

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Madras Week – a great success

(By The Editor)

It's been a great success, the Coordinators of Madras Week tell us. There have been 40 per cent more programmes than last year, they indicate, speaking of the programmes they were informed about. "There were many more we were not told about," they add. These programmes started from August 1st and are going on till the first week of September, the core week having been packed with events and many more being organised during the week that followed, making it virtually a Madras Fortnight with promise of August-September developing into a Madras Month.

Studying the programme, attending the events, catching up with the numerous reports, still more blogs and even more activities described in person, we are delighted to find that some of the concerns of the Coordinators in past years are being addressed positively. The major success story has been the number of schools participating. Apart from individual schools and some which teamed with a school or two in their neighbourhood, a significant contribution was that by PSBB, KK Nagar, and Pupil Saveetha Eco School, Poonamallee, who took it upon themselves to take the lead roles and act as nodal points for a cluster of a dozen and more schools each. About a hundred schools participated in numerous activities, some of the exhibitions they put up being, in particular, described as "excellent craftsmanship". But the most significant contribution of the lot was a travelling exhibition of the CPR Environmental Education Centre that visited nearly 200 schools and showed the students a 14-panel presentation titled 'Clean Adyar, Clean Coovum, Solve Madras's Water Problem'. The message was in English as well as in Tamil.

Another heartening feature has been the extended spread of the celebrations. North and West Madras have seen much pioneering activity. Sri Theagararya College in Washermenpet, St. Joseph's High School in Erukkenchery and Ambal Matric School in Arumbakkam have all contributed to this in a significant way.

Then there have been those who have turned the spotlight on the Chennai of today that was once Madras. Namma Chennai and the Indian Press Institute have taken a lead in this. The British Council had several innovative programmes ranging from the past to the present. And, two surprises, the Reserve Bank of India got into the spirit of the celebration and organised programmes for its staff, and the Hotel Ambassador Pallava introduced what we presume will be annual awards to the 'Doyens of Madras'.

There has also been more than a doubling of the number of walks, all of them well attended. Nizhal led the way with its Tree Walks, but local individuals have shown the way to go leading

(Continued on page 9)



Deepa Sekar conducted an extremely successful Kilpauk Heritage Walk on the first Sunday of Madras Week and Timeri Murari writes to her, enthused, "Last year half a dozen showed up; I was delighted to find 58 trailing you this time. What was even more encouraging was that most of them were young men and women who showed such an interest in their neighbourhood. Next year – 100!" One of the places the group visited was Murari's ancestral home, Devar Kottai. R. Revathi added, "I liked the way you obtained permission and involved the residents of old and heritage houses and made them present their homes with pride." (Also see Page 5)

The muddle that is the ASI

The Comptroller and Auditor General recently filed a report that 92 monuments protected by the Archaeological Survey of India have gone missing over the years. The ASI has since 'redeemed' itself by its riposte that 47 out of the 92 have since been traced and the others had vanished years ago and the records were not updated owing to oversight. All this fills us with no confidence in either the way the CAG did its survey or the methods that the ASI uses to protect its structures. It is a miracle that more buildings, icons and precincts haven't gone.

Listed among the missing monuments were two Chennai-based monuments – Hynmer's Obelisk in the Law College premises and the remnant of the old town wall on Old Jail Road. Both of them are very much there unless, of course, the CAG is looking for the rest of the town wall which, incidentally, was demolished in the 1850s (in which case the ASI takes really long to update its records). But what is interesting is that the monument that has really vanished, the Powney

Vault, which stood next to Hynmer's Obelisk, finds no mention. The enclosure in which several members of the Powney family were buried has, most likely, fallen victim to the Metro rail development. This must have been allowed by citing that the Justice Padmanabhan Committee list does not specifically include the Vault by name.

Having said that, it must be pointed out that there is very little to rejoice about, for the ASI has not really covered itself in glory. Both the town wall and Hynmer's Obelisk have lost much of their sheen. The

● by A Special Correspondent

former was 'renovated' in complete Kollywood style a few years ago. The rampart is now a park brought back to life but the arched entry and the steps are eyesores with several commemoration plaques haphazardly placed. This is hardly the manner in which a historic monument is to be treated.

Hynmer's Obelisk is now more or less lost to view, entry being through several barricades and trenches and an unfriendly security guard. Experience has taught us that monuments that are lost to sight vanish over a period of time.

Other Chennai-based monuments that are really protected by the ASI (which in reality means nothing more than a blue signboard that threatens vandals with dire consequences) have not fared better. A correspondent, as readers of this publication are aware, discovered the Bulkeley tomb after much difficulty. The condition of the sepulchre is bad and it has survived only because it is a massive piece of granite. The Fort is no better. The ASI may take cover under the plea that the precinct suffers from multiple ownership, but it has done precious little to take care of what are indisputably its own properties within the Fort. Lack of funds and manpower is the usual excuse given, but for how long?

(Continued on page 2)

Brindian or Hindlish?

It could be said of the English that if you took away their Latin, Greek and French they would have to speak in sign language. But although Purists have decried this allegation, this ease with which foreign words have been absorbed into the English language is one of its great virtues.

In the 18th Century there were so many Hindi words in the English language (as well as Tamil, Sanskrit and Urdu) that it could have been predicted that the English in India would eventually have been speaking Hindi and calling it English.

Even Edmund Burke admitted that as much as he would like to avoid these "New Abominations", he could not, when talking of Indian affairs, be understood in Parliament if he did not use them.

First had come merchant words suggesting comfort and commerce. The master/servant relationship being so important, hundreds of words for all the infinite variety of tasks, and the servants to do them, were deemed, at that time, to be indispensable. Preoccupation with the social classes ensured the establishment of such words as Mogul, Nabob, Brahmin, Sahib (did the British, I wonder, ever know that it meant friend?), wallah, coolie, pariah, babu.

Then came the soldiers with their Army Ranks and their endless military terms. Words like gymkhana, shikar, bungalow, veranda, cummerbund, jodhpuri reflected the continued sense of privilege, and thug, dacoit, jungle, loot added another dimension to the heritage.

The foot-soldier, with his inadequate but poetic grasp of language, adopted khaki, cushy, dekho, baksheesh and the word phut which acquired an English onomatopoeic force most appropriate to its meaning. And, of course, there is blighty, the concept without which no British could think of leaving home.

Then the nostalgic words of the retired colonial who finds himself in a land he loves but is not at home in: amah, ayah, toddy, cheroot, chai, curry, chutney and all the other culinary words. Words like pukkah and purdah, dinghy, bandanna, bangle, calico, catamaran, dungaree replaced others previously quite acceptable....Could a child put on this pajamas and crawl into his cot with quite the same degree of warmth if he wore a nightshirt and slept in a bed? How did we ever wash out hair before we discovered shampoo? What could we do without the chit and without tiffin? And without that so Irish-sounding soup mulligatawny?

Yet although Indian words now flourishing in the English language are a mere fraction of the words that have been taken in and later discarded, the golden age may still be ahead. For, with the interest in Indian philosophy ever increasing, the Englishman now not only knows words like yoga, sadhu, mandala, but he also understands concepts like nirvana, dharma, ahimsa, mukti.

These concepts being indispensable if words for them did not exist, he would have to make them up from his Latin or from his Greek. (Courtesy: Sri Aurobindo's Action)

– Navoditte

The muddling ASI

(Continued from page 1)

Which brings us to the point at issue. Is the ASI really capable of handling the protection of monuments? Its charter and guidelines were drafted when Lord Curzon was Viceroy and at a time when most monuments were standing in vast open spaces. Today with congestion and encroachments being the chief threats, the organisation has to reinvent itself. It has to look at public-private partnerships, imaginatively promote its monuments

in the manner in which it is done abroad, and take steps to garner funds independently and not merely through the sale of low-priced entry tickets. It has to look at making its monuments visitor-friendly and ensure that basic amenities are available for visitors. (When was the last time you needed to visit the toilet at a historic monument?) And it needs a properly trained and dedicated watch-and-ward force, not the kind that merely shoos away visitors and prevents the taking of photographs.

Madras Week – MMM style!

The Chief spoke, and there was Madras Week. At the end of it all, pronounced a success by the three wise men who founded it, and their sidekicks who joined later, *The Man from Madras Musings* is feeling quite weak. It is the considered view of MMM that what with the Madras Week, the Music Festival, the Theatre Festival, the Literary Festival, the Adi Thallupadi, the Pongal Festival and other such events, Madras that is Chennai is becoming a much too hectic place to live in.

But leaving that aside, let MMM describe his own exploits during Madras Week. The Chief had fixed him with a burning eye and commanded him to do his bit and MMM

but was quite amazed at the cheer it exuded. No problem, it caroled. It advised MMM to take his time. The programme was for an hour and MMM could walk in at any time. As a filler, the voice said, a photo of MMM had been downloaded from the internet and put on screen even while the anchor was holding forth on various issues that faced Chennai.

It was good 40 minutes later that MMM reached the studio building which was a huge office complex. MMM charged in, tripped over a couple of wires, had a glass of water pressed into his hand and was pushed into a seat. Opposite him was a personable wench, speaking non-stop. This was the anchor and

"Ah..," said MMM.

Once again the reporter had something new. This time he had members of the public with him. He then proceeded to interview them. One man said he suffered because of the traffic. A woman wept copiously at the water supply. A third recited a jeremiad on the cutting of trees, while a fourth blamed everyone else for the pollution. Women then joining together screamed themselves hoarse about the teeming slum, and the bad buses. A child expressed her concern over trees. Then the anchor turned to MMM once again; no doubt the city needed to know.

"Umm..," whispered MMM.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

had proceeded, rather like the Light Brigade. Chief of these was a television interview on Chennai, its historic beginnings etc. And so came the day when MMM, having spent half the night studying the Chief's magnum opuses (or is it opi?), woke up early, performed all ablutions and having dressed suitably, left for the TV studios. These were somewhere down south of the city and MMM was informed by the chap who fixed it up that it would take an hour to reach from MMM's place.

It was after an hour of journeying that MMM realised that he had got nowhere. There were glass towers on both sides and traffic volleyed and thundered to the left and right. MMM's chauffeur belongs to a class which believes that asking for directions is infra-dig and so the car was bowling along at high speed. It was only after the route began to look suspiciously rural that MMM quelled the driver's objection with a burning eye and asked him to enquire from the first villager as to where we were in. And it was good that we asked too. Had MMM kept going he would have perhaps had to write like Corbett that the natives appeared to be friendly and so he spent the night there.

The car turned round and soon civilisation was sighted once more, by which time the programme in which MMM was to appear had already begun. MMM, therefore, called the producer and asked him if he could go back home. He half expected a petulant voice

when she paused to take a breath, which was seldom, a reporter was holding forth on the civic problems that Chennai faced.

We want to know ...

Gradually, MMM came to grips with what was being said. The reporter ranted on about water supply, polluted rivers, bad roads, terrible slums and the mosquito menace. After a while he paused for breath and the anchor cleverly got a sentence in edgeways, announcing to the viewers that MMM was with them in the studios and would give them a solution for all their problems, namely, the poor roads, the erratic water supply, the polluted rivers, the terrible slums and the mosquito menace. The city, she said, wants to know. She then beamed expectantly at MMM.

"Er..," began MMM.

Whereupon the anchor said that our reporter on the street had some more to say and switched over to him. He then thundered about the horrible traffic, the cutting of trees, the unplanned colonies, the teeming slums and the bad buses. "Why?" he shouted, after having worked himself into a crescendo. It was then that the anchor said that well-known MMM who was in the studio with answers would, well, spell out answers to the horrible traffic, the cutting of trees, the unplanned colonies, the teeming slums and the bad buses. The city needed to know.

At which thoughtful expression, the anchor thanked MMM for his participation and said that his views had been most useful. She also hoped that she would meet MMM again soon in the studios. It all reminded MMM of day-to-day conversations with his good lady, also known as She-Who-Must-Be-Obedied. MMM since resolved to learn to speak faster. The first step would obviously be to get a word in edgeways while his good lady is holding forth.

The three laws

Our beloved journal, *Representing Chennai Heritage*, organised its eight lecture programmes and mighty successful they were. The speakers and audiences were unanimous in praise. The hotels did a magnificent job too. The freeloaders had a field day as well, though their numbers have diminished. *The Man from Madras Musings* has formulated three laws based on their behaviour:

Everybody remains in a state of rest until informed that refreshments are served, whereupon it gets into a state of motion in which it remains till the refreshment counter is closed.

The indelicacy of the grasping claw is directly proportional to the delicacy of the dish.

Every grabber has an equally powerful and opposing grabber?

– MMM

Beginnings of the labour movement

When a doctoral dissertation submitted in 1987 takes the form of a full-fledged book 26 years later, it is a reflection on the historical relevance of the contents. More so, when the book comes four years after the author, D. Veeraraghavan's death in 2009 at 51.

In his introduction to the 300-page book titled *The Making of the Madras Working Class*, Veeraraghavan, quoting historian Sabayaschi Bhattacharya, says "the history of the historyless – the anonymous people who, in their collective acts, their work, daily lives and fellowship, have forged our society through the centuries" – was often neglected in social history. That explains the rationale for the author writing a book which falls under a specialised head such as labour history or socioeconomic history. The title of the book, according to A.R. Venkatachalapathy, historian and professor at Madras Institute of Development Studies, pays homage to English historian E.P. Thompson's 1963 work *The Making of the English Working Class*. It was

• by
T. Srinivasa Chari

Venkatachalapathy who oversaw the conversion of the thesis, *The Rise and Growth of the Labour Movement in the City of Madras and its Environs, 1918-1939*, into the book under mention.

While describing the labour conditions and industrial development of Madras in the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, labour struggles and formation of the trade unions, Veeraraghavan draws the attention of the reader to a common factor between the origin of the city of Madras in 1639 – as a cloth producing centre – and the formation of the first organised labour union in India, the Madras Labour Union in 1918 – emanating out of the harrowing experience of a textile mill worker employed in the B and C Mills, Perambur. The trigger leading to the forming of the Union was a worker being forced to defecate in the open after being denied permission to leave the shop floor to relieve himself. Not only that, he had

to clean up the mess which hurt his religious sentiments. G. Selvapathi Chettiar and G. Ramanujulu Naidu, two young businessmen at nearby D'Mello's Road, Perambur Barracks, empathising with the workers organised a meeting in March 1918 at *Janga Ramayammal Gardens* on Statham's Road. Sudarsana Mudaliar, Honorary Magistrate, presided and Thiru Vi Ka made a powerful speech which was well received by the gathering of 10,000 workers from the mills and elsewhere.

The first president of the Madras Labour Union (MLU) was B.P. Wadia, an associate of Annie Besant, and the Union was formally inaugurated on April 13, 1918 at its weekly meeting where Wadia addressed the workers in English and Thiru Vi Ka translated it into Tamil. The unionisation of workers was a natural outcome of the humiliation in the workplace and the rigorous discipline and racist attitude of the British government and employers.

Earlier, individual workers had resorted to absenteeism,

high turnover, thievery, and even riots and strikes. One case of rioting was between weavers and European officers of the Buckingham Mills in September 1902 when workers' pay was cut after the management found flaws in the yarn and defects in the weaving looms. Workers in the other departments supported the weavers and rioted. Police and the Army were used to evict the weavers.

Other workers to follow the MLU lead and set up unions were those from the tramway, railway workshops, printing presses, kerosene oil distribution companies, and aluminium vessel manufacturers. Contract workers in the cigar factory of McDowell and Co. in George Town struck work during the last week of June 1918. Even rickshaw-pullers went on strike in the same period when their owners hiked the rent from four to five annas. They were addressed by Besant of the Home Rule Movement and were gifted two rickshaws to be rented to

Overcoming handicaps to write history

Leftist scholar, the author, late Dilip Veeraraghavan, lost his eyesight by the time of his school final days in Kumbakonam due to retinitis pigmentosa. He moved to Madras and studied B.A. (History) at Vivekananda College, M.A. at Presidency College (1978-80) and M. Phil at Pachaiyappa's College (1980-81). In 1982 he joined IIT Madras for his Ph.D and submitted his thesis in 1987. The next year he joined the faculty and taught there for 12 years, until his death.

At IIT, Veeraraghavan was an inspiring social sciences and humanities teacher. Future technocrats were sensitised to social issues. Veeraraghavan was active in the Students' Federation of India. He was close to the CPI (M) and maintained close relationships in the party with leaders ranging from P. Ramamurthi to the younger ones. During later years, he maintained a distance from



Dilip Veeraraghavan.

the party due to differences on environmental issues.

The studious person that he was, Veeraraghavan was obviously somewhat of a loner. Venkatachalapathy recalls that even in the campus of the Tamil Nadu Archives, Veeraraghavan preferred poring over files with a research assistant to chatting over tea in the canteen. He was a regular at

the city's music concerts, being an ardent Carnatic music *rasika*.

Among the Communists, he belonged to those who were austere in their ways, using public transport in spite of the fact that he could afford a car and did not enjoy good health. Along with Venkatachalapathy, who prepared the manuscript of the book, another associate of Veeraraghavan, V.R. Muraleedharan, initiated the forming of the Dilip Veeraraghavan Memorial Trust. In his introduction in the book, Venkatachalapathy also recalls the contribution of S.S. Kannan, founder of the Karl Marx Library, who nurtured Veeraraghavan from his student days and translated into Tamil Veeraraghavan's dissertation with Pudukkottai Gnanam. The Tamil version is called *Chennai Perunagara Thozhichanga Varalaru*.

– TSC

the members at four annas a day. About 225 workshop men of the Madras Corporation struck work on March 19, 1919.

During the period of the emergence of the Left forces, between 1933 and 1937, one strand of Communist ideology believed in opposing the Congress and Gandhi because they believed the Congress to have become a capitalist party in the struggle against imperialism. Later, another school of thought decided to work within the Congress as members of the Socialist Congress Party and build a broad united anti-imperialist people's front. But it is to be noted that the Tamil Nadu Congress was so hostile to socialism that even a Congress Working Committee (CWC) member, Achyut Patwardhan, was refused use of the Congress office during his visit to Madras because he was a Congress Socialist. Many CWC members including Rajagopalachari sent a resignation letter to Nehru protesting against his advocacy of Socialism. But not all nationalist Congress leaders were of the same persuasion. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai for one declared at a meeting in Negapatnam (Nagapattinam) on April 14, 1920: "Postal, Telegraph, Police and Railways are the four walls of the British Government and of these if one wall collapses, the British Government will at once collapse. You are like the foundation of the Government." At another meeting in the Tirunel-

veli Provincial Conference, he said: "If the Government did not act up to what people say, we must induce these unions to strike work...If you have these unions under your control, you will have 'Swaraj' the moment you desire for it."

The period 1937-39, during which the Congress was in power in the Madras Presidency, saw an upsurge in trade unionism. Labour saw in the Congress a representative against their battle against imperialist owners. The Labour Minister was V.V. Giri who was president of the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railways Employees' Union from 1929 to 1934. C. Rajagopalachar was Prime Minister. Even backward trades and unorganised industries workmen came under the influence of militant trade unionism. For example, 80 workers in 11 button factories in Royapuram, Washermenpet and Tondiarpet went on strike from July 24, 1937 when they did not get the promised one anna rise in wages. Because of the increased awareness of their rights the workers, in many of the strikes, focussed more on victimisation, rather than on the issues for which the strike began.

On the government side, while there were compulsions to meet the aspirations of the people – improve their economic conditions, reduce indebtedness and unemployment, and break the continuing Brit-

ish stranglehold in the form of the hated new constitution – what prevailed was showing the British and the public at large the government's administrative capabilities. As management refused to implement the non-mandatory recommendations of the boards of conciliation, agitated workers resorted to stay-in and wildcat strikes and action against strike-breakers. In response the government banned processions and meetings under the City Police Act. Giri justified his government's measures by saying it believed in the maxim 'Govern or get out'. He added that the ways and methods of the Communists went beyond constitutional propriety. The attempt of a Labour Congress MLA Krishnamurthy to move a bill seeking to define and protect the rights and privileges of registered trade union members and that of the government to pass two bills in consultation with employers and unions fell through, as the Congress ministry went out of office in 1939.

Among the sources on which the book are based are historical documents of British India preserved in the Tamil Nadu archives and National Archives of India, including private papers of political and labour leaders, back issues of English and local language newspapers like *The Hindu*,

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Goodness, mercy and toughness

Dr. M. Santosham was a gifted tuberculosis specialist when the disease was at its worst, saving the lives of hundreds of people with his practical treatment and accurate diagnosis. The demands of tuberculosis care led him to establish the first private sanatorium in Madras, setting it up in the outskirts of Madras to supplement his Lung Clinic at Egmore. He made a mark in the political scene as well, first as a member of Congress and then as a founder-member of the Swatantra Party. He was a close confidant of the party's founder, Rajaji, and was elected as the Party's MP from Tiruchendur in 1967. Dr. Santosham was the voice of the Christian community in Madras for years, heading several of its organisations. His interests also

spanned music, cartooning and writing. William Mathuram Santosham faced difficult times as a young man. But he stayed undaunted. He was sent to Madurai along with his brothers, Wilfred and Dharmaraj, by his father, Abraham Santosha Nadar, a tahsildar, for studies. His zest for life, his booming voice and his captivating singing won him popularity during his days at American College and then at Madras Medical College (MMC) where, as a student, he is best remembered for his witty compositions and singing at functions. His political activity started at MMC when he founded the Madras Student Organisation, a student wing of Congress, but his deeper faith inspired him to spend more time with the Zion Church in Chintradipet, which was to remain a constant companion for the rest of his life. He aspired for a general medicine position after completing his medical studies as a 24-year-old in 1937, but, his political activities having been noticed, he was asked to intern at the TB Institute. This was to prove a blessing in disguise.

TB was then a dreaded disease and was almost a death-feared disease. Dr. Santosham's



Dr. M. Santosham

combination of compassion and expertise won him the hearts of tuberculosis patients and his small practice grew by leaps and bounds. In 1938, the front portion of a rented house on Egmore High Road became a Lung Clinic, a small four-bed facility. The poor patients were treated for free and stories abound about him giving money to patients to buy medicines. The clinic was later developed into a full-fledged hospital and still functions as the Santosham Chest Hospital. Dr. Santosham, who was a member of Indian Army Corps, served the civil defence's Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wing during the War in 1942. He was up to any challenge and never backed off, so much so that he operated on a goat first to learn surgery skills and, in later life when the suction pump failed during an operation, he himself sucked out the fluid, little worried about contracting TB.

Another tussle with the administration forced him to quit government service and start his own private practice. Dr. Titus – a compounder from Trivandrum who came to MMC to formally study medicine – found his colleague Dr. Santosham to be a suitable match for his daughter Susheela, and the marriage was solemnised in 1944. Susheela got a hint of Dr. Santosham's commitment to his profession when he rushed to attend to a bleeding patient while she waited for him to come back and take his marriage vows. The couple enjoyed a full life and grew a happy family of three boys – Rajan, Ravi and Roy – and two girls – Renuka and Ranjani.

Offering further hope to TB patients, Dr. Santosham decided to treat tuberculosis patients at a secluded facility that could

provide the recommended TB treatment with fresh air and complete rest. He established the first private TB sanatorium, named after his late father A. Santosha Nadar, in 1946, acquiring 10 acres of land at Selaiyur, near Tambaram. The sanatorium took a life of its own and developed into a full-fledged facility with a poultry farm, kitchen, and graded accommodation for patients. Ten per cent of the patients were treated for free and the sanatorium's doors remained open to all patients suffering from TB, irrespective of whether they could afford the costs or not. A resident doctor, support staff, and administration manager made it a self-sufficient TB care unit.

Dr. Santosham, with the objective of spreading awareness,

and his cheerful disposition won him friends across the political spectrum. Early electoral forays in mayoral elections in 1949 and Assembly elections in Perambur in 1952 ended in disaster. Dr. Santosham was then attracted to Rajaji's plank of politics in the Congress. His initial rapport with Kamaraj became strained as a result. The factional divide between Kamaraj and Rajaji denied him what should have been a cakewalk in the 1957 mayoral elections. Kamaraj's choice for mayor, Dr. Tara Cherian, beat Dr. Santosham by seven votes and the relationship with Kamaraj eroded further. When Rajaji broke from Congress to form the Swatantra Party in 1958, Santosham was to become one of the party's strongest pillars in Madras

thin margin and much to the surprise of political observers, and became an MP. He spoke eloquently on various issues in Parliament, the most significant one being the necessity for government to provide quality health care throughout the country. Later, shifting political fortunes led to the Swatantra Party joining the coalition led by Kamaraj's Congress (O) in the 1971 elections and Dr. Santosham's strained relationship with Kamaraj now turned friendly. But the alliance was no match for the rising popularity wave of the DMK. With the passing away of Rajaji in 1972, it was also the death knell of the Swatantra Party, high on intellectual appeal and low on popular attraction.

Dr. Santosham was closely associated with Christian organisations such as the Indian Christian Association (ICA), Indian Missionary Society (IMS), and YMCA. He was president of the ICA three times and constantly appealed to parties forming governments to give a fair representation to Christians in their cabinets. His appeal to the DMK government in 1975 to treat Christian Harijans on par with Hindu Harijans won the government's consent. He is credited with invigorating the YMCA Family Club, a small vibrant group consisting of thirty Christian families, formed in 1956 to forge close relationships between them. As president of the Club, Dr. Santosham was the soul of the group whose members regularly met to socialise. Music was in his soul, and he composed a Cantata (text composition set to music) titled 'Redemption'.

He remained on the fringes of the political scene thereafter, aligning with the Lok Dal and Janata Dal as State unit president in the final phase of his life. He was also instrumental in getting the DMK into the National Front led by V.P. Singh, which formed the government at the Centre in 1989. Prime Minister V.P. Singh offered him the position of a governor, but Dr. Santosham politely declined citing his failing health. The same day, January 30, 1991, he passed away. On the occasion of his birth centenary (June 21, 2013), his biography *Goodness and Mercy: Life and Times of Dr. Mathuram Santosham*, authored by V. Sriram, was released.



Various facilities at the Sanatorium.

• by
K. Venkatesh

wrote a book on TB. He then enrolled for postgraduate studies abroad to learn more sophisticated treatment methods and surgery techniques. With TB's treatment advancing to the level of being treated at home, the sanatorium lost prominence after a 30-year life of enviable success. The space was then transferred for a nominal sum to his friend Dr. G.D. Boaz to run a psychiatric centre.

The political fortunes of Dr. Santosham stood in contrast to his medical practice, swinging from one extreme to another. He always remained staunch to his principles and was never put off by any setback. He believed in being clean and honest in

State. He always had the ear of Rajaji and became his trusted companion. Intellectual compatibility brought them even closer. Mentor Rajaji thus became an integral part of Dr. Santosham's political life till the very end of Rajaji's life.

The fight at the hustings bore fruit for Dr. Santosham in 1967 when the Swatantra Party formed an alliance with the DMK in the parliamentary elections. This alliance won him friendships with M. Karunanidhi, M.G. Ramachandran and a host of Dravidian party leaders of the time. Riding on an anti-Congress wave, Dr. Santosham defeated Congress strongman K.T. Kosalram, although by a



The political partners: Rajaji and Dr. Santosham.

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– THE EDITOR

Looking back on Madras Week

A four-page special feature

Searching for a past in Kilpauk

‘The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there,’ is the opening line of L.P. Hartley’s novel, *The Go Between*. Every year in our Madras Week/Month, we search for this country through exhibitions, lectures, books and walks but all we see are the few vestiges of that distant land. To many, especially the youth who live in Chennai, Madras is a foreign country.

Madras was a calm city of shaded roads and garden bungalows. When my great-grand-

father moved from overcrowded George Town (Black Town) around 1900 to Kilpauk, his relatives and friends believed he was going to a jungle. He built his house in 1911, and other families followed cautiously and Kilpauk was embraced by Madras. There was grand space then for the garden bungalows that sprawled next to each other and, maybe, two or three families lived on those new roads.

When Madras Week celebrations began a few years ago,

a young woman, Deepa Sekar, organised the first Kilpauk Heritage Walk. There were around a dozen people, mostly middle-aged, who showed up and we wandered in search of the past – Our Lady’s Votive Shrine, the church on Hall’s Road, Pachaiyappa’s College, one or two bungalows beyond it and then my great-grandfather’s house that still remains as a memory of that foreign country. The following year, the numbers dwindled.

This year, to my surprise, and hers, 58 explorers, most of them young, trailed Deepa. They were well armed with cameras and photographed the church, the Salesian Institute and, finally, my house from all angles. Then they waited for my sister, Nalini, and me to conjure up the past that was now layered with apartments on every road. It is hard to conjure up this foreign country through



Our Lady’s Votive Shrine, Kilpauk.

just words. Opposite the house was the Reserve Bank quarters. How could they imagine that once there was only a massive bungalow and a garden that stretched to Poonamallee High Road? The Salesian Institute had been a movie studio; the Madras Telephone quarters on Taylor’s Road was a rice field in my childhood. ‘No Anna Nagar?’ one asked? ‘Not even a New Avadi Road,’ we told them. The city petered out around those borders. Off Vasu Street was a large pond. All gone, like those garden bungalows and their gardens with mango and coconut groves.

For those who lived in that foreign country the deep roots are still there but they have now been chopped down like all

those great trees that lined every road. Our roots lie in the buildings that our ancestors built for their future and, once lost, we too lose our identity. The cities and towns in Europe remain perfectly preserved, two to three centuries old, beautifully maintained and those citizens know they can see their past in the present.

In Chennai, the history has vanished and all we have are the apartments, block after block, almost identical on their stilts. We may walk and talk, but that foreign country, Madras, is beyond the reach of planes, trains and automobiles. We abandoned it a long time ago.

– Timeri Murari



Nizhal among the trees

Nizhal took steps in a totally new direction... offering its very first musical tree walk with Dr. Sowmya and her students at the verdant Kalakshetra campus. Great music under magnificent trees... digging deep into our heritage to discover the close connection between music and nature.

A Tiruvottriyur Walk

A group explored the heritage of Tiruvottriyur during Madras Week.

The heritage walk was led by Gokoulane Ravi with Jothi Vel Moorthi.



The teppakulam outside Sri Thyagarajaswamy temple, Tiruvottriyur, gone dry...



Winning T-shirt design

Vincent D’Souza displays a prize-winning T-shirt design.



Sri Thyagarajaswamy temple gopuram, Tiruvottriyur.



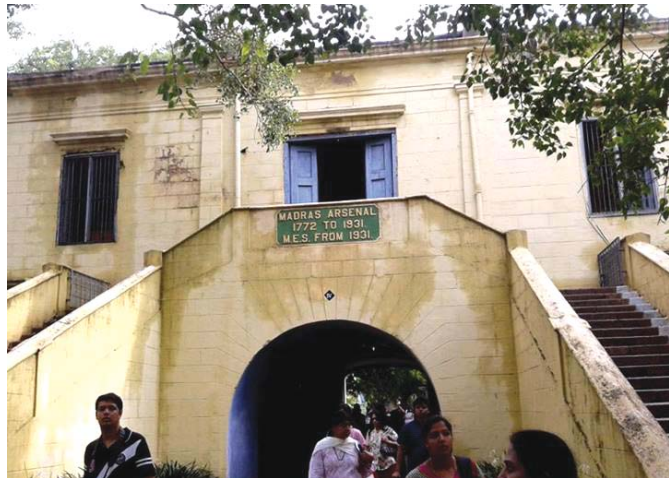
... And the tank inside the temple.



Near the Fort Exchange.



King's Barracks, said to be the largest barracks space in Asia.



The Grand Arsenal.



Another grand Fort building left to die.



On the ramparts of Fort St. George. (Photo: Muralidharan Alagar)

The Fort – in sketches, words & photographs

Ganapathy Subramanian says it in words and pictures.

52 people did the Fort St. George walk. The big group got the attention of the Police Intelligence, the Secretariat Outer Security, Inner Security and the Army folks. Was good to have the Arch students and the Madras Sketching Group! It was a great session exploring the Fort by foot. Vincent D'Souza's high energy time travel was enjoyable.

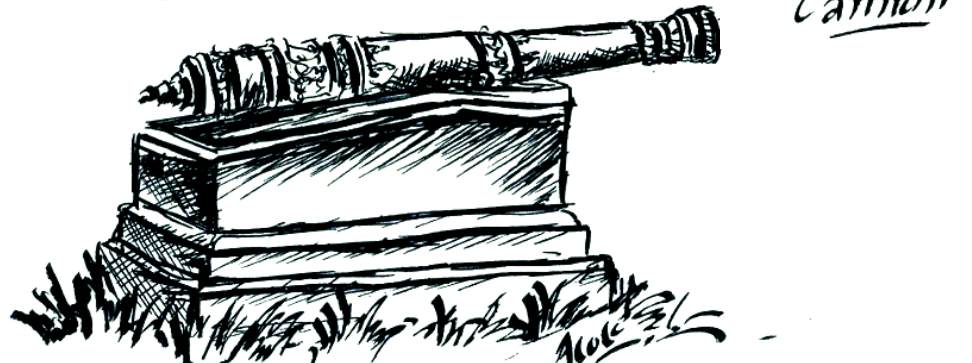
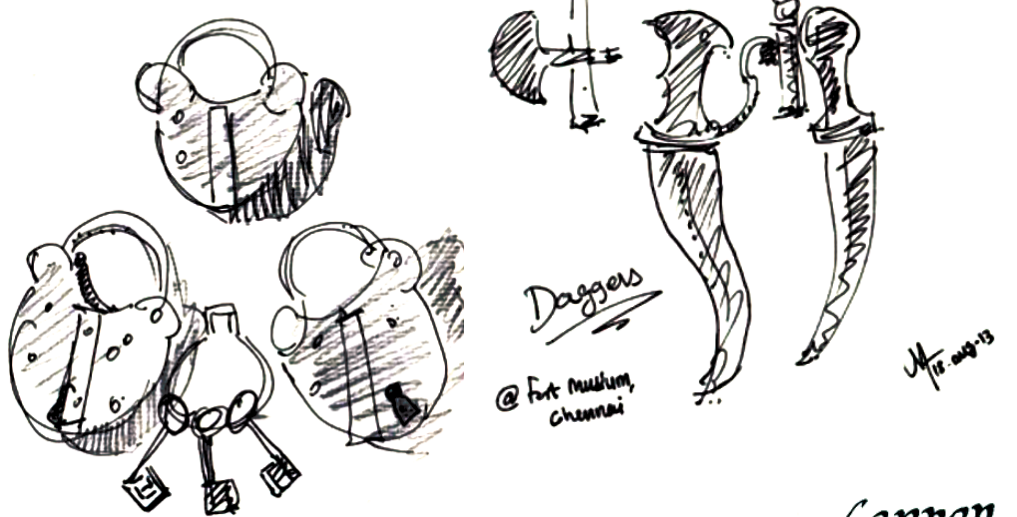


The Army's Parade Ground flanked by many vintage buildings. The first Fort House could have possibly stood here in the late 17th Century.

With the Chennai Weekend Artists



Locks and keys of the gates of St. George c. 18th century



A date with Adyar's past

Traditionally it always rains when Sriram V. conducts a heritage walk and August 17th was no different, when he got Madras Week 98 to trekking start through Adyar. Notwithstanding the weather, 43 people had gathered at Gandhi Nagar at the crack of dawn.

Sriram began with the story of Gandhi Nagar – the place that was once Bishop Gardens, belonging as it did to the diocese of Mylapore-Madras. The purchase was negotiated by C. Narasimham, Commissioner of the Corporation, and J.C. Ryan, Registrar of Societies, with the blessings of Daniel Thomas, Minister for Local Administration. The two officials agreed to the Bishop's price of Rs. 17 lakh for 136

convenience and nuisance. Its pedestal carries the famed Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936, an act for which the Maharaja received Gandhi's appreciation.

We next came to the Madras Institute of Development Studies, the brainchild of Malcolm Adiseshiah, who also donated his residence for it and which is where it functions from. Sriram dwelt at length on Dr. Adiseshiah's illustrious career at UNESCO and as Vice-Chancellor, Madras University. The many facets of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy came to life at our next stop, the Cancer Institute. A woman of many firsts, she started the Cancer Institute, which is now a world-renowned institution, in 1954.



Celebrating Madras in Poonamallee

The Pupil Saveetha Eco School, Poonamallee, organised a weeklong celebration, *Madras Memoirs*, from August 19th-24th, with a series of inter-school and intra-school events and competitions that highlighted the transition of the city from Madraspattinam to Chennai.

The exhibition *Reflections*, showcased exhibits from a bygone era – a gramophone, telephones, a hand-woven saree, some miniature brass items and vehicles, photographs, old coins, old documents and postage stamps. It was a nostalgic moment for some as they viewed the photos that adorned the walls and walked down streets and lanes of the past.

As part of the International School Award activity, another hall had charts, models and photographs that the students had collected over a period of time. This event enhanced their learning potential and gave them a sense of belonging – a sense of pride that they live in a city steeped in history.



acres, although their allocation was only Rs. 15 lakh, an instance of the freedom officials enjoyed in those days. The cost of land and construction came to Rs. 60,000 per house for the larger plots, which were a third of an acre! The roaring success of Gandhi Nagar as a housing colony saw the acquisition of 140 grounds from the Bengal brothers to create Kasturba Nagar in 1949. Other colonies came up thereafter.

The next stop was the Sri Ananthapadmanabha Swamy Temple, where Sriram provided many interesting anecdotes, chiefly involving the construction of the shrine thanks to A. Narayana Rao and other early residents of Gandhi Nagar with the help of the last ruler of Travancore, Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma. His statue, which once stood at the Travancore Maharaja's Park in the Esplanade, was shifted here in the 1990s by his admirers, the park having long gone and the statue having become a spot of public

Her dream was taken to great heights by her successors – her son Dr. Krishnamoorthy and the disciple, Dr. Shanta. We then moved on to a school that started functioning in the 19th Century. In 1875, three Patrician brothers, Bro. Ignatius Price, Bro. Paul Hughes and Bro. Fintan Parkinson, started St. Patrick's School here. St. Michael's Academy, another popular school, is an "offshoot of St. Patrick's," explained Sriram V. This school began functioning from 1953.

Elphinstone Bridge, connecting Mylapore and Adyar, was constructed in 1840 but fell into disuse after the Thiru Vi Ka bridge came up in 1973. At its northern end, we remembered Durgabai Deshmukh, founder of the Andhra Mahila Sabha. Sathya Studio opposite, another well-known landmark, was once Meenakshi Cinetone, later Neptune Studios and, finally, property of MGR, the matinee idol and three-time Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Now, a women's college functions in these premises.

The largest island on the Adyar was Quibble Island, which later merged with the mainland. A cemetery here is the last resting place for many Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. Quibble Island also witnessed the Battle of Adyar on October 10, 1746, in which a small but disciplined French force defeated the 10,000-strong army of the Nawab of Carnatic commanded by Mahfuz Khan. It decisively demonstrated the superior training of the European forces, paving the way for an Empire.

The present-day Greenway's



The participants seen with Sriram at Brodie's Castle.

Road was once lined with beautiful garden houses, each built with a different architectural style. Thanks to well-known musician E. Gayatri, who is now Director, Tamil Nadu Government Colleges for Music, we were allowed into *Brodie's Castle*, one of the few to survive, which is where the Government Music College is situated. Even as Sriram told us the story of the several occupants of this palatial residence since 1796, we explored it with him.

From the verandah, we had a great view of the Theosophical Society, and, standing there, Sriram told us of the history of that verdant campus from its *Huddleston Garden* days. The great personalities who lived there – Col. Olcott, Mme Bla-

vatsky, Annie Besant – and the famed Adyar *Alamaram*, which still survives in part, were brought to life. The Theosophical Society was also the birthplace of Kalakshetra. The green cover prompted Sriram to also tell us of how activists successfully fought and saved the Adyar Creek, making it the *Adyar Poonga* now.

Our final stop was outside *Ramalayam*, the Travancore Maharajah's palace in the city. The Sishya School and several eastern colonies of this area came up on its land. Diagonally opposite stands the *Avvai Home* started by Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy for destitute women. We wound up with breakfast at (where else?) Adyar Ananda Bhavan.

In the US Consulate-General



Did you know that Chennai has two sister cities in the United States? The American Library at the U.S. Consulate-General, Chennai, celebrated MadrasWeek with a poster display featuring the two cities, Denver and San Antonio.

With the Cycling Yogis



The Cycling Yogis Heritage bicycle ride seen at National Poet Subramania Bharathi's house.

The nawabs on Mount Road

(By A Special Correspondent)

In the past few years, well-known photojournalist S. Anwar has emerged as an engaging chronicler of the Islamic history of South India. He penned the chapter on 'Islam in Madras' for the Association of British Scholars' 3-volume project on the history of the City. Since 2011 he has also been roped in by Chennai Heritage to do heritage tours of the city with a focus on its Islamic history. Last year he took us on a tour of Nawabi Triplicane and this year he followed it up with a tour of Islamic Mount Road. It was a classic

Anwar tour – underplayed, factual and engaging. Mount Road, now being a maze of one ways, Anwar took pains to go over the route several times, meticulously planning the destinations. A morning of great fun, and learning, was the result.

With the conquest of the South by the Mughals, Emperor Aurangzeb appointed the Nawab of Arcot to oversee the newly added territories. The decline of the Mughal Empire enabled the rise of the various powers who aspired to rule

over the Carnatic, including the Marathas, the Mysore rulers, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the British and the French. The then Nawab, Muhammad Ali, was beholden to the British. They offered him protection within the walls of Fort St. George. Palace Street recalls plans for his residence. The Nawab, being the overlord of the Carnatic, preferred to build his own palace a little further from the Fort, at Chepauk. A road connecting the Fort and the Chepauk Palace is named after Nawab Muhammad Ali, who was given the title Wallajah by the Mughal Emperor (Wallajah Road). He engaged Paul Benfield to build the Chepauk Palace, which is considered to be the beginning of the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture in India. The palace extended upto the Coom River in the north and Presidency College towards the south. The site of the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium was part of the Chepauk Palace, which extended till Bells Road as the western boundary. A clean Coom River was where the Nawab bathed. One of the entry points to the Fort, where it meets Mount Road, was used by Wallajah when he visited and is known as the Wallajah Gate.

After the death of Wallajah's successor Nawab Umdat-ul-Umrah, the Company took over the entire administration of the Carnatic and the subsequent Nawabs were titular. After the 1860s, they were moved to *Amir Mahal*, with the new title Prince of Arcot.

On August 18th, we assembled at May Day Park in Chintadripet for the heritage tour. On our way to Wallajah Gate, we stopped opposite Government Estate to learn about the Governor's Bodyguards Mosque in which the Governor's Muslim bodyguards prayed. This is close to the Governor's Bodyguards' Muneeswarar Temple, now just known as Bodyguard Muneeswarar Temple (near *Pallavan House*).

Our next stop was the *Rajaji Hall* which, interestingly, holds political significance for the Muslim community. After Partition, it was here that Quaid-e-Milleth Ismail Sahib founded the Indian Union Muslim League to provide a political voice to the Indian Muslims. Right opposite *Rajaji Hall*, on the other side of Mount Road, is Anjuman-e-Mufid-e-Ahle-Islam (Society for the Benefit of Muslims), which was established in 1885 for the bet-



On the Nawabi trail in Mount Road with S. Anwar.

terment of Muslims and provide technical education to them. Today, the place houses a commercial establishment, 'India Silk House'. The third president of the Anjuman, Justice Boddam, helped purchase the property and the society moved into the new premises in 1901. Anwar recalled that Lodd Govinddoss donated Rs. 10,000 to the Society when it was badly affected by the Arbutnot Crash of 1906.

We were treated to a detailed history of the Nawabs, who belonged to three successive and different lineages, at the Chepauk Palace: Zulfikar Khan and Daud Khan Panni, the original appointees of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor, followed by the Nawayati Nawabs, prominent among them being Sadatullah Khan after whom Saidabad was named, which later became Saidapet. In the 1740s, the Wallajah line of Nawabs came into being.

At Dargah-e-Hazrath Syed Moosa Sha Khaderi on Mount Road, Anwar explained Sufism and the different mystical orders such as Khaderia, Chistiya, and Nakshabandhi. Nawab Mohammed Ali Wallajah was a follower of the Khaderia order. He was also open to other orders like Nakshabandhi and went on to invite Dastagir Saheb to Madras. The latter is buried at the end of Natesan Road, Mylapore.

We then went to the Madras-e-Azam, set up in 1849 as a school at the instance of Edward Balfour by the then Nawab, Ghulam Ghouse Khan. It originally operated in Triplicane and moved to the present premises of *Umda Bagh*,

which was a palace of the Nawab that changed many hands before being bought by the government in the early 20th Century by paying Lodd Govinddoss' family Rs. 1 lakh. Balfour designed it as a school for the English way of teaching Muslims and did away with Quranic studies. In 1919, the Government established the Mohammedan College for the education of the Muslim community. After Independence, the College was made the Government Women's College. It was renamed the Quaid-e-Milleth Women's College by a government order.

Only the small minarets of Byramjang Mosque are visible across the road, a few buildings away from *Agurchand Mansion*. Nawab Umdat-ul-Umrah's adviser Byramjang built it. The majestic *Agurchand Mansion* was once known as *Khaleeli Mansion*, built as it was by a Khaleeli who came to Madras from Persia for trade. As one of the Khaleelis who owned the mansion migrated to Pakistan after Partition, the Government auctioned off the premises as enemy property and it was bought by *Agurchand* family.

Abbasi Ashur Khana and a mosque constitute what is popularly known as the *Thousand Lights Mosque*. They were originally built by Nawab Umdat-ul-Umrah who showed leanings towards Shiism. The current structures inside the compound, both the Ashur Khana and the mosque, are believed to have been rebuilt by the Khaleelis. It was a delightful walk culminating with breakfast at *Saravana Bhavan*, Peter's Road.

All about the Nawabs



Namma Arcot Road celebrated Madras Day with a talk by S. Anwar on the significant social and cultural contributions of the Nawabs of Arcot to Madras. Anwar spoke at Vadapalani on the secular practices of the Nawabs and the influences they had on architecture, education and British rule.

Old Churches of San Thomé



A short tour of the old churches of San Thomé was organised by themadrasday.in. (Pictures by Arun Christopher.)



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

1. Name the American whistle-blower who got political asylum in Russia for one year, straining its relations with USA.
2. Hassan Rouhani was officially inaugurated as President of which news-making Islamic nation on August 4th?
3. Name the Internet pioneer and billionaire who, in his personal capacity, has purchased *The Washington Post*.
4. In a week of mixed emotions for the Indian Navy, name the first indigenous aircraft carrier that was launched and also the submarine that sank after an explosion.
5. What is Olinguito that created a buzz among naturalists on August 15th?
6. In a move that has surprised many, a recent Grand Slam tennis champion has decided to call it quits. Who?
7. On August 13th, who emulated Prakash Padukone, G. Jwala and Ashwini Ponnappa?
8. What is the name of NASA's next Mars mission set to take off in November?
9. Who recently became the first Indian bowler since Kumble to top ICC ODI Bowlers' Rankings?
10. The Diamond Jubilee of the liberation of which UT was observed on August 2nd?

* * *

11. Which vocalist, a disciple of MLV, has been chosen for this year's Sangita Kalanidhi award given by the Music Academy?
12. Who is the only cricketer from the State to score a century in his Test debut?
13. Which eminent dancer is the new director of Kalakshetra?
14. What political first did Sir P. Rajagopala Acharya (aka Rajagopalachari) achieve in 1921?
15. Name the bridge that connected Black Town and Peddannaikpetta and which, according to H.D. Love, is said to have been built around 1677.
16. Which Divyadesam town has had names like Varaga Kshetram, Vadesupuram and Vikrama Chola Mangalam in the past?
17. Name the queen whose palace in Madurai was partly demolished recently. She is considered the first to lay an extensive road network in the whole of south Tamil Nadu.
18. The first structure of its kind in Madras came up on the roof of the Exchange Building (present-day Fort Museum) in 1796, while the latest one is on the Marina. What?
19. Which famous institution in Adyar was started by Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah and Mrs. Elizabeth Adiseshiah in January 1971?
20. Which much-loved literary character's wife was called Vembu and had a son called Sundhu?

(Answers on page 11)

Madras – fifty years ago

This is the story of
Chitra alias Madhurambal,
born and brought up
in the heritage city of Madras!

My father was truly Middle Class
in those days - but
I was raised as
a Princess of Mylapore!

My grandma adorned *Karpagambal*
with a nine yards saree
to celebrate my birth - so precious!
We roamed the streets of Mylapore
with our *jimikis* and *kunjalam*s tangling
and silver anklets tingling.

Our toys and trinkets came from *Mada Veedhi*
shops
Our *pattu pavadais* from Nalli and Rasi
My first geometry box from Vijaya Stores
Books from Higgin Bothoms;
Science and fiction both interested me even
then...

How we enjoyed the movies
at *Kapali* and *Kamadhenu!*
Pity we saw only Sivaji films,
MGR films with dreams duets, not allowed!
Bama Vijayam at Midland was a rare treat.

We were groomed with *Kalki* and *Vikatan*
weeklies,
writers Kalki, Manian and Savi added
different perspectives,
I read *Washingtonil Thirumanam* to my
grandma,
translating the English verses for her!

We peeped at the *Kapali* car festival,
holding on to our father's hands;
We thought it reached the clouds then,
now it seems so small!

How I relished the Sunday *bajjis*
with hot filter coffee to follow,
Evening outings to Marina beach,
with *sundal* to follow,
and shells to collect.

Dinner outings at Gupta's,
the first roof garden restaurant in Madras!

The milky taste of Rita ice cream,
gave way to 'Joy' with chocobar!
With the monsoon rains
came the cyclones,
flooding the coconut grooves
enroute to school.
How we enjoyed wading through!

School days are still vivid in my memories,
I was the *Bharatha Mata*, shackled with a
cycle-chain,
with my long hair billowing out in curls!
And Lord Indira in *Thanushkoti* drama,
prompting everyone's lines throughout!
And the *Kush* of the *Lava-Kush* twins dance
drama,
I wonder where is my twin brother now,
rather sister?

'King Maker' Kamaraj inaugurated
the Mandaveli New Bus Stand,
So proud to see a humble politician!
Route No. 21 was our favourite,
to go to Luz, Tank or a doc's visit.
Enjoyed the long rides in 5B buses,
to Guindy and T'Nagar.

Over the last five decades,
Madras, nay, its Chennai now,
has grown more beautiful, very elegant,
and all powerful!
It has stood the testimony of time!

Chennai is now home to (abode of)
chirpy young IT professionals,
middle-aged business magnets, and
elderly NRI parents.

Change is the rule of nature,
Chennai is now riding high.
No stopping you, my dearest Chennai,
celebrations are coming (y)our way!

Chitra Sundar

A 57 year old, homemaker, caregiver, social
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OUR
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No airs about him

I met A. G. Kripal Singh, the Madras State and Test cricketer, when he was with E.I.D. Parry's, Ranipet unit, during the period 1964-1966. As convener, I invited him, B.R. Mohan Rai, former State cricketer, and M.R. Mehra Director of E.I.D. Parry, to participate in the meeting organised to form the North Arcot District Cricket Association on July 1, 1964. As founder-Honorary Secretary, I invited Kripal to attend the nets we had at the George Union playgrounds (now the Nethaji Sports Stadium).

Both Kripal and Mohan Rai represented the Parry & Company in the Inter-club Cricket Tournament conducted annually by the Association. We requested him to lead the 1964 N.A. District team in the Inter-district Cricket Tournament conducted annually by TNCA in the year. He agreed to do so and both Kripal Singh and Mohan Rai played for the team in the match at the Vaniambadi Islamiah College grounds. Chengalpattu District won the match by a slender margin. Kripal bowled very well to take four wickets. Unfortunately, when he had scored 15 runs he was declared out on a dubious LBW decision. Playing for the Club team the jovial Kripal had none of the airs of the former Test cricketer!

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Madras Week, a great success

(Continued on page 1)

walks in their neighbourhoods, Kilpauk, Tiruvottriyur, Royapettah, etc. There have also been groups studying their own neighbourhoods, past, present and future.

These are all harbingers of the future, say the Coordinators now grown from three to a dozen. We join them in hoping that the promise of 2013 grows into an even bigger, even more meaningful celebration in 2014. It's time to start thinking about those plans right now.

September 7

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Dates for Your Diary

Till September 15: *Ganesh*, an exhibition of the work of 24 artists at IBA Arts and Crafts, 8th Cross Street, Shenoy Nagar West, Chennai 600 030.

Recharging tanks

With reference to the article about 'Temple Tanks' (MM, August 16th), the Rotary Club of Madras launched "Project Thanneer (Water Project): (2000-02)". The project recharged the fresh water aquifer in nine temple tanks by cleaning the surrounding areas, providing collection pits around them to guide rainwater and thereby raising the groundwater level. The project was financed by Rotary Club of Madras, Rotary Club of Whitby, Canada, Matching Grant and CRCID to the tune of \$60,000.

Of 36 tanks in Madras, these nine tanks were renovated under this scheme.

S.L. Chitale
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● The Hindu MetroPlus Theatre Fest

Random thoughts on local flavour at Fest

HOW TO SKIN A GIRAFFE (inspired by Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*), directed by Rajiv Krishnan, presented by Perch of Chennai and Rafiki of Bangalore.

For a minute, it feels like you've pulled an Alice-like stunt and tumbled into another universe... a zany, Dr. Seuss-like one. A myriad mix of languages dart about on stage, reflecting, in a sense, the audience right there in the theatre....Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, to name a few, with English strictly of the 'we-are-like-this-only' kind, always a delight to the ear.

The story unfolding on stage has a comfortably familiar air about it. You have two 'enterprises' – one a kingdom ruled over by a king who, while endearingly limited in vision, believes wholeheartedly in the myth of his own intellectual enlightenment. As a measure of this superiority, a stream of words, all ending with 'ion', tumble out of him. "Predestination of creation; Automation of emotion; Moronic deforestation, oral diarrheification!" Stream-of-consciousness meets crazy-roller-coaster... yet, a few contemporary digs slip slyly in: "Deception by election! Gender equalisation molestation discrimination... nothing, nothing moves without bribification."

Fawned over by his coterie of 'yes-sayers', who rush to clear his path of obstacles, King Labadub is blissfully unaware that he is basically walking the same road always...getting nowhere quickly, inexorably, with their help. A victim of his own social status, he is willing to stoop to lies when it suits him.

Then you have Heroine Pipi in – what else? – a tower filled with that wistful longing so typical of heroines everywhere, as they cling desperately to daydreams even though something within warns otherwise. A life, where she will merely exchange one window for another, looms closer, and she knows it.

There's Prince Popo, again more than slightly addicted to illusions. (For a second, you wonder: What is it with writers and their obsession with melancholic, joy-challenged Princes?) Popo is aware that he may "still be suffering from a slight case of ideals!" He says: "I wish I could be like one of you. Take this puppet of a body and stuff it

into some nice suiting shirting ekdum smiling shyling useful member of society types."

Boredom terrifies Popo, above all else...with good reason, you feel.

Other wacky characters abound – like Popo's second in command, Vaal, a good-time guy, with an eye on opportunities and the good life. Possessing a "BA in Idleness", he would like to "declare that Sunday would extend all the way to Friday, with Saturday being half day", but is actually Popo's one access to reality. There's the dog Wagner, and Pipi's Mother, Madam Momosa, who isn't exactly the Wicked Witch, but a ruthless Corporate Chief, head of the Jolly Cheimeens prawns factory, selling prawns that have been bludgeoned into submission. She is all about

irruku, iravukkula pagal irukku; Yen raniyoda chinna kannil, periya periya kanavu irukku... and charms the audience.

Reality shows with relentlessly upbeat hosts, cops who've learnt to take refuge from actual work by resorting to endless, obvious report-writing, school masters who bully and threaten... the script flings stereotypes at you, and in recognising them, you are forced to admit your own compromises and compliance.

What do you take away with you? Beneath the laughter is a growing sense of sadness as the play progresses. Sheer, deadly banality will come. Life will turn mediocre by its descent into the commonplace....that soul-destructive 'sameness' which kills dreams and illusions.

In the end, happily-ever-af-

● by Ranjitha Ashok

power and money....wiggles her fingers to show you she knows how to get it....and is willing to enter her daughter (whose own wishes seem to have suffered the same fate as the prawns) into a marriage of convenience to further both her social and her business agendas.

That charming folk-tale staple – the heroine's companion – appears here as the governess, who supports her dear charge. She has some of the best lines in the play, spouting –isms uniquely her own: '*Nadaka nadaka daan paadai, varudu muttiyila baadai.*' For a second you almost smile in that superior 'I-understand' manner of many who attend philosophy lectures....till the obviousness hits you, and your forehead wrinkles in a 'hey, wait a minute' moment.

She goes: *meenu kulla kadal irukku, pagallukkulla iravu*

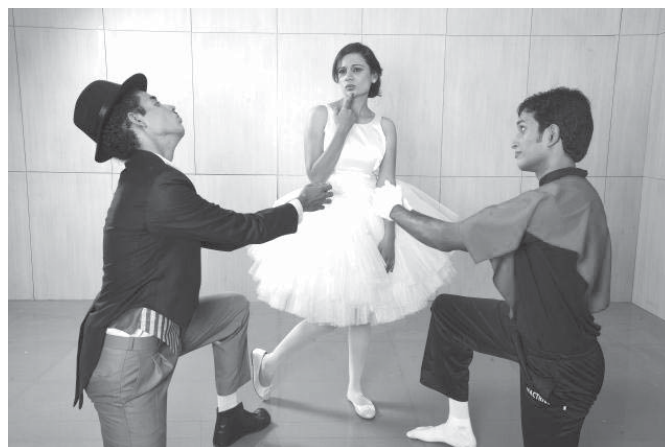
ter comes with a question mark, as these two idealists (whose names, incidentally, are basic body parts and/or functions) ultimately surrender, become boxed-in, like their parents, down to the mannerisms.

The tragedy lies in this process being declared a success – just like the packaged prawns.

And yet, what choice did they have – or do you – for that matter?

Those on stage are perhaps too young to remember Pete Seeger's song, "Little boxes", but you find traces of the lyrics floating through your mind at this point.

Is it better to be an idealist who then succumbs to the practical, better for having known a few moments of dreamy madness....or should you be firmly practical materialists like Vaal, or dear Momosa, from Day One?



From Circus.



From How to Skin a Giraffe.

How many ways are there to deal with that one all-encompassing situation – the life that's been wished upon you?

How to find those ways?

A little like asking...how to skin a giraffe?

* * *

CIRCUS (adapted from Charlie Chaplin's film, *The Circus*, directed by Victor Jayaraj M, presented by MacTrics of Chennai).

Imagine this. Charlie Chaplin runs into career difficulties back home, and decides to seek his fortune elsewhere on advice of a parent who points out that he was born for entertaining, and that Man is pretty much master of his own Destiny (given Chaplin's real father's track record, you can't help feeling this bit of poetic licence is a cheerful change). Chaplin travels by ship, then by train, finds himself in Chennai's Central Station, is overwhelmed by the teeming millions, runs afoul of the law due to a misunderstanding, stumbles into a Circus, encounters bullies, an irascible owner, a handsome tight-rope walker, falls in love with the circus owner's daughter, watches Rajnikanth movies, almost loses the girl, but wins her in the end, and dancing to Kamalhasan's *Pudhu Mappillai* from the film *Apoorva Sagatharagal*, lives happily ever after – at least, you hope so.

Cute and quirky, this story, stepping out of the constraints of real-time chronology, is brought to life by a Chennai-based mime and body theatre group.

In the beginning, all action takes place through shadow miming, using a shimmering ivory screen – and this sequence comes close to 'Wow!' The 'over-there' scenes ingeniously draw reality out of illusion, with human bodies easily taking on shapes – a computer screen in a restaurant being handled by the maitre d', musical instruments, a car. When Chaplin successfully gets himself fired out of promising careers, and makes his way across the seas, those outlines of ships and trains, complete with slatted windows – very impressive.

A voice, in that distinctive

cadence Central Station, Chennai, has perfected, announces the arrival of our hero's train, and, naturally, the first thing that literally hits Chaplin is the sheer crowds. The screen disappears, and you are now 'on stage' so to speak, as Chaplin moves through Chennai.

Circus has a large ensemble, with mummies of various sizes – all of whom are quite good in creating formations to suggest landmarks, in playing the inanimate to sound effects...like a creaking door, or a slammed one, and also in acrobatics, including aerial acts and simulated tight-rope walking.

You have to give a young set of mummies and actors credit for trying.

But when you leave the theatre, you can't help feeling some elements need work.

* * *

And now – since both plays dealt with Humour....another small point.

Editing.

Yes, this is always the tough, even heart-breaking, part of any creative process. But an essential one, especially when you are dealing with something as delicate, as capricious and touchy a creature as Humour. Treated gently, with the lightest of touches, Humour sparkles, soars, transforms magically in an instant into the sharpest of arrows, or offers a smile that floats softly, yet devastatingly, on pathos. But, handled roughly, clumsily or worse, strretched too long, it collapses, turns leaden, and falls flat. Like they say, 'taking a shovel to a soufflé' is always a bad idea.

So learning to recognise that moment when a story is done is the difference between a tale well told, and one that grows tedious.

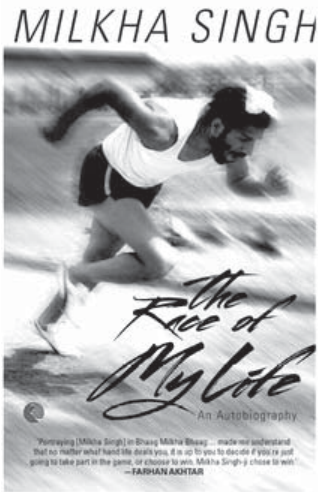
Remember Hamlet's words?

"...in the very torrent, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.".... "for anything so o'rdone is from the purpose of playing..."

A useful bit of advice – for all occasions.



On your marks... geography and a laugh!



The Race of My Life: An Autobiography – Milkha Singh – Sonia Sanwalka (Rupa, Rs. 250)

Watching the recently released film *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* with my 8-year-old proved to be a rather unique experience. After the film, my little one was very curious to 'see the real' Milkha Singh. Thankfully, Google and Wikipedia came in handy, and he was fascinated to 'see' how the 'real' Milkha Singh looked and ran.

Thanks to Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's bio-pic, a new generation of people has got an opportunity to 'meet' and understand a legend whose success story is not just about him but also about the time he lived in.

Did Milkha Singh run all the time? Yes, running in his case, like many of that time, was not just about winning; it was a metaphor for escape... from hunger, despair, helplessness and, most importantly, the only option if he wanted to live.

For a boy who narrowly escaped death during Partition, when most of his family was hacked to death, winning a race just for a glass of milk was motivation enough. Milkha stole, fought, and survived to become a young Army recruit who ran his very first race to ensure he got a daily glass of milk. After that first race, he became an athlete by default. In fact, as of 2013, he is the only Indian male athlete to win an individual athletics gold medal at a Commonwealth Games (in 1958).

In this candid autobiography, co-written with his daughter Sonia, Milkha Singh shares many significant moments of his life... the amazing highs of winning the gold in athletics at the Commonwealth Games, the unbridled joy of being hailed as

the Flying Sikh in Pakistan, as well as the shattering low of failure at the Olympics.

Simple, yet ambitious; famous, yet grounded; temptations all around him, yet remaining celibate so that he could focus on running... that's what makes Milkha Singh a league of his own. Yes, there are plenty of nuggets about his personal life which are beautifully intertwined with his love for sport. Especially his wooing and marrying his lady love, Nimmi, against all odds. In fact, he reserves high praise for his wife who has "stood by me" at every turn of life. Yet, for a man whose life was dominated by sports, he remains disillusioned with the way sports events are run today.

A touching foreword by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, who was inspired by this book to make the film, as well as a moving tribute by way of introduction to his father by international golfer Jeev Milkha Singh, adds plenty of emotional quotient.

As a reader, you join in his anguish, you laugh with him, you cry for him and cheer when he needs it. That's what makes this book a compelling read.

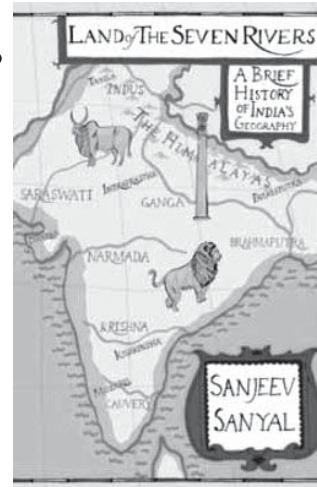
* * *

Land of the Seven Rivers: A Brief History of India's Geography – Sanjeev Sanyal (Penguin, Rs. 399)

When this book was suggested to me, I was initially reluctant to read it. But once I began to read, I could not put it down. For the simple reason that though Sanyal's work is all about history and geography, all right, it's the way he has put down facts and figures (and plenty of speculation, of course) that makes this a fascinating read.

The history of any country begins with its geography. From the raw and basic Stone Age to present-day multiplex and skyscraper-infested India, Sanyal's is a riveting journey. He begins at the beginning with the theory about how one huge land mass, following various geographical occurrences such as earthquakes and volcanoes, split and continents took shape. Did you know that the San tribe in Africa is perhaps the oldest in the world! Man migrated from there to other parts, including India.

Sanyal takes on questions such as: Where did the river Saraswathi originate and how did it disappear? Did the Great Flood of Indian legend actually



happen? Why did the Buddha walk to Sarnath to give his first sermon? How did the Europeans map India? With sparkling wit and intelligence, he explores various theories and facts to try and understand the India we inhabit today.

Traversing remote mountain passes, visiting archaeological sites, crossing rivers in shaky boats and delving deep into old records and manuscripts, Sanyal tries to paint a picture of India that is Bharat. But why was it called Bharat? And why was the world's highest mountain named after George Everest? Pick up the book to discover some interesting stories that provide answers.

* * *

Jest in Time: A Cavalcade of Cartoons Over 175 Years – Jug Suraiya, Neelabh Banerjee, Ajit Ninan (Times Group Books, Rs. 699)

Nobody has captured India in all her glory and grime,



horror and glamour, like *The Common Man*, that little guy created by R.K. Laxman, who brought a smile on people's faces every morning when they picked up *The Times of India*. Similar is every cartoon that occupies a pride of place in newspapers across the world. In fact, if India did not exist, cartoonists may have had to invent it.

True, for there's no other country in the world, perhaps, which presents such rich and varied material for the depiction of humour as we do here. Humour is the harmonious reconciliation of opposites and India abounds in opposites: the corrupt and overweight VVIP vs. the skinny and honest *aam admi*, the pompous politico vs. the skeptical voter, and so on.

This book is a pageant of cartoons culled out of *The Times of India* archives which portrays colours, the emotions, the trials and the travails, the triumphs and the zest for life that make up the never say die spirit of India. Take a peek and laugh out loud!

– Savitha Gautam

Beginnings of the labour movement

(Continued from page 3)

Justice, Navasakthi, India Thozhili and *Swadharma* (the first exclusive labour journal in English), and interviews with labour and shop-floor leaders of different eras like G. Selvathy, Rudra Kuppasamy, P. Ramamurthi, Arujunan and K. Murugesan, to name a few.

The publishers, Leftword, feel the book will become a standard reference work not only in labour history, but the history of Madras and the Left movement owing to the exhaustive research that has gone into it. The inclusion of biographical notes on leaders like V. Chakkarai Chettiar (1878-1958), V.V. Giri (1894-1980), Hari Sarvottama Rao (1883-

1960), A.S.K. Iyengar ((1907-1978), E.L. Iyer (1885-1941), P. Jeevanandam (1905-1963), V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar (1883-1953), G. Krishnamurthi (1905-1970), G.T. Ramanujulu Naidu (1886-1959), P.R.K. Sarma (1903-1951), V.L. Sastri (1890-1962), G. Selvathy Chettiar (1892-1985), B. Shiva Rao (1891-1975), M. Singaravelu (1860-1946) and B.P. Wadia (1881-1958) after the conclusion with cross references on their roles in the evolution of the labour movement is a bonus read. The observance of the May Day in 1923 was first initiated in Madras at Napier Park, Chintadripet, by Singaravelu, hailed as the first Communist of South India. He also promoted the Maha Bodhi Society in the city.

Answers to Quiz

1. Edward Snowden; 2. Iran; 3. Jeff Bezos; 4. INS *Vikrant* and INS *Sindhurakshak*; 5. It is a newly discovered mammal and the first new species of carnivore to be identified in the Western hemisphere in 35 years; 6. Marion Bartoli, the 2013 Wimbledon Ladies Singles champion; 7. P.V. Sindhu, by winning a bronze at a World Badminton Championships; 8. MAVEN; 9. Ravindra Jadeja; 10. Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

* * *

11. Sudha Raghunathan; 12. A.G. Kripal Singh; 13. Priyadarshini Govind; 14. First President (Speaker) of the Madras Legislative Council; 15. Armenian Gate Bridge; 16. Srivilliputhur; 17. Rani Mangammal; 18. Lighthouse; 19. Madras Institute of Development Studies; 20. Thuppariyum Sambu.

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

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

V. Sivaramakrishnan, the tall, left handed opening batsman, who played first class cricket between 1973 and 1988, had the highest Ranji Trophy aggregate for a Tamil Nadu batsman for a long time, before another lefthander, S Sharath, went past him. My youngest brother, Sivaramakrishnan was, however, my senior in first class cricket, making his debut for Tamil Nadu three seasons before I made mine for Hyderabad. As he was playing for Bihar during my first season, I had to wait another season before I bowled to him for the first time. Fittingly, as his elder brother, I got him out in that game at Lal Bahadur Stadium, Hyderabad, but only after he had made a bright 61. Thereafter, we shared the honours more or less equally in Hyderabad-Tamil Nadu matches.

Sivaramakrishnan represented the beginning of a batting revival in Tamil Nadu cricket in the 1970s. He was an important member of the Madras University team that won the Rohinton Baria trophy for the first time in its history. That was in 1971 and, under the captaincy of R. Ravichandran, Madras discovered a galaxy of young stars in Sivaramakrishnan, Krishnaswami, Mukund, Sushil Haridas, Victor Fernandes, Bhargav Mehta, N. Bharathan and P. R. Ramakrishnan. The left-hander's best contribution in the tournament was a fine hundred in the final against Bombay. A hundred and other good scores in the Vizzy Trophy followed, South Zone winning the title.

Making his Ranji debut against Karnataka in 1972-1973, Sivaramakrishnan was

Unlucky to find a Test cap too far

run out for zero in the first innings, but gave evidence of his class in the second innings, when he punished Prasanna and Chandrasekhar to make 53.

With stiff competition building up for batting places in the Tamil Nadu eleven with the arrival of P. Ramesh, another left hander of great promise, and a line-up that had in it Krishna-swami, T. E. Srinivasan, Jabbar, Satvinder Singh and Mukund, Sivaramakrishnan moved to greener pastures in the steel town of Jamshedpur in Bihar, where he played for TISCO and Bihar in the company of the likes of Ramesh Saxena and Daljit Singh. His consistent performances won him a place in the East Zone team, and he scored runs in the Duleep and Deodhar Trophy matches against North Zone, dancing down the wicket to Bishan Bedi and the like.

Sivaramakrishnan returned to Madras in the very next season, with his reputation enhanced by his Bihar sojourn and an earlier stint in Calcutta where he had proved his competence against the moving ball, playing quality swing bowlers with consummate ease.

Back in Madras for the Ranji Trophy, the left-hander batted in the middle order against Karnataka and scored a magnificent 169 against Prasanna, Chandrasekhar, Vijayakrishna and Co.



V. Sivaramakrishnan.

Sivaramakrishnan went from strength to strength from that point, to become Tamil Nadu's most reliable batsman. He was a strong driver of the ball and revelled in the cut. He was particularly good when the chips were down and when there was something in the wicket for the bowlers. One of the most brilliant close-in fielders Tamil Nadu has produced, he held more than a hundred catches in the national championship, besides occasionally turning his arm over usefully with gentle in-swingers.

Sivaramakrishnan came close to being picked to tour Australia in 1977-1978, when he made 74 for South Zone against North at Bangalore. His rival to the second opener's slot

Chetan Chauhan failed in that game, but North piled up a large total after debutant Yashpal Sharma made an impressive 173. The only way South could have gained the first innings lead and, by virtue of it, the match, after being down at 50 plus for 3 was for Siva and T. E. Srinivasan (who scored a brilliant hundred) to put on a massive partnership, but Siva virtually threw his wicket away just when the attack was tiring. South Zone yielded a lead of over 100, North went on to win the match and Chetan Chauhan made a hundred in the final at Bombay, to clinch a place in the squad. The rest is history, as Gavaskar and Chauhan struck a durable partnership thereafter.

Opening the innings for South Zone against Tony Greig's Englishmen at Hyderabad (I was warming the reserve benches then), Siva negotiated the seam and swing of John Lever and Co., and was on the verge of launching an all-out attack on the spinners, when he was run out while he and G.R. Vishwanath attempted an impossible single to Derek Randall. He had made 27. In those pre-helmet days, he was out fending off bouncers from Imran Khan and Malcolm Marshall in the tour matches against Pakistan and West Indies, and failed to convert a good start against Rodney Hogg

and Co. of Australia. These failures kept him out of a Test berth. His last chance was against England again, in 1983, following a hugely successful Ranji season, but again he was dismissed for 38 and 30, though he made batting look relatively easy facing Bob Willis at his quickest.

Some of Siva's best batting against fast bowling came in Colombo in 1982, and in Perth six years later. In Sri Lanka, he batted so well in the first innings of the Gopalan Trophy match against genuinely quick bowling on a fiery wicket that the coach Peter Philpott advised the captain not to enforce the follow on so that the Lankan bowlers gained more practice bowling to a quality left hander, ahead of the then forthcoming tour of Australia, which had a few southpaws. In Australia in 1988, playing for the Ranji Trophy champion Tamil Nadu, he blunted a pace attack which had three Test fast bowlers on the Perth wicket notorious for its pace and bounce. It was a brave counterattack amidst a general batting collapse.

Winning the Ranji Trophy that season had been a personal triumph for Sivaramakrishnan. He had come back into the side for the knockout stage of the championship after announcing his retirement at the start of the season and scored heavily in all three matches he played, including a hundred in the semifinal and 94 in the final. He continued to play league cricket in Chennai for many more seasons, regularly amassing runs.

* Madras Province/State/Tamil Nadu.

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