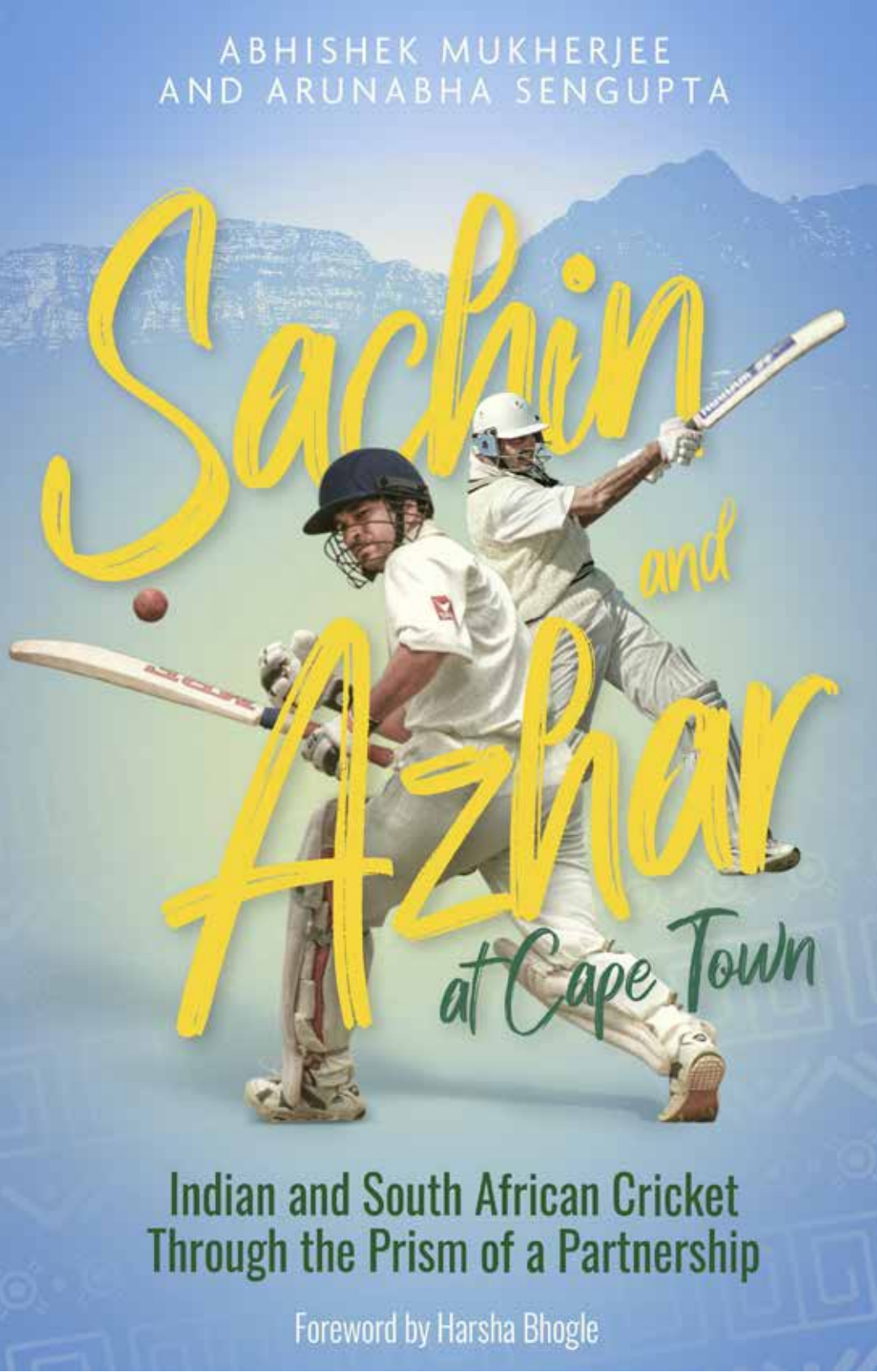


ABHISHEK MUKHERJEE
AND ARUNABHA SENGUPTA

The book cover features a photograph of two cricketers in white uniforms and helmets, captured in a batting stance. One player is in the foreground, and another is slightly behind him. A red cricket ball is visible in the air to the left. The background shows a blue sky and a mountain range. The title 'Sachin and Azhar at Cape Town' is written in large, stylized, yellow and green cursive fonts over the image.

Sachin
and
Azhar
at Cape Town

Indian and South African Cricket
Through the Prism of a Partnership

Foreword by Harsha Bhogle

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Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Pre-Match Presentation (Introduction)	11
Pitch Inspection	15
Evening	26
Morning	44
Lunch	111
High Noon	130
Afternoon Light	174
At the End of the Day	192
Match Scorecard	235
Appendix	238
Index	247
About the Authors	256

Evening

By the time Paul Adams completes his curiously convoluted frog-in-the-blender follow-through, the ball has already pitched on the middle stump. The googly turns past a clueless blade and crashes into the stumps. Adams does his characteristic celebratory flip, the head ducking, the body contorted into a ball, the feet flying through the air before landing on the other side, every such celebration sending palpitations through the South African team management, selectors and physios.

Who on earth sends in Venkatesh Prasad as a nightwatchman anyway? An average of 4.87 from eight Tests. Why not the far more capable Anil Kumble or Javagal Srinath?

On the other hand, it has been a curiously intelligent move by Hansie Cronje. With his batsmen, primarily Lance Klusener, creaming the Indian bowlers, he and Bob Woolmer probably had a lot of time to work things out. Batting at the fag-end of the day, with that tottering top order, a nightwatchman was always on the cards. Perhaps they had a plan for each one of them. Unfortunately, we can no longer ask them. But that is a different story.

Prasad could probably have missed a few from the faster men and survived, too poor a batsman to get a touch to Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock. Adams was the right choice. A wrist-spinner with a splendid wrong 'un. Prasad has to either play him with his bat or go. He goes.

EVENING

Captain Sachin Tendulkar is not very pleased to walk in with minutes remaining in the day. With 3,106 runs in 46 Tests, he is a few years into his decade-and-a-half-long tussle for the crown of world batsmanship with Brian Lara. Impeccable consistency laced with audacious improvisations on the platform of perfect technique on one side, a genius on a coil of spring with a penchant for mammoth knocks on the other. A rivalry to be savoured.

But introduction to captaincy has not been easy for the Indian master's willow. For the first time in three years, his career average has dipped just under 50. In five Tests as captain he averages 19.50, with just one half-century. With moments to go, this is the worst time to come out and take guard.

Sourav Ganguly greets him with a nervous nod of his head. He has struck a couple of boundaries. In fact, his has been the only blade from which runs have looked like coming in this innings.

Rahul Dravid was dropped on 1, and chopped one from Lance Klusener on to his stumps for 2. The end to 55 minutes and 41 balls of painful, pitiable struggle.

W.V. Raman went way earlier, his perennially lazy saunter across the pitch for a second run failing to beat the fierce Protean agility. It was Klusener with the throw. Eight wickets in the second innings on debut at Eden Gardens. Now 102 not out in 100 deliveries in his fourth Test, followed by a run-out and a wicket. Test cricket seems easy for some.

Tendulkar takes guard.

AS: I remember sitting in the lounge of the hostel of my university, watching the game. I could feel my fingers tightening around the handle of the mug of tea. A fairly large number had suddenly gathered in front of the television in the last few minutes, some curious chain of

whispers informing everyone that Tendulkar was at the wicket. Mind you, this was long before the explosion of text messages. The hearts seemed to thud with every step the bowler took after turning from his bowling mark, and by the time the little man went forward to meet the ball mine was knocking against my front teeth. That was what the wicket of Tendulkar meant in those days.

AM: It was not an exaggeration, you know, what they say about television sets being switched off when he got out. I used to watch every ball, even when India needed 170 with two wickets standing, but many others used to switch their sets off as soon as Tendulkar was dismissed. It was eerie. There used to be a collective groan across the neighbourhood, and then the boys came out to play their own cricket. Mind you, Azhar might still have been batting, but none of that mattered.

Tendulkar's stature among a section of cricket followers was already godlike, enough to generate discomfort even among many of his fans. Indian batsmen of the new millennium would go on to achieve many a feat, as individuals or as a unit, but the 'god' tag would stay.

It was an honour or a burden – depending on your point of view – that he still has to bear.

AS: I remember watching the previous overseas series. In England. The Edgbaston Test match. We were sitting in the television room of our hostel in New Delhi. It was teeming with people as Tendulkar played that 122-run gem. The next highest score in the innings was 18. As long as he was there, people dared to hope.

That was the difference. Since the early 1990s the limits of possibility had been redrawn. The logical parameters of match situation had been tampered with. Every opposition

captain had to take the Tendulkar factor into consideration. As long as he was there, genuine impossibilities looked within reach.

I still recall him skying a pull off Chris Lewis. By the time the catch was taken, the TV room had emptied. Only two or three still lingered.

AM: Unfortunately, that hundred, the best from either side in the series, is not remembered as much as some subsequent ones. That said, Ganguly and Dravid started their careers on that tour, and then Laxman, and later Schwag came into the team. This would ensure that the TV sets were not switched off to that degree the moment Tendulkar got out.

Why was Tendulkar such a demigod?

India, with its closed economy, license-raj and slow, hesitant stumble across the path of progress, was one of the last to embrace the idiot box. Even considering the other third-world countries, India was a late entrant.

To put this in context, people in Pakistan had already been watching television programmes for more than a decade before the first set appeared in a common Indian home.

(Under the apartheid regime, South Africa had to wait longer. It was not until 1976 that the first sets appeared in the country.)

In the 1980s, international matches at home became regular fare on Indian television, and slowly one-day internationals played overseas were also watched live. But when the side went on Test tours to

SACHIN AND AZHAR AT CAPE TOWN

countries other than Pakistan, the fans had to depend on packaged highlights.

In 1991, under pressure from the World Bank and IMF, India was forced to open its economy and allow foreign investment. The market, which had remained closed and constrained, opened up and along with that cable television made an entrance.

Soon cable operators were running amok and elders in middle-class housing colonies were gravely shaking their grey heads, wondering about the onset of decadence that the distractions of 24-hour television would inflict on the future generations. But their feeble resistance did not quite prosper. Even the Gulf War could now be followed on television, after all. Urban India was soon enmeshed with cables. First the cities, and then gradually the small towns and villages fell to this invasion.

The year 1991 also saw another major change. With India hosting the path-breaking ODI tour of the recently back-in-the-fold South Africa, two television channels of the Rainbow Nation contacted the BCCI for television rights. It was a jolt for the board who till now had often paid Doordarshan for telecasting the home Tests and ODIs. No one quite knew who owned the rights. After much leafing through the fine print, it was discovered that the BCCI were indeed the owners. It made the board realise that they had been unwittingly sitting on an untapped goldmine.

It took a certain amount of gestation period for this potential money-spinner to reach its logical conclusion and coffer. ESPN and TWI (Trans World International) started transforming the way Indians viewed home

EVENING

Test matches, but the foreign tours remained mainly relegated to ODIs and packaged highlights.

The New Zealand tour of 1993/94 was the first to have the solitary Test match beamed back live, but it was a relatively low-key affair. All that changed in 1996.

It was Mark Mascarenhas, the Connecticut-based businessman of Indian origin later to become Tendulkar's agent, who performed the magical transformation of cricket viewership in India. He zeroed in on the 1996 World Cup played in the subcontinent and showed the BCCI the enormous market that lay in selling television rights. He bought the rights for an atrocious sum, and the profits he made were equally spectacular. The transmissions reached the remotest parts of India, and also the cricket-starved diasporas around the world, mainly in the United States. The world woke up to the power of televising cricket in India and to Indians around the world. Indian cricket lovers in the remotest villages and the farthest diasporas started watching every ball that was bowled.

By then the Indian television industry had come of age. From the one television channel (two in Delhi) when Tendulkar had made his debut in 1989, there were over 50 by 1996.

The 1996 World Cup witnessed major commercialisation. Ex-cricketers recruited as commentators were star attractions themselves. Every possible and impossible product was packaged with cricketing essence during the tournament, from the official soft drink to the official chewing gum. Advertisements were beamed to the remote towns, featuring men of the stature of Courtney Walsh and Dickie Bird.

SACHIN AND AZHAR AT CAPE TOWN

Now to gauge the appeal of Sachin Tendulkar, let us look at what transpired in the transitional five years following the satellite television revolution of cricket, the revolution that was kick-started with the 1996 World Cup.

From February 1996 to the end of the 2000/01 season, Sachin Tendulkar led the rest of the field by light years. No Indian batsman had reached the top of the batting charts by dominating the best bowlers in this way, being so far ahead of the rest of the field across the world. And the television channels beamed each and every stroke, taking them to every cricket-loving home in India and around the world.

Be it the desert storms at Sharjah, or the Test hundreds at Birmingham '96, Cape Town '97, Chennai '98, Chennai '99 or Melbourne '99, the story was always of genius unfolding.

To put the difference between Tendulkar and the rest of the batsmen in this period in perspective, it makes sense to look at some data. Both the figures in the Test matches and ODIs indicate Tendulkar was playing on a level of his own.

Generally, combining different formats together does not make sense in gauging the quality of a batsman. The units are totally different. However, if we consider the viewers who watched cricket on television in those days and cheered runs and hundreds irrespective of the format, during those five years between World Cup 1996 and the Australian tour of India in 2001, Tendulkar scored 11,204 runs in international cricket with 41 centuries! No one came anywhere close.

With television converting international cricket to prime-time entertainment, people sat back during

EVENING

those initial years and discovered their superhero who zoomed through the cricketing stratosphere while the lesser mortals had to make their way across the ground.

The statistics were such that they even cut right through the oft-used inane cricketing argument for safeguarding the interests of one's own heroes – numbers-don't-give-the-complete-picture-because-I-would-rather-believe-something-else.

World Cup 1996 to 2000/01 season (Tests)

Batsman	T	R	Ave	100	50
Sachin Tendulkar	44	4,237	60.52	17	13
Steve Waugh	54	3,963	51.46	14	14
Alec Stewart	55	3,681	40.45	7	20
Rahul Dravid	43	3,660	53.82	9	18
Gary Kirsten	53	3,541	41.17	11	14
Brian Lara	49	3,485	40.05	8	17
Daryll Cullinan	51	3,459	46.74	13	11
Mark Waugh	57	3,454	39.25	8	20
Michael Atherton	52	3,207	35.63	7	16
Nasser Hussain	52	3,010	35.83	9	13

World Cup 1996 to 2000/01 season (ODIs)

Batsman	M	R	Ave	SR	100	50
Sachin Tendulkar	166	6,967	46.13	89.25	24	29
Sourav Ganguly	162	6,374	44.57	73.69	16	36
Saeed Anwar	141	5,546	43.32	83.94	11	32
Mark Waugh	126	5,001	44.65	76.09	13	27
Sanath Jayasuriya	136	4,825	37.40	97.21	10	33
Inzamam-ul-Haq	147	4,620	39.82	70.48	3	35
Rahul Dravid	144	4,596	36.76	67.91	7	30
Michael Bevan	134	4,461	54.40	75.31	5	31
Gary Kirsten	114	4,406	42.77	73.65	8	30
Ajay Jadeja	154	4,189	38.78	73.84	5	23
Ijaz Ahmed	129	4,173	36.92	79.91	6	27
Andy Flower	133	4,147	34.27	74.25	1	36
Marvan Atapattu	119	4,049	38.93	65.78	5	32

AM: India being a batting-crazy nation, it was mostly the Indian batsmen the brands targeted. Ganguly, Dravid and later Sehwag all became huge brand names.

AS: Sports superstars becoming brands has been a feature for a long time now. From Michael Jordan to David Beckham to Tiger Woods to Cristiano Ronaldo to Roger Federer, all of them are supreme brands.

In India towards the end of the 1990s it was helped further by the proliferation of television channels, riding on advertisements and cricket-crazed sound bites.

India never quite managed to produce too many world-class bowlers until the very recent years as we write. Unlike Pakistan, for instance, with their steady supply of fast-bowling greats. Hence, to keep hanging on to the national craze surrounding cricket, there is a fascination for batsmen and near mythical powers attributed to them. The brands obviously built on this.

Brand wars

A lot of brands had already zeroed in on Tendulkar before the 1996 boom.

This was a ready-made superhero, whose performances, as we have seen, branded him as such.

When other brand ambassadors were identified and backed in those years, it was difficult to replicate Tendulkar-like performances on the 22 yards. That is evident from the data.

Hence, different branding strategies were used for some cricketers, creating brand essence, seldom concrete, often spurious. Superpowers not directly mappable to performance, not always dealing

EVENING

with deeds with bat and ball, had to be created and bestowed.

Sometimes they don't stand up to careful data analysis unless considerably stretched.

AM: The sad thing is that in spite of this fascination with batsmen, there was not much Indian batting on display at Durban.

AS: 100 and 66 at Durban. Team scores, not individual. On one of the fastest possible surfaces. There was a surge of hope when Prasad took a fifer and South Africa were bowled out for 235 on the first day. The euphoria lasted only until the match restarted on the morrow. 100 all out in just 39.1 overs. That was not the worst of it. Five more to Prasad in the second innings. A total of 259. The target 395. No one expected India to overhaul it. But no one really expected them to be knocked over for 66.

AM: I was talking to G. Viswanath, who had covered the tour for *The Hindu*. A local journalist had told him that India were fortunate to get even 100 and 66. In his opinion India would have scored even less, had the clouds been lower that day.

The Prasad spell was another matter. Prasad took 10-153 in the Test match. The South Africans got 10-100 in India's first innings. Srinath took five wickets. Had there been a third world-class seamer, the way India have now, things might have been different – to some extent.

Even here in Cape Town, Srinath captured 3-130 and Prasad 3-114, but the others had 0-285 (Kirsten was run out and South Africa declared with seven wickets down). That was the kind of difference the lack of

that extra fast bowler made. India might have been up against 329, not 529, had there been a bit of support for the two of them.

Srinath, Prasad, and South Africa

The result of the series could have been different, had India had a third seamer to share the workload when they needed a break.

Donald was the outstanding bowler of the series, but between them, Srinath and Prasad took a comparable number of wickets (they took more wickets than the Donald-Pollock pair), and had to bowl more overs.

Both pairs bore half the workload for their respective sides. But while the other South African bowlers claimed 43% of their team's wickets, their Indian counterparts contributed with only 29%.

All bowlers on India's tour of South Africa, 1996/97

Player	B	W	Ave	Player	B	W	Ave
Srinath	889	18	28.72	Donald	716	20	15.95
Prasad	732	17	25.00	Pollock	576	10	23.10
Combined	1,621	35	26.91	Combined	1,292	30	18.33
Others	1,667	14	57.57	Others	1,501	23	32.96
	49%	71%	(*)		46%	57%	(*)

*The percentage figures denote the percentage of balls bowled and wickets taken by the Srinath-Prasad and Donald-Pollock duos respectively.

Prasad's 10-153 at Kingsmead remains the best analysis by an Indian seamer against South Africa, home or away. Sreesanth's 8-99 in 2005/06 is a somewhat distant second, followed by Srinath's 8-104 in 2001/02.

EVENING

As for Srinath, only four pace bowlers have taken more wickets than his 64 at 24.48 against South Africa in the post-war era. Of them, only Statham (69 wickets at 20.67) has a better average.

Perhaps it is not relevant in the context of the book, but do take a look at the figures of Sydney Barnes. A whopping 83 wickets, an average below 10, and 12 five-wicket hauls. In fact, he took ten wickets in six of the seven Tests he played against them. Could have been another ...

Fast bowlers against South Africa (50 wickets)

Player	M	W	Ave	5WI	10WM
James Anderson	26	93	31.53	4	-
Sydney Barnes	7	83	9.85	12	6
Stuart Broad	22	75	30.12	2	-
Brian Statham	16	69	20.67	4	1
Mitchell Johnson	12	64	25.64	3	2
Javagal Srinath	13	64	24.48	4	0
Glenn McGrath	17	57	27.33	2	0
Chris Martin	14	55	26.73	4	1
Alec Bedser	13	54	26.98	3	1
Courtney Walsh	10	51	19.80	2	0
Brett Lee	14	50	34.64	2	0

AS: When Donald and Pollock took breaks, South Africa had Klusener and McMillan running in for them. And then there was Cronje with his brand of medium pace. By the way, Klusener and McMillan both scored hundreds in this Test match. In the first innings Klusener and McMillan added an unbeaten 147. In the second innings McMillan and Pollock added an unbeaten 101.

AM: Yes, that was the other difference between the sides. Other than Donald, all the South African pacemen were

genuine all-rounders, in stark contrast to their Indian counterparts. The scales were tipped too heavily in favour of the hosts.

AS: There have always been all-rounders in South African cricket, starting with Jimmy Sinclair at the turn of the last century.

Of the great googly bowling quartet, Aubrey Faulkner was perhaps the greatest all-rounder in the history of the game alongside Garry Sobers, Keith Miller and Imran Khan. Reggie Schwarz and Bertie Vogler could both bat. And Gordon White was a classy batsman, who turned his arm over to bowl googlies now and then. Besides, Tip Snooke, Dave Nourse ... most of them were all-rounders. Even the first non-white South African Test cricketer, Charlie 'Buck' Llewellyn.

AM: The 1960s team had Eddie Barlow, Mike Procter, and even Peter Pollock and Tiger Lance. And, of course, Basil D'Oliveira. Then there was Clive Rice in the apartheid era and of course Tony Greig who went to play for England.

AS: Adrian Kuiper as well. And through much of the 1950s and 1960s the pillar at the top of the order and the regular third pacer was Trevor Goddard, one of the most underrated all-round greats in history. There was Clive van Ryneveld as well, who, apart from batting and bowling, fielded superbly at short-leg, led the South African cricket team and was a rugby international for England during his Oxford days.

If we look at the non-white cricketers who played during the apartheid days, there was Taliep Salie – a leg-spinning all-rounder. Clarrie Grimmett, who saw him on the 1935/36 tour, voiced that Salie would get into any side in the world. In 2000, Gesant Toffar noted in his

obituary that he had been a better all-round cricketer than D'Oliveira. Not that non-empirical comparisons are too trustworthy, but it underlines what a fantastic player he was.

Then there were Cec Abrahams, the Abed brothers Goolam and 'Tiny' ... fantastic all-rounders who played in the South African non-European side against the Kenyan Asians and the East Africans in the second half of the 1950s. 'Tiny' Abed was reputed to be an attacking batsman and a dangerous swing bowler in the mould of Keith Miller.

AM: And once they returned, they almost immediately had McMillan, followed by Pollock, Klusener and, finally, Kallis. There were excellent limited-overs all-rounders like Cronje, Boje, and in later days, Albie Morkel.

AS: Even Pat Symcox, who played as an off-spinner and batted mostly at No. 9, scored a Test hundred from No. 10 and a fifty from No. 11, ending with a batting average of 28.50. And later they had Vernon Philander.

In 2013, during an interview with the late Clive Rice I asked why there were so many all-rounders in South Africa. His answer was quite simplistic. 'If you're in the nets to practise and you do both bowling and batting properly, you are contributing. In the match you're always in the game. If you get out for a duck, you don't spend your time standing at third man. You can pick up five wickets and it is great again. This appealed to me. I guess it appealed to all those guys.'

South African all-rounders in Test cricket

Name	M	R	Ave	100	W	Ave	SWI
Jimmy Sinclair	25	1,069	23.23	3	63	31.68	1
Buck Llewellyn	15	544	20.14	0	48	29.60	4
Dave Nourse	45	2,234	29.78	1	41	37.87	0
Aubrey Faulkner	25	1,754	40.79	4	82	26.58	4

SACHIN AND AZHAR AT CAPE TOWN

Cyril Vincent	25	526	20.23	0	84	31.32	3
Trevor Goddard	41	2,516	34.46	1	123	26.22	5
Eddie Barlow	30	2,516	45.74	6	40	34.05	1
Peter Pollock	28	607	21.67	0	116	24.18	9
Mike Procter	4	226	25.11	0	41	15.02	1
Hansie Cronje	68	3,714	36.41	6	43	29.95	0
Brian McMillan	38	1,968	39.36	3	75	33.82	0
Shaun Pollock	108	3,781	32.31	2	421	23.11	16
Jacques Kallis	165	13,206	55.25	45	291	32.63	5
Lance Klusener	49	1,906	32.86	4	80	37.91	1
Vernon Philander	64	1,779	24.04	0	224	22.32	13

South African all-rounders in rebel 'Tests'

Name	M	R	Ave	100	W	Ave	5WI
Adrian Kuiper	7	216	24.00	0	16	19.18	1
Clive Rice	18	679	27.16	0	28	22.39	0
Brian McMillan	4	111	22.20	0	10	31.20	0
Alan Kourie	16	407	23.94	0	38	33.60	3

The South African all-rounders were brilliant in the non-Test world as well, but often away from international eyes. These two, in particular, were glittering stars of county cricket:

Legendary all-rounders in first-class cricket

	M	R	Ave	100	W	Ave	5WI
Mike Procter	401	21,936	36.01	48	1,417	19.53	70
Clive Rice	482	26,331	40.95	48	930	22.49	23

And unfortunately, some had to perform away from all eyes but those of their own people.

The non-white all-rounders the world did not get to know about

Taliep Salie: Leg-spinner par excellence and a good batsman to boot. Some said he was a greater all-round cricketer than even Basil D'Oliveira.

EVENING

Cec Abrahams: Fast-medium bowler of considerable ability and a very dependable batsman.

'Tiny' Abed: Fast-bowling all-rounder in the Keith Miller mould. At 6ft 3in he was called Tiny because brother Lobo, a superb wicketkeeper, was two inches taller.

Goolam Abed: Off-spinning all-rounder, another fabulously talented cricketer from the Abed family.

Denis Foreman: Managed to slip through the colour bar and play three matches for Western Province in the Currie Cup of 1951/52. Migrated to England where his football skills earned him a contract with Brighton and Hove Albion. From 1952 to 1967, he played 125 first-class matches for Sussex.

Eric Majola: Splendid Eastern Province all-rounder who was also a top-class rugby fly-half.

Khaya Majola: In the inter-provincial matches for non-whites between 1971 and 1991, Khaya Majola scored 2,735 runs (second highest), captured 214 wickets with his left-arm spin (fifth highest) and took 65 catches (highest).

Tendulkar and Ganguly survive the rest of the day, but the scoreboard says it all. 29/3 in response to 529/7. Not really fascinating reading for the Indian fans. The age-old tale of abject surrender abroad.

And since the England tour, the overseas woes were being beamed back live.

The mood in the dressing room is anything but upbeat. And around the world the Indian fans gingerly lick their wounds.

Cape Town

The sun sets over Table Mountain. This is Cape Town. The first port of call of the Europeans. The Dutch settled here in 1652, the British took over in 1806.

After that it remained a subcontinent of prolonged tussle. A tussle between British imperialism and capitalism, and the nomadic farming ways of the descendants of the Dutch, who became the orthodox Bible-abiding Afrikaners.

They fought for control over the land, more so when diamond and gold were discovered. The land was split into four colonies, two English and two Dutch. It all came to a head in the prolonged 1899–1902 conflict, the Boer War.

There were, of course, other wars. Wars not given that prominence in the chronicles penned down over the years. Wars through which the indigenous African tribes were driven off the lands that had been theirs for centuries. They were called the Frontier Wars.

After the Boer War peace was brokered between the two warring white factions, and soon South Africa became a union. Before and after that the chips of negotiation between the British and the Boers were the black, coloured and Indian communities. To cater for both the two white races, the non-whites were increasingly marginalised.

By 1913, the blacks, who formed 80% of the population, were restricted to 7% of the country in their settlements.

And things turned from terrible to diabolical when the National Party won the 1948 elections and apartheid became the government policy.

Basil D'Oliveira

It was in this very Cape Town, near Table Mountain, that Basil D'Oliveira grew up as an enormously talented Cape-Coloured cricketer.

The term meant that he was mixed race. In his own words: 'I am not certain of the sociology of our past, and when asked what is a Cape-Coloured, I can only repeat what we grew up to understand it to be. A Cape-Coloured is someone not Indian, not African, but a combination of either Indian and white or African and white. Out of this mixing a new race was born. In South Africa, if you are mixed you are coloured, and that's the end of it.'

Being coloured, he perhaps had it slightly better than the blacks and the Indians. At least as far as the basic rights and amenities were concerned, and at least until 1948. But there could be no hope, no dream of playing international cricket for South Africa.

A phenomenal talent, in his twenties D'Oliveira played in the non-white tournaments - the David Harris Trophy for the coloured, the Dadabhay Trophy contested between the non-white races. And then he led the non-white South Africans in a couple of triumphant series against the Kenyan Asians and the East Africans.

But international cricket remained a dream against the terrible apartheid legislations. When he watched Test matches at this very Newlands Ground, it was from the Cage, the segregated enclosure for the non-Europeans.