

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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CUMTA Needs to Be Nodal Body for Traffic Management

It is now just over a month since the launch of the common app for all forms of public transport in the city. That has earned CUMTA encomiums and we are sure all of it is well-deserved. But the body could really do more, certainly in the real world.

Chennai resembles a vast battleground. There are massive digging operations all over the place and while we all understand that it is necessary to put up with some difficulties today for a better tomorrow, what we cannot comprehend is manifest lack of coordination among the various civic agencies, all of which seem to be hell bent on digging up the same roads at the same time. Surely, an august body like the Chennai Unified Metropolitan

Transport Authority (CUMTA) can take on the task of coordination between them all and make life a little easier today, even while keeping a better tomorrow as the ultimate goal.

Take for instance Metrorail, the Highways Department, Metrowater, Traffic Police, the

● by **Sriram V.**

Corporation and TANGEDCO. All of them seem to be operating in silos. How else can you explain that in areas where Chennai Metrorail is undertaking massive underground drilling, there are flyovers being constructed in parallel? The entire Nandanam/Raj Bhavan/Guindy area faces massive

traffic holdups each day chiefly because of Metrorail and the Highways working on the same stretch. Koyambedu is another example.

Similarly, at a time when Metrorail is forcing traffic movement through narrow bye lanes and streets, is it necessary for Metrowater or TANGEDCO to undertake excavation at the very same places? Of course, we do understand that some of these civic works may be of the nature of emergencies – say a burst pipeline or a malfunctioning cable that requires immediate attention. Should there not be signs put up well ahead of such hotspots so that commuting public know that these routes need to be avoided? More often than not, such

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A Wakeup Call for Ensuring Drug Safety

Earlier in October this year, a severe tragedy unfolded in Madhya Pradesh, with several infant deaths reported. Investigations revealed the cause to be a contaminated cough syrup prescribed by a medical practitioner. The event turned the spotlight on Tamil Nadu, as the brand of cough syrup that was deemed to be the root cause of the tragedy was found to have been manufactured by an establishment based at Sunguvarchathram, Kanchipuram district. It was found to contain high levels of Di-Ethylene Glycol (DEG), far more than the prescribed limits.

● by **Karthik Bhatt**

DEG is an industrial solvent used in brake fluids, resins, dyes, etc. and ingesting even a small dosage has severe ramifications, including death. Following the unfolding of the tragedy, the state government jumped into action and closed the company's operations and also suspended two senior drug inspectors for their inaction. The establishment's owner too has been arrested and further proceedings are underway.

The usage of DEG in the

cough syrup as a cheaper substitute for Propylene Glycol or glycerin, used in pharma manufacturing, has led to severe casualties in the past. Over the last five decades or so, deaths linked to cough syrup contamination have been on the increase worldwide, particularly in low and middle-income countries, with events reported from places such as Bangladesh, Nigeria, Panama, Gambia, Uzbekistan, and Indonesia. In India, one of the earliest known cases of deaths linked to cough syrup contamination was reported in our city, way back in 1972, when at least 14 children died due to contaminated cough syrup

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HERITAGE WATCH

Historic Bridge – Not Just in Name

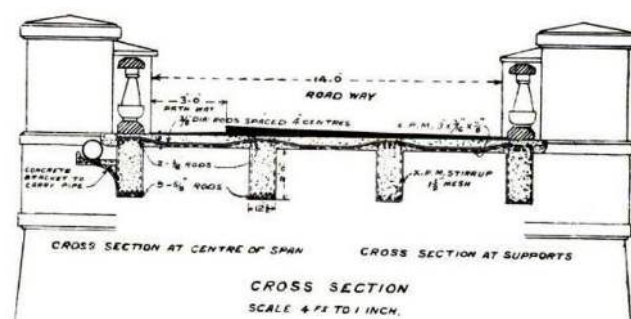


One of the oft-repeated legends of our city is that of the Hamilton Bridge in Mylapore and its subsequent renaming. If it was indeed Hamilton Bridge at first, we can find its supposed corruption in

Tamil as Ummutton Varavathy as early as in 1867, in a record of the *London Gazette*. This legend of the name undergoing a transformation, thanks to the word Hamilton being too hard to pronounce by the local populace, also finds a place in publications from the era such as the *Census of the Town of Madras, 1871* (published in 1873). By this time, the bridge had moved on to its next avatar, supposedly leading from the Tamil version and had come to be known as Barbers Bridge in official records. But none of these documentations are exactly clear as to who the Hamilton in question was. However, that there was a bridge in the location as early as the 17th century is evidenced by the fact that HD Love, in his *Vestiges of Old Madras*, Vol 1, makes a reference to the same in connection with the second siege of San Thome by the French, in 1675.

A serendipitous search on the internet threw up a very interesting revelation about the bridge, courtesy the *Indian Engineering Journal*, in its issue dated September 1, 1906. A note published under the title "Barbers Bridge, Madras" gives the technical details of a "new superstructure erected on the abutments of the old bridge". (Whether this was the old bridge referred to by HD Love is not clear). It states that the new bridge was intended to carry a steam road roller. It had only one span, 28 feet clear and was designed and built by Marshland, Price and Co of Bombay. It was built using reinforced concrete, and the journal mentions that it was claimed to be the first reinforced concrete road bridge in India. The note was accompanied by a plate of its section and a lovely photograph of the bridge soon after its construction.

While the above claim is not readily verifiable, there is no doubt that with a history going back to at least 350 years, the bridge (demolished and rebuilt sometime in the 1960s and subsequently renamed as Dr Ambedkar Bridge), would be one of the oldest locations of man-made public infrastructure in continuous use in the city.



CUMTA NEEDS TO BE NODAL BODY FOR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

(Continued from page 1)

signs are either non-existent or so tiny that they escape attention. The end result is massive traffic congestion, delays, and frayed tempers. It is impossible to accept that in the present day, with so much of technology at everyone's disposal, there are no warning mechanisms for roadblocks. Yes, we agree Google maps exists, but not everyone can be clued on to the app while driving. We do need signboards. And the Traffic Police need to be tasked with this.

Next, we come to the very basic premise of a project like Metrorail. It is meant to encourage the use of public transport. Then, do we still need to be constructing flyovers? Should we not be dismantling them and getting people to use their cars less? On the other hand what is happening is that more and more flyovers are being constructed, with the promise of lesser commute

times by car. This is nothing but an elitist solution that defeats the very purpose of Metrorail. CUMTA needs to intervene here and by means of statistical forecasts, work out how traffic hotspots can be decongested by encouraging patronage of public transport.

The world over, flyovers within cities have come to be seen as fairly useless additions that only serve to shift the congestion a little further ahead. In Chennai itself, the remnants of the roads by the side of the flyovers have become almost useless, so narrow being their spans. The whole exercise has been wasteful and such ideas are outmoded. It is necessary for CUMTA to ponder over this and in coordination with Metrorail, MRTS, MTC and Traffic Police, work out a master plan for the city's traffic management that does not look at solutions for specific pockets with complete disregard to the larger picture of the city.

A wakeup call for ensuring drug safety

(Continued from page 1)

made by a local manufacturer.

While the action of the state government in closing the operations and making arrests of suspects is welcome, the episode raises a few questions. Firstly, it was found that no quality checks by the state drug control administration had been carried out in the above manufacturing unit for the past two years. Inspections after the recent incident flagged over 350 violations, including 39 critical ones. One wonders if the tragedy could have been avoided had periodic quality checks been carried out as mandated and steps been initiated to address the deficiencies. The inspections at over 300 other manufacturing units in the state commissioned as a fallout from the episode cannot but bring to mind the idiom of bolting the door after the horse. The second pertains to the adequacy of the process of the inspection of drugs itself. The CAG audit report on performance of public health infrastructure and management of health services has flagged shortfalls ranging from 34 to 40 percent in the lifting and inspection of samples for the period 2016-21. The state government has been quick to blame the present opposition, which was then in power during the period under consideration,

while the latter has blamed the party now in power for being negligent. It has also sought to draw attention to the inaction of the CDSO (Central Drug Safety Organisation) in carrying out checks of the manufacturing units in the state for over six years. Passing the buck and playing politics over a crucial issue involving public health does not bode well for a state which has often been seen as a hub for medical tourism. Thirdly, news reports flag a massive shortage in manpower to carry out inspection, with only 14 senior drug inspectors (the grade responsible to carry out quality checks) in the entire state which has more than 350 manufacturing units.

With an estimated Rs 12,000 to Rs 15,000 crores worth of pharmaceutical products being exported from Tamil Nadu every year to over 100 countries, the state is fast emerging as a pharma manufacturing hub and is currently placed fifth in the country (according to the Guidance TN official website). While the malaise with respect to the lack of effective controls seems to run deep at a national level, it is essential that the state takes proactive steps to set its house in order and ensure its pharma manufacturing units are fully compliant with good manufacturing practices and other legal requirements.

When AI is (Not) to the Rescue

The Man from Madras Musings is told that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now the answer to everything. From the mundane to the esoteric, MMM sees people now using AI. It would appear that in the craze for using AI, natural I has been pigeonholed. While the world worries over job losses owing to AI, MMM wonders whether there ought to be concerns for the way intelligence itself has been rendered irrelevant and therefore given the pink slip.

It is of course not as though AI is all bad. MMM notices people who were terrible in written communication have suddenly begun to display great epistolary skills. Letters today, by which MMM means emails, appear as what can only be termed as flowery messages and flawless at that. MMM who always prided himself on his communication skills is now left with an inferiority complex. His sole talent has been sacrificed to technology.

Faced therefore with the task of writing yet another column for the good old magazine MMM suddenly found himself unable to think. What is it that he could take up that would be fresh, humorous, not be considered elitist, and not give offense to any section of society that happened to read the column? And he found he did not have an answer. Could he have come to the end of fresh ideas? Should he therefore ask AI if it had something to suggest on what could be written for the column? But before that MMM decided to once run through his mind some of the common topics that have proven to be everlasting as far as Chennai is concerned.

There is the matter of the airport. It remains as much an apology for a facility of its kind as it was a few years ago. But MMM has already written enough and more about it and so what is it that could be said which was new? Then there is the matter of the roads. MMM has written so many reams about it that he does not have the energy to take up writing about it once again. Not that it has made any difference for the roads are just as bad as before. Could he write about posters being pasted on walls? No, because that too as a topic has been done to death. What about the chief minister's convoy blocking traffic every morning in front of MMM's residence? No, that too has been written about quite often. And if MMM persisted in writing about it there was

every danger of a group of people coming and blocking his residence itself, leave alone the road in front of it. Could he write about the behaviour of people at religious shrines? No no! For that would mean riots and we do not want all that trouble, do we? And therefore, MMM seems to have run the full gamut of what he could write about Madras that is Chennai. The cry goes around that MMM has lost it.

And so, MMM decided that he would surrender his soul to AI. He compiled a set of questions, threw in some of the topics that had already been covered by MMM in his columns and then asked as to what is it that he could write about. Believe it or not, he got the following options as his answer -- the airport, the condition of the roads, posters on

And here are a couple of samples of what we have received in the last couple of weeks.

From New Delhi we have received in chaste Hindi what has been titled as a Press Vidyapati. It has come in connection with a New Delhi Film Festival where it claims 221 films selected from 37 countries are going to be screened and it asks in Hindi whether MM would be interested in covering the event. MMM has decided not to reply. Firstly, if he did reply, it would have to be in Hindi which is unlikely to bring him brownie points locally. Secondly, if he were to publish the entire letter in MM then he would have to go around searching for Hindi font which would mean a lot of trouble just when we were going to press. And so, you will have to take that particular letter as read.

Some further interesting correspondence has been received at MM which, MMM is glad to say, is in English. One of them is from Ankesh who claims to be the marketing manager of a company called Postpact. He says that he recently visited our website and is so impressed with it that he would like to buy the entire site and he wants to know as to whether we would be open to talking about it! MMM wonders as to what such an offer means -- will it mean being sold as slaves to Postpact and then having to work for them night and day or will it mean collecting millions and then retiring to some far-off tax haven, not having to write articles anymore? MMM is still debating on this point.

Lastly, MMM is glad to inform you all that the Make in India campaign seems to be gaining ground. Thus far MM was receiving enticing offers to buy, if you will recollect, heavy machinery from China. MMM is now glad to inform you that offers have begun to come from India. The latest is from a company named Lifton Chains and Tackles Private Limited. It, after hoping that MMM and family are "doing well with their health", has offered for sale stainless steel chains, link chains and other such equipment for lifting, hoisting, lashing and other applications. The very thought of such activities filled MMM with a nameless fear and he decided that he would be better off not replying to this sales query. The last thing that we need in this life are liftings, hoistings, and lashings.

— MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

the walls, religious behaviour, and traffic in Chennai city! MMM threw up his hands in frustration and then realized, wait a minute, AI had given him 600 words after all.

Fan mail, from far and near

It was a dull afternoon. MMM was twiddling his thumbs wondering as to what to do next when all of a sudden he received an SMS. And this is what it had to say --

'Dear, call Sonam for meeting has received your dot. Further details about location will be shared soon.'

MMM has since been left wondering as to what this assignation is all about. What exactly of MMM had Sonam received that she was so keen on a meeting? And since no further details of a location have arrived MMM wonders as to how long he has to wait. Like Barkis he is willing.

It did not end with that, for two days later MMM received an email -- *Need a loan? We offer all types of loan at affordable rate. To apply, send your name, amount, and duration to westernh15@gmail.com* -- To this, MMM chose not to reply. We at MM may be short on talent but thankfully we don't seem to be worried about our finances.

Moving on to fan mail from other parts of the world, MMM is happy to report that MM's popularity is intact.

Website Comments

When Tamils made Delhi their Home, amid Struggle and Hope

(Vol. XXXV No. 14, November 1-15, 2025)

Narayan Swamy's evergreen memories of the life of Tamils in Delhi bring back fond memories of my brief periods of stay (1964-69 and 1972-75) in what was then called Bombay. My parents stayed there for about 20-odd years and my sister and myself were born in the same Kripalini clinic. My parents even stayed in touch for a long time with the chief doctor couple there.

I believe most Tamils stayed in Matunga. I was born in Colaba and was raised there in the multi-storeyed RBI quarters. It is common knowledge that Bombay was far ahead in constructing multi-storeyed apartments.

As a kid I remember my north Indian friends enjoyed singing the Tamil song *Muthu Kulika Vareegala* which sounded more like *Mutham Kudikka Vareegala!* We mixed well with people from all over the country. Of course, the Tamils formed a group of their own. I had Tamil male nannies to take care of me (at least one of them came from Tirunelveli) and there was a Tamil driver too. I had a special bonding with them. Strangely, because we were vegetarians, I believed that all Tamils were vegetarians.

Like my father who was a TSK Chari (he preferred to wear dhoties at home and on social visits), there was a VV Chari. The Seshadris lived in the same building as ours, and my mother and Mrs Seshadri joined together to make weekly visits in the official car of the latter to the veggie market on the other side of the town and then share them. While we conversed with our elders in Tamil, we young Tamils conversed in English. There were three of us named Srinivas. It was the women who spoke more in Hindi, because they interacted a lot with the local people.

On weekends we had kith and kin making social visits from the other side of town and vice versa. The fire-engine red 'BEST' buses were a thing. The conductors used to pull a rope on the roof and make a clanging noise to catch the attention of the driver. And of course, there were the double-deckers and the half tickets!

I remember watching two Tamil films – the tear-jerker *Kaviya Thalavi* and the arty *Dhagam*, screened by the Tamil or South Indian Society. The Shanmukhananda Hall was an exclusive south Indian domain.

I, however, don't remember worshipping at exclusive temples built by our community; there was a Perumal temple in Banaswadi run by north Indians. Another vivid recollection is that of my mother making idlis for the Muslims of the nearby Grain Stores.

I remember my parents finding a job in Bombay for one of our relatives in Madras and being quietly thrilled when my uncle, an agriculturist in a village near Cuddalore, came to visit us in Bombay. Our family hosted the once

popular T'Nagar silk merchants PB Lakshman Sah and Bros. There were a whole lot of them who stayed with us. My mother used to send 'wooly wooly' saris from Crawford market to my aunt who lived in straitened circumstances in Pallavaram. She used to resell them and earn some money.

I am thankful to MM and Narayan Swamy for opening the flood gates of my heart.

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* * *

I can call myself a third generation Tamil born in New Delhi. We had a fairly privileged upbringing but I do recollect my aunts and uncles sharing stories of growing up with apparent hardships but latent happiness. Our history in Delhi begins with my revered grandfather Dr C Dwarakanath, who moved from Mysore to Delhi as advisor to the Health Minister Sushila Nayyar. A lovely Government bungalow in the D1 quarters of Vinay Marg not withstanding, money was always in short supply as Thatha supported his two brothers and their brood back in Madras as well. A large hearted and selfless generation.

Each word in this story rings true. Very well written!

Shree Srinivas
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* * *

I got transported to that era when Madarasis were struggling to come up, our parents spoke in heavily accented Hindi that the Punjabis made fun of and we writhed in anger. My father was addressed as Tirupati as there were many Srinivasans in the Central Government!

In the middle of winter we often had guests visiting us without any sweater or shawl. We had to provide them with raajai (heavy quilts), blankets and endless supply of hot water and tea/coffee.

Temple visits were real fun during festivals; the Soora Samharam at Malai Mandir is still fresh in my mind.

Navaratri golu time – when all of us wore fine clothes and visited everyone – was memorable too. There would be so many stories going around about how some lady was robbed of her ear rings or chain or even silk saree during golu days! These shocked us no end. As a result some ladies started wearing only turmeric in their mangalyam instead of gold.

Today I don't have to worry about monthly budget but still those days had a charm, a bonding with neighbours and friends that wealth cannot bring.

Once again, thanks for the wonderful writeup.

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South Indians (Madrasis) lived earlier mostly in Karol bagh and Gole Market areas. Sarojini Nagar and Ramakrishnapuram came subsequently. Religious functions such as bhajans,

OUR READERS WRITE



Tribute to TT Jagannathan

In the tribute about TT Jagannathan and TTK Group, the author has failed to mention about Orient Pharma Pvt Ltd, Pallavaram, which later became TTK Pharma, and their popular product Woodward's Gripe Water.

Parantharami Mani

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About Redevelopment

I refer to the letter of Krithiga Viswanathan, published in the *Website comments* (MM, Oct 16-31, 2015), wherein she sought to know whether the CMDA has any facility to assess old buildings and issue certificate paving its way for redevelopment. While such a certificate issued by a government agency can be used as a trump card to silence the dissenters who are against the demolition for whatsoever reasons, at present no agency is empowered to do so. Even if any agency is given the powers, it can be contested.

As mentioned that age is a mere number, the age of the building should not alone be a determinant factor for redevelopment. Thanks to the yester-year constructions, there are many residential buildings which can still weather many storms. If such structures are demolished to put up new ones for reasons like lack of parking space and unwillingness on the part of the residents to contribute towards repairs to the old structure, while one can enjoy newer facilities, the new structure will be nowhere near the old ones with regard to longevity, triggering

yet another process of redevelopment sooner than later.

This is not to suggest that the residents should not pursue redevelopment. All aspects need to be taken into consideration before redevelopment is taken up. If the structure is dilapidated or in a ruinous position, endangering the lives of the occupants, well, such buildings should surely face the axe. Regular maintenance of buildings will ensure its longevity.

While the apartment rules suggest that a complex having more than four units should form an association and get it registered, the decision is best left to the collective wisdom of the residents. The registration of the apartment association will help deal with recalcitrant residents.

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Names Games – another futile exercise

The confusion earlier created due to the indiscriminate change of street names in Madras city has not died down. The odd/even house numbers contradiction still exists! Why again another costly, futile and unwanted name change exercise in the guise of eradication of castes, just a few months before the general election? And already the principal opposition party has said that they will restore the old names, if they come to power!

The absurdities committed in the earlier change in names, still linger, e.g. Krishnamachari is a full name, but someone thought otherwise and changed the name to Krishnama road! No checks and balances!

Renowned academician and physicist Dr Sir Arcot Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar has been truncated to Lakshmanaswamy Salai, the name of the famous industrialist and philanthropist Dr Sir Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar into Ramaswamy Salai, and Sir CP Ramasamy Iyer Road into CP Ramasamy Salai (is there any other way of heaping praise or shaming these personalities, I wonder!). Please do not use these names any more and change to something else! Spare the great personalities. Similar is the case of roads and streets such as Thirumalai Road, Linghi, Kondi, Thambu, etc! But Dr. Nair road still exists (T' Nagar). You can't get away with shortening it to Muthuramalingam Road – you have got to call it Muthuramalinga Thevar Road only. The century-old name of Halls Road (Egmore) was changed overnight to Tamil Salai! The powers that be should have put the old name, at least, in brackets!

Is Chennai a historical or literary name like the original names of Mambalam, Kodambakkam villages? Madras changed to Chennai (whatever it be, the international call sign will always be MAA only!)

There are many civic issues crying for greater attention, e.g., in the Mahalingapuram Main Road (Nungai) sewage overflows like a river in spate. Worst is when it rains, the rain water mixes with the drainage water and becomes another fertile breeding ground for mosquitoes. No action taken for many months. On the one hand they call for eradication of mosquitoes and on the other create plenty of breeding grounds!

To cap it all, and to make a mockery of the caste eradication drive, the much fancied new Kovai overbridge opened with elaborate arrangements, is called GD Naidu Bridge!

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kathakalakshepam on *Ramayana, Mahabharata* by veterans from the south like Brahmasri Anantarama Dikshitar and Balakrishna Sastrigal were held mostly at Puja Park. My father GA Padmanabhan was President of Delhi Bhajana Samaj. The Ayyappa Temple and Venkateswara Temple at Ramakrishna Puram were built later.

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Vasanta Vihar, A Haven of Peace

J. Krishnamurti and Madras go back 116 years, and their relationship continues to this day. Vasanta Vihar at Greenways Road had been his home from the 1930s. It is also the Krishnamurti Foundation India's headquarters and importantly a Study Centre and a Retreat. But it was a couple of kilometres away, at the Theosophical Society, Adyar, in 1909 that as a boy of 14 he was 'discovered' by the Theosophist and clairvoyant, Charles Leadbeater, as one who had 'a most wonderful aura without a particle of selfishness'. And so to be groomed as 'the World Teacher'. Krishnamurti's father, also a Theosophist, had brought his children to Madras from Madanapalle earlier the same year. Mary Lutyens, daughter of Edwin Lutyens, architect of much of New Delhi, writes in 'The Life and Death of Krishnamurti' that the family was put up in a dilapidated cottage outside the campus of the Theosophical Society. With his younger brother Nithya, Krishnamurti walked six miles to and from the P.S. High School in Mylapore but not for long. Leadbeater and few others had taken upon themselves the task of training Krishnamurti

and Nithya. In her biography of Krishnamurti, Pupul Jayakar quotes C. Jinarajadasa, who was to later be president of the Theosophical Society -- "Meals, study, and games were on an absolute schedule intended to teach the boys alertness to time and circumstances. Bicycling was not for fun, but to teach self-reliance and resistance to fatigue. On one occasion they were made to cycle to Chingelpet and back, a total of 64 miles."

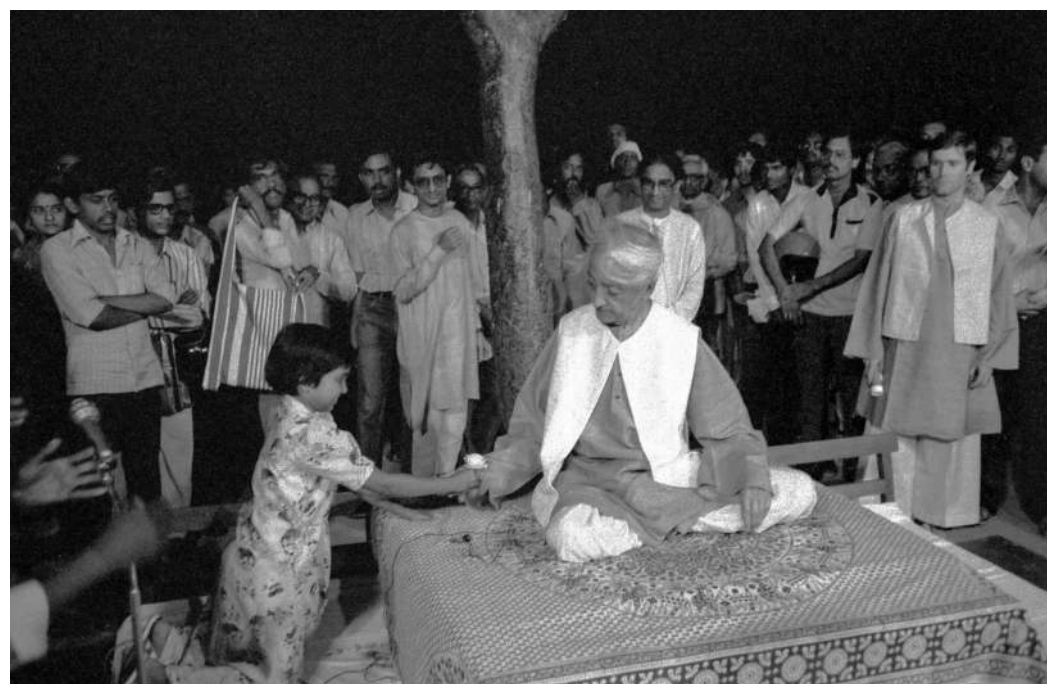
In 1882 the Theosophical Society had moved its headquarters to Adyar from America because its founders, Russian mystic Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the American, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, had adopted as their occult creed many of the ancient traditions of the East.

In 1911 the International Order of the Star in the East was founded with Krishnamurti as its Head and Annie Besant (she was elected president of the Theosophical Society in 1907) and Leadbeater as its protectors. The object of the Order was to draw together all those who believed in the near 'Coming of the World Teacher'. Krishnamurti gave up this position in 1929 at a gathering of more than 5,000

Star members at Ommen in the Netherlands. Excerpts from what he said: "I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally... You can form other organisations and expect someone else. With that I am not concerned, nor with creating new cages, new decorations for those cages. My only concern is to set man absolutely free."

Disassociating himself from the Theosophical Society, he continued to travel the world over for more than 60 years, giving talks, writing, holding dialogues and giving interviews. Or just sitting silently with those who came to him for help and advice.

During his visit to the Society in Adyar in May 1933, he met Annie Besant for the last time before her death in September. He was to return to the TS headquarters only 47 years later in 1980 on the invitation of Radha Burnier who had just been elected president. In later years, while visiting Madras, Krishnamurti would visit the Theosophical Society and walk along the beach.



Krishnamurti at Vasanta Vihar in January 1986, the last talk he gave in his life.

Among the prominent people Krishnamurti met in Vasanta Vihar was the Dalai Lama in the winter of 1956. The Dalai Lama was 21 then. That was the only meeting between them. In January

A month later, Krishnamurti died in his sleep on February 17 at his home in Ojai, California.

To buttress this article, I met Vishwanath Alluri, secretary of

of children was an important part of what he laid out. It is not a spiritual body from where enlightenment is emanating. For dissemination, we are not to send out propagandists and interpreters. His vision of life was not his teaching but the teaching of life itself. For him, it was always the teachings and never my teachings.

Our schools do not have teacher-dominant classrooms and are known for their rural outreach and eco conservation programmes. The schools are at Bengaluru, Varanasi, Sahyadri near Pune and Rishi Valley in Madanapalle and Madras' own 'The School' set up in 1973, now

KFI, at Vasanta Vihar. Excerpts from our conversation:

...You may ask why the Foundation was set up when the Order of the Star was dissolved... Krishnamurti said it exists for dissemination of his teachings and for the schools as education

● by
T.K. Srinivas Chari

ary 1979, Indira Gandhi who had been deposed from prime ministership, came to Vasanta Vihar to see him. That very evening she dropped in again to attend a concert by M.S. Subbulakshmi. Indira had met him on other occasions.

At the age of 90, on 4th January 1986 – at the last talk he ever gave – Krishnamurti said in Vasanta Vihar and I quote from Mary Lutyens' book -- "Creation is something that is most holy. That's the most sacred thing in life and if you have made a mess of your life, change it. Change it today, not tomorrow. If you are uncertain find out why and be certain. If your thinking is not straight, think straight, logically. Unless all that is prepared, all that is settled, you can't enter into this world of creation. It ends. (These two words are hardly audible, breathed rather than spoken. They can just be heard on the cassette. They could not have been heard by the audience.) Then, after a long pause he added, 'This is the last talk. Do you want to sit together quietly for a while? All right, sirs, sit quietly for a while.'" This writer was present at the talk arranged in the front of the house under the trees.



The Study.

at Thazhambur near the OMR, and the newest, 'Pathashaala', at Elumichampattu village in Tirukazhukundram taluk 80 km away from the city. Dedicating his home 'Vasanta Vihar' to posterity before his death, he said: "It must last a thousand years, unpolluted, like a river that has the capacity to cleanse itself." To sum up, the spirit of the teaching is reflected in the decisions of the Foundation.

I had a chance meeting with Mithavachan, a visitor from Bengaluru. We spoke as we walked around the grounds. I wondered if he found Krishnamurti's teachings daunting. He didn't see them as a body of knowledge to accumulate — or, as I finished the thought, to be accepted in toto. But rather as pointers to help one listen and perceive the actual facts of life, Mithavachan reflected. What sets apart Vasanta Vihar for him is that it is a peaceful place amidst a bustling city and there is no pressure here to conform to a school of thought, belief system or practice like meditation. He was sure that he was neither escaping from something nor did he expect anything out of the time spent here.

After being introduced to Anusha, a young mother, and an alumni of The School, I asked, weren't the Krishnamurti Schools known to be different? Here's what she said: "It's not a conscious effort to be different. It's about being authentic. The school gave me the physical and cultural space to constantly be in touch with myself. I questioned



Vasanta Vihar, as it still remains.

my routines, my beliefs, and my silences on issues around me.

"The school created spaces for this everywhere. Physically and culturally too. Wednesday Assemblies, Culture Classes, and Class Teacher Periods gave me room to share with my teachers and peers what was happening inside me, what brought me joy, what troubled me.

"The real insight came after I left. The outside world rarely offers these kinds of spaces. Instead, it pushes you to abandon

your authentic self, to forget who you are. But the education I received gave me the resources to hold on to my voice even without those physical or cultural spaces. It taught me how to create them wherever I go."

Booklovers note that KFI's no-fuss bookstore is not far away from the entrance to the verdant campus. As Vasanta Vihar is also a publishing centre, the shelves are a brimful with books neatly displayed. Most in English and a few in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam,

Hindi and Marathi. There are few a DVDs on sale. Tech savvy readers can download the 'Awakening of Intelligence' App. The link jkrishnamurti.in takes you to their classy web pages. Check out the free digital booklet 'The Future of Humanity in the age of AI'.

Their telephone numbers are 91-44-24937803 / 24937596 and email: vvstudy@kfionline.org

Hello 1970s, Are You Free This Weekend?

Sometimes, I truly believe a quick trip back to the 1970s or 80s might do us all a world of good. Not to escape – but to remember. Three years after COVID, life has hit the fast-forward button again. Yet, amidst all the zooming, swiping, and multitasking, one can't help wondering – what happened to the slow, warm rhythm of community life we once had?

Back then, we didn't need "family time" reminders on our phones. We just had family – always around. Children didn't need "play-date requests". They simply appeared at your doorstep, barefoot, carrying a half-deflated football and an abundance of noise. Parents didn't schedule "quality time". It just happened, somewhere between curd rice and a power cut.

We didn't need WhatsApp to stay connected. One shout from the balcony – "Amma, sugar illa!" – and within minutes, a neighbour would appear with half a cup of sugar and a full dose of conversation. If someone fell sick, the news travelled faster than the 12B bus. By evening, there'd be rasam, kashayam, and five aunts stationed at your bedside, each with their own home remedy and opinion.

But in 2025, things feel different. Everyone's calendar is full, inbox overflowing, and hearts – well, sometimes a little empty. We chase salary hikes, promotions, and "likes", but where's the

joy of helping someone fix a leaking tap or lending an ear over a tumbler of hot filter coffee?

Maybe it's time to ask ourselves: what do we really want to pass on to the next generation? A shiny gadget, or a sense of belonging?

Bringing back the warmth of community doesn't require grand gestures. It starts small – a shared smile, a chat with your security guard, a quick "Come, have tea" to the neighbour you have only waved to for years. Reviving our old "adjust maadi" spirit might just be the most modern thing we do.

And perhaps it's time to bring back our forgotten arts – mending, reusing, forgiving. Repair the broken stool, yes – but also the slightly cracked friendship. Pass on our stories – the funny ones, the flawed ones, the ones that smell of rain and old wood cupboards.

Because the soul of a city like Chennai has always been this – warmth in simplicity. We may live in high-rises now, but true connection still happens at ground level – over laughter, shared mistakes, and an occasional bowl of sambar.

So, shall we? Let's dial the 1970s once more. Dust off the radio, step out to the terrace, and pour that extra tumbler of coffee for a neighbour. Who knows – the 70s might just pick up the call and say, "Long time no see, da!"

– Priyanka Soman

Krishnamurti and his brother Nithya with Leadbeater at the Theosophical Society, Adyar, 1909.

Marshalls Road and the Lempert Hospital in the 1970s

● Dr Veikalathur Sundaresa Subramanian (1912-1988) was, besides what A Raman writes, a prominent citizen of Madras. He served as President of the Rotary Club of Madras. His wife Kamala was a talented writer, whose translations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha* remain among the best.

– The Editor

My frequent push-bike rides from my home in Purasawalkam to Rajaratnam Stadium in mid-and late 1970s, required riding through Marshalls Road, Egmore. That aspect of bike-ride always offered me joyous experience because of its majestic calmness and far-less vehicular traffic than in the nearby thoroughfares: Pantheon and Harris Roads (presently Adithanar Salai). Riding a bike on Harris Road was, of course, a nightmare.

Marshalls Road was magnificent to me because of the relatively new, tall buildings, interspersed by vintage garden houses on either side, used both as residences and offices. The Government-Ophthalmic Hospital with its widely spaced red-brick buildings embedded within sprawling lawns was inspiring to see and feel. I remember that the administration offices of the then large pharmaceutical firms, Sandoz India and May & Baker India, tucked away in the hinder portions of two different multi-storey buildings on this road. As a college student, I used to delight myself riding through Marshalls Road, simply to inhale the air and feel an indescribable old-world charm of Egmore.

One spacious garden house,

located at the entry point from Pantheon Road–Harris Road–Police-Commissioner-Office Road junction end always fascinated me. I fancied its double-storied structure with a delicate cream-white façade bearing aesthetically interspaced large wooden frame glass windows, and a decently large front portico. Whenever I passed by that garden-house, I always — rather involuntarily — turned around to catch a glimpse of the frontage of this house that filled me with a silly sense of joy and satisfaction. One of the two gate pillars included a small (1'x½') embedded granite block that bore an inscription 'VS Subramanian, Lempert Hospital'. I cannot recall whether the prefix 'Dr' was there; maybe, maybe not. But I clearly remember his academic qualifications 'M.B.,B.S., M.Sc.' (definitely an 'M.Sc.' and not 'M.S.'; Fig. 1) inscribed after his name. That was the impact that house had on me. The name 'Lempert Hospital' added to my curiosity. Why? I don't know. I felt something was special about it; but I never pursued. VSS, in my guess, was a full-time private practitioner, although his 1959 publication indicates that he was an Honorary E.N.T. Surgeon at the Madras Government General Hospital.

Sometime in the late 1970s, I spoke to my older brother, A. Parameswaran, a medical doctor practising in Madras, about the Lempert Hospital. He shed some light on the doctor practising at Lempert. It was the ENT surgeon VS Subramanian, although he could say nothing about 'Lempert'. His short response was that VSS was a trail-blazer in ENT sur-

RECENT ADVANCES IN EAR SURGERY.

by

Dr. V. S. SUBRAMANIAN. M.B.,B.S., M.SC., F.A.C.S.,
Hony. E. N. T. Surgeon, Govt General Hospital, Madras,

Masthead of an article by VSS in the Madras Clinical Journal (A Journal of the Madras State Branch of the Indian Medical Association), 1959, XXV, 236–238.

geries in India in general and an exceptional surgeon, who deftly handled extremely delicate and intricate ear surgeries.

The above contextualises my positive vibes and memories of the Pantheon Road–Harris Road–Police-Commissioner-Office Road–Marshalls Road junction and the Marshalls Road that has today become Rukmini Lakshmipathi Salai.

Recently my mind was repeatedly thinking of Marshalls Road, Lempert Hospital, and VSS for unknown reasons. Succumbing to that pressure, I managed to get hold of a PDF

Surgery for Otosclerosis in India, written as a tribute to his mentor Julius Lempert, who had died in America in 1968, VSS briefly speaks of his academic relationship with him and that naturally unfolds an explanation why VSS had named his hospital after Lempert in Egmore. I quote from page 786 below:

'This issue of the Archives of Otolaryngology pays special homage to a great otolaryngologist: Dr Julius Lempert. I am one of the foreigners who had the privilege to be closely associated with that great man

– modern French) in a body part, such as heart (viz., Fontan procedure) and inner ear, wherein fenestration improves hearing capacity.

VSS indicates in his 1969 paper that he trained with Lempert at the Lempert Institute of Otolaryngology, New York City, in the second quinquennium of the 1940s, thus upskilling himself with the then state-of-the-art endaural-fenestration technique. After training, VSS started performing multiple inner-ear fenestrations in India, probably from 1950. Around 1957, he started using the New-York-city E.N.T. Surgeon Samuel Rosen's stapes-mobilization technique (developed in 1953, published in *Acta Oto-Laryngologica*, 1954, 44, 78–88), although VSS records that results he achieved were not that promising. Therefore, he repeated Lempert fenestrations on patients on whom he had previously done Rosen's stapes mobilizations. In 1960, he went to USA again to retrain himself in the then 'new' domain of stapedectomy (an improved technique over Rosen's stapes mobilisation) with another distinguished American ENT surgeon, John Joseph Shea (1924–2015) in Memphis, Tennessee. By 1960, VSS had successfully done 2700 stapedectomies. Stapedectomy involves the removal of stapes, covering of the cut window with a vein graft, and inserting a prosthesis to replace the diseased stapes bone, restoring the patient's hearing, usually cent per cent.

I have recaptured the life and work of VSS, as much as I could, although I fully recognize that this has several obvious gaps. To me Lempert Hospital was a charm; but curiously I have never stepped into that building in my life. I am not sure whether the Lempert Hospital still exists in Egmore. However, Marshalls Road was a great thoroughfare for me; many physical structures, other than the Lempert, such as the Madras Ophthalmic Hospital on that Road still linger in my mind fresh.

● by Anantanarayanan Raman
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of VSS's publication *Surgery for Otosclerosis in India* published in the *JAMA Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery* (1969, 90, 786–788). (Note: Otosclerosis is a type of middle-ear conductive deafness, usually manifesting during adolescence.) The *JAMA Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery* was earlier the *Archives of Otorhinolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery* in 1986–2012 and the *Archives of Otolaryngology* in 1960–1986. I could also get hold of 'Association Notes' written by VSS in the *Indian Journal of Otolaryngology* (1964, 16, 191–203). The latter prompted me to think that he should have played a responsible role (What? Could not determine) in the Association of Otolaryngologists of India, established in Bombay (Ghatkopar) under the leadership of an eminent ENT surgeon of Madras P(alathinkal) V(arkey) Cheria in 1948.

Normally when I write on the stars of science in Madras, I generally provide a brief biography of the person concerned. In the present instance, regrettably, I could not secure any biographical detail of VSS: I am sorry that I cannot even explain what the initial letters 'V.' and 'S.' in his name stood for.

In the first paragraph in

when I worked as a resident in the Lempert Institute of Otolaryngology in 1946. Dr Lempert was absolutely dedicated to his work: a man who spent all his life's earnings for the cause of otology. All the present advances in the surgery for otosclerosis owe their success to the pioneer work of Dr Lempert and the "one-stage fenestration" operation which he perfected. Dr Julius Lempert was an artist as a surgeon and he is the architect who laid the foundation of otosclerotic surgery.'

A brief note on Lempert, I think is necessary for MM readers. Julius Lempert (1891–1968) was a pre-eminent North-American ear-nose-throat surgeon practising in New York city in the early- and mid-decades of the 20th century. He pioneered many novel neuro-otological procedures (for details see Krisht, KM, Shelton, C., and Couldwell, WT, *Journal of Neurological Surgery*, B, 2015, 76, 101–107). Lempert is remembered today for the design and development of many surgical instruments: e.g., Lempert rongeur, Lempert curette, Lempert periosteal elevator. He majorly contributed to the fenestration procedure to treat otosclerosis. Fenestration is the process of creating a window (fenestra – Latin; fenêtre



Dr VS Subramanian, courtesy the Rotary Club of Madras archives.

M.B. Srinivasan remembered

The article on MB Srinivasan in Vol. XXXV No. 13 (October 16-31, 2025) has seen a lot of responses and we are reproducing a few here.

A great human being

As a sishya of the late MB Srinivasan for 18 years (1970-88), I have fond memories and feel blessed to have been closely associated with him. He was kind, sympathetic, affectionate and caring. I learnt from him not only music, but, also great values in life. He lived by example to be honest, humane, unbiased, to stand up against injustice and fearlessly fight for rights, as mentioned in the article. He was very humble, and appreciated and encouraged the creative works of others. In short, he taught us members of his Choir, to be good human beings. There are several instances and anecdotes that remain etched in my memory.

One such is when he asked

me to fill in his cheque (as he was busy composing) for Rs. 137.50 in favour of "The Director General, All India Radio, New Delhi". Curious to know about the odd amount, on my query he replied that he had served as a judge in a music competition conducted by AIR in Delhi for four days. Having stayed with a friend he had waived the costly accommodation offered to him by AIR. He was paid the two-way flight charges, and the local conveyance of 550 rupees for four days. However, on one of the days he had been picked up and dropped by his friend. Therefore, Sir told me he was returning the amount of Rs. 137.50, being a day's conveyance paid in excess. So much for his honesty!

On another occasion, I was moved by one of his many philanthropic deeds that I witnessed. One evening while I was in his house I happened to answer the door bell. I saw an



MYC performing in the USA.

unkempt man in his sixties in a soiled dhoti, standing with a smart young boy in his twenties, wanting to see MBS. Sir came out and greeted them in Telugu. When the old man told him something, Sir let out a victory cry and invited them inside. Zahida Aunty (Mrs. MBS) served tea for all of us, but both father and son refused to sit. Meanwhile, Sir went to his room and brought a very elegant suit along with a couple of beautiful ties. He gave them to the boy, and hugged both of them. The old man was visibly moved. Sir wished the boy the very best and advised him to take care of his father. Both of them were in tears as they thanked Sir profusely before leaving.

Curious to know what was happening I asked Zahida Aunty. She took me aside and told me in a whisper: "The old man, living in abject poverty, is the only player of an almost extinct traditional percussion instrument of Andhra. Vasu (as Aunty addressed MBS) helped in educating the boy right through his school and medical college. Now, that he has completed his MBBS course, Vasu has gifted his only suit as a gift for the boy to go and receive his degree at tomorrow's convocation."

On noticing Aunty briefing me, Sir frowned at her for telling me all this. He was the perfect example of the Tamil saying that even the left hand shouldn't know of what the right hand gives! Sir further told me strictly not to publicise this. But, how can I not share such noble deeds for us to know the greatness of my Guru MBS! This is but one of several anecdotes that reveal what a great human being MBS was.

D.R. (D Ramachandran)
Artistic Director, Madras MBS Choir
* * *

My experience with MBS Sir

As a school kid in the late 1970s, I used to hero worship MBS Sir. Who wouldn't adore him for the way he interacted with students and praised them lavishly for synchronised singing as a group? What joy the songs used to give us children for their simple tunes, stories

told and lessons taught! Exposure to a variety of languages through the songs he composed was a bonus.

Later while still a teenager, being a part of the senior choir was a different experience. Sir's compositions embellished with the Western harmony and the special effect it had on me as a listener and singer was a new thrill to experience. The vibrations of a perfect chord and the revelation of a song's musicality in connection with the meaning of the lyrics caused great inclination and attachment to the new genre – Indian Choral Music created by MBS Sir.

What better way can there be to give back what you received, than by teaching what one has learnt? The way he gave importance to the diction and dynamics of a song and wrapped the entire choir in his hand with his adorable conducting skills, is something I was lucky to experience and trying to imbibe as much as possible. It's like completing a full circle now to see the younger generation having fun singing together with confidence and commitment.

Rajashree Bhaskaran
(Member of the Madras MBS Choir and an instructor)
* * *

Choral singing beyond borders

As I read the beautifully written article about MB Srinivasan in *Madras Musings*, it brought back memories of how the Madras Youth Choir (MYC – before it was renamed recently) got an opportunity to spread the founder's message through his music to an international audience, at the Serenade 2017 International Choir Music Festival at Washington DC, USA. Truly a matter of pride and a milestone in its journey!

With 14 choir groups from 14 countries coming together, it was a true celebration of harmony beyond borders — proving that music has no language barriers. For us it was a wonderful learning and enriching experience as we presented the magical compositions of MB Srinivasan, considered a pioneer of Indian choral music.

The festival was a cultural exchange as we interacted with

choir groups from places as varied as Zimbabwe, Bulgaria, USA, Northern Ireland, Latvia, Shanghai, Mongolia, Spain, and India to name a few. Besides performing, MYC also conducted four workshops including two for children where we also taught them a song in Bengali, which was received very well. Equally interesting were the workshops conducted by the other choir groups.

Concerts were held at prestigious venues throughout the Washington metropolitan area. MYC premiered a piece specially composed for the festival (a medley of seven songs) marking the birth centenary of John F Kennedy. The grand finale at the Concert Hall in Kennedy Centre was an unforgettable experience. It was the culmination of the Serenade festival and began with the different choir groups presenting a piece each. MYC showcased *Mazhai the Rain Song*, a six-part harmony, and arguably one of the most complex pieces in our repertoire. With lyrics penned by the legendary Subramania Bharathi, the music for it was composed by MB Srinivasan.

At the end, all the choral groups proceeded down the aisles, waving glow sticks and took the stage for the Mass Choir. It began with *Greensleeves*, Kennedy's favourite song, as it gradually coalesced a range of 375 voices. The grand finale of the evening was the world premiere of the spirited *Ansam Ansam* a French song (All together we sing) by the Haitian composer Sydney Guillaume and conducted by the maestro Joshua Habermann. As we took a bow, the packed audience of 2,400 plus gave us all a standing ovation – a moment that will be embedded in our minds.

"Come Let's Sing Together" is the motto of MYC and we experienced how the joy of singing together with other choral groups transcends cultures. During the trip, Madras Youth Choir also performed at the Murugan Temple of North America in Maryland.

S. Ram
Secretary, Madras MBS Choir
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PC Ramakrishna conducting a workshop in the USA.

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– THE EDITOR

Another step forward for development of Sailing Sport in Tamil Nadu

The development of sailing in Chennai is all set to move up a notch higher. This would be facilitated by a recently signed MoU between Tamil Nadu Sailing Association (TNSA), Indian Coast Guard and Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDATN). This MoU is being seen as a positive curve up in the development and strengthening of sailing and other water

sports activities, besides sharing expertise and creating new opportunities for training, TNSA Secretary General Nilima V Sha, reveals, adding a major highlight of this three-way partnership will be the conduct of Asian Sailing Championship for Youth Classes in Chennai later this year. SDAT will financially support this prestigious competition, which will place Tamil Nadu on the continental

● by V. Venkataramana

sailing map. The hosting of this competition would also inspire the next generation of sailing sportspersons besides reinforcing Tamil Nadu's premier position in the conduct and development of sailing sport.

For the Coast Guard, an important wing of the country's defence sector established in 1977, the new involvement in sailing sport marks a new turn in its active role in supporting sporting events especially the water sports along India's coastline. And, the MoU collaboration marks a new landmark initiative for the Tamil Nadu government through SDATN, which has been striving to make TN a frontline state in sports in the country through meaningful initiatives like Champion Development Scheme, Mission International Medal and Elite Sports Persons Scheme, besides creation of sporting infrastructure in many districts.

What's more, the state's plan to set up India's first sailing academy has already excited serious sailing sportspersons. The MoU also has another important objective of developing employment pathways for trained youth into the Coast Guard as well as other defence services.

Meanwhile, October 12, 2025 turned out to be a day of celebration for TNSA and the sailors what with Chennai's two-time Olympian sailor Nethra Kumanan claiming the first position (winner) at the ILCA Olympic Format Test Event at Vilamoura, Portugal. She exhibited a consistent and commanding performance competing in the ILCA 6 class. She bagged the gold competing against a strong international line up. The victory, besides coming as another milestone in Nethra's bright career, reaffirmed her status as one of India's most accomplished sailors. She has been dominating the Asian sailing circuits with notable achievements like Gold at the 2022 Asian Championship and multiple podium finishes in international regattas. Nethra has represented India at the 2020 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympics, bereft of medal success though, it may be recalled.

Nethra's commendable progress in sailing sport, and the recognition as world class Tamil Nadu's sailing facilities at Chennai and Ramanathapuram are being looked at as a source of inspiration for the next generation of sailors, says TNSA Secretary General Nilima Sha.



From left to right: Dr Atulya Misra, IAS., Additional Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu, Youth Welfare and Sports Development Department, Ashok Thakkar -- Vice President, Tamil Nadu Sailing Association, DGICG Paramesh Sivamani, AVSM, PTM, TM Director General Indian Coast Guard, DIG IJ Singh, PD (MP&T) CGHQ, Deputy Inspector General Indian Coast Guard and Meganatha Reddy, IAS., Member Secretary, Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu.

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