

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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You said the Rupee was strong! ...
But I couldn't buy even one suitcase-ful.
Two hands-ful was more like what I
brought back!

That's it?!

By the time you read this, you will be, like others in the city, recovering from that most exhausting of exercises – the Family Holiday. (I don't know why we do this to ourselves!)

The painful process involves unpacking and, like any homemaker knows, if it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly. So, stoically ignoring the sheer drudgery, you insist that the family stops lying around complaining of the heat, humidity and tiredness, and gets on with it.

And that's when you see it.

There, in the centre of the floor, amidst the gaping suitcases, that ridiculously small pile. Your holiday shopping!

For this, you lugged some 257 parcels up and down escalators/railway platforms/airport lounges/coffee shops/streets/other people's homes/hotel lobbies ... all depending on where you holidayed.

For this, you quarreled with spouse/children/relatives-by-blood-or-marriage, with accusations of being cruel, a spend-thrift, a compulsive shopper (or, by sharp contrast, a miser) flying around.

For this, your credit card burst into flames, what with all that swiping.

Where did it all go?

And why did you buy the stuff you did? What use will that ceramic blue bear with mad eyes and rude, red tongue ever be to Humankind?

All this to merely add to the already formidable pile in that cupboard, which ought to bear the sign: "Here lie-eth, for all eternity, the Great Unused."

Ranjitha Ashok

A face-lift — to stay?



The new-look Independence Day Park in Nungambakkam, Chennai, by night and by day.



Park renewal apace in the city

(By Shobha Menon)

It looks like that ambitious dream of 'Chennai – A City of Gardens' will come true, and sooner than we thought. In 2004-2005, 178 new parks, road-

side parks, traffic islands and traffic central medians were developed at a cost of about Rs. 385 lakh. An additional 177 parks, roadside parks, traffic is-

lands and traffic central medians are to be developed in 2005-2006, at an estimated cost of about Rs. 1150 lakh!

The number of parks and

roadside parks developed by the Corporation of Chennai in previous years was:

	Parks	Roadside parks
2001-2	01	05
2002-3	29	10
2003-4	48	42

Indeed, remarkable 'green' changes have been observed across the city in the course of the last year. The Puliyanthope Park (Zone III), Sriramulu Park (Zone II) in North Chennai, Tower Park (Zone V), Annie Besant Park (Zone VI), Independence Day Park (Zone VII), Panagal Park and Annaji Rao Park (Zone VIII), CIT Nagar Park (Zone IX) and the

(Continued on Page 4)

But there are hiccups too

B. VIMALA of Reach Velachery reports: The Corporation of Chennai, Div. 153, has just completed construction of compound walls for two parks in Velachery, one of them a children's park. The walls have been constructed from the Councillor's fund, at an estimated cost of Rs. 4 lakh each.

Residents of areas served by the children's park complain that an unauthorised entry fee of Rs. 10 per person is being collected for entering the park. They further complain that Rs. 30 is collected as monthly fee to use the park. The park was also being opened and closed according to the whims and fancy of the person collecting the entrance fee. The resi-

dents wonder whether the park is privately owned or is owned by the Corporation.

A Chennai Corporation official says that all Chennai Corporation playgrounds and parks are free for public use. Moreover, all these playgrounds and parks are maintained by the Chennai Corporation. Hence, there is no need for any person to collect maintenance charges.

Another problem that has cropped up in most of the parks in Velachery has been caused by dog owners, who use parks and play-grounds to walk their dogs. These dogs litter the parks. Moreover, dogs playing with owners have deterred many young children from using these parks.

Where 'gold' is not a fishy business

Selling ornamental fish in Kolathur is as common as selling tomatoes or potatoes elsewhere in the city. Every other house you approach invites you inside to show you their *meen pannai* – big or small. Entire streets are filled with 'Gold specialists', and 'Aquarists' and 'Aquazones' that sell fish and fish accessories – wholesale and retail. Kolathur (actually in Thiruvallur District) is, for the uninitiated, just beyond the Padi Junction when approached from Anna Nagar.

At the M.R. Lingam Colour Fish Farm, spread over about four grounds, the scorching afternoon sunshine glints sharply on the big rectangular tanks used to raise 'big size fish'. A few workers busily pack cylindrical plastic covers with a couple of fish in each and fill oxygen with mechanical precision. A net all round protects the fish from the kingfishers in the area.

Just down the road is D. Kumar, 15 years in business, with an average income of Rs. 5000 a month. He says, "For the last 30 years, Kolathur has been well known in Tamil Nadu for ornamental fish. We export to Bangalore, Kerala, Hyderabad etc. Most popular are the Goldfish, Black Moor and Carp. Rates vary. We sell the common fish for Rs. 4 - 5 each."

and "took over the business" from the person from whom they bought the land and their house) was enjoying his afternoon siesta. "We supply fish for the wholesalers, who have many contacts. There is a lot of work involved – removing the soiled water every day, replenishing it with good water, and once in two weeks cleaning the entire ring well, scrubbing it clean with a brush and drying it in the sunlight so that the fish are reared in hygienic conditions. I don't think large-scale fish farms can ensure this level



Other fish-rearing tanks in Kolathur.

of cleanliness. The fish are fed with worms that we either buy or collect from the *eri*. Many families earn their living from this work - selling fish or worms or liaising with wholesale mar-



'Gold' fish in Kolathur. (Pictures by T. MURUGAVEL.)

"It is also difficult work procuring worms that are found between 4-6 a.m. in the gutter and sewage muck where even pigs wouldn't venture. The lifespan of those who do this work is definitely reduced, because they don't even know the worms can get into the body through any orifice and cause major damage. Yet we have more and more people getting into this business because it is 'good'. I

plan to wind up this work soon," he says.

In Gangapuram, across the main road, in a little house whose *pyol* is a convenient makeshift container for all kinds of fish accessories and a few sample fish species, I meet 21-year-old Santosh Kumar, a Commerce graduate 'from the city' (as his proud father reveals), who says simply, "Seeing the huge demand in this area made me get into this field even without previous experience. It thrives here because of the very good quality of water and the copious supply available. But I hear that Government is planning to come down on this kind of water usage so close to the city. We are all planning to shift location, most probably to Kavankarai or the Red Hills area. But the quality of water will change with location and affect business. Goldfish is best suited to this area, but other varieties thrive better in the areas further north. There is still a lot of demand

and a thriving market for supply, but there is also a lot of competition and plummeting rates. Where overheads are minimal, business still is brisk. However, dealers will slowly start stocking fish species from Malaysia or Thailand for instance – which are actually not indigenous and are also banned – to cater to newer demands."

On my way out, I see that a 'Fish Paradise' and an 'Aquarium Supermarket' are in their finishing stages – two more dealers who will begin to compete with the many already in the field of ornamental fish export. But the fascinating Kolathur visit also raised some disturbing issues:

- The imminent entry of banned fish species.
- Effective ways to enforce hygiene standards in fish-rearing.
- The crucial issue of water management in such an industry.

Is the only answer to move further as the need arises?

● by **SHOBHA MENON**

D. Velu's 'Little Flower Aquarium' proudly sports an oxygen cylinder that is used to replenish the air in the plastic covers that contain fish for export. "If I pack them this way, the fish are able to survive longer and last the travel time." 'Gold' is the most sold variety in the area. Guppies also fell well. About 30 shops in the area sell on an average 1000 fish a day. But there's a lot of competition; 30 years ago, a fish sold for Rs. 2, today it sells for 50p. Once there were 10 farms, and now there are as many as 5000.

Go to Lakshimpuram, and you can find 1000 households who survive on this 'business'. I met petite 22-year-old Vijayalakshmi chatting with her friends amid huge circular cement structures (actually well *urais* that have been plastered below at ground level) that are being used to rear the fish, while her husband Nagarajan (who came to Madras four years ago

kets. We're happy that we make enough money for a comfortable lifestyle."

But says Mahalingam, the owner of the biggest *meen pannai* (who earlier owned a shop selling provisions and who has been in this field for 18 years), "Sadly, the increasing publicity has ensured that the business is dull. Earlier, only people who had the knowledge and expertise got into the business. Nowadays, almost everyone is into what each feels is a 'lucrative' business because it gives him more than he can earn otherwise. Those who've invested more in the business face major losses. I've qualified graduate friends in Kerala who've invested and who are now in a quandary. Fifteen years ago, a large size fish cost Rs. 150. Now it costs Rs. 3. This is one business that has to be carefully managed – a demand for 1000 should mean a supply of 800."

India wins 10-year-long neem battle

Law Chronicle, New Delhi, reports India has won a 10-year-long battle on Neem Patent at the European Patent Office on March 8 against the grant of patent on use of neem as a fungicide, citing it as a traditional knowledge available with farmers and the scientific community.

The European Patent Office in Munich had originally granted the patent to the US Department of Agriculture and multinational WR Grace in 1995. This was revoked in 2000 after India appealed against the patent. The MNC, however, went in for an appeal against the patent, the revocation of which has now been upheld, after India led by environmentalist Vandana Shiva presented further evidence to support that use of neem in varied forms is part of traditional Indian knowledge and not a novel product. In addition, the documentary evidences presented by India included research done by two scientists prior to 1995 on use of neem, known for

Traditional knowledge cannot be patented

its medicinal properties for making several products like fungicide.

"This is a major victory for us. The award of patents could have been damaging as the US company had tried to enlarge the scope to include all neem and its products," Dr. Shiva, who heads the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, said in Munich.

"After this decision to uphold the earlier revocation of the patent, the European Patent Office will in future be much more careful in granting patents on products based on traditional knowledge," she said further.

Stressing the need for protecting traditional knowledge,

Dr. Shiva said the present Indian laws are not stringent enough. Merely digitising Ayurvedic knowledge is not sufficient.

"There is a need to provide patent protection for all traditional knowledge to stop product piracy. Over 70 per cent of our agriculture practices are based on traditional knowledge," she said.

Dr. Shiva was part of India's successful bid to protect Basmati, a traditional long-grained aromatic rice variety, grown only in India and Pakistan, from being patented in the U.S.

Along with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement and Green Party in European Parliament, Dr. Siva has been actively campaigning against the piracy of traditional Indian varieties of wheat by seed multinational Monsanto, which has filed for a patent in Europe. — (Courtesy: *Environment Ambassador*, Journal of Exnora International.)

OUR READERS WRITE



More about them

Balu Alagunan (MM, May 1st) is an unfailingly courteous gentleman. He was an excellent golfer; and an incident in this sport comes to mind. Balu had been declared winner in a tournament at the 'cosmo' — his name was on the board. We were surprised some time later when he rang up and disqualified himself as he had an extra club in his bag. Apparently, a friend, during the course of the match, had returned a pulter that had been borrowed! Not only an example of sportsmanship, but extreme integrity on the part of Balu.

Balu was very helpful when Kannayiram and I requested his help to stage a Ranji Trophy match in Madurai — to give a boost to the Madurai Cricket Association. He not only obliged but was also present along with R.T. Parthasarathi at the match!

* * *

Left out of Sarukkai's eminent men (MM, May 1st) is S. Gopalan, doyen of broadcasting in India, who later turned Hindustan Photo Films, Ooty, around at one time!

Dr. Rangachari was associated with another Rangachari (T.M.). Both were pioneer members of the fledgling Flying Club. Dr. Rangachari was a frequent visitor to *Acharya Griha*, now the Provident Fund office in Royapettah, but in those days TMR's residence.

T.M. Raghunathan
E 16, 16th Cross Street
Besant Nagar, Chennai 600 090

Spread industry out

There is growing concern at the lop-sided industrial development in the State, with the interior and southern districts remaining relatively underdeveloped.

Large resources continue to be invested in world-class infrastructure and in the industrial and manufacturing sectors in and around Chennai. Ashok Leyland is undertaking a major expansion of its manufacturing and foundry capacities in Chennai. Hyundai is setting up its second car factory (Rs 2000 crore) near the existing one in Sriperumbudur. Asian Paints is putting up a state-of-the-art paints factory in Chennai. The communication giant Nokia plans to set up a Rs. 1300 crore mobile phone factory along with ancillary units near Chennai. Consequently, thousands

of professionals, non-professionals and unskilled labour will continue to migrate to water-starved, congested Chennai.

If the requisite infrastructure, techno-parks, industrial parks and incentives are provided in regions like Trichy, Salem, Madurai and Tirunelveli, many industrial companies will start ventures in those centres, generating employment opportunities in the districts. This will check avoidable migration to Chennai.

J.W. Thomas
9 Ritherdon Road
Chennai 600 007

More cars, more congestion

Hundai Motor Company's investment of Rs. 2200 crore in a new plant in Chennai is a matter of satisfaction on many counts. However, the socio-economic impact of a new plant should also be critically looked at.

The massive capacity creation for motor car production in the country in recent times, without the required expansion of infrastructure and road facilities, has already created considerable road congestion, leading to severe bottlenecks on the road and causing a large number of accidents involving loss of human lives all over India.

With government having no adequate action plan to tackle this congestion in the immediate future, what is needed is the encouragement of schemes to promote mass transportation and not individual ownership of cars.

N.S. Venkataraman
M-60/1, IV Street
Besant Nagar, Chennai 600 090

New authority needed

Silicon Chennai (MM, March 1st) requires a separate authority for its development, as the CMDA has outlived its purpose and usefulness long ago. Spaces should be earmarked for schools, colleges, playgrounds, parks and hospitals.

Also, linking of IT Corridor by rail with Tambaram will go a long way towards helping commuters.

M.R. Pillai
H 64/5, Central Avenue
Korattur, Chennai 600 080

Just no jobs

Hard-earned money is invested in the education of children in

Engineering/Medical colleges. But the job opportunities are diminishing. Engineers are ready to work for as low as Rs. 3000 to Rs. 4000 a month. The job market is really tough and engineering graduates are the biggest sufferers. The position looks gloomy not only in Chennai, but also in other parts of the country. Only engineering colleges, which are well recognised, are able to organise campus interviews with companies of repute. Other colleges are left in the cold. It is a pathetic position indeed.

C.K. Subramaniam

A 101 Syndicate Bank Qtrs.
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Vashi 400 703

Building high

Chennai can learn many things from Mumbai (MM, March 16th) insofar as civic amenities are concerned as well as water resources, electricity etc., but Mumbai should not try to emulate Chennai, the way in which the real estates of erstwhile textile mills are being grabbed by flat promoters creates apprehension in our minds about its future. So far, Mumbai has been managing fairly well of water distribution and there has been no need to tap groundwater as Chennai has done. If Mumbai encourages highrises in the defunct textile mills areas, then its future is doomed. Such unplanned and unbridled (so-called) development has landed Chennai in its present predicament. What is surprising is still more high rise apartment complexes are being promoted in Chennai, where the infrastructure has come to a bursting point. Indian conditions are quite different from China and we should not try to emulate other countries.

T.M. Sundararaman
19, Nallappan Street
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

Ill-conceived subway

A pedestrian subway is being constructed at the intersection of Alandur Station Road and GST Road near the Azharghana. Construction work has already commenced.

It appears to be an ill-conceived pedestrian-alone subway. Because vehicles coming from Alandur and Adambakkam and proceeding towards Guindy have to travel towards Tambaram for one km on GST Road, and then take a U-turn in front of the St. Thomas Mount Post Office and Telephone Exchange. This would mean traffic towards Tambaram too would be slowed as these vehicles would have to cross the lane to take a U-turn towards Guindy.

In this context, instead of constructing a pedestrian-alone subway, a subway that would take both pedestrians and vehicles to the other side of GST Road, to join the stream of traffic heading towards Guindy, would be a far-sighted one and be most welcomed by all. It would ease congestion of traffic heading towards Tambaram too.

V. Rajagopalan
Flat-F, Bagmar Flat
20, 8th Street Exten.
New Colony, Adambakkam
Chennai 600 088

Reminiscences sought

The South India National Association and Ranade Library will

They also serve... who pass in September

There were three Minerva landmarks in Madras. One was the (now gone to seed) Minerva Theatre where the air-conditioning was a novelty and a major draw in the 1950s and 60s. In fact, elders used to advise youngsters visiting the Minerva to wear flannels, so chilling was the AC. The second was the Minerva Cricket Club founded by Lakshmi Ratan, who passed away recently and whose star was the legendary A.G. Ram Singh. The other Minerva was the Tutorial College, which was one of the pioneers in the field and a friend, philosopher and guide to carefree souls who believed in the saying, 'If April has come, can September be far behind?'

Speaking of tutorial colleges, my alma mater was Jayanthi on Harris Road run by a colourful personality called Prof. Lakshmi Narayanan, a man of ferocious energy and subtle humour freely laced with sarcasm. I remember him asking a victim what was the colour of the chemical 'cream of tartar'. Owing to malafide and mischievous prompting from some LLBs (Lords of the Last Bench), the poor sap answered 'Cream Colour Sir' (which was incorrect). Whereupon the professor's face became the icy calm before the storm — "I agree it ought to be cream colour, my dear fellow, but unfortunately it is not and... you have not been attentive (window panes rattling)."

Another time when some of us became restive at 8 p.m., Prof. Lakshmi Narayanan expansively and with impish look said, "What is this? Already you chaps want to go? Do you know that three batches ago the class used to go on till 10 p.m." and looking at one of the students he continued, "What do you say? Lordship (he had nicknames for a chosen few), you were in that batch... tell these boys...," leaving the whole class grinning at the squirming 'Lordship'.

Because of the cricket bug I cut a few classes of the Professor in order to repair to the Corporation stadium and watch the India-New Zealand Test match of 1965 in which Madras's S. Venkatraghavan was making his Test debut. Knowing that choice abuse would be in store for me if I went back, my nerve failed and I discontinued at Jayanthi, failed in the exam and chemistry continued to be a mystery.

I then enrolled under another formidable personality, Prof. Kandasamy of Theagaraya College for the succeeding April. Prof. Kandasamy too was the male version of Bertie Wooster's Aunt Agatha and Attila the Hun rolled into one. He hammered the aldehydes and ketones and other rubbish into my head and I scraped through, finally ending my misery with the sciences. These teachers were great Dronacharyas all right, but equally capable of biting Arjunas's head off!

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

be celebrating its centenary in June-July 2005. We invite readers of *Madras Musings* to share with us their reminiscences, anecdotes, news etc. (about this institution) for inclusion in the proposed souvenir. All contributions will be gratefully acknowledged.

A.M. Swaminathan
President

The South Indian National
Association & Ranade Library
40, Luz Church Road
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

Recognition deserved

One cannot but agree with reader C.K. Subramaniam (MM, May 16th) when he laments our failure to honour one of the greatest sportsmen Tamil Nadu has produced — Srinivas Venkatraghavan. It was always a hard grind for him during his playing days, always considered as the fourth spinner after Prasanna, Chandra and Bedi. That he grabbed the few opportunities he got and rose to be the captain of the Indian team is testimony to his hard work and determination.

As an umpire in the ICC panel, Venkat was considered one of the best in the world. He had the courage to announce his retirement when he was at his zenith as an umpire. The TNCA should take up the matter with BCCI and ensure

that Venkat gets his deserved recognition.

G.V. Raman
26 (Old No.42)
M.G. Chakrapani Street
Satya Garden, Chennai 600 093

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **handwritten** 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

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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

Park renewal apace in city

(Continued from page 1)

Coastal Road Park (Zone X) have all got facelifts. And the Otteri Dumping Ground is being developed as a tropical dry evergreen forest. "Planting has already begun," confirms an official of the Corporation's Parks Department.

"The developed greenery is being maintained through water available from borewells and open wells on the Marina Beach. The Corporation operates 17 water tankers throughout the city to water the greenery. Besides this, 'grey' water (bathroom and kitchen water) is collected from commercial buildings and residential flats, treated and used for watering roadside gardens. The primary treated sewage water from Metrowater at their treatment plants at Nesappakkam and Kodungaiyur is also being further treated for watering parks and roadside medians, ensuring that the greenery is sustainable and precious groundwater is not depleted," the official confirms. The average cost per day for transporting water in tankers is about Rs 24,000.

But residents of Indira Nagar in Zone X tell a different story. Former bureaucrat V. Ramamurthy, who has been trying with some other residents to get attention paid to the Indira Nagar Park — the only park for the whole of Sastri Nagar, Besant Nagar and Indira Nagar — complains bitterly of the "total apathy and neglect" in spite of "repeated representations over the last three years" for "some method of watering in place." Ramamurthy states, "Our repeated pleas to the local office resulted in an unfinished underground sump (the idea was given up halfway). After residents requested Nalli Kuppuswami Chettiar to sponsor a 10,000 lt Sintex tank, the Corporation put up three 2000 lt tanks and also laid out water lines. But they still haven't provided tanker supply. One by one, trees die for want of water. The Corporation, however, neatly relaid a jogging path in the same park. And about 100 yards away, on an open playground, that had once been meant exclusively for women and children, it laid out a much smaller jogger's path, and also built a totally unnecessary gymnasium that remained unopened for a year and a half! Should we attribute such discrepancies to either 'bureaucratic block' or



Independence Day Park in Nungambakkam, Chennai — before and after.



'overall inefficiency?' However, sources in the Corporation cite "non-cooperation among the residents" as a reason for the 'apathy'. But why the poor plants have to struggle for life amidst these 'warring' factions is much beyond comprehension.

Meanwhile, news reports allege that the number of permanent workers for the upkeep of city parks has not changed for well over half a century now, even as the city has been burgeoning in all directions, making for a steady rise in the number of parks. The ceiling was fixed at 350 over 50 years ago. But the current strength stands at 290 permanent workers. How will they be able to handle the multifold increase in park maintenance?

A few years ago, this policy contradiction seemed to have been handled by the administration itself, by giving corporate institutions the opportunity to look after parks. It was in such a climate that the Chennai Chapter of the American Chamber of Commerce in India (AMCHAM) came forward to adopt the Desodharaka Nageswara Rao Pantulu Park on Luz Avenue Road in Mylapore. In the initiative, named 'Project Green Spaces - Dr. Nageswara Rao Park', AMCHAM aimed "to enhance the attractiveness and improve the facilities of the Nageswara Rao Park, through its own resources, and with the cooperation of the park administrators and other local agencies" and offer "catalyst vision for similar corporate-community partnerships across the city". Though there was considerable support from the local community, the estimated initial costs were

pegged at Rs. 30 lakh and the ongoing costs at Rs. 6 lakh per annum. A corpus fund for the park's upkeep was also established. The façade of the park itself was to undergo a major facelift, with a pergola, tables for visitors to play chess, a Poet's or Speaker's Corner, a concert space, fountains, lawns and safer children's play equipment. Some progress has been made on all this, but the official responses have been disappointing.

Sources in the Corporation ascribe the discontinuation of such partnerships to "promised commitments not being followed through". Naturally, the policy decision that was even reported in a daily as "one among the latest benedictions to have come Chennai's way", fizzled out. Currently, only three corporate houses have been allowed to continue with these joint partnerships. Says a Corporation official, "We now have the confidence, the technology, the resources and the wherewithal to handle any project ourselves. And outsourcing labour is our best option." With the Corporation going in for greening of large open spaces — near Napier Bridge, the entire stretch of the Marina, and Swamy Sivananda Salai, Binny-Canal Junction, Nungambakkam Canal, Turnbull's Junction, Chitra Nagar and Gandhi Mandapam — work is done by labour on private contracts. This greening exercise is expected to be completed in a couple of months.

Health-conscious citizens in North Chennai, meanwhile, are happy that in the Arignar Anna Poonga and Royapuram Park they can "actually hear the chattering of the birds again", and the

A camera that captures art

Sittannavasal Panamalai Tanjavur Early Chola Paintings, reads the rather intimidating title of the book, possibly creating a slight sense of unease in the timorous reader, daunted as he is by the size of the book too. You needn't worry.

Inside is a virtual treasure house — reproductions of Chola murals circa 10th Century AD, the mural paintings of Sittannavasal, Panamalai and Thanjavur, and Thanjavur sculptures of Bharata Natyam Karana.

The photographs by C. Nachiappan, now the Koviloor Swamigal, exude a timeless intensity, well matched by the scholarly and informative text by Professor P.R. Srinivasan. The book dedicated to Rukmini Devi Arundale is published by Kalakshetra Publications.

In the 1950s, T.N. Ramachandran, then Joint Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, working on a book on the heritage of Thanjavur, approached Nachiappan — at the time one of Madras's leading photographers — to photograph the murals in the Brihadeesvarar Temple, after all attempts by official photographers had failed.

The rich murals on the wall around the sanctum are the finest examples of Chola art and are captured in all their glory in the book. Nachiappan built a special



Detail of Kailasa scene found in the Brihadeesvarar Temple in Thanjavur: Apsaras dancing and Sundaramurti Nayanar seated.

ladder device which enabled him to position his camera in such a way as to photograph the paintings without any distortion.

The work was laborious and needed a great deal of ingenuity and planning. As fate would have it, the film sent to Calcutta for processing was spoilt. Then Ramachandran passed away when the publication of his book was just half way through.

Fortunately, Nachiappan preserved a set of transparencies for his own record, and decided, nearly 50 years later, to publish a book with the photographs he had so painstakingly taken all those years ago.

The book also contains reproductions of photographs taken by Nachiappan of the early Pandyan murals in the Jain cave temple at Sittannavasal and the early Pallava murals in the Talagirisvara Temple at Panamalai.

In addition, the book carries photographs of the series of relief sculptures of 81 Bharata Natyam Karanas, which were discovered earlier on the wall of the corridor of the first floor of the *garbhagriha* in the Brihadeesvarar Temple.

The Sittannavasal paintings are dated between the 7th and 9th century AD, an era when both Buddhism and Jainism, playing prominent roles in the

Nadu. The Talagirisvara temple was built by Narasimhavarmar II, who also built the Kailasanatha temple in Kanchipuram and the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram. The temple, in all aspects, is representative of Pallava architecture, with ornamentation in stucco. Originally painted all over, only a few fragments remain today, the most outstanding of which is a near-complete figure of Goddess Parvati. Although this figure has suffered damage, enough remains to indicate that the original artist appears to have had both unmatched mastery over his art and the deep insights required to paint Divinity. The work was probably done in the fresco secco method, with the shaded lines making the image appear three-dimensional. The outlines are red, while the body is yellow; touches of green are also included.

By the end of the 10th Century AD, the Cholas had become the most powerful rulers. Religious, literary and artistic pursuits were encouraged and offered royal patronage. Architecture was promoted on a massive scale, quite literally, resulting in the magnificent Brihadeesvarar and the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temples.

This chapter in the book is awe inspiring in its detailed descriptions of the temple, the works, and the environs. The murals at the Brihadeesvarar Temple at Thanjavur came to light in the first half of the 20th Century purely by chance, when Nayak paintings which had been painted over the earlier Chola creations in the 18th Century were being examined. The paintings in the temple were discovered in the 1930s by S.K.

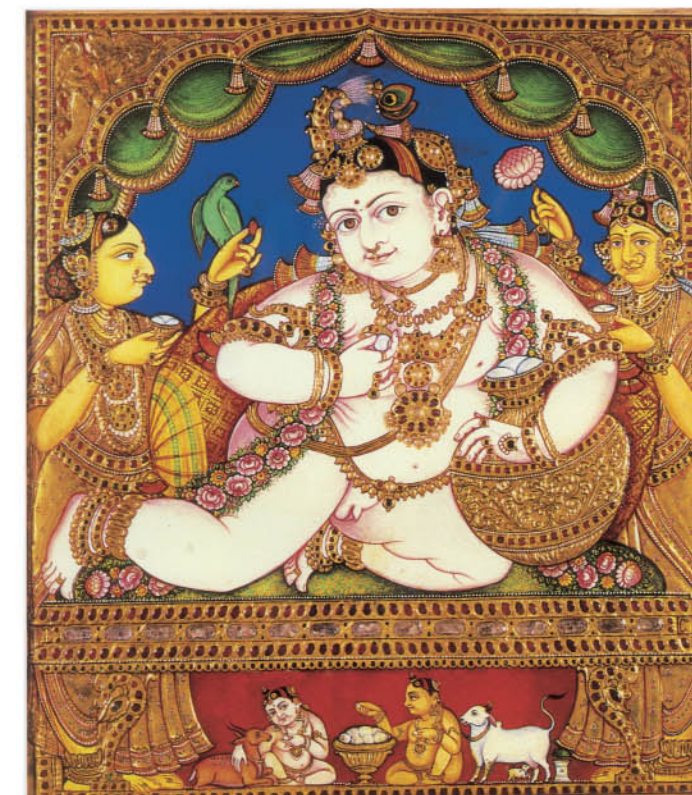


Karna Verse: Natya Sastra No. 70. Arddharechitam (translation of the verse): The posture in which the hand is thrown up, the leg is firmly planted on the floor and the body is well-bent.

Govindaswamy, when the vestibule, closed till then, was opened. It is believed that King Vijayaragava Nayak ordered a re-painting of these walls. The painters applied a layer of plaster over the old Chola murals, painting afresh on it, thus (unintentionally) helping to preserve the older paintings. The murals depict religious themes, episodes from the legends of Lord Shiva — Dakshinamurti, Nataraja, Tripuranthaka — and the story of Sundaramurti Nayanar. The Dakshinamurti panel appears to have suffered damage, but enough survives to display the sheer wonder of this work of art.

Each photograph in this chapter is accompanied by invaluable descriptions, explanations and historical details, making the reader truly feel the experience. The colours are rich, with a preponderance of yellow, gold, red and white. The face of Karuvur Devar, a light green, is said to be a truly great example of portraiture. Emotions run riot through the paintings — devotion, worship, the guru-sishya relationship, happiness, and at times a terrifying anger, as in the eyes of Lord Shiva in the form of Tripurantaka, where it appears as if the essence of all the energy and vigour in all the Universe is concentrated in him. The feminine figures are infused with compassion, coupled with grace, ornamentation and beauty.

The chapter devoted to the Karana sculptures contains photographs accompanied by Professor P.R. Srinivasan's text, with relevant Natya Sastra verses given wherever possible, along with translations and descriptions of each figure. Proponents of Bharata Natyam will no doubt find this chapter of intellectual



Child Krishna with a pot of butter. (Thanjavur paintings in Koviloor.)

and academic interest, speaking perhaps of familiar concepts. But, for those of us who attend performances without any real in-depth knowledge, this chapter may change the manner in which we watch future performances. For you to get a glimpse, albeit a faint one, of the complex thinking and visualising processes, the deep knowledge and comprehensive studies involved, and the sheer artistry that goes into every move, every step — every aspect, actually, of what you finally see on stage — an entire process of creativity is translated into the physical.

The sculptors, as the photographs show, have endowed stone with a quality of flawless movement.

Kalakshetra Publications has also published a companion volume, *Tanjavur Paintings in Koviloor*, featuring photographs of Nachiappan Swamigal of the pictures in the Thanjavur painting collections held by the Koviloor Mutt near Karaikudi in the Sivaganga District. The works depict stories of the 63 Nayanar (Saivite saints) and the 64 miracles of Lord Shiva. The works also include paintings based on Vaishnava, Kaumaara, Gaanapatya and Shaakta themes, along with other depictions religious in content. This entire body of work was specially created for the Mutt over 100 years ago.

Thanjavur paintings are by definition rich and bejewelled, demanding a high degree of craftsmanship and precision. Lakshmi Venkatraman's introduction gives clear and concise details, describing the origin of and the methods employed in this art form.

It was during the Maratha period that Thanjavur painting

came into being, with its distinctive features characterised by its linking of various art forms like paintings, sculpture, jewelry and handicrafts.

The compositions are static, with the central figure placed within frameworks like arches or pavilions, and usually represented in his or her most characteristic pose, invariably surrounded by other figures. Figures are rounded and plump; gems and heavy gilding are used, with ornamentation being slightly raised by the use of putty, a mixture of chalk powder and natural gum.

These paintings, done on wooden panels, were known as *Palagai padam*. Gems and gold were placed using a paste known as *sukkan*, made from a fine powder of unboiled limestone mixed with glue. Thin gold leaf was pasted with stiff glue.

Strong colours are used, red, blue, green, with figures in white, yellow, green or blue. The decorative structure is held together by the use of gold.

The themes invariably are set around icons of worship. However, portraits of kings and courtiers were not unknown. On rare occasions, paintings bearing entire narratives are also found.

The book, having provided this brief explanatory note at the very beginning, then takes the reader on an uninterrupted visual journey, with page after page of paintings, some themes and forms being very rare, with the very nature of its work serving to make the book bright and colour-filled.

Of special interest to those who practise the art today, this book is also a source for fresh ideas in creative work.

Ranjitha Ashok

NOTE: all pictures by C. Nachiappan.

When consumers sound off...

The boneless vegetable sandwich

Savitha Rajagopal was feeling hungry and didn't have time to go and cook herself an elaborate meal. As she was already in a shopping complex, she decided to stop at the takeaway counter of a fastfood restaurant and pick up a sandwich. Being a strict vegetarian, Savitha scoured the menu card displayed at the restaurant and settled on an "all-veggie sandwich with extra cheese", with which she set off for home.

Watching TV and munching on the sandwich at home, she bit into something crunchy and different. She looked inside the sandwich and found pieces of bone in the filling. Being a vegetarian, she was extremely shocked and upset by this. She immediately called up the restaurant and complained.

The restaurant staff first denied that this could have happened, which was sufficient to get Savitha really annoyed. The restaurant quickly realised that it had made the error and apologised. Savitha insisted that it immediately send someone to her residence with a replacement sandwich, though she had more or less lost her appetite. After some haggling, the restaurant relented and Savitha got her "all-veggie sandwich with extra cheese" door-delivered.

Most consumers would not have persisted like Savitha. Many of us would have felt the same degree of annoyance and anger, but we rarely take the effort of directing it to the person(s) responsible. Savitha got her complaint resolved because she was assertive about her rights.

Savitha did one more thing. She wrote down the entire episode and mailed it to CAG (Consumer Action Group) and to the press. Unfortunately, the press didn't report it. But CAG contacted the restaurant and spoke to the manager. We learned that the restaurant was part of an international chain and this was a franchisee outlet. We wrote to the foreign owners and brought the episode to their attention. We shared this information with other consumer groups – so that they too were aware that the issue had come up. Also, so that we collectively monitor the restaurant and its functioning and ensure that this was indeed a one-time error and not a regular feature of services.

The Vermicola case

Ashok Kumar purchased

three bottles of a popular cola from a local retailer and was shocked to find a worm inside one of the bottles. He immediately filed a complaint seeking compensation of Rs.25,000 for sale of this unsafe product. The vendor and the manufacturer were both made the Opposite parties.

At the District Consumer Forum, the sealed bottle containing the worm was examined. The issue was whether the worm had entered the bottle at the premises of the manufacturer or the retailer. The manufacturer alleged that the drink was spurious and that they were not responsible for the worm. Interestingly, the retailer was absent from the proceedings.

The District Forum, after hearing the parties, concluded that the contents of the sealed

(From
CAG NEWS)

bottle are the responsibility of the manufacturer. The Forum said that if the soft drink giant believed that retailers were in the habit of refilling bottles with spurious liquids, then, as a responsible company, it should have

- 1) Taken steps to prevent such practices, including cautioning the unsuspecting public;
- 2) Requested authorities to inspect their factories, and the retail shops to stop such practices; and
- 3) Taken steps to seize the bottled drinks for testing to verify whether they were spurious.

The Forum held that public health was a matter of concern for everyone, and unless basic standards were maintained, public safety would be in jeopardy. The Forum added that the contention of the manufacturer that they had a fully automatic unit equipped with the latest machinery, and that their drinks were manufactured under strict supervision, did not stand to reason since the worm had indeed found its way into the bottle. The Forum held that this constituted an actionable failure.

Consequently, the Forum directed that the manufacturer pay Rs.10,000 and the local retailer pay Rs.5,000 as compensation to the complainant as well as reimburse Rs.500 towards litigation costs. An appeal filed by the manufacturer

against this order was dismissed by the State Commission with further costs of Rs. 250.

The 'Flying biscuit'

In a strikingly similar case, Bhuvaneshwar Nanda purchased a box of a popular brand of biscuits from a retailer to find that an insect had been baked with the biscuit. He too filed a complaint before the District Consumer Forum for compensation.

The Opposite party (the manufacturer) defended the complaint stating that the manufacturing process in their unit was subject to regular and periodic checks by authorities of the State and Central Governments. The District Forum did not accept this argument and found in favour of the complainant. They directed payment of compensation (Rs.5000) and costs (Rs. 500) to the complainant.

The biscuit manufacturer appealed to the State Commission arguing that if the complainant had found some foreign body in the biscuit, he should have immediately brought it to the notice of the concerned Government authorities. In the absence of any laboratory test, it could not be said that the biscuit was injurious to health, especially when there was no material to show that the complainant or anyone in his family had consumed any of the biscuits and suffered from it.

The manufacturer further argued that the use of high tech equipment in the manufacturing process virtually ruled out the possibility of the biscuits being contaminated and suggested that the insect could have been planted in the biscuit by the complainant and that this fact could have been proved if a lab test had been conducted.

The State Commission, however, did not agree to this line of argument, observing that, as the insect was visible to the naked eye, the onus on the complainant to prove that there was something defective in the product was discharged. The onus therefore now shifted to the manufacturer to prove by way of a laboratory test that the biscuit was free from defect. The appeal was therefore dismissed.

NOTE: If you have a complaint or need information about a deficient service, call CAG at 24914358 / 24460387 or mail us at cag@xlweb.com



One of Vinoth's work on display at Alliance Francaise.

June 2005-April 2006: The Madras Craft Foundation is offering an opportunity to get hands-on experience in pursuing a creative career. It's a 10-month course on Arts Management and Education. This programme will help in learning arts and crafts, culture, management and event planning, graphics, writing and publicity skills. The course will run from June 2005 to April 2006. It is open to graduates of any stream. Selected candidates will be paid a stipend of Rs.3,000/- a month. Hostel facilities are also available. Limited seats only. (At Dakshina Chitra).

Till June 4: Private vs. Public views, an exhibition of the work of six contemporary photographers from Luxembourg. *Private vs. public views* provides a brutally honest, funny and daring portrayal of a little known country and people. This is the first time that contemporary photography from Luxembourg is being seen in India (at Alliance Francaise).

June 5 : Calling all Wodehouse fans! The Corner Book Club will discuss the life and works of PG Wodehouse. The discussion is to be moderated by Samanth Subramaniam. (At The Corner Bookstore, 39 Fourth Street, Abhiramapuram, Tel 24986618/19.)

June 10-12: *The Owl and the Pussycat*, by Bill Manhoff, a comedy first produced on Broadway.

June 11-12: French Romantic at Sathyam.

Love on the borderline: After several fast and loose years away from home, burning the candle at both ends, Viviane, the prodigal daughter, returns home where her parents and her 15-year-old half brother, Marc, still live.

Far Away: Three days... Three stories... Three characters. Trafficking and trucking... love craved and love caved in...bereavement and birth...

Emotional Destinies: Pauline is twenty-years-old when she first met Jean at a ball. Jean, a minister married with children, has just recently resigned himself to the failure of his marriage with Nathalie. No matter the pressures of polite, protesting society surrounding them, from this mo-

ment on, "Love... there is nothing else in life...nothing".

(At Sathyam cinemas, 9.30 a.m. Passes available at Sathyam & Alliance Francaise.)

June 13-25: Photographic exhibition. V. Vinoth on Varanasi. A portrait of the city by a young photographer, born in Thiruvananthapuram and educated in the science of Visual Communication in the New College (at Alliance Francaise).

June 17 and 18: *Fete de la Musique.*

Started by the Ministry for Culture in 1982 in France, Fete de la Musique firstly spread throughout Europe. Today, more than 100 countries the worldover celebrate this day. It is a popular event dedicated to music in all its forms. Both professional and amateur musicians participate and perform what they like.

17th: *The world is your studio!* New technologies and music by Sudhin Prabhakar. (7.30 p.m.)

18th: You can watch videos of French musicians and be part of the musical evening; with French songs as the theme, students of different classes will present their projects, musicians will share their passion and the evening will conclude with a Carnatic-jazz concert by Vijay Venkat (4 p.m. onwards at Alliance Francaise).

June 19: *Balloon* by Pareeksha. A transcreation Tamil play written by Gnani and performed by Pareeksha in 1981. It is inspired by the courtroom trials against anti-Vietnam peacenik protestors. The Tamil play discusses the attitude of the establishment, police, judiciary and the media towards a small non-violent group of protestors opposing increase in city bus fare. The script is laced with poetry from Tamil poets of the 20th Century and with humour (Alliance Francaise).

June 22-26: Masquerade present *Olenka*, by David Mamet and directed by Krishna Kumar. A fascinating character study, examining academia, language and the startling effect of bad communication. Can there really be interest in and cordiality between men and women, student and professor and how cruel humans can be to one another? (At Alliance Francaise).

Beyond the habit of history

Mahatma Gandhi had a very low opinion of history. He saw it as a catalogue of human failures. Of wars, strife and oppression. It was anathema to all that he held dear, "a record of every interruption of even the working of the forces of love and of soul." The common man, he thought, was better off without it. Education should concern itself with worthy subjects. History was far too negative and historians too clever for their own good. Worse still, they were mostly English for, according to Gandhiji, "The English have a habit of writing history."

"They pretend to study the manners and customs of all

peoples. Though God has given us a limited mental capacity, they usurp the function of the Godhead and indulge in novel experimentation. They write about their own researches in the most laudatory terms and hypnotise us into believing them. We in our ignorance then fall at their feet."

That was written nearly 100 years ago (in *Hind Swaraj* of 1909) and things have changed a lot since then. Today, no one in his right mind bows down before a historian. Even Gandhi would find that history did have its uses and would quote freely from it. But his reservations still need to be addressed by any foreigner writing on Indian his-



John Keay on the Lao-Myanmar border for his latest book, *Mad About the Mekong*.

tory. There is a presumption in doing so and there may be mischief.

"Why are you always writing about Indian history?" may sound an innocent enough question. Sometimes I parry it by insisting that I don't. Poised between a 20th Century account of the Middle East and a possible history of China, it is not true to say that I only write Indian history. And I don't only write history. A writer, unlike an academic, is free to turn to any subject on which he fancies his chances. Putting it crudely, there's a book wherever the author's expertise and the publisher's expectations coincide.

But admittedly, I have written more about India than about anywhere else, and this seems to imply a preference. It's partly attributable to the market. One modestly successful book tends to generate another on the same subject. The sensible author sticks to material he knows and an environment in which he is confident. He may even have become emotionally involved in his subject, a dangerous condition that needs to be acknowledged.

For the question "Why are you always writing about India?" is seldom innocent. It's usually loaded. Instead of "why always write about India" it implies "who are you, to be always writing about India?" It is, in short, a polite Gandhian jibe, a strictly nonviolent assault on the presumption of Englishmen who make a habit of writing other people's history.

I could, of course, meet it by citing the traditions of British scholarship. The great works of history in English were not necessarily written by citizens of the country concerned, nor indeed by historians. Gibbon and Carlyle would not today measure up to the standards of academic history, and neither the later Roman Empire nor the French Revolution could claim them as citizens. Being removed in place as well as time from one's subject is no bad thing and may be a distinct advantage.

One reason why Gandhi distrusted history was that it often portrayed India as divided and under foreign rule. Since this did not serve the purposes of a united national revival, he dis-

paraged the chronology of politics in favour of an ageless Indian cultural consciousness that supposedly transcended things like dynastic, linguistic and confessional divisions. But the outsider is no less prone to selective judgement. British historians in the heyday of empire undoubtedly exaggerated the pre-colonial disarray and tended to portray India's past as one of repeated invasion and

the hubris of a post-colonial generation may console itself.

That's where a little emotional involvement, a deep sympathy and even a flutter of passion may enter the equation. Such things would horrify academic historians, but a mere writer may declare himself. I write much about India because for about 40 years it has been like a second home, a place not just to visit but to inhabit. India's past has become as much mine by association, as is Britain's by birth. And whilst British history, mined and worked for centuries by thousands of dedicated scholars, has the feel of a ravaged land, India's past is only now revealing its secrets and attracting the finest of scholars. I find that exciting. That history can indeed excite, that it can be highly controversial and bitterly contested came as a revelation and holds me, not hypnotically as Gandhi supposed, but delighted and alert. — Courtesy: *Connecting*, the journal of the British Council of India.

• John Keay, one of the UK's most respected writers and historians, reflects on the profession of the historian and his own special engagement with India.

subjection, thereby offering both an explanation and a justification for their own presence. Similarly, in what may or may not be a post-imperial age, any British writer on India today must be on his guard against the smug pontifications with which

Subscriptions and contributions

• As readers are already aware — and hundreds have responded positively — we have no other alternative but to price *Madras Musings*. From April 16th (Volume XIV, No.1), *Madras Musings* has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to 'Chennai Heritage' and send it, together with the COUPON BELOW, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 260-A, TTK ROAD, CHENNAI 600 018 or C/O LOKAVANI-HALL MARK PRESS PVT. LTD., 122, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

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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 2004-5 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. We are indeed sorry we can no longer remain a free mailer.

— The Editor

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A reminder to our readers

• It was from April 16, 2004 that *Madras Musings* began being a priced journal, offering readers a special annual subscription rate of Rs.100. It is now time to remind subscribers to renew their subscriptions and readers who have not yet sent in their subscriptions to do so.

All subscriptions acknowledged by us from January 1, 2005 and subscriptions that we receive between then and April 16th will be considered as annual subscriptions for the year April 16, 2005 to April 15, 2006, Volume XV. As for those who have sent in their subscriptions between April 16, 2004 and December 15, 2004, please renew your subscriptions as and when they fall due. *Madras Musings*, unfortunately, does not have any staff, but only a couple of part-time volunteers to help and, hence, is in no position to send you reminders.

When sending in your subscription, please send it to *Chennai Heritage* together with the coupon that appears in every issue, duly filled in, in full (including quoting your Mailing List number).

— THE EDITOR

Senate House Conservation Fund

• The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust appeals to all alumni of the University of Madras and heritage lovers everywhere to contribute to the Senate House Conservation Fund which the Trust is managing for the purpose of restoring *Senate House* to its old glory by December 2005 and maintaining it thereafter in the same condition.

Cheques should be made out to the Senate House Conservation Account and sent to the Registrar, University of Madras, Chennai 600 005. Contributions are eligible for benefits under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

Dear Registrar,

I am pleased to enclose a cheque for Rs. as my contribution to the restoration and maintenance of *Senate House*. Kindly acknowledge receipt.

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I am an alumnus/alumna/heritage lover and wish the project all success. My college was

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An Indian 'cap' in just 4 years

Basics are the most important aspect of cricket. "Today, we have enormous talent in the game, but the players lack basics," says legendary Tamil Nadu player, C.D. Gopinath.

'Gopi' at 75 is still as fit-looking as he was when he was captain of the State's Ranji Trophy team, that was called the Madras team. Those, he recalls, were his happiest days in the game. "What a lovely set of players I had," he reminisces.

Leg spinner V.V. Kumar was "a very, very good bowler." The only thing was that somebody had to guide him. "All you have to do was to tell him what he had to do and he did it perfectly," says Gopinath. The "soundest batsman of the team was without doubt A.G. Kripal Singh." But, says Gopi, when "I saw Kripal bowl in the nets, I realised that he had the potential to become a good off-spinner — and encouraged his bowling."

Gopi says that "basics are essential as we advance in age." He is appalled at the lack of footwork among present-day cricketers. "In cricket, feet movement matters more than anything else while batting," he explains. He cites former England captain and opening batsman Sir Len Hutton as an example. Gopinath recalls how Hutton played seven or eight maiden overs against Vinoo Mankad and played every ball on its merit. It was only after such careful watching did Hutton go for his strokes.

As for captaincy and bowling, "It's no point in a captain asking a bowler to just keep on

trundling away. In the first over itself, you can, by watching the stance and back lift, learn a batsman's flaws and attack them."

The square cut was Gopinath's favourite stroke and fetched him a lot of runs. Even the captain of the first Commonwealth team that toured India in 1951, Charles Duckworth, wrote in *Sport & Pastime* that "Gopi was the best player of this stroke." However, it was his coach, Bert Wensley, who cautioned that "it was vulnerable to square cut as an opening batsman" and who advised

disastrous tour of England in 1952," he recalls.

In England, the wickets were uncovered and a little rain would immediately affect the playing surface. "We from the subcontinent were not used to playing on such damp wickets at home. The pitches were equally green as the outfielders and the ball would move throughout the day. That's why we found it difficult to play Fred Truman and Alec Bedser," he explains. Bedser, to Gopinath, was a "fabulous bowler". "He would place a coin on the pitch and land the

● by **BHASKERAN THOMAS**

him to go lower down the batting order. He did not discourage Gopinath from using the square cut. "He told me to play five overs, watch the bowling carefully and then use my favourite stroke." Bert always emphasised basics, recalls Gopi who has not forgotten his coaching and the time in the 1950s and 60s when "we used to analyse every batsman's technique and bowl accordingly."

Gopinath attributes India's poor performances in his playing days to lack of team spirit. The South Indian players were looked down upon with contempt and disdain because of their inability to converse in Hindi. "In this respect, Ghulam Ahmed and I were treated very shabbily. Hence, we declined to go to the West Indies after the

ball on it; such was his accuracy."

Other outstanding players in his era, he recalls, were Alan Davidson, "a superb bowler", and Jim Laker, who was "the best in the business." He compares former Aussie skipper and leg-spinner Richie Benaud with India's B.S. Chandrasekhar. "He bowled short of length and quicker than someone like Shane Warne and hence was able to mislead batsmen."

Gopi recalls that when he played for India, Vijay Hazare was the captain. "He was a gentleman, but he allowed others to lead him and hence the shabby treatment of players like me." In one game in England, Gopinath was slated to go in to bat at number 4. But when his turn came, he was asked to go lower down and finally his turn



C.D. Gopinath who led the Madras Cricket Club to the 1965-66 win.

came at number 9! "I was furious and told Hazare I would not take this kind of treatment again," he reminisces.

The former Ranji star says that people often misunderstood his non-availability to play for India when selected. "In those days, we were not privileged like the present-day players. I was a senior executive with a major company, Gordon Woodroffe, and my bosses were not liberal with leave. Hence I could not play the 1959 Test against the West Indies in Madras. People say that I was scared of facing Wes Hall and Roy Gilchrist, but they forget that I stood up to pacemen like Truman," Gopi points out.

Gopinath played his last Test against Australia in 1960 in Calcutta and scored 39. He has no regrets for not playing for India after that.

In the Madras league, Gopinath played for the Madras Cricket Club, which twice won the championship. During his time, Alva Gopalan and Aruldoss were great players. "Jaggu" (S.R. Jagannathan) was a good bowler who would never hesitate to toss the ball up. In the league tourney, 'A' division offered real competitive cricket in his playing days.

Gopinath's entry into the game is a curious story. While

he was a student at Madras Christian College High School, he played hockey and football as no cricket was played in the school in those days. "When I joined Madras Christian College, I began playing street cricket without entertaining any thoughts of playing for India. But since the college had no wicketkeeper, I was drafted to don the gloves in the nets, first, and then in the college team itself!"

Then came another opportunity when the team's opening batsman repeatedly failed. Gopinath was asked to go in first. He made runs regularly and became a permanent fixture in that slot. "I played cricket only from 1947 and represented India in 1951 against the Commonwealth team. A year later I was selected to play for India against Neil Howard's English side and played three Tests — in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras." In the Bombay Test, he scored 42 following a 50 in the first innings and was involved in a match-saving partnership with Vinoo Mankad during the second knock. Gopinath, a year earlier while playing against the Commonwealth team, had faced Sony Ramadhin while playing for the Combined Universities' team and scored 93. But he did not receive recognition at the national level till the next year.

With nostalgia Gopinath remembers how he used to commute to the Chepauk grounds in the afternoons for coaching at the B.S. Nets. "I used to take a train upto Egmore and then a bus to Chepauk. Even a year before my debut, I never imagined that I would play for India while watching a match from one of the low-priced stands. I enjoyed the game and have no regrets when I look back at the past!" — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

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