

# **I have the Streets**

**A Kutti Cricket Story**

**R Ashwin and Sidharth Monga**

**“Ashwin is a cricketing geek, a studious kid who brought his intelligence to the game “ –  
Rahul Dravid**

**” I admire Ashwin’s ability to reflect on it, his willingness to keep working on it, his courage to take risks and his confidence to keep innovating” - Rahul Dravid**

**As a child, my health is a constant source of worry for my parents, especially my father.**

**Cricket is a bond between me and my appa(dad), if we are not watching it live in chepauk or bengaluru , we are watching it on cable TV.**

**I feel good about my cricket and how its progressing. My wheezing attacks have stopped and I am playing for Chennai against a combined Tamil Nādu team.**

**I go through a medical emergency, the whole world comes crashing down. If I have to go for surgery, then this will be a strain on the family financial resources.**

**Aniruddha Srikanth is a privileged kid, he comes for practice in his own car, he is snobbish and makes fun of several people. I fight back against him but the good thing is that he is a great teammate and captain.**



**I love playing other sport, I represented Tamil Nādu in ball badminton during the cricket break.**

**Somasundaram ground in T Nagar is the hub of Tamil Nādu cricket. You will see tens of matches there, all 14 overs a side.**

**Tamil is an inherently humorous language, the range of expressions is huge. What a word means depends on the way its spoken and by whom to whom.**

**When I went for the India Under 17 trials, everybody just assumes that everyone knows Hindi, and set off speaking their own version of Hindi. No one makes the effort to understand that a boy doesn't know Hindi.**

**I am originally an opening batsman, my Amma ( mother) planted the seed of off spin bowling in my head since she felt that after batting I had nothing to do on the field the whole day. I would try and copy Harbhajan Singh's action, sometimes Romesh Powar, he was a big hero for me.**

**Many times I find myself in a situation where nobody gives me a chance. I suspect nobody wants to give me a chance. My response is the only one I know – work harder, run harder, push harder.**

**In training camps, we mark each others exercise drill. The first time I asked Pujara, how many push ups do you want me to put when he has done 22, and he replies 22 only.**

**Towards the end of the camp, vengsarkar and the coaches signal to me to meet them. They tell me that for the Under 19 world cup team, they want a middle order batsman who can bowl. They also tell me that they are impressed with my leadership abilities.**



**I am not selected for the south zone team despite impressive performances. I get calls from Vivek Jaisimha and Dilip Vengsarkar in support. When I sit back and reflect, I wonder how a legend of Indian cricket like Vengsarkar went out of his way to find my home number and call me to offer support.**

**My captain at Alwarpet CC doesn't want us bowlers to talk to any batsman, if you communicate with batsmen, you make them feel comfortable, he says.**

**My family is clear that they don't want me to put all eggs in one basket, i.e. cricket. My mother wants me to be a Doctor, her sister is one. I opt for engineering.**

**Everyday is a hustle, managing both college and cricket. I notice that nameplates outside a house in Chennai always have a degree after the name I wonder what it will be in my case.**

**One thing that bothers me about Chennai is that we love to talk about the game, we romanticize it but play it less. That's why we haven't had a cricketer of repute from Tamil Nādu after Kris Srikkanth.**

**Dinesh Karthik is a year older than me. I cycle to watch him play in every match. I am so fascinated with Karthik, that I even drag my father to watch him play.**

**Sunil Subramaniam , the left arm spinner form Tamil Nādu asks me to put more revolutions on the ball. This results in movement in the air and off the pitch.**

**I am called to be a net bowler for the India West Indies match at Chepauk. I bowl to Gayle, Sachin , MS Dhoni etc. I am amazed that no one asked me my name or who I was. I found that disappointing, I refused to go the next day because I felt that I wasn't respected.**



**I found that India and West Indies batsmen would never tell you good ball or well bowled in these nets, they were very professional, they were focused on excellence.**

**I want to experiment in the nets but WV Raman the coach tells me not to. I have an argument, why is it that batters try different things in the nets but bowlers aren't allowed to. A batter doesn't apologize to the bowler when he plays a bad shot, why should the bowler apologize to a batter if he bowls a bad ball in the nets.**

**WV Raman, I love working with him, since he makes me realize that there is more to spin bowling than just revolutions o the ball.**

**He makes me bowl 5 pc slower, 10 pc faster, adjust my angle etc.**

**It has been such a quick turnaround for me as a cricketer. From being an opening batsman who bowls some seam up, I am now an off spinner with one and half successful cricketing seasons behind me.**

**The IPL is unlike any cricket I've ever been part of.**

**I don't go for any of the after match parties in IPL. I have never been to a nightclub. I stand outside the party door, to get a glimpse of actors Vijay and Nayanthara who drop in sometimes as CSK brand ambassadors.**

**CSK and their owner India cements offer me a job – as senior manager , costs department, India cements.**

**WV Raman the coach tells me that that my first job as a bowler is to provide control. He tells me “ you come across as a player who puts the game ahead of anything else, if your ego kicks in, I will kick you”**



**As a kid, I used to fantasize about opening the batting with Sachin. I finally meet him when I am picked for the India T 20 team.**

**I am in a dilemma, I don't want to call him Sachin, neither do I want to call him sir. If he were Tamilian or understood Tamil, I would have called him Anna ( brother)**

**S Badrinath, my Tamil Nādu captain and I have a theory about captains and race horses. Each captain is different, some can make a donkey run. MS Dhoni takes only racehorses and makes them run. He needs to be convinced you are a racehorse.**

**MS Dhoni doesn't speak much in team meetings. He listens to different points of view and absorbs them. He never reacts in a hurry. He hardly attends bowler's meetings. He leaves it to Fleming to prepare players.**

**When the team takes the ground is when MS speaks to the players, this is the only time he speaks in a team meeting.**

**When I am bowling in an IPL match to Sachin, MS tells me, “ I know its Sachin, but you are as good as him”**

**I am aware that I carry the reputation of not being a great fielder from my under 14 days. I am not the quickest in the park but I am a safe and good fielder. I have fielded at slip with distinction and have put in extra effort to get quicker on the field.**

**The Indian team under MS is not big on meetings. His contribution to all meetings is, “come on, lets go”**

**Even the best cricketers deal with more failure than success in their careers.**



**MS prepares me for the 2011 World Cup final, he explains why I didn't play in the semis, he asks me to be ready and not be overawed.**

**There is so much joy when we win the 2011 world cup, everyone is in tears.**

**At 2 am after the festivities, Gary the coach sits me down and tells me that I have improved a lot over the last two years and I am a special cricketer, I should never lose this attribute of improvement.**

**When I get home to Chennai after the world cup win, my street is jampacked with people, everyone is shaking my hand, I am hoisted and carried like a pop star.**

**I see media people, random people in the house, my mother gives me a stare to be nice to everyone.**

**I show my winning medal to my grandfather.**