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MADRAS MUSINGS

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WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

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A Dull December Music Season

Yet another December has just got over. And with it the curtains come down on the December Music Season as well. Given the chaos that is ongoing owing to multiple COVID 19 strains it is a wonder that a music season happened at all and so we need to be thankful that it did. After all, this is one of the principal contributing factors to the UNESCO giving Chennai a creative city tag. But the dependence on a miniscule target audience in a pandemic-ridden year is throwing up various structural weaknesses that the art may do well to address if it wants to survive.

Audiences in 2021 were a divided lot. Those from abroad

largely remained abroad. For a season that depends heavily on the NRI presence this was bad though many of those living in foreign lands did buy tickets to watch performances online. Several of the locals chose to stay away as well – the fear of infection probably proved a deterrent especially in this art

● by The Editor

where the target audience is largely elderly. The organisers were divided as well – some chose to present exclusive online content, others had physical events and then there was a third group that having

oscillated between virtual and physical events, plumped for a bit of both. The response to all of this has been mixed at best.

One of the chief reasons has been a general sense of fatigue with events online. While virtual events have come as a boon for the elderly and those with mobility issues, the bulk of audiences would prefer to be attending performances at venues. Artists too prefer the latter – the live presence of an audience is of vital importance, and nothing can be more frustrating than singing or dancing for a recording crew. Yes, artists do record in studios but the monotony was relieved by

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A long way to go before we become a truly accessible city

Every December, the Marina beach is made temporarily accessible to the differently-abled for a week to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This year, the Greater Chennai Corporation's arrangements come after a prolonged gap – disabled citizens will enjoy the sea and sand after a long interval of two years, with the pandemic and heavy showers playing spoilsport. GCC Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi has confirmed that these temporary facilities – made on the portion of the beach behind the Gandhi statue – will remain in place till January 16, 2022. In a quote to India Today, he said, "5 floating wheelchairs that can go closer to the sea and 50 normal wheelchairs are arranged by the GCC. But for the safety of differently-abled person and their dependants,

we have advised that they be at a distance of 20 meters from the sea and not go into the water."

At this juncture, it is worth noting that the beach does not have permanent solutions in place to make it entirely accessible to differently-abled citizens – the Corporation maintains four beach wheelchairs which are reportedly kept tucked away in the accessible toilet; most visitors do not know that even such sparse amenities as these are available. Naturally, the state of affairs is disappointing to the differently-abled – not only is the beach a natural heritage treasure of the city, but it is also one of the precious few recreational spots that are truly affordable to all; lack of accessibility bars entry to an

entire demographic of citizens. While the temporary structures of December are welcomed, disability rights activists are quick to point out that such initiatives must be made permanent – and not at just the beach, either.

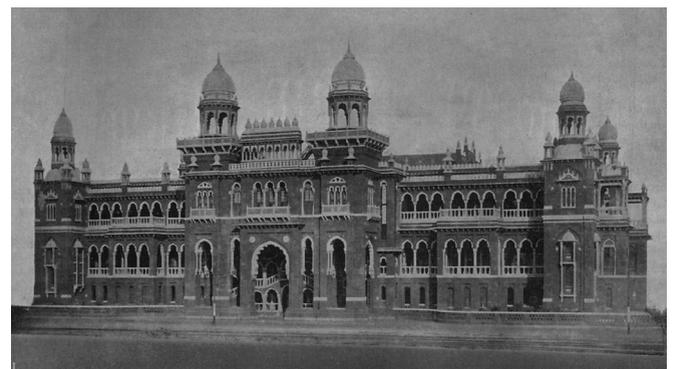
Unfortunately, the city does not have a healthy track record of taking care of the needs of its differently-abled citizens. The Accessible India campaign launched by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment was kicked off in Chennai in 2015. The program aimed at achieving the following goals by June 2022, among others:

- Converting important government buildings into fully accessible structures

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HERITAGE WATCH

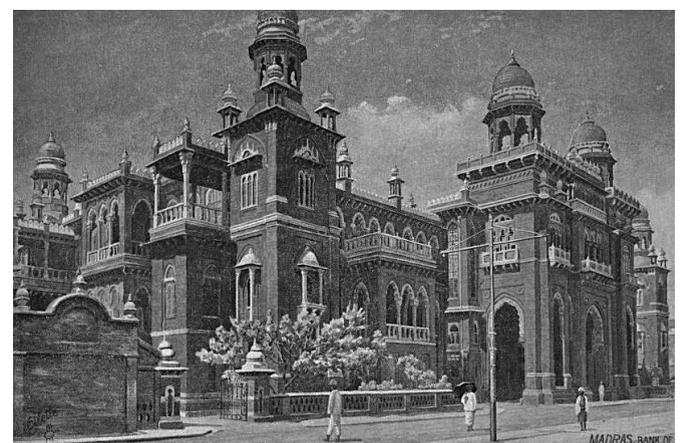
If State Bank cannot restore its building, then who will?



Reader and regular contributor Sujatha Vijayaraghavan's article (see pages 4-5) on the stained-glass panels at the SBI Main Office on First Line Beach triggers off this post. Once recognised as a significant piece of architecture that embellished our city's skyline, this seemingly solid edifice is in reality a hollow shell, much of its interior having been ravaged by fire in 2014. Seven years later, there is no sign of the promised restoration. On the other hand, the building has been practically abandoned to the elements, which in our view is always a forerunner to demolition.

The interior of the building was as much an architectural wonder as the exterior is. And that had already suffered much deprecation in the light of crass changes by way of partitions and false ceilings. It is not clear as to how much of that has survived post fire and it would be a pity if all of it was just swept away over time. Hopefully some good sense will prevail.

Our OLD dates to 1915, and is from Somerset Playne's *Southern India*. It shows the Bank of Madras building as it was known, without a compound wall. The second, is from a picture postcard dating to the 1930s, that shows a wall and also other buildings close by. Even today, the SBI building is impressive from the outside. If there are some SBI staffers among *Madras Musings* readers we request them to take up the question of restoration with the top management of the bank.



A DULL DECEMBER MUSIC SEASON

(Continued from page 1)

several live performances. Just to be a recording artiste is difficult for those brought up on concert fare. At the same time, audiences also seem to be wary of thronging venues – only the very top artistes have drawn full houses this year and even they have not been able to do so at all concerts. As a consequence, ticket sales have been low, leading to a depressed commercial sentiment.

Another cause for the low sales has been the plethora of free content that is being uploaded, often by the same artistes who are also singing ticketed concerts. While it is good practice to put up samples for free viewing, posting entire concerts for free means these artistes are creating alternate channels that will bring them no revenue. It has also led to a bad practice among audiences to demand YouTube and zoom links from artistes so that they can simply listen for free, with no obligations to the artistes or the organiser. How then can the economics of classical music be self-sustaining?

That it is not self-sustaining is well known – all music organisers right from the most

powerful bodies to the by-the-corner sabha depend on sponsors more than on ticket sales. But that does not mean we can do away with tickets. In a bad economic situation corporate houses may withdraw support and then, if the habit of ticket purchases becomes non-existent, the art form may just collapse. This has already happened in Tamil theatre – sales of tickets were long ago given up on the pretext of propagating the art. Today, hardly anybody goes to see plays and with sponsorship having dried up, Tamil theatre is trying to manage on less and less. It shows in the tacky sets and the poor production aesthetics – that is all that can be afforded. That the same situation is rapidly being reached by the classical arts is evident if you see most of the venues and the tales of pathetic artiste remuneration. Today Tamil theatre is almost run by amateurs. It would be a bad day for the classical arts if no full-time professionals take to them and the performers are all amateurs, purely because there is no earning potential.

It is time for some deep soul searching and for some corrections by at least the next season.

A truly accessible city

(Continued from page 1)

- Converting international and domestic airports into fully accessible premises
- Ensuring that at least a quarter of government-owned public transport carriers in the country are equipped with fully accessible facilities

However, ground reports say that little progress has been made towards these goals. The city's pavements are not accommodative to the differently-abled with their bollards and lack of gradient ramp. Citizens visiting the MGR Central railway station report that the disabled friendly toilets tend to remain locked; they add that drinking water facilities are not easily accessible either. While the Ripon building has ramps and elevators, reports point out that its toilets are not disabled friendly and are located on the first floor; the heritage building also does not offer information in braille, tactile formats or audio. At the Secretariat, a ramp is available but at a different gate; there's no signage to direct users. Perhaps the greatest disappointment is the lack of accessibility planning in public transport, which activists say

ought to be taken into account in the initial planning stage. For instance, it was just earlier in June that the state government announced that persons with disabilities could travel for free in government buses; however, lack of ramps and other accessibility measures make it hard for citizens to avail the service.

With the GCC planning heavy public infrastructure spends covering new toilets, park renovations and more, activists have begun to raise a fresh call to ensure that planning involves differently-abled representatives to ensure inclusive design of public spaces.

Coming back to the Marina beach, corporation officials say that plans are in the offing to design permanent solutions that are compliant with CRZ rules. According to reports, one fix involves creating a passage with eco blocks typically used in rainwater harvesting structures while another proposal involves a design using African teak. In a quote to the New Indian Express, a senior official said, "The designs have not been finalised since we also have to consider the cost difference between the two designs, among several other factors."

Dark, Wintry days

These are days when Chennai that was Madras is in the grip of a cold wave – well, the temperature is below 30 deg C and that is freezing as per our standards. The band of morning walkers that *The Man from Madras Musings* usually sights everyday is literally festooned in monkey caps, mufflers and earmuffs. Anybody would think that arctic winds are blowing around in this, our city. But if our fellow citizens aspire to such things, who is MMM to object?

A humourist whom MMM walks with on most days also drew attention as to how the numbers of those walking up and down flyovers early in the morning have thinned out, no doubt owing to the extreme weather conditions on those icy slopes. That naturally turned the conversation to some of the regular characters that MMM and friend end up seeing each morning on the flyover. But before that MMM also needs to tell you about what walking on the flyovers is all about.

It all began during the first lockdown when the Government for reasons best known to itself, decided to close flyovers for traffic, along with beaches, parks, cinema theatres, auditoriums, restaurants and malls. Perhaps there is a scientific study that has shown that the COVID virus propagates on flyovers. Whatever be the reason, flyovers were closed and then, when the phased opening up began, these continued to remain barred at nights, as they still are. That naturally led to walkers scaling the heights so to speak, early each morning. The slopes get the blood pumping and there are, it must be admitted, some glorious views from up top. You almost feel like stout Cortez's men, silent on the peak at Darien. You can see sunrise, birds flying from treetops, and then looking down you can also see men relieving themselves under the pillars.

Naturally, not everyone gets on to the flyovers and it amuses MMM no end to see some of the regulars look askance at newcomers who dare the climb. It is almost as though those who have been making it to the top since say June 2020, resent those who have begun doing so in October of the same year. There seems to be a view, so prevalent in starchy social clubs of the city, that only those who make the cut should be allowed in. Extending the same logic a little further, these old timers also resent the policeman who promptly at 6.30 am, pushes away the chicanes that block traffic access to the flyover. It is almost as though the regulars puffing away to the top feel that the flyovers ought to remain for pedestrians only.

Looking at it from another angle, this may not be such a bad idea after all. Given that the pedestrian has no space for him/herself on the roads, what with the footpaths taken over by hawkers, makeshift shops and squatters, and the carriageways being full of vehicles, flyovers as walkways is something that can be explored. That way those getting about on foot can be assured of safety (provided they don't attempt bungee jumping or paragliding from the top). If implemented, it can also be another instance of how Chennai has managed to stand every road rule on its head. After all, flyovers were once meant for vehicles were they not?

The Flyover regulars

Continuing on the same vein, *The Man from Madras Musings* is aware of walkers' associations in various cities of India. He is quite sure that pretty soon the flyover walkers' association will be an offshoot. It does sound a lot better than streetwalkers' association. More elevated you know.

MMM also notes that just on the lines of the social clubs, the flyovers too have some

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

noted eccentrics populating them in the early morning hour. MMM's regular flyover has quite a few and these add colour so to speak to what is otherwise a rarefied community. There is a man who turns out regularly in salmon pink dhoti and a sleeveless vest of the same colour. In this garish outfit he walks up and down, suddenly stopping to adopt some postures, sometimes tying himself into a knot. Given his shaven head and the rosary around his neck, MMM has classified him as the Monk who sold his Ferrari and Bought a Pink Dhoti.

Then there is the elderly gent who has made it his mission to train his already well-trained dog. Each morning the two set out, man and dog. The journey continues in absolute silence as long as nobody else is within earshot. As soon as someone is sighted the dog's companion lets out a stentorian shout to the dog – it could be anything from asking it not to loiter or to keep silent or not to lift a leg. The point is this dog is one of the most well-behaved animals anyway and there is no reason for the man to yell at it. He does it chiefly to impress everyone. This one, MMM has classified as Watch Out, I Can Bark.

The Blessed Damozel is as

can be guessed from the name, of what at one time used to be referred as the distaff side. She turns out each day in a saree – not unusual as walking gear but certainly not suitable for running. Having reached the flyover she daintily tucks a bit of the saree to her waist so that she does not trip and then proceeds to sprint up and down the flyover. Also of saree-clad variety is Barefoot in the Park – who while otherwise impeccably turned out is barefoot – she walks on all the roads without footwear. Her companion on the other hand is fully suited and booted, rather in the manner that the present (and forever wanting to resign) leader of the opposition described our government.

MMM also recognises Show Business who does nothing but parade on top of the flyover, fortunately not in the altogether. This man has a variety of exercise gear – one day he will arrive with a bicycle, another day a set of weights and on a third day an exercise band. His outfit also varies, from track suits to army fatigues. His footwear changes from rubber slippers to the most expensive running shoes. The point is, he does no exercise – he strolls up and stands at the top of the flyover. And then having given everybody a glance, he goes away. MMM has not yet given up on this man, he is sure that one of these days Show Business will display some hidden talent. But at present it remains truly hidden.

Last but not the least, the flyover also has the Masked Avenger. Masked to the eyebrows, this man, identifiable in his trademark white was known for going around telling everyone else to mask up. And then there was a long hiatus. Nobody knew what happened to him. He returned, sans mask. It transpired that he contracted COVID and having gained what is known as herd immunity, decided to abandon the mask. In MMM's view that was not such a good idea after all.

The Parachutists

If you thought that was all there was to the flyover, let *The Man from Madras Musings* assure you that there is a lot more. There is a band of parachutists who everyday attach tiny parachutes to their rear and run up and down the flyover. It appears that it gives them no end of a thrill to see the parachute billow behind, opening out owing to the rush of wind as they run. None of them has as yet taken off from the flyover. On that happy note, MMM wishes you all a happy new year.

– MMM

A tribute to a legend on his birth anniversary

Let me begin by tracing my brief association with Laxman. When I started my advertising career with Clarion Advertising Bombay as a Junior Account Executive in 1964, the late Mr. S.A. Venkatraman (ICS retd.) was my first client. He was the brother in law and father in law of R.K. Laxman. He took a liking for me and when I moved to Chennai in 1974 I got to know his elder son Babu Swaminathan's family very well as they were my neighbours at Sastri Nagar where I have been living since I moved to Chennai. Babu used to tell me interesting stories about his two famous maternal uncles R.K. Laxman and R.K. Narayan.

When I became the Secretary of the Tamil Nadu chapter of the Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) in 1978, I decided to use this connection to get the legendary cartoonist to address the Members of the chapter. I met Laxman at his home in Bombay and he agreed to my request as I promised him a good media coverage of the event and interviews with some popular Tamil weeklies of the time. It is at his home that I came to know about his fascination for crows.

To get a bigger audience the Chapter decided to tie up with ISTD (Indian Society for Training & Development). It was a lecture-cum-demonstration by R.K. Laxman at the Connemara Hotel. In his typical tongue-in-cheek style, Laxman gave a talk and also demonstrated how he visualizes politicians on a drawing

board. In his mind, every politician is symbolized by an object which he draws out first and then converts into a cartoon, adding a few strokes from his creative pen. To draw the cartoon of Morarji Desai, he first drew a flower pot and within a few seconds transformed it into a cartoon of Morarji. It was amazing and looked so simple. No wonder he became a legend in his life time, delighting millions of *Times of India* readers with his cartoons.

I was in charge of his three-day programme in Chennai. I even hosted a dinner for him at home attended by a few close friends. During the informal interaction with him at home we found that he was as sarcastic with tongue in cheek humour in person as he was in



A tribute to the legendary cartoonist R.K. Laxman on his birth centenary.

– R.V. Rajan



his cartoons. He was also very conscious of his celebrity status and would not suffer fools.

When it was time for him to leave Chennai, I had gone to the airport to see him off. After thanking me for my efforts he asked me to look at him and framed my face with his four fingers. I was puzzled and wondered why he did that. The surprise was over when a couple of days before my 36th Birthday, I received a packet by registered post. It contained an amazing caricature of me

by Laxman. Though I was not as plump then, R.K. Laxman visualized me as I would be and the cartoon showed me dressed in my favourite striped safari suit. It also captured the small line - a scar on my forehead, a reminder of an accident I had when I was six years old. Truly a genius with fantastic memory and the power of observation. I was delighted beyond words to receive the priceless birthday gift, The cartoon rightly adorns the cover of my autobiography titled *Courage My Compan-*

ion, which I describe as the 'uncommon autobiography of a common man – Laxman's common man'!

Though I have received several interesting gifts on my birthdays over the years the one I received on my 36th birthday from Laxman is something I will cherish for ever! I cannot also forget the three days I was close to him coordinating his meetings with various media and getting to know more about him beyond his reputation as a cartoonist.

OUR READERS WRITE



Professor Charles Henry Alexandrowicz (1902-1975) was a Polish legal scholar who played a key role in the history of Madras. In 1951, the Vice-Chancellor of Madras University, Dr. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, invited Professor Alexandrowicz to set up a new Department of International and Constitutional Law (the Department of Legal Studies). Prof. Alexandrowicz headed the Department from 1951-61 and, during this period, started the first M.L. Programme in the country on International Law & Constitutional Law.

During the decade of the 1950's Prof. Alexandrowicz was instrumental in creating, what has been termed, the "Madras School of Law". He founded and edited *The Indian Year Book of International Affairs*. Prof. Alexandrowicz wrote extensively on international law and the need to challenge Eurocentric aspects of the history of international law. He also wrote widely on Indian constitutional developments. His collected works were published in a volume *The Law of Nations in Global History* edited by David Armitage and Jennifer Pitts, published by the Oxford

University Press (2017). Interested readers are urged to read the detailed Preface, Introduction and chapters of the book to understand the contributions of Prof. Alexandrowicz to international, constitutional, and comparative law.

When Alliance Francaise was first inaugurated in Madras in 1953, he was its first president. He initiated the Indian Committee of

Comparative Law in 1953. When he retired from the University of Madras in 1961, some of his Indian colleagues recommended him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

In June 2019, the Tamil Nadu National Law University held a Memorial Roundtable at Tiruchirappalli to celebrate the life and work of Prof. Alexandrowicz, one of the most distinguished schol-

ars in International Law. Several distinguished legal scholars such as Professors Upendra Baxi, B.S. Chimni, Manoj K. Sinha, M. Gandhi, V.G. Hegde, Sandeep Bhat and Prabhash Ranjan participated.

– Abhimanyu Singh
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From the Website

2015 Redux?

(Vol. XXXI No. 15, November 16-30, 2021)

Among all the issues at large, water seems to be having great fun these days. On the one hand, we see an army of people setting up pumps to pump water from the storm water drain into the sewerage lines: on the

other hand, the sewerage lines cough up the excess water onto the roads. And so a set of people with starched and ironed white shirts and black trousers have begun to spring up everywhere, bringing great ideas to the table. Then what was the purpose of constructing the storm water drains? Instead of draining rainwater like the layman expected, it seems to have

drained the coffers of the GCC. But one thing has been made very clear - the pumped water seems to be traveling in circles; it moves from one locality into another before returning to the original locality thanks to gravity! This job seems to be endless.

S. Pinglay

The stained glass marvels of the State Bank of India – Madras branch

● It was in the 1980s that Sujatha Vijayaraghavan, then Manager at the SBI, wrote this article on the SBI's main office at First Line Beach, Madras. A landmark building if there ever was one, it is now a sadly burnt out shell, awaiting restoration, of which there has been no sign for over many years now. The article is being carried as it was written, with no changes made to reflect the present situation. It gives you an idea as to what has been lost.

– Editor

In their application to the Government in the year 1881 for transfer of a piece of land on First Line Beach, the Directors of the Bank of Madras gave the assurance that they "undertake to erect such a building as will meet with the approval of Government and which will materially add to the architectural embellishment of the city." The majestic red brick and granite structure which stands today as the Madras Main Branch of State Bank of India, more than fulfills the promise made a century ago. With its minarets, turrets, arches and staircases in the Indo-Saracenic style, it is verily one of the most magnificent examples of 19th Century architecture of Madras. Designed and supervised by the architect Henry Irwin, C.I.E., this edifice evokes the spirit of a bygone era, of a grandiose way of life, of the delight of the connoisseur in the ornate and the artistic.

History of stained glass

The origin of stained glass is obscure. The earliest known examples are from Egypt, where the art was in vogue prior to 9th Century. It spread to Europe, presumably through Italy. The art reached its pinnacle in the Medieval Churches and Cathedrals.

Primarily designed to allow light into the dark Gothic Churches, the stained glass panels came about to play a greater role in creating an awareness in religion and art in the mind of the congregation.

The Churches and Cathedrals in England, France, Ger-

Mohanasundaram, an employee of the Imperial Bank of India days points out to the boarded up ceiling in the central hall, above which are domes with lattice work, now concealed from view. D. Ethiraju, another employee who has served from the early forties in this building speaks of the wrought iron gallery railing on the second floor, now replaced by a plain brick and plaster retaining wall. These men and their contemporaries remember that the spaces above the arches in the hall once had foliage patterns in bas-relief, which have since been cemented smooth and painted over.

Shorn of the delicate ornamentation, the once massive central hall, now cramped with counters and plywood partitions, is saved from total drabness the moment you look above at the vaulted ceiling and encounter a breath-taking array of stained glass panels.

As you walk around the rooms on the first and second floors a magic world unfolds as the eyes rest upon each panel above the doors and windows. It is like walking right into a kaleidoscope.

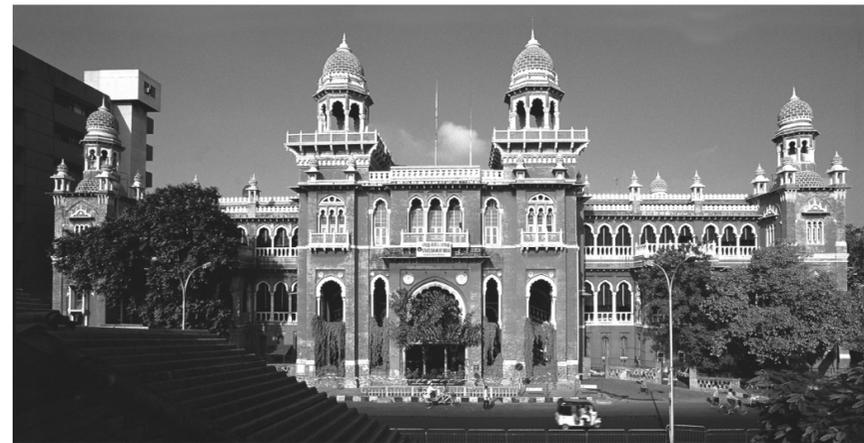
Most of the contemporary buildings such as the Connemara Public Library and the Senate House, Madras University have been adorned with such panels. But the ones found in the Madras Main Branch of State Bank of India building far surpass them in subtlety and sophistication of design and colour. The colours used here are more delicately tinted and tastefully juxtaposed than the bright reds, blues, greens and violets found in other buildings,

History of stained glass

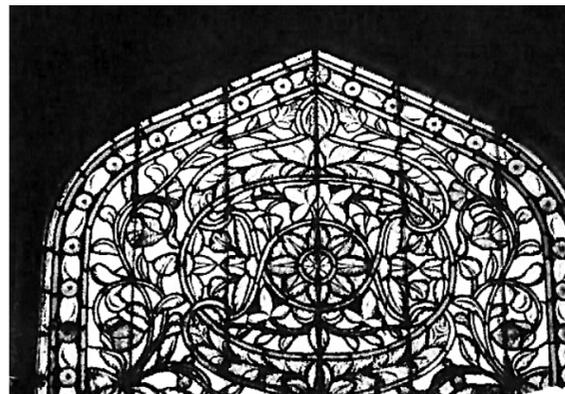
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The Churches and Cathedrals in England, France, Ger-



The exterior view of the State Bank of India Madras Branch.



One of the stained glass windows at the State Bank of India Madras branch.

many and Italy have some of the most beautiful stained glass windows. Noteworthy among them are those at Canterbury, York, Oxford (England), Rheims, Chartres, Notre Dame (France), Augsbuurg, Cologne, Ulm (Germany), Milan, Florence, Rome (Italy), etc. Centres of stained glass production were situated all over Europe, especially in ecclesiastical cities such as Coventry, Canterbury, York, Oxford (England), Rouen (France), Strasbourg, Augsbuurg, Cologne (Germany), Milan (Italy). Some of the renowned artists over the centuries were Bernard Flower (Netherlands), Guglielmo de Marcillat (France), John Prudde, William Morris (England), Hans Wild (Germany) etc.

It is not confined any more to Churches and places of worship. "Coloured glass became very popular in domestic architecture around the turn of the Century, in doors, windows and even as panels in the porch" says Julian Barnard. The all round demand

for stained glass inspired an enterprising printer to come out with multicoloured paper to be stuck on the inside of the window pane to give the appearance of coloured glass. This was used by the lower middle classes who could not afford the real thing.

The post-war period wit-

● by Sujatha Vijayaraghavan

nessed a resurgence in stained glass. Whereas the techniques remained more or less as of old, the subject and the style were entirely modern and abstract. West Germany, where most of the churches had borne the brunt of the war, was the pioneer in this period.

History of the Craft

A stained glass window is a translucent mosaic of pieces of

coloured glass held together by lead matrices called CAME or KAME. The earlier variety was called the Mosaic and the one of later origin was the Enamelled glass.

Mosaic stained glass

The first step in its production was to make a full size drawing of the window on one end of a white-washed board supported on trestles. The other end was used to spread the coloured pieces of glass according to the drawing. Each piece of glass was shaped into segments as per the design. It was cut first with a hot iron and then shaped with a tool called the "grazing iron", which was a flat piece of iron with a notch at one, end like a spanner. Until the diamond-edged cutter was introduced in 1500, the grazing iron was used to cut and shape the pieces of glass.

The designs were out in further detail on the pieces of glass with an opaque brown paint called grisaille. This was a mix-

ture of powdered glass, metallic oxide and gum. The painted glass was fired in the kiln to fuse the colours into the glass. In medieval times the glass was fired in a pan, which was filled to the top with alternate layers of glass and whiting (ground chalk). By this method the glass was coloured throughout its layers and was known as "pot metal." To retain translucence in dark colours like "ruby red", the glass was "flashed", which meant dipping the pliant, clear glass in molten coloured-glass.

Then these pieces of "pot metal" or coloured glass were cooled and arranged on the glazing table. They were connected by strips of lead or KAME, whose cross section was like the alphabet H. The strips were inserted between the glass segments and were soldered at the points of junction. Crevices between glass and lead were filled with cement or putty. The whole panel was strengthened by leaden strips soldered to the leaden matrices and fixed to iron saddle bars whose ends were embedded in the masonry or the wooden frame of the window. Larger windows were

made in smaller units fitted on to an iron frame work. The bars of such armatures often formed a geometric pattern, enhancing the intricacy of the work.

Until the discovery in the 14th Century of a yellow stain derived from a solution of silver, the colours available to the craftsmen were limited. This new stain made possible hues like lemon yellow, orange and brilliant green. Another innovation in the 16th century was the fusing together of two sheets of glass of different shades to produce a third colour. One layer was partially ground away or 'abraded', or eaten away by fluorine acid to produce delicate shades.

Grisaille Painting

In the 13th and 14th Centuries ruby glass was in scarce supply. This gave rise to a new technique called Grisaille Painting. Square or diamond shaped coloured glass called quarry were set in a geometrical pattern outlined by coloured bands. Patterns of foliage or trellised plant were drawn in black or brown enamel on these panes.

Enamelled Glass

In the late 16th Century availability of "pot metal" dwindled. Consequently, the new craft of enamelled glass came into vogue. Ground glass was mixed with various metallic oxides to obtain different colours, such as copper for green, cobalt for blue, manganese for purple, etc. The design was painted with these colours on a clear sheet of glass and fused on.

Stained Glass in State Bank of India, Madras Main Branch

The agreement dated 3rd March 1896 between the Bank of Madras and the contractor Thaticonda Namberumal Chetty contains as its annexure a detailed estimate of the proposed building for the Bank. Item No.61 of the estimate reads as follows:

Item No.	Description of work	Estimated quantity	Rate per sq. ft.		Amount	
			Rs...	As.. Ps	Rs...	As.. Ps
61	Coloured glass in leaden sashes including all necessary frames and saddle bars for heads of doors and windowssq.ft.	2593	2---	8---0	6482	8--0



The interior view of the State Bank of India Madras Branch. (From S. Muthiah's collection.)

Forming a mere 2.16 per cent of the total estimated cost of Rs.3,00,087-14-11, these "coloured glass in leaden sashes" nevertheless have brought in light and life to what might have otherwise been a sombre and drab interior.

Other buildings attributed to Henry Irwin, the architect, as also those executed by Namberumal Chetty, the contractor, during the period, abound in the leaded stained glass windows. The Law College, the High Court, the Museum and the Museum Theatre, the old building of the Connemara Library, the Senate building of the Madras University are some of them. Other contemporary buildings, both public and private, include this feature in good measure. Among them the San Thome Cathedral Basilica, the Higginbothams building on Mount road, the Spencers building and some of the old mansions in George Town have exquisite windows.

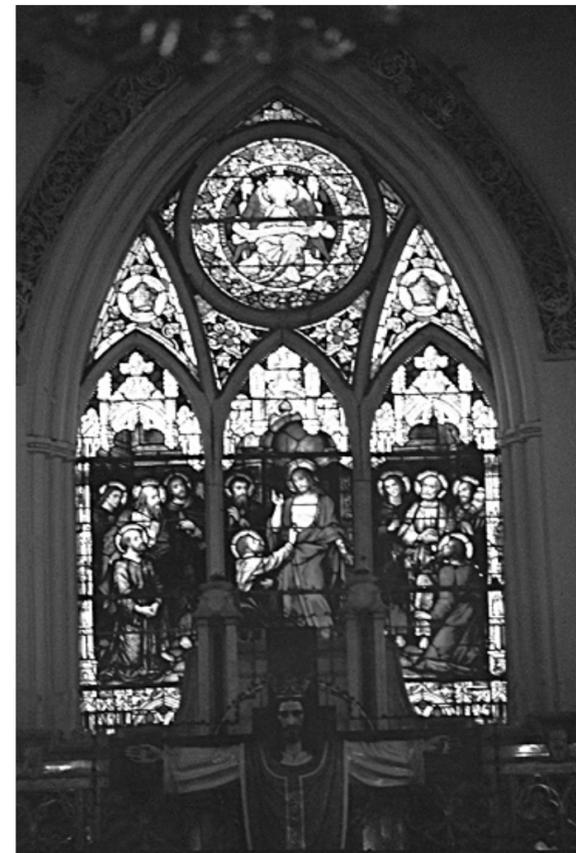
Wide use of leaded glass, which is a typically European mode of ornamentation, makes us wonder, whether the panels

were imported in large quantities from abroad or were produced locally, in India. It was common practice to import a number of building materials used in these palatial structures, which were a legacy of the British Raj. Thus the black and white marble floor tiles came from Italy, the teak from Burma and the stained glass from England, Germany and Italy. Despite their fragility it is quite probable that the stained glass panels were imported. Those were the times when importing a luxury item like ice was considered neither extraordinary nor extravagant. Moreover, had there been a manufacturing unit in Madras or elsewhere in India, some vestiges of the craft should have remained till date. It could not have vanished without a trace within the space of a century.

On the other hand, there are old timers who speak of stained glass panels to have come from Bombay. The strikingly Indian Motifs and patterns make this theory tenable. The slim handbook entitled *Some Important Churches of Tamil Nadu*, brought out in 1986 on the occasion of the Pope's visit, makes a very clear statement about the San Thome Cathedral Basilica constructed in 1896. "The back wall of the sanctuary has a large three panelled window of stained glass. The three panels contain representations of St. Thomas, and the other apostles, the former placing his finger into the wound in Christ's side. The window was

manufactured by M/s. Mayer & Co., of Munich. On either side of this window there are two other

stained glass windows made at Madras under Capt. Power's supervision."



The stained glass painting at San Thome Basilica. (From Madras that is Chennai: Gateway To The South by S. Muthiah.)

(to be continued next fortnight)

Tracing the family roots – I

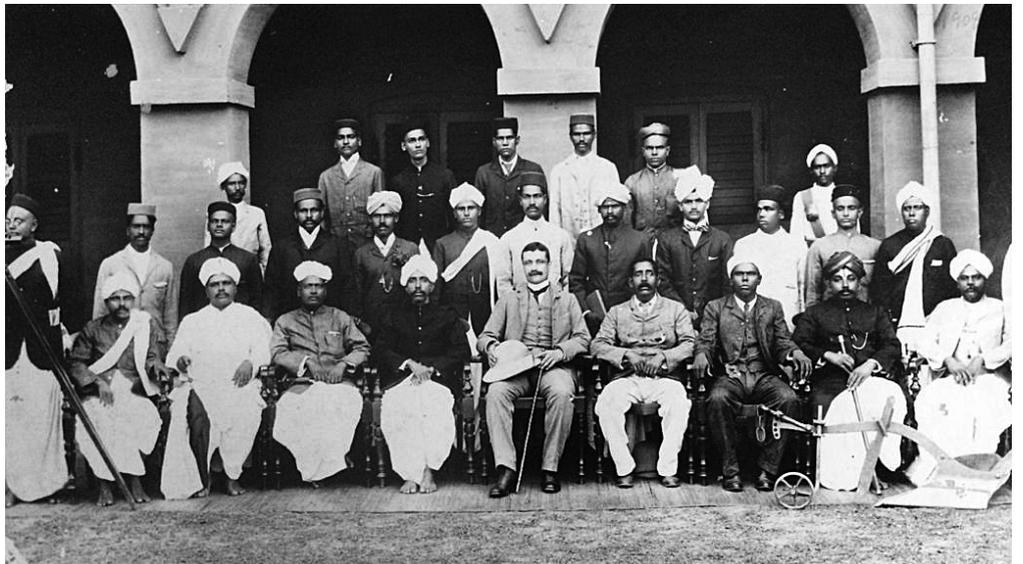
A recent train trip to visit my daughter in Coimbatore brought about many nostalgic memories for our family. I was aware all along that our ancestors led very enterprising lives and many created milestones in their careers. Even though I had interacted with some of them in my younger days, it never crossed my mind to delve deeper into their personal and academic life. This visit to Coimbatore brought back some memories, fuelled also by my siblings. My sister from Pondicherry immediately jumped at this opportunity and joined us in Coimbatore after a few days. So, here is the story.

Rao Bahadur Manamadurai Ramaswami Sivan was born in 1870. He was married to Lakshmi and had six children, all of whom very creditably marked an imprint in their respective careers. M.R. Balakrishnan (FAO, Bangkok, father of late M.B. Srinivasan, music director), M.R. Venkatraman (Rajya Sabha member and CPI (M) leader), M.R. Krishnaswamy (Veterinarian), M.R. Kalyan Sundaram (Sugar Technologist, Pugalur Sugar Factory (EID Parry) and my father), Alamelu (first to get the doctorate in Music from Madras University and associated with Kalakshetra), and Govindabai (M.A, History Professor). Alamelu was married to S.A. Govindarajan who was with *The Hindu* for over thirty years and Govindabai, aka Kamla Mani was married to A.D.Mani, Editor of *Hitavada* in Nagpur.

My paternal grandfather, Ramaswami Sivan was the first Indian Principal of the Coimbatore Agricultural College,

which is now the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. Established as the Agricultural School at Saidapet, Madras, in 1868, it was later relocated at Coimbatore. The construction of this research institute was started in 1907 and completed in 1909. The total area was 500 acres and architectural style was Hindu-Sarcenic, made of red table-moulded brick in mortar and finely dressed cutstones. The clock tower is 75 feet in height and still tells the correct time. The first Principal was J.W. Shepperson, a Britisher, followed by others. Indian scientists also got the opportunity to steer the administration as Principals and Heads of Research Institutes. Rao Bahadur Ramaswami Sivan was the first Indian Principal (1926-27), followed by Dewan Bahadur C.Tadulinga Mudaliar, Rao Bahadur P.H. Rama Reddy, Rao Bahadur D. Ananda Rao, Rao Bahadur S. Sundararaman and others.

Thanks to the internet and with some contacts at the University, I spoke to the PRO, introduced ourselves, and got an appointment to meet with him on a Saturday. My sister, daughter and myself went to meet him at the appointed time. The sprawling campus on either side of the road took our breath away. The PRO was very happy to meet us and to learn of our connection with the College. He was kind enough to send two of his colleagues to accompany us and show us around the campus. We felt like we were transported to another era. We were shown



The Saidapet Agricultural College, Madras – 1901-1904. Dr. Harrison was the Principal and Sivan was Assistant Farm Bailiff. The College was shifted to Coimbatore in 1908 and Sivan was promoted as Assistant Agricultural Chemist with Harrison as the Government Agricultural Chemist.

the hall which was named after my grandfather. This was one of the newer buildings which was inaugurated by Sri C. Subramaniam, Union Minister for Food and Agriculture on 14th December 1966. Sri M. Bakthavatsalam, then Chief Minister, Madras, presided. Though recently built, the pillars were magnificent with carvings on them. What good is a visit without photographs so we went on to take some pictures to share with the family. It was indeed a very memorable and sentimental moment.

I also understand that Sivan invented a 'malt' for which the

promised credit was taken away by a Britisher.

Sivan was a forceful and dynamic personality. He was born as Varadaraja Sarma on 15th November 1870. While at St. Joseph's College, Trichy, he was inspired by the spirit of the times and the fight against the British. He fought for religious independence, participated in protests and was branded a rebel. He was a good singer as well and used to go around the temples singing *thevarams*. He got his name Ramaswami Sivan as Sivan was a title conferred on ardent Saivites. He was a freemason, theosophist, uncon-

ventional and unorthodox. He could not tolerate injustice of any kind and put his preachings into practice. He was very fond of his wife, Lakshmi and treated her as his equal. He was never bothered about what people would say. He encouraged her to read and write in English and it is no wonder this passion stayed with her when even at the age of 80 she wanted to learn Telugu. He engaged an English lady to tutor his children as far back as 1914.

Lakshmi Sivan became a prominent member of the National Indian Womens Association and was the only woman in the District Education Council in Coimbatore in 1924. In

● by Jayanthi Ramesh

(Continued on page 7)



Sivan's house in Coimbatore.



Sivans four sons and Meenamma along with their English tutor.

Adyar's Short-Lived Cultural Association

Adyar has been my second love – silly, when you are married, you don't mention anything else as your first love! Since that rainy day in November 1962 when our small family walked into a new house still smelling of wet cement, built brick by brick by my father, I have loved almost everything about Adyar. So much was my affinity for Adyar that once when someone in a not-so-important lunch meeting remarked "oh Adyar, who can go and live there?" I made sure that a cup of hot sambhar was dropped on his terry wool clad thigh to register my protest!

But then, I have a grouse too against this charming neighbourhood that I have treaded on and trundled over for over fifty long years!

Since the early sixties, vegetarian restaurants have found it tough to thrive here, perhaps the then thin populace preferred home food when compared with the aromatic sambar and idly delivered on semi-crushed plates and moon-surfaced cups. Besant Hotel, Vani Vilas, Adyar Woodlands, Karpaga Coffee hotel, Dosa Corner - all started with great fervour but within a few months, lost their sheen, spent some days with chairs placed upside down

on the tables and then folded up. Non-vegetarian restaurants were in favour at Adyar as was proven by The Coronet Hotel that was a landmark for over three decades. The Runs Hotel, where the passers-by would unfailingly get the petrol smell and boiling eggs combo as they crossed its entrance, till a couple of months back, ran to packed clientele.

The Adyar Cultural Association, like these short-lived vegetarian eateries, had a brief existence.

When you travel from Madhya Kailash on the Sardar Patel road, at the Ambika Appalam signal, you stay alert waiting for the milli-second green light. When you do take a turn, you still have to negotiate a couple of past-sixty uncles nonchalantly crossing the road, oblivious to vehicle, to enter Sundaram Finance to check for the third time on the same day if the interest on their Fixed Deposit has been credited! And even thereafter you cannot not zip straight on the Third Cross Street of Kasturba Nagar, for you need to pause at the Nilgiris Departmental store, to your left. This is in order to see an open hall in which Rajasthani blankets would be swaying in the air, beckoning you to buy.

And that open hall used to be the Adyar Cultural Association!

"Two Kutcheris every month, Jayaraman! You must become a member and support the growth of this cultural association!"

Dr Krishnamurthy coerced my father and a group of our neighbours, who obviously were his regular patients, to shell out the then princely eighty-four rupees as the annual subscription.

● by
**Jayaraman
Raghunathan**

I must tell you about Dr. Krishnamurthy!

A gregarious man of wit and humour with a metallic voice that could rarely be disagreed with on any opinion. He was a six-footer and had a very fair complexion with coal black hair neatly Cantharidin-oiled and combed to perfection. He would be attired in faint perfume-smelling Terylene shirt and neatly pressed trousers. He would carry a brown leather medical kit and always had amusing anecdotes to share

that would end invariably in his guffaw. In reciprocation, you may have to deliver at least a faint smile to avoid his ire. He had a wonderful gift of the gab and most of your ailments would go or be forgotten in the face of his wit and jovial personality. He never hesitated to treat the poor and needy free with the same banter and enthusiasm.

It was his tireless effort that brought Adyar Cultural Association to take off with great fanfare and run with gusto and success.

I distinctly recall the inaugural concert – it was by the Bombay Sisters and more than the Pantuvarali or Manji ragas that the duo sang, as a school-boy, I remember the pleasant-smelling sandal "panneer" sprinkle and the three-paise Parry chocolates given on that day. There was even a concert by Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna when the Kasturba Nagar Third Cross Road was filled with people listening to his heavenly 'Nagumomu'!

During one Margazhi month, there was a concert planned by A.K.C. Natarajan. It rained in the morning, and I had gone along with my mother to attend the performance. Adjacent to the concert hall, there was an

old peepal tree under which was a well-flattened surface that served as an ideal location for playing marbles. In the bright glow of tube lights, it used to be great fun playing! On that day however, within a few minutes, my mother called me to go home. I was to learn later that there were hardly eight to ten people who had turned up and AKC Natarajan was miffed. He refunded the advance to Dr. Krishnamurthy saying, "Please do not insult artists like this! Don't hold music concerts here!"

After this incident, very few Carnatic concerts were held. I remember Major Sundararajan in his play Theerpu, Delhi Kumar arguing a la Sivaji Ganesan in Theerthathu Kanakku which was an adaptation of Agatha Christie's Witness for the Prosecution and a play for children enacted by a troupe called Lalithanjali consisting of Sundar, Surrender, Shobha and Sheela – Shoba being the mother of Actor Vijay!

After a few months, if memory serves me right, Adyar Cultural Association folded up and subsequently, returning from his clinic one day, Dr. Krishnamurthy died of a massive heart attack.

TRACING THE FAMILY ROOTS

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– THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 6)

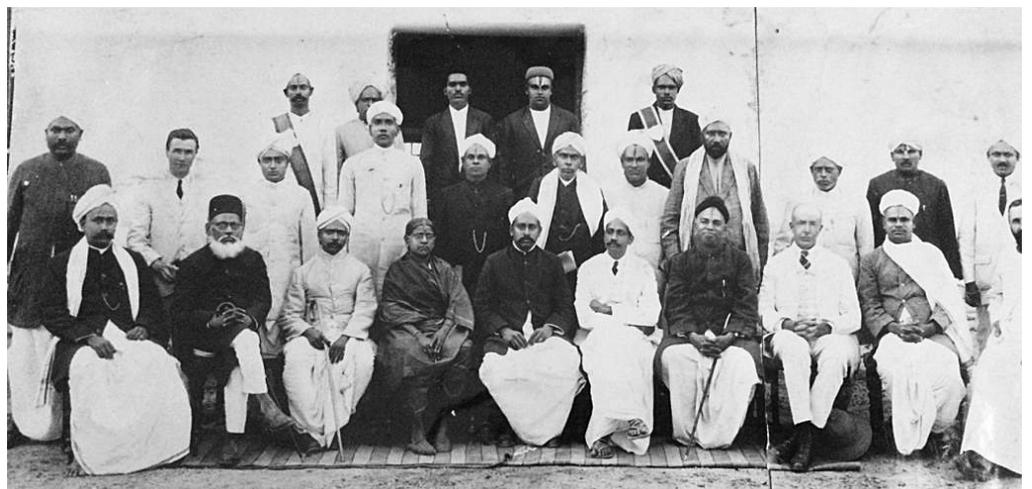
fact she is supposed to have chaired a meeting with Rajaji and Ambedkar during her days in Coimbatore. The entire family had great interest in music. Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar gifted one of his *thamburas* to my grandmother when they were living in Gopalapuram in Madras. My sister who trained under the late D K Jayaraman is the proud owner of this *thambura* till date.

Lakshmi Sivan's sisters were no less achievers. While Lokasundari, a crusader for women and child welfare married Sir C.V. Raman, another sister's daughter Meenamma was the first woman sound engineer to work in cinema. She married film director A. Narayanan. So, the women in the family too brought laurels by passionately following their careers.

As per the notes in the old diaries left behind by my

paternal grandfather Ramaswami Sivan, it is believed their ancestors originally lived in Kanya Kabja (the land between the Ganga and the Jamuna) for the reason that the Shandilya Gotra is not prevalent in any other part of India. From there they should have migrated to somewhere on the banks of the Narmada river, as they also recited a prayer daily to the river Narmada.

(To be continued next fortnight)



The District Educational Council, Coimbatore, 1924.

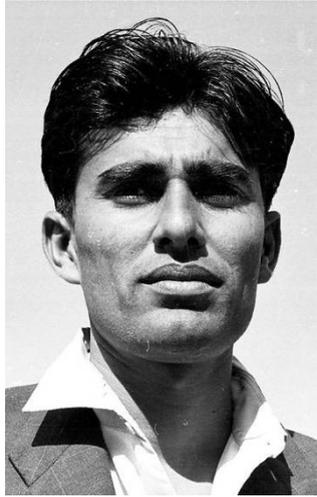
When India won a test series against England for the first time

Sixty years have passed but for me the image is as sharp as if it happened yesterday. Tony Lock swings Chandu Borde high towards square leg and Babu Nadkarni from mid wicket runs a few yards to complete the catch. Victory has been sealed and India have won their first Test series against England. It is January 15 1962 and the venue of the historic triumph is the old Corporation (later Nehru) stadium in Madras.

It was the final Test of the five-match series and when the contest began some two months earlier it was reckoned that India had an even chance of winning it despite the fact that the home team's overall record against their first opponents in Test cricket was abysmal. But that was largely because India had fared poorly in matches in England. In India, they had held their own. In 1933-34 India the minnows of international cricket had lost the three-match series 2-0 while 18 years later they drew the five-Test contest 1-1. That was a depleted England side however with most of the big guns reluctant to tour India. Ten years later it was much the same story with an under strength England side coming over. Missing were names like Peter May, Colin Cowdrey, Brian Statham and Fred Trueman but with Ted Dexter (captain), Ken Barrington, Peter Richard-

son, Geoff Pullar, Mike Smith, Tony Lock and David Allen around it wasn't a bad side.

The first three Tests played on true batting surfaces were all drawn but in the fourth Test at Calcutta on a pitch that aided spin India won by 187 runs and so made sure they would not lose the series. The wicket



Salim Durrani (above) and Chandu Borde (below). Pictures courtesy: The Hindu.



at Madras was also expected to help spinners so could India with Salim Durrani and Chandu Borde among the wickets make the most of the surface and bowl India to an emphatic 2-0 win in the series or could Lock and Allen turn things around for England and help the visitors to square the series?

With the contest still open there was considerable interest in the match and not unexpectedly huge crowds were in attendance during the five days of the Test. Like he had done in Calcutta Nari Contractor won an important toss and batting

the series. Farokh Engineer first gave indications of his buccaneering approach by taking 16 runs in the first over bowled by Barry Knight. He dominated a record eighth wicket partnership of 101 with Nadkarni getting 65. Nadkarni contributed 63 and Indian cricket fans were pleased with 428 runs on the board confident that it was unlikely India would lose after posting such a huge total.

The Indians spinners led by Durrani then got to work and England lost wickets at regular intervals. In fact at 226 for nine they were in danger of



Contractor was stuck on the skull by a Charlie Griffith bouncer in a practice match during India's tour of the West Indies in 1962. Picture courtesy: The Hindu.

85 while no other batsmen got even 20. He was the only one to negotiate the wiles of Lock who finished with six for 65.

India were restricted to 190 but on a difficult pitch for batting it was going to be an uphill task for England to get 338 for victory. The match was practically decided on the fourth day when England were 90 for five. Peter Parfitt and Knight added 65 runs for the sixth wicket to prolong the match to a fifth day but there was no stopping the inevitable. Durrani (four for 72) and Borde (three for 59) completed the formalities and just after lunch India were celebrating a 128-run victory and a historic triumph had been accomplished.

● by Partab Ramchand

first India went on to score 428. The skipper himself came good ending a long unproductive run with a splendid 86 but the man to catch the eye was the young Nawab of Pataudi playing in only his third Test. With some dazzling strokeplay he raced to 103 in just over 2-1/2 hours. The rest of the batsmen inspired by the brilliance of the 21-year-old prince all made bright, valuable contributions and at stumps on the first day India were 296 for seven. It was an unheard off total on a single day in Indian cricket in those times.

The tempo was maintained on the second day by another player who made his debut in

following on but a last wicket partnership of 55 between David Smith and Geoff Millman averted that. Durrani bowled his left arm spinners accurately and incisively to finish with six for 105. On a pitch that was now turning square a lead of 147 runs was a major advantage but the Indian batsmen found survival difficult against Allen and Lock particularly the latter. However the one glorious exception was Vijay Manjrekar. The highest run getter for India in the series and their best batsman on such a viciously turning surface Manjrekar came up with an innings that was the epitome of batting technique. He scored

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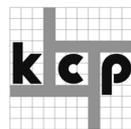


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