



Oh! Bleeding Madras

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“Oh! Those checks!” she sneered.

“Don’t be like that. It’s important to me. I wanted to wear it when I meet her. It might make her change her mind.”

This was fascinating, and the four of us grilled Uncle Sid. It was a romantic story. The lady in question had gifted him the shirts because they were ethnic, traditional and Madras-centric. But, when he saw them, he had laughed and not appreciated them. And, so ended his love life.

Now, 20 years later, he realised why the shirts were important. “They are known as Madras Checks,” he explained, “because, *duh!*, they are made in Madras. Both sides of the cloth have the same pattern and it was handwoven.

“Its history goes back to the mid-17th century, when the English East India Company wanted quality textiles and set up a trading post in the small fishing village of Madraspatnam. They organised 400 weavers to do the job. The cloth was popular in Europe and demand was high.”

Uncle Sid told us a riveting story about a consignment that went to the Brooks Brothers, a clothier in New York, the U.S, in 1958. “People who bought these expensive

shirts found that, after one wash, the shirts became discoloured and faded. They were annoyed and threatened to sue Brooks Brothers. To appease customers, advertising guru David Ogilvy coined the phrase ‘Guaranteed to bleed’ and used it as a selling point rather than a defect. So, it is also known as Bleeding Madras.”

Detection unlimited

We knew we had to only ask Muthu, who mostly lay on the beach and watched the world go by, to find the suitcase. We found him in his usual place. We grilled him, bought him several teas and *vadas* before he told us that he saw a taxi drive up and two men getting into the house and making away with the suitcase. When we got back, uncle Sid was in a flap. His date was in the

evening and he didn’t have his shirt.

“Why don’t you just buy another?” asked Karthik’s father. Sid just growled. “It’s not the same.”

We stepped in, “The taxi guy took your suitcase. If we track him down, you’ve got your shirts.”

In no time, we piled into the car and drove off to the airport. It was like a treasure hunt. Collecting clues from one place and arriving at the next. Our destination was the taxi driver’s house. At first he denied it, but Kamla wandered into the house and found the suitcase in the back room.

Uncle Sid wore his checked shirt and went to meet the love of his life. After 20 years, the shirt worked its magic. Wrongs were righted, sins forgiven and she agreed to be wooed again.



Bookworm

Flight of the fly

Why should you keep your surroundings clean? Find out from the story of Makkhilal



Title: The Tale of Makkhilal

Author: Geeta Dharmarajan

Illustrator: Charbak Dipta

Publisher: Katha Books

Price: not stated

In the land of Makkhipuri,
The fly was god for all.
They prayed to it for good health,
They called it Makkhilal.
Imagine, a fly as the god of a village! What will happen when food has to be offered to the god first? Or when people have to be blessed? Makkhilal’s reign is a terrible one but the people don’t seem to realise that their god is causing all their problems. One person, however, knows. But, can she save the village? Will the villagers listen to her?

The Tale of Makkhilal (Makkhilal Ki Mahima, in Hindi), told through verse by Geeta Dharmarajan, and with illustrations by Charbak Dipta, encourages everyone to think about hygiene, role models, the power of one, and more. At the end, the book also has information about houseflies and a section on how children can self-reflect and achieve their targets.