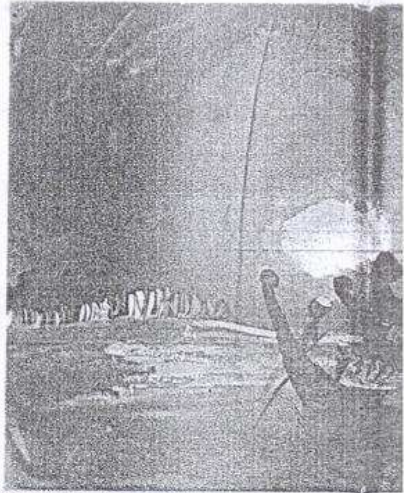
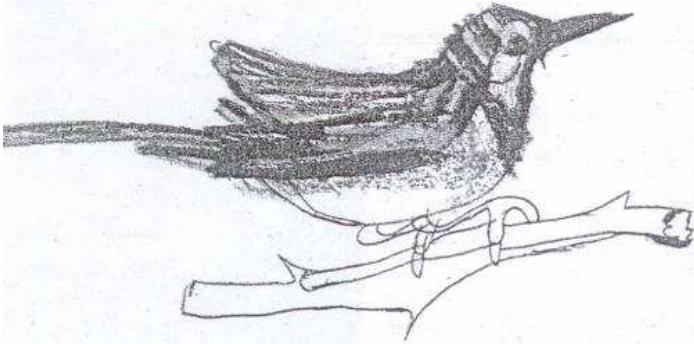
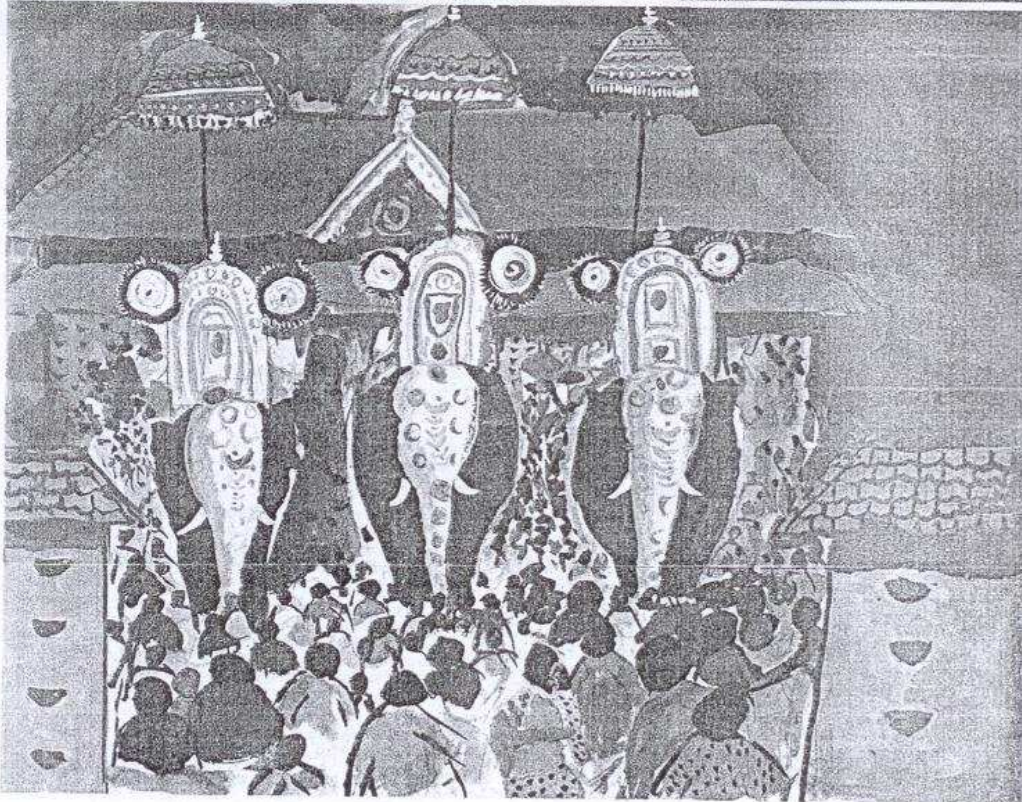


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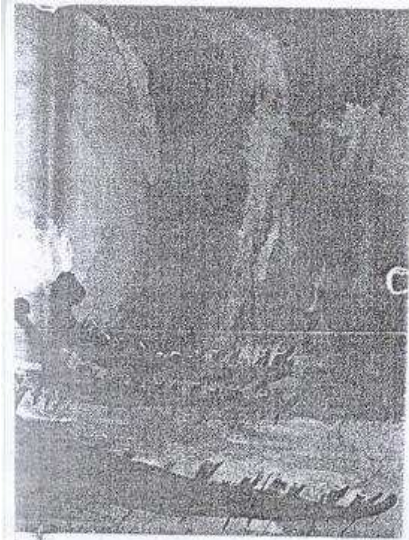


Winning strokes. A temple festival in little Clint's eyes. This is a recopy did by Clint himself of a painting that won him an award at the state-level.





# The world of Clint Edmond Thomas



“AMMA, I might suddenly fall asleep. And perhaps when you call me, I might not answer. Don't get scared, I'll only be sleeping,” Clint said. Exactly an hour later Clint went into a coma. He never woke from that sleep. The next day he died. The prince of colours had vanished into the dark world of the unknown. It was Friday, April 15, 1983.

Clint Edmond Thomas was just six when he died and in six years he had done about 10,000 paintings and drawings, participated in 13 painting contests and won gold medals defeating rivals three times his age. At the 13th contest there were 8,000 child artists against Clint. He won the 13th contest. That was his last.

The only child of an accounts clerk at the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Clint started to draw from the day he began to crawl. The floor and the walls were his canvas. From dawn he used to stand at the window to watch the blushing face of the sky. He was madly in love with colours. One of the first questions he asked his parents when he learnt to talk was: How did the sky become so colourful? How are colours formed?

M T Joseph gave his son the best a father could ever give: understanding and support. From chalk pieces Clint moved over to sketch pens and brushes. Drawing books, samples from child artists all over the world and the guidance of a neighbour who worked as an artist in Clint's father's office made him the wonder boy of Kerala. Here is a child prodigy, some said. Some refused to believe that the pieces were Clint's work. But at the open maidan, when Clint floored thousands of other children, some of the contestants as old as 18, the doubting Thomases had nothing to say.

Clint had an attack of diarrhoea when he was three. When it stopped there was a patch of dark shade below his eyelids which a doctor interpreted as the symptom of a grave disease. Clint's parents later found that their son's kidney trouble, which finally led to his death, was because of the wrong treatment given when he was three.

The child was much more mature for his age. Thunder and lightning never frightened him. He used to stay close to the windows and watch the fury of nature and the fiery clash of the clouds. Later, after a day or two he would transcribe all that he had seen onto paper. Many draw looking at the subject. Clint could draw from memory. With just a few lines here and there, Clint could create figures that were live and moving.

Though a Christian, Clint loved going to temples. Once when his parents asked him why, Clint answered: “Can anyone talk to God in a crowd? Our churches are crowded.”

He was thorough with the Bible, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Ganapati and Abhimanyu were his pet subjects. There are hundreds of drawings of Ganapati enjoying a happy meal—to go with the times, non-vegetarian meals with roasted chicken and beer bottles.

At home he never used to cry. But a stage came when Clint started yelling whenever he saw a woman in white. He was scared of nurses. Injections and drips were too painful for little Clint to bear.

Because of his illness—from the age of three to six he was a sick child—his parents could not take him out often to let the child see the outside world. And since most of his life was spent at the window, watching the sky and the birds, the two became his favourite subjects. There are many drawings of birds, most of them lonely, among Clint's works. He himself was a lonely child, always lost in thoughts.

The day before he died, Clint made a tomb and a cross with kids' building material. He sat watching the plastic tomb for some time. Then with a swift sweep of his hand destroyed it. Soon, he started building a new tomb and another cross. Then again he smashed them into bits. Was he playing with the tomb when death had begun to play with him? His mother seeing this building and re-building told him not to play with the cross. “Okay,” he said softly.

On the eve of his death, Clint took out *Balarama*, a children's magazine, and asked his mother to read out a particular story. Its title—The Funeral. Earlier he had asked his father the meaning of the song which began “I am going to heaven in the chariot of time”. What does it mean, he asked. Before he went into the coma, he took out a picture book about Jesus and asked his mother to read out from a particular page. This was it: The scene, Jesus's crucifixion.

*Though the others jeered at Him, the thief at His right believed Him.*

*And he said, “Jesus remember me in your kingdom.” Jesus said to him, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.”*

“Read that again Amma”, the prince of colours said. “Again and again”.

—MAXWELL FERNANDEZ