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His hostel business crashed. Now, Kamaraj promotes milk ATM

By Dheepthi O. J.

With his hostel business turning dull, C.Kamaraj, a hostel owner based in Mylapore has started selling milk to run his family.

For the past 10 years, Kamaraj has been running hostels for both men and women at the city's IT hub Perungudi and Thoraipakkam.



a dairy farm in Arakonam asked him to sell cow's milk through 'Milk ATM', an automatic milk vending machine.

Soon Kamaraj researched online. And as he found the business 'hassle-free', he bought the Milk ATM from Coimbatore at the cost of Rs. 3 lakhs.

"The machine has been in use in Salem, Coimbatore and other parts of India.

But this is the first time, we have brought it to Chennai," he says.

A week ago, Kamaraj began selling milk from his home in New Street, Mylapore.

"Now, every day at 6.30 am, my friend sends pure cow's milk from his farm in Arakonam. We then fill it in the 300-litre capacity Milk ATM and starts sales.

"Till now, he says 25 litres are being sold daily. "We hope business would gradually increase."

Kamaraj says the machine is pre-programmed to function as a refrigerator. "Its operation is the same as the ATM." Explaining this, he says, "When a person inserts Rs 10/ Rs 20 note in the machine's slots, it dispenses corresponding amount of milk. Customers can themselves operate and collect milk in their vessels."

One can also pay Rs 50 and get a 'smart card'. Thereafter they can recharge it with say Rs 500, and use it to buy milk from the machine, he says.

A litre of his cow's milk is priced at Rs 64.

Kamaraj promises to provide fresh milk 24/7 at his house at 61A/84, New Street, Mylapore. Ph: 9789891111/6369700265.

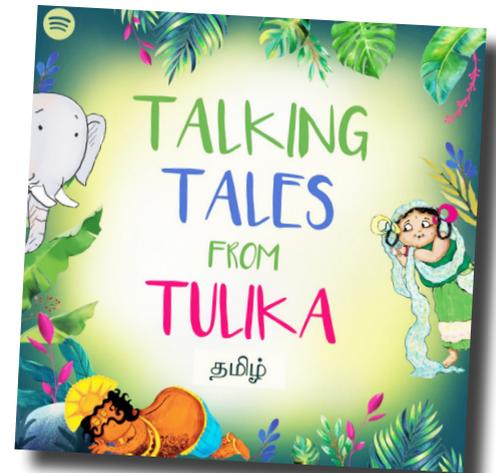


However, following the lockdown, as all his hostel's occupants, mostly IT goers were asked to 'work from home', the hostels became empty.

Consequently, Kamaraj lost his business completely and had to close down his hostels.

Says Kamaraj, "Now, although I have two sons who are working in IT, I cannot depend on them for my daily needs. So I was mulling over the idea of starting a new business, for the past few months."

That is when, Kamaraj's friend, who runs



Popular stories of Tulika Publishers now podcasts on Spotify

Popular stories of Alwarpet based Tulika Publishers are now available as podcasts on Spotify.

Recently, in an effort to bring out audio content for children, the online music streaming platform collaborated with the well-known children's book publishing house to create these podcasts.

Called 'Talking Tales From Tulika', the Spotify original, produced by Asiaville, is available in three languages, English, Hindi, and Tamil.

Gajapati Kulapati Series, Chhote Pashu Bade Pashu (Hindi), Ullaasa Unavu (Tamil) are some Tulika's titles, that one can listen on Spotify now.

Reads a note from Spotify, 'This podcast has storytelling at its heart. It spans across a variety of themes, including friendship, acceptance, loyalty, food, fun and more. Repetitive sounds are also used to tell a tale.'

A new podcast featuring a variety of Tulika's stories will be released every Friday.

Available for children aged 2 and above. For details email Tulika at reachus@tulikabooks.com

San Thome resident sells home-made body soaps, lip balms and foot soaks



Bath Konzeptz is a range of sulfate-free handmade body soaps. Started as a hobby by San Thome based Tasneem Kutubuddin, they are made to order and customised to suit the skin specifics and needs of the clients.

These are made from pure essential oils and high quality fragrance oils and Tasneem says they are safe and soothing on the skin.

Varieties include lacto calamine, honey, aloe vera, activated charcoal, goats' milk, loofah soaps and plain glycerine soaps. These can also be made in different combinations, says Tasneem.

Lip balms, foot soaks and oil serums and gift hampers are also made on request. Prices start from Rs. 50 onwards depending on the weight and ingredients used. Delivery is charged extra.

WhatsApp 9841610456 for more information and details.

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Jottings

VINCENT D'SOUZA

Catholics around the world celebrate the birth of Mother Mary on Sept.8. And in two zones in the country, this celebration has, over a century and more, taken a character of its own, and is very local.

The Annai Vailankanni festival, first originated in Nagapattinam out of local legends and beliefs.

In coastal Karnataka, home to a large number of Catholics, the festival is popular and known as Monthi Saibeen Fesh.

This is a festival devised by European missionaries; they married the popular Indian, local practices and seasons of life of this time of the year and Church beliefs to create a celebration of devotion and togetherness.

It also incorporates a harvest thanksgiving strand though the paddy and sugarcane harvest happens late October.

On each of the 8 /10 days leading to Monthi Fesh, families gather flowers from their garden, bring them to the church, and after prayer and singing, offer these flowers to a statue of baby Mary, which has for ages been seen in European newborn clothes.

Feast day is grand, starting with community processions to church (music band in attendance!), flower offerings, special Mass, community snacks and gifting of the blessed sheaves of new paddy and sugarcane.

When families get back home, it is a busy morning - cooking the grand lunch. Once the table is set, the rice from the new paddy is ground into a powder and mixed in a thin payasam or sweetened milk and partaken after a round of prayers at the family altar. Then the family sits down for a special lunch. Symbolic of saying thanks for a good harvest and to Mother Mary.

The all-vegetarian meal - 7/9/11/13 different vegetable dishes - is served on large banana leaves; much like the Onam sadya. Recently, I learnt that Catholics of north coastal Karnataka also serve fresh seafood!

It is a day when the extended family members of a home make it a point to sit together for lunch.

Monthi Fesh is unique and ingrained in the Catholics of that part of India. Every time I have had the occasion to be part of the festival I realized how well communities adapt and absorb local customs, practices, beliefs and legends and practice them harmoniously. And, continue to preserve what some of us may call 'colonial' hangovers.

Churches open but Holy Mass yet to resume because pandemic regulations affect religious rites

Churches in the Mylapore zone opened their doors earlier this week after the state relaxed regulations during pandemic time.

But priests and the community in parishes that fall under the San Thome Vicariate (zone) of Madras-Mylapore diocese for Catholics have not decided yet on the celebration of Holy Mass, which is said daily in all churches.

This is because among the strict regulations applicable to churches, besides sanitisation and social distancing a priest at Mass cannot offer Communion to people (which is considered to be symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus). This has been curtailed to avoid close contact between people in the church.

"The Communion is at the core of Holy Mass and is sacred too and when the regulation says this cannot be carried out then there is no relevance of saying a Mass without it," said a assistant parish priest at a church in R. A. Puram on Friday.

This means that besides daily Mass, Sunday Mass will also not be celebrated in local churches. However, the issues



are being discussed at the highest level in the diocese and priests hope that solutions will come by soon.

However, all churches are now kept open in the morning and in the evening. This allows for people to come by and pray by themselves. They are asked not to touch books, statues and to wear masks.

Priests, as per their religious rules must say Holy Mass daily and many of them say Mass in the morning in the sacristy (the room behind the altar section of a church).

The community has been taking part in Holy Mass said at some city churches and webcast by websites or broadcast on some religious TV channels. "We have been attending Mass since April online and will have to continue to do so now," said a church-goer of the parish of San Thome Cathedral.

Adyar Poonga, a birdwatchers delight even from its fringes

Report, photo by Fabiola Jacob

If there is one large space of nature that can relax a tired mind then it is the Adyar Poonga – the wetland eco-park in south R. A. Puram, just off the Mandavelipakkam neighbourhood.

In the mornings, this place looks serene and calm from the San Thome Causeway side on Dr. DGS Dhinakaran Salai.

Though the park is closed to visitors right now (visiting is regulated even in ordinary times, there is no unregulated entry to this campus), one can have a clear view of many birds which have made this place their home.

Pelicans, painted storks and other water birds look for feed in the still, clear waters.



Early mornings and late evenings are the best time to go birdwatching from the fringes of the Poonga.

Three-wheelers, bins to be used by new garbage clearance agency stocked in R. A. Puram

A whole lot of brand new garbage collection three-wheeler vans are now seen parked inside the Chennai Corporation playground end off Brodies Castle Road, near the Jesus calls campus.

They are parked at one end of the ground and have been here for some days now.

Also, stocked here are small waste collection roller bins – hundreds of them kept under tarpaulins.

Obviously, these are the new utilities that will be employed by the new waste clearance agency that has been chosen by Chennai Corporation to work in select zones of the city, and this includes Teynampet zone under which much of the Mylapore neighbourhood falls.

The contract of the previous agency got over long ago but a stop-gap service has been active all along. However, only battered waste bins and other equipment are now seen at street corners inside colonies while new lorries are engaged by GCC to clear garbage.



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Selling keerai helped me manage the lockdown without taking loans, says this hawker

By Dheepthi O. J.

“Selling keerai helped me sail through the lockdown, without taking loans,” says Ezhilarasi, a keerai hawker, sitting beside her cart at South Mada Street, Mylapore opposite Surya Sweets store here.

The 30 something old sells a range of keerai varieties including mudakathan, murungai, keezhanelli, and thuthuvalai.

Says Ezhilarasi, “Several vegetable vendors and businessmen I know have been taking loans to continue their business during lockdown.”

“But luckily, as I sell only keerai, I have managed to run my family, through the lockdown, without taking any loans.”

This is because “Keerai is something people buy at all times. So I get an average of Rs 200 or Rs 300 a day,

which is sufficient to buy daily bread for my family.” And this she says was the case even during lockdown.

The resident of Mandaveli has two children, one boy in class 10 and a girl in class 7. By saving small amounts of money from her daily earnings, she says she has also paid the school fees for them.

“Both my children study in government aided schools. So we had to pay school fees, which was Rs 8000 for each.

I kept saving Rs 50 from keerai business and that helped pay the fees,” she says proudly.

Ezhilarasi’s husband works as a gardener. “He too contributes towards the family, whenever he gets work.”

■ **TELL US ABOUT** People / Families who have made unique efforts to address the current challenges.

Sowcarpet’s popular snacks joint, Kicha’s Corner comes to Mylapore

Kicha’s Corner, a franchise of the popular snack joint of Sowcarpet has come to Mylapore.

The outlet recently opened on Royapettah High Road, near Thanni Thurai market.

The small store painted with vibrant yellow colour now offers all food items, that would be available at the 22-year-old Kicha’s corner in Sowcarpet.

And owner M. Muthukumar says, “Its taste will be 100 % same as the snacks at Sowcarpet outlet.”

One of Kicha’s specials, Muthukumar says is Kucha. “Fillings with a mix of veggies, cheese and sauce are sandwiched between two khakras to make this food item.”

Bunza is yet another Kicha’s special snack that is a combination of burger and pizza.

Apart from this, the store offers a range of chaat items (vada pav, pani poori, bhel poori), pizzas (double cheese veg), sandwiches (murukku sandwich) and puffs (veg, cheese). “All these foodstuff will be offered hot and fresh at the store.”

A variety of cakes (choco truffle, mango, oreo, triple berry) are also available here.

Also on offer are ‘Jain’ snacks – puffs, sandwich, and pizzas, prepared without onion and garlic. “This is for people of the Jain community.”

The store has a space to seat 10 people. Open for dine-in. Soon, door delivery will be provided via Swiggy and Zomato. The shop takes essential precautions to prevent virus spread.

A kucha (small) is priced at Rs 60. Timings: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. For details call 9500092826.



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ASHWINI'S HOME-MADE CAKES BUSINESS GETS A BOOST DURING LOCKDOWN

She uses organic essences (colours) to offer a healthier version of cakes.

By Dheepthi O. J.

The lockdown seems to have turned into a blessing for this young Mylaporean. For it has helped boost her home-made cakes business.

27-year-old Ashwini Catherine, has been making organic, homemade cakes from her home at CIT Colony Link Street, since September 2019. However, till early this year she had only 10 to 12 customers. Friends and their friends.

Post lockdown, her clientele has grown to 50. And this is making her feel good.

Says Ashwini, a homemaker, "Following the lockdown, as people are mostly homebound, cake cutting is the only option available for them to celebrate their special days. And now, as most people are switching towards healthier food habits, they prefer home-made cakes."

This trend, she says has worked positively to take her business to the next level. "Unlike pre-Covid times, when I used to get only one or two orders a week, now I'm getting five, sometimes even ten a day."

Having a passion for baking, Ashwini started baking cakes from 2010, when she was in college.

"I picked up baking skills from YouTube tutorial videos and from baker friends." Soon, she began making simple banana and chocolate cakes. "I used to offer them to relatives/neighbours on their birthdays and anniversaries. Everyone liked them," she beams.

But then her priorities changed. The BCA (Bachelor of Computer Applications) graduate took up a job at an auditing firm. After which she got married and had a girl child. "When my daughter was born, I was on maternity leave."

It was during that period (Sept. last year) that she again re-visited her passion and decided to bank on it, to be financially independent and to 'give back' to her mother, who she says has single-handedly raised her. "Also, I wanted to run the business from home, so I can spend time with my child."

Thus was born 'Avryn's Homemade Cakes', Ashwini's venture, named after her two-year-old daughter.



However, she had to do something different to stand out from "the many people, who were increasingly venturing into home-baking at that time."

And so she came up with the idea of using organic essences (colours) to offer a healthier version of cakes.

"Usually people use food/gel colours to colour cakes. However, I learnt it was not healthy. Hence, I offered cakes made out of natural colours."

"I would extract say yellow from turmeric and red from beetroot."

The initial set of cakes made this way were sold to Ashwini's friends and neighbours. "They were all impressed and the big pat came from my friend Juliana. I was encouraged to go on this path in the business," she says.

Through word of mouth buzz, Instagram and Facebook promotion, more people got to know her business. Orders started coming in, slowly. But it was not until early April this year that her business boomed.

Ashwini now offers 25 cake varieties. It includes fruit cakes (mango, Kiwi, strawberry) and cream-based cakes like vanilla, chocolate. Her specials, she says are choco truffle and ras malai cake. She also makes brownies, cup cakes, tea time cakes, carrot, orange cakes, wheat

cakes, and oats cookies.

"In all of them, I try and have only natural ingredients," Ashwini says and adds, "For instance, to make a strawberry cake, instead of using sugar syrup, I use strawberry juice to prepare cake base. Then I would add freshly chopped strawberries in between the cake. And spread cream, mixed with strawberry juice on the cake. So when people eat it, they will get an authentic strawberry flavour."

She also makes customised designs on cakes.

"My entire family, including my husband, mother and brother support me in this business. In fact, my brother goes to far off places in Chennai to deliver our cakes."

A kilo of choco truffle cake is priced at Rs 1000. For wedding orders, people have to book one day in advance. Door delivery is available. Ashwini can be reached at Ph: 9884947702. Her Instagram/Facebook page - 'avryns'.

India International Quilt Festival in Jan.2021; contest for teens too

The second edition India International Quilt Festival for 2021 will be an online only fest, different from the on-ground festival which had its core venue at Sankara Hall in Alwarpet and featured some of the world's best known artistes.



Varsha Sundararajan, Alwarpet resident, senior quilter and core member of Quilt India Foundation says that the 2021 show 'will be a fully virtual online festival with all the regular features of quilt competition, lectures, workshops, e-catalogue and artisan showcase.

The 2021 show will be online from January 23 to 25.

A special addition to the festival is an exclusive competition category for Gen Next (those aged under 18).

Says Varsha, "In these challenging times, working with one's hands nurtures creativity and provides a mindful, meditative respite from increased exposure to gadgets and electronic screens."

The Quilt Foundation is now reaching out to schools to encourage students to participate.

There is also a separate category for Indian Quilts. The Theme this year is Floral Rhapsody.

Registration opened on 1 Sept. Contact – contact@indiaquilt-festival.com



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