

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Manohar Devadoss – a life of indomitable courage and cheer

It is hard to believe that Manohar Devadoss is no more. He was so full of life. Born in 1936 at Madurai, Mano was blessed with a natural sense of perspective that led to art as a hobby. He found his métier in ink-on-paper, a tough medium, but a fortuitous choice. While in his thirties, he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, an incurable eye disease that progressively led to blindness. As his colour perceptions faded, the black and white of ink-on-paper became his means of expression. He devised methods to draw and kept at it till almost the very end of his life. Thanks to him, much of Chennai and Madurai's heritage, is preserved on paper.

A chemical engineer by profession, Mano married the talented Mahema in 1963. What ought to have been a fairy tale

of happily ever after was marred by an accident in 1972 that left her a quadriplegic for life. It was a shattering blow for a young couple with a child, but they rose to meet the challenge. For years, Mano and Mahema kept each other going – he making sure she was taken care of by a team of helpers and she reading to him while he worked late into the night on his art. It was a unique team. And there was not a social event they missed – Mano proudly wheeling in Mahema immaculately dressed in silks and a circlet of jasmine in her hair. A wave of cheer would go through the room on their arrival – lit up by her smiles and his infectious hugs and laughs.

Any other couple would have saved for themselves but not so Mano and Mahema. Each year he prepared greeting cards featuring his sketches and they would be sold by Mahema, the proceeds going to various



Manohar Devadoss (1936-2022)

charities – chiefly those that researched eye ailments. When Mano turned author, the royalties too went the same way. Mahema passed away in 2008 but Mano continued with life, writing more books, making more friends, giving more to charity and sketching until he could do no more. He still made it a point to go out and travel despite being completely blind. Last year, the Government of India conferred on him the Padma Shri. What he ought to have got was a Param Vir Chakra for the courage with which he led his life.

To *Madras Musings*, and its founder S Muthiah, Manohar and Mahema were very close friends. More importantly, Muthiah and his wife Valli admired the spirit with which the couple led their lives in the face of the enormous challenges that fate had flung at them. Each year, once the greeting cards were made ready, the first port of call for Mahema would be to



Muthiah to make sure he gave sufficient publicity in the magazine about their availability for sale. And he would always instruct the rest of us to make sure that the news item on the cards was given prominence in the subsequent issue. Till the end of his life, Mano would have each issue of *Madras Musings* read out to him and sometimes he would call to express his appreciation and occasionally dictate an email to be sent to us.

Mano lived life smiling and we are sure he must have gone the same way. But to us who are left behind, there is a sense of emptiness, of a blithe spirit that was always ready to laugh and appreciate.

Farewell Mano! We will strive to keep smiling. That is the least we can do.

– The Editor

Tributes to Manohar Devadoss

The Madras Literary Society (MLS) faces a deep loss with the parting of artist Manohar Devadoss, our good friend and ardent supporter. Mano uncle, we will miss you very much!

He was with us on November 28 this year for our AGM, cheerfully chatting with each of us. Indeed, the historic foyer of the 200-year-old Madras Literary Society has played host to the distinguished artist many times; he even joined us online during the Covid lockdown. Manohar Devadoss made sure that he was part of every MLS meeting. He dubbed the Society a 'gentle giant.' He once said, "... the friends I made at MLS has made my life more interesting. I look forward to coming to the MLS Saturdays and the fellowship. In 2020, fresh from being awarded the Padma Shri for his immeasurable contribution to art, he spoke to a captivated audience about his journey in a chat aptly titled 'An Ode to Courage.'

Mano, as he is fondly known by those privileged to have him as a friend, grew up in the temple town of Madurai. In the 1940s, it was the epicentre of civil disobedience against British occupation. But to a young boy, the city offered magical inspiration through its rich history. Young Mano would become a writer and scientist but he made his mark as an artist who brought layman and connoisseurs alike to tears with his magnificent renderings of temple art and landscapes.

His greatest attribute was and is his personal courage. When he spoke of the accident that befell his beloved Mahema, listeners struggled to hold back tears – it took away her

physical mobility but could not touch her exuberance for life. Mano often spoke wistfully of their creative collaborations – his art wedded to the magic of her words produced a series of unforgettable books such as the *Green Well Years*, *Dreams, Seasons and Promises* and of course, the awe-inspiring *Multiple Facets of My Madurai*. He gives an impassioned yet unapologetic account of his infinite love for her, which lit his days of caring for her as a paraplegic for 37 years and which continued to glow in her omnipotent presence that forever enveloped him. Shortly after her accident, Mano himself was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a rare disorder that causes blindness. While it gradually robbed him of sight, he did not lack the enthusiasm to live and love. Indeed, his mind often seemed to have a greater sense of clarity than most. When he spoke, one listened to him with rapt attention for he was utterly charming, self-effacing and pragmatic all at once. Mano narrated his tragedies with a sense of humour and his considerable achievements almost always remained humbly unspoken. He was not shy of expressing his admiration and fondness for women but that confession was always tempered with the respectfulness of a gentleman's vocabulary and always, always began and ended with Mahema. Mano's early ambition – one that remained for much of his life – was to author an art-based treatise on stereo-chemistry, complete with 3D goggles for readers to go on a multidimensional adventure into the fabulous world of primordial chemical structure.



A sketch of Manohar Devadoss by Sethuramalingam Velumani.

Mano's capacity to see beauty in ugliness is matched only by the magnificence of his artworks. In every possible way, each word he uttered, each brushstroke, each touch of a pen was inspired by Mahema.

And that is Padma Shri Manohar Devadoss in a nutshell.

– Prabhu Vishvanathan
MLS Committee Member

* * *

I am a regular reader of MM. I have made one-line drawings of Mr. Manohar Devadoss to pay tribute to a great illustrator and fine fellowman. I have had the pleasure of visiting him at his residence and have bought some of his books. I last saw him at the release of Madras Inked at C.P. Ramaswami Arts Centre. I could not meet him personally on the occasion since the Governor had graced the event. May his soul rest in peace with Mahema.

S. Velumani
Chennai

* * *

Mano, a blithe spirit

When Sriram told me that Mano had gone, I really felt



Manohar Devadoss with Mrs. Prabha Sridevan and Sujatha Shankar.

the world lost some shine, sparkle, joy and a positive cheer. Manohar Devadoss is an icon of Madras, no one will argue with that. His *Madras Inked* has only one human icon, M.S. Mano deserves to be in it. But who will draw him in the exceptional Mano style?

When I first met him and Mahema (Miss), she was already in a wheel chair. It was at the Music Academy. Both of them were regulars at many of the cultural events. I was already a judge, but that did not deter me running up to them and gushing, "Mahema miss!" You see, she was the Arts teacher at my school, Rosary Matriculation. In fact, many of us had a huge crush on her. She was like that. It was no surprise to me that Mano was totally in love with her. "Mahi" – when he said that word, the love was palpable. That encounter was the beginning of a lovely friendship, one of my life's treasures.

He drew like a dream. His fingers 'saw' and they drew and they 'spoke' to us. How else do you explain the drawing of Cottingley, which he felt with his fingers and drew?

Mano really was a blithe spirit. Once he told me that he does his exercises regularly and keeps his arms strong. "How else can I help lift Mahi when she needs to be?" And then that shining smile. How can one be so free of self-pity and other such demons that drag you into a morass? He told me recently that he had so many things to be thankful and happy about. And I am thinking, Mano, please transmit this quality to me. Why just me, to everyone!

He enjoyed being with people. In a gathering, people would gravitate towards him and introduce themselves. He would hug them at once – that was his way of seeing them.

He was very gender-equal. He respected women, and

admired them. Once at a book release, the three persons on the dais with him were Nirmala Lakshman, Sujatha Shankar and me. He mentioned it then that it was an all-woman event excepting him! He never forgot that, even recently he recalled it. Once he said that the resilience and inner steel of South Indian women is unmatched. I did not counter him by saying, it applies to all women, I just said "Yes, Mano." He beamed.

When I decided to publish my collection of *Dinamani* articles, I wanted only Mano's drawing on the cover. A page from his *Perspectives*, because the articles spoke of my perspective of things. I am very proud that the book came out with his drawing. I asked him what the royalty was. He refused to take anything. After much persuasion he asked me to give to the Mahema Devadoss Endowment which both of them created with Aravind Eye Hospital. A spiral staircase drawn by Mano adorns the cover of my *Karappanpoochi Nagaikkumo*.

He was generous with his praise and he never forgot to express it when the occasion called for it. I can vouch for that. He called it the Yaa-naimalai judgment, the order that stopped the rock from being carved. I repeatedly told him it was not a judgment. He brushed me aside, for according to him even if I had done nothing except that during my tenure as a judge, I was fine!

We often use the clichéd phrase "Whence comes such another?" But it applies to Mano fully. Madras events will be poorer without that properly-dressed-in-full-sleeves shirt figure, talking to everyone happily, touching everyone with his magic. God bless you Mano.

Justice Prabha Sridevan
(Retired)

* * *



Basking in the company of his friends at MLS.

When the light was gone

Light denied is blindness. When rendered blind, Milton did not blame God when he asks, "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?" On the contrary, he accepts the condition and moves on. Nor did Manohar blame God for his blindness.

When dreams of a good life ahead are destroyed, it takes a rare kind of courage to push the past into oblivion and deny space to pain or self-pity. The pair strode along together until the death of Mahema did them part.

I remember how he insisted that I should write a foreword for his marvellous coffee table book. A cheerful person with a fine sense of humour, he was part of the lives of almost everyone he knew. He was an easy person to know quick to friendship. His elephantine memory of voice recognition was remarkable.

I have seen him at work and have spoken to his wonderful wife after my book Aalavai was

released, for which he provided four beautiful line sketches of Madurai.

It was with total disbelief that I heard that Manohar Devdoss passed away early on December 7. He had attended the function at which my book was launched. Later, he attended my address at the MLS Library in connection with Madras Day celebrations. I had been in conversation with him until as late as last month, after which due to my own illness and hospitalization I could not stay in touch.

All that I can do is to pray for his soul to rest in peace.

K.R.A. Narasiah

* * *

The magic of Mano uncle

I've known about Mano uncle's work since the time I was a college student. I was left awestruck by his detailed sketches, which are in fact valuable lessons in perspective; one could learn to see

life in Art and appreciate the beauty of Madurai and Madras through his eyes. I met uncle in 2016 and we stayed in touch over email and calls. When we meet in early 2017 at MLS, he invited me home with so much warmth. I visited him for the first time on March 3rd, 2017 and it was only later that I came to know that it had been Mahema aunty's memorial day.

I am grateful to have met him and happy that I could curate and organize talks and discussions with him at multiple platforms such as the Madras Literary Society, Nam Veedu, Nam Oor, Nam Kadhai and many others, thanks to friends and colleagues. These talks, travels and lectures were accommodated amidst uncle's already packed schedule; each one was accorded weeks of preparations and trial runs to keep a check on the time and presentation. I was lucky to have been part of few of the trials.

He led an illustrious life even with Retinitis Pigmentosa – a degenerative vision problem. It could not deter his literary, art, professional and personal pursuits. From pen and ink, to pencil, colours and line drawings, he had a natural ease in creating a variety of art. His works exist across different mediums and render styles, something that is very rare.

He has travelled worldwide for his scientific research as a chemist and had submitted research papers on module design. He bestowed equal concentration on his art and writing pursuits. Amidst all this, he also launched the Mahema Devadoss Endowment Fund. The balance he struck between profession, art and social causes, all while taking care of Mahema aunty for 35 years, is what makes his life an epitome of perseverance and optimism.

My friends as well as my team from office and Nam Veedu Nam Oor Nam Kadhai were welcomed with the same love and beautiful words. Uncle knew each of their interests and favourite dishes, which would be always be made when they visited. They would look forward to accompanying uncle to events and eagerly await the conversations in the car and then later the tea or Nanari wine at home. My personal favourite was the cauliflower with mayo dip, kottanchoru, and Tulsania. Every time we planned to lunch at home together, the dishes would be a part of the menu.

Mayur Anand suggested that we start an Instagram page for uncle, and he, along with Muhilan and Amita, managed orders under uncle's guidance and ensured that deliveries were smooth even during the covid lockdown.

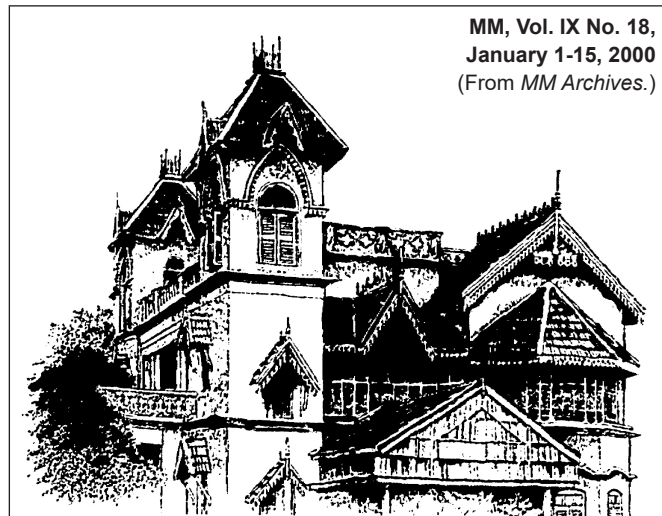
Uncle was a part of each of my small milestones, whether it was success at work or family functions. His clap was always the loudest.

In 2018, uncle became a member of the Madras Literary Society and made sure he attended all the events; even the smallest development obtained his ready support. A few of us took his perspective classes while others took English lessons from him. Though truth be told, many gravitated to his home to learn his love for life – every meeting would include a hearty meal, music and a lot of laughter and promise to meet once again. During the covid lockdown, we had

a online birthday celebration for uncle and many fans joined from different parts of the world – Archana with cake and Rajasekhar anna with tactile art work, Varsha with postcards, Nividitha akka with songs, and even 92 year old Vimala paati, a self-professed fan of uncle's, and many others. We all celebrated his 82nd birthday with warm wishes and he ended with a remark that he hoped to meet 'normally' soon once the corona monster went away.

If there was an article about me and I lapsed in telling uncle, there would follow a call or an email, without fail:

(Continued on page 7)



MM, Vol. IX No. 18, January 1-15, 2000 (From MM Archives.)

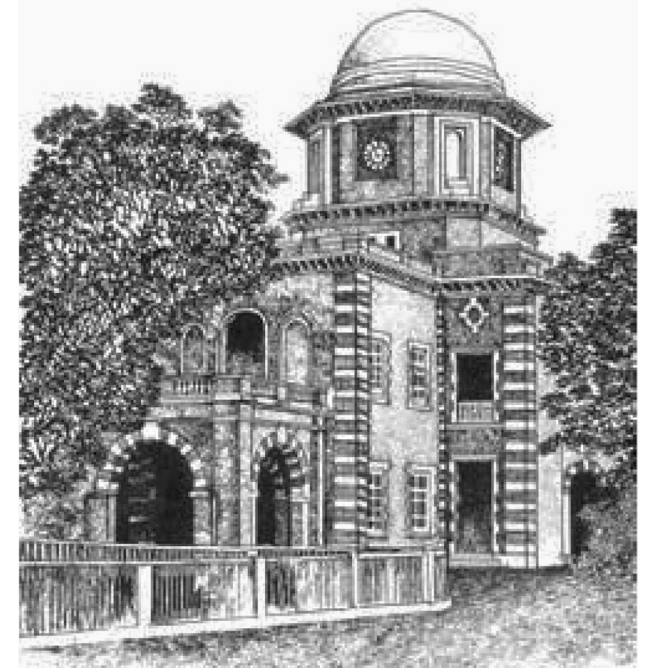
A heritage reminder

Committed as this journal is to heritage protection and conservation, this card beautifully illustrated by MANOHAR DEVADOSS and with text by MAHEMA must be our favourite this season, for it features a picture of a home that must undoubtedly be on anyone's heritage list of Chennai's buildings. This house in Purasawalkam was owned by P.M.A. Muthiah Chettiar, say his kin, and it was the first house owned by a Nagarathar after the community began moving into Madras in the early 20th Century. The present owner of the house, however, believes that it belonged to SA RM M Annamalai Chettiar who later was honoured with the titles Rajah Sir by the British. If ever the owner pulls out his records that question of earlier ownership will get solved, but documents are not needed to accept the heritage status of this home. It is one of the most splendid examples of that late 19th, early 20th Century South Indian architecture that favoured an English style adapted to the tropics; gables, monkey tops, towers and wrought iron railings teamed with tiled roofs, verandahs, louvered windows and arches. RAJIND N CHRISTY's picture above shows the house as it was in 1999 bowed out.



Mahema writes: "Many stately houses of this city are being torn down to make room for high-rise structures. But the present owners of this elegant building say that the edifice will not be demolished in the foreseeable future." And that's a heartening thought as 2000 begins.

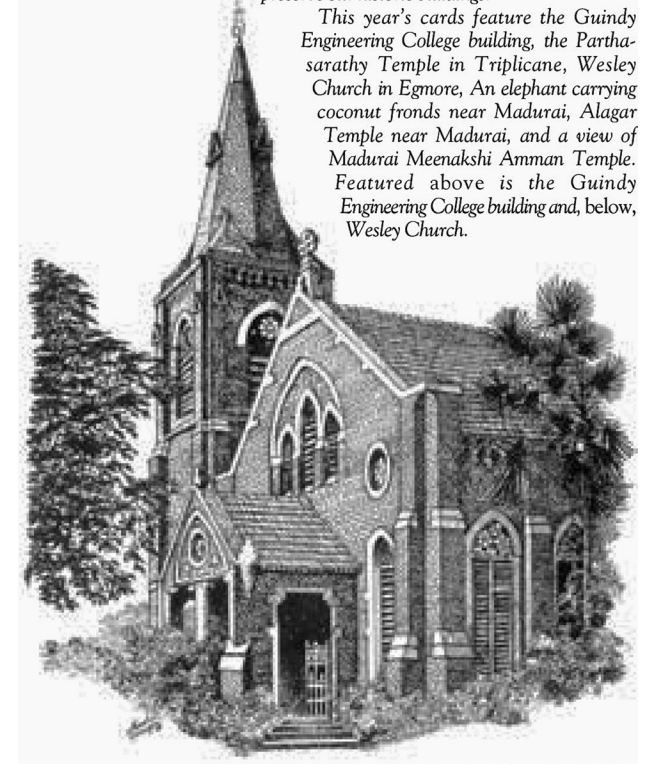
MM, Vol. XV No. 15, November 16-30, 2005 (From MM Archives.)



Manohar Devadoss, that well-known artist of Madras, who creates detailed pen-and-ink drawings of historic monuments, despite battling with declining vision, presents six new greeting cards this year, each with a brief text on the history of the monument.

The sales proceeds go to service-minded institutions like Sankara Nethralaya, Aravind Eye Hospital, SPASTN and others. Apart from the money the cards generate, they also create a greater awareness of our heritage and the need to preserve our historic buildings.

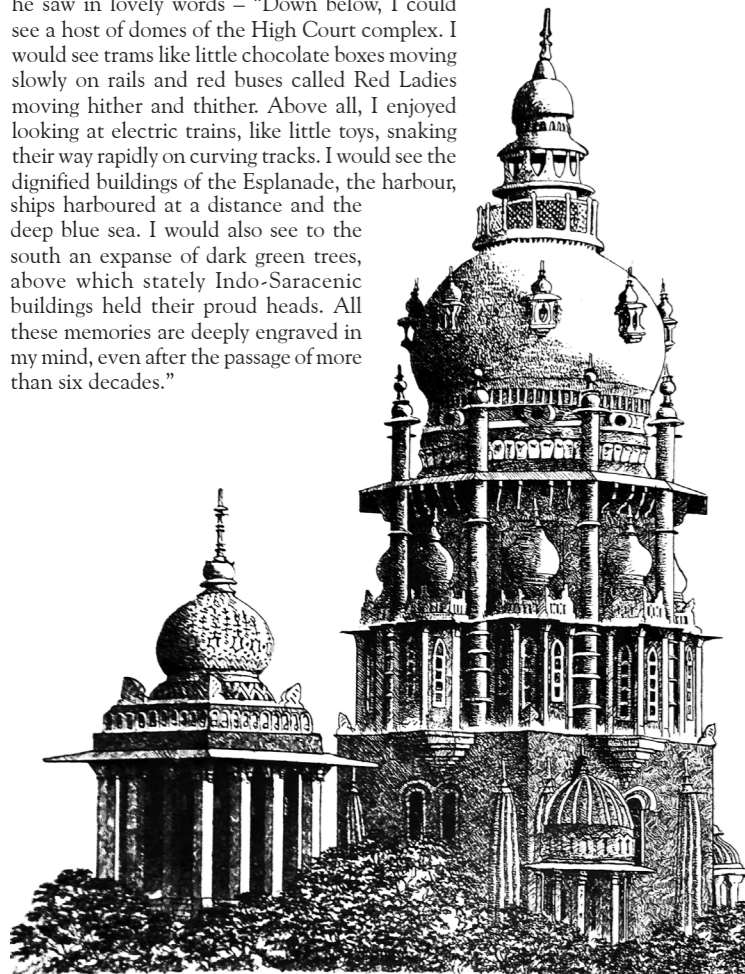
This year's cards feature the Guindy Engineering College building, the Parthasarathy Temple in Triplicane, Wesley Church in Egmore, An elephant carrying coconut fronds near Madurai, Alagar Temple near Madurai, and a view of Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple. Featured above is the Guindy Engineering College building and, below, Wesley Church.



Sketches of Manohar Devadoss from *Madras Inked*

Lighthouse, Madras High Court

The teenage Mano who visited his grandparents in Madras, loved visiting the Lighthouse, then the tallest building in the city. He describes what he saw in lovely words – “Down below, I could see a host of domes of the High Court complex. I would see trams like little chocolate boxes moving slowly on rails and red buses called Red Ladies moving hither and thither. Above all, I enjoyed looking at electric trains, like little toys, snaking their way rapidly on curving tracks. I would see the dignified buildings of the Esplanade, the harbour, ships harboured at a distance and the deep blue sea. I would also see to the south an expanse of dark green trees, above which stately Indo-Saracenic buildings held their proud heads. All these memories are deeply engraved in my mind, even after the passage of more than six decades.”



Clock Tower

It was in February 2008 that Mano began work on an ink sketch of the Clock Tower. Mahema had been by his side for years, reading to him as he drew; but now, her stamina was waning after a 35-year battle with her illness. On March 2, past midnight on a particularly challenging day, Mahema asked to see Mano's work and expressed joy in its progress. Shortly after, deep slumber claimed her and she did not wake up. In Mano's words – “The stage at which Mahe saw the incomplete artwork was of special significance to me. I took a photocopy of the ‘unfinished symphony’ to mark the significant moment and then proceeded to complete the artwork.”

St. Mary's Church

A First Day Cover of the sketch was formally gifted to Prince Charles on his visit to Madras when he participated as a Guest of Honour in a ceremony at the Church.

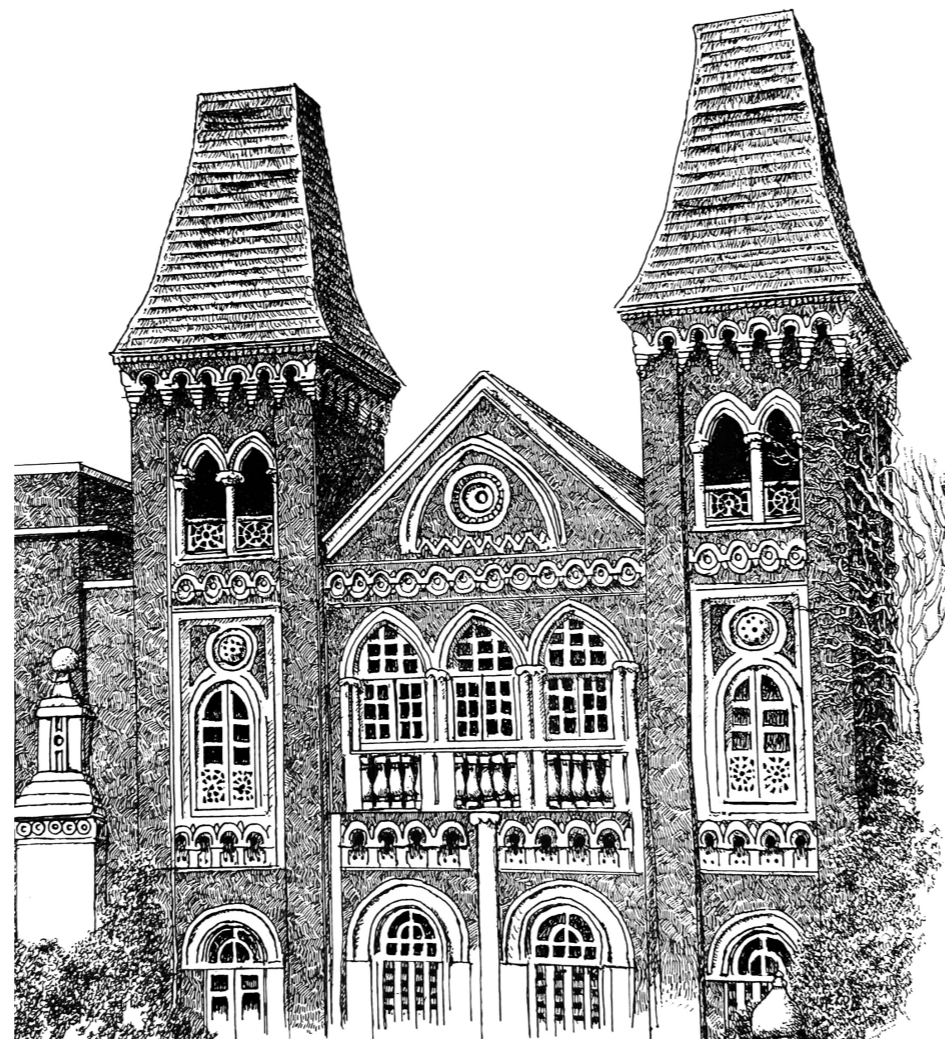


Triumph of Labour

Curiously, Mano had no thought of sketching the Triumph of Labour until the imminence of a ‘happy, anticipated family event’ – the expected arrival of a new baby with Mahema. In his own words – ‘Inside the card would be my artwork of the statue and on the outside, there would be only three words, ‘Congrats on your...’ ...The card would convey my joy by congratulating her on ‘her’ triumph of labour.’

Spencer's Building (right)

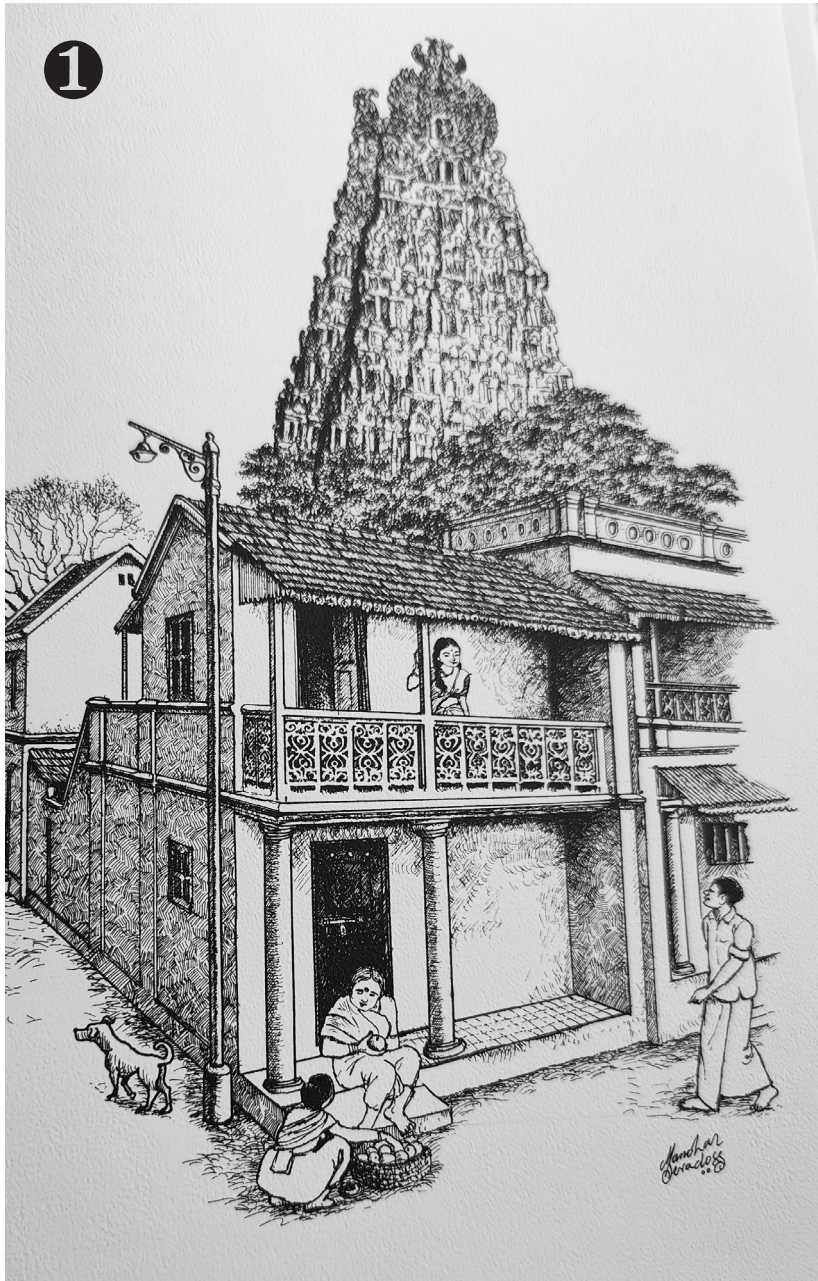
When Abraham Eraly requested a cover image for a special edition of *Aside* that bore the theme ‘City in Transition’, Mano chose to sketch the landmark Spencer's Building, which was at a significant turn in its own history – while a major part had been demolished, a multi-storied departmental store was rising from the ashes. Mano writes, “... my drawing for the cover showed on the left side of the fading yet elegant old part of the building and to the right the shell of the new. The new departmental store would offer a far wider range of products and would cater to the ever increasing population. But in this process, the noble, stately, attractive heritage monument would be lost forever. Abraham was pleased with the cover drawing but felt sad about the event it represented.”



Moubray's Cupola

“I have never before seen an architectural entity even vaguely resembling this edifice,” says Mano about Moubray's Cupola which adorns the Madras Club. A small story – once, the Madras Club invited Mano to make a presentation on his remarkable career. S Muthiah was part of the event at which, so the tale goes, he paid Mahema, then on the other side of 50, a spur-of-the-moment compliment that delighted Mano – “Santhome girls are the loveliest in town and Mahema is a Santhome girl.”

Fascinating Madurai



1. A city built around a temple

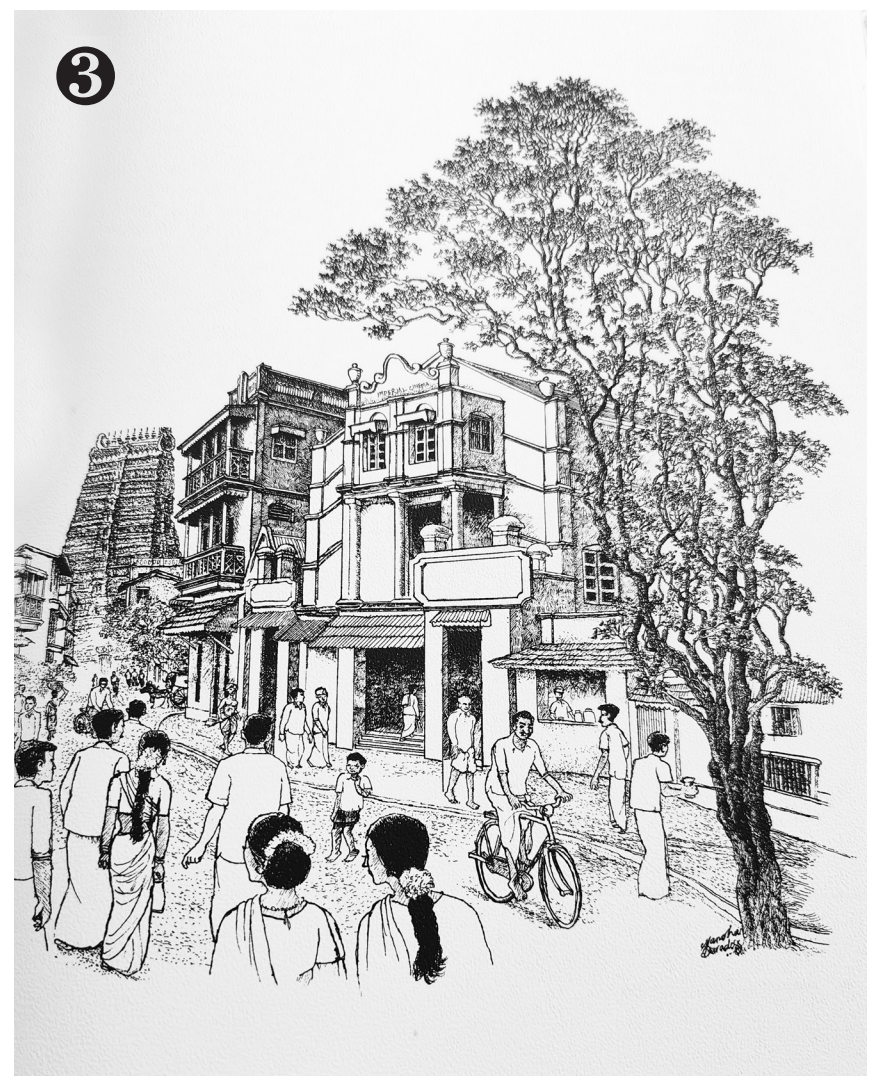
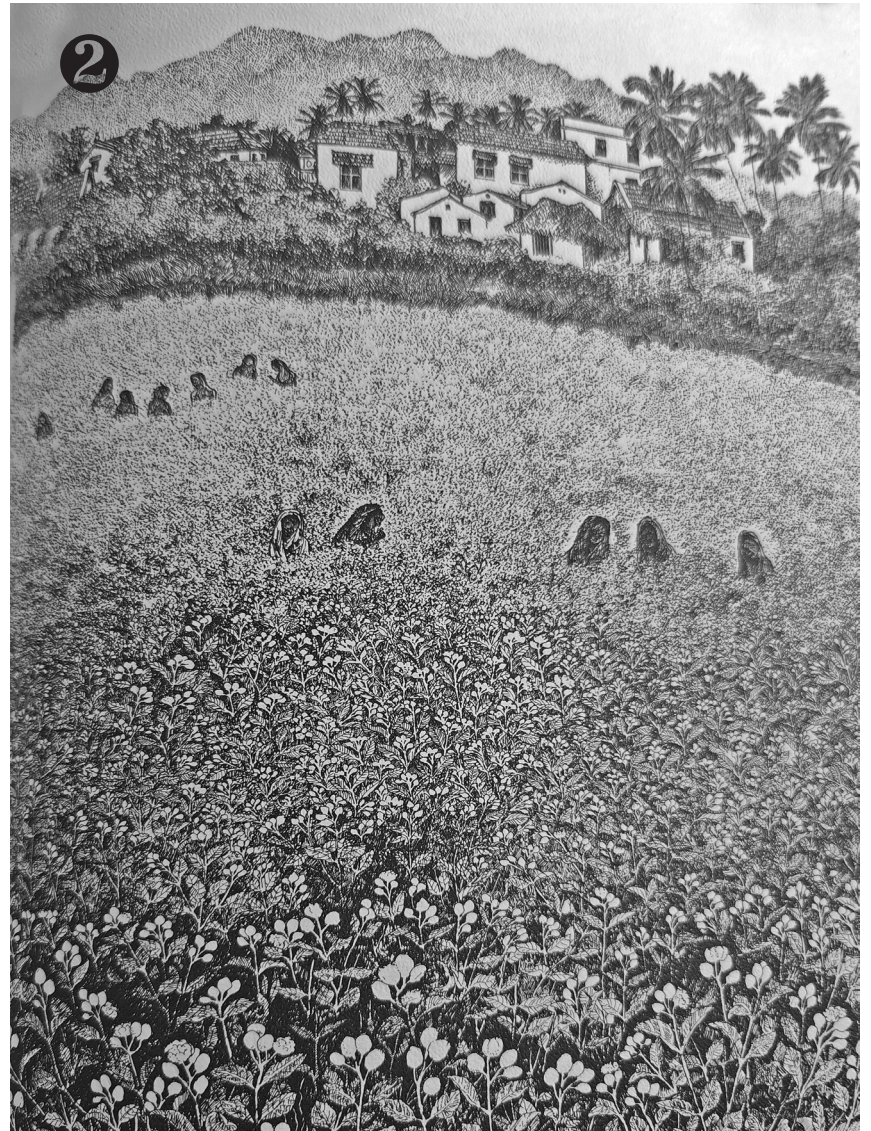
The Meenakshi temple is Madurai's heart and the inner city is built around the grand edifice with 'expanding, concentric, roughly square roads.' Mano continues – "Within the framework of these roads is a network of narrow streets and narrower bylanes. The houses on the bylanes were sometimes very small indeed. But these houses were not only as self-contained as the relatively larger ones on the main roads, but they also looked attractive, what with small but heavy rosewood doors studded with decorative brass knobs and balconies with wrought iron balustrades."

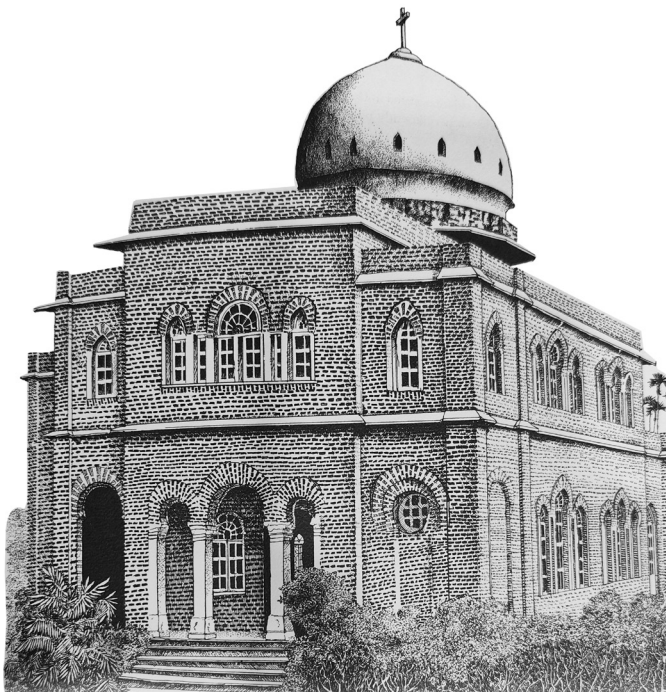
2. Madurai Malli

The jasmine grown in Madurai – Madurai malli – is famed for its fragrance and beauty. Accompanying this arresting sketch of a jasmine garden are these notes from Mano – 'Jasmines cultivated around Madurai are so special that every time friends came from Madurai to Madras, my wife, Mahema's only request, was that they bring her a charam of jasmine... The buds from Madurai are considered the best, not merely in Tamil Nadu, but in the entire country.'

3. Imperial Cinema

According to Mano, it was unusual for a town of Madurai's size to have a cinema hall that exclusively catered to English movies, even in the early 1950s. But Madurai had two such theatres – Regal Talkies and Imperial Cinema. Sketched here is the latter, which Mano says he was 'particularly pleased' to draw in April 2004, owing to the elegant environs – "the street-house next to the quaint Imperial with the East Gopuram at some distance and a stately bouquet-like indigenous pungai tree in the drawing, greatly enhanced my enjoyment."





American College Chapel

A pen and drink drawing from Mano's final year in college, featured on the cover of the college magazine that year. The work, Mano writes with a touch of good-natured bemusement, 'evoked far greater enthusiasm from the students than even the ones I did of the college beauty, Bhavani.'

Paychiamman Padithorai Street

Privileged to share its name with the small Paychiamman shrine that it leads to, Paychiamman Padithorai street in Madurai is described thus by Mano – "Half-a-century ago, if one had walked on Paychiamman Padithorai Street, towards North Masi Street on certain mornings at certain times, one would have suddenly heard a cacophony disharmoniously trying to imitate the tinkling of many small bells. Then one would see cows emerging from North Masi Street and rushing towards one – as in my drawing completed in November 1985 – cows with bells improvised from old aluminium tumblers, empty tin cans and the like tied around their necks. A community of Konars (cowherds) lived in and around North masi Street, especially in villages-like enclaves sprinkled here and there. Though there was hardly enough space even for people, these families managed to rear a cow or two in their crowded quarters. Konar boys would collect herds of twenty to forty cows and drive them through the narrow Pachyamman Padithorai Street to the dry river bed. They would shout and cuss. Women and children would run helter-skelter, not because they were afraid but because they did not want these docile creatures to inadvertently step on their toes or unintentionally knock them over."



Tributes (Contd.)

My dear ATS,

This morning Premila read to me the entire article on Madras log book in the Madurai Times of India....

He would go on to ask for a copy of the paper and more details about the work, in this case, the Madras log book. He was the one who convinced me to accept a photo interview

when I had so much insecurities about myself. When we went to order a frame for his spectacle lens before his trip to Delhi, I choose a few similar to the earlier frames and gave it to uncle to feel. 'You choose the one you think will look good on me,' he replied. I am grateful for each of these moments with uncle. I shall cherish them for a lifetime.

I received an email which moved me so much that I found myself robbed of words for a reply even though uncle asked me about it. Sorry uncle - here is my reply, now.

My dear ATS

You, Uma and MLS dear ones made my birthday very special with all the goodies, above all the birthday cake. You have been a precious friend to me who has done so much including getting the Padma award for me. I cannot thank God enough for your friendship.

Love,
Mano

Dearest Mano uncle,

Meeting you was a blessing in my life uncle. We put a part of ourselves in our art and loose a part of ourselves when we love art. For me, every time we met, I was happy to have left a part of me with you and get your love and affection. To have a welcoming home with so much warmth and love like you, is what I aim for uncle.

All I have is my gratitude and love to you uncle.

– Thirupurasundari Sevvil

* * *

Manohar Devadoss – Immortalised through his sketches

In his passing, Manohar Devadoss leaves a void that can never be filled. A renowned artist and writer, he was remarkably compassionate and humane too, rising head and shoulders above all the adversities he faced. It was truly an honour for me to co-au-

thor Madras Inked with him. Our collaboration gave me an insight not only into the architectural gems in his immaculate sketches but also his spirit of generosity, cheer and sheer love for life. His own life is one that must be cherished and celebrated.

Pen-and-ink was what Manohar had a flair for, although he did artworks in other media, too – watercolours, oils, pencil and charcoal. He enjoyed addressing the challenges that black and white posed. He would wonder – 'How to distill the mood and magic of early morning in a still and fragrant jasmine garden in black ink without the use of colour?' In later years, drawing in black-and-white became an asset when his vision diminished, colour perception reduced and his acuity weakened.

His amazing hand-brain coordination compensated for his fading vision with Retinitis pigmentosa, which in his evening years finally rendered him totally blind. His works of art created over six decades with varying levels of vision reveal his complete immersion in the subject and ability to capture the tiniest details despite his visual challenge. Many times, this was by actual observation of a building or landscape, but on other occasions, it was by drawing from the descriptions of the subject explained to him by his quadriplegic and wheelchair-bound wife Mahema or by a friend or a well-wisher. It is incredible to feast one's eyes on the magical outcomes in perfectly composed drawings.

While drawing Cottingley,

the residence of the British Deputy High Commissioner's residence, the architectural features of the building and its structural elements were orally narrated on the spot to him by his daughter's friend since he could not see. After this, he walked around the building and its periphery, touching the building, and feeling the outlines of the arches and other elements to gauge their shapes and proportions. The lyrical representation is so magical that it makes me believe he can see in his mind's eye.

Manohar's capacity to convert a disadvantage into an advantage is astounding. Fading vision made him work harder than ever, spending hours at the easel, producing a prolific output of perfect creations, while his disabled wife sat by his side reading out book after book to him. He started to write and brought out profusely illustrated books – *Green Well Years*, *Mahema and the Butterfly*, *Dreams, Seasons and Promises*, *A Poem to Courage* and *Mahe and Mano: Challenges, Resilience and Triumphs*. Many of them contain candid accounts of his own extraordinary life. His engagement with perspective in drawings is elaborated in *From an Artist's Perspective*. *Multiple Facets of My Madurai* captures the spirit of Madurai. And, *Madras Inked – Impressions of an artist and an architect* is a work in line and word on the architectural heritage of Madras, which Mano and I brought out as an offering to our city, Madras.

For me, writing this book was a joyous journey. Mano's (Continued on page 8)

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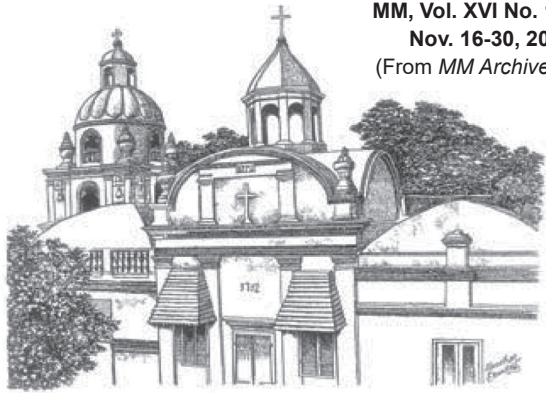
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Letters to the Editor

Dear Readers,

Please email all your letters, comments, additional remarks, brickbats and bouquets to editor@madrasmusings.com

– THE EDITOR



MM, Vol. XVI No. 14,
Nov. 16-30, 2006
(From MM Archives.)

Armenian Church

Breezing through a challenge

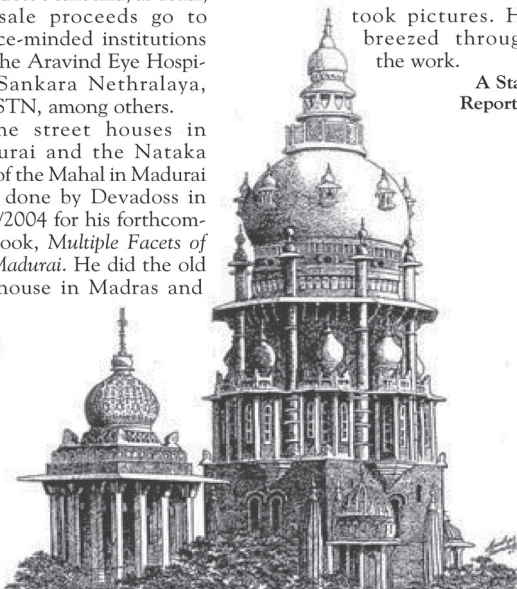
Manohar Devadoss's greeting cards with their exquisitely detailed pen-and-ink drawings of historic monuments this year feature the historic Armenian Church and the stately old lighthouse in Chennai, the charming Thirunermalai temple, the impressive Thirumalai Nayak Mahal in Madurai, and the elegant street houses that are vanishing from the Madurai city. All cards are accompanied by Mahema Devadoss's text and, as usual, the sale proceeds go to service-minded institutions like the Aravind Eye Hospital, Sankara Nethralaya, SPASTN, among others.

The street houses in Madurai and the Nataka Sala of the Mahal in Madurai were done by Devadoss in 2003/2004 for his forthcoming book, *Multiple Facets of My Madurai*. He did the old lighthouse in Madras and

Thirunermalai, near Madras, in the mid-1990s. But the Armenian Church is an entirely new work which his daughter Sujatha persuaded him to do despite his vision being what it is now.

He took up the challenge, made many, very early morning visits to the church with Sujatha and her friend Joan and they helped him to "see" the structure 3-dimensionally. They made rough sketches to show him some details and took pictures. He breezed through the work.

A Staff Reporter



Tributes (Contd.)

(Continued from page 7)

artwork in the book spans many centuries of our city's heritage, from the monuments of Mahabalipuram and the shrine of St. Thomas to the Indo-Saracenic structures that symbolise Madras city and the later buildings, each a jewel in its own right. Our aim was to bring the spotlight on Madras, its local history and magnificent heritage, that in our fast-paced era are being eroded at an alarming rate.

Mano was childlike when it came to the expression of delight. He eagerly looked forward to attending the theatre, music concerts, talks and cultural programs, where he showed his appreciation with thunderous applause. Mano had open doors and warmly welcomed visitors. A personalised welcome kolam in his front verandah was his way of conveying how he treasured someone's visit. Mano was very fond of carnatic and western music and was himself a student till the end. The paattu vaadyar taught him keerthanais and in turn, Mano taught him English. Mano had mastered the mouth organ and would entertain friends by playing MLV's Ayya sami Aaoji sami with gusto. Time and punctuality were very important to him and his talking watch would mark time. Not one to waste a minute, he would practice Abhogi varnam with talam even if it was a short wait somewhere.

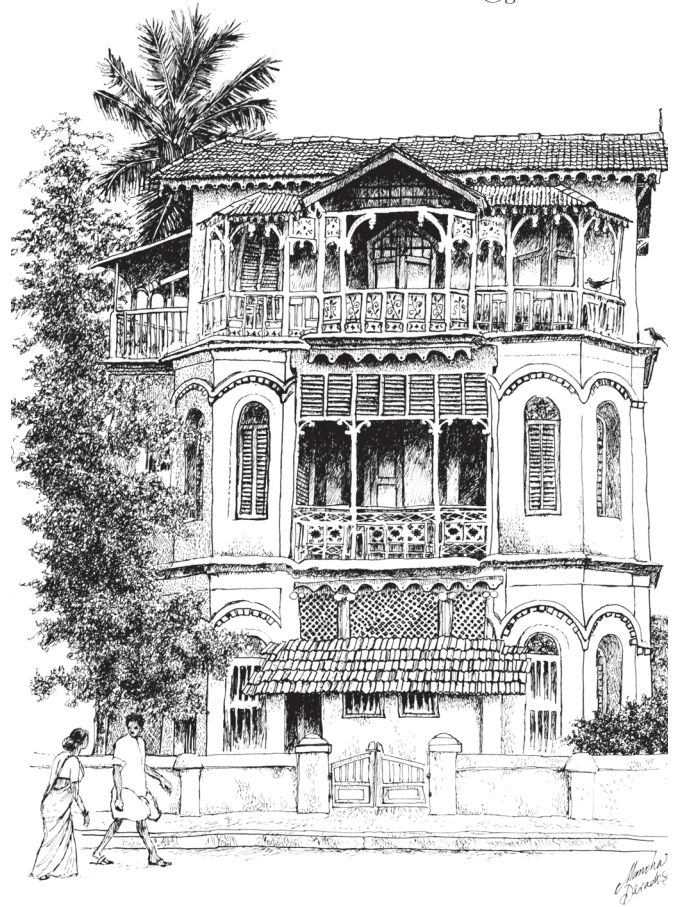
Manohar Devadoss was a one-of-a-kind artist and above all, a one-of-a-kind human

being and an inspiration to humanity. A true gem of the nation, there can never be another Mano.

Sujatha Shankar
Architect, Convenor of INTACH, Chennai Chapter

Postscript: After the launch of *Madras Inked*, there came a call from a friend to say that there were two sketches of buildings of Madras in their home, ones that were featured in the book. In his own words, Mano was 'jubilant'. Just a

week before he passed away, we managed to trace one of the drawings to a home in Royapettah and it was a matter of great delight to him. The other house, featured here, was, according to Mano, very close to the Ega Theatre junction to its east on Poonamalle High Road. This was his recollection of the location from the detailed description of the building in the drawing as explained to him. If anyone can locate or identify this building, please inform us at sujathashankarachitect2020@gmail.com



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