

# alumnus Dr Ram Guha : Writer, Historian, Commentator

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As a youngster, Ram was a person with a very broad range of interests. He was also a talented cricket player and had played alongside Kirti Azad and Arun Lal on the **St Stephen's College** cricket team.

MADHAV GADGIL



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**Ramachandra Guha** BA His Hons St Stephen's 1977

PHOTOGRAPH BY NARENDRA BISHT

My abiding early memory is of Ram standing below my room at **St Stephen's**, morning newspaper and asthma inhaler in hand, hair ruffled and splayed (even as it is today), muezzin-ing me for breakfast with repeated calls of 'Super-Dey'.

I was introduced to the great cricket writings of AA Thomson, Neville Cardus and Jack Fingleton by Ram.

**Arvind Subramanian IAS Chief Economic Adviser Govt of India**

Over the last twenty years I have known Ram in various guises, but there were earlier incarnations that I could not know. I never knew Ram the anthropologist, Ram the trainee sociologist or Ram the nearly-Marxist, the Calcutta student who gave away his cricket books in order to find room on his shelves for a Marxist library that included the 90 volumes of Lenin's collected works. Nor, more regrettably, have I seen much of Ram the ecologist, although we have similar views on the environment; we have been on expeditions into the Nilgiris, and we have enjoyed good country walks in Britain, in the hills of lowland Scotland and southern England.

**David Gilmour**, Author of *The Ruling Caste* :  
*Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj* and *The Long Recessional* :  
*The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* among other books.

Provoked by sociologist Ashis Nandy's procrustean approach to the game in *The Tao of Cricket*, Guha wrote *Wickets in the East*; thrown into depression over the demolition of the Babri Masjid, he sought solace in cricket, and dashed off *Spin and Other Turns* in a week's furious writing. With these books Guha liberated cricket writing in India from the two poles it had been tethered to—the cynical-journalistic and the statistical-dogmatic. Cricket, he underlined in these anecdotal histories, is about the human stories, not just of the players but of the fans too; its humour is rich, its culture varied.

*The Picador Book of Cricket*, which he edited, is as much a tribute to the facets of the game and its personalities as it is to those who wrote about it. Guha brings to cricket writing the sheer joy of watching, of reading about it, of revelling in its traditions. He appreciates the chasm between the man who can spin a ball in his backyard and the genius who does it for a living on the world stage. Guha understood this and captured it in those early books. These were fans' books, and it was no coincidence that on the title page of one was the line from **Ian Peebles**: "*There are no cricketers like those seen through twelve-year-old eyes.*"

**Suresh Menon**, Editor , Wisden India Almanack and Contributing Editor , The Hindu