

**WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI**

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

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## Street Names Game Again

The State Government has embarked on yet another name change spree. Only this time it seems to have covered its tracks quite well. It has announced that as a fallout of the Chief Minister's earlier announcement that the word 'colony' where it occurs will be deemed derogatory and needs removal, streets that still bear caste names will be once and for all given fresh names. The options for these have however not been left to the citizenry but restricted to a list that the Government has put out. Which means we will have the usual tired, timeworn, set of names again. The Opposition has cried foul and declared that if it comes to power, it will reverse this entire exercise.

It is worth reflecting that this move, while laudable in its

ultimate objective of removing caste, is nothing more than cosmetic in its impact. The State Government, in its present and past forms, all of which have been on this game at least since the 1980s, have only been tampering with history and not with any view to proactively change caste attitudes for the future. The first such move,

● by **Sriram V.**

during MG Ramachandran's regime, truncated caste names from real-life historic personalities, in whose honour streets were named. BN Reddy for instance cannot be Dr B Narasimhan. How would the State Government react if some of its cherished leaders' names were to be altered in public usage?

Likewise, the removal of caste names was selectively applied. To give a DMK example, Dr TM Nair Road, named after the Justice Party leader, has remained as such when in reality it ought to be Taravath Madhavan (who he?) Road. The ADMK in its turn, preferred to rename Chamiers Road as Pasumpon Muthuramalinga (Thevar) Road, the parenthesis reflecting ground reality – caste does not exist, and yet it does!

Would any political party seriously affirm that caste considerations have come down in our State? Not really. While name change is very simple, getting mindsets to move is not so. Electoral mathematics is still entirely caste driven

(Continued on page 2)

## The Monsoon and Our City – A never-ending love story

It is that time of the year again, when people look to the skies with a cautious prayer on their lips. We are of course talking about the North-East Monsoon, the excess or deficit of which more or less determines if water tankers become a common sight on the roads come the next summer. A common sentiment that is expressed is that while people want the rains, they do not want the destruction that it could potentially cause to infrastructure and throw day-to-day life out of gear. Expecting nature to not take its own

● by **Karthik Bhatt**

course because of man-made inadequacies is well, plain native to say the least. What is essential is to ensure that all preparedness and planning is in place to ensure that damages, if any are minimized. And unfortunately, that is where the city has been found regularly lacking.

What is surprising to note is that the same set of scenarios play out year after year. Take for instance the storm-water

drain works. While it is a no brainer that these are vital cogs in the wheel for flood mitigation, it is the timing of these projects that more often than not contribute to the mess during the monsoon. While the city is dry as a bone for most of the year, starting January, it is not until August or worse, in some cases September, that these projects see some action. This writer speaks out of first-hand experience, having been at the receiving end of all sorts of civic woes arising thanks to storm-water drain works on

(Continued on page 2)

## HERITAGE WATCH

### The Madness Around King George

OLD



As a periodical we are divided on whether a statue for a colonial ruler still needs to be in a public place in Chennai. At one time we had several statues of King George V in our city but now there is just one. And it has some logic for still being in place, for it commemorates the renaming of Black Town as George Town in 1905. The statue itself, funded by the Govinddoss Chaturbhujadoss family, was executed by Sir Bertram Mackennal and has been standing here since 1914.

It is not clear as to what possessed our city's corporation that they had to build a rabbit's warren of shops all around the statue! Ostensibly meant for hawkers displaced from NSC Bose Road, the outlets are all shut, and the place is rapidly transforming into an open latrine and rubbish tip. The statue itself is completely hidden from view. Our OLD dates to 2021 when King George was out in the open. Our NEW, by Surya Kumar has him trying to release himself from the shops that threaten to bury him. (Please see page 4 for further details.)

NEW



# STREET NAMES GAME AGAIN

(Continued from page 1)

in Tamil Nadu; it is no better than those states up north that we so like to mock. Similarly, our record of preventing caste atrocities, particularly of the intermediary castes against the lower ones, is not edifying. And every time we read of conflicts, we see caste and religion-based subliminal messaging. Even now there are stories of glasses being segregated based on caste in tea shops. You need to just go to the southern districts to see how entire areas are classified and qualified based on who lives in them.

And so what is it that we are trying to change here? And who is addressing those bigger issues? Nobody really. For it is those divisions that come in handy while selecting electoral hopefuls and also for calculating strength in the assembly and municipal councils. In reality,

it is only Chennai that seems to have shed caste tags and so this exercise will have minimal impact on the city where the maximum number of streets exist. Let us wait and see what the Panchayats in villages, whose nod is required for name changes there, will have to say.

Whatever it is, we hope the Government makes this a once and for all exercise. More often than not, we see that such steps are implemented only half-heartedly, leaving plenty of scope for future powers to meddle. The party that comes up with such brainwaves too does not look too closely at how the changes are made on the ground. Thus, while all these Brahmin, Nadar, Chetty and other such streets that should have ideally been wiped out in the 1980s itself are still around for fresh changes to be made and touted as pioneering efforts in bringing in equality.

# The Monsoon and our City – A never- ending love story

(Continued from page 1)

his road last September, which coincided with the arrival of the monsoon. It was not until mid-January this year that some semblance of normalcy was restored to the road.

One would reasonably expect that learning lessons from the past, any proposed works of similar nature would be carried out well in advance the next time around. Sadly, there has been no change in the way things have unfolded this year, with work on storm-water drains on the adjoining road (which thanks to the diversion of routes due to ongoing Metro Rail works in the area, has become a bus route) starting quite recently and fighting a deadline to complete them before the onset of the monsoon. The Mayor's statement at a council meeting in late August as reported in the newspapers, that all storm-water drain work in the city may not be fully completed by the upcoming monsoon, comes across as a startling admission of all that is not right with the way these projects are planned and executed.

The road cuts as a part of various ongoing civic proj-

ects pose significant dangers as well. Typically, all road cuts are halted well before the onset of the monsoon. The recent announcement that permission for road-cuts has been extended to October 15th this year (right on the cusp of the expected onset) sets the alarm bells ringing. Experience with the way things have unfolded in the past has raised concerns amongst the residents who fear half-dug up roads, unfinished drains and risk of flooding.

For a city which aspires to be a world-class one, it is essential that a proper comprehensive plan is drawn up covering all aspects of civic infrastructure upgrade with a special focus on monsoon preparedness, which is followed fully in spirit. The call for urgent reforms in the way land and water are managed, as well as the dangers posed by unplanned urbanization are handled, cannot be ignored. As the popular saying goes, those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it, and it would be absolute callousness and indifference on the part of those responsible to leave the citizens in the lurch year after year.

# Santa Claus is coming along in time for Elections

There is an air of expectancy in this, our city. The Man from Madras Musings notes that everything is at fever pitch – road works, flood mitigation measures, meet-ups with the common man, the raking in of complaints for speedy disposal and so on. The other day, two rather suspicious-looking characters rang MMM's doorbell and there being no one else to respond, MMM did the honours himself.

Several 'With You' pamphlets were thrust at MMM and he was told that if he had any complaints regarding civic matters, this was his turn to meet up with the great power in person and seek redress. MMM was then asked his cell phone number and adhaar card reference but MMM, not being that dumb, smartly shut the door without revealing either.

But on the day of the At Home, or At Work, or With You, MMM did duly manifest himself at the venue, only to find several thousand others had also done so. He therefore gave up all attempts at the cosy tete-a-tete that he had planned with the great power and contented himself with listening to all that was going on around him. And that by itself counted for rich returns.

Apparently, the State Government is on a recruitment overdrive, filling vacancies at all levels in all departments. And the numbers, by which MMM means vacancies, typically run into four digits in practically every department. You can imagine then as to how many people are joining government service. This kind of recruiting spree MMM was informed, happens once in five years, typically just before elections and that no matter who is in power this procedure is scrupulously followed. Which means when the great powers set out campaigning, they can happily claim that they gave employment to so many people.

All of this was conversation that MMM heard in scraps. What happens during the remaining four years he wondered. And he was soon illuminated about that as well. Nothing, it seems. Vacancies are kept pending, building up towards that great shower of manna in the wilderness just before elections. MMM did not unduly bother himself with the consequences of all this but those around were not so accepting of the procedure. There were better men than MMM around and one of the sages immediately pointed out the flaws in this.

According to this village elder, four years of no recruitment and then a sudden hiring spree spreads chaos in the executive branches of the departments. This long hiatus and then an overflow mean entire batches of people will retire with nobody to fill their vacancies as the next lot will be five years away in seniority. The next problem is that people from the same batch find themselves at various levels of seniority when vacancies necessitate out-of-turn promotions. And so, no work gets done. The AE does not obey the EE so to speak, for they were all hired at the same time, and EE when shouted at by the CE refuses to obey for in an undertone he mutters everyone knows how the CE became a CE. In short, chaos prevails in the long term. There is also the problem of training – huge batches mean

contribute a short, high-quality article to your site, with one helpful (do-follow) link included – either in a new post or an existing one.

No worries if you don't cover betting content – we also work with brands in lifestyle, pets, crypto, and wellness.

Would you be open to this kind of collaboration? Happy to send a topic idea or follow your guidelines if you have them!

And if you manage or recommend any other websites, I'd really love to check them out too!

What makes MMM pause for thought is the sender is someone from a well-known pharma company! The promised content does not seem to gel with that, unless the medicines are veterinary in nature.

But MMM is not just for those abroad. That it is also read, albeit online, at Katra Abdul Gani, Uttar Pradesh was made manifest by this email –

Kindly, sir

I hope everything goes well for you. I am Sudhir Kumar, and I work for Rentrip, one of the best car and bike rental companies in India, as an SEO executive. Rentrip is the company you contact when you need reputable and easy-to-use rental services. For further information, go to <https://www.rentrip.in/>, our website.

I have seen that everything on your <https://madrasmusings.com/> website is well-organised, easily comprehensible, and really beneficial to people. I have chosen to guest post some useful information. I have no doubt that my work will be well received by your audience and that they will come in big numbers.

I will share my updated data with you if you approve and give me the go-ahead.

I guarantee that we will deliver an outstanding item that aligns with your outstanding content.

I sincerely hope you will allow me to post on your website, and I eagerly await your positive response.

warmest regards,

Sudhir Kumar  
(SEO Executive)

Rentrip

MMM wonders if he should connect Sudhir Kumar to the Chinese company selling bulldozers. They may come in useful in UP.

– MMM

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

an enormous strain on training. And there are no trainers as they are needed only once in five years anyway.

All of these serious thoughts were rather rudely interrupted by an official speaking to an assistant in what he thought was a whisper but which MMM could hear quite well. The With You meeting said the official, had to be wound up quickly as there was a VVIP constituency that needed to be covered the same day. And so that, was that.

## Madras Musings, Far and Near

As you are all aware, The Man from Madras Musings receives email regularly from China, interesting him in a series of products ranging from gardening implements to road rollers. There have even been enticing offers for Madras Musings to collaborate on these. And of late, there has been interest from the US as well. Regulars will recall that there was a query on whether a musical could be advertised in the magazine. It has since got even better. MMM is delighted that there are now offers to send in content as the mail below will testify –

Hi [madrasmusings.com](https://madrasmusings.com) team,  
Hope you're doing great!

I'm reaching out on behalf of our licensed U.S. partner, [TwinSpires.com](https://TwinSpires.com) — they specialize in horse racing and sports coverage. We'd love to



# OUR READERS WRITE



## Marina Blue Flag

As an old timer I also recall that in the past, the Marina beach was clean, free of vending stalls, and was as natural as a beach could be. In fact it was acclaimed as one of the best beaches in the world. Overcrowding without proportionate improvements in the infrastructural facilities has been a major reason for the deterioration of the quality of the beach area. As you have rightly pointed out, the proliferation of temporary food stalls is yet another major reason for the beach getting dirty. Sustained effort of the civic administration is called for to keep the beach clean.

There is also an urgent need to regulate the food stalls on the beach to reduce littering, and to eradicate the stray dog menace and the beggar nuisance. Public cooperation is also paramount in keeping the beach clean. It is good to remember that beaches are a shared public property and it is our duty to protect and maintain them while enjoying their immense benefits. Lastly, as hinted by you, proper maintenance of the beach is more important than getting obsessed with winning laurels.

**N Rama Rao**

Retired Deputy Registrar  
General (Census) GOI and  
UN Census Adviser  
1A, Sri Kripa Apartments  
RA Puram, Chennai 600028

## Tamil translation

Propos your tailpiece on crazily worded signboards, I would like to add a few which I noticed in Colombo. Tamil is also an official language in Sri Lanka. But the translation may sound funny:

மலசல கழிப்பிடம் :  
Toilet

சபை : Board like  
Electricity Board  
உதவிக்கரும்பீடம் :  
Help Desk

கூலி வண்டி : Taxi

This will not be understood in Chennai!

**DrG Sundaram, IAS(R)**

A601, Keshav Dugar  
Apartments, Greenways  
Rd., Chennai 600028

## Distortion of a Street Name

I would like to bring to your attention an instance of street name distortion in our city — one that warrants documentation and rectification.

The street originally known as Rajachar Street has been subjected to inconsistent and erroneous naming even across its short stretch: At the intersection with Raghaviah Road, the signboard reads 'Raja Sir Street', even though the older, painted board on the compound wall clearly says 'Rajachar Street'! At Ramarao Street, it is labelled Rajachari Street, and at Hanumanthan Road, it reverts to Rajachar Street.

It appears that the original name was first misread as Raja Char, then transliterated into Tamil and reinterpreted as Raja

Sir during the signboard installation. This is not just a typographical oversight — it reflects a systemic lapse in preserving nomenclature integrity. What is more a matter of concern is that these boards were erected around the same time, yet show no consistency, even within a few metres of one another.

Such distortions erode the historical and cultural identity of our streets, confuse residents and visitors, and compromise the accuracy of public records. I urge *Madras Musings* to feature this issue — not only to document the anomaly but to advocate for corrective action by the civic authorities.

Thank you for your continued commitment to heritage and civic clarity.

**Ramesh C. Kumar**

ramesh.kumar@icico.in



At the intersection with Raghaviah Road.



At the intersection with Hanumanthan Road.



At the intersection with Ramarao Street.

# Website Comments

## A.S. Diwakar – A Man for All Seasons, From Table Tennis to Digital Printing

(Vol. XXXV No. 12, October 1-15, 2025)

Congratulations Diwakar. Very proud of you and I feel honoured to be your schoolmate. Definitely our teachers will be very happy to see this article. Wishing you many many more laurels.

**Sabitha Krishnamurthy**  
suba1712@yahoo.co.uk

\* \* \*

Great and interesting story.

**Dr S Murugan**  
murugan16@yahoo.co.in

\* \* \*

I enjoyed reading a short biography of a young achiever, who remains humble and simple. In addition to being a family friend, I have been privileged to be associated with him in many fields. I wish him many more laurels and accolades.

**Subramanian Ganapathy**  
gsmfca@gmail.com

\* \* \*

A man with amazing energy and enthusiasm. He is also the focal point for our Vailankanni school batch and is the main reason why we all meet so often even after so many years. Truly the right man for the award and the right award for the man! Proud to be his friend!

**Anandh B**  
b.anandh@gmail.com

\* \* \*

An inspiring journey of Mr Diwakar.

**Ramanathan pk**  
ramapkbpc@gmail.com

\* \* \*

## Seeking timely professional help promotes good mental health

(Vol. XXXV No. 12, October 1-15, 2025)

While well-to-do households with schizophrenia patients manage to provide them with hospital or attendant care, many poor and low-income families who have such patients retain them at home though they find it difficult to manage them.

The patients and others at their home live with fear, stress, violence and stigma from society. Increased Government support by way of affordable and free health care in hospitals for mental patients belonging to such families would greatly help them.

**N. Rama Rao**  
ramaraon2014@gmail.com

\* \* \*

Besides professional help it is essential for family members in close contact to understand the root cause for the problem and adopt an understanding

attitude to ameliorate the shortcomings arising out of the illness which is influenced by peer factors.

**R Vijaykumar**  
vijaykumarr52@gmail.com

## Our Readers Write

(Vol. XXXV No. 12, October 1-15, 2025)

I am having a hearty laugh reading the last para of Raghu Krishnan's letter. That bit about the uncle of the writer wearing a cap watching the cricketers do so in the afternoon session of the match telecast live on TV.

**Srinivas Chari**  
srinivaschari@gmail.com

## Notification of apartment development rules paves the way for residential benefits

(Vol. XXXV No. 12, October 1-15, 2025)

1. Thanks for this article. I would like to know if there is any facility offered by the CMDA to assess such old buildings which are over 39 years and give a certificate, which mandates redevelopment, and can it also be a legal document to fix a time period by which redevelopment resolution to be passed and signed by the 2/3rds of the association members?

2. Will this also facilitate formation of an association within a stipulated time period (what if there is no registered association for a society which is nearly 40 years old?)

**Krithiga Viswanathan**  
viswanathankrithiga@gmail.com

## Heritage Watch: How Wonderful Was Our Waterway

(Vol. XXXV No. 12, October 1-15, 2025)

I have fond memories from around 1954-55, of a bunch of parents, uncles, aunts and raucous cousins setting out to Mahabalipuram on a boat down the Buckingham canal for a picnic!

I was about seven at that time. The memory of the fun and frolic remains; that of the pong that even then must have floated about has however, faded...

**B S Prakash**  
bsprakash@gmail.com

## She resurrected Table Tennis in TN

(Vol. XXXV No. 12, October 1-15, 2025)

Well said without them no district players could have reached the national level. They paved the way where all districts had a chance to conduct state ranking tournaments. It was only because of Mrs. Tara Murali and Mr. Lakshmanan, players grew interest towards table tennis those days.

**TV Sriram**  
sriramtv919@gmail.com



# Diwali in our Home: A Slice of Light (and Laughter)

Deepavali in our home is more like a full-scale family production than a festival. It has drama, comedy, food (lots of it), and the occasional shouting match about who has hidden the last Mysore pak.

As a child, I was always puzzled: “Why do we celebrate Deepavali?” The answers I got depended entirely on who I asked.

Paati, with a dramatic wave of her hand: “Ayyo kanna, it is the day Lord Krishna killed Naraka-sura! Imagine, he freed 16,000 women. These days, in one wedding hall with 500 guests, we get tired only!”

My uncle, always ready with his *Ramayana* knowledge: “It’s the day Rama came back to Ayodhya, don’t you know? People lit

lamps everywhere. In Ayodhya, no EB power cut that day!”

My cousin, who loved the *Mahabharata*, “It’s the day the Pandavas returned after exile. They were welcomed grandly. We are still waiting for our welcome after coming back from Hyderabad.”

So yes, the stories varied, but in our home the ‘essence’ was simple: good food, plenty of lights, and surviving the fire-cracker competition with the neighbours.

## Togetherness, Chennai style

Our house on Deepavali morning looks like Egmore station during peak hour. Relatives pour in with tiffin carriers full of sweets, and within ten minutes the sofa is gone under piles of



silk sarees and kurta-pyjama sets.

Amidst the crowd, you can hear different shouts:

“Who has kept the TV volume so low? Increase it, I can’t hear Rajinikanth!”

“Ayyo, don’t step on the kolam, kanna!”

“Coffee? Filter coffee is ready – take fast, or else gone.”

The conversations overlap so much that even Google Translate would give up. But that chaos, that energy, that laughter – that is Deepavali in Chennai.

## Kitchen Chronicles

The kitchen on Deepavali morning is a battlefield. Paati is the commander, armed with a ladle. Amma is the second-in-command, shouting orders:

“Don’t touch the murukku now, wait till neivedyam!”

“Who put sugar in the salt dabba?”

## ● by Priyanka Soman

“Somebody taste this payasam, tell me if it’s too sweet. No, not you, you’ll say everything is nice!”

The cousins, of course, are busy sneaking sweets when no one is watching. One year, my little brother tried to hide *boondi ladoos* in his pocket, only to discover later that cotton pants and ghee are not best friends.

## Lights, Action, Fireworks!

Evening comes, lamps are lit, the house looks beautiful – and then comes the true Chennai test – crackers! The neighbours are already in full swing, their “100-wala” going off like machine gun fire.

My cousin insists: “Let’s light a Lakshmi bomb, show them we are not weak”.

My grandmother, shaking her head: “Why da? There is already enough noise in this house.” Finally, we settle on sparklers because they are safe, pretty, and don’t make the dog run under the bed. Of course, one child will always wave it too close to the curtains, and someone loudly admonishes, “Careful! This is not Marina Beach to do a torchlight parade!”

## The Great Sweets Exchange

No Chennai Deepavali is complete without the annual sweet exchange with neighbours. We pack up a box of our ‘*mixture and adhirasam*’, hand it over, and within an hour receive a box from them, which, on suspicious inspection, looks exactly like the one we sent. Recycling at its finest!

In the end, Deepavali for us is not just the old stories of Krishna, Rama, or the Pandavas. It’s about the house smelling of ghee and filter coffee, the sound of cousins arguing over which laddoo is better, and the sparkle of lamps cutting through the Chennai night.

And yes, no matter how many fairy lights get tangled, or how many murukkus mysteriously vanish before lunch, the joy of being together always shines brighter.

# A locality gets a new identity and a commemorative statue

The visit of King George V and his wife Mary to Madras in early 1906, during the time they were the Prince and Princess of Wales was one of the grandest events of the city in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was a short, yet jam-packed visit lasting five days, marked by public receptions, entertainments in their honour and ceremonial visits. There was also another important development, which was to become the father-of-all renaming exercises, the likes of which the city keeps seeing regularly even today. The locality of Black Town was renamed as George Town.

According to the book *Ref-*

*erence in the press to the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales to India, 1905-1906*, the initiative for the renaming exercise came from the Government of Madras itself, which had made enquiries amongst the native citizens through the Commissioner of Police as to the general public feeling with regards to the altering of the name.

Interestingly, a large portion of the correspondents had suggested an alteration of the name to Ampthill Town, commemorating Lord Ampthill, then the incumbent Governor of Madras. One of the prominent voices in favour of renaming it as George

## ● by Karthik Bhatt

Town was journalist CV Swaminatha Iyer, who ran the *Viveka Chintamani* magazine. And, that was how it came to be known thereafter, with an announcement being made to the effect in the Fort St George Gazette Extraordinary dated Saturday, 27 January 1906.

The grand Coronation Durbar held in Delhi in 1911 saw the proclamation of the King George V and Queen Mary as the Emperor and Empress of

India. It was an event that saw celebrations across the country and commemorations in various forms. It can thus be reasonably surmised that the idea for presenting a statue of the king to the city of Madras too must have originated from this event. Funding the statue was one of the prominent Gujarati businessmen of Madras, Dewan Bahadur Govindoss Chaturbhujadoss, senior partner of one of the old businesses of the city, Chathoorbhooja Doss Khushal Doss & Sons, which was first established in 1828 with its primary business being banking, and trading in silk, musk and spices. Over the course of the next century, sev-

eral other businesses were added. Govindoss Chaturbhujadoss was appointed the Sheriff of Madras in 1913, when he was 35 years of age. He was involved in several public causes and was associated with organisations such as the SPCA, the South Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Indian Bank, etc. The statue was presented to the public in 1914.

That the city had a great fascination for King George V is evident from the fact that there were probably seven statues/busts of the emperor in and around its limits (MM, March 1-15, 2021). The one in George Town is the only one surviving in its original location.

# TT Jagannathan – A Tribute

When I wanted to write about the TTK group in 1984, I did not even know that it had shifted its headquarters to Bangalore and it was run by TT Jagannathan, the founder’s grandson. Most of the group companies were not publicly listed. Although the products they made and sold were popular and well known, such as the Prestige pressure cooker, it was not recognised that they came from the TTK group. Among other things, they also made condoms.

TT Krishnamachari, later to become India’s Finance Minister, founded the group and handed

at Cornell University in the US, who would rather have been an academic, was forced to step in. He found that there was no coherence in the group and many of its constituents were facing losses.

He was first assigned to Maps and Atlases which did precisely that – print maps and atlases. It was a loss making unit which he turned around by taking some simple steps like increasing prices.

He made improvements in the pressure cooker which was beginning to face competition from smaller manufacturers.

## ● by Sushila Ravindranath

it over to his younger son TT Narasimhan, on becoming a full time politician. At that time the TTK group was mainly in the agency business and was distributing products made by others like Cadbury’s.

By the 1970s the group started facing serious trouble as the agency business started to fade. The principals wanted to set up their own distribution networks. For example, when Cadbury’s terminated its arrangement with the TTKs, it meant a loss of several crores. The group had taken on many agencies and lacked sufficient manpower. It faced problems from many sides and this precipitated a financial crisis. TT Jagannathan, Narasimhan’s second son, who was doing his PhD in management

He invented and introduced the gasket release system which was a safety measure to prevent cookers from bursting. He was large hearted enough not to patent it.

The chief executive of Prestige which made pressure cookers and was the most profitable in the group, was not willing to help out the other companies. Jagannathan realised the need to integrate the companies which he did.

A reluctant recruit, he said, that once he joined, he started living, breathing, and dreaming business. He had to turn the group around. It had got into random businesses without much thought or insight. He shut down the loss making companies. Professionals were



T T Jagannathan. Picture courtesy: The Hindu.

brought in. That was a time when only family members were given jobs, and professionals were also reluctant to join family

companies. Prestige changed all that.

TT Jagannathan was an exuberant and fun loving person. He

liked food, which he said was essential to be in the food business. He is going to be much missed.

# Nayagi 1947

## ● by Prabha Sridevan

Nayagi is a group of young Chennai women tied by the bond of love for literature. I first met them when they invited me to an event to celebrate the women writers of the previous century (*Kadamtha nootraamdin penn ezhuthalargal*). They said that the list of women spoken about that day was not an exhaustive one, and it would be continued. My grand-aunt K Savitri Ammal was one among their list.

Nayagi is a very democratic group – all are equal as there are no posts like president, secretary and so on. I shall therefore name the members in alphabetical order: Ahila Sridhar is assistant director of movies and a translator, Ja Deepa is a writer and dialogue writer for films, Gayathri R is a lecturer in French and co-founder of Zero Degree Publishing, Jayashree is executive director of Samarpan Study Centre, Palaivana Lanthar is a poet, writer and founder of Lanthar Art Entertainment – an event management company, Reva is a poet and writer, Savita too is a poet and writer and Tamizhponni is a tailoring expert.

This year on Independence Day, I attended their Nayagi-1947, at the Kavikko Manram. It was a day to remember the women who were married to celebrated freedom fighters; women whom we have forgotten or whose names we may not know; women who remain invisible. Nayagi decided to focus the light on them, by inviting scholars and academics to speak about each one of them.

Only one speaker was a direct descendant of one of these women, Jebamani Masilamani. The speakers had applied themselves to their task with earnestness, sincerity and humility. Referring to the year 1947 mentioned in the title, one of the speakers said it was not just one year, but many years of sacrifice. There were many moments when one felt a lump in one’s throat.

Chitra Balasubramaniam spoke about Chellammal Bharathi, perhaps one of the few women about whom we have heard. Gomathisankar

spoke about Bhagyalakshmi Va Ve Su Iyer; and Ja Deepa spoke about Ponnammal Vanchinathan. We learnt that two other men Madasami and Chavadi Arunachalam were with Vanchi and their wives too were young women who, like Ponnammal, would have spent just a few days with the men they had married. Dominic spoke about his grandmother Jebamani Masilamani, Rangiah Murugan spoke about Valli Ammal and Meenatchi Ammal, wives of VO Chidambaranar, Kadarkarai Mattha Vilasa Angadam spoke about Mutthammal and Soundarammal – the wives of Namakkal Kavignar Ve Ramalingam. These are women forgotten by history, said the writer S Ramakrishnan who spoke on the occasion.

It was a remarkably unique way to celebrate Independence Day. Fortunately Shruti TV has recorded the whole event. So readers like me, who feel strongly about the injustice done to the ‘forgotten women’, can see it on YouTube – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Ib1Ak4Za0>.

The group Nayagi, deserves applause.





# MB Srinivasan – A Centenary Tribute

Come September and Chennai suddenly woke up to activities centering around “MBS” – articles about him were featured in mainstream media, and programmes were organised in his memory. MB Srinivasan (popularly known as MBS) – a man whose memory and contributions had remained in the background for several decades in Tamil Nadu, deservedly zoomed into the limelight on the occasion of his birth centenary.

The Madras Youth Choir established by him in 1971, and renamed in his memory as the Madras MBS Choir (MMC) in 2024, organized a befitting tribute of choral music on September 20, 2025 at the Dakshinamurthy Hall in Chennai. Besides several renditions by the MMC, it was heartwarming to watch the children of Saraswathy Vidyalaya Choir, Arcadia NIOS Choir and the Junior Madras MBS Choir sing with gusto. The chief guest VS Narasimhan, who had been a close associate, spoke about the contributions of MBS. For the guest of honour, musician and composer Dr. Rajkumar Bharathi it was a homecoming and he took the audience on a humorous flashback to the days when he was a member of the choir under the baton of MBS.

Talking later to *Madras Musings*, he recalled that “MBS was a great devotee of my great-grandfather Subramania Bharathi. He was progressive in his outlook, upright, honest and courteous, though he could be brutally frank if he felt something was unethical. Though as a teacher he was a strict disciplinarian, he was kind hearted and cheerful, very fond of his family and his students. He was indeed the father of Indian choral music. His ‘*bhasha gnanam*’ (knowledge of languages) was phenomenal! His music compositions brim with *bhava*.”

Famous Carnatic vocalist Sudha Ragunathan pays a glowing tribute: “A stickler for time and discipline, MB Srinivasan sir was an epitome of perfection. I had a good five years working with him and was always amazed at his penchant

for ‘newness’ of sound! His music carried the pulse of the people, the cry of justice and the tenderness of hope and dreams. Through his choirs, he proved that voices united in harmony could be stronger than any slogan, more enduring and effective than any speech. He gave music a conscience and in every note that he wrote, there was courage, compassion and the dream of a ‘better world’! I cherish my memories with MBS sir to date.”

Manamadurai Balakrishnan Srinivasan was born on September 19, 1925 at Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh. The family was steeped in music and social service which had a deep impact on the young lad. He had his schooling at PS High School, Chennai. He was also deeply influenced by his paternal uncle, M.R. Venkataraman, a hard core communist leader. While studying in Madras Presidency College, MBS became a student leader and joined the Communist movement. Fond of reading books and deeply interested in music, MBS was inspired by the songs of Bharatiar sung at public gatherings during India’s freedom movement and realized the power of collective music to ignite the minds of the masses.

After India gained Independence, MBS served as private secretary to A.K. Gopalan who was India’s first Leader of the Opposition in Parliament. His sojourn in New Delhi broadened his horizons as he learnt Hindustani and Western classical music. He also got a taste of India’s diverse musical traditions. It was there that MBS fell in love and married Zahida Kitchlew (daughter of freedom fighter Saifuddin Kitchlew) who remained his guiding spirit.

The Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) which propagated the concept of *jana sangeet* (people’s music) had a great influence on MBS. It was at IPTA that MBS met the cinematographer and filmmaker Nemai Ghosh. Their first film, *Paadhai Theriyudhu Paar* released in 1960 with songs set to music by MBS such as *Thennankeetru oonjalile*, *Chin-*

*nachinna mookutthiyam*, and *Unmai oru naal veliyaagum*, introducing a novel soundscape to Tamil cinema. The Cine Musicians’ Union, the first trade union for film workers in south India was also founded by the duo. As a result of MBS’s activism, workers in the cine field got motivated to rally together to protest against undue exploitation.

MBS played a major role in securing labour rights for cine musicians, fighting for fair wages and regular hours. As Chairman of Indian Performing Rights Society (IPRS) for several years, he strove to protect the rights of music composers, lyricists and provide royalties to them. This apparently did not go down well with the powers in the Tamil film industry which seemed to have sidelined him. This was pointed out by many speakers who paid tribute to MBS at the centenary celebrations organized on October 11 by the Tamil Nadu Murpoku Ezhuththalar Kalaigargal Sangam.

● by  
S. Janaki

All this did not deter MBS from his ideals, and he soon moved to Malayalam cinema which welcomed him. There he collaborated with famous filmmakers like KG George, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and well known lyricists. It was MBS who gave a memorable break to one of India’s finest voices, K.J. Yesudass. He collaborated with several top singers like S. Janaki and P. Jayachandran, which won them awards. He wrote the lyrics for Usha Uthup’s movie hit *Peethambari O Krishna*. His first film song was composed to the words of noted Tamil lyricist, Jayakanthan, for the Tamil film *Paadhai Theriyudhu Paar*. MBS introduced a novel idiom in film music in the songs that he tuned as well as in the background score. Though MBS had no interest in acting and had turned down several roles, his love for parallel cinema made him accept the lead role of eccentric professor in

John Abraham’s *Agraharathil Kazhuthai*.

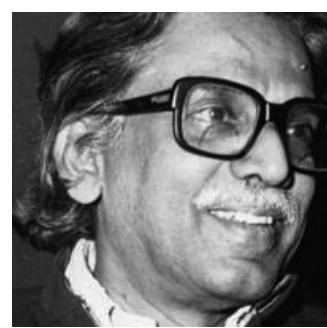
It is a well known fact that star playback singer SP Balasubrahmanyam paid rich encomiums to MBS and his contributions declaring: “If we receive spot payments for the songs we record today and sleep peacefully at night, it is because of MB Srinivasan. If senior musicians eat well today, it is because of him. I feel a deep duty to thank him.”

Rightfully so, an auditorium in Madras was later named after him as the MBS Memorial Hall. He was one of the founders of FEFISI (Film Employees Federation of South India). He was nominated by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the Advisory Committee of NCERT – the National Council of Educational Research and Training.

While his work in films was significant, Srinivasan’s true legacy lies in his pioneering efforts in choral music. In 1970, MBS along with Vasanthi Devi, then Vice Chancellor of Manonmaniam University, KS Subramanian, and wife Zahida Srinivasan, began a youth choral group for a programme on All India Radio (AIR) under the banner Bharathi Ilangnar Isai Kuzhu, and its radio show, *Ilaya Bharatham*, was well received. This led to his forming the Madras Youth Choir in 1971 and as the composer-director, he trained people to sing songs on peace, love and patriotism. He took the songs penned by national poets like Subramania Bharathi, Mohd. Iqbal, KCS Arunachalam, Rabindranath Tagore, to name a few and set them to music. He then choralised the compositions, which became popular among the public, especially the youth. He was Director of AIR Choral Group, Chennai, for eight years. It evolved into the Madras Youth Choir, which was formally registered in 1973.

Secretary of the Choir, S. Ram informs that “MBS composed over 200 choral compositions based on Indian classical and folk melodies, infusing elements of Western harmony into Indian music. His riveting compositions include Bharathiar’s *Vasana Kavithai Mazhai* in a six-part choral arrangement, Bharathidasan’s *Amma Unthan Kai Valaiyai*, Tamilanban’s *Bhagat Singh*, and the Telugu poet Dasarathi’s *Pilalaara* which became a household song in the late 1970s and 80s. In 1986, he helped to set up the Kerala University Choir.”

MBS won several awards including the FIE Award for Creative Excellence in Choral Music, the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for



MB Srinivasan.

Creative/Experimental Music and Kerala State Film Awards for Best Music Director. The Malayalam films for which he composed the music – *Nirmalyam*, *Swayamvaram*, *Prayanam*, *Swathi Thirunal*, and *Utharayan* won National Awards. MBS conducted mass singing with nearly 6,000 children in various towns in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

MBS, was more than a music director; he was a visionary who believed in the power of music as a tool for social change – “makal isai, sernthu isai”. His inspiring call “Come, let’s sing together,” focussed on youth and collective singing which reflected his belief that music could shape a better society. He strongly believed in collective human values. The themes of his songs in over a dozen languages focus on national integration, unity, peace, environment, women empowerment, human and social values.

MBS felt that the human voice was one of the best means of communication, everyone can sing and that the true purpose of music should be to bring people together through Indian choral music -- adapting Western choral techniques and combining classical ragas and folk rhythms to touch an emotional chord. He believed in the democratization of music, inclusivity, and collective excellence.

On March 9, 1988, MBS who was only 63, died of a heart attack in Lakshadweep where he had gone to conduct a choral singing workshop for music instructors under the aegis of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

There are many veteran members in the Madras MBS Choir like D. Ramachandran, its Artistic Director, its President PC Ramakrishna, founder member M. Kumaresan, KR Parthasarathy, its treasurer, the sisters Latha Unnikrishnan and Malathi Ravinath who are senior instructors, and Padma Srinivasan and Rajashree Bhasakaran who teach choir music to children. All of them become emotional while talking about MBS sir and describe him as a

(Continued on page 7)



The MBS Youth Choir at an event.



# Gopalapuram Chronicles: Hundred Years of a Madras Locality



**Authors:** Sriram V and Karthik A Bhatt

## Theme of the Book:

The book narrates the history of Gopalapuram, detailing the evolution of this area in Madras City (now Chennai), and its present-day significance.

## Deeper Analysis Summary – *Gopalapuram Chronicles*

*Gopalapuram Chronicles: Hundred Years of a Madras Locality* by Sriram V and Karthik A Bhatt is more than just a chronicle of a neighbourhood; it is an architectural and socio-cultural biography of one of Chennai's most iconic residential areas. The book meticulously documents the evolution of Gopalapuram from a cooperative housing society for government servants to a vibrant hub of culture, politics, and education.

The structure of the book is neatly laid out across eleven chapters, each delving into an aspect of the neighbourhood's transformation. The early chapters explore the origins of the colony – its founding by the Madras Government Servants Co-operative Building Society – and detail how it was rooted in ideals of planned urban living and civic consciousness. The emphasis on how Gopalapuram was built on a collective vision is a subtle but strong critique of today's fragmented urban sprawl. As the book progresses, the authors show how the colony absorbed cultural and intellectual energy. Institutions such as the Gopalapuram Educational Society and its later offshoots played a central role in making the area a cradle of Tamil Nadu's educational movement. The chapters also touch on the area's religious centres, highlighting how temples and spiritual spaces became social anchors. One of the most engaging parts of the book is its attention to art and culture. Gopalapuram wasn't merely a residential layout – it became home to Carnatic musicians, Bharatanatyam dancers, film personalities, and Tamil literary icons. Through narratives and archival photos, the book pays tribute to this artistic vitality.

The penultimate chapters shift the focus to contemporary relevance. Gopalapuram today has grown to accommodate modernity without completely erasing its past. Schools and other institutions are symbols of continuity and change. The authors have conducted commendable archival research and interviews with long-standing residents. Their narrative is factual yet warm, scholarly yet accessible. This makes the book appealing to historians, architects, city planners, and Chennai enthusiasts alike.

So far, we have only seen the sugar-coated aspects of this book... As a reader, I also found some drawbacks.

## Drawbacks:

- While richly detailed, the book could have benefited from personal anecdotes or oral histories from more diverse voices – especially women and working-class residents.
- It remains heavily descriptive and could have used more analytical commentary on urban evolution, comparing Gopalapuram with other Chennai localities such as Mylapore, Triplicane, T. Nagar, Purasaiwalkam, Adyar, and others.

## Suggestions:

- Future editions or sequels could include oral history interviews, interactive digital maps, or comparative studies.
- Including contributions from younger writers could help bridge generational perspectives and add freshness to the storytelling.

## Is This Book a Boon or Bane?

*Gopalapuram Chronicles* is undoubtedly a **\*\*boon\*\*** for readers. It is a model for how to preserve local history. At a time when neighbourhoods are reduced to real estate value, this book restores identity, memory, and pride to a place and its people.

– Nagarjun Venkateshwaran

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– THE EDITOR

## MB Srinivasan – A Centenary Tribute

(Continued from page 6)

Guru – an excellent teacher, a kind hearted father figure who often helped them in need, and a principled man who led by example.

His music resonates across different age groups. Preethi Sriram, one of the younger instructors, says the music composed by MBS is very inspiring because every song is unique and provides a different experience to savour which she has been doing travelling about 20 kilometres every Sunday to choir class since 1998!

Gayathree Krishna who has been with the Choir for 24 years says: "Having grown up with songs composed by MBS, I am continually amazed by his

clarity, creativity, and vision. His compositions do not carry religious overtones; instead, they explore the true meaning and emotion behind each lyric, communicating the song's intention with directness and grace. MBS's musical intellect and sensitivity are evident in every line."

MBS celebrated the little joys of life through songs on cleanliness, trees, nature, birds and animals. He composed songs on everyday values – *Kalaiye Ezhunthiru* encouraging daily discipline, and *Ayyavukku Salute Podra Rama*, using the chained monkey as a striking metaphor for life's realities. His delightful tongue twisters are

playful, poetic and packed with wit – to help children learn the nuances of the Tamil language. His songs for children should become part of the curriculum in schools across Tamil Nadu.

A Tamil biography titled *Makkalisai Medhai MB Srinivasan* by Mu. Iqbal Ahmed (published by Parisal Putthaga Nilayam), with rare photographs and recollections by MBS' contemporaries, associates and students, has been brought out to mark MBS's centenary. A must read to know more about MBS – the man who charted new paths in Indian music.

# Tamil Nadu Tennis Association's centenary milestone

Ramanathan Krishnan, Vijay Amritraj, Anand Amritraj, Ashok Amritraj and Ramesh Krishnan: what do these tennis celebrities have in common? The five great talents who hailed from Chennai (the Amritraj siblings Vijay and Anand shifted their career midway to the United States while Ashok left the sport) grew up in the sport under the aegis of the Tamil Nadu Tennis Association (TNTA) and brought glory to Indian tennis. Arguably, they were the country's marquee talents at the international level. The credit does not end there: the TNTA also fostered the emergence of a few more men and talented women players, such as Lakshmi Mahadevan, Nirupama Vaidyanathan, Rushmi Chakravathi, Sai Jayalakshmy and Amrita Balachander nee Ahluwalia.

With such a rich legacy over the decades, it is now celebration time for TNTA as it has reached its birth centenary. Talking to *Madras Musings* on the occasion, Vijay Amritraj, the present President of TNTA, sums up the development of tennis in Tamil Nadu, especially Chennai. "Hundred years is a long time and many people have worked with zeal and commitment to promote tennis in our state. For some good reason the people here also took to the game like fish to water," Vijay observes.

He points out that Tamil Nadu has been in the forefront in the game of tennis, and in the last seven decades India's Davis Cup campaign has been headed by players from Tamil Nadu. Reaching three Davis Cup finals is a phenomenal achievement for India. He further explains, "In terms of con-

ducting tournaments over the years, the highest prize money in national or state events in different eras, and the highest ranking international tournaments in India, the Chennai Open for Men and Women, have all been organised by the TNTA with sponsorship support".

● by  
**V. Venkataramana**

On the occasion of the centenary of TNTA, Vijay also emphasises the importance of acknowledging the achievements of the young talent in the past as this would serve as inspiration to achieve more in the future.

To mark the occasion, Hiten Joshi, former player, coach and the current CEO of TNTA, traces the birth of TNTA and some of its development-oriented activities. "TNTA was born as the Madras Provincial Lawn Tennis Association in 1926. It is the centenary year of one of the most respected sports associations in the country. Affiliated with the All India Tennis Association (AITA) and the Tamil Nadu Olympic Association (TNOA), TNTA has done a great deal over the years. Tamil Nadu has been home to legendary players and famous tournaments and leagues."

Presenting an overview of

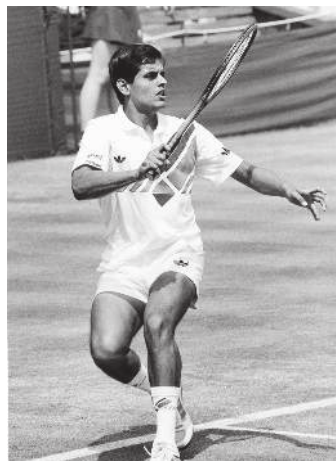
the activities held as part of TNTA's centenary, Joshi said the ITF 25,000 dollars tourney for Men conducted in January was a runaway success. It was followed by an ATP Challenger 100 for Men, which attracted the participation of players from 20 countries. It was during this year that the prize money for the Sanmar TNTA league was doubled. An ITF Junior tournament for Under 18 was held in Madurai in March. Five centenary junior tournaments were conducted in Salem, Karur, Nagercoil, Sivakasi, Tirunelveli and Trichy between May and June. In August, the National Junior Tennis Championship was organised at Madras Cricket Club, immediately followed by another ITF and Unifi ITF. The RWD league cum knockout event came close on the heels between August and September 2025. Joshi stated that Vijay Amritraj, the present TNTA President, had through his good offices, brought the WTA 250 event to Chennai. Now, the Chennai Open International Women's Tennis Championships event is to be held at the SDATN Tennis Stadium in Nungambakkam, Chennai between October 27 and November 2, and a video and coffee table book are to be released.

"Hundred years is a milestone for any sports administrative body, and a very significant one, at that," remarks Hiten Joshi. "Over the years, we

have had the help of so many people in the TNTA who are so closely connected with tennis. TNTA owes its gratitude to the GOTN SDATN sponsors, players, parents, coaches and markers, who have all contributed to its glorious evolution and success."

Expressing his elation upon TNTA reaching the centenary milestone, Ramesh Krishnan, son of the legendary Ramanathan Krishnan, recalls that it was from the 1950s that Chennai has had a good run of churning out talented tennis players.

TNTA Secretary, B. Venkatasubramanyam, who is busy with arrangements for the centenary celebration on October 27, is happy to share that TNTA is the only non profit organisation recognised by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu and the AITA, as TNTA is fully involved in working for the development of tennis in Tamil Nadu. He concludes with pride that "In the last 100 years local, national and international tournaments have been hosted, which is evident in the evolution of talents like the Krishnans and the Amritraj brothers who have brought glory to the country in the sport of tennis. We are fortunate to have Vijay Amritraj as the President in this centenary year. Our next level programme is to nurture young talent in the age group of 15 to 18 and help shape them become the future players of the country."



Vijay Amritraj and Ramesh Krishnan. Pictures from [www.tn-tennis.com](http://www.tn-tennis.com)

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