

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XXXVI No. 1

April 16-30, 2026

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Campaigning in a Digital Age

You must hand it to our politicians. Once every five years they have to battle it out and they don't hesitate to do so. Electoral campaigning is gruelling and there is no alternative to it. And you must hand it to our electoral system – it demands this of our political class almost with the rigour of a workout. They need to sweat it out to gain the fruits of office. It is in this scenario that a new trend seems to be emerging – that of digital campaigning. And in the present elections, this medium seems to be as much invested in by all parties as the physical campaigning is.

The stakes are of course high, but then, so is the battling spirit. Our politicians may

travel in the best comfort and stay in the best hotels, or they may just jet it to a location and get back, but once they are in the electoral fray, it is very much the grind – heat, dust, crowds, endless speeches, noise – let us face it, most of us would give all of this a miss, given a

• by Sriram V

chance. And all the elements of conventional electioneering are still around – posters, wall signs, bunting, public meetings, door-to-door visits and advertising in media.

Social media is a different

beast, and our political class seems to be very savvy with it too. Thus, the campaigns are different depending on the nature of the social medium. On YouTube for instance, the advertisements are of a longer format and relatively more dignified. The messages are based on performance, or the lack of it. What is interesting is that there is plenty of humour employed and that seems to be the hook. Moreover it is of the clean variety, relying on satire as the principal tool. The cleaner campaigning is also probably because advertisements on YouTube are similar to print and electronic media – they have

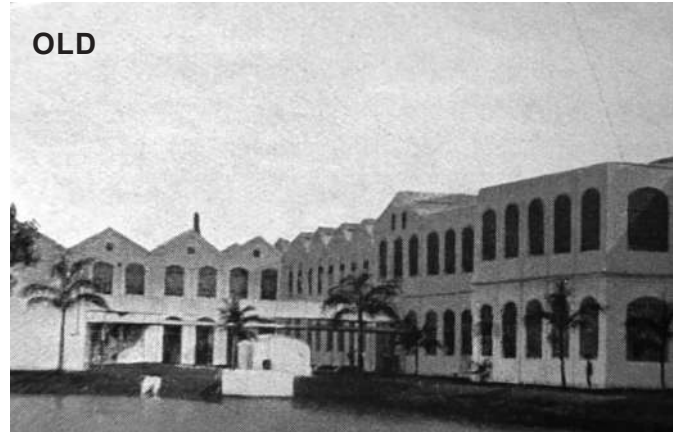
(Continued on page 2)

HERITAGE WATCH

Once Upon a Textile Mill

If you work for *Madras Musings*, chances are that you will frequently be poring over Somerset Playne's *Southern India, its History, People, Commerce and Industrial Resources*. That tome, published in 1917, is a veritable mine of information on our city and the presidency that it once lorded over. During a recent re-read, the OLD picture below caught our eye. That was of the Binny Mills in its heyday, when it employed over 10,000 people. The industrial roof, rising in three triangles is what held our attention. For we had a NEW, taken in 2022 of the same structure, now shorn of the extended wing to its left and a mere shell, reflecting on past glory.

OLD



NEW



Building Chennai's heat resilience

The heat is well and truly upon us. We are not referring to that which is being generated once every five years but the one with which we live for more than ten months in a year. As a city which wears the "hot, hotter and hottest" tag on its sleeve, the increasing heat related issues and the risks they pose do not seem to occupy public mind-space and discourse as much as they should. But given the undeniable fact that our planet is constantly undergoing changes (mostly not desirable), and that heat is going to play a major part in shaping the future, it is imperative that there is a proper plan in place to address the challenges. So, what steps have we taken towards building heat resilience?

In November 2025, the Government of Tamil Nadu (through its SPV, the Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company) launched a Heat Resilience Centre in partnership with the UK Government to strengthen the State's capacity to address rising extreme heat risks. The initiative is supported under

• by Karthik Bhatt

the UK's Climate Action for a Resilient Asia (CARA) programme and is implemented with technical partnership from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Resources Institute (WRI). According to its website, the Heat Resilience Centre

would function as the nodal agency for coordinating heat-risk management across sectors in Tamil Nadu. Its objectives include building technical capacity across government departments, generating climate data, evidence and policy tools, supporting city and district level heat action plans etc. At the launch, the development of heat maps for cities across the State in order to aid targeted interventions was the first of the action plans proposed. On a related note, the government undertook a study to bridge key knowledge and policy gaps in the State's response to urban heat by assessing ward level Heat Risk Index and identifying solutions in four cities viz., Chennai, Coimbatore, Tiruchi and Tirunelveli on a sample

basis. The findings were presented in a report titled Urban Heat Island Assessment and Strategic Guidelines for Urban Cooling in Tamil Nadu, un-

veiled at the recent Tamil Nadu Climate Summit 4.0

It is heartening to see that the authorities are finally taking (Continued on page 2)

CAMPAIGNING IN A DIGITAL AGE

(Continued from page 1)

to be released by an advertiser who needs to adhere to certain norms.

On social media of a shorter viewing duration such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram or WhatsApp, the reels sadly are of a different quality. Prone as these media are to influencers and also anonymous IT cells, the messaging is different. Many are just short of slanderous and several others plainly below the belt. The posters here, unlike in YouTube, can get away under the cloak of anonymity. Instagram and X also carry comments below each post, and these get flooded by those of one political colour or the other.

In an era where print is clearly on its way out, it seems the digital media has taken over. Even if the statistics on its impact may not be all that clear, it offers the benefit of direct messaging, and our political class sees much benefit in it. In

terms of costs too, this may be much cheaper and more effective. Not that costs would really matter, unless you have been out of office for long.

Will we see a day when real campaigning will be replaced entirely by reel? That may be a long while off but the journey towards it has begun. And in a largely urbanised state like ours, the trend may catch on much faster. It is just that unlike other media, this is instantaneous in its dissemination – going viral can be both positive and negative. In print or for that matter TV, carefully crafted lighting, scripting and speaking can work wonders but in the cell phone era, the slightest grimace, a wardrobe malfunction, a cracking of a public mask, a reduction in civility (may be in the face of extreme provocation) can all cause havoc. Social media therefore demands its own discipline and mastering it can be tricky.

Building Chennai's heat resilience

(Continued from page 1)

note of the increasing risks of heat-related issues and debating ways to address them. Over the last couple of years, the Greater Chennai Corporation has installed shade nets at major traffic signals to provide commuters with some respite from the heat for the duration of their wait, though with mixed feedback. Last month, the State Government asked the Chennai Corporation and other local bodies to start training volunteers on disaster preparedness for heat waves, with over 11000 volunteers from 500 resident welfare associations across the State, set to be in readiness to respond to situations. It is the first time that such a comprehensive programme has been launched.

While these are undoubtedly laudable initiatives, a dedicated year-long awareness drive to

promote simple actions at an individual level (for example, on the need to stay sufficiently hydrated) which can go a long way in addressing heat related issues is essential. While official advisories are put out on precautions to be taken, maybe innovative campaigns (harnessing the power of social media) can also be thought of to drive home the need to be aware of heat-risks. Our State has been a pioneer in climate innovation, being the first to establish a State Green Climate Fund and remarkably, the first to notify heatwaves as a State specific disaster. Building a heat-resilient State is a crucial aspect of development and it is imperative that a proper framework based on scientific data is in place in order to mitigate the risks involved. The time to act is now.



Picture courtesy: The Hindu.

Cash Cache

By the time you read this, your vehicle would have been stopped at least once by the flying squad for a thorough check on whether you are carrying cash with you. In case you have not been checked, *The Man from Madras Musings* expresses his sympathies because then you do not count in the social order. MMM notices that for several in the city it is a matter of prestige to have been stopped and searched for cash. That is not the sole badge of honour. A bigger one is to have been found with cash beyond the permissible limit and then allowed to drive on, after dropping a few names of course!

It amazes MMM that the Election Commission (EC) and the city police should assume that those who are responsible for the disbursal of cash for election purposes should be carrying it around with them in cars. And the quantum too is rather puzzling. The upper limit specified by the EC for you to be able to carry cash around is Rs 50,000. And that amount has

then secure in the belief that they will not be stopped once again and searched. Does this mean that all the vehicles belonging to our political parties can be checked once and then released so that the economy can remain in a healthy state of liquidity?

MMM has not yet had his brush with the law enforcing agencies and his vehicles have thus far remained uninspected. There is an entire posse of policemen belonging to a flying squad which for whatever reason, does not fly but remains seated under a very convenient spreading banyan tree not very far from MMM's residence. Each time MMM drives by, he expects to be stopped by these people but thus far he has not had the privilege of being searched. And here is a hint for those who are bringing cash to give MMM – the best time is in the afternoon when the flying squad, having had its lunch, parks the car under the banyan tree, lowers the windows, and goes into a communal nap.

civil thank you, is usually a footnote – the tenure they expect is until the next election. This has come to be accepted as a necessary evil and by that MMM does not mean his note of congratulation but the resigned acceptance of a transfer.

What puzzles MMM is the Election Commission wanting to transfer senior civil servants and police officers when the electoral process is on. Does this imply that they have no faith in the incumbents' impartiality? Are these senior transfers now an expected side effect of elections and so would the EC be seen to be failing in its duty if it does not transfer the officers? And what exactly is achieved by these transfers? As is well known, in fact it is so well known that even MMM knows about it, the top bureaucrats rarely have any effect on ground reality. It is the lower division clerk, the peon, the vendor of tea and the doorman who have ears to the ground and impact developments. Have you not

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

to be the sum total of all the cash that can be found in your vehicle and therefore if you are carrying Rs 49,999 you are all right to be cleared and you can drive on. But if you are carrying 50,001 then you are in trouble unless you can drop the correct names and then be allowed to go on. MMM wonders as to what would happen if a vehicle had five people traveling in it and each one of them was carrying the sum of Rs 12,500. Would it amount to a violation and therefore will the vehicle be stopped or is it okay because individually each person did not have Rs 50,000? Even worse, what happens if the owner of the vehicle sitting in the back seat is carrying Rs 49,000 and his chauffeur in the front seat is carrying Rs 1001? Will it then amount to violation of the present rules, and will the cash be confiscated? These are all matters to be pondered over.

MMM is informed that once your vehicle has been checked and cleared, then the authorities make note and you are then immune from further searches. It is like being vaccinated. Or even better it is like being afflicted once by an infection and then you develop immunity to it. Such at least is the belief of our law enforcing authorities whose innocence is touching. Technically therefore, once a vehicle has been offered for inspection, those in it acquire the freedom to carry around cash of whatever denomination because they are

Off With Their Heads

The Man from Madras Musings as you can see, cannot get the elections out of his head. There is so much to smile at during these times, denied elsewhere especially with wars of many varieties in progress all around the globe. And so, having picked up his lyre and sung of the cash transfer process, MMM now ponders over the official transfer process.

It is now accepted as customary that whenever an election is called, officialdom will undergo a rotation, no matter how temporary it is. For that matter, there is another rotation – one that happens after the election results are announced. If the same party wins then the officials return to their old seat and if it is an upset, then there is a further set of transfers. Those who served the earlier regime in senior capacities, no matter how impartial they were in the execution of their duties, will be viewed with suspicion. A fresh set of favourites gain the upper hand, and the earlier ones get shunted – usually to such attractive posts as heading the war graves commission. These are referred to in local parlance as waterless forests.

MMM, who now knows quite a few civil servants and police officers, keeps tab on where they end up, and if it is a leg up he congratulates them. The response, after a

heard of the man-eating tiger that sheltered in a government office for years devouring a senior officer each day and nobody took any notice? One day it killed the tea vendor and all hell broke loose. A search was organised and the tiger was found.

The EC would be better off in MMM's view – transferring all lower grade staff and sub staff. This can cause a real churn and destabilize pre-existing loyal chains and networks. And then all will be well with the electoral process. And once the election process is over, all of them can be brought back to their original seats. They can also be given a hardship allowance during the transfer period. This will encourage them to voluntarily accept the transfer and make the EC popular among them. That way, it is not just the political parties that can command loyalty.

On the other hand, what exactly is achieved by transferring senior officials? They get their salaries and perks. And one air-conditioned office is no different from another, is it? Some may even welcome it, as election time postings are temporary at best and may not be so demanding. In MMM's view the EC should try this transfer trick with the clerical cadre and see the impact it has. It could rename itself as the Exciting Commission and do wonders to its working.

– MMM

Knuckle and Knockout Your Customer

“Dear Customer,

Credit turnover in your account xxxyz exceeds the Threshold Limit. Please visit nearby branch to avoid digital blocking of account - Ignominious Bank”

Customers were shocked to receive this WhatsApp message from a nationalised bank.

What threshold? What limit? Who imposed it? When? Is it some crime to have funds in a Savings bank account? Does the bank have the authority to block my account if it thinks there are excess funds?

Repeated queries to the branch manager brought forth no explanation except that they had to submit a form.

● by
Sadhu Jana

The form is a declaration by individual customers on Expected Annual Credit Amount, if it exceeds Rs. 7.5 lakhs per annum.

The documents required to be enclosed are

1. Salary slip
2. Income tax Return
3. Proof of Investment
4. Proof of Source of Fund
5. In case of others each to be specified

Such documents used to be required to apply for a loan from the bank, not to credit funds into a savings account!

There is an income tax department to go into all these personal details and check if there are any suspicious transactions.

The only documents not called for are the horoscopes and the recent medical report!

Is it legal for banks to impose new regulations on existing customers' accounts, without informing them and threaten them with digital blocking of accounts?

Is the bank authorised to fix at its will any limit or threshold for the accounts of its customers?

Under what authority is the bank entitled to ask for such personal details of a customer's financial status?

Is it legal for the bank to threaten the customer with blocking of accounts under any circumstance?

How can the customer trust any bank with his earnings and savings which he would need access to at all times?

We trust the bank with our earnings and life's savings and the bank treats us like a fraud and criminal.

Is this how they Know Their Customer?

There was a time six decades ago when the branch manager and every member of the staff really knew their customers, treated them with courtesy and a smile.

We have fallen on sad days where men may come and men may go at the bank and nobody knows anybody. And nobody cares. By sheer habit, old timers stick to their old banks and are not inclined to migrate to newfangled banks which seem to have computers and robots. And the customer is a number.

Demanding KYC documents every year is another harassment the banks impose on their customers. Once they have the PAN numbers and Aadhaar numbers and their fingerprints which are all permanent, why demand them every year?

This is an appeal to the Finance Minister and the Governor of the RBI to look into the matter and ensure that customers are not harassed unnecessarily, irrationally and illegally.

History, Hearsay, and a Hint of Humour

There is fact. And there is fiction. And, as any weary History teacher will tell you with a knowing smile, the two are not always on speaking terms.

Yet, step into any classroom today, and you may find them seated side by side – fact quietly taking notes, while fiction confidently raises its hand, ready with dramatic retellings, WhatsApp forwards, and “I saw this in a video” declarations.

As a teacher who has spent many years in classrooms in Chennai, I have often found myself less a dispenser of knowledge and more a gentle referee in this ongoing tussle.

Let me begin with a familiar scene.

“Miss, is it true that...?”

The question usually begins hesitantly but ends with absolute conviction. The source? A YouTube video, a family conversation, or occasionally, a particularly persuasive auto driver. (In Chennai, intellectual discussions can happen anywhere – especially in traffic.)

What follows is not merely a question, but a narrative – complete with heroes, villains, and a dramatic plot twist. The only missing element, quite often, is evidence.

Now, to be fair, fiction is not the villain of this story. Literature, storytelling, and imagination have long helped us humanise history. They add colour to otherwise dry dates and events. A well-told story can transport a child to another era far more effectively than a textbook ever could.

However, the challenge arises when imagination begins to replace evidence – when stories are accepted as truth without question, and when emotional appeal outweighs careful inquiry.

This, as historians often caution, is how we begin to create what may be called a “post-truth past” – a version of history shaped not by evidence, but by belief, identity, and sometimes, convenience.

What makes this particularly interesting (and slightly amusing, if one chooses to see it that way) is that History, as a subject, is often declared “boring” by students. Yet, outside the classroom, there is an undeniable enthusiasm for consuming historical content – videos, reels, forwards, and animated retellings. Everyone, it appears, is deeply interested in “what really happened”... as long as it comes with background music and a strong opinion.

So, where does that leave us as teachers?

In my classroom, I have found that the answer does not lie in dismissing these narratives outright. Doing so often leads to resistance. After all, nobody enjoys being

told that their favourite story is questionable. Instead, I have learnt to invite these stories in.

“Yes, that’s interesting,” I might say. “Now let’s investigate it together.”

And just like that, the classroom transforms into a small research space.

We ask:

- Who said this?
- What is the source?
- Can we find another version?
- Does the evidence support the claim?

At first, there is hesitation. Then curiosity. And occasionally, delight – especially when students realise that questioning something is not an act of defiance, but of thinking.

One particularly memorable moment involved a widely circulated claim about an ancient invention. The students were enthusiastic, convinced, and ready to defend it passionately. Instead of contradicting them, we traced the claim step by step – examining sources, cross-checking dates, and comparing interpretations.

By the end of the exercise, the conclusion was not imposed by me. It emerged from them.

And that, I realised, is where real learning happens.

Humour, too, plays a quiet but important role in this process. A light comment, a playful exaggeration, or a shared laugh can ease the tension that sometimes accompanies correction. It reminds students that learning is not about being right all the time, but about being open to revision.

More importantly, it builds trust.

Because at the heart of this entire endeavour lies a simple goal: to help students become thoughtful readers of the past.

Not passive recipients.

Not unquestioning believers. But curious, critical, and compassionate learners who understand that history is not a fixed story, but a careful reconstruction – one that requires evidence, perspective, and humility.

In a world where information travels faster than reflection, this may well be one of the most valuable skills we can offer them.

And perhaps, just perhaps, the next time a student begins with, “Miss, is it true that...?” it will not be followed by certainty – but by curiosity.

And that is a very good place to begin.

– Priyanka Soman

“A Customer is the most important visitor on our premises.

He is not dependent on us.

We are dependent on him.

He is not an interruption on our work.

He is the purpose of it.

He is not an outsider on our business.

He is a part of it.

We are not doing him a favour by serving him.

He is doing us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so.”

This quotation attributed to Mahatma Gandhi was on the table of every officer in the bank, half a century ago.

It is not there anymore.

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



It is with reference to the article on rasam and sathamudu. I hope it will be of interest to readers:

There is a city called Madras

The home of the curry and dhal

Where Iyers speak to Iyengars

And Iyengars speak only to God..

T. Rajagopalan

Former Education Correspondent

The Hindu

A Brush with Arts and Artists

The Piano at Savera, serving up multicuisine buffets for the palate of guests, turned into a semi art gallery, a palette if you please, for a band of 20 spirited artists through April. Advait and Zephy at 10, the youngest, and the senior-most Subhashri at 35.

At the opening on April 2, while the 28 rich-in-colour-and-composition exhibits on the walls each had a story or two to tell the world, its makers were milling around with family and friends, smiling and taking pictures or just sitting back taking in the scene. High tea was served, and was a welcome distraction from the main show. I spotted Savera Managing Director Nina Reddy checking in on the event and mingling with the guests.

When I asked Mala Chinnappa, art educator and part of the organising team, about the artists, she told me: "Noel (17) just enjoys the process. Be it clay, paint or oil pastels, it is mainly a sensory seeking activity for him. So the sight, smell, touch and feel is what he's enjoying. Striking works are a by-product. If it is paints, he gets really excited (fluid mediums do have that effect) and goes into overdrive, as his fast, bold strokes will testify.

"Madhav (22) is very graphic in his drawing and uses very strong assured lines. His works are unique because of the way he sees things, his perspective is very atypical.

"Varun (24) is calm, unflappable. He enjoys circular motion with pastels or paints. Even watching him go at it can be meditative...

"Little Zephy's (10) head is filled with all the characters she has befriended on TV and her books. So there will be pretty princesses, puppies, kitties, many flowers, the sun, moon and stars. It's a magical, happy art world that gets portrayed." To sum up, the artists are 'raw, honest and vibrant with no filter because they are not creating for 'others'. They are wards of ABWA (A Brush with Art), a group of seven art facilitators working with the Neuro-diverse.

ABWA has been working in 'The Cottage' in Cholamandal Artists' Village since 2016 and at 'Saranalayam' in Besant Nagar since 2022. Jyotsna Srinivasan works online from Bangalore.

"As facilitators, our main job is to observe and learn about each child. Which medium/technique is their strength...their predilection. We should not get in the way of their exploration or expression. We need to be enablers. Sometimes they might be quite indifferent or 'stuck' in the same groove. We need to watch and gently nudge them in new directions. Maybe skill up if they are ready for it," says Mala. For more details, contact her at 9841068794.

Now, let's also hear from two parents:

Prabha – ABWA was the one place where we could completely relax, not be judged or criticised...which was heavenly in those stressful early years of our journey with autism.

Vasanta – I wouldn't rewrite my stars ever...this life has given me different shades of colours and challenges and this journey has given me this beautiful community – the facilitators, moms and boys and girls who grow an inch taller each time I see them. And their work...? I'm like I want them all, an ABWA gallery at home.

Mala gives her thanks to Kavita Krishnamoorthy for the idea of nurturing free artistic expressions, her co-facilitators Jyotsna, Priya Badri, Latha, Sathya, Lavanya and Rangashree. To Viswanathan and Nadine and Madhuc for giving their houses for ABWA classes, parents, interns, sponsors, well wishers and art aficionados who have gladly bought many of the paintings. A special thumbs-up to The Savera and its people for being invested in the show for the second year running. The anniversary cake they made said it all, '10 years of Art and Joy'.

– T.K. Srinivas Chari



Sashank Balu – Grapes.



A Athidev – Untitled.



Advait Srinivasan – Maze.



Damini Rao Narang – flowers.



Priyadarshini with the facilitators.

Ten Years of Remembering, Inspiring, Marching On

India is home to countless organisations dedicated to celebrating its heritage — across art, literature, architecture, and more. Yet, curiously, one vital strand of that heritage has long remained underrepresented: warfare. This is despite India's rich and storied military past. It was this striking gap that prompted a group of armed forces veterans to launch a unique initiative in Chennai in 2016 — the Colours of Glory Foundation, the first organization of its kind in the country devoted to promoting awareness of India's military heritage.

The Foundation found early encouragement in the late Mr. S. Muthiah, the celebrated chronicler of Madras, who readily lent his support as a Founding Trustee. With his association, yet another “first” was added to the legacy of “Madras that is Chennai”.

From its inception, the Foundation set out to bring the stories of India's men and women in uniform closer to the public. Through a diverse array of evocative and engaging events — battle re-enactments, military tattoos, heritage exhibitions, commemorative marathons, candlelight vigils, military history quizzes, book launches, documentary screenings, seminars, and presentations -- it has succeeded in capturing the imagination of audiences across age groups. Even young children have been drawn into this world through specially curated programmes such as painting competitions and kids' carnivals.

Notably, the Foundation pioneered the concept of battle re-enactments in India, staging compelling recreations of the Battles of Adyar, Colachel, and

Haifa. Its flagship event, the Victory Marathon held every December to commemorate India's landmark military triumph in 1971, attracts participants in large numbers, cutting across generations and backgrounds.

When the COVID-19 pandemic brought in-person events to a halt, the Foundation adapted swiftly. Leveraging digital platforms, it expanded its reach to national and global audiences through a series of virtual talks and webinars. These sessions featured distinguished veterans and eminent civilians, ensuring that the momentum of engagement and awareness was not only sustained but amplified.

Education has remained a central pillar of the Foundation's work. Since its early days, it has organised military history and awareness quizzes for high school and college students, both in-person and online. Extending its footprint beyond

● by
Capt D P Ramachandran

Chennai, the Foundation has conducted annual quizzes in Bengaluru for the past three years, marking the beginning of a broader outreach vision across the country.

Its flagship academic initiative, the All-India Online Inter-Collegiate Military History Quiz, has grown into a widely anticipated event, drawing enthusiastic participation from students as far afield as Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu. Complementing these efforts is the Foundation's commitment to military literature. Its website hosts nearly 200 well-re-



Marching Band.

searched blogs, two of which earned the distinction of being reproduced in the Journal of the United Service Institution of India's commemorative edition marking the fiftieth anniversary of the 1971 war.

Beyond events and education, the Foundation has also engaged actively with issues concerning the armed forces. Among its most notable campaigns was a sustained effort to discourage the use of the term “martyr” for soldiers killed in action, on the grounds of its religious connotations. This initiative achieved partial success, with the Ministry of Defence and the Army endorsing the position, even as its adoption in the media remains inconsistent.

Other advocacy efforts — such as urging the inclusion of military history in school curricula and proposing that “Killed in Action” (KIA) be accorded the status of the nation's high-

est military honour to support bereaved families -- have yet to achieve tangible outcomes. Nonetheless, the Foundation continues to engage with such issues, underscoring its commitment to preserving the dignity, image, and legacy of the armed forces.

Following the passing of Mr. Muthiah in 2019, the Foundation instituted an annual memorial lecture in his honour. The first three editions were held virtually during the pandemic, followed by in-person events in subsequent years. Since 2024, the lecture has been held in association with the Madras Management Association. While earlier held in April to coincide with Mr. Muthiah's birth and death anniversaries, it will now be aligned with the Madras Day celebrations in August–September — a fitting tribute to a movement he initiated and cherished.

Today, the Colours of Glory Foundation has grown into a vibrant, pan-Indian community comprising serving and retired armed forces personnel, civilians, and even overseas members, united by a shared passion for military history. Guided by a Board of Trustees that includes veterans from all three services alongside distinguished civilians, the Foundation continues to chart a unique path.

A decade on, it stands as a trailblazer in its field — honouring the memory of those who gave their all for the nation, inspiring future generations, and ensuring that the stories of courage, sacrifice, and service are neither forgotten nor overlooked. As it marches into its second decade, the Foundation remains steadfast in its mission: to preserve, promote, and celebrate India's proud military heritage, so that the nation may always remember the price of its freedom.



Battle of Haifa — Re-enactment.



Military History Quiz.

CD Gopinath – An All-Rounder in Life



Gopinath as Sherrif of Madras, 1976/1977.

In the passing of CD Gopinath the world of cricket has lost a respected elder. He was at 96 the oldest test cricketer at the time of his demise. *Madras Musings* has carried several articles about his prowess at the game and for those who are interested, we refer them to MM issue Vol XXXIII No 1, April 16-30, 2023 for a comprehensive profile. For further details, there is V Ramnarayan's biography titled *Beyond Cricket, A Life in Many Worlds* (Wordcraft, 2023).

The title itself aptly summed up Gopinath, for he was a man of many facets. A graduate of Madras Christian College, Gopinath was a boxwallah for much of his life, joining the British company Gordon Woodroffe (GWC). He rose to

become its first Indian Managing Director in 1966. He played an important role in stabilising the operations of the company. The late sixties were to see most British companies in India run

In 1964, GWC's ownership in England changed hands and the new man at the helm was Eric Sosnow, journalist turned businessman. He began suggesting new ways of growth in

● by Sriram V

into choppy waters, thanks to increasingly restrictive legislation. But Gopinath it was that brought order. GWC retained its position as a leather and shipping major. In the former activity, Gopinath made sure the company was well-represented in exhibitions abroad and secured an export market for itself. In shipping too, he was the company's human face, something that it would come to rue.

India, much of it not strictly as per law. Many left the company and Gopinath too did so, in the mid 1970s. Using his contacts, he secured the contract for representing the Clan shipping line for which GWC took him to court, and lost. The company's days were numbered thereafter though its eventual demise was in the hands of the Chabbrias.

Gopinath did well in his shipping activity. Outside of it,

(Continued on page 8)



Above: An oarsman too – seen extreme left. Below: Leading Indianisation at the MCCI.



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– THE EDITOR

CD GOPINATH – AN ALL-ROUNDER IN LIFE

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even when he was with GWC, he helped in the Indianisation of the Madras Chamber of Commerce (now the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry). Till the early 1960s this was essentially a British dominated body, and it was executives such as Gopinath who gave it a new direction. He served as its president in

1976. He had similarly helped other crusty British institutions to Indianise too – he was President of the Madras Cricket Club in 1966 and the Madras Club from 1976 to 79. There is no doubt that he, and others like him played crucial roles in getting these conservative establishments to see the light, and then gradually make the transition to a new world. He served as Sherrif of Madras too, in 1976/1977.

Post retirement, Gopinath divided his time between Madras and Coonoor. He was always accessible for clarifying doubts on various aspects of the city's corporate and sporting histories. He certainly helped me a lot when I wrote the history of the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry in its 175th year. And he was generous with photographs too. S. Muthiah too relied on him for many clarifications.

Early in the new millennium, Gopinath made it to the news for an interesting reason. A bison, which he named Bada Bheem, developed a liking for the grass in the compound of his Coonoor home and made it a part of its daily beat. Bada Bheem was photographed,

seated behind Gopinath. The story had interesting side-lights as he revealed to me at a chance meeting in the Coimbatore airport. Bada Bheem thought nothing of leaping over the compound wall and landing with a terrific thud in the garden. But he could not jump back on to the road when his meal was done. That meant someone in the house had to run out, open the gate, and run back before Bada Bheem lumbered to his feet and sauntered out. On some days Bada Bheem went to visit the neighbours and some actually called Gopinath to complain that HIS bison was in their garden! At a subsequent meeting Gopinath told me that Bada Bheem had stopped coming and he hoped all was well with him.

My last personal meeting with this grand old man was when he released the book I wrote to commemorate 175 years of the Madras Cricket Club. Covid was then raging and the book, titled *175, Not Out!*, was released at the MCC in September 2021 to a limited set of invitees, all masked. The rest of the members saw it via live relay. When it came to the book release, the volume was



Seated 2nd from left with the winning Madras Ranji Trophy Team, 1954/1955.

so tightly wrapped that Gopinath, at 91, struggled to open it. I had to lend a helping hand, and between us we managed to tear the wrapping paper apart. There was nobody to take the shreds (social distancing remember?) and so there was nothing to be done but for me to hold it all in my hands as Gopinath held the book aloft. We both laughed heartily over this.

Nobody else seemed to have noticed. But nothing escaped N. Sankar. The big boss of the Sanmar Group was watching it remotely and that evening called me – “What sir, you were left holding the wrapper!”

CD Gopinath represented a cultured and refined world. One that we left behind a long while ago. As S. Muthiah wrote in 2013 – “Gopi played his Test cricket in the 1950s. How many remember that era today when India won its first ever Test match in 1951, at Chepauk, Gopi taking the catch to end the innings victory?”

(The photos for this article have been sourced from Beyond Cricket, a Life in Many Worlds; Championing Enterprise, 175 years of the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry; 175, Not Out! 175 years of the MCC.)



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