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Pradeep Kanna

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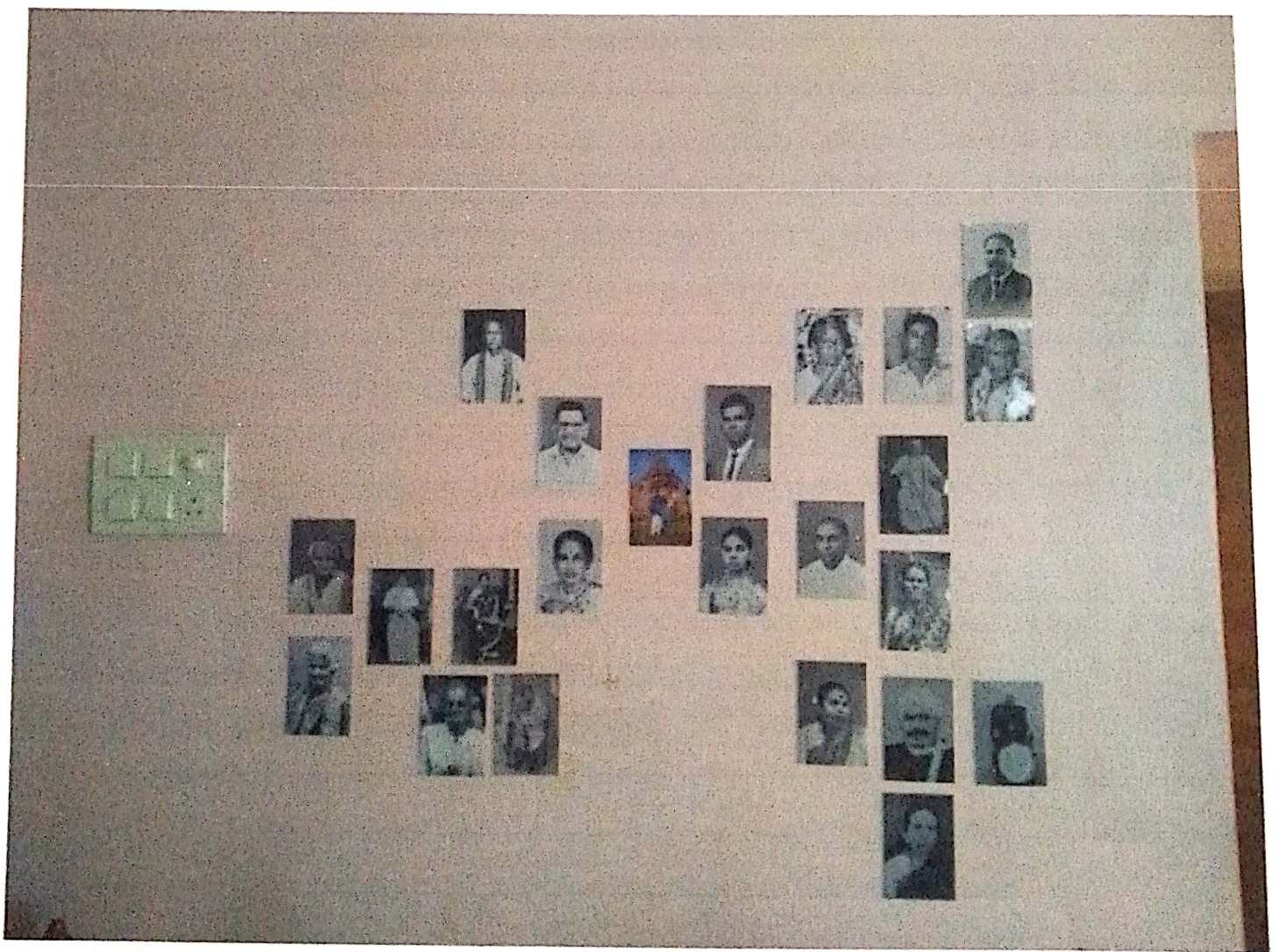
Enquiry into the past



Pradeep Kanna · Dec 27, 2018 · 9 min read

Humans are born with certain privileges at birth which at times decides the entire life course. May it be the Jews or the Indo-European descent (Aryans/brahmins), enjoy the birth privilege of being born in settled families which part their ways from rain-dependent agriculture centuries back. This gave them the edge from other communities to explore new fields of science, banking, art and culture etc. Recently I attempted to collect and document photos and stories of my own family history. I was lucky enough to interact with persons 3 or 4 times of my age to get into details. I came across extraordinary stories and situations of my forefathers right from 1800. That would roughly sum up 2 centuries of course of the family. Armed with my birth privilege of being born in the information era, I have attempted to add my own colour to the findings. This quest into the yesteryears began with my paternal grandfather who had written a piece on his forefathers and their lives back then. I was again lucky enough to find it after his death which provides enormous details about his forefathers (and mine too). What was kindled by the man after his death made me go crazy about the idea. Because he continues to speak to me through his writings which he had wanted me to discover only after his death. I travelled to 3 villages (Keelayur, kondayampatti and Iyankotai) to meet a few extended relatives to collect all information, photos etc. In a few places, I was given a very warm welcome as they felt that the old garbage in their houses has now got the opportunity to be eradicated (haha). In a few places, I had to deal with sentiments of not even removing the dust from the photos as they believed their ancestors are not to be disturbed even by rubbing their photos (haha again).

So, I will take you back in time categorically with separate columns for paternal and maternal sides. You may end up discovering the caste to which I belong. I would like to make the point that it is not intentional but it is very difficult to ignore the caste aspect which otherwise wouldn't be a complete enquiry. And this is no self-promotion. I request the reader to view it from with the spirit of enquiry and curiosity towards links in history. I gain nothing from doing this and we are just a simple normal family like any others. It will prove beneficial to my families upcoming generations to find their roots and to my friends as an interesting find. It is very simple as that. All glory to the ancient city of "MADURAI".



My wall of generations

Some of the basic findings and interesting things which I found after collecting which surprised me first hand.

1. In all the photos of ladies both paternal and maternal sides, the application of **sindoor** was restricted to the forehead alone and not on the parting line of hair above it. This trend continues till 1990s photos.
This must have been a northern influence which our ladies picked up only later.
2. Growing ears for the purpose of wearing heavy earrings (**Pambadam** in Tamil) has been in fashion until the 1930s which vanished with the start of western education among girls. Also women didn't wear jackets till early 1900s.
3. Photographs and half torso clicks might be very common these days. But in all these photos which I collected people were clothed in their best attires. It gave insights on "**padhakam**" or the ancient "**thaali**" which was so big in size which must have been an influence which the wealthy **chettians** must have exerted. As theirs would be much bigger in size. Again all this was possible just because both my paternal and maternal ancestors were lucky to be in and around the ancient city of Madurai. Photography began in India only after the sepoy mutiny when the archaeological survey of India was established in the 1850s. The ancient city of Madurai attracted English photographers and their Indian assistants just because Madurai had the famous Meenakshi temple. **Lala Deendayal** had been a pioneer in it. Those were the heydays of superstitions which taught that photos were a bad omen which shortened lifespan. These people have broken that myth with their bold experimentation. (it is not that easy)
4. Every human is privileged at birth in one or the other way. But it takes some amount of "**human consciousness**" above all to actually put them into use either for the betterment of self or the immediate society. The photos which you will be looking below is not just another photograph, but a day in the lives of the people who have attempted to exercise their interest in it. Just try imagining that all these photos have a days story of getting up early, getting dressed up to the best of their abilities, making way to a good studio in Madurai and retrieving back the copies (photos those days were not an instant business as it is today. One may even have to wait for 2 weeks to get the final work.)
5. Silk has been in common use as a status symbol. The photos bore signs of ladies wearing "**Karachi silk**" which was a famous silk route from China to the west through Pakistan. My paternal great-grandfather had sourced it

not available to everyone. And if you can further notice the fact that

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from Kanchipuram. He was wearing a body long "**angavastram**" as a status symbol. (He was around six feet in height) Religious symbols of "**thiruman**" / "**Namam**" are continuing till the 1940s from 1800s. After which the practice has vanished totally with increased westernisation.

6. There is a commonality is the usage of initials. For example, maternal great-grandfather had his name with initials ATN which was the name of his forefathers (three generations backwards). Similar practise has been followed along both maternal and paternal sides. This is their version of remembering their forefathers. Another fact which I got to discover was with the name "**Bosakonar**". The name still travels in my paternal side as "**Bose**" in the present generation. **Bosakonar** must have been born around the 1810s during which time Subash Chandra Bose was still unborn. When I got curious about the name, most were of the answer that it must have been a nationalistic influence on naming kids. But they were completely wrong. This guy **Bosakonar** had his life in **kondayampatti** village next to **alanganallur** which is known for "**rendu bogam**" means two harvest as the area was at the peak of agricultural success. So if my theory is right he has been named "**BOGAM**" or "**BOSAKONAR**" which took a surprising nationalistic yet ignorant turn as **Bose Konar**.

7. There are **doyens** in the family history who were the firsts in their fields. There are also stories revolving around **Burma, Hanoi, Yangon (Rangoon)** which are extraordinary in their own ways. **Nagapatnam** has been the famous seaport (natural harbour) those days. **Tuticorin** was much later developed. So the characters in my family history who have made their way to **Vietnam, Burma** etc must have surely used **Nagapattinam** port only as the other route by road through **Calcutta** is more strenuous. Again voyage comes with its own challenges of ability to withstand typhoons along **Malaya strait**. Sea sickness must have surely affected them as there was no remedy for it back then except eating more bananas to increase salt levels and maintaining decent hydration with more intake of fluids. Even "**jandu balm**" must not have been available to them. **India, Burma and Vietnam** were British colonies (some under French) back then. A permission letter from the District collector was necessary along with passport to cross the seas. These people have taken help from **chettians, wealthy thevars and the tamil muslims** who were

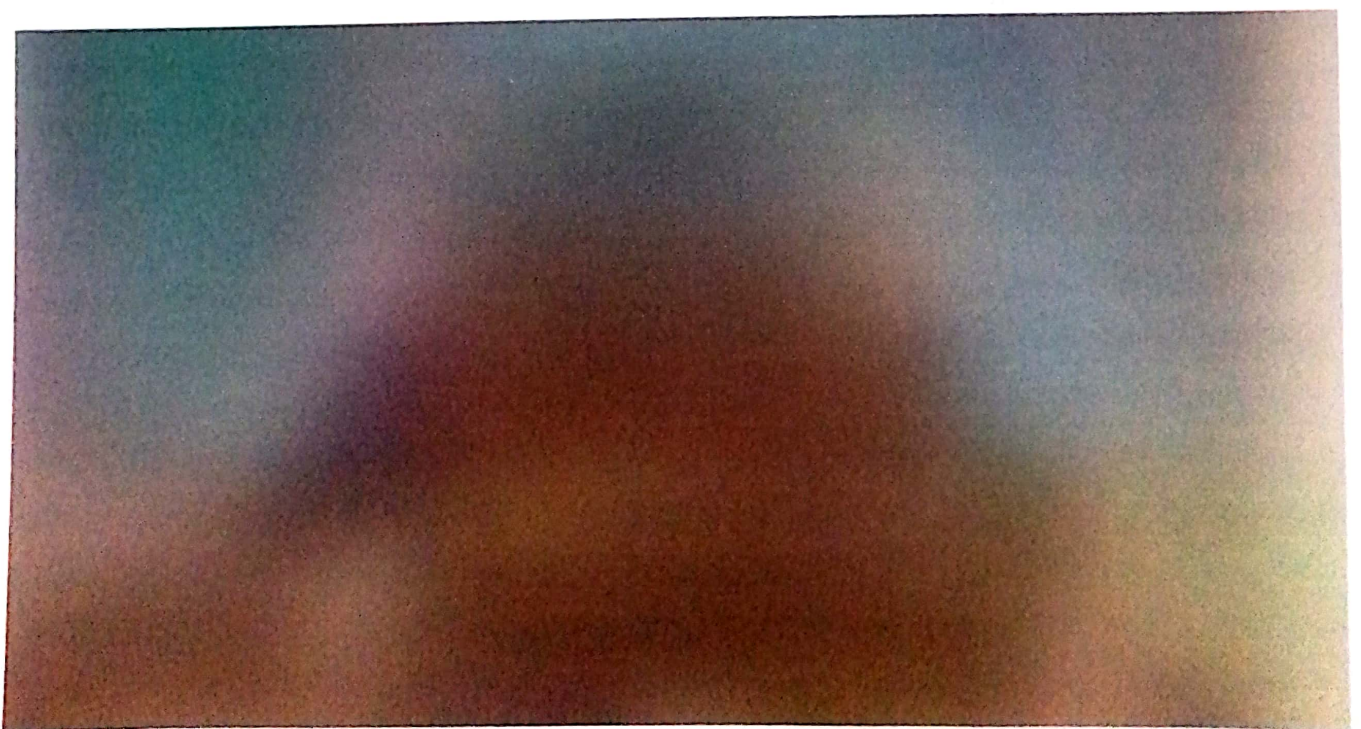
traders back then. So their communal harmony and broad-minded outlook are noteworthy. They were opportunists to the core. Language should not have been a problem as those countries had significant Tamil populations. They had been accountants for **chettians** and also money lenders. Point here is they were strong with math which they would have learned with experience and not from books. It was the pre-calculator days and every fraction should be calculated quickly in one's own mind. **In fact, the village of "Abiramam" near Ramnad district is called as "chinna Rangoon"** as most made their way to the east from this village. We can attribute the credit to people of Keelakarai and Devipatnam who kept the Muslim community informed in this village (Keelakarai which is miles apart from Abiramam was a flourishing place back then. If Gujaratis made it to Africa and Europe as they looked up to the west naturally for opportunities, these people have made it to the east. So why leave mainland India when you can do agriculture here. This holds a case to be further explored as my paternal grandmother had her ancestors fully based in Kondayampatti village near Madurai who didn't have to move in search of opportunities elsewhere. They were wholly agriculture dependent. Rice was surely a luxury those days and its producers enjoyed a life of luxury too. I got to see the "machu" or granary within the ancestral houses in keelayur and kondayampatti and I must say that "rendu bogam" explained the big structure in the latter.

8. Philanthropy has been in practice either to exercise more influence among the masses or as a symbol of status. I got to see hospitals built and donated by them which stands to bear their names till date. Touring talkies had also been run in my paternal side. We also come across stories concurring with the "Rajus community" in Rajapalayam and Ramnad zamindars (Sethupathi kings) and their possible and proven interactions. I found the meaning of Sethupathi only after exploring their proven association with my forefathers. "Sethu" which refers to Ram Sethu in Rameswaram. "Pathi" means protector. So literally these zamindars were the protector of the mythological bridge which is believed to have been constructed between Rameswaram and Lanka in the famous epic 'Ramayana'.
9. Some of the popular names in Tamil like U. Ve Swaminathan Iyer and Damodaran Pillai also comes in the story which was a pleasant surprise to me.
10. This is the last of the pretext which will be required to understand the upcoming articles. Most women before the 1950s have given birth to maximum 12 offsprings

and minimum 6. This is just on a lighter note-Imagine the 12 offspring case.Let us say one year for one child and let's also calculate minimum one year gap between one and the next child.That would make near 25 years of their lives just producing offsprings. Imagine the mental and physical stress they handled with grace with themselves living longer also. Present day women can only dream of such abilities both physically and mentally. This point of view is not from the perspective that women are child-bearing machines but the integrity which they must have possessed as raising 12 kids is nothing short of running a company. Their responsibilities should have been round the clock which again modern day women as a result of radical feminism would brand as enslavement.Let's not get into that. But had not these women shown exemplary skills in their day to day lives most things would have gone wrong.

Thus we come to the end of pretext. Now I will be taking you to different time scales with photos and findings and also attempt to draw parallels with the world and the events that were happening at that time to give a better perspective to the reader.

I was so much fond of **"Back to the future "** film series and **"Interstellar"** as a kid.If I am to travel back in time, I would be extremely equipped to change the course of family history as I exactly know where they were, what they were doing from the 1800s.Or at least wouldn't it be a boon to recognise your own bloodline without whom the link never gets fulfilled in time and I would have never born at all.



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Family series #1

With the pretext of the family series in place, now let's move on to analysing the character arcs in the family. If you had not read the pretext :

<https://medium.com/@pradeepkanna/enquiry-into-the-past-3742c26e71fb>

*This article will strictly revolve around the lives of just two men from the past. **Ayarpadi Konar and Karmegha Konar**. People have the habit of getting lost in mundane activities of life. We don't even realise what the past has for us in store. When I started collecting stories for my personal enquiries, it was extremely difficult for me to break through the generation gap, because you can't go on asking queries beyond a certain point even if the person is receptive to say them. But an interesting thing unfolded once I put the photos in my wall which caught the attention of whoever came to my home. So, now that I have tickled their brains each individual visiting my home started giving endless information from the past and their shared memories with their forefathers even without myself having to bear the pain of continuous questioning. The attention which the wall in my home receives now is simply satisfying as now the wall speaks to me in all possible ways. But what worries is that there was little self-initiative from every member to transfer these even without the need for someone to ask them. I have had experiences in the literary and history circles of Chennai. I got the opportunity to get into touch with every single event and happenings at Mylapore, T Nagar and Nungambakkam at the various cultural centres. What struck me was the upper caste unity in every single place. May it be the **Brahmins or chettiars**, they would have spun stories around their pasts which indeed would be rich. Such privileged pasts to look upon is*

not available to everyone. And if you can further notice the fact that from the pretext, you can never find a single event of exploitative history in our side(You will come to know why I am making this statement later). Those from privileged families don't even spend an extra penny to keep their stories available for the next generation. They are spoon fed with all cultural and historical backgrounds which are well oiled by a tightly knit brilliance of organisation. It's Ok, had I got everything spoon fed, there could have been fair chances that I would have never looked back with interest which I have now. That's the only positive way of looking it.

Coming back, Our heroes today are just two persons mentioned above. For Karmegha Konar, things were readily available. He has been immortalised already so there are little things to interest you from his story. But yes, I do have some alternate angles from his life which might evoke awe to the reader.

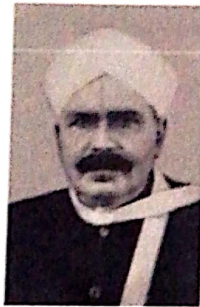
Ayarpadi Konar :



A glimpse of his photo would give you fear. That was the man. No more introductions needed. This guy has had a zeal for organisation and has possessed extreme physical qualifications. Law and order situations are not as it is now. Enforcement of the law was always weaker back then. We find abiramam to be so near to Ramnad the area of "Thevars". As any Tamil cinema would give you the glimpse of their lives and culture as they form a large chunk of population in Tamil Nadu even to the level of deciding electoral politics. Those were the days when disturbances were very often in Abiramam from this influential caste. It has ranged from forcibly taking women from this area to absolutely every possible menace. This guy Ayarpadi had framed local rules to keep the "idayars" or "konars" at peace by forming the "**Yadava dharma paripalana sabha** " and served as its head it too. I have no clue on how he managed to do it as it was a contemporary movement in North India(we are in the 1860s to the 90s timeframe where social movements/organisations were gathering steam). The guy has had well-

established connections from the Muslim community (a natural advantage at abiramam) which must have kept him vigilant of the happenings in the pre newspaper days. He had formed a virtual fort in the minds of his people to stick to one another as one functioning unit. His efforts in making his son great would have never occurred had he been an xyz kind of man. He was something very different as his will had been indomitable. His photo would also display a small clock in his coat. A clock in the 1800s that too in Tamil Nadu in the hands of a person who had no formal education or training suggests that he was ahead of his times. Yeah that's what men with zeal are, aren't they? We have no account of his wife other than just names. She must have surely complimented him.

KARMEGHA KONAR:



Karmegha Konar as we know him had shown signs of early maturity. Our quests in this planet literally end once we enter a job or when we go into the very usual activities of procreation. The absurdity of life is that it never throws any meaning to your existence however difficult you are going to try. But the quest which this man had possessed, took him places and has made him immortalised in time. There comes a scene in the film Troy where Achilles' mother would predict his future. She would say that if he doesn't enter the war scene, he will be remembered by his children and their children and will die a celebrated man. Also, she will add that if he takes up the war-path he will never return again but his name will live till the end of mankind. That is just a literary tease of your senses to fight for a name. But Konar (karmegha as he will be understood hereafter) has possessed a warrior spirit who didn't fight to keep his name alive but focused on greatness alone! I was not able to understand the depth of his works. None outside the family knows him now. Gone are the days where men are remembered for their achievements as our lives have already been Macdonaldised. The book on him is

brilliantly written with every single detail of his life. Whoever took efforts for it is to absolutely praised for their wisdom to have portrayed this.

SENTHAMIL KALASALAI-1901-1956

Mr. NA. MU. VENKATASAMY NADAR

First Principal of Karanthai Pallavar College

MOZHI GNAYIRU DEVANEYA PAAYANAR

MU. RA. ARUNACHALA KAVIRAYAR

VEERA RAAGAVA IYANGAR

RAMA SUBRAMANIYA NAVALAR

A. KARMEGA KONAR

M. KANDHASAMY PULAVAR

CHOLAVANDAN A. KANTHASAMYAR

IYAN PERUMAL KONAR

SANGU PULAVAR

KAVIGNER MU. ULAGANAATHAN

A. K. SELVA GANAPATHY

DEEPAM N. PARTHASARTHY (Novelist)

SENTAMIL COLLEGE-1957

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K. ANBALAGAN, *Former M.L.A., Tamil Nadu Assembly.,*

N. THIRU VENKATACHARI, *Commissioner, Labour Welfare Dept. Coimbatore (Rtd)*

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M. ILANGO VAN, *Panchayat Union Councillor.,*

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Dr. I. S.
Dr. S. S.
Dr. S. S.

10/24/2020

FAMILY SERIES #1. With the pretext of the family series... | by Pradeep Kanna | Medium

Sign board at the Fourth Tamil Sangam -Madurai (Senthamil college -Tamil sangam road)

The Watershed moment in the course of family history:

From Konar's biography, we come to know of an event which is a textbook case of Brahmanical oppression. Though Narayana Iyer was impressed with the boy's wit he was not prepared to enrol him in the Tamil Sangam of 35 students where 30 seats were reserved for brahmins alone. Pandithurai Thevar the then Raja of Ramnad had already known the boy. He didn't meet Iyer in person to recommend Konar to be taken in. He had just sent a person with his message. Konar was immediately taken in. This is absolutely a watershed moment in the family history as it was the first entry by a man with a humble background to his way of gaining social capital which went on to produce businessmen, legislators, professors, management grads, government employees like deck of cards which fell one after the other in the upcoming generations. We need persons to look up in life. Konar made sure that he never rusted in one place. He was a rolling stone which gathered no moss. His self initiatives are lessons to be emulated by us. A simple student and a humble professor had no need to be this active in life as he could have very well enjoyed his table desk job happily without much ado. But that was not Konar. He was not prepared to pursue a normal life. What happened next is history now. It is the idealism of few men which bears fruits for generations. He had remained idealistic throughout his life rubbing shoulders with learnt men of his generation. This man didn't even go outside of Madras Presidency. But such was the mileage he was able to give to his surroundings. His part in the formation of Madurai Thiruvalluvar kalagam is well known. This is the very place where Baratiyar submitted his poetry works for public presentation.

Wiki link : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karmegha_Konar

American college Madurai : <https://americancollege.edu.in/departments/language-and-literature/tamil/>

His nationalised works during Kalaignar Chief ministership (no 12):

<http://www.tamilvu.org/library/nationalized/html/index.htm>



10/24/2020

FAMILY SERIES #1. With the pretext of the family series... | by Pradeep Kanna | Medium

A road in Madurai which has been named after him: SENNAPULAVAR KARMEGA KONAR ROAD; Link : <http://www.maduraicorporation.co.in/streetdetails.html>

Vizha Malar of Karmega Konar released by his son -in-law Mr.ATN Nagalingam.

Links

Part 1: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1t3H5Hl6mK_kRIIRrAOq2fXNCU6aYR5b

Part 2: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Sc_QvNicgN3F9qHxDlvlabr3FeSP01Me

Part 3: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hKbHHkChM3IgHTFCZPcX9Z18Y8NtOMEj>

Part 4 : https://drive.google.com/open?id=14c8Xn4XjcKZ83oem_C9BxtTB6LKnh_zL

Konars wife is known to be a silent woman with a face that is extremely tired in the available photos. Maybe her children who are available now can throw some light on her life



Karupayi (rechristened by Konar as Padmasini as he was not Ok with an old name)

.Her elder Sister named "Petha" had served the Ramnad Rajas palace for which she received pension till the end of her life. The pension papers are still available with the family.

The next on-line is my personal favourite in the family history. It is the story of a stellar couple of all times in our family. It is the story of business acumen meeting every possible opportunity. It is the story of an extraordinary unsung hero of the family. Yeah, time took away his name. But he is coming back now in the next series.

Family series 2: <https://medium.com/@pradeepkanna/family-series-2-9ed65fa769e5>

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Pradeep Kanna Jun 12, 2019 · 7 min read

Family series #2

Time is a wonderful thing. It is the absolute gift which one has on earth as it can never be bought with any other precious things. As generations advance, we find personal peace and time diminishing for everyone. This is one peculiar reason for which I would like to be born in the 40s, 50s or 60s. Post liberalisation era has done more harm than good. The peace which the people of 40s enjoyed is something which can be never again created. It was the post-war and post-independence era in Indian history. It was a time when people were valued more than personal pleasures. There was little money in the hands of people. But the happiness of interdependence was always more. Present generation looks like mental retards to go behind the false pleasures of life away from truth and reality. People born after the 70s have a difficult time to cope up with changing times.

A stellar couple of my entire family tree investigation would undoubtedly be ATN. **Nagalingam and Soundaravalli**. These days we find people in absolute haste for everything even if there is no necessity for it. The corporatisation of lives has led us into producing more and more pressure cookers and less of human beings. Leave aside this fact, what troubles me more is the race to reach the top for no reason other than false pride is ruining people's mind high time. Blessed were those people who didn't have the situation to work for unknown masters. Blessed were the people who didn't lose themselves in the loop of monthly fixed wages. But yes, the times in which people find themselves decide their entire life flows. This is the play of fate against which none of us

stands a chance. Vedic yugas Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali seems to hold true when we look back.

ATN NAGALINGAM :

The son of a person who spent the most part of his life in Burma, **Mr. Narayana Konar**. ATN must have epitomised his eldest brother with whom he had spent considerable time in his life. Narayana Konar had to leave for Burma to sustain his family. His wife who outlived him is an interesting lady. She had lived **past 90 years** and had teeth to bite meat till that period. She was the sole caretaker of children and expander of the property with the money her husband brought home every 5 years. Most of the Burma settlers from family has been rice merchants over there. There is also an interesting case of a diamond and precious stone merchant from the family. **Pechi** - ATNs mother had this desire to be in a photo with her husband. As she had never left Tamil Nadu, she also had the dream to visit her husband's workplace. The story goes like this that Narayana Konar had taken her to Burma with a new **padakam** or **thaali** and imported silk, **the Karachi silk** just to fulfil her dream.



Narayana Konar



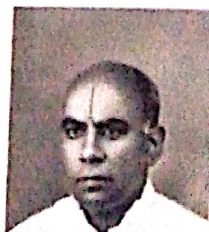
Pechiammal

ATN, as we know him, has been a 4-time SSLC warrior. He had been known to be a muscle man or "**bayalvaan**" with his keen interest towards the brave sport "**kusthi**". His

mother has enriched the boy with pure cow's milk with powdered cashew in it daily. My memories of him are so mild. All I could remember is an old man in his bed in a wide hall in his house. There were lots of photos of National and regional leaders decorating the hall. I do still remember his **sharp eyes**. He has been a man **so soft spoken**. His "bayalvaan" physique had nothing to do with his character. He has always been of God-fearing type. A staunch **Gandhian** he had been. His youth photos seem to portray him in his coat and veshti. But as the "**Swadeshi**" bug has bitten him in his early 20s, he has converted his wardrobe to pure white kadhar clothes. **A kurtha and a veshti** — that was his permanent attire till death. **He neither had a B school education nor a basic college degree for that matter. But you don't need these if you possess natural acumen. A fish need not be taught to swim. That was ATN.** The greatest moments in Human history as a whole are when sheer talent meets opportunity. In ATNs case, his opportunity was his foray into the education business. His father in law has given him all the initial push required. He used to cycle his way to reach his office or business area opposite to **Madurai Meenakshi**

Amman temple. What a lucky man he has been. What is little known of him is his knowledge in English also. He used to proofread every book which is being written by professors to be sold under his banner ATN publishers. He used to make frequent visits to every collector office throughout the state to make his books as preferred syllabus books till 10th standard. He was a man who wore different hats. His negotiating skills should have been impeccable. It's not easy to raise even two kids these days. To raise 7 kids, making them all have a good education and settling them off to good places is no mean feat. He was indeed an unsung hero. A highly principled and able administrator. He was always on the run behind every single opportunity. Even after the recession period in his business, he had tried different ventures one after the other. Yes, his story is not without losses. But the way he has tackled them with his unending spirit till death is something rare so rare these days. A die-hard Congressman, an able businessman, a good father -whats more

"Nallor oruvar iruka avar porutu elorkum peiyum malai"



10/24/2020

ATN NAGALINGAM

Soundaravalli:

Daughter of a Doyen. She was more educated than her husband. A Tamil pandit who passed out of the Madurai Tamil Sangam. I used to call her “**punnu paati**” as she always had a white bandage strapped on her legs whenever I saw her.



Soundaravalli

When I was pondering on my mother's marriage video, I was able to comprehend her energy. Such infectious energy is again a rarity. She had fed whoever came to her home, had raised a lot of persons from the extended family too. I was lucky to be born when she was still alive. As per my childhood stories, she used to take a rickshaw from her home near LDC college to my paati's place back then just to bathe me and to have a check if I am being taken care of well. **MGR, Chandra Babu Naidu, Vaiko and many more politicians have had a taste of her kitchen.** Her storytelling abilities and the way she raised her own kids with care and affection stands to bear her name in the hearts and minds of the next generation. Her home was located in between the famous OCPM and LDC college. She never had to worry of life because she was in the hands of an efficient person ATN. The girl children of the family had their prime time in life with all the home advantage without having to travel to other places for the sake of education. Both LDC and OCPM took care of it. Her expertise in making “**Kola urundai**” was something only she could match. Being compliment to one's spouse is a kind in a marital relationship. She was not only complemented but also competed in such a healthy manner with her husband. The epitome of love and patience was Soundaravalli who was the crisis manager in chief at tough times. There is still a saying going on in the family “**Soundaravallividam vangi sapidadavaregal naavam nanavaragal**” when it

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Family series #2. Time is a wonderful thing. It is the ... | by Pradeep Kanna | Medium

comes to all the help she had done to her family and friends. Commanding women are always the kindest also. Such a kind was Soundaravalli. The best couple of all times in the family. None were like them before. None can ever live a complete life as they did. They might have been defeated by time and unkindness of their surrounding when they suffered. But they always gave their 110 per cent to people who didn't even give 10 per cent back to them.

Long live the couple wherever they are. Let them not leave each other even in the afterworld. The LDC college road will never forget that it once made way for ATN and his lady love.

Whenever I see this video, one way or the other I get connected to the past of the life which they would have lived even if it has no connection of events.

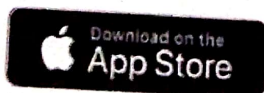
For you to watch : <https://youtu.be/ijUiM775KRI>

Family series 3 : <https://medium.com/@pradeepkanna/family-series-3-6db8eff55c1>

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Family series #3



Pradeep Kanna Aug 6, 2019 · 9 min read

The maternal lineage of my mother is somewhat covered with the available information. This article will strictly revolve around the paternal side of my mother. The characters would be of very wide variety as I was very much convinced to have unearthed these stories. The major part of the story would move in Hanoi, Vietnam. This is no work of fiction but is based on hear-say events. I have tried verifying facts also.

My mother's father was born with a silver spoon. He epitomises his grandfather till date. He is 72 now. There is a reason for it. 'Chithirai Konar' as he was known was who wore different hats throughout his life. He was a man of Cassanova proportions and that's what makes his story the most interesting in the entire family. There is a similar person in my father's side but his story is saved up for later work.

CHITHIRAI KONAR :

Born on the Tamil month of Chithirai the baby boy was named Chithirai Konar. Those were the days when babies born in the month of Chithirai would be put to death as it was a popular belief which astrology suggested that they were signs of bad omen. But Chithirai Konar survived due to the grit of his mother to save him. Born into a poor family, the guy had his share of "Etu pallikoodam/thinnai pallikoodam" alone. He was very strong in mathematics as my grandfather used to say that he was capable of saying the decimal value of any fraction in a whisker of a second. He was **Si.mu.su** Chithirai Konar as his forefathers were, **Sinan; Muthiah and Sundaram** respectively. His paternal roots jump to a place called Kollangudi near Muthoor Vaniyangudi. The guy

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Muthiah had purchased the ancestral house at Keelayoor(Melur Taluk) which is still running in the hands of the family.



Chithirai konar

Days went so usual in his life. At the age of 21, chithirai Konar who was then working as an accountant in a Chettiar shop at Mela Masi veedhi was blessed with an extraordinary opportunity to make it to Hanoi(Vietnam) as part of the Chettiar s team which took over their family business there. Konar had the responsibility of getting his 3 sisters married off to good places. So he was in no situation to miss any opportunity. His first voyage had proved to be a near-death experience as the ship in which he travelled along with others suffered severe cyclones en route. However, destiny made him land safe and sound at Hanoi. Days went on, the young boy picked up the knack of trade as well as credit business from the Chettiars. Also, he had become well versed with the French language as Vietnam was a French colony back then. He used to make visits to his hometown once in 3 years. He was married to Mookayi who was the daughter of a settled family at Kachrampatti.Mookayi looks so charming with English looks in the available photos.However, she was no fan of her man's extramarital affairs.



Mookayi

The owner of the rice shop had passed away without any heir to take over the business at Hanoi. This made the shop fall in the hands of the government which dominated Konar

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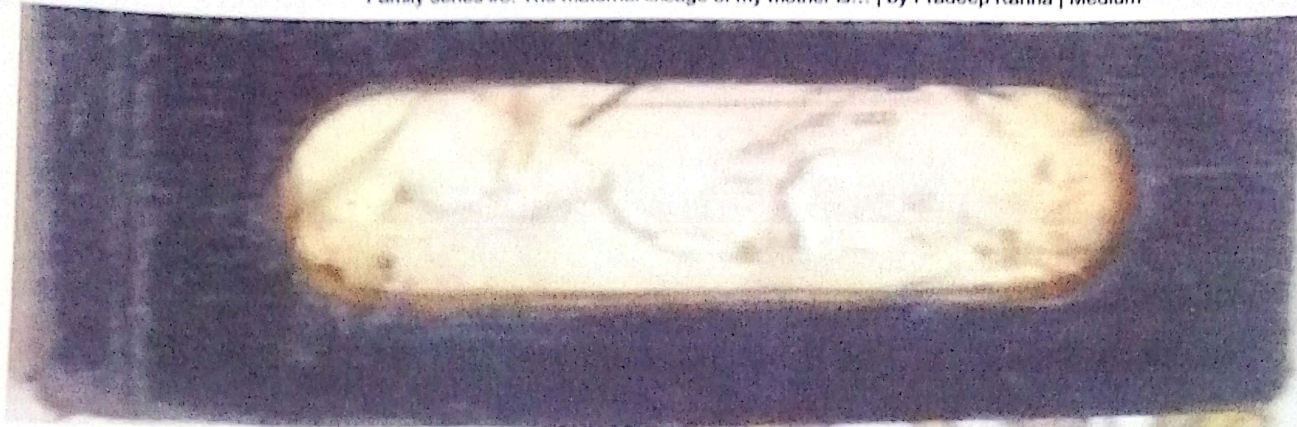
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jobless. He and his friend whom he met at the port of Hanoi (who had a similar story as of Konar but was from the Servar community)decided not to leave to their homeland without trying their own luck at Hanoi. Together they have set up a credit lending arrangement to the french soldiers which made them reach the top so quick as it was a flourishing business back then. Konar had married a girl from Vietnam already and was living with his official second family at Hanoi.





Passport held by Chithirai Konar

REGULATIONS.

1. British passports are issued by the competent authorities throughout the British Empire and by British Diplomatic and Consular officers abroad. Applications should be made in the authorised form obtainable from those authorities.
2. Passports are issued in the United Kingdom at the Passport Office, Westminster, London, S.W.1, and at the Branch Passport Office, 36, Dale Street, Liverpool. Passports cannot be issued or renewed at the Passport Office for persons not at the time being in the United Kingdom. Passports should not be sent abroad by post.
3. Residents in the Irish Free State should make their applications to the Passport Department, Ministry of External Affairs, Dublin. In the British Dominions or Colonies applications should be made to the local authorities.
4. Passports are available for five years, in the first instance, unless otherwise stated. They may be renewed from time to time for further consecutive periods of one to five years from the date of expiry, provided the total period of validity of ten years from the original date of issue is not exceeded. The fee for each year of renewal is 2s.
5. British passports are not available beyond ten years from the original date of issue. Thereafter, or if at any time the passport contains no further space for visas, a new passport must be obtained.
 - (a) A passport including particulars of the holder's wife is not available for the wife's use when travelling alone.
 - (b) Children who have reached the age of sixteen years require separate passports.
6. The passport is only available for travel to the countries named on page 4, but may be endorsed for additional countries (fee 2s.). The possession of a passport so endorsed does not, however, exempt the holder from compliance with any immigration regulations in force in British or foreign countries or from the necessity of obtaining a visa where required.

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available for travelling to territory under British mandate, not, however, including Palestine or Transjordan, for which the passport must be specially endorsed, or the Aden Protectorate, which both an endorsement and a visa are required.

8. British subjects permanently resident abroad should in cases register their names and addresses at the nearest British Consulate. Such registration constitutes the most ready means of emergency or difficulty of enabling all proper assistance or advice to be afforded them. Changes of address or departure from the country of residence should also be notified to the Consulate.

CAUTION.

This passport is a valuable document. It should not be allowed to pass into the possession of an unauthorized person. If the fact and circumstances of the immediately reported to the London, or the nearest British Consulate or to the nearest police. New passports can only be issued in such cases after exhaustive

(SS10) Hw. G.939

PASSPORT.

By His Majesty's
Consul General
at
Saigon

These are to request and require in the name of His Majesty all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance and to afford him every assistance and protection of which he may stand in need.

Given at the
British Consulate-
General, Saigon

the 28th day

of June 1937



This Passport contains
32 pages.
Ce passeport contient
32 pages.

PASSPORT. PASSEPORT.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND.
ROYAUME-UNI DE GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET D'IRLANDE DU NORD.

No. of PASSPORT
No. du PASSEPORT

C. 41464

NAME OF BEARER
NOM DU TITULAIRE

CHITTIRAN

ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE
(Passport number)
ACCOMPAGNE DE SA FEMME
(pass)

NATION
NATIONALITE

Br



Scanned with OKEN Scanner

COUNTRIES FOR WHICH THIS PASSPORT IS VALID
PAYS POUR LESQUELS CE PASSEPORT EST VALABLE

British India and Straits
Settlements, French
Indochina

RENEWALS
RENOUVELLEMENTS

The validity of this passport expires :
Ce passeport expire le :

Twenty-eighth June 1942

unless renewed.
à moins de renouvellement.

H. B. M. Consulate General,
SAIGON,
COCHIN CHINA.

OBSERVATIONS

Bearer has previously
travelled on Pondicherry
passport N° 8/1926 issued
27th December 1926, can
called.

2

DESCRIPTION
SIGNALEMENT

Bank
Accountant

Wife-Femme

Place and date
of birth

Keelajin
Madurai Dt.
India, 1887

Residence
Keelajin

Height
5 ft. 3 in.

Color of eyes
black

Color of hair
black to gray

Facial features
mole near
left eye

3

PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER

WIFE FEMME

CHILDREN - ENFANTS

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NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	SEX	(photo)
...

VISA

Holder returning to
India via Singapore.
Singapore 2nd September 1937

British Consulate

an agent / pan. Matras vishay
6474 + 3/9/37

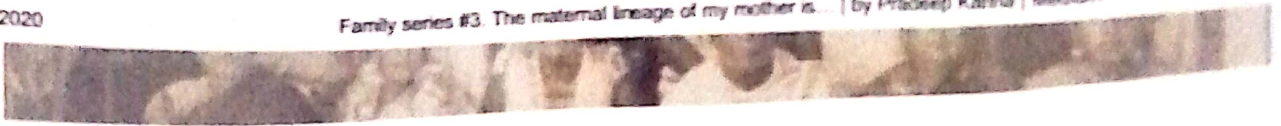
Consulate

VISA

VISA

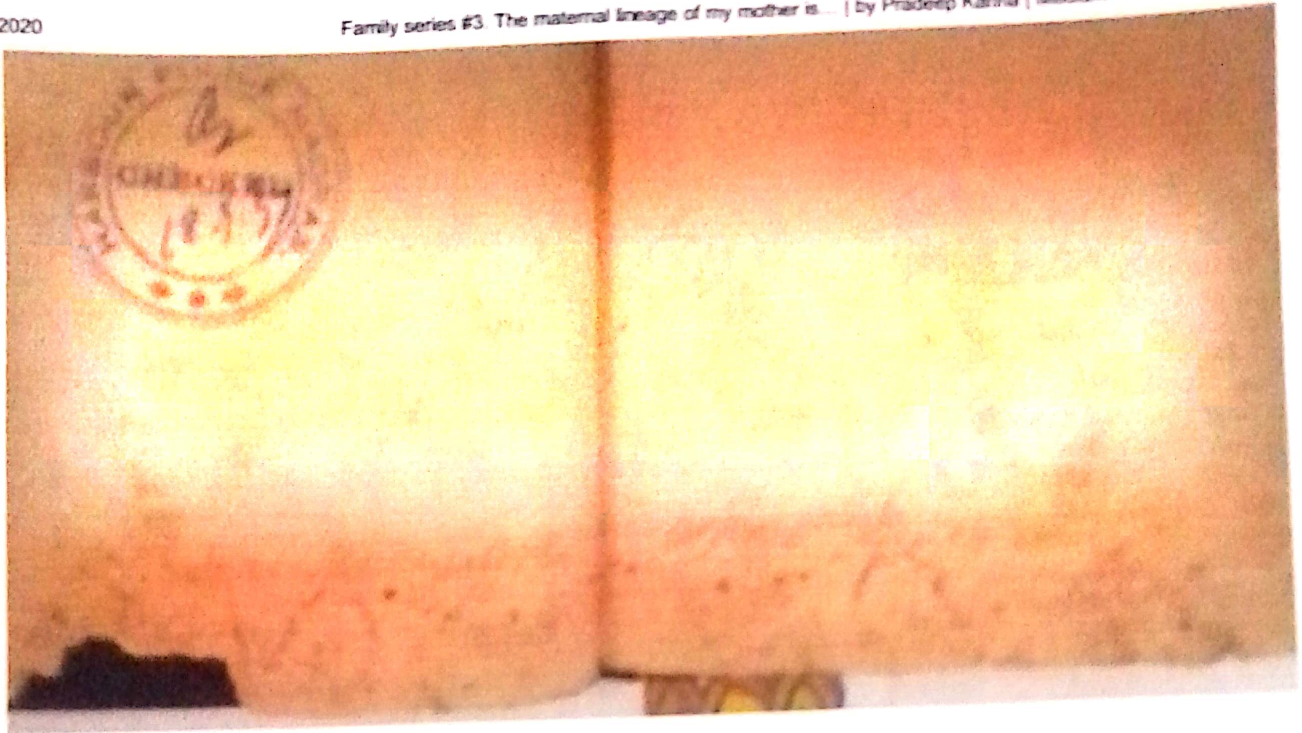
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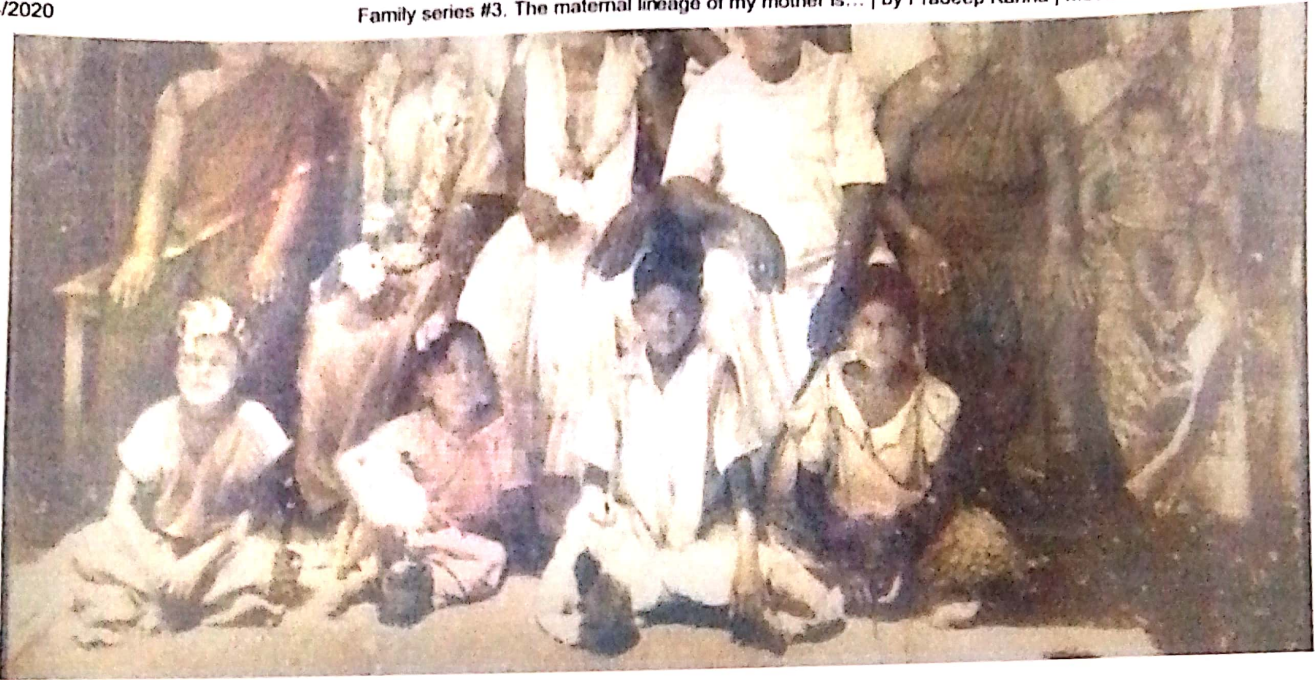
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There is an interesting story on how Konar escaped the arrest for his failure of payment of income tax dues(due to draconian laws). He had made friends with the French governor's wife and she had helped him to get away safely back home when the world war started by 1939. He had returned to India permanently by 1945 leaving back his large amassed wealth and second family at Hanoi. On reaching Keelayoor, Konar was so quick in investing the money he had. The people at agraahams around the Meenakshi Amman temple had feared that the Japanese invasion that had started in the northeastern parts of India would reach Madurai. So they were in deadly haste to sell off the property they owned and leave to distant places. Konar cashed in on this adversity and purchased four residential buildings in Vakkil pudu theru , Lakshmiipathy agraaharam and mela maasi veedhi. The guy should surely have had some quick wit to do these back in the 40s. His wife outlived him. He had died at around 73 years of age.



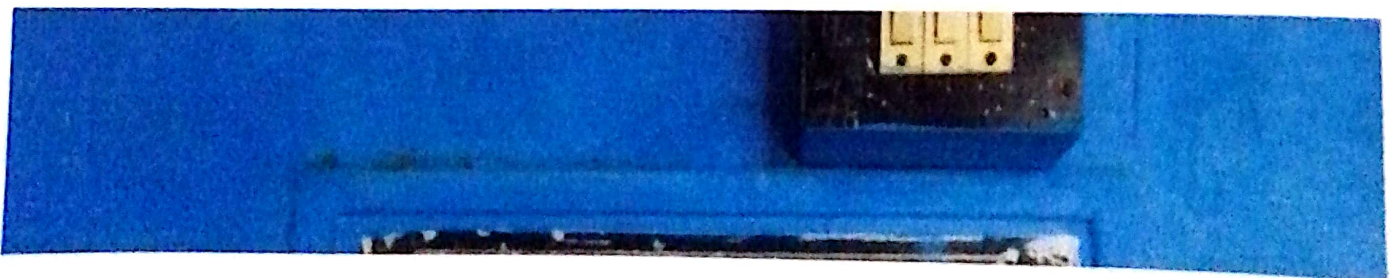


60th birthday function

His photos with his majestic coat and boot look with his friends in Hanoi will heavily contradict his lean look in his Sathyartha purthi function (60th birthday). Diabetes had caught hold of him. He is found to wear a leather strap watch with the dial on the reverse. A coffee maniac, he had been. He had instilled the habit of coffee drinking in the family. Back then, one had to purchase roasted coffee nuts and hand grind them to make coffee. This habit still runs in the family as every single person is acquainted with two times a day coffee (that too only filter) till date. It has become much more of a family habit by itself.

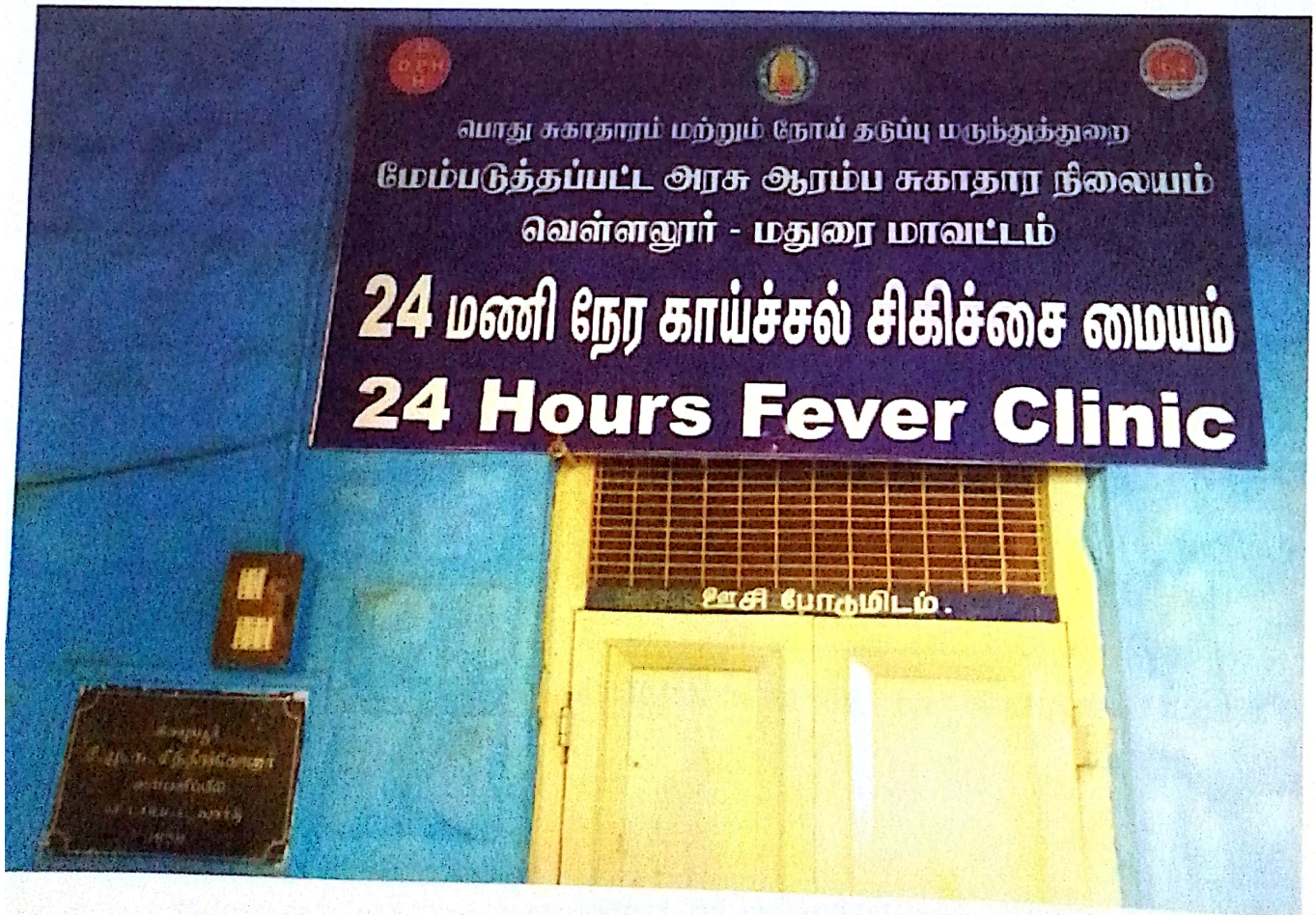
PHILANTHROPY:

I was amazed at his scale of giving back to his surroundings. He had always been a famous figure in and around Melur taluk as he was always ready to help whoever approached him. He was known to operate his bank account in Madurai back in the 30s/40s itself. He was in good terms with the Madura collector as the collector had a half french and half British ancestry. The collector was always pleased to grant his passport whenever he went up to his office as the collector was able to talk in French with him.





Konar had sold one of his houses near the Meenakshi temple to fund a hospital building construction at Kattasolaipatti (near keelayoor) where he had married off his daughter. The primary health centre ward still stands to bear his name in it.





Konar had diverted a part of his wealth for continuous charity which he insisted should be continued even after his times. It started in 1959 and it is continuing to date with minor changes in the targeted beneficiaries. Till 2009 the family had continued it in Keelayoor itself for which a resthouse /Chatham was built in his land. Now the male progeny of my grandfather is continuing the practice of feeding people (3 times a day throughout the week back then) on the auspicious day of Chitra proposal. So it is an uninterrupted service which the family does to feed people for the past 60 years which is a magnificent feat. Whatever be the vagaries in personal lives, the family is continuing without fail with the responsibility taken forward year after year by the male descendants.

Chithirai Konar was a man whose life took unexpected twists and turns at every point. He was always receptive to change and he struck back logically. He was indeed a rare breed of person who cashed in every single opportunity that was available to him. Every man has some weak area as no one is perfect. Konar was a curious person with a constant drive for new relationships which cost him bad. He had an unhappy family life as there was constant chaos in one way or the other. But that can never take away his glory which he carved out for himself.

An interesting connect which I got through this man recently:

<https://medium.com/@pradeepkanna/my-tryst-with-manohar-devadoss-8637eaa3ef7f>

Sundara Konar:

Born with a golden spoon and a very handsome physique, the young boy had his early schooling in the same school at Kumbakonam where Srinivasa Ramanujam had his too. It was called the Indian Cambridge because of the association of the prodigy. It is located in the Besant road of Kumbakonam(Town High school). He had not stayed in a hostel but took up lodging in his father's business partners house. He had learnt Sanskrit as well as typewriting during his time. After primary education there, he joined the UCH school Madurai and then enrolled at the American college Madurai but ended up unsuccessful in completing it.

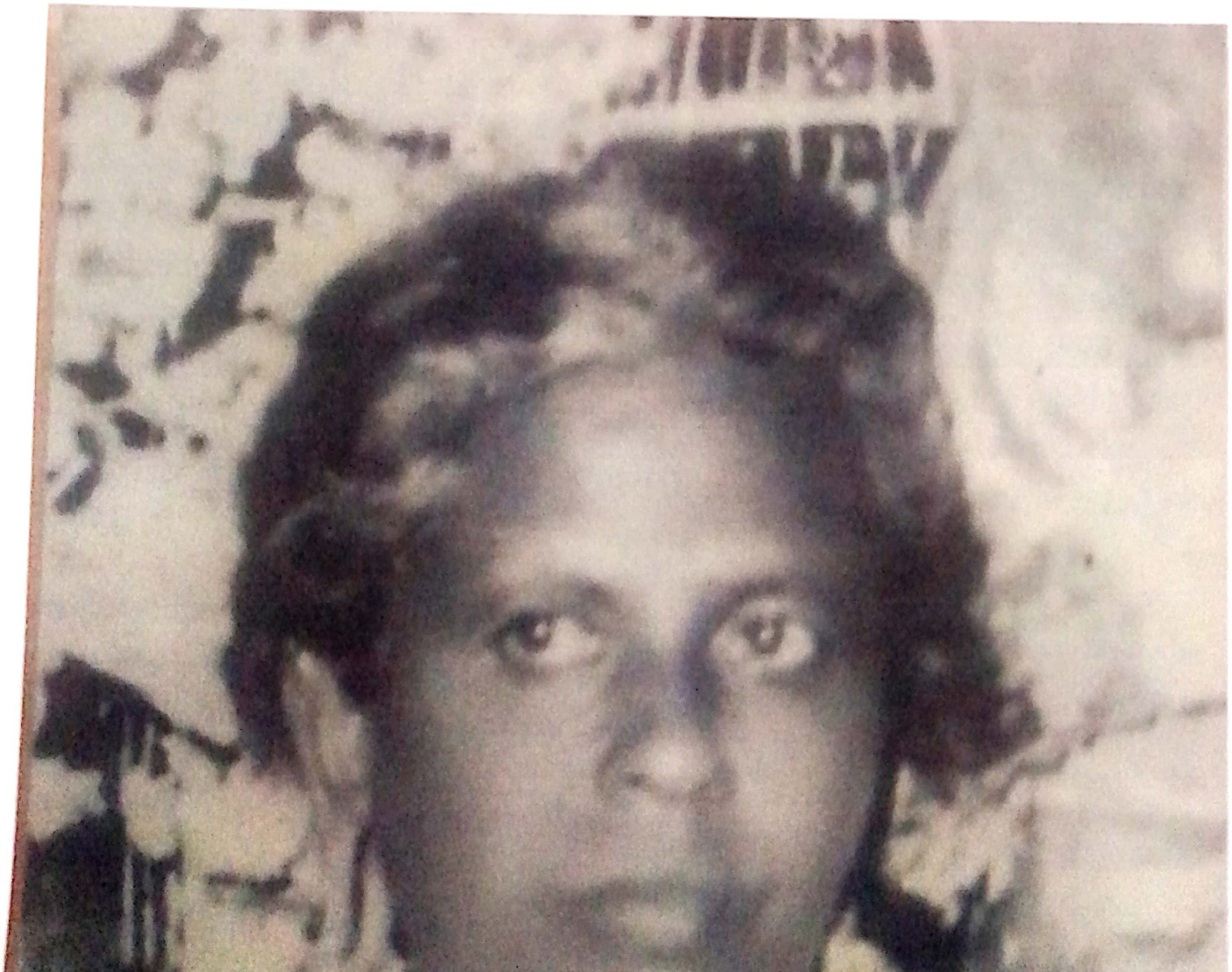


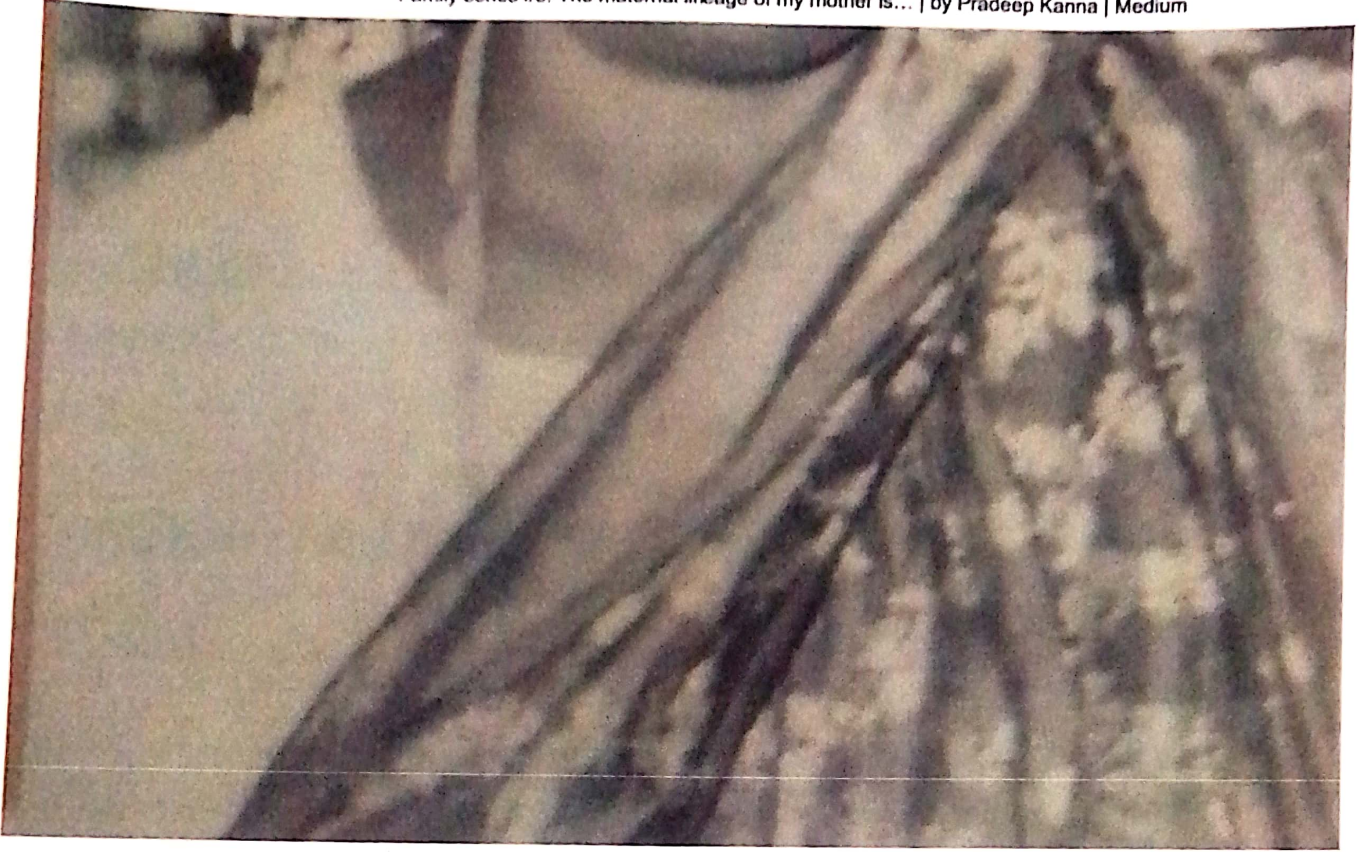
Sundara Konar

He was forced to marry according to his father's whim which ruined his entire life. The unhappy marriage ended with his remarriage with another girl. Two children (including my maternal grandfather)were born from the first and one from his second marriage. He died at a reasonably young age.

Ammakutty :

A poor lady born to Chithirai Konar's sister had a life full of tragedies. Having lost her parents at a young age, she took refuge at Keelayoor in her uncle's house. Having seen poverty at a very young age she turned out to be a matured woman. She married Sundara Rajan, Konar's son without a word when the marriage was fixed. Sundaram was not prepared to marry the dark-skinned amma kutty. But he had heavily mistaken her character which he failed to appreciate till death. Amma Kutty the brave lady was always keen on raising her kids single-handed and managing day to day affairs after Chithirai konars death in 1961. She was taking care of managerial activities ranging from rent collection to agriculture. A sound lady with a heart of a warrior she married off her son to a good alliance which she was able to find neglecting her husband altogether as he was not fit to do any good on his own. Her daughter was settled off when Konar was still alive. She had transferred all her culinary skills to her daughter-in-law, had single-handedly managed every aspect of life during her son's time also.





Ammakutty

My mother and her two sisters have learnt to be bold and competitive just because of the example set by ammakutty who stood against whatever odds life posed at her. All her photos reveal a curious lady with stunning eyes. One can never miss her sharp eyes. Even during her last times, she had not disturbed any and had maintained her dignity till death. It's not easy for a woman to live such a challenging life- poverty at a young age, departed parents, failed marriage, constant fear of losing dignity and lots more physical and mental stress. Ammakutty not alone challenged her situations and posed a tough fight till the end but also transferred it to the next generation of girls to be women in the family.

A colourful or glamorous life was not available to her. But she made sure that she never lost any battle. And that makes Ammakutty (Udayammal) so special and my personal favourite in this series of my family !!!

Family series 4 : <https://medium.com/@pradeepkanna/family-series-4-1dbafc8d809a>

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Family series #4



Pradeep Kanna Aug 14, 2019 · 9 min read

I have tried providing continuity to the articles. You will find links to the next series at the end of each article.

As my maternal link explorations are over to a decent level, let's move on to the traces of my paternal side. This article will be about the male line backwards(father's father, his father etc). My father was born in Madurai Mission hospital which is (was) a very famous Christian missionary run hospital. When tracing the male lineage, I was able to find little facts and evidence alone as my father belongs to Rajapalayam (a town in Virudhunagar district). **Photos or other luxuries which Madurai was able to enjoy was not available to it. So I was able to retrieve photos from two generations alone.** I had a lot of people to tell stories from the past on my mother's side. But it was a huge void in my father's side as both of my grandparents and people of their generation passed away way earlier before I could be a man on my feet. But my grandfather is an interesting person. An economics graduate in the 50s, **he left behind a written material titled "My family history " which he made me read aloud when I was a kid. Little I understood from it back then.** But after his death when we were clearing out his things, I found a few precious things for life. The family history notebook (blog of his times haha), his college slam book (of the 50s) and a few books with his paper cuttings in it. My grandmother was dead even before I was born. But he had left perfect detailing on every single character with a heavy foresight or even prophesying that I would dig all these in 2019(haha). He left us around 2008. So it has been a solid 10 years after his departure, but the guy still takes me to school with his writings.



Niraikula Konar :

His name means "Filled well". He was my **great grandfather** and a doyen of the entire family. His father was Sangu Konar whose father was Madappa Konar as per written records. He had three sisters namely, solamalai amma, ayyanar amma and another lady who was married off to a relative. He was married at the age of 18. He is a textbook example of "Triumph of labour" as my grandfather used to say. Rajapalayam was a stronghold of Rajus who shifted from Andhra Pradesh to serve the Madurai King Thirumalai Nayak. They were war generals and were given land to settle down near the then union of Madurai (which included virudhunagar). Palayam of the Rajus became 'Rajapalayam'. Niraikula Konar's father had his roots in Puliyankudi (near Tirunelveli) where the family once held lands. There is an 'Ayyanar temple' to which every male descendant of the family continues to go till date once a year for ceremonial purposes. Sangu Konar had a small piece of a plot where he had his cow shed long with an attached home at Pethaya Pillai street in Rajapalayam. After his times, Niraikula Konar expanded the house and went on to buy the entire street from Pethaya Pillai. The house has seen 5 generations (including me) and it is still kept as joint property. Whatever the vagaries life brings, the family is keen to hold the house as it is more of an emotional asset.



Niraikula Konar

Niraikula Konar who didn't have any formal education didn't show any signs of maturity till he became a man. He was agricultural labour whose hard work had no limits. He started at zero during his initial days. He was 6 feet in height and had a strong body built. A word of the mouth story runs in the family that he used to chase off thieves when transporting agricultural produce with a coconut showeled in a cloth which he used as a weapon. He used to make it to the nearby field on his bullock cart. Stingy to the core, he made money which he kept with a few trusted Rajus whom when not able to

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return the money on demand would write off a piece of their land in his name. Those were the days when land by itself had no value and cash flow was very meagre. This way Niraikulam amassed a huge bounty. He never enjoyed the fruits of his labour as he was a bit workaholic. He used to make three trips back and forth to the field. He also used to draw water from wells himself and water the crops and trees. He never feared hard work as it was his very nature. He used to take the goods to the nearby market to sell. If he did not get his desired price for his agricultural produce, he used to bury them in his land to serve the purpose of organic manure. Such orthodox was his grit. When he brought the entire street from Pethaya Pillai with four houses, it was his ultimate peak period. He was unfortunate with his first marriage as his first wife Irulayi was impotent. Married at 18, he remarried 18 years later (36). He provided permanent alimony to his first wife legally without a divorce. The second marriage was with Shanmugam mammal .5 children were born to the couple of which my grandfather was the first male kid. Shanmugam ammam died shortly after delivering the 5th kid.



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Rupee notes and coins holder (in tamil suruku pai)used by him

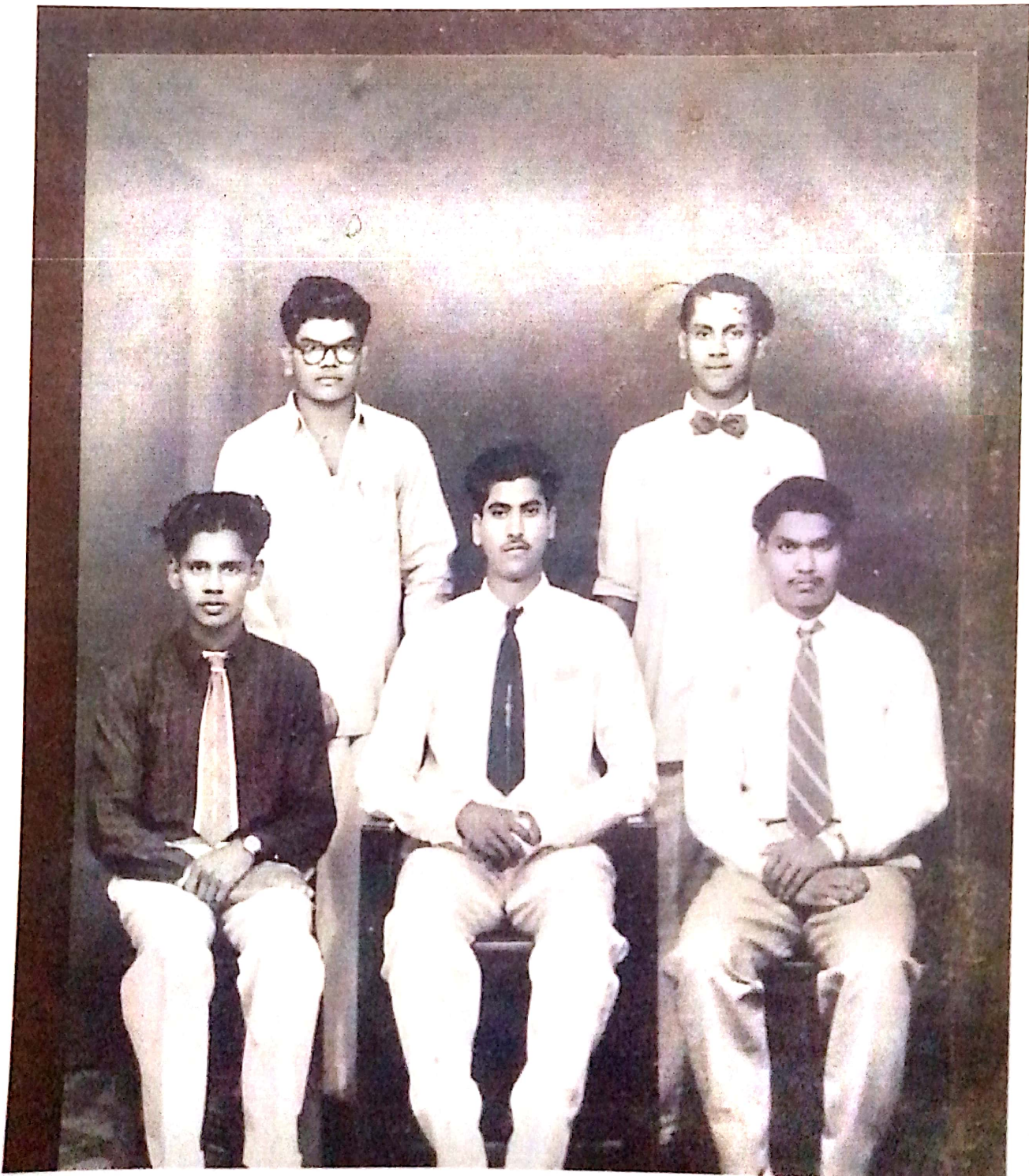
5 kids one after the other within 7 years forced him to remarry for the third time (Chellamal). The third marriage yielded a girl child and the total count went up to 6 children. The third wife acted as the mother to every kid in the family. He also had an affair with an agricultural worker who worked under him. But he never hid any single fact. The woman received a legal pension from him till her death (she died much later than him). Niraikulam -the man was well known in philanthropy in Rajapalayam. He had donated large sum towards educational institutions in Madurai. He made his first son (my grandfather) as a graduate -the very first in his entire town. He settled off his kids in good places. The street still has all the houses which he bought. It is in the hands of the extended family and had suffered lots of partitions. But the name Niraikulam still resonates in the town as his hard-working nature not only bore fruits to him alone but for generations of his family members to come.

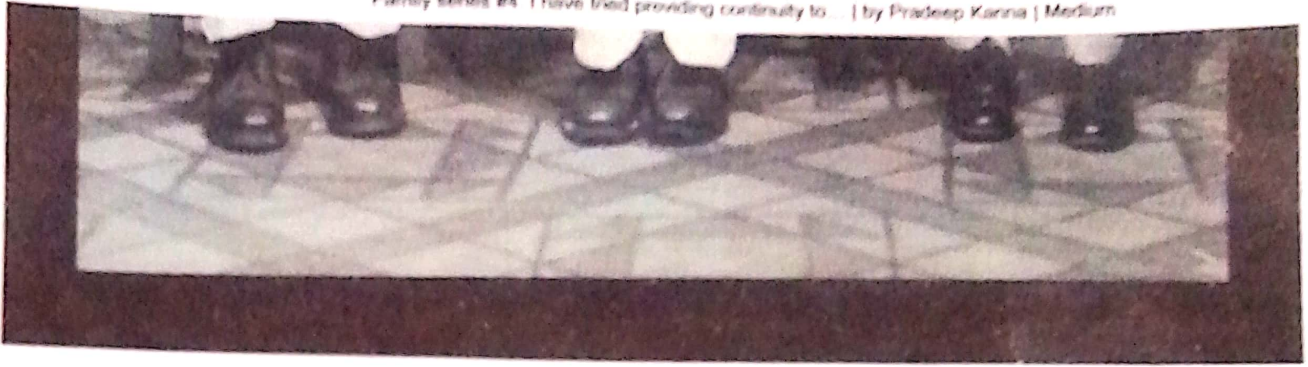
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Balakrishnan :

Born with a silver spoon, the guy was prepared to have a settled life. Having lost his mother, even before he could gain self-consciousness of the world, the boy had good acumen in academics. His father wanted the boy to graduate from a good college. Little he had known of the academic field back in the fifties, he sent the boy to **St.Xaviers college Tirunelveli**.





The one with glasses

He graduated in B.A Economics with a good score. It was the golden times of the start of Dravidian nationalism. He had changed his name to "ILANG KANNAN" which is a pure tamil version of Balakrishnan. I got to retrieve his slam book after his death. My memories of him are so close to heart. I share my physique as well as peculiar family ears. He was so fond of me as my nose and eardrum (pinna) as it would exactly look like him (also my father). Whenever I visit our ancestral house, a sugar-coated cream bun (his choice of snack for me) will be waiting for my arrival. He would keep it near his wardrobe and would ask me to fetch it for a small surprise. He continued this till his death. Whenever I am with him, he would ask me to button him up. He would be pleased by my patience to button his shirt every single time when we went out together. There is also a hotel called 'Ramraj' at Puliyangudi where we would have our breakfast en route to our ancestral temple (this continues even today). He would watch me with a cautious eye. That hotel is an emotional connection to the entire family. His choice of clothes was always a white shirt and a white dhoti.





During his marriage

He had people around him always whom he used to command to fetch things for him. He was very soft-spoken and had a good sense of humour. The Hindu newspaper was a rarity those days. He was a disciplined newspaper reader until death. Whenever I was with him, rarely we speak with each other. There would be pin-drop silence when I am with him. He quit his job as senior inspector general at Ramnad government office as he was a man who sought pleasure alone. He took little care of his sons and daughter. He was not a responsible kind of father. His lax attitude cost the next generation bad.





Balki as I used to call him in his 60s.

0 கச்சாப் விவசாயிகள் சங்கம், இராஜபாளையம்.
0 வருடாந்தர விழா 23.3.1981



He ran a coconut business in Rajapalayam. He had printed a visiting card too for that. The card would be in a plain style (yet too good). The spelling coconut would be cocoanut which again is an old fashioned way of writing it.

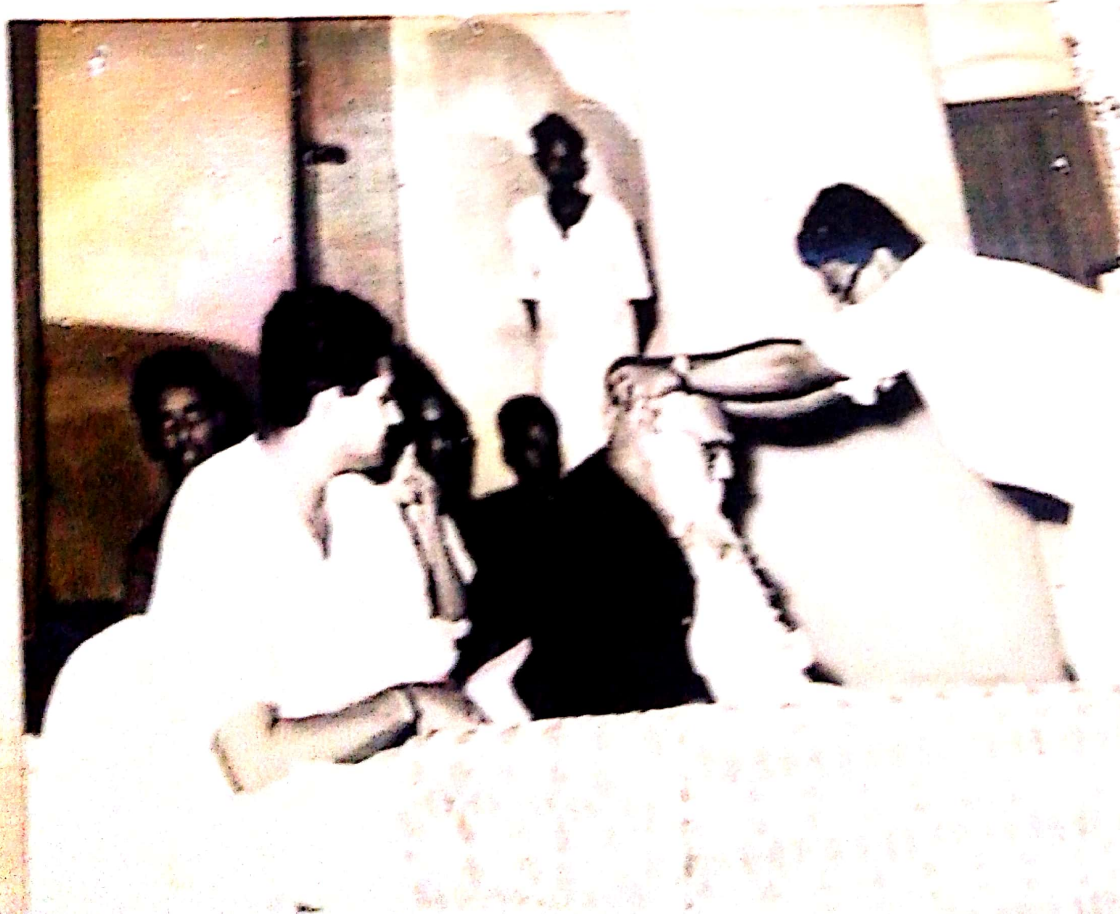
N. BALAKRISHNAN, B. A.,

COCONUT MERCHANT,

27, Atok Talkies Road,
RAJAPALAYAM.

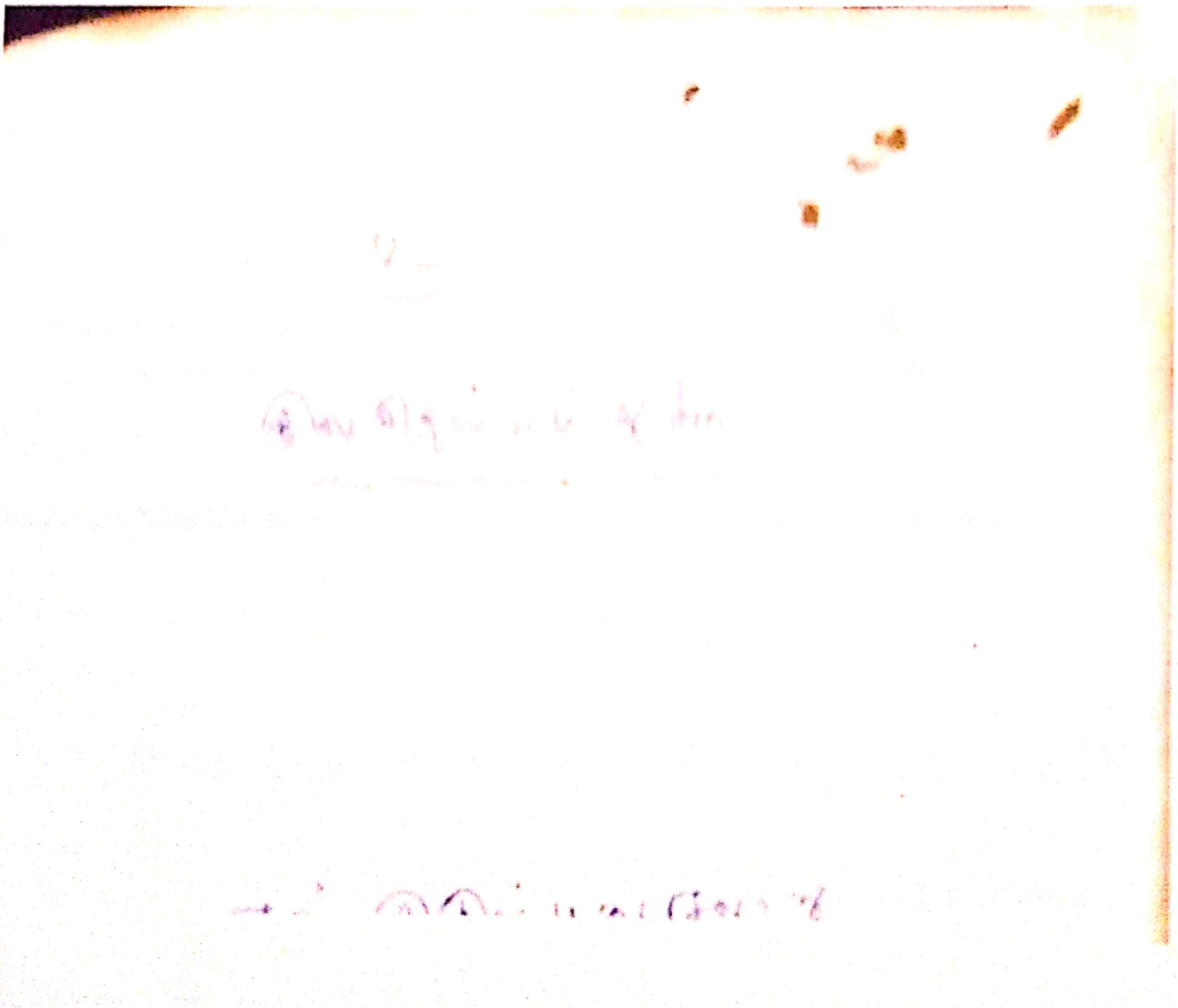
He was the head of coconut merchants association also. A lax educated person who didn't exploit his talents to the fullest would be my grandfather. But my relationship with him had no complaints.

11-4-65 அன்று ஓத்தம்பிச் சங்கக்கூட்டத்தில் சாற்பெருநிஸ்தர் மருகை தந்த
தந்தை பெரியார் ஈ. வெ. டி. அவர்களுக்கு
தலைவர் நி. இரங்கண்ணன் B. A. மணி மரீன துட்டம் போது எடுத்தபடி





To be true he loved me more as I was the first male progeny. A male chauvinist who didn't treat his wife good would also be him. But no one is perfect right. He had the habit of taking notes of good quotes in his diary. I have saved up his paper cuttings also. He was a clean man with clean habits. But his final years were not so smooth. **There are only three persons on this entire planet who would call me by my last name 'Kanna'. He was the first among the three. He had insisted to add Kanna to Pradeep. So whenever I get called by the name 'Kanna', he never forgets to flash in my mind.**



My Family History

He is the reason for my entire work on family history as he had written his version in a small note to be found and used with wisdom by me after his death. The guy has left a little bit of him in me for sure.

2

இந்த உரையின் மூலம் நான் நன்கு
புரிந்து, சில நிகழ்வுகளை எழுதினேன்.

എൻ ജാർജ്ജ് ഹോൺ

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എൻ ജാർജ്ജ് ഹോൺ

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His calmness in tough situations (actually like Rome's ruler Nero which cost the family bad at times) is something I'm trying to emulate in safe proportions. My love for him will