



(clockwise) M.N. Krishnarao Pavilion; the board at BS Madhav Rao circle, Sir Otto Koenigsberger at his desk, M.N. Krishna Rao, and Armugam Circle

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Bringing back Bangalore



Perhaps not to be seen anywhere in Bangalore, and maybe rare in any other cities of our country, are four huge circles positioned exactly at the four corners of an equally big square seen even today in the blueprint done in 1904 for the Basavanagudi extension. This highly sought after locality is known for retaining its tradition of old Bangalore.

Vestiges of the circle culture

Circles were attached to memories of important personalities in Bangalore. Most circles have gone, but memories stay

K. Nettekallappa Circle, Dr. Armugam Circle, Prof. B.S. Madhava Rao Circle, and Tagore circle are very much there even today at the four corners of M.N. Krishna Rao Park. Considering the space constraints of the present day busy areas of the city, these structures are really big. Fortunately, they have not yet been the victims of 'development', and remain as vestiges of the circle culture of Bangalore,

All the four circles are named after eminent personalities -- K. Nettekallappa, was not only known for his business acumen, but also remembered for the philanthropic contributions to the city. N. Madhava Rao road starts from this circle and after a short run ends at Dr. Armugam Circle named after Dr. Armugam Mudaliar.

Dr. Armugam has made significant contribution during the initial years of Victoria Hospital, started in 1901. He believed in avoiding surgery, and Kannada's great writer, D.V. Gundappa, speaks about him in his memoirs.

Once, Krishnaraja Wadi-



yar IV suffered from acute stomach ache. Immediately, the chief of KR Hospital and Medical college, Dr. Robinson, was called to look into the problem. After a thorough examination, the doctor suggested a surgery at the earliest. Worried, the royal family, decided to take a second opinion. Dr. Armugam Mudaliar was called to re-examine. The veteran surgeon moved his hand over the abdominal region of the king for sometime and then asked for a cup of castor oil. The Maharaja was asked to drink it. He came out confidently and said the king would be alright within 45 minutes. Accordingly, after about 40 minutes the Maharaja came

out with a sigh of relief on his face. Dr. Armugam said that many a times, our own indigenous methods and simple medicines alleviate the so called serious problems demanding surgery. Another such common sense treatment by him had saved the jnanapith award winning writer, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar.

Dr. Armugam also known for several charitable works lived at the corner of the circle later named after him. Even today the house exists. The road starting from Dr. Armugam Circle, after a short distance ending at K. Nettekallappa Circle is named after N. Madhava Rao, who was the Dewan of

Mysore State from 1941 to 1945. He also headed the experts committee formed in 1952 to give a report to form 'Greater Bangalore'. His residence was on this road close to the existing nursing home.

Kanakapura Road connects Dr. Armugam circle and Prof. B. S. Madhava Rao Circle. It is named after a Mathematician who was known for developing Mathematics Department in Central College. He also served as the Principal of the institution from 1953 to 1955. In addition to being a popular mathematician, he was also a very good sports person efficient in cricket, tennis and

hockey. Once Prof. V.L. Dsouza, the then VC of Mysore University had made this remark on Prof. Madhava Rao. *For Madhava Rao, Cricket was pure Mathematics, Hockey was applied Mathematics and Tennis was a Complex Variable.* Prof. B. S. Madhava Rao resided close to this circle. From this point, starts B.P. Wadia Road, named after the renowned theosophist. The Indian Institute of World Culture on this road is his contribution. At the other end of B.P. Wadia Road is another circle named after Rabindranath Tagore as a tribute to the Nobel Laureate who had come to Bangalore in 1919. Tagore Circle and K. Nettekallappa Circle are connected by a little portion of K.R. Road named after Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV. On this road exists Basavanagudi Police Station, one of the few old police stations of the city retaining their old architectural style. Except K. Nettekallappa Circle, all the other three circles have well-maintained gardens and a little bit of walking path too.

Surrounded by these roads and circles is a square shaped park which is equally rich in history and heritage. Named after Sir M.N. Krishna Rao who was the acting Dewan of the Mysore princely state in 1941, when Dewan Sir Mirza Ismail had gone to

London to attend the Round Table conference. MNK Rao was conferred Knighthood for his invaluable contribution for the progress of the Mysore State. One of the significant contributions of MNK Rao to the city, is that he gave 20,000 rupees to lay a park exclusively meant for women and children. Once, a security guard prevented MNK Rao from entering the park not knowing his identity. But he felt satisfied that the purpose was served. He had also given an additional amount to build a pavilion inside the park and laid the foundation on November 11, 1940. Interestingly, this unique construction, was designed by Berlin-born Otto H. Koenigsberger, Chief architect and planner of Mysore State. He had also built a few structures in Indian Institute of Science.

Many old residents of this area recall how this pavilion was the main place to listen to music and radio programmes. During recent decades, it was in a bad shape. However, it is restored, though given a new look.

All over Bangalore, several names like Mekhri Circle, Richmond Circle, T. Ananda Rao Circle, Jaimuni Rao circle... remind us of these luminaries of the city. But the word circle remains only in names.

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