

Breaking away

MALA MAHESH

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Lamentation of Christ by Giotto.

Giotto de Bondone was one of the famous painters of the Middle Ages (approximately from 5th to the 15th Century, A.D.).

Giotto was born in a village near Florence, Italy. According to legend, Giotto was drawing a picture of a sheep on a rock when Cimabue, a well-known

artist, spotted him. Cimabue encouraged Giotto to work under him. This was Giotto's introduction to the restricted world of art of his time.

During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church spread its faith through the medium of art. The church ordered huge panel paintings, altarpieces and frescoes. The use of gold colour for the background in a painting was common.

The purpose was to emphasise the divinity or holiness of the image. The artists had to follow these strict rules, laid down by the church. Cimabue was one of the early painters who tried to break away from these strict rules but it was his pupil, Giotto, who successfully accomplished it.

Giotto's themes were mainly religious but his style of

painting was different from other painters of his time. He showed emotions in his paintings, which made his work seem more real and people could identify with it. The frescoes painted by Giotto in the Scrovegni chapel (also called as the Arena Chapel) in Padua (Italy) were good examples of this style. One of the frescoes called the "Mourning of Christ" showed the limp body of Christ being



held by Mary. The pain and anguish felt by Mary, the angels and people gathered around Christ, was clearly visible.

Giotto lived in Florence and had his own studio and many apprentices working for him. He did work for many rich and important people in and outside Florence. Pope

Boniface VIII asked him for a sample of his work. Giotto drew a perfect circle in red and sent it back to him. The Pope immediately recognised him as an artist, far superior than his contemporaries. Giotto made the "Ship of Church" mosaic for St. Peter's in Rome. He also painted some panels for the Cardinal Stefaneschi in Rome. However, the mosaic was altered so many times that it did not bear any resemblance to the original work of Giotto and the panel paintings were considered to have been done more by the other artists in his studio than by himself.

He was the most popular artist of his time. His paintings lacked the technical sophistication of the Renaissance artists, yet his works inspired great masters of the Renaissance period, like Masaccio and Michelangelo. He was considered the forerunner of the Renaissance period, which started about a 100 years later. ☺



Sense & Nonsense

Fly for your life

MADHAV GADGIL

Be a Swift, and stay on the wing,
For heaven's sake, don't sit and sing.
For then you can be sure of your fate,
Locked in a cage, or served on a plate!

An eerie silence prevails as the dawn breaks in Indonesia. No koels call, no mynas chatter. The only birds around are the silent swifts. With mouths agape, their whole attention is riveted on swallowing as many as possible of the tiny insects flying around. Swifts are unable to perch on trees or hop on ground. So they rest the whole night, squatting on

rocky crags or on building walls. But once they spread their wings at dawn, they fold them again only to go to sleep at dusk. Indonesians are fond of birds; they love to see and hear them. But they want them in their homes, so they set about snaring every manner of singing bird. Most Indonesian houses have several cages, holding birds. And what they do not cage, they love to eat, so forever they are out with their catapults or guns. This hunting and snaring takes an incredible toll of the bird life. The only birds to survive this gauntlet are the swifts, flying forever to hold on to dear life! ☺



Prema Iyer

Seven-year-old Bunty was a good student. He did his homework, drank his milk and ate his carrots and beetroots without a fuss. That is to say he was almost an ideal child.

I use the word almost because he behaved in a perfect manner on most occasions except when he saw a puddle. The moment he set his eyes on one he turned from a shy, quiet boy to a bundle of energy and enthusiasm. On seeing a puddle he would take a few steps back, look longingly at the water and then charge — full speed, then jump high and land bang in the middle of the puddle, splashing water all round, clapping his hands and shouting in glee.

A couple of moments later he would quietly walk away as if nothing had happened. "What is this Bunty? Once again your clothes are in a

mess," his class teacher would shout.

"I am sorry ma'am. I stepped into a puddle and..."

"Then why don't you look where you are going? Next time I'll send you home."

Back home his ma would scream.

"Once again you have come back looking like a pig."

"I stepped into a puddle, ma."

"You must have jumped into one. Don't I know you?"

"Ma, whenever I see a puddle, something happens inside me. I can't control myself. I have to jump into it."

"Bah! Don't give me that nonsense. I am warning you, next time you get your clothes dirty I'll spank you."

One Sunday morning, Bunty lazily opened his eyes and looked out of the window. It had rained all night. Right in

Puddle-jumping

RAMENDRA KUMAR



Something happened to Bunty when he saw a puddle. There was a kind of excitement within him that he could not control...

the middle of the lawn was a puddle. Bunty wanted to rush into the garden and jump into the puddle. But he remembered his mother's warning and stopped.

As he stared longingly at the puddle he saw his mother step into the garden in her nightgown.

She was staring at one of the puddles with a strange expression on her face. As he

watched she went back five or six steps and looked around. She then broke into a trot, leapt into the air and landed bang in the middle of the puddle. Her feet, her ankles, her nightgown were all splattered with mud, but her face was wreathed in smiles. "Wow! Ma! That was perfect. Even I couldn't have achieved a better landing," Bunty yelled clapping his hands.

Startled, his ma looked around and on seeing him, turned red.

Bunty ran into the garden and hugged her.

"You scoundrel, you were spying on me," she said looking at him with mock anger.

"Of course not, ma. But tell me didn't it feel great?"

"It's... it's fun," she said.

"But that doesn't mean I'll allow you to make a mess of your clothes and shoes every day."

"Oh! Come on, ma. Don't be a spoilsport. And just imagine if Papa comes to know about your fantastic jump into the..."

"You rascal, you are trying to blackmail me!"

"Of course not ma... but suppose when I am talking to him, if it just slips out..."

"Okay, okay, I got the message. But you must do your puddle-jumping only in the garden, not on the roads."

"Okay, ma, but you'll have to join me from time to time. It will be much more fun when we do it together."

Ma looked at him with a twinkle in her eye, a soft smile on her lips. She grabbed his hand and pulling him forward yelled, "What about now?"

"Yahoo!" Bunty shouted and mother and son landed bang in the middle of a wet and slushy puddle. ☺

Silent tears

BIKASHKANTI SAHA

It is a breathtaking sight to see Olive Ridley turtles come out of the sea and find their nesting place.



It is said that nesting marine turtles possess large glands near the eyes as they shed tears of grief because they are forced to leave their eggs to the mercy of nature. Actually, the secretion from these glands is because of excessive salt absorbed with water and food. In Gahirmatha, the turtles nest from November to March and

each lays at least 120 eggs at a time. It is a breath-taking sight to see thousands of giant turtles (each weighing about 40 kg) in the moonlight as they clamber out of the sea and prepare their nesting holes in the sand to lay eggs. And again cover them carefully to deceive the predators. Nearly thousands of the endangered species of Olive Ridley turtles are fast perishing in the coastal zone of Orissa due to rampant trawling activities and biological intervention.

A ban has been imposed on fishing within 20 km. of Gahirmatha since it has been declared a marine sanctuary. ☺

Forging...

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Streeter who visited most of the areas in India known for kite flying wrote: "Indian style kite flying is a freedom sport. Most sports today are moving away from nature but kite flying and the Indian style of kite flying is inevitably, totally, a natural sport"

For those in Jaipur, *Makar Sankranti* is the day for outdoors, flying kites standing on the rooftops of the buildings. The festival also means goodies like *til ki*

laddu and *feeni* besides the *vada* which go well with the cold weather.

The Kite Festival this time meant different things for different organisers. For the Rajasthan Tourism, it was an opportunity to project another traditional festival. And the Heritage Trust projected the Pink City. The Trust arranged programmes by artists from various parts of the country.

For the Nomads, the festival was also an occasion to remember the drought-affected people of Rajasthan and uphold their social commitments. ☺

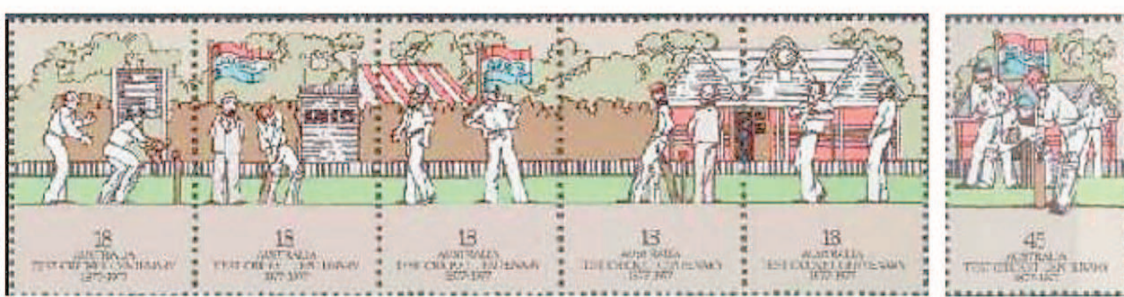
Caribbean omnibus

VIVEK SRINIVASAN



Over a period of three months, from July to October 1976, 10 Caribbean countries came out with a set of two stamps each to celebrate the West Indies' victory in the 1975 World Cup. In this second omnibus issue, all of them issued identical stamps — one showing a map of the Caribbean and the other, the Prudential World Cup. The countries involved in this issue were Barbados, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago and even the Central American Republic of Belize. A few of these also issued miniature sheets of the two stamps with cricket related designs on the border.

Four years after the English county championship issue, there was another, more significant centenary. Australia played England in a test match at Melbourne from 12 to March 17, 1977, 100 years after the first ever test. Australia Post came out with set of six stamps for the event. Five of them, depicting a cricket match in progress, were joined together in a strip while the sixth stamp portrayed a batsman. ☺



Minted at Srirangapatnam

S. SURESH

The coins of the Wodeyars of Mysore were almost similar to the coins of the Vijayanagar emperors.



it is very difficult to differentiate a Wodeyar coin from a Vijayanagar coin! Many of the Wodeyar coins feature Hindu deities such as Lakshmi-

Initially, the Wodeyars were the subordinate of the powerful Vijayanagar emperors who ruled South India during the medieval period.

With the decline of the Vijayanagar power in the 17th Century, the Wodeyars became independent rulers in Karnataka. They ruled from Mysore till 1947, except for a brief gap of around 40 years (late 18th century) when the Muslim rulers Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan ruled from Mysore.

The Wodeyars minted coins in gold, copper and rarely, silver. They had a large mint at Srirangapatnam. The Wodeyar coins are similar to the Vijayanagar coins in size, shape, weight, obverse and reverse devices. In fact, often

Narasimha and Shiva-Parvati. You may recall that Krishnadevaraya, the famous Vijayanagar ruler, minted coins featuring God-child Krishna (Balakrishna) to commemorate his victory over the ruler of

Udayagiri. Similarly, Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar, one of the early Wodeyar rulers, issued Balakrishna coins to mark his victory over the king of Madurai.

Some Wodeyar coins also depict animals like the elephant and the bull.

The reverse of the coins bear the name of the ruler in Nagari script similar to the Vijayanagar coins.

Several Hindu families preserve and worship the Wodeyar coins-bearing figures of deities. ☺



Toss of a coin