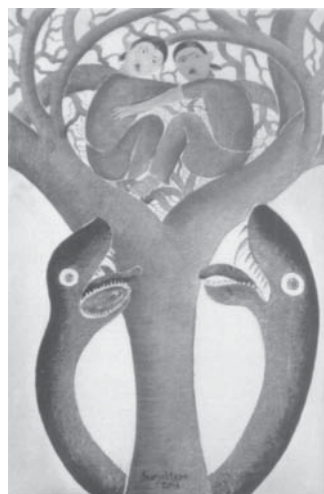
Viswanathan later formed his own group to stage some excellent works with serious content, mainly, plays by Sujatha, such as *Kadavul Vandar*, Indira Parthasarathy's *Nandan Kathai*, *Aurangzab* and *Ramanujar*. These are serious works which, like Poornam's earlier efforts, lack support from sponsors and audiences alike, a sad commentary on the prevalent theatre culture of Tamil Nadu. Parthasarathy's plays have met with far greater stage success in their

Hindi translations than in the Tamil originals.

Theatre of the old Nawab Rajamanickam or Boys Club kind is still reputedly alive and kicking all over the state, together with Terukoothu and other forms of folk theatre, but urban Tamil Nadu has the reputation of not supporting or enjoying serious Tamil theatre any more. In fact, a worthy recent attempt to revive Sujatha's *Kadavul Vandar*, by Bharati Mani – a character actor who has relocated here from Delhi post-retirement – had to be funded entirely by him. For all the favourable reviews and audience response the play has received, Mani will not find it easy to obtain sponsorship for further productions of serious plays.

The lure of cinema and television is blamed for the lack of an informed, interested audience for plays other than the joke-a-second or slapstick variety. The huge crowds that Magic Lantern's *Ponniyin Selvan* drew a few years ago at the YMCA Open Air theatre, however, suggested that the blame for the situation did not lie with the audiences alone.

The last few years have seen a surge in the number of theatre festivals in Chennai, usually staged at venues like the Dakshinamoorthy Hall in Mylapore and Narada Gana Sabha. Some of the plays, including a few by troupes from Delhi and Mumbai, even the U.S.A., have attempted serious themes, or relatively sophisticated comedy, in a departure from the Mylapore formula of yore, but the productions often suffer from lack of infrastructure as well as training. The sets are a throwback to the era of Manohar and TKS Brothers or, even worse, are imitations of TV plays with their strange furniture and stranger interiors. The actors often stand in front of microphones and declaim their lines to the audience, and the acting belongs strictly to the realm of melodramatic excess. Yet no one seems to mind. It is time both our theatrepersons and our theatregoers were exposed to quality fare from other parts of India. – (Courtesy: Sruti)



One of the paintings by Surjit Akre featured in the exhibition.

December 16-22: *I Want to Live*, the 60th solo exhibition of paintings by Surjit Akre (at Lalit Kala Academy).

Till December 22: *Festival of Manipur*: Folk performance and



crafts of Manipur (at DakshinaChitra).

December 25-30: *Marghazhi Festival* featuring *Therukoothu* performance by Shanmugam and troupe from Kancheepuram (at DakshinaChitra).

Till January 17, 2014: *Idhu Chennai dhan*, an exhibition on popular culture of Chennai by Arts Management students (at DakshinaChitra).

Till January 18: *1x1 of a kind*, an exhibition of paintings and sculptures in small format by members of the Progressive Painters' Association (PPA), one of the oldest art organisations in

India. It was started by late K.C. Panicker in 1944. The artists include many eminent ones and also some promising new talents most of whom reside in Cholamandal Artists' Village (at Forum Art Gallery).

Till January 20, 2014: Exhibition of paintings of Yusuf Arakkal (at DakshinaChitra).

Children's Workshops at DakshinaChitra:

December 21: Card Modelling: Miniature house

December 28: Activity Camp (7-10 years age group)

I have been a reluctant selector. It took me months to even start this series on Tamil Nadu cricketers, because I resisted the idea of selecting an all-time State team. Why don't I just profile 20 players I like, I pleaded. If I must pick a team across generations, why don't I select two teams, dividing the history of Tamil Nadu cricket into two approximately 40-year chunks 1931-1973 and 1974-2013, I argued.

Finally, the Editor won, and here I am, with 16 names so far discussed and having to pick a first XI from them. Again a tough task for someone like me who would have made a lousy selector, inclined as I am to see merit of some kind or other in so many players, past and present, though I do have my prejudices as well. And as Sheridan's Mrs Malaprop said, comparisons are odorous, aren't they?

To start at the beginning, I am not even sure that the 16 cricketers I have so far profiled are the best 16 in the State's eight decades of cricket, but to keep complications to the minimum, let's go with the list compiled over the last few weeks. The players are C P Johnstone, C Ramaswami, A G Ram Singh, M J Gopalan, C R Rangachari, C D Gopinath, A G Kripal Singh, V V Kumar, S Venkataraghavan, K Srikanth, V Sivaramakrishnan, Robin Singh, T E Srinivasan, W V Raman, Dinesh Karthik, and S Vasudevan.

Of the three opening batsmen in the list, Johnstone, Srikanth and Sivaramakrishnan, Srikanth is an automatic choice, given his record as an international batsman, even if his contributions to the State may not match those of

• The last in a series by V. RAMNARAYAN profiling cricketers who may have made an all-time Madras' squad. Here, he picks his all-time Madras XI from the 16 he listed. Readers, what is your all-time Madras XI, chosen from or beyond those named in this page?

An all-time Madras XI

the other two. He is also a contender for the captaincy of the team. The other two are very similar in that each was a left-handed opening batsman who could bowl with the new ball, and each was a brilliant close-in fielder. Johnstone wins, as he captained Madras in his time and was much appreciated for that. Besides, Sivaramakrishnan happens to be my brother.

There was a close contest for the No.3 spot as well between my late friend, the brilliant T E Srinivasan, perhaps the most colourful character Tamil Nadu cricket has produced, and Raman. I reluctantly plump for Raman because of his greater international exposure and his left-handedness in an otherwise right-hander dominated lineup. Gopinath and Kripal Singh, both State captains, are again automatic choices, with their outstanding batting records quite uncontested, especially in the run-up to Madras's first Ranji Trophy triumph.

How can there be a Tamil Nadu all-time XI without the two stalwarts Ram Singh and Gopalan, the greatest player from the State not to be selected to play for India and the second one of the finest all-rounders the State has produced? They both walk in. Dinesh Karthik is, I believe, still a work-in-progress, but he is the only wicket-keeper in my list for reasons I have already outlined in my profile of him, I am convinced of his merit.

Follow the two spinners S Venkataraghavan and V V Kumar, both synonymous with Madras-Tamil Nadu cricket and wreckers-in-chief of many innings and batting careers in Ranji Trophy cricket, with more than a thousand first class wickets between them. C R Rangachari is the specialist fast bowler in the eleven. His credentials for the spot are impeccable. Robin Singh, arguably Tamil Nadu's greatest all-round fieldsman, is the 12th man in this team, with no disrespect intended towards his great contributions to the team's cause. Double international C Ramaswami was a past great I was forced to leave out to maintain team balance. The other three players I have omitted for the same reason are my personal favourites.

Here is my final team.

1. C.P. Johnstone
2. K. Srikanth
3. W.V. Raman
4. C.D. Gopinath
5. A.G. Kripal Singh
6. A.G. Ram Singh
7. M.J. Gopalan
8. Dinesh Karthik (wicketkeeper)
9. S Venkataraghavan (captain)
10. C.R. Rangachari
11. V.V. Kumar
- 12th man: Robin Singh

A few words about some fine cricketers who do not even figure in the 16.

Among the pace bowlers regarded highly by those who played with them or watched them, N Kannayiram was good enough to be selected for India. U Prabhakar Rao and B R Mohan Rai were fine new ball bowlers I faced or saw in action in my youth; they were both in the radar of the national selectors and attended the Alan Moss bowling camp. B Kalyanasundaram was a loyal and hardworking soldier of the Kumar-Venkataraghavan era, with 100 wickets under his belt, no mean achievement with the limited opportunities at his disposal. In later years, T A Sekar and K Bharath Kumar were excellent opening bowlers in different styles. D Vasu started as a fiery pace bowler, but settled down as a fighting all-rounder, who resorted to slow bowling in the second half of his career. How can we forget L Balaji, one of the most successful bowlers in the State's history, someone whose fighting spirit has been demonstrated time and again?

Some heroes miss out – Balu Alagunan, who led Madras to its first Ranji title; all-rounders M K Balakrishnan and P Mukund; M Suryanarayan, two wicketkeepers P K Belliappa and K R Rajagopal – extremely unlucky to miss the Australian tour of 1968 – the talented P Ramesh, accomplished Sada-

gopan Ramesh, exciting V B Chandrasekhar, and hard-working V Krishnaswami and C S Suresh Kumar among openers; the classy A G Milkha Singh and A G Satvinder Singh, ever reliable Abdul Jabbar and S Sharath, consistent Michael Dalvi and P C Prakash, and confident R Madhavan in the middle order are some examples.

Among spinners, I am not even taking into account bowlers of the calibre of G Parthasarathi, N Ganesan, N J Venkatesan or M K Muruges of an earlier era or N Bharatan of a later vintage who did not get to play too many first class matches. Sunil Subramaniam was one of the most attacking spin bowlers Tamil Nadu has produced and should have found a place in the Indian team during his decade in first class cricket. Like his seniors S Vasudevan and the gifted L Sivaramakrishnan, he makes way for the four spinners in the XI – Ram Singh, Kripal Singh, Venkataraghavan and Kumar – who simply cannot be left out. I am also forced to leave out current stars M Vijay and R Ashwin, both very accomplished cricketers who have proved themselves at the highest level. Ashwin, for one, threatens to smash all manner of records, and promises to be the elusive all-rounder India needs. I can only say that they both belong to the future!

I do not know if C R Rangachari ever led Madras, but everyone of the others in the team has been captain of the side. My vote goes to S Venkataraghavan, former India captain.

*Madras Province/State/Tamil Nadu.

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