

INSIDE

- **Special Issue on our Founder: S. Muthiah**

MADRAS MESSAGES

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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OUR FOUNDER



S. Muthiah

13.4.1930-20.4.2019

Muthiah, The Complete(?) Works

How many books did the Chief actually write? When asked he would dismiss the question with a wave of his hand. If pressed he would be evasive but concede that the number was around forty. My guess is that he simply stopped counting after a while. To him it was the quality of the output, rather than the numbers, that mattered.

A few hours after his demise, Vikram Raghavan put up on Facebook a photograph of his collection of Muthiah's books. The Madras Club library put up a similar display. The family had a collection, along with his typewriter and pens, placed close to where his body was kept on the day of his funeral. That got Karthik Bhatt to compile a list. I still suspect that this is incomplete and who knows, some more may emerge. But we did get to 'around 40'.



Books on Madras

1. *Madras Discovered*; East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Limited; 1981 – this is now in its 8th edition (2018), as *Madras Rediscovered*, published by East West, an imprint of Westland Publications Private Limited (also available in Tamil).
2. *Madras, the Gracious City*; Affiliated East West Press; 1990.
3. *Madras – Its Past and Present*; Ranpar Publishers; 1994.
4. *At Home in Madras*; Overseas Women's Club; 1995.
5. *Madras that is Chennai, Queen of the Coromandel* (illustrations by C.L.D. Gupta); Palaniappa Brothers; 2000.
6. *Madras that is Chennai, Gateway to the South*; Ranpar Publishers; 2005.
7. *A Madras Miscellany, A decade of people, places and potpourri*; East West; 2011.
8. *The Dalliance of Miss Mansell and other stories*; East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Limited; 1989 – enlarged as a fresh edition titled *Tales of Old and New Madras* in 2014.
9. *Madras, Chennai: A 400 year Record of the First City of Modern India*, Vols. 1, 2 and 3; Association of British Scholars; Vol. 1 came out in 2008 and Vol. 3 in 2019.

Books on Madras Institutions

10. *Getting India on the move: The 150 year saga of Simpsons of Madras*; Higginbothams Limited; 1990.

(Continued on page 3)

Bye Bye Chief

For once, *The Man from Madras Musings* is at a loss for words. It had been a great friendship between Chief and MMM and at the end of it, he, the Chief, has shaken MMM's hand off and gone to a distant land. With whom is to MMM now laugh over Madras that is Chennai?

MMM even now thinks of that happy day when he brought the Chief a picture of a shop signboard, which gave the address as Mind (instead of Mint) Street. And then there was that awful issue when we consistently left out the letter L from the word public. Fortunately nobody noticed. The same cannot be said of the issue where MMM made fun of the postal services and speculated on the way they delivered issues of *Madras Musings*. Someone in the Department of Posts read it and by some stroke of misfortune it was the man who stamped or franked the *Madras Musings* copies. The Chief dealt with the irate visitor and promised on MMM's behalf to behave in future.

gers, just as he did with a typewriter. And then there was the matter of cell phones. For years he fought the very idea and then when everyone insisted he did get one, he promptly gave it to his assistant. That person did all the dialling and answering. When all the heavy work was done, the Chief would deign to take the instrument in hand and utter some benediction or the other.

Finally, on the title Chief – MMM would have never dared call him Uncle or Muthu. Sir sounded too formal and so it became Chief. He appeared to like it and so that was that. There never will be another Chief for MMM.

MM will go on

The phone rang and *The Man from Madras Musings* answered it rather



MMM said he was not. "A freelancer?" it asked, rather in the manner of Lady Bracknell saying, "A hand-bag?" in the *Importance of Being Earnest*.

MMM said he was. "Oh in that case, I just called to ask about the exact nature of the illness of your boss."

MMM was not giving him any personal details and so politely suggested that the conversation take a different turn.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

There was also the time when MMM wrote of ladies walking around in public in nightwear. There were howls of protest, led by a Lovely Lady from Lancashire. The Chief calmed them all down.

There were some aspects to his personality that none of us ever managed to fathom. For instance, how IT savvy was the Chief in reality? He maintained that he was in a tech-free nirvana, preferring to handover such mundane responsibilities to Flower or God-On-Seven-Hills, his two assistants who dealt with the mountains of manuscripts, correspondence and other paperwork. MMM had his doubts and one afternoon managed to catch the Chief poring at a desktop. When confronted he just shrugged it off saying he could read what was on-line but had never managed to move the mouse. He however did gamely agree to pose in front of the machine as he called it and the accompanying picture was the result. When he did go abroad, never for more than two weeks as the next issue of MM had to be handled, he did send out some emails. He said he typed them out with two fin-

reluctantly. These are days when MMM feels low and depressed. True, the Chief was ailing and old but then there was always the comfort that he was there. But then MMM digresses. Let him get on with the story.

"The Glory that was Ind," said the fruity voice at the other end.

MMM wondered if the caller, a former bureaucrat, had been indulging rather freely at lunch. But then clarifications came forth –

"I don't expect you would have even heard of this book, a great work of the past that told us about the glory of India," it said.

MMM rather brusquely replied that he had read the book though he did not add that going through it was something of a penance.

The voice became impressed.

"Am I speaking to Professor MMM?" it asked, a new obsequiousness creeping into its tone.

MMM assured it that it was and added that he, MMM, was no professor.

"Are you not attached to any institution?" asked the voice, a ring of disappointment now evident.

"He was a glory of Ind," said the caller. "I guess now your magazine will have to wind up."

MMM did not reply but he knew that somewhere the Chief must have been chuckling. After all, had he, the wise man that he was, not made enough arrangements for the magazine to continue? Indeed that would be the greatest tribute that those of us who worked with him can ever pay him. And striving to be worthy of his standards will be everyone's endeavour.

So sucks to you, you pompous caller.

Tailpiece

There have been many moving tributes to the Chief and *The Man from Madras Musings* has been reading them with a heavy heart. One, however, from a senior art critic, was tailor-made for this column – "Will miss her, She was a dear friend. Chennai will not be the same without her. RIP"

Chief – wherever you are, MMM knows that you are laughing out loud at this one.

–MMM

Farewell to our Founder



He would not have entirely approved of this issue.

We can see him, holding it in his hand, a slight frown appearing on his face even as a twinkle lights up the eye. "The problem with you young people is," he appears to be saying and yes, to him there were no middle-aged people, everyone was young, "you have no sense of proportion. Where was the need for a full issue on me? And with my photo on the cover?" He would also have added a favourite comment of his – that we had thrown in everything including the kitchen sink into the issue.

But for once we beg to differ. We will be firm. We will argue in favour of our stance. For this is the least we can do for someone who gave us so much. Consider the facts – has any other tabloid espousing the heritage and culture of a city survived this long? True, its financial future was made secure a few years after its birth thanks to an industrialist stepping in at the right moment and roping in others as well, but what about content? Did that not bring in the readership, which once having come in, stayed on and expressed its appreciation by way of donations, letters and articles? For the quality of what *Madras Musings* carried, all credit has to go to S. Muthiah, its Founder.

Today, practically every newspaper in the city has space for heritage. Social media too focuses on such issues. But back in 1991 this was practically unheard of. It was Muthiah who had the vision to identify the

need for a magazine that would espouse causes nobody else touched. The fortnightly devoted itself to the city's heritage, both built and natural, apart of chronicling plenty of sport, some current affairs and above all, the lives of various citizens who contributed to Madras and the world. In the process, Muthiah made citizens of Chennai realise that they lived in a metropolis with plenty of firsts to its credit. This was not Kipling's 'withered beldame' but a city to be cherished and be proud of.

All of this did not exactly endear the publication or its editor to the establishment. Bureaucrats were wary of its continued (and entirely justified) criticism of the way the city was managed – be it water supply and sewerage, heritage preservation, pollution, congestion or defacement of public properties. The real estate lobby too was not amused when *Madras Musings* gave space to residents of T Nagar who complained bitterly in its columns about illegal buildings that had fast converted their well-planned neighbourhood into a civic horror.

Madras Musings under Muthiah championed the underdog – the law-abiding citizen who always received a rough deal from just about any agency of the Government. While reading it, people felt they could relate to every issue it highlighted. In this the voice of the editor came through loud and clear.

It was a matter of great regret to his many admirers that Muthiah was not once considered for a national or even state-level award. In reality it would have been a great surprise had they been conferred on him, for those in power rarely took kindly to his brand of activism – consistent and focused criticism on causes close to his heart. He was personally never interested in recognition of that kind. To him it was enough that his voice had been heard and at least some of the city's heritage had been restored. Certainly, credit was due to him in large measure for the saving of the DGP Building on the Marina, the restoration of *Senate House* and the prevention of takeover of the Queen Mary's College campus. His was also the lion's share of work in the Justice E. Padmanabhan Committee Report that formed the first and only listing of heritage buildings in Chennai City. In all of these, *Madras Musings* was his vehicle, his medium for communication.

It was his dearest wish that *Madras Musings* continues after his time. We at the paper commit ourselves to live up to that expectation. We are sure his guidance will always be with us in whatever we do. This issue is dedicated in full to his memory and carries tributes from close associates, colleagues and friends. Our regular features will resume in the issue dated May 16, 2019.

– The Editor

List of books by Mr. Muthiah

(Continued from page 2)

11. *The Spencer Legend*, East West Books Madras Pvt. Limited; 1997.
12. *Parrys 200, A Saga of Resilience* (with N.S. Ramaswamy); Affiliated East West Press Pvt. Limited; 1988.
13. *The Spirit of Chepauk, The MCC Story*; East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Limited; 1998.
14. *All in the Game, A Pictorial History of the Madras Cricket Club*, (with V. Ramnarayan); The Madras Cricket Club; 1998.
15. *The Ace of Clubs, The Story of the Madras Club*; The Madras Club; 2002.
16. *60 Landmark Years* (with Sashi Nair and Ranjitha Ashok); L&T and ECC; 2004.
17. *A Tradition of Madras that is Chennai, The Taj Connemara*; The Taj Connemara; 2006.
18. *150 Years of Excellence, A Pictorial History of the University of Madras*; (Muthiah was chairman of the committee that brought out this book); University of Madras; 2006.
19. *A Work of Genius, the Senate House of the University of Madras*; University of Madras; 2006.
20. *Overcoming Challenge: The 125 Year Saga of Chennai Port, the Harbour that Men Made* (with KRA Narasiah); Chennai Port Trust; 2007 (also in Tamil).
21. *Moving India on Wheels, the story of Ashok Leyland* (with K. Gopalan); Ashok Leyland Limited; 2008.
22. *The Raj Bhavans of Tamil Nadu* (edited by S. Muthiah); South Zone Cultural Centre; 2009.
23. *The School in the Park, A Hundred Years of the Sacred Heart School* (edited by S. Muthiah); 2009.
24. *Down by The Adyar*; Madras Boat Club; 2010.
25. *The Madras Musings Silver Jubilee Book* (edited by S. Muthiah, Sriram V. and Ranjitha Ashok); Chennai Heritage; 2016.

Madras People

26. *Looking back from Moulmein* (A biography of AMM Arunachalam); East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Limited; 2000
27. *B.S. Abdur Rahman – A Visionary with a Mission*; 2002.
28. *Born to Dare, the life of Lt. Gen. Inderjit Singh Gill*, PVSM, MC; Penguin; 2008
29. *T.T. Vasu – The man who could never say no*; Ranpar Publishers; 2016

In addition to the above biographies, Muthiah completed two others, which for various reasons did not appear in his name. The first was *The Unfinished Journey, the life of M Ct Chidambaram Chettyar* and the second a biography of K.V.A.I.Rm. Alagappa Chettiar.

Other Books

30. *An Atlas of India*; OUP; 1990.
31. *Word in Indian English; Indus, an imprint of Harper Collins*; 1991.
32. *Rupa Book of Geography Quiz*; Rupa Publishers; 1992.
33. *The Splendours of South India* (with Rupinder Khullar); UBS Publishers and Distributors; 1992.
34. *A Planting Century, the first hundred years of United Planters Association of South India 1883-1893*; Affiliated East West Press; 1993.
35. *The Indo Lankans, Their 200-Year Saga*; Indian Heritage Foundation; 2004.
36. *The Chettiar Heritage* (with Meenakshi Meyyappan and Visalakshi Ramaswami); The Chettiar Heritage; 2006.
37. *Walkabout in Oz*; Ranpar Publishers; 2012.
38. *A Kodaikanal Icon, the 125 year old history of a Koda landmark* (the story of the Kodaikanal Club); Ranpar Publishers; 2012.
39. *The Anglo Indians, A 500 Year History* (with Harry Maclure); Niyogi Books; 2014.
40. *A Chettiar Album* (with Meyyappan Junior); The Chettiar Heritage; 2014.
41. *Office Chai, Planter's Brew* (with Ranjitha Ashok); Westland; 2016.

At the time of his passing he was working on two more books, one on the Lawrence School, Lovedale and the other on the Sports History of Tamil Nadu. I am sure these, when published, will be fitting memorials to a man who documented so much, and so well.

– Sriram V

And Madras gently weeps...



Cartoon by Biswajit Balasubramanian.

You can almost hear the conversation:

You: *Muthu, the title? No editing, please?*

Big Chief: *Why not?*

You: *Trust me, there's a whole bunch of people out there who'll get the reference, and...*

Big Chief: *What reference?*

You: (faint, but pursuing) *Muthu, just let it be, no?*

And he would...in the end.

This was a game played all the time. You'd bung in references loaded with the zeitgeist-of-your-era, and Muthu would come right back at you...all for effect, of course. He always supported you ultimately, and he invariably knew what you were talking about – he just wanted you to earn the right to pepper your work as you pleased.

(A small diversion here – the 'Muthu' bit. This manner of addressing him was not out of disrespect or over-familiarity, but a direct order from the Chief himself. Few had the courage to question such orders. You certainly didn't.)

So, it was 'Muthu' right from the beginning.

More than 25 years ago, you remember.

That's really what the last few days have been about.

Remembering.

Every single detail – however slight.

You can almost sense that signature slightly askew, perceptible smile.

And hear him warn: Don't over-write.

Well, you'll try.

So – your particular Muthu-story.

It's around '94, and you're at an "Ok-now-what?" point in your existence. The insatiable time-gobblers in your life, your kids, are now firmly ensconced in a school routine; the home is chugging along – some hiccups and speed bumps, yes, but it's becoming clear that your rather casual, whenever-possible, free-lancing is no longer enough. Your Significant Other – who does get the occasional 'Really Good Idea', bless him! – notices the growing restlessness with some amount of trepidation (understandable...being first in line should an explosion occur) and says: I think you should go and see Muthu.

Eight words.

One sentence.

And an amazing new path opens up in a life.

(See, Muthu? I avoided using 'one's life'...you'd like that, having always seen the word 'one' as slightly pompous if used in 'first-person reference'!)

So, you gather up a few 'pieces' you've recently written and trot off, having dutifully fixed an appointment.

You walk into a room that so clearly represents the Life Literary, you instantly draw a deep soul-affirming breath, taking in the essence of books, paper, type-writer ribbon and ink... this being back in that era.

Books are piled everywhere, spilling over...and there on a sofa, telephone ringing constantly next to him... your future editor.

Looking back, you can't help thinking that Life sometimes drops the ball at big moments. Surely something as momentous (for you – not for the Chief, obviously) should have come with an impressive background score? Not necessarily 'Also Sprach Zarathustra'... but at least a couple of bells chiming...something?

Instead, there is silence. You sit nervously on the edge of your chair, as he cursorily glances through your pages. He then looks straight at you over the rim of his glasses, and says: "You know, a lot of people come to me, saying they 'want to write'... a couple of pieces later, I never see or hear from them again."

Clearly, a gauntlet has been flung down.

You pick it up, grimly telling yourself, and him, that you'll make sure to stick around.

And you do.

You remember your early assignments.

A profile on someone...you get so carried away, you give him 3500 words. He gently asks you to understand the difference between disciplined journalism, and an essay in a school paper written by an ill-prepared student short on material, but filled to the brim with a need to impress.

A bit diplomatically-challenged?

You now smile to yourself, and think 'yes'.

You remember interviews, where the first ten minutes would be taken up by an irate interviewee with a gripe against Muthu, ranting in full spate at you... before calming down, allowing you to coax answers out of them.

But his bluntness never bothered you – it was actually exhilarating, crossing swords, the arguing. And that's a privilege reserved for those he cared about,

you learn in time. Also, pretty early in this process, you've seen through the curmudgeonly mask to the compassion beneath.

Not exactly a 'baa-lamb', our Muthu, but definitely not as much of a bear as he liked to pretend.

Slowly, your work grows, from articles and 'features' to book projects. The city opens up for you. Naturally. The magic password is Muthu himself. And your world, your writing, begins to change, expand.

You remember your first book project – the history of Spencer's.

When the book is completed and launched, you are so thrilled, you tell your father you'll bring a copy across to Bangalore on your next visit.

"Make sure it's signed," he tells you, and you excitedly sign your name with a flourish on the title page.

You bear it across triumphantly, and present it to him. He opens the book, sees your name. His face drops in disappointment, and he mumbles: "I meant Mr Muthiah's signature."

Feeling sink-into-the-ground foolish, you later narrate the incident to the Chief, who shakes and rumbles with laughter as only he could.

You remember another book that dealt solely with buildings and building material...things you know nothing about. When you protest, you are told every assignment cannot be 'fun' or laden with 'dreamy soulfulness', and expecting they should be a display of the 'worst kind of work ethic.'

● by Ranjitha Ashok

That makes you so mad, you complete all your interviews in record time. And when you go: "So there", you see the smile, and ruefully salute his tactics.

At one point, the Chief decides to bring you on board a certain library committee...you have no way of judging how useful you ever were. All you know is – there should have been relevant background music here as well, as a 'significant moment' alert. Because his decision has the very fortunate, albeit inadvertent, result of bringing into your life those who have gone on to becoming the dearest of friends, enabling transformation in your reading, your thinking, even setting your feet firmly on a spiritual path you had always sought, but hadn't known how to find. His decision also leads to some memorable lunches involving the sub-com ladies and the Chief, with Singapore Slings playing a major role in increasing both volume and indiscreet exchange of gossip.

While the Chief was on the committee, there were lively spats here as well. On what books to keep and what to discard. Here too, the Chief had very decided opinions. No poetry, and no short stories...what he had against this genre was beyond everyone, but he disliked them.

You remember when the A-musings column began. You didn't think then that they'd sustain for ten whole years; that you'd get a book out of them.

Even here, nothing escaped the Chief's sharp eye and instincts. When a bout of laziness meant a crazy, last minute dash to meet deadlines, other readers were nice about that fortnight's column. Not so the Chief, who'd direct one of his piercing glances at you, drawing, "Struggled a bit there, didn't you?" But, for you, it was always a relief to have someone who calls it exactly for what it is...no masks needed at all.

Then, remembering all those book-related events, especially at the Madras Book Club. The Chief almost always got the annual subscription amount wrong in his standard opening speech, but was the most effective moderator and general whip-cracker. Fiercely

(Continued on page 10)

TRIBUTES



My association with Muthiah was close over the last six years. He was kind enough to invite me to support him in three of his major book projects and also to contribute regularly to his journal. I had no aptitude or ability to handle literary assignments. He gave me courage and guided me through it all, in his characteristic taciturn style. This privileged association is the most fulfilling learning experience of my life and that too under the Master. I watched the great

man weaving numbers, episodes and experiences magically into literary works of beauty that are a joy forever.

– N.S. Parthasarathy

* * *

When people woke up to the news of Mr. Muthiah's passing, everyone felt an immediate sense of loss, whether they knew him personally or not. Madras lost a fond chronicler who gathered interesting facts about its history, and the personalities who made

From a collaborator

When the Association of British Scholars in collaboration with the British Council decided to bring out a record of sorts like a gazetteer, on *Madras 400 years*, a subject close to the heart of Muthiah, he chose to be its editor and experts in the respective fields were asked to contribute. On the subject of Port and Shipping of



Madras, my name was suggested to Mr. Muthiah and that is how I personally met him first after locating myself in Madras, post retirement from Vizag port. Even in the first meeting I found his warmth overwhelming.

A few weeks later I was pleasantly surprised when he attended my lecture on *Early Navigation and Shipping of Tamil Nadu*, at the Tamil Nadu Archaeology department, and was awed when I saw a lengthy and elaborate report about my talk in his column the following Monday, (August 29, 2005) titled *Marine Conundrum*.

When the Madras Port was celebrating its 125th anniversary, the port administration wanted a coffee table book to be published with Muthiah as its au-

Courageous, proud, humble

"I know you; the off spinner." This is how Mr. Muthiah greeted me – in a gruff voice that carefully hid the friendliness underneath – when I introduced myself as Gowri's husband in search of writing opportunities some 25 years ago. Little did Mr. Madras realise that he would be stuck with me for decades, if only intermittently. Not long afterwards, he gave me my first assignment, that of proof-reading a book of 127 pages, which brought me my first cheque (for Rs. 381) as a freelancer. He believed in compensating anyone who did anything for him – and the cheque was never delayed.

For the next few years, I assisted Mr. Muthiah in several projects, which included books he either wrote or edited for publishers. It was an exciting new world for someone who had just found his calling, for want of a better description, and the debt of gratitude I feel for Mr. Muthiah for practically resurrecting my career is immeasurable. (S. Krishnan of *The Hindu*, Preeti Mehra of *Businessline* and N. Sankar and Chandra Sankar of the Sanmar family are some of the others I owe my second innings to). For a couple of years, I also assisted him with *Madras Musings*, seated daily at the very dining table where our first meeting took place. His meticulous eye for detail and constant search for excellence were an inspiration to me and the small army of freelance helpers, from aspiring journalists and photographers to researchers and columnists, he had gathered around him. The other aspects of his personality to catch the eye were his obsession with heritage and his love for the city he had adopted and had adopted him. Once I got to know him well and allowed myself a few liberties with him, his stern exterior notwithstanding, I occasionally teased him about his fondness (as I alleged) for British rather than Indian heritage, and he laughed it off good-naturedly. One of his first books to include a small contribution by me was *At Home in Madras*, a handbook to the city in all its many aspects. My favourite book was *Athletic Gold*, a blueprint for preparing India's athletes for international competition by Olympian Eric Prabhakar. Though this excellent manual was probably then consigned to

the city what it became. Institutions and literary groups associated with him lost an impactful patron. A quintessential club

man, never alone, his delightful conversation, and erudite, wise observations will be missed.

Leading an action-filled life full of interesting experiences, his prodigious work ethic ensured he never missed deadlines, even while travelling.

Our lives are immensely enriched for having known Mr. Muthiah, and for that we are grateful.

– A.V. Ram Mohan

* * *

Shocked to hear the sad news of the demise of S. Muthiah. More than his admirers, friends, associates, the city of Madras will be shedding tears. And they may not dry up for a very long time.

May his soul rest in peace.

– J.S. Raghavan

* * *

I was born in a Madras of leafy avenues, quiet neighbourhoods, and gentle pace of life. Over the years, it disintegrated into a city of chaos, squalor and my sense of belonging diminished. Muthiah changed all that. Through his eyes, I saw glorious history in every nook, heritage



the dustbin by government and sports bodies, I suspect someone more enlightened discovered it subsequently and took its message to officialdom and sports persons alike, judging by India's recent emergence as a serious competitor on the world arena in some disciplines, especially the brilliance of our women athletes. Mr. Muthiah did not stop with editing such works, but passionately advocated the propagation of their contents.

Hagiography is something Mr. Muthiah abhorred. The author of many biographies, mainly corporate, he would never consent to writing sycophantic paean of praise, however eminent the men or women he wrote about. Institutions could not escape his critical gaze, either, and the higher and more powerful the office, the greater his courage while espousing causes close to his heart. His herculean efforts to stop the demolition of the IG's office on the Marina standing up to the might of the state government was a sterling example of his fearlessness.

Mr. Muthiah was a proud man, and a truly humble one – proud of the value of his and his indefatigable team's work, of the history of his beloved Madras, of the talents he unearthed and nurtured, but also genuinely modest when it came to listing his virtues (which he never did). A stubborn, demanding, hard-to-please boss, he did not hesitate to own up when corrected, or praise good work generously. Finally, he was a wonderful host and pleasant travel companion, as my good friend S. Anvar and I found out during our road trips together in the 1990s.

– V. Ramnarayan

in every building, and a city with centuries of pioneering history. I learnt to listen to the stories the city had to tell. His passion and unwavering commitment to this city helped me rediscover Madras. With his passing Madras has lost her Boswell. I hope all those he inspired keep his dreams for the city alive.

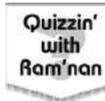
– Vinodha Ram Mohan

* * *

Dear, dear Muthu, your family, your friends, the people who loved your writings are bereft... and Madras will miss its most ardent chronicler. To you I owe my allegiance to Tamil Nadu; you opened my eyes to its history, its beauty, its culture. My most enduring memory is watching you and Valli together...that was an enviable relationship and I believe all of us who knew you well, grieved with and for you after she died. I do not wish you R.I.P. I wish you a good rebirth...and perhaps you may influence future generations of young people...you have done this state proud.

– Radha Gopalakrishnan

(More tributes on pages 6-11.)



A short quiz on the life and career of a respected family friend, Guru, well-wisher, historian (chronicler) and writer synonymous with this wonderful city.

1. Where was S. Muthiah born and what does the initial S stand for?

2. A qualified engineer, from which prestigious Ivy League university did Muthiah get a Masters degree in International Relations?

3. It is well-known that he worked at *The Times of Ceylon* for about 17 years before returning to India in the late 1960s. What prompted his return?

4. Passionate about sports (especially rugby), Muthiah wrote a widely-read weekly column in *The Times of Ceylon* for many years. What was it called?

5. Muthiah retired from active service as head of one of India's best-known corporate group's cartography printing company. Which one?

6. A man with passion for news throughout his career, he was a visiting faculty (teaching reporting) at a well-known centre of learning's journalism course (of which the QM was a student). Name the institute now based in Myslapore.

7. In 1980, he produced a tome about Madras' cultural, historical and architectural heritage which is now in its ninth edition and revered by the lovers of the metropolis. Name the original title and its present name.

8. Apart from his myriad books on Madras, the prolific author also wrote on remarkable institutions. So tell me, what were the subject of the books *Getting India on the Move*, *Down by the Adyar* and *A Planting Century*?

9. Going with the above theme, he wrote a handful of biographies of achievers. *Looking Back From 'Moulmein'* and *Born To Dare* dealt with which two prominent residents of Madras?

10. One of his many labours of love is this 28-year-old wonderful newsletter that you are now reading. In which month and year did Vol 1, Issue 1 come out?

11. He was also instrumental in launching a companion volume to *Madras Musings* which, as he once told me, was 'for women, about women and by men and women!' Name this magazine.

12. A regular contributor to *The Hindu*, history was made on November 15, 1999. How?

13. His short-lived column in *The Hindu* that told tales 'travelling on the five main roads that led out of the Fort in the city' was called...?

14. What did Muthiah start to bring together booklovers and discuss literary works at least once a fortnight?

15. On March 7, 2002, Muthiah was recognised by the Queen with an award for his relentless pursuit for the conservation and protection of Madras' historic environs. Name the award bestowed on him.

(Answers on page 12)

TRIBUTES Continued

Thank You, Muthiah Sir



Mr. Muthiah at the MLS library seen with Manohar Devadoss, Sujatha Shankar, K.R.A. Narasiah and Sriram V.

It was exactly three years ago that there was a mention about Madras Literary Society and the exhibition we hosted, in *Madras Miscellany*. Many good things started happening in MLS after that. Muthiah Sir, member number 5, was one of our senior-most members. He visited MLS after a long gap and stayed for three long hours. He looked at the restored books and patiently went through our paper on future plans.

He would enquire about our progress once in a while and give us many suggestions for improvement. When I went to his home to request Sir to give a talk in MLS, he said "Let's do a quiz on Madras," "you better know the answers and keep a bowl of chocolates to reward correct answers," he said with a smile. It was one of the most engaging and interesting events which have taken place in MLS. He patiently stood for all the selfies his fans wanted to take with him at the end of it.

During one of the conversations I had with him I mentioned that I was working

on post-Independent settlements of Madras, starting with Anna Nagar. We had published a booklet on the same. I was asked to meet him the next day and explain all the parts of the book. From that day on, he would always introduce me as the Anna Nagar history girl, and made sure we were included in press meets, celebrations and talks. And that was Sir, who was ready to encourage, acknowledge and appreciate the young and newcomers.

Another cherished time with Sir was, when I attended the PII Journalism course. He talked about his love for sports, his ideas on women fashion, politics, border issues, food, and many other subjects. He also gave homework. At the end of the course he asked, "can we have one more class?" All of us unanimously said - Yes! We could not get enough of his knowledge, passion, his encouragement and his interesting questions with a charming smile.

- Thirupurasundari Sevel

A beloved Mentor and Friend



If I had not joined the Journalism course at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on a whim, I would possibly have never met S. Muthiah. I was in the batch of 1992-93, the oldest by some measure, but I quickly got hooked, not missing a single evening class through the year.

looking for a public relations manager. It was the time I was determined to leave the public sector. I was eight years old with the insurance company and I knew I had to be careful. But there was something about this man that drew me to him. I took the plunge.

Mr. Muthiah taught us Reporting - we held him in awe. Before the end of the course he asked me whether I was serious about my insurance officer's job - the south-based conglomerate where he worked was

In fond remembrance of Mr. S. Muthiah

My parents Murthy and Balam, wife Usha, and work colleagues Shankar and Gomathy join me in penning these few words in fond remembrance of Mr. Muthiah.

Mr. Muthiah took me under his wing in 1992 when my dad introduced us to each other for possible typesetting work for my DTP business. His allergy for new-tech was legendary even then, so I didn't expect my computer-based solutions to cut much ice with him; but while Mr. Muthiah never trusted new-fangled machines, he trusted people.

It was my good fortune that, deserving or not, he found me worthy of his trust. Thus began my 25+ year journey in his service. Over this quarter of a century, he was guru and mentor to me personally, and well-wisher to my business and my family.

At work, he put us through our paces. There was no satisfying his quest for perfection. Year after year, he put us through the wringer, drove us up the wall and made us tear our hair in despair... achieving impossible deadlines while at least in major part meeting his high expectations on the typesetting of his books and the laying out of *Madras Musings* every fortnight.

That was his way. To first find potential in anyone he worked with... and once found, push, prod and guide, until the potential reflected in the delivery.

We are proud to say that we are what we are today because of his relentless efforts... and his unrelenting belief that we had something in us that even we were not aware of.

I am sure most of his proteges feel the same way about their interactions with Mr. Muthiah.

On the personal front, Mr. Muthiah was always there for us. Despite all his engagements, he made it a point to be with us at every celebration, be it my son's *upanayanam*, the launch of my daughter's maiden book by his own hands, or their weddings. He was always kind, caring, affectionate and endearing. He made it clear that his blessings were always with us.

We too were always extended the famous hospitality of the Muthiahs at all their celebrations, not to mention his unfailing "Amma, coffee *kondaa*," whenever any of us met him at home, surrounded by his books and papers, and usually the ominous proofs with which he was going to roast us over the coffee.

Mr. Muthiah's passing is yet to sink in. At work, Shankar will feel it when the next issue of *Musings* comes up and there is no "sir's handwriting" to decipher, though Mr. Muthiah himself told us, "You must now tell me," when we once asked him what he had written. And at home, the next time Usha says by force of habit, "Romba naal aachu, one of these days let's drop by and meet Mr. Muthiah," it will dawn on us that we have left it too late.

Adieu, Sir. We are going to miss you sorely.

- Krishna Prasad

Mot Juste Communication Services Private Limited

As communications director at the TTK Group, Mr. Muthiah was my boss for a decade. Together, we brought out the group's award-winning in-house magazine, *TTK Spectrum*. I might have been a gold medalist in journalism and confident of my English language writing skills, but Mr. Muthiah, the editor, soon brought me down to terra firma.

I vividly remember the day I received the first lot of drafts I had written for the magazine, carrying Mr. Muthiah's stamp. His driver, Malairaj, would bring such edited versions to my room from time to time. The first lot carried the editor's favourite Wality fountain pen ink scribbles, which formed patterns between paragraphs, dotted margins and created a sort of mosaic at the bottom of almost every page. On one

page, there was an extra splash of ink and two prominent words emblazoned across: What nonsense! All the articles, of course, had to be rewritten for a second round of editing.

On most Saturday mornings those days, Mr. Muthiah would arrive at the TTK headquarters on Cathedral Road. He would come to my room first, but only after spending some time with Mr. T.T. Vasu. He would get me to order what he liked - either black coffee or lemon tea. And then he would go through the page layouts I had prepared, the headlines, etc. No adjectives for people, he would insist; for products, it's fine. Do not use unnecessary words; the lead in a news story should say something new and you should make it interesting; avoid label headlines...

(Continued on page 12)

Muthanna

K.S. Padmanabhan was a close friend of Muthiah's and an associate in some of his pet projects. His wife, Chandra reminisces about it.

It is with a sad and heavy heart I am reminiscing about Paddu's and my association with Muthiah, which existed for more than 4 decades. In 1975, my husband and I started the Madras branch of East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Ltd. and shifted base from Delhi. A few years earlier Muthiah also shifted to Chennai from Sri Lanka. Thus began our relationship as Publisher-Author, and above all a great friendship.

He wrote his first book – a thin version of the present edition, titled *Madras Discovered*, which sold for just Rs 10/-. The residents of the city loved it and Muthanna, as he was fondly known to me, decided to do more research. *Madras Rediscovered* was born! During the course of our association – East West published several books of his. Most popular among these were *Madras Rediscovered*, *Madras Miscellany* and a coffee table book *Madras it's Past and Present*. *Madras Rediscovered* has run into several editions. In spite of his failing health, he brought out a revised edition, which was published last year under the East West imprint!

Sometime in the eighties Paddu and I, decided to bring out a magazine dedicated to reviewing books called *The Indian Review of Books*. Muthanna was also involved in this project.

In the early nineties both Paddu and Muthanna decided to start the Madras Book Club with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Kumar of the British Council. To this day it still functions!

A few months back my son, Gautam Padmanabhan, his wife and I visited Muthanna since he was ailing. He was full of new ideas for future books and promised Gautam to send manuscripts as soon as they were ready! He was an amazing person with a lot of zest. Despite several changes in the ownership of the publishing company – the author-publisher relationship continued.

Muthanna always said "everybody has a story in him" and encouraged everyone to write. When he started *Madras Musings* he gave me a cookery column called "Cooking with Chandra". This led to my becoming a cookbook writer! He was always a source of great encouragement. For me and my family it is a great personal loss. He will always be remembered with love and admiration.

The Gentleman from Colombo

Long before he became the beloved Chronicler of Madras, society sage and Uncle Muthu to a new generation of writers, artists, social activists and heritage enthusiasts, there was another S. Muthiah, an elegant gentleman and boulevardier of Colombo.

"He did not just belong to high society of Colombo, he was right up there with the best," recalls Rohini Shankar, architect and designer. She remembers how he and his friends would be guests at her family home in Kurunegela in North Western Sri Lanka. "Of course, we were too young to mix with them but they were amongst the top people in the society of those days." She gestures with her dainty diamond ringed fingers to indicate just how high up Muthiah was in those times.

Imagine him now in the Swinging Sixties at Mount Lavinia Hotel, Colombo's most favored venue for the likes of Hollywood stars like Vivien Leigh, Lawrence Olivier and Kirk Douglas, still alive at 105. Do we add Alec Guinness and William Holden who also stayed there? They were there for the making of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* that was shot mostly in the jungles of Sri Lanka.

The Sun may have set on the Empire but it continued to rise on Mount Lavinia. At the Colombo Race Course men wore shiny white sharkskin suits and Sri Lankan society women wore their Channels and pearls. This is where Ted Fordyce, a tiny wizened Australian jockey raced and won the hand of the daughter of the man who had hired him. In one of his Metro columns Muthiah remembers Dhanalakshmi Fordyce: "Tall willowy, dusky, Tamil-looking Dhanalakshmi, Rasathy to many of us, was one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. She was one of the first students at Darpana in Ahmedabad and later danced with Mrinalini Sarabhai's troupe."

The most beautiful of the



Mr. Muthiah with Geeta Doctor.

Muthu, my friend

I first met Muthu in Bangalore. He was visiting with his mother, and stayed with us. I was 14 years old, and he had just come down from New York where he was studying. I met him again years later, after he had relocated to Chennai, with Valli. I will always cherish our evening 'Mafia' meetings with friends, on the verandah of the Madras Club. As I will our

Hello, Girl!

My father, the late R.K.K. Menon, a veteran journalist in his time was a good friend of Mr. Muthiah. At our first formal meeting over an editing assignment brief he was giving me, our conversation was filled with my innumerable Yes, Sir's. A few minutes of that, and he said, "Cut out that Sir...call me Uncle"! And it was precisely at that point that my life changing journey with Uncle Muthiah began.

'Hello, Girl', was his usual greeting whenever I dropped in on him, mostly mid-morning... 'By 11ish, and don't come half hour earlier' he would joke! During those quiet times, he would generally discuss ideas on his beloved city to follow up for *Madras Musings*, institutions to discover nuggets about, and people to contact. And as usual, he would take out that meticulously compiled directory (laminated precisely to prevent damage!) to pick out the chosen contact.

In his gentle firm way, he nurtured my interest in civic concerns and stretched writing thresholds. In the early years, he would actually call me every other day, generally around 8.15 a.m. (when he woke up) to catalyse the ideas, to get me started! And once I gathered steam myself, to write on a plethora of civic and environmental issues in, he also modestly stepped back to guide only where he felt absolutely necessary. A perfectionist, he would occasionally fly off the handle if things were not how he felt they ought to be. But immediately after, he would be as gentle and gracious as ever, all upset forgotten... 'Will you have some coffee, or rasam?' was the next query.

Once my interest in civic issues led me onto founding Nizhal, a Trust for sensitive greening in urban areas, my time for *Madras Musings* came down and I could sense Uncle Muthiah's disapproval. 'Once you have started running behind the trees, you have no time for me!' he would often say. 'Do that and do this too', he would say. But he also empathised with the grass root level challenges I faced and would listen patiently and keenly to my outpourings, offering the names of helpful contacts he felt could support us in any way.

Burgher women, Sinhalese women with Dutch antecedents, the famous artists and designers of that time, the Bawa Brothers, Barbara Sansoni, the textile diva, Ena de Silva, sculptor, George Keyt, artist were some of the internationally known people in Colombo. Muthiah's father was the Mayor of Colombo. After sending his son to study in the U.S.,

quite a feat in those days, when everyone went to the U.K., Muthiah returned to join *The Times of Ceylon*. He was to remain there for 17 years, working under British

editors and rising up to be second in command.

I can't resist adding the story of how the Mount Lavinia got its name. When the first British Governor of Sri Lanka came to take up the post, he fell in love with a native woman. Her name was Lovina Appasuwa, of Portuguese-Sri Lankan descent. While he built his splendid Palladian style mansion on the hill overlooking the bay towards the Laccadives, he directed his engineers to bore a tunnel linking the wine cellar to Lovina's house close by. Their love flourished in the wine cellar. Governor Sir Thomas Maitland could not however marry his gorgeous native woman who nonetheless became Lady Lavinia.

By the time I met Muthiah in the early '80s he had become



When Nizhal published a book on Heritage Trees *Living Landmarks of Chennai* he was delighted and actively supported its formal book release and the planning from start to finish. The environmental heritage of Chennai was also of keen interest to him. Our walk around the Kotturpuram Tree Park, where I showed off Chennai's first Community Park and its successes, was truly special. And though Uncle Muthiah spoke little that evening, he promptly wrote a rare effusive note on our eco restoration work in his weekly column for *The Hindu*, 'Madras Miscellany'! And a few years later on our organic farming work across prisons of Tamil Nadu, and with the historic Maadi Poonga and the community around.

I remember well our last meeting over a month ago, by which time his health was failing but he was still going as strong as he could with his writing commitments. And the sharing of our lives and routines and his affectionate peck on my cheek before walking me to the road, in spite of needing help to straighten up from the sitting position! 'Once I am up, I am fine!' he smiled.

Thank you very much, Uncle Muthiah... for all the learning, thank you for being part of my life and Nizhal's, for the support and kindness and encouragement you have always shown to us. Will miss you very much!

—Shobha Menon

as they say a family man. There was little left of the boulevardier in him except in his exquisite manners. He knew for instance to greet a lady in the manner of Maurice Chevalier; leaning lightly forward trailing a whiff of after-shave and murmuring "How are you my dear?" with the merest brush of lips on proffered cheek!

Valli I began to realise was the power behind the man. A company secretary who worked during the week, she typed his hand-written manuscripts, managed his finances, the two daughters whom he adored, and the household. When she passed away, so much earlier than him, something in him died. Even if to the outside world he picked up his pen, never missed a deadline for his Hindu Metro column, put the pen jauntily in his left side pocket and sallied forth.

That's how I would like to remember him – straw hat, pen and binoculars in hand singing perhaps: "Thank Heavens for those fabulous days! Without Valli, what would a man like me do!"

— Geeta Doctor

Madras Club Library sub-committee meetings, and, most recently, our Third Sunday 'Books for Breakfast' get-togethers, also at the Madras Club. I was lucky to have spent precious prime time with Muthu just before he passed away. I was privileged to know him and will sorely miss this really good friend.

— Malathi Ramachandran

The Muthiah I knew

It was sometimes in the early 1990's I was introduced to S. Muthiah by V.R. Devika. I had just passed out of Loyola Institute of Visual Communication, trying my hand at freelance writing as well as photography. Muthiah loved the tonal ranges in my black and white prints. Thus started our relationship. It was the time the printing industry was also going through major changes with letter offset giving way to multi colour offset machines. I became a part of his team, photographing for quite a few books he would author, including *The Raj Bhavans of Tamil Nadu*. I couldn't have asked for a better mentor. He always had a clear idea on what he wanted, and any project of his would start with a proper briefing on the subject, a list of pictures, the kind of picture he would want for a book cover and letters seeking permission to photograph addressed to authorities concerned.

Even as my photography career bloomed, it was to the credit of S. Muthiah that my own interest in history and writing became focused. He had this gentle knack of asking questions about things around us, which when one went about seeking answers would open new avenues. That is how while talking about Tamil maritime past, Muthiah once wondered aloud as to why there are no record of the early ships. This is what led me to the Azhagiya Nambi temple at Thirukurugudi, where there was a beautiful bas relief of a ship with traders and their goods, which included horses and other animals. Perhaps it was already known to the locals and a few research scholars, but that discovery set me to work more on the maritime past, which I was also soon to discover as the reason for Islam's arrival in this part of the country, even as it was spreading across West Asia in the 7th Century.

It was at Muthiah's insistence that I got reluctantly drafted into the Madras Gazetteer project. When the project was mid way through, the earlier person entrusted with writing the chapter on Muslim history had dropped out. I was neck deep in my commercial work and hesitated to take it up, but Muthiah won me over saying "otherwise the community history will go unrepresented." Even though the project was on Madras, Muthiah also made a specific request, asking me to start my writing with the history of Islam's early arrival in Tamil Nadu. He said "not many are aware of this unique aspect of history of Islam in Tamil Nadu, so it needs to be told to contextualise it." He was genuinely concerned that no aspect of Madras history or any history should be left out



Kaviko AbdurRahman, S. Muthiah at the *Yaadhum* DVD release function at RMRL along with Anwar.

for any reason. So when I made *Yaadhum*, a documentary film on my search for my Tamil Muslim identity and history, Muthiah was a pillar of support. He volunteered to correct my script, released the film along with acclaimed Tamil poet late Kaviko Abdur Rahman at Roja Muthiah Research library. Thereafter he would recommend the film to many friends and acquaintances of his and also ensured its screening in various forums. Even as he promoted

my film, he would gently ask questions about the current situation of the Muslim community, expressing concern at the changing cultural practices. These were hard questions but put in his typical mild language, from a friend and well wisher with good intentions in mind.

That was Muthiah, not just to me but to a whole lot of people, cutting across race, religion or ethnicity – A friend, philosopher and Guide.

– S. Anwar

What made Muthu write?

When we were struggling to form a Board of Trustees for the Roja Muthiah Research Library in 2000, Muthiah was the first person we thought of. Sundar, the present Director of the library and I, met him. After a number of questions, he visited RMRL, then in a pitiful rented building in Mogapair. He got the concept of the library and agreed to become a trustee. That was a critical point in the growth of that institution. We could attract some more eminent names on the board. The library was of Tamil imprints, mostly unconventional library material. But Muthu saw the heritage value of the collection.

His presence in the Board of Trustees was solid and lent it tremendous strength. He would keenly follow the activities of the library and contribute. He gave us contacts to pursue and offered his counsel in times of trouble. That he was politically liberal and progressive suited us well.

Though he was keen on heritage and pushed the idea to Chennaites, as he could not read or write Tamil, he had a tendency to ignore that domain. For instance, the building in which Ramalingam aka Vallalar delivered his first sermon in Chennai never figured in his list. We often had discussions on such issues and Muthu was always polite and unfazed during the proceedings. The name change for Madras for instance. In one of the meet-

ings of *The Madras Gazetteer*, for which I was a contributor, I said it should be Chennai Gazetteer. Muthu believed that Chennai was a fresh name chosen instead of Madras. The name Chennai has been in parlance for at least two centuries, I pointed out, and that what has happened is out of the two, one name has been chosen. He did not agree. But what I loved about the man was that he did not let such differences affect the relationship.

He had his critics, academics particularly who saw his work as a mere corpus of empirical details, lacking in analysis. They also looked upon *Madras Musings* as an elitist periodical that disregarded the vernacular tradition of the city. In fact M.S.S. Pandian wrote an article in an English daily on these lines. Two days later, Pandian, Muthu and I met at the end of a workshop in a beach resort near Mamallapuram. This article came up for discussion.

The great encourager

In the passing away of S. Muthiah, veteran journalist, historian and conservationist, we have lost the man who kindled the spark in every Chennaiite to know more about "Our Town Madras". When I moved to this metropolis in 1989 after spending the early years in north India, I got to know several aspects about this city on reading two very interesting books – *Tales of Old and New Madras* and *Madras Discovered* – written by S. Muthiah. Am glad I have a copy of both.

I got a chance to meet the soft spoken, ever smiling "Mr. Muthiah" soon after I became a member of *Sruti*'s editorial team. He was a well-wisher of *Sruti* magazine and a good friend of its founder-editor N. Pattabhi Raman, and would occasionally drop in for a chat. In fact, Muthiah was involved in its initial printing process and he recalled the association in *The Hindu's* Madras Miscellany column after attending the launch of the 400th issue of *Sruti* magazine in January 2018. Here are a few lines in his inimitable style:

"I was there at the recent release of the 400th edition of *Sruti*, the premier music,

dance and theatre magazine. I was there when the very first copy of the first issue came out of the trimming machine 34 years ago and flipped through it to make sure we at TT MAPS had not made an error while printing.... In black and white, it looked a sophisticated magazine. Its well-written content offered good reading, only a couple of pieces having a technical slant. I have no interest in music or dance, but I knew what *Sruti* contained; being a conscientious printer then, I'd read every word a client brought in for printing to make sure I wouldn't get into trouble. The funny thing is that I still read *Sruti*, except when it gets technical. That's saying something about the magazine.... It was the Bossu (T.T. Vasu) who got me printing *Sruti* when it started. After asking for a quote for a monthly magazine, he suggested I print it at half the price. Helping a cause, he'd said at a time when CSR had not even entered the vocabulary. When the internal auditors asked questions, it was my baby not his, so I met Pattabhi Raman for the first time a couple of years later, asking for a small price hike. Sathyamoorthy, the Bossu's Man Friday, found him a new printer. But the former UN civil servant (Pattabhi Raman) and I kept in touch."

Muthiah described the passing away of his friend Pattabhi Raman in *Madras Musings* as "A loss to the world of small, serious journals in India". He also reproduced several cartoons about the "Mad Madras Season" as a tribute to his memory.

Muthiah would often reproduce articles from *Sruti* in MM. Meticulous and principled that he was, he never failed to give credit and would send us a cheque for the same though we never asked him to do so. We cherish his interaction with all of us.

Deeply passionate as he was about the heritage of Madras, Muthiah enjoyed the articles, the cartoons and the statistics published about the music and dance season in *Sruti*. Come December, he would ask me to write an article about the Madras Season for *Madras Musings* — which I did for many years. Although he knew my name is Janaki, for some reason he would refer to me as 'Jayamalini of Suruthi!' It was a good joke that we shared.

He, who was passionate about Madras that is Chennai, was responsible in a major way for all of us to celebrate Madras Day, and continued to raise his voice for conservation, is no more. The best homage we can offer him is to uphold the causes he held dear.

– S. Janaki
Editor-in-Chief, *Sruti*



S. Muthiah, MBE

This article was written by Timeri N Murari in 2002, when Mr. Muthiah was awarded the MBE by the Queen of England. Much of what he wrote held true at the time of Mr. Muthiah's passing.

Writer, printer and chronicler of our times, S. Muthiah was presented with the 'Honorary Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire' award recently.

TIS TIME to salute success and write about it. Like most of our achievements, recognition first comes from those outside India. My friend S. Muthiah has been honoured with the MBE by HM Queen Elizabeth II. Let me get the wording right as I know Muthu cares deeply about accuracy.

He's been awarded the 'Honorary Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire'. Now that is something to cheer about.

In far away England, our ex-imperial masters have recognised Muthu's talents. I had hoped the British Empire would have coughed up an airfare for him to meet the Queen at Buckingham Palace. I would've

loved to see him in a top hat and a morning suit with cut away tails, sipping tea with HM on those regal lawns. But they're broke as we are and the Investiture Ceremony takes place in Chennai.

On second thoughts, it is appropriate, as he is the major historian of the city.

I have known Muthu now for many years and been enriched by his friendship. We have a couple of coincidences in common. Both of us began our careers as engineers, shunted into that profession by our respective fathers. We're of the same profession, journalists, and we worked for British newspapers. While he was *The Observer's* correspondent in Sri Lanka, I was working for *The Guardian* around the same time. *The Guardian* now owns *The Observer*.

In the manner of old friendships, I cannot quite remember how we met now. I believe it was through his niece, who told me I had to meet her Uncle Muthu, the writer. The meeting didn't happen immediately.

We probably met at a function or a dinner party and fell into conversation. He is difficult to pick out of a crowd, as

he's a soft-spoken unassuming man, who walks, or marches I think, with very straight shoulders, looking straight ahead.

He also possesses the simplest of wardrobes, a plain white bush shirt and slacks. His shirt was once a topic of conversation.

He was amused I'd paid a few hundred rupees for a shirt, while he couldn't be bothered with such sartorial splendour and still had a local tailor stitch his shirts for a tenth of the amount.

He exudes an aura of calm, which always surprises me, as I know his mind is spinning faster than a particle accelerator. I can't even catalogue his tremendous output of fine work, while I plod along with the odd-column, a novel and a film script or two. He still works on an old manual typewriter, typing with two fingers and out of those fingers have flowed weekly columns, *MADRAS MUSINGS* and numerous books. When I say I am enriched by his friendship, I should also state his books have informed, enlightened and enriched me.

I have learnt more about my city through his *MADRAS Rediscovered*, *MADRAS*, *The Gracious*

City (he must regret this subtitle today), *At Home in Madras*, and *MADRAS, Its Past and Present*. They're my Bibles should any visitor question me on anything, from Fort St. George to St Thomas' Mount to George Town.

If Muthu hasn't written about something, a quick call and I have the information. He's taught me the history of cricket in Madras through his book on the Madras Cricket Club and I should learn about the history of Sri Lankan cricket soon.

I've learnt about plantation life and the rich and colourful heritage of the Chettiars. He's even chronicled "The Splendour of South India", for those of us who don't explore our States.

The sheer depth of his knowledge has him now on the lecture circuit for American tourists. He's just returned from a week of floating around Kerala with a bunch of octogenarians. Of course, a week away from his old typewriter put him way back in his work, he complained.

He still lectures on journalism and on his other profession as a printer. He is the front man

for the Madras Book Club's monthly meetings. I'm constantly surprised by his prodigious energy.

He pops up all over the place in his columns. One moment meeting a team of environmentalists, the next at a conference of our babus.

He is in the front line to preserve our cultural heritage against our Government.

He chronicled the victory of the IG of Police office on the Marina but he's also written about the destruction and loss that occurs around us daily.

When I write that he has enriched me, I guess that's being selfish. Muthu has enriched everyone he's met, and especially this city now called Chennai.

If the British Empire recognises his work, I don't see why the Indian government doesn't try to top that with one of its highest awards.

And I bet, he'd receive it in his bush shirt and slacks.

— Published with kind permission of *The Hindu*

Subbiah Muthiah, the Madras legend

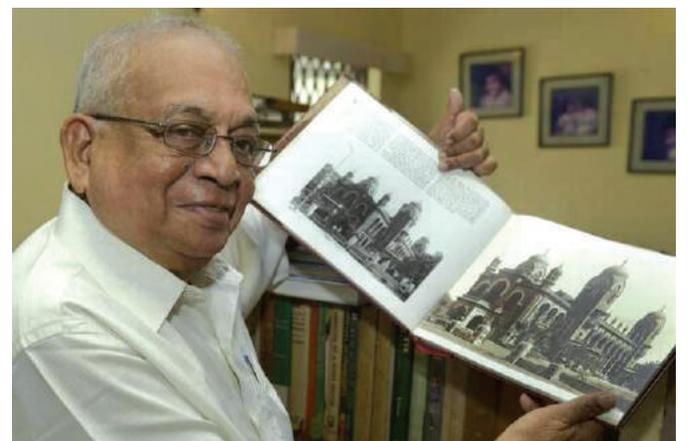
Dr. A. Raman

Must have been the summer of either 1984 or 1985. Nicholas Casimir Raj, S.J., Principal of Loyola College, Madras – deeply enthusiastic in bringing about dynamic changes to the College – and I were discussing various college-related matters. Casimir had just returned from Santa Clara (California) and was bubbling with enthusiasm. One project we talked of was to replace the 'calendar' – that included monotonous information about the College and a few other details on academic matters, issued to students at the start of each academic year – with an attractively printed and handsomely illustrated 'handbook'. Casimir and I went to TT Maps, a large and

modern photo-offset printing facility in the neighbourhood of Madras. That is where I first met Muthiah. In the draft manuscript on the Loyola handbook, I had included a 5-page text, 'History of the College'. As the printer, Muthiah had read through that part of my text. That opportunity formally 'introduced' me to him. He was then gathering information on Madras's history, especially the book, *MADRAS* by N.S. Ramaswami of the *Indian Express*, Madras. Muthiah introduced me to S(amuel) E(benezer) Rungnadhan *et al.*'s tercentenary volume on Madras (1939). This conversation instilled a desire in me to know about the town I was born in. He also spoke to

me about various other authors, who had written on Madras. He fired the academic spark in me.

Because of the Loyola handbook project, I had occasion to meet him several times at TT Maps. Our *guru-sishya* relationship got strengthened. He used to alert me about his talks on Madras's history held at various venues. I need to say here that he was wanted at various intellectual forums of Madras, since knowing about the past of Madras was considered something 'new' and 'unknown' to the people of Madras! I was a regular attendee at these talks. He used to invite me to his home in T. Nagar. In my interactions with him, he was absolutely enchanting and charismatic. I fell for his knowledge and I was being academically influenced by him to get interested into learning more about Madras's past. He was so impactful that I started reading about the 'olde' Madras, which made me do my (amateurish) research on this subject, thus gradually sinking me into writing on Madras's colonial-period history. At first, he encouraged me to write for the fledgling *MADRAS MUSINGS*, compiling current literature on Madras's history. I thought this was a beneficial and informative effort: (i) beneficial because this learning and practice would empower me to know about Madras's past, and (ii) informa-



tive because, in the process, I would be informing my fellow residents of Madras about Madras's past. The empowerment reinforced my confidence to take this subject on to myself, although I found it extremely challenging, simply because I have never had any formal training in history. At one time, he spoke to me about others who were passionately writing on various aspects of Madras, such as Sriram V., Theodore Bhaskaran, Randor Guy, and suggested, therefore, that I should focus on exploring evolution of science in Madras, between 1639 and 1947.

He trained me to think simply, but correctly. He trained me to search for accurate details and consult original documents. In that sense see he is my teacher and mentor. Whenever I was doubtful, I relied on his

acumen and wisdom. He, not only with readiness in his face, but also with readiness in his heart clarified my questions. A great personality, who called a spade, a spade. On many an occasion, I have been chided and scoffed at for my errors and omissions. I remember his sharp response to me, when I misspelt Willingdon (Freeman-Freeman Thomas, 1866-1936) confusing him with Wellington, the capital of New Zealand from 1865, when he replied quoting 'et tu?' from Shakespeare. I revelled in his warmth of heart and kindness. He shined his knowledge and wisdom on many, like a selfless lighthouse tower. The words of Matthews (5, 16), *Let your light shine before people in such a way that they see your good works, ...*, reverberate in me, as

(Continued on page 10)

Uma and Karthik Narayanan have been staunch supporters of Madras Musings, through their entities Ucal Exports and the Chatnath Trust.

As condolence messages pour in, it is abundantly clear that Mr. Muthiah was like our great banyan tree in the Theosophical Society grounds. In his benign shade, many talents developed and creativity flourished. I owe him a deep personal debt – he was the mentor who encouraged my husband Karthik Narayanan and me to write.

Mr. Muthiah recognised Karthik's proficiency in Tamil, entrusting him with translating his oeuvre – a prodigious task which Karthik did with enthusiasm and commitment. He endorsed my work, talking about it in glowing terms, contributing substantially to its success.

I will miss him and his zest for life. My life is poorer for his passing.

— Uma Narayanan

The Boston link

Sitting at my desk in Boston, in MIT where I edited strands of DNA for the Human Genome Project, I'd read S. Muthiah's Madras Miscellany during breaks. I loved this column in The Hindu because it dealt with every aspect of my hometown, mostly its past. It was like learning interesting details of your mother's life before she became your mother, and loving her more for it. One December, on a visit home, I rang up the man who wrote about Madras institutions, personalities, and neighborhoods. I had hoped to mumble my thanks and hang up but he asked me to drop in if I was free.

So, I first met the legendary chronicler of Madras at his residence in a cul-de-sac in T.Nagar. The gentleman treated me as an equal despite the years that separated us. We got talking. Turns out, he too had known the frigid winters of Boston, firsthand, as a student at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). His father, a Mayor of Colombo, had sent him abroad to become an engineer. Tinkering with machines was not his thing, but he didn't want to disappoint an affectionate dad.

"But I should have never been given an engineering degree," he said cheerfully. Writing saved the day. In the

lab, three students were teamed up to run experiments. While the other two did the work, he carefully observed the proceedings and wrote reports which his instructors loved. The narrative won the team good grades. And one day, a flyer on campus caught his eye. The student newspaper was looking for recruits. He showed up at the office to be greeted with, "Can you write in English?" W.T. Keble, the headmaster of his school in Sri Lanka, the author of many books, had encouraged him to read widely, and to write. So he, and did write for the paper.

He was not miserable during his undergraduate days, I'm sure. When I took my husband to meet him, he asked him, not me "How is old Scollay Square?" From our blank stares, he realized we hadn't heard of the place, but didn't bother to explain, unusually enough. So, I went home to dig up more on this fairly recent piece of Boston history. You see what it means to come under the man's influence? It is not Madras alone, you have to be alert and alive wherever you are. Turns out, this had been a tract of nightlife in Boston.

What then is Scollay Square?" wrote Pear Schiff in her 1952 *New York Times* best selling novel of the same name.

And Madras gently weeps...

(Continued from page 4)

protective of the manner in which the Book Club was run, the Chief never put up with any fractious behaviour, calling to order self-appointed orators, seeing through grandstanding cunningly disguised as a question.

The memories are endless; thousands of moments explode everywhere.

What more can you say?

Of someone who took the trouble to sit in the front row whenever you had to speak, so he could control, by a series of semaphoric gestures, your regrettable habit of talking extra fast when nervous?

Who, on what proved to be one of the last major book projects you'd work on with him, decided to put your name in as co-author...a stupendous honour as unexpected as it was sudden. In a world territorial about almost everything, here was generosity that ought to be, but rarely is, the very essence of a true guru. You'll never know if you did enough to earn this or if you even deserved it. You can only feel blessed.

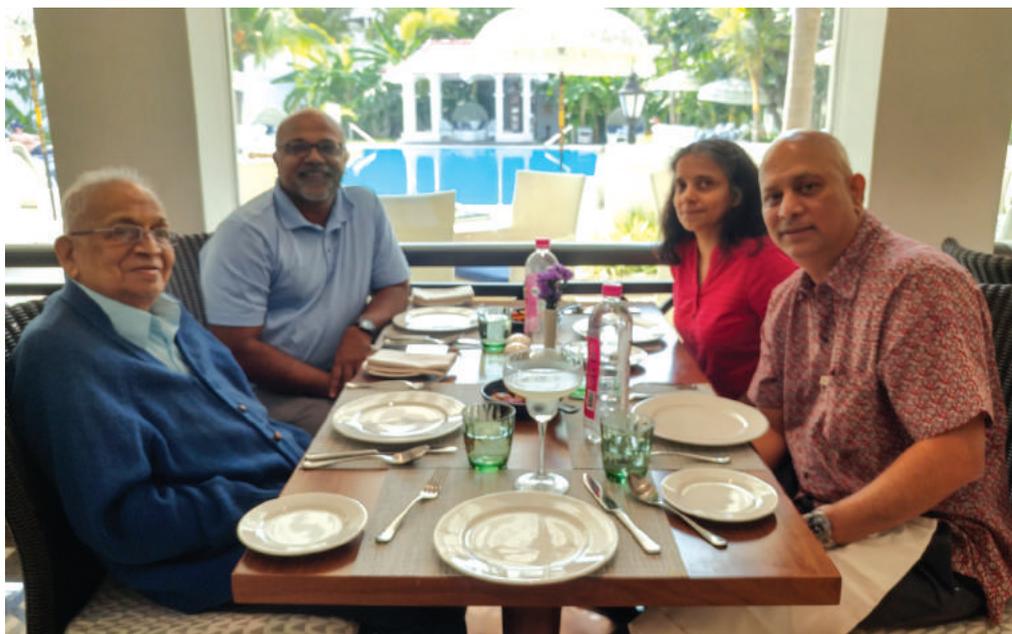
And what can you say about the sheer luck of finding someone who re-introduced you to the self you had forgotten somewhere along the way?

Who is actual proof of the statement that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. Except you don't know if you were ready; you just remember you needed a mentor to appear.

And he did.

So Muthu, whichever verandah of a grand old heritage building you now grace, sitting in a comfortable chair with those tall white columns behind you, surrounded by friends and conversation that will inevitably lead to stories, then to books, here's to you, my friend, guide, philosopher, teacher...and most of all, a second father.

You will be missed every day.



S. Muthiah with Siva Panchanathan, Vijaysree and Subash Pereira at Taj Connemara, a favourite venue of his.

"Ask any sailor whose ship lays up in the Boston Navy Yard..." she wrote. Or ask any male college student, who made visits to Howard's Temple of Burlesque (featuring Rose La Rose, Peaches, Irma the Body) a requisite part of undergraduate life, elaborates writer Susan Orlean. In 1962, Scollay Square was razed to make way for the staid plaza, Government Center. The disreputable square's name was slowly erased from people's minds. When I reached Boston, twenty five years later, nobody spoke of this place, which I found a mention of in Orleans' Red Sox and Bluefish. If Uncle Muthu went to this place full of cafes "ripe with impropriety" as an undergraduate, why, I am happy for him.

In a 2011 interview with *The Hindu*, he said "Work keeps me going, so does good life. I still love my drink, I still love to gossip." He mentioned that he always had a couple of drinks before dinner. "It's a habit I got from my father," he said. "The only difference is that while he drank only Scotch, I drink only Indian whisky. The best thing about Indian whisky is that no matter what brand you drink, it tastes the same." I wonder how the newspaper's readers processed this information. The prudish in Madras can outdo the original Puritans of

New England when it comes to "vices." Though he was a public figure, he didn't care about projecting any particular image. Ardent fangirl, I loved him all the more for it.

"All my old girlfriends are still in Colombo," he often said with a big smile. Once when he told me, "I don't have that many friends in Madras," I was taken aback. Of course, his best years were in Sri Lanka where he went to school and worked as a journalist after he got a graduate degree in International Relations from America. He came to Madras only when he was 40. Yes we make most of our best friends when we are young, in the first three decades of our life. But so many people in Madras were happy to be associated with him in any capacity. Wasn't that enough? Can it ever be enough?

Though he had regaled us all with so many stories about Madras, my favorite was the one on Ice House, a landmark building, across from Marina Beach. This was a place where ice was stored in the 19th century. Back then, ships carried crystalline ice cut from frozen ponds around Boston to a few tropical ports (Later, they also sent crisp New England apples to these tropical climes.) Ours is the only city where the facility lives on though it has

been remodeled extensively. The building resembles a pink wedding cake and now houses a museum for Swami Vivekananda but unlike Scollay Square, the name Ice House lives in public memory. This frozen water trade wins no mention in our history textbooks. To others it may be nothing more than a forgotten bit of commerce, but the journey of ice appears extraordinary to me, connecting as it does my two hometowns.

Subbiah, handsome Mayor of Colombo who drank two pegs of whisky every night, lived to the ripe old age of 97, and was active till the very end. At first he was not happy with his son's career choice. but got on famously with him later. He encouraged his son to write a book on Chettiars, the merchant community they belonged to. Uncle Muthu believed he'd live as long as his father, but illness robbed the raconteur of half a dozen good years. There was no self pity even when he saw the end coming. "I will be back later this year. I will see you then," I told him last month and he smiled that same boyish smile. "Why not?" the smile suggested.

I can't believe I won't see him again.

– Vijee
(Vijaysree Venkatraman)

The Man for Madras

(Continued from page 9)

I write this piece with a deep sense of nostalgia.

He was a strong soul, who shed much light on Madras – an ugly and dirty town today, which had its genesis in 1639. He was so powerfully effective that he is seen by every admirer of the ugly Madras as 'Mr. Madras' in a prideful, metaphorical sense. His name has become synonymous with Madras. He has indelibly carved his name

in the annals of the history of Madras. Although the Government had awkwardly changed the name to Chennai, the term Madras will live for ever, only because of the deep inscription Muthiah had carved in the stony pages of Madras. He not only inspired me as a dynamic and effective speaker in public forums, but also as a brilliant writer, who had a facile knack of communicating powerfully and impactfully. The Madras

Day project, which has today grown to 'Madras Month' is solely because of him. We owe our deep sense of thanks in making us feel proud of Madras and its forgotten contributions to India at large.

He has left an unfillable void among a host of admirers and friends. A legend in every thinkable sense.

– Dr. A. Raman

The Honorary Anglo-Indian

The Anglo-Indian Community in India has been a much loved, yet much misunderstood one. Depending on the season, people ascribed many things to the Anglo-Indian: cool, fun-loving, simple-minded, generous, oafish, sexy, skilled, laidback, gullible, apolitical and so on. The British did it with scorn, the Indian with sarcasm. The history of the community was brushed under the carpet, its contribution to nation-building ignored and its social presence frowned upon. But India came into her own in the 1990s thanks to liberalisation, and so did the Anglo-Indian.

One person who keenly watched the community unfold over time was S. Muthiah. He himself was taught his 3 Rs and table manners by a Mrs. Smith, his Secretary in later years was a Mrs. Dubier and he was acquainted with a lot of Burghers during his time in Ceylon. In Madras, he interacted with Dr. Beatrix D'Souza when she was a Member of Parliament, and thereafter. He was impressed with Harry MacLure's *Anglos In The Wind* (the Madras-based international magazine on the community) and sometimes drew notes from it for his writings on the city. He took inter-

est in his special issue on hockey, highlighted its key aspects in his Madras Miscellany column for *The Hindu* and even attended the Dinner Dance held at St. Bede's School in San Thomé in January 2009 at the end of an all-India Anglo-Indian hockey tournament. Quite recently, he picked up Dr. Bryan Peppin's cameo on Pallavaram in the magazine, and reproduced it in *Madras Musings*, a weekly that he edited. He also made it a point to include the Anglo-Indian community in the Madras Week celebrations held each year, and as many would attest, the community responded with panache. The Madras Book Club, chaperoned by him, was also instrumental in the launch of many Anglo-Indian related books, *Double Cream Memsahib*, *The Secret Vindaloo* and *Kipling's Daughter* to name a few. When Jenny Mallin visited from the U.K, promoting her book *A Grandmother's Legacy*, Muthiah spontaneously called us over to his home after the event, where he offered us beer, red wine and canapés.

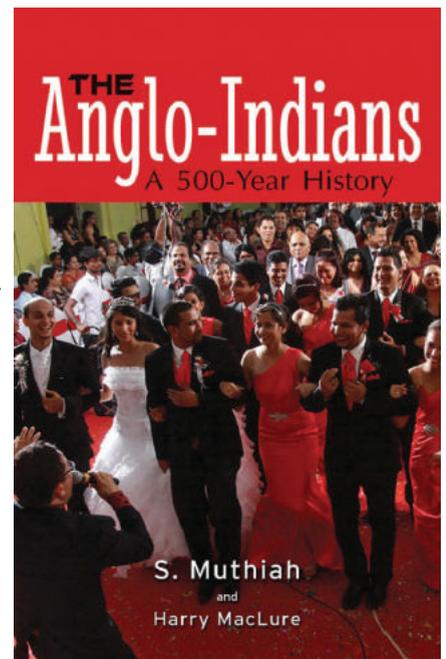
For some reason, Muthiah looked at the community with a loving eye. He recognised its immense contribution in the field of education across

the country, through the various schools it ran or helped run, and certainly through the ICSE Board of Education which its leaders A.E.T. Barrow and Frank Anthony set up. He acknowledged its contribution in the fields of Defence (where Anglo-Indians held key positions, especially in the Air Force), the Railways, Sports and above all the role of its women who were the country's first actresses, hostesses, secretaries and nurses, and were thus the forerunners of women's liberation in India. Unknown to the community, he had been making notes on it, and in 2013 authored *The Anglo-Indians: A 500 Year History*, the most outstanding book on the community to date. Harry MacLure and I were honoured to collaborate with him on this. Many, both within and without the community, were thrilled to lay their hands on the book. When Muthiah visited Australia in 2011 where his daughter Parvathi then lived, he was treated by the Anglo-Indian diaspora like a star, especially in Canberra where Joe Bailey feted him in the presence of the Indian High Commissioner as well as the Chief Minister of ACT and other VIPs.

The thing about Muthiah was that he understood the

community so very well, especially aspects relating to the Anglo-Indian way of life. He knew that its cuisine was a class apart, not just in India, but internationally, and devoted a Chapter to it in his book. He observed that matters of faith and family were quite central to the ethos of the community and disapproved of the caricaturing in the media. He was also critical that community members in the past did not make full use of the educational opportunities that they themselves gave to others, while also happy to observe that its youth are well educated and are taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by modern India. Dr. Beatrix D'Souza aptly called him an Honorary Anglo-Indian.

Despite his failing health, he made it a point to be present at the International Anglo-Indian Reunion, held in January 2019 in Madras, and even spoke at the Authors event held at Loyola College. He also bolstered it with a corporate sponsor.

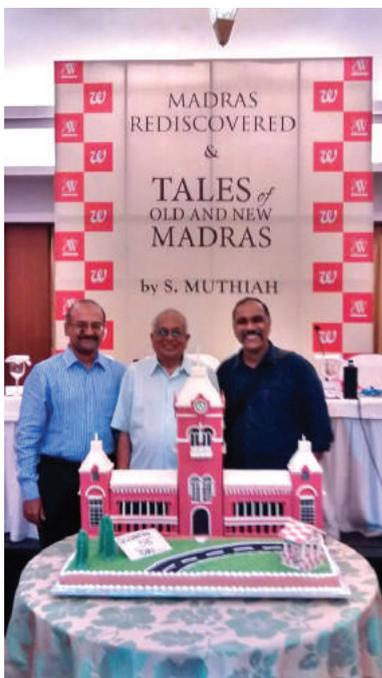


All this has endeared him to the Anglo-Indian community, in India and overseas, and in his passing, the community has perhaps lost its finest champion. Stand up, stand up ladies and gentlemen, as you listen to that collective Anglo-Indian whisper of acclaim:

Rest in peace Sir Muthiah, rest in peace...you will always be in our Hearts!

— Richard O'Connor

A father figure and mentor



Mr. Muthiah along with Sriram V and Ramanan during one of the Madras Week Celebrations.

was always a positive critic of my writing efforts and was taken aback when I chose to be on *The Hindu* Sports Desk rather than be on the field. Always a regular at many quizzes that I attended (or conducted), he asked me to take the baton from Dr. Navin Jayakumar in 1993 and pen the quiz column in *Madras Musings*....an assignment that I do with enthusiasm to this day! Initially he used to correct (and gently admonish) me if I got some Madras funda wrong or asked too trivial a question but never did he once get angry. 'Muthu' (as appa knew him) was a family well-wisher till the end...I will surely miss the genial yet strict father-figure, guide and mentor and a quiz fan!

— V.V. Ramanan

Deputy Sports Editor (*The Hindu*) and *Madras Musings* quiz master since 1993

Uncle Muthiah

The Chief, Uncle Muthu, firmly believed that everyone, every place, every street, every stone had a story to tell. He encouraged people to express themselves. Tributes are pouring in and it is amazing to see how many people are saying that it is because of him they have become a journalist or a writer.

I knew him first as my father's friend. Among other things, they had the shared love for books. Uncle Muthu, my father, K.S. Padmanabhan of East West Publishing, and Abdullah of Orient Longman used to meet regularly for lunch and they formed the quartet behind the Madras Book Club. It was Uncle Muthu's passion which drove the Book Club. Eventually people all over the country wanted their books publicised there.

When I was struggling with the first cover story for a Bombay based business magazine I was working for then, it was uncle Muthu who came to the rescue. He was delighted that finally there was a magazine which covered corporate India in a readable way. To my surprise and delight I found that he read the magazine regularly. There used to be regular phone calls, sometimes critical, sometimes full of praise.

Uncle was not predictable. He knew what was going on in

Madras business houses. He collected facts and connected them which made him a great corporate historian. I could always turn to him when I wanted to put things in proper perspective.

I used to be most reluctant to speak in public. Uncle would not take no for an answer and thought it was an inhibition I had to get rid off. He pushed me into addressing meetings, moderate discussions and even in speaking in Tamil on rare occasions.

If he chose to attend one of the meetings, one had to be very careful. I had to speak in a professional association meeting once. This was just before Google occupied our mind space. I had no time to do my research and I winged my way through. I cracked irrelevant jokes mentioned unrelated anecdotes, made it interactive and got through the half an hour allotted to me. Everybody congratulated me for a fun evening. At the end of it uncle came up with a twinkle in his eyes and said, "you were completely ill prepared, weren't you."

On another occasion, when I



was in discussion with a very famous writer along with another friend and colleague, Uncle whispered to me from the front row, "You are taking over this entire discussion. Stop now and allow the other person to speak." This is what he did to somebody who was so terrified of addressing an audience.

Like many others I would never have got round to writing my book, *Surge*, if he had not so persistently asked me when I was going to start on it. He guided me, helped with many things, and was so proud and happy when it came out.

How can I not mention our monthly lunches with two other friends, his excitement at finding new places in his beloved Madras? How did he discover them? He used to laugh when quizzed about this. Now we will never know.

— Sushila Ravindranath

A keen follower of sports

Mr. Muthiah was a walking encyclopedia on various topics. People from many walks of life who came into contact with him were amazed at how he could discuss at length on just about anything. And as a professional sports writer for over half a century now I was absolutely flabbergasted as to how much he knew about my subject, cricket being particularly close to his heart.

After meeting him casually at a couple of literary functions I had my first serious interaction with Mr Muthiah at his house a little more than a decade ago. He wanted to know whether I could contribute a sports column for *Madras Musings* on a regular basis and of course I was happy to do so. Sometimes

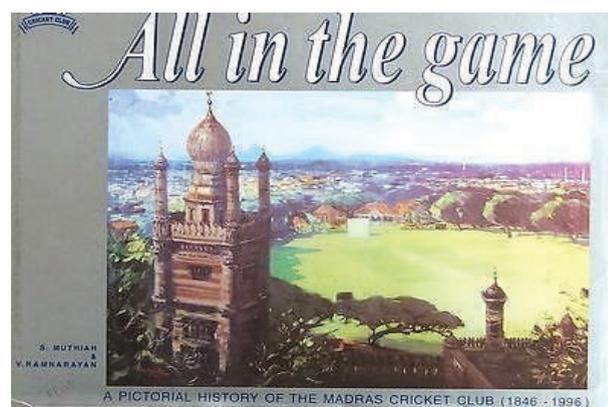
I would send in the piece on my own, at other times he would prompt me to write something topical since he followed sports closely and knew what or who was making news. He also encouraged me to write on senior sports journalists and over a period of time I wrote about P.N. Sundaresan, N.S. Ramaswami, J.C. Jacob and T. Govindrajani.

When at the request of prominent sports administrator Mr. N. Ramachandran he agreed to compile a book on sports in Tamil Nadu he asked me how I could contribute. I offered to write on cricket and tennis but he said that V. Ramnarayan was doing the chapter on cricket so it was just tennis for me. I introduced him to journalists who could help him

out in writing on other sports. I am glad that my colleagues S.R. Suryanarayan and V. Venkatramana were of immense help in contributing articles on various sports.

During this time I interacted with Mr. Muthiah more often and found him meticulous in his approach. A stickler for discipline and detail he did not like copy that was haphazardly written and was quite blunt in his criticism. Being a historian he was particularly dogmatic about facts and figures and preferred copy with correct and straightforward prose and not padded with needlessly flowery language.

Mr Muthiah had been following cricket closely since his young days and his knowledge



grew in abundance after he became a historian. I remember having a long discussion with him at his house some years ago on Madras cricket and why it continued to languish at the Ranji Trophy level despite the players enjoying the best of facilities and financial stability. I recall mentioning the name of C.P. Johnstone who had been a pillar of strength to Madras cricket in its formative years in the 30s and 40s and he told me that he had seen Johnstone in action pulling off a brilliant diving catch in the slips. That he could recall this after more than 60 years took me by surprise but then it was Mr. Muthiah with his razor sharp memory who was talking to me and I should not have been taken aback.

– Partab Ramchand

A beloved mentor and friend

(Continued from page 6)

During 2002-03, when he was travelling abroad and once when he was lying ill in hospital, Mr. Muthiah relied on me to put together issues of *Madras Musings* – I was by then a regular contributor. It provided me yet another valuable experience, deciding the stories to be published, writing the Short 'N' Snappy / MMM column and, most importantly, to ensure there were no errors that would upset the editor.

He was simple and humble. He let his work do the talking. And no age for chivalry – he would open the car door for a young lady and get in only after she was seated.

– Sashi Nair

A man of great perfection

Our mutual association commenced from 1986 when I started attending the meetings of The Madras Printers' & Lithographers' Association.

While attending a Governing Council Meeting of The All India Federation of Master Printers at Calcutta in the Salt Lake Stadium wherein Mr. Muthiah was the Vice-President then, we stepped out to catch some sunshine during the coffee break and I broached the subject of starting a fortnightly, titled *Madras Musings* in 1991. Back in Madras, couple of weeks later, we met up with the proposal from Mr. Muthiah and that birthed *Madras Musings*.

Over the years, our friendship grew and it was more than a business relationship, in fact

I drove down to Karaikudi to attend Mr. Muthiah daughter's wedding ceremony. Mrs. Valli Muthiah maintained the accounts for *Madras Musings* perfectly, and always jocularly reminded Mr. Muthiah that he became popular only after his association with Lokavani Press.

A tough taskmaster, he was a person of great grace. Always ending a mail with Warmest Regards, Muthu, there was never a missing punctuation. Such was his attention to the smallest detail.

We executed many coffee table books for Mr. Muthiah. Notable amongst them were the books on Chettiar Heritage, Madras – Old & New and various autobiographies. His

idea of colour control and visualization was exemplary. I have personally learnt a lot. After every issue of *Madras Musings* was printed, we would have a discussion on the quality of the black and white photographs printed, the black text which had to be printed jet black without affecting the quality of the photographs. These discussions led us to get a dense black ink specially formulated for the printing of *Madras Musings* so that both were printed well.

Mr. Muthiah's passing away has created a great void in many ways and for me personally he was a father figure.

May his soul rest in peace!

– Anu Varghese

Answers to Quiz

1. He was born at Pallathur in April 1930 and Subbiah (Chettiar); 2. Columbia University; 3. Citizenship rules in that country; 4. 'By the Corner Flag'; 5. TT Maps (part of the TTK Group); 6. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan; 7. *Madras Discovered* and *Madras Rediscovered*; 8. The Simpson Group, Madras Boat Club and United Planters' Association of Southern India (UPASI); 9. April 1991; 10. AMM Arunachalam and Lt. Gen. I.S. Gill; 11. *Eve's Touch*; 12. *The Hindu MetroPlus* supplement of that date carried the first of his 970 columns called *Madras Miscellany*; 13. 'Madrascapes'; 14. Madras Book Club; 15. 'Honorary Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire'.

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