

# The Chennai Chronicles, From Various Viewpoints

**This book isn't about history, culture or even an ode to the city as it once was. It's a combination of all of them, told through 11 accounts**

**R**uminations on the contemporary city that Chennai is, or yearning for the reminiscent past of the archaic Madras, has prompted many people to turn their love towards writing an account on their experiences. While many books have already been written about the heritage, history, culture, art and other aspects, at the launch of Tulsi Badrinath's latest book *Madras, Chennai and the Self: Conversations with the City* on Wednesday, the panel discussions that followed could not have been better, with historian S Muthiah, chronicler Sriram V, scholar A R Venkatachalapathy and N Ram, chairman, Kasturi and Sons Ltd, who themselves have stood witness to the all-encompassing magnitude of the city.

Tulsi Badrinath, whose parents were from North India, was born and brought up in the city, gives a fastidious recollection of how the city was receptive of people like her, making her feel at home.

Talking about the book, she says, "There are a lot of books on the history and the heritage of the city. Through this book, I wanted to write about the people in the city: how they see Chennai and through the neighbourhoods, how we can get the flavour of the place."

*Madras...*, she says, tells the story of 11 lives, as she looks back at the house which no longer exists, the endearing nature of an elderly couple, who were like grandparents to her, among many other memories. With regard to the other interesting tales that she chose to narrate, she says, "I chose them for how they lived their lives, as in some way they had to be an example of what I was trying to say about the city."

And then she came across Seshadri, a priest who wanted to learn karate, while at the same time wanted it to conform to his religious practices. the next person whose story is in the



Author Tulsi Badrinath along with N Ram and S Muthiah at the launch of her book *Madras, Chennai and the Self: Conversations with the City* | ALBIN MATHEW

Tulsi Badrinath's book tells the stories of 11 different people - some famous, some not so much - who have found themselves and made their home in Chennai

book is Dalit activist Sivagami, who came from a poor background, and became an IAS officer and a writer. She says, "For a Dalit, who comes from a village to the city, Sivagami loved the fact that in a bus, anybody can travel with people from any caste."

Interestingly, she has told the tale

of actor Vikram with a different perspective, apart from the stardom he has.

When asked about what her mind is inclined to - Madras or Chennai, she adds without a thought that it is Madras for sure. She says, "I love the city. I think it's a very unique blend of the traditional and the modern. I wanted to bring out the ability to absorb change and not give up your roots."

For people who have travelled to many places and made the city their abode, this book will surely strike a chord, as one will surely find several similar experiences, like the ones narrated by Tulsi of her eleven protagonists.

*Chennai, Madras and the Self: Conversations with the City* is her fourth book, her earlier books, being two novels and one book on non-fiction, which were also based in Chennai.

—Express Features

