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OLD AND WISE

While addressing the emptiness in their own lives, two residents of Adyar, Jayanthi Sekhar and Pushya Sitaraman, have managed to ease the loneliness of many senior citizens who find themselves in a similar situation **P5**



A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

House of Hiranandani Upscale now has a library as one of the amenities **P3**



Photo used for representational purpose only

R. RAMASWAMY

Sholinganallur, the largest electorate in the State, is served by a post office tucked away in a manner that makes it inaccessible. It is in a corner of a narrow road that is al-

ways congested with water and septic tankers.

The nearest bus stop is more than two kilometres away making it extremely difficult for the residents in the area, particularly senior citizens who constitute the majority of customers of Sholinga-

READERS WRITE

Postal services infrastructure inadequate on OMR

nallur Post Office, to access the facility. During summer and rainy seasons, the trek to this post office is unenviable. With the roads being too narrow and pockmarked with potholes, even for those who travel by cars, it is a challenging experience to reach this post office from

the main road.

Despite repeated representations to the Post Master General and other postal authorities, nothing has been done to relocate this post office to a more accessible place. This post office is equally important for the businesses as most

of the top notch IT companies and multinational corporates have their offices on OMR only. The relocation of this post office to somewhere near Sholinganallur signal is a must and needs to be taken up on a priority basis.

Besides, there is no post office beyond Sholinganallur/ Chemmencherry - right upto Thorupporur. A post office in Padur or Kelambakkam is badly required.

As OMR is the most bustling residential and commercial locality in the city with a huge number of workforce working in two shifts - the post office here should be made a 24/7 office to serve the residents and offices.

(R. Ramaswamy is a resident of Kumaraswamy Nagar in Sholinganallur)

Cloth bag vending machines opened at six locations in south region

Greater Chennai Corporation is taking this initiative to expand Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board's anti-plastic campaign

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The 'Meendum Manjappai' campaign has got a boost. Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, which has been installing these vending machines at strategic locations, has got the support of Greater Chennai Corporation to expand this initiative aimed at reducing the use of single-use plastics.

On March 14, the automated cloth vending machines were inaugurated at six locations in south zone covering Thiruvannamiyur, Palavakkam, Sholinganallur, Valasaravakkam and Nanganallur. The chosen locations are either near a market, temple or supermarket.

"Over the years, TNPCB was involved in installing and maintaining these vending machines. This is the first time in South Chennai that GCC has played a key role," says N. Nireeshkumar, superintendent of parks, GCC. Recently, 10 vending machines were installed in Central and North zones by GCC, he says.

GCC chose locations where the



The locations

- Zone XI office in Valasaravakkam
- Division 153 office in Porur, near Saravana Stores
- 4th Main Road, Nanganallur
- Thiruvannamiyur market
- Division office (183), Palavakkam
- Near Nilgiris supermarket, Model School Road, Sholinganallur

footfall is on higher side and there is a noticeable demand for eco-friendly bags. "A vending machine was installed at Nanganallur

Fourth Main Road, which has a market, park and temple close by. Likewise, one is placed near the Thiruvannamiyur market," says the official.

Out of the six machines, five were sponsored by TNPCB, and one was procured by GCC.

According to a press release, the Manjappai vending machine, designed by Instagood Technologies Pvt. Ltd., is an IoT-based smart vending system that offers a simple, hassle-free solution for acquiring cloth bags. Users can insert a ₹10 coin or currency note, or make a cashless transaction through UPI payment options. The machine has a storage capacity of 500 bags and can be quickly restocked. It is accessible for the physically challenged.

The vending machine enables real-time tracking of stock levels, machine health, and transaction data across multiple locations.

"There is a plan to install more such vending machines in the coming months and we will be studying the response at all these places," the official adds.

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During the launch of the library at House of Hiranandani Upscale.

A new chapter begins

House of Hiranandani Upscale now has a library as one of the amenities

VINI BHATIA

Last Sunday, the clubhouse at House of Hiranandani Upscale in Egattur, Old Mahabalipuram Road came alive with the launch of the much-anticipated “Let’s Read at Hira” event, marking the opening of Hira Library.

As founder of Asha Foundation, I had the privilege of organising this event in collaboration with Raghavan Murti, Vijay and Shambhavi. Our goal was to bring the community together through the shared love of books, creativity and storytelling.

The evening began with a warm welcome speech by Shambhavi, who set the tone for an inspiring celebration of literature. Mokshi’s soulful prayer and song performance brought a serene and reflective atmosphere to the event. Hira

Library recognises the power of stories to shape our lives, foster connections and inspire new ideas – a point I could not help dwelling on when I took the stage to present my views.

Vijay shared the incredible three-year journey behind the creation of the library, reflecting on the challenges and joys of bringing the project to life. Maya Shriram, in her address, beautifully highlighted how books teach us empathy. She urged the audience to read widely, beyond popular writers, as even lesser-known books have the potential to connect us with diverse feelings and perspectives.

Shobha V’s storytelling session was a highlight, captivating the audience with her engaging and entertaining narrative. Aditi, too, mesmerised us with her heartfelt short story, leaving everyone in awe of her wonderful style of delivery.

The evening also featured a cake-cutting ceremony, followed by the awarding of prizes to winners of our pre-launch competitions. We had over 70 participants who showcased their creative talent in categories such as bookmark design, book cover creation and blurb writing. It was wonderful to celebrate their passion for literature.

As the event came to a close, Pallavi expressed heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved, ensuring the success of this special evening. With an exciting calendar of upcoming activities, Hira Library is set to become a vibrant hub for learning, imagination and community engagement. The launch of “Let’s Read at Hira” marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for all who cherish the magic of books.

(Vini Bhatia is founder of Asha Foundation)



Harper Lee’s work to be discussed today

Bookworms to converge on Sholinganallur for a variety of reading-related activities between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

The meeting of FOMRRA’s book club, BookWorms, on March 16 (from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.) at Basil with a Twist at Kamala Street (opposite Novotel) in Sholinganallur, OMR, promises an engaging lineup of programmes.

Book enthusiasts can join Rohini Subramanian as she moderates a discussion on Harper Lee’s classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Bookworms of OMR will engage in interactive conversations about the plot, writing style, favourite characters and memorable passages from this timeless masterpiece, says a communication from Federation of OMR Residents Associations (FOMRRA).

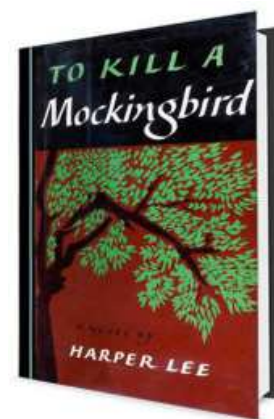
This session will also feature a new novel by emerging OMR-based writer Sujatha Rangachari – *Where Time Stand Still* – alongside an interactive discussion by Ranjit Narayanan of ArtoonsInn on the challenges of writing, publishing and marketing literary works. Venkatraman and Sudha from “The Bookshelf” will speak on the essential role of libraries in our lives, says

the communication,

The 15th edition of “Book Swap” will take place during this special gathering. Visitors can bring any number of books in good condition to exchange for the books on display. Barring textbooks and study materials, all genres welcome – fiction, non-fiction, and comics/graphic novels – are welcome.

Bring a book, take a book – it is that simple, the communication notes.

For more details and to connect, join the BookWorms group using the link <https://join.fomrra.org>.



Fencing comes up on Karanai Main Road to prevent littering in a lake and a water channel



The section of Karanai Main Road where a lake and a couple of gated communities -- Bollineni Renata and Jones Cassia -- are located was the target of rampant dumping of trash, including construction debris. To put an end to this practice, the Chengalpattu district administration has got EFI to build a fencing, covering the length of two water systems (the afore-mentioned lake and a water channel, the latter under WRD's watch). The images were taken on March 4, 2025. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

Rowing down the Adyar river for five decades

Five former employees of Parry & Co. recall the time when they were part of a title-winning team



(From left) Revi Thomas, Rabindranath Rao, S. Radhakrishnan, Naresh Vassudhev and P Venkatram have served on the managing committee of Madras Boat Club in different capacities over the years.



The Parry & Co. team that won the Challenge Fours Trophy in 1975: (L to R) Rabindranath Rao, Revi C Thomas (Bow), K. R. Ganapathy (Coxswain): S. Radhakrishnan (stroke) and H. T. Bhaskar Rao.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

K. KEERTHIVASAN

In the mornings, around 6 a.m., both on weekdays and weekends, one can spot a small group of men who are in their 70s, rowing down the Adyar river, cracking jokes as they go.

They are no ordinary folks. The five rowers, Revi Thomas, Rabindranath Rao, S. Radhakrishnan, Naresh Vassudhev and P. Venkatram, all former employees of Parry & Co., who won medals at major regatta events in the 70s and early 80s, are still at it, waking up early in the morning, going to Madras Boat Club and rowing with all the joy that the sport brings. Naresh and Revi, who rowed for MBC, were honoured with the

prestigious Club Colours.

In fact, Parry & Co. won the Challenge Fours Trophy, a main event in the prestigious Merchants and Bankers Trophy, for two consecutive years in 1974 and 1975. Barring a few, members of that winning team are still maintaining a link with rowing.

S. Radhakrishnan, part of Parry

team that won the Challenge Fours Trophy, says it feels great to be part of the sport for 50 long years and still rowing.

"Every morning, we sit together and reminisce about those days, at the Madras Boat Club. Whenever we are in Chennai, we meet and row at MBC. We have been rowing for 50 years now. We are at MBC at 5.30 a.m. and finish our warm-up by 5.45 a.m. and by 6 a.m. we start racing. It is such a good feeling that at 82 I am able to row six kilometres. Of course, the body feels the pain, but it is a pleasurable pain," laughs Radhakrishnan.

Seventy-six-year-old Rabindranath Rao, who was part of the team that won the Challenge Fours Trophy twice, says winning the titles felt great. "When we won the tournament in 1974 after 17 years, our Managing Director invited us to the boardroom and everyone celebrated. We were thrilled," Rao recalls.

Rao enjoys the time with his close friends at MBC. "We keep meeting regularly and are close friends. Once you start rowing, you cannot forget your crew so easily. We race for 10 km; there is rigorous training," he adds.

Thomas is now a member of MBC, as are Radhakrishna Rao and S. Radhakrishnan. The 77-year-old, who was part of the two titles, is supremely active, ready to row at MBC at 5.45 p.m. "It is not that we meet every day, we meet whenever we can. We do row with different members. It feels great to row," he says.

The senior citizens are not just content rowing, they continue to train young rowers at MBC. "We also love to coach youngsters. It is very satisfying," says Revi.



When we won the tournament in 1974 after 17 years, our managing director invited us to the boardroom and the victory was celebrated



During a recent meetup held at a member's house in Mylapore where participants played traditional games; and (below) Pushya Sitaraman (third from left) and Jayanthi Sekhar standing next to her.



Old and wise

While addressing the emptiness in their own lives, two residents of Adyar, Jayanthi Sekhar and Pushya Sitaraman, have managed to ease the loneliness of many senior citizens who find themselves in a similar situation

LIFFY THOMAS

Recently, in an ancestral house in Mylapore, traditional games kept a gathering enthralled. The sight of shells moving across a wooden board revived memories of *pallanguzhi*. There was a game of Seven Stones. Paramapadam and *aadu puli* were among other games that took a motley group of senior citizens down memory lane. Numbering over 20, the group had gathered at the house of a member as part of the monthly activity of Wise Owl Club.

Led by two sisters - Jayanthi Sekhar and Pushya Sitaraman - the activities of the Club are run under the Wise Owl Foundation, a registered body born in October 2023. Wise Owl Club currently has 40 members and is keen on growing bigger.

The forum was started for senior citizens looking for a recreational club that is off the beaten track. The meetups do not have a fixed venue or date - they are held either at a club or a member's house.

The idea to start a recreational club for seniors came up when the sisters themselves were trying to infuse fresh meaning into their lives.



"Our children are away and there is some emptiness, that is when we thought of starting this club," says 65-year-old Jayanthi, a resident of Adyar, who was helping the family business before starting the Foundation.

The curated workshops try to offer activities that people are really longing to take up or something that they had grown out of but now want to return to.

Book owls, gardening owls, theatre arts owls, creative owls, playful owls, healthy owls and arm-chair travel are the broad themes of these workshops, offered to members as well as non-members.

In the book owls, for instance, participants stitched a story together - each adding a para in what would finally emerge as an audio book.

Nostalgia is a big hook at these workshops. Pushya, a practising lawyer who is in her 70s, recalls how



two ladies discovered that they went to the same school and was taught Bharathiya songs by the same teacher during a session to

remember the writer and poet.

While experts are brought in for the workshops, in some cases members would volunteer be the resource person.

The cause

Until last year, Wise Owl Club has been conducting two activities a month - one online and the other offline. While the online events are free to attend, the in-person ones levy a nominal fee for workshops as they would entail the purchase of material such as canvas and paint.

The recent one at Mylapore was a free meetup. There were many new faces among the participants.

"If any of our members offers to

host a meetup, we encourage it, as that has the potential of bringing a new set of people on board," says Jayanthi, adding that K.R. Jambunathan and wife Visalakshi were invited as special guides to help participants get their moves right in the games.

The sisters have been trying to pass on the benefits of such recreational activities to an old age home in the city.

"Whatever little we get conducting activities from our paid workshops is used to conduct similar activities at an old age home," says Jayanthi. This year, Pushya says, they want to conduct at least one such workshop every quarter at an old age home



Feeling the pulse of a street and a neighbourhood

An open house on March 21, 22 and 23 that is being organised as part of an initiative titled The Pelathope Urban Living Lab will explore the questions of social cohesion and meaningful development in neighbourhoods



Event Details:

Dates & Timings

March 21 (5 p.m. - 8 p.m.)

March 22 (9 a.m. - 6 p.m.)

March 23 (9 a.m. - 6 p.m.)

Location: New No. 11, Old No. 6, Pelathope Vedanta Desika Swami Street, Mylapore, Chennai 600004

the rich history and cultural heritage of Mylapore.” As the name suggests, the Open House is open to all, and it is aimed at discussing “opportunities to collaborate in setting up a meaningful community design initiative focussed on the neighbourhood scale as part of the urban living lab.”

The open house would be marked by exhibitions, archival showcases, guided walkthroughs, and community conversations (which allow visitors to can engage with architects, historians and residents about the past, present and future of Mylapore).

The communication notes the Open House would witness the launch of two key initiatives: The Pelathope Community Archives and The Mylapore 15-Minute Cultural Neighbourhood Map.

The communication elaborates that the Pelathope Community Archive consists of oral histories from previously unrecorded or forgotten narrators, archival photographs, and documents highlighting the history of Pelathope and Mylapore, organised around thematic areas of culture, community, infrastructure/planning, and ecology. This exercise is underpinned by the hope that the “discovery of unexplored histories will resonate with others in the neighbourhood, leading to alternative readings of Mylapore that can foster a better understanding

of the dynamics of neighbourhood change.”

The communication adds: “The Mylapore 15-Minute Cultural Neighborhood Map is a crowd-sourced document that seeks to highlight the unique cultural heritage of the neighbourhood. This serves as a starting point for creating a broad-based and inclusive (re)development framework that leverages the cultural and heritage assets of Mylapore. The expected focus of this framework includes enhancing the local economy, preserving and enhancing tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and identifying high-impact community projects such as last-mile connectivity interventions and shared community spaces that can improve social cohesion and tangibly enhance the quality of life in Mylapore.”

The organisers are also running a photo contest – Mylapore Through Your Lens – which will be exhibiting shortlisted entries and announcing winners at the Open House.

Two structures would be central to the exercise. One popularly known as 40 Pelathope (which now goes by the new number 16 while retaining its old number 40) is steeped in history; so are the three row houses right opposite this structure. A section of the row houses which underwent a renovation, one that was easy on its original character, will mark the physical space of the Pelathope Urban Living Lab by being a congregating point for residents as well as entities that have the agency to effect positive changes in Pelathope as well as the rest of Mylapore.

A view of Pelathope; and a close look at ‘40 Pelathope’, a famous address on the street. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

Though running parallel to North Mada Street, Pelathope hardly shares in its spotlight. Pelathope is a cul-de-sac and its days unspool to a rather fixed script with little room for improvisation. The odds are high that anyone unfamiliar with Mylapore has not heard of

Pelathope (which means “jackfruit grove” in Tamil). Even Google maps would be silent on it: as this old name of the street is overshadowed by an official name, one popularised by Google Maps – Vedanta Desika Swami Street.

Next weekend – March 21, 22 and 23 – is going to be in the public

glare as a result of what is called The Pelathope Urban Living Lab – Open House, an initiative by SKDO in collaboration with PLUS, Curating for Culture, UCAN and Cultural Heritage Narratives.

According to a communication from the organisers, the initiative offers an “opportunity to explore



Vinayaka Missions celebrates Women's Day

Vinayaka Missions, Chennai campus, recently celebrated Women's Day to honour women's achievements in various fields.

The Women Empowerment Cell of Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation (VMRF) organised the celebration.

On the occasion, S. Arunraj, Collector of Chengalpattu District, Neera Misra, founder of Droupadi Dream Trust, K. R. Maalathi, chief executive officer of Auuro Educational Services, and R. Seetha-devi, founder of Street Vision Social and Charitable Trust, were honoured for their invaluable contributions to educa-

tion and society.

Anuradha Ganesan, chancellor of Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation, emphasised women's crucial role in shaping society.

Neera Misra delivered an insightful speech on the resilience of Indian women. She highlighted the significance of grass roots initiatives in uplifting marginalised women, said a release.

The VMRF Women of Excellence Award 2025 was presented to K. R. Maalathi and R. Seetha Devi for their education and community service contributions.



Women's Day at Jerusalem College

The women's cell of Jerusalem College of Engineering (JCE) recently celebrated International Women's Day in association with Swadeshi Shodh Sansthan (SSS), Tamil Nadu chapter. Karuna Gopal, president of the Foundation of Futuristic Cities, was the chief guest. M. Balasubramaniam, Deputy Chairman of the Ministry of Education (Government of India) - All India Council for Technical Education Investor Committee, was the guest of honour.

M. Balasubramaniam highlighted the

importance of women's participation in technological advancements and industry. Karuna Gopal inspired the audience with her words on the role of women in shaping sustainable and innovative urban development. On the occasion, Bharathi (Education), Razia Parvin (Women Empowerment), Ramya (Technology), Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar (Healthcare) Chitra (Resilience and Sustainability), Archana Prasad (Commerce and Management Studies), P. Anuradha (Best Faculty Member 2025), Maheswari (Industry-Academia Collaboration), Pushpa Sadavatti (Economics), Mala (Social Entrepreneur) were presented with Lifetime Achievement award.

Women Entrepreneur Award presented



The Rotary Club of Madras East, in collaboration with the family of Late Mrs. Rajeshwari, held the annual Women Entrepreneur Award on March 6. Every year, the Women Entrepreneur Award is conferred upon a distinguished woman who has made a significant impact in the business world.

The award was conferred upon Namrata Sundaresan, co-founder of Käse Cheese for her commitment to excellence, sustainability, and social impact, said a release. She was honoured with the Nari Shakti Puraskar by the President of India in 2018.

Namrata spoke about how she and co-founder Anu's de-

sire to start a baking unit for differently-abled women turned into a cheesemaking venture.

Special guests at the event were Dr. Vijaya Bharathi Rangarajan, trustee and director, Sundaram Medical Foundation and Dr. Rangarajan Memorial Hospital; founder and executive director, CANSTOP.



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Railway staff honoured



In commemoration of International Women's Day, Southern Railway Women's Headquarters Organization (SRWHQO) felicitated 26 women employees in recognition of their exemplary work during last year.

According to a press release, over 100 women including officials and staff attended the event which was inaugurated by Sonia Singh, president, SRWHQO, in the presence of Rekha Kaushal, vice-president, SRWHQO. Various Cultural events were also part of the celebration

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Uninterrupted storytelling

Adyar resident Ramya Vasudevan keeps piling up audio stories through a disciplined schedule of recordings

R SAI VENKATESH

Not all heroes wear capes. Not all heroes are known by their faces. Some manifest as disembodied voices. In the wider world, Ramya Vasudevan chooses to be more heard than seen, thanks to an unstinted commitment to producing audio stories in Tamil.

Ramya has narrated over 2,060 stories, and made them heard on platforms such as Spotify. Irrespective of their tone and theme, the stories are bundled together under one brand identity, "Under The Tree". This "Tree" grew from a carelessly tossed seed. Back in 2019, Ramya Whats Apped a friend her story narration based on a book she had just finished reading.

"My friend nudged me to narrate summaries of books, blogs or personalities through audios as she found them quite appealing. She created a WhatsApp group and forwarded one of my audios to it. Soon, it branched out to three more groups [this was at a time when only 256 members could be added to one]. And the pandemic hap-

pened, after which the number only grew," recalls Ramya, an Adyar resident.

Until recently, Ramya had to keep the story recording session for the fag end of the day as she was on a private firm's payroll. Though quitting that job has freed up time, the overall pattern is intact: she still posts her stories in WhatsApp groups and the Spotify channel around 8.30 a.m. On Mondays and Wednesdays, she narrates Tamil short stories; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, spiritual lessons; Fridays, general short stories; and Saturdays, lessons from any English book of any domain. Besides these, she condenses books specifically for children, and posts them on her channels.

Today, over 700 episodes of her content have been stored in public and school libraries, including the Anna Centenary Library, the Ashok Nagar Government Library and the Avarampalayam Library in Coimbatore across different parts of the State. Three years ago, with her husband's help, she launched a website (underthe-tree.me), compiling her audios.

Under The Tree also holds a story-

Ramya Vasudevan

telling contest for persons of all age groups once a year, and distributes prizes to winners. It also honours persons who have made significant strides in literature at the event. "For these events alone, I go looking for sponsors. If nobody turns up, I spend out of my pocket," she adds.

"Some of those who listen to me have turned volunteers for Under The Tree," says Ramya and cites the example of Karpagam, a librarian from Coimbatore, who stumbled upon Ramya and her audios during the pandemic and would later set out to Chennai to visit her.

"I requested Ramya to hand me her audio collection, and approached several libraries, including the Anna Centenary Library, and got them stored there. Later, I started a group for like-minded librarians, and circulated her audios there, pressing them to store them in their libraries as well. I also shared them with my readers, went to schools, formed a group of teachers, and submitted her audio collections so as to get students to listen to them. At one point, we even met the Chennai Mayor to get the audios installed across schools in the city," says Karpagam.

For Sridhar, 64, a retired bank official from Chennai, not a day goes by without listening to Ramya. He maintains a database of her work. He says: "The beauty of her work is mainly her short stories. I sometimes wonder how she manages to find time to do this amid her busy schedule. And imagine the reading she has to do to churn out audios!"

Workshop on bee keeping

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a culinary workshop on March 20. According to a press release, the session will focus on ready-to-cook food items such as idli, adai, murukku, puttu and a few more. Another workshop on bee keeping will be held on March 21. Both the sessions will be held at the centre's premises at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048

Cultural event at school



Bala Vidya Mandir Senior Secondary School, Adyar, organised a cultural extravaganza recently, in the school premises, bringing together a vibrant celebration of talent and tradition. Around 200 students took part. The events included music and dance, says a press release.

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