

**WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI**

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

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### INSIDE

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# Lessons (Not) Learnt from Moore Market

It is the 125th year of the construction of Moore Market. And it therefore follows that it is forty years since the precinct was swallowed up by fire. The conflagration was mysterious but it was convenient – the space was handed over to the railways for the construction of the suburban terminal. Infrastructure, it was argued, was more important than a heritage building. The shopkeepers were placated by compensation by way of cash and also alternative accommodation. A pond was filled up for that – a very necessary sacrifice it was said, in a water-starved city, for taking care of the displaced. Years of looking the other way when the place degenerated

into a byword for lawlessness had made it a headache for the administration. And so the fire was indeed a blessing.

In reality, everyone was glad Moore Market was gone, except for a few heritage activists who did not matter anyway. And forty years later, we do not seem to have learnt any

● by **Sriram V.**

lessons from it, especially on how not to administer public infrastructure.

Constructed in 1900, Moore Market was envisaged as the city's first organised public shopping area. But certainly

by the 1960s, it had become one of those facilities which people hesitated to go to. At the time of the fire, there were 572 stalls, each paying a rent of Rs 150 pm and in addition there were smaller traders who paid Rs 30; these were 300 in number. With years of lack of political will to increase the rents and also no maintenance of any kind, Moore Market was quite an urban horror, much of which is forgotten in a wave of nostalgia. There were several unauthorised hawkers, and then there were pickpockets. The shopkeepers too were a law unto themselves and indulged in all kinds of intimi-

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## HERITAGE WATCH

### Memories of Moore Market

As this happens to be the 125th year of Moore Market, we thought we will dedicate a column or two to it. But though it has long vanished physically, such is its impact on our city's heritage that we found we had tonnes of material on it. It finally came to a stage where we had to apply the guillotine, restricting ourselves to three pages and some more. Beginning with the lead story alongside, there is plenty of other material on the market in the following pages. Not all of it was complimentary to it and we guess heritage is a composite of the good, bad and ugly. We hope you will enjoy what we have compiled and share with us your memories of Moore Market. Our photos alongside are of the miniature of the market, that stands outside the suburban railway terminal, adjoining Central Station. Pictures courtesy: Ramanujar Moulana.



# And finally, there came the rains

This column often sounds like a broken record playing on loop, writing on the same topics time and again, but as the last edition of this very column noted, ours is a city that continues to keep giving. After an anxious month of waiting, with the last meaningful rains sometime in mid-October, the skies finally opened in the first week of December. It was not without drama, as the cyclone Ditwah kept everyone on tenterhooks as to its expected path and the damage it would cause. Just as everybody had given up on any meaning-

ful rains for the city, it poured and poured. Stationed near the coast of Chennai for almost three days, the remnants of the cyclone which had ravaged Sri Lanka gave bountiful showers, assuaging fears of a water scarcity come the next summer. So how did the city fare this time?

● by **Karthik Bhatt**

Thanks to the fact that cyclone Ditwah did not bring about heavy gusts of wind, massive disruption to public and communications infrastructure (electricity, internet) that the

city has witnessed in the recent past were largely absent. There was one high-profile incident though which caused some nervy moments to the people involved. The newly-opened Wonderla Chennai amusement park's first day of operations saw several rides, including the coaster ride being impacted midway due to power outages. Thankfully these were localized outages (though one cannot help but wonder if it would have made better sense to wait until the storm had passed, literally speaking, for the amusement park to start operations). Many of the arterial roads in the city, including the ones

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## LESSONS (NOT) LEARNT FROM MOORE MARKET

(Continued from page 1)

datory tactics. The administration watched.

Sounds familiar? Cut to early 2000s when Traffic Ramaswamy began a campaign for moving unauthorised vendors off various places in the city. The administration was complicit in the mess, lacking political will to regulate them. The alternative was to find building space for them and this was done -- at a multi-storey complex in T Nagar and a warren of shops in George Town to give just two examples. In the former instance, vendors have moved in to an ill-designed building but others have come to replace them on the footpaths. At George Town, the vendors have moved out of line of sight as far the High Court goes, but only just. The shops assigned to them remain locked.

Meanwhile, at the beach, which had not one vendor around forty years ago, a whole lot of stalls have come up. They

were all encouraged by the political outfits while the administration kept quiet until the problem could not be ignored. Enter, the courts. Once again there is the debate on authorised and unauthorised vendors. What is forgotten is that forty years ago there were none! How did any of them become authorised? Let us not be surprised if a permanent building soon comes up on the beach to house these vendors.

It was just the same in Moore Market. It needed a fire to get rid of several inconvenient truths. And the replacement, when built, was poorly designed. And remains so. Lily Pond Complex is an apology for a shopping precinct.

And so, when will the administration wake up to realise it needs to tighten its grip over regulating its vending spaces? Or are we waiting for fires to help us out each time? We seem to have learnt our lesson on heritage restoration but not on routine civic discipline.

## And finally, there came the rains

(Continued from page 1)

notorious for it year after year, were largely free from waterlogging and most of the subways too functioned without any major disruptions, though the same could not be said of inner streets in areas where work to fix broken links in stormwater drains is yet to be completed. The Greater Chennai Corporation's activity of digging new ponds inside the newly-reclaimed land from the Madras Race Club in Guindy too seems to have paid dividends going by media reports, as they filled to the brim and helped prevent runoff and flooding in the area.

However, it was the northern parts of the city that bore the severe brunt of the rains. With several stations such as Ennore, Manali New Town, Parrys Corner, Perambur and Basin Bridge recording readings much higher than other areas of the city, the rainfall yet again exposed the infrastructural deficiencies plaguing them. Inundation was reported in several localities in Perambur, Vyasarpadi and MKB Nagar, with water entering houses in a few streets as well. The Ganesapuram subway in Vyasarpadi, notorious for its flooding was yet again in the spotlight, with neck-deep water inundating it. It is worth noting that the work on a proposed flyover in the locality has been long delayed,

leading to a pause in the stormwater drain activity. As always, the reason for the delay remains shrouded in mystery, with reports in the media seeming to suggest that there has been no request so far from the GCC through the State Government to the Government of India seeking clearance or a NOC for the construction of the flyover across the railway tracks.

That North Chennai continues to get the short end of the stick year after year is a sad commentary on how infrastructural progress remains tardy in the localities that make it up. Disgruntled residents complain that work on stormwater drains in some areas have been initiated only recently and remain incomplete. Surely, it must be a frustrating experience for them to watch other parts of the city spring back to normalcy quicker, when they themselves are busy bailing out water from their homes and assessing damages. That older parts of a city get left behind over a period, as development gets skewed in favour of newer parts due to various reasons is almost inevitable. But should that be an excuse for their continued lack of infrastructural progress? It is time to fast-track every aspect of work related to infrastructure upgradation in the northern parts of the city to ensure its citizens get better quality of life.

## The Market vs The Cathedral

**T**he Man from Madras Musings has been on a never-ending bout of travel. He has been so much in and out of the world's best airport, namely our own, that he may as well be considered one of its fixtures. Add to this last week's meltdown of that airline which always hustled you so much that you arrived at your destination before you took off, and you will not be wrong in saying that what was left of MMM's hair was standing on end like quills on a fretful porpoise. It was only the will power of MMM's good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed that saw MMM through. As regulars of this column will know, she has an eye like Mars, that threatens and commands.

If the chaos at the airports was not bad enough, the approach to our airport is even worse. Of late, whether it is because of the perennial bad blood between our Raj (sorry Lok) Bhavan and Fort St George, MMM knows not, but the area surrounding the gubernatorial residence is forever in a state of stalled traffic. Vehicles get diverted through what seems like the eye of a needle and emerge shaken, and stirred. As a consequence, going to the airport takes forever. Yes, Metrorail is a fabulous option and MMM uses it often but there are occasions when a lot of baggage precludes this.

Thus it was that MMM, one night, having completed an event in the city, was driven to the airport to board a flight to that other city by the sea, on the west coast. Google Maps showed a driving time of 45 minutes and MMM assumed all was well. But as time went on, this stretched like elastic and kept stretching, with the entire route marked blood red. And it got worse as the airport approached, to the extent that driving time from entrance of the complex to the departure terminal showed a further 30 minutes. VIP movement was the explanation given for the chaos. MMM got off the car and sprinted the last one kilometre, carrying all his luggage, rather in the manner of Bhima who walked about carrying his mother and brothers. He had almost given up on catching the flight when the electronic display showed that MMM's flight was an hour behind schedule and so all was well.

This by the way was not the airline that lands on time, but the other -- the one named after Indian rulers of a more relaxed age. And its functioning was, is, and will probably always be reflective of that era. MMM made bold to ask one of the attendants at the counter as to why no message was sent alerting him of the delay. The response was a smile with a mumble about yes that was an option but only when delays are beyond one hour! Anyway, MMM was not complaining -- he had made it. Boarding was

done in a leisurely fashion and what with a lot of smiling and welcoming etc, the flight was delayed even more with MMM landing at the destination in the wee hours of the next morning. But yes, the seats were well padded and the food (covered in your ticket) was superlative. Clearly, the old is still gold though its time-keeping could do with some improvement.

The terminal from where this airline operates in our city is reflective of its style. Taking a leaf from Perhaps Greatest Writer's comparison between Paddington and Waterloo, here all was refined quiet. People moved in leisurely fashion and MMM was strongly reminded of stately cathedrals he had been to. In contrast, the other terminal, where the airline now suffering meltdown operates from, is all chaos, hustle and bustle. Passengers fight over the trays on which they have to keep their carryon baggage for security, whereas in the other they were actually as-

### SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

sisting each other. And that is also the terminal where airline desk managers literally scream out the destinations of their flights, reminding you of a market where costermongers are calling out their wares. MMM usually emerges from that terminal with the feeling he was boarding a suburban train in the metro-by-the-sea-on-the-west. Here on the other hand, he was actually winding down, looking forward to forty winks on board the flight.

Perhaps it is a sign of MMM slowing down but he thinks he will extend patronage to the durbari airline a little more in future.

### Awards Ceremony Oddities

**T**he awards ceremony was reaching its speech stage. The Man from Madras Musings was one of the recipients and stirred uneasily in his seat. He is never comfortable when having to listen to longwinded sermons and having attended many events, has a kind of sixth sense about what kind of speeches to expect. This one, something told MMM, was sure to be among the longest wound. And MMM was not wrong. But it provided him much amusement because of what was happening on stage.

The speaker, a person of venerable age, shuffled to the lectern and then having peered at his sheets as though this was the first time he was seeing it (very likely it was), proceeded to stumble his way through it. MMM had not expected any different and so did not find much there to hold his atten-

tion. But at the other end of the stage, there was plenty to keep him engrossed. For seated there was the dynamic and young secretary of the organisation. As to how young MMM could not guess, but the man had enough hair to dye it and slick it back. He was also dressed in a manner that was better suited for weddings of the kind where the bridegroom arrives on a horse, ladies dance around it with rupee notes in their mouths and gun shots are fired.

But that was not what kept MMM spellbound. It was the sight of the secretary lip-syncing the entire speech of the chief guest that was fascinating. He was word perfect, unlike the man at the podium and it was clear that he had written the entire speech and what was more, had taken the pains to learn it all by heart. It did not end with this. As each geriatric came on to speak, the man mouthed all their words. It was fascinating to watch. But as to why he felt he had to do this was beyond MMM. Was it merely out of force of habit? But there it was. And it gave MMM exactly the same feeling that he gets when he watches a film with sub-titles.

Some of the more alert speakers on stage noticed it as well and a couple of them were riled. MMM thinks that they felt that this was secretary's way of showing to the audience that he had written all their speeches and but for him, this organisation would collapse. And one of the elders did extract his revenge. When it came to his speech he decided he would depart from the typed speech and ad lib. And this was ostensibly to faintly praise the secretary, who was in effect being damned. The Methuselah at the mic said the organisation was blessed to have such a dynamo as its secretary and then proceeded to say that he had no idea what the secretary does but what he does, he does well. He then also proceeded to state that secretary was problem-solver, go-to man and a vital cog who was also a great hit with the ladies! The secretary squirmed in his seat. But that was not the end of it. The elder's mind had got into a speech loop and did not know how to conclude his speech. And after every once in a while, he came back to talking on the secretary like the refrain of a song. But having run out of adjectives he called him a lady-killer and then, after a while, serial killer as well. At this point, someone came and led away the elder and the event went on its dreary way to its conclusion.

With the December Music Season just beginning, MMM is sure that there will be more such events and so, watch this space.

— MMM



# Website Comments

## Nostalgic memories of Delhi

I am remembering 35 years of Delhi life once again, I liked it. I recall how we suffered during our early period to settle, because of language. After about one year, I was able to communicate with the locals. But one thing is sure, south Indians still got a lot of respect in Delhi.

**Sridhar**  
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\* \* \*

Very beautifully written. Old memories of the life spent in Delhi between 1960s and 1980s got refreshed. Amazing to know how our parents adapted to life in Delhi at such a young age and overcame so many obstacles to give us a wonderful life. Truly grateful to them.

**Kamala Venkatraman**  
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\* \* \*

Well written. My father, Balu, came to Delhi in 1940 and lived in Ram Niwas, Karol Bagh. He was an active member of South India Club and a friend of YGP, SV Raman and Poornam Viswanathan. After marriage, he moved in as a tenant with another Tamil family. He was allotted government quarters first in Netaji Nagar, then Sarojini Nagar and finally at Pandara Road. His two sons are products of DTEA Lodi Estate and Delhi University. We are proud to say that our Tamil origin mixed with Delhi culture and boldness has helped us immensely in our life.

**Narayanaswamy Ramani**  
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\* \* \*

Remembering our wonderful days in Dalhousie Square 28 D. My father AV Ramaswami, his elder brother AV Narayanan and younger brother AVS Narayanan – all from Shimla settled permanently in Delhi in 1945 serving in the Defence Directorate. Those were unforgettable days of playing in the square lawns till dusk, walking to the school at Mandir Marg. After several decades I met my classmate at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chennai, in a music programme. And he called out to me, "Aren't you 8C Yamuna, Tamil section," "I am Vitchu 8A."

A floodgate of memories opened and it will continue during the music season in Chennai at dramas and so on. DTEA association meetings too have become an old friends meeting point for us.

**Yamuna Subramanian/  
A.R.Yamuna**  
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\* \* \*

Excellent written article. Enjoyed reading the same and with great nostalgia, remembering our DTEA school times, the Delhi winters, the Vinayaka temple, the Malai Mandir, the markets like CP, Sarojini Nagar, Munirka, etc., and last but not the least, the tasty street food. So many wonderful memories. Thanks for sharing.

**S. Rajan**  
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\* \* \*

Very well presented. Also one could

add that many government servants, with their family, had to shift back and forth between Delhi and Shimla, during summer. The British administration shifted to cooler Shimla.

**Kannan Nilakanta Ayyar**  
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\* \* \*

Very apt. Can completely relate and feel the experience shared in the article. My father came from Palakkad in 1955 and we children studied in DTEA, Lodi Road.

**KSV Viswanathan**  
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\* \* \*

We seven siblings went to Delhi in 1952 as my father who studied BA Math from St. Joseph, Trichy, got selected for P&T clerical job. We were good in studies and made it to Medicine and Engineering. All seven of us lived in EPT quarters along with our grandparents from Renganathapuram village. My father used to cycle to the North Block. We walked to LBN. My elder siblings moved to Lodi Road and travelled by bus paying 1/4 ana, later 5 paise!

Thanks to the author who took time to write and bring back our old memories.

**Bhaskar**  
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\* \* \*

Emotional nostalgia. My father went to Delhi in 1957. Four of us – two brothers and two sisters – studied in DTEA Lodi Estate.

**V Balaji**  
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\* \* \*

Wow, this is like reading my parents' biography! We are Palakkad Brahmins settled in Delhi and can relate to everything you mentioned in your article. My parents were the first generation in my family to settle in Delhi. I am now married to a Punjabi, but still very connected to my roots. Thanks for writing this.

**Priyadarshini Mehra**  
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\* \* \*

My parents came to Delhi in 1946. My elder brother was born in 1947, myself in 1949. Father Ramamurthy N was Treasurer of Madras School, South India Club, Karnataka Sangeetha Sabha and Madras Brahmins Vaideega Association. Death snatched him away in 1963.

**R V Ramanan**  
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\* \* \*

The article is nicely worded and written. My father, a government officer, the late VN Iyer fondly called Iyer in office, was very kind to the peons in listening to and addressing their problems. He got a government accommodation later, before that we all stayed in a rented one-room quarters. Tamilians were given rented accommodation because they are trustworthy and god fearing. We witnessed the Indo-Pak war, saw the construction of Malai Mandir and

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Encroachments by Civic Agencies: A Case of Government vs Government

I write to draw attention to a troubling civic issue that has recently come into sharper focus. On November 25, 2025, *The Hindu* reported that the first division bench of the Madras High Court directed the Greater Chennai Corporation and TANGEDCO to submit, within three weeks, a plan to relocate public toilets, Amma canteens, and electrical junction boxes installed on footpaths in KK Nagar and Ashok Nagar. The Court's order highlights a paradox: while private encroachments on public spaces are wide-

ly condemned, government bodies themselves are obstructing pedestrian rights-of-way.

This problem is not confined to those localities. For many years, an Aavin parlour has occupied nearly half the road at the entrance to Saraswathi Street from Mahalingapuram Main Road. Following the construction of the flyover and dividers on Mahalingapuram Main Road, access to the colony has been severely restricted. The presence of this government-run parlour at such a critical junction has turned the situation into a nightmare for residents and commuters alike.

It is disheartening that such matters require judicial intervention. Should

it really take a court order for government agencies to recognise and rectify their own encroachments? This appears to be a case of "Government versus Government", where one arm of the administration obstructs public convenience, and another is compelled to step in to enforce compliance. I urge the authorities to take proactive measures to remove such obstructions without waiting for litigation. Civic responsibility must begin with government institutions themselves, setting the right example for private parties.

**Ramesh C. Kumar**  
Director  
Indian Commerce &  
Industries Co P Ltd.  
Beehive Foundry



View from Mahalingapuram Main Road.



View from Saraswathi Street.

Ayappa temple. So many things to add, it was a very beautiful period.

**sudha rajagopalan**  
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Nostalgic moments, and a well compiled post. My dad came to Delhi in 1944 and this article brings wonderful memories of my childhood days. We were in RK Puram.

Its so very true, so I am sharing with my friends and family. Thank you!

**Easwaran Krishna Swamy**  
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● Four Pages on our old Moore Market

November 30, 2025 marked 125 years since the inauguration of one of the city’s most iconic landmarks until the 1980s, the Moore Market. The foundation stone had been laid in August 1898 by Lt Col Sir George Moore, President of the Madras Corporation and when completed, it was named in his honour (see *MM*, Dec 1-15, 2014). It was constructed by A Subramania Aiyar. Several references to the shopping experience, particularly from the 1960s and 70s have appeared in the pages of this magazine from time to time. Recently, a search on the internet related to the inauguration of the market led to results from *The Surveyor And Municipal and County Engineer*, Vol. XIX (Jan 4 to June 28, 1901) and *The Building World*. The note in the former appeared in the January 18, 1901 issue, within two months of the market’s inauguration and was accompanied by two images, one each of its interior and exterior. We reproduce the relevant portions from the journals and also the images, which make for interesting reading.

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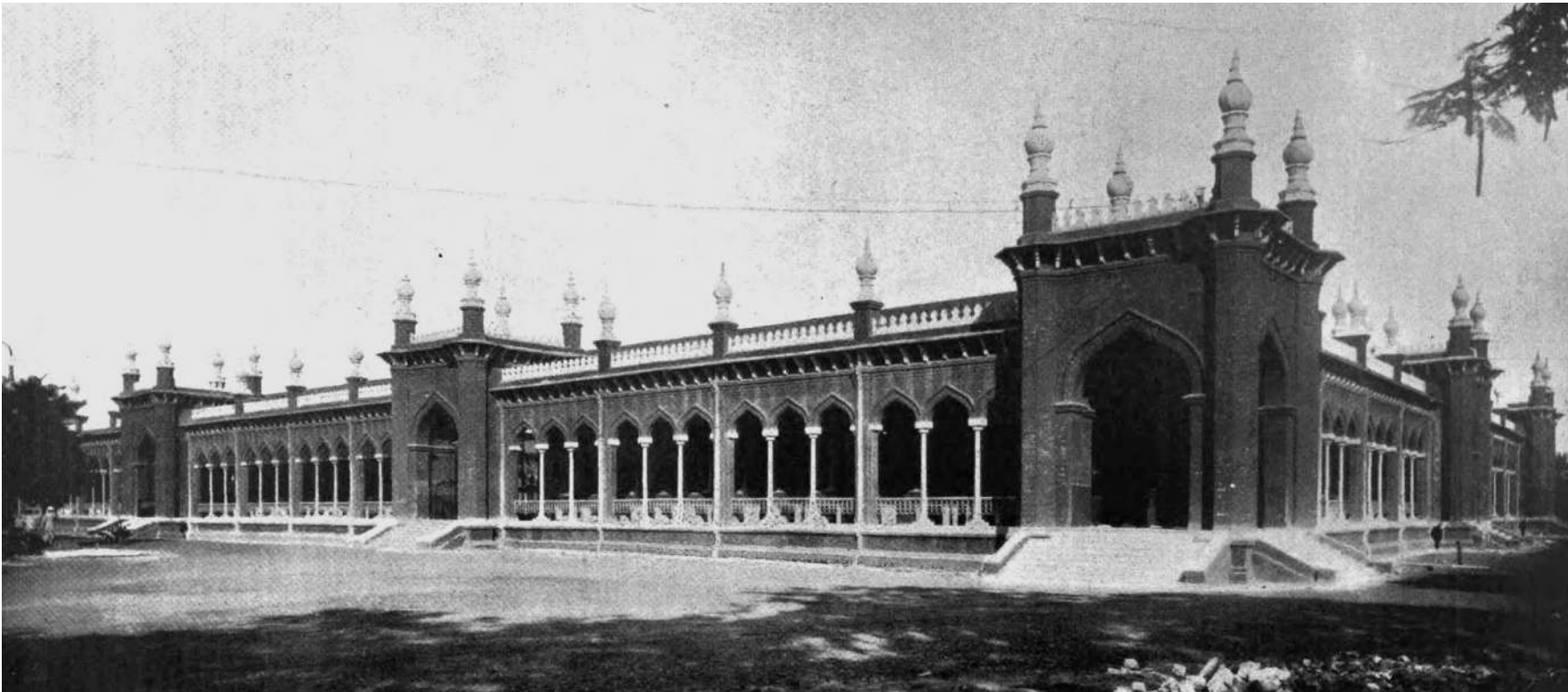
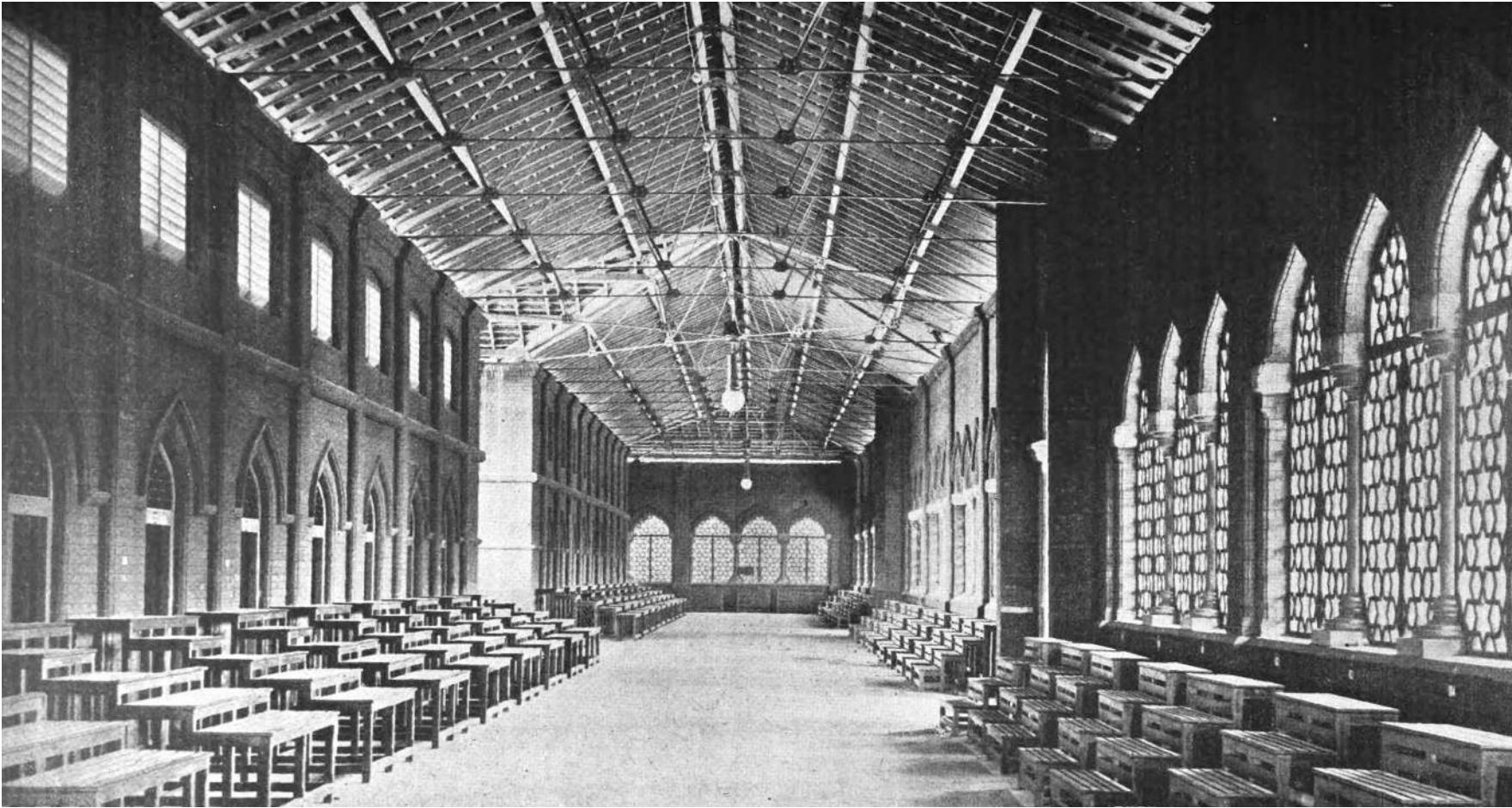
Moore Market As It Was

From *The Surveyor And Municipal and County Engineer*

“We are able to present our readers in this supplement with two excellent illustrations (reproduced from photos by Nicholas & Co of Madras) of the Moore Market which was formally opened by his Excellency Sir Arthur Havelock, the Governor of Madras, on 30th November last.

The building occupies a site 350 ft by 240 ft and was erected from designs prepared by Mr RE Ellis, M.I.C.E, until recently engineer

Right: Moore Market interiors and below: the exterior of the Market.



to the Madras Municipality, but now engaged in private practice in London (70, Chancery-Lane, WC) with Mr HA Pryor, under the style of JC Chapman & Co. The style of architecture is mainly Indo-Saracenic. A verandah, 11 ft wide runs all around the building. There are ten entrances to the verandah from outside and six entrances from the verandah to the halls, which are 30 ft wide and run all around inside the verandah. Between the hall and

the verandah there is a series of archways, filled in with tracery but not glazed, so as to allow free perflation of air, which is so necessary in a hot climate. From the hall there are four large archways leading into an open space in the centre of the market, measuring between 230 ft by 120 ft, where fountains will play. Between the hall and the open space there are fifty-two small store-rooms, about 10 ft. There are in all 291 stalls, but the market is capable

of extension, should additional room be required. The cost of the building was about 26,000 pounds.”

● by  
Karthik Bhatt

From the *Building World*

The note in the *Building World* journal (issue dated May 11, 1911) also gives a description of the newly-built market, largely

covering all the points mentioned in the above note. It however adds a few more details, particularly with respect to the verandahs.

“The verandahs have wrought-iron railings on their outer sides. The gates, railings and trusses of the roof of the hall were manufactured at the local municipal workshop, while the cast-iron columns were obtained from England. The halls, four in number, corresponding to the four sides are each 30 ft wide,

two are each 220 ft and two each 140 ft long. The roof is pent, and covered with Mangalore pattern tiles, manufactured by Arbuthnot and Co of Madras. The floors are of Cudappah stone (slate) in 6-in. concrete, and laid sloping from the centre to the sides, where there are U-shaped drains for carrying off all the washings.”

The razing of this iconic structure in a mysterious fire in 1985 remains one of the saddest episodes in the heritage history of the city.

Its Sights and Sounds

It would be difficult to imagine a more noisy, or characteristic scene than that presented by the large general market named after Lt. Colonel Sir George Moore, KCB, one-time President of the Madras Municipality. Despite much opposition, Colonel Moore succeeded in abolishing the old insanitary bazaar in George Town, and substituting the present imposing red structure designed by Mr RE Ellis, Municipal Engineer. The cost of erection was estimated at three lakhs of rupees. Quadrangular in shape, the edifice consists of outer verandahs and inner galleries erected about a central court open to the sky. The south side is practically devoted to bird fanciers and animal dealers. Booksellers congregate along the northern verandah, where the wary and persistent are occasionally rewarded by the discovery of a rare first edition. Vegetable stalls, butchers and vendors of every sort and description are well represented in other parts of the market.

– Reproduced from *Madras – The Birth Place of British India* by Lieut. Colonel H.A. Newell, FRGS., Indian Army, 1919.

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Passing along the road by the General Hospital Bridge spanning Cochrane’s Canal, we come to a line of imposing buildings fringing the southern edge of the People’s Park. The first of these is the Moore Market named after Sir George Moore, a former popular President of the Corporation who took great interest in its foundation in the place of the congested and insanitary market that existed in Broadway which has since been converted into a park. The structure is a quadrangular in shape with an open space in the centre laid out as a garden and with arcades all around. The market is a convenience to the middle and upper classes of the population and is well ventilated and kept in a clean condition. To the east and north of the market are the supplementary structures called the hawker’s stalls, allotted to the vendors of worn-out and second-hand goods, who formerly vended their wares in what was known as Guzili Bazaar near the Memorial Hall.

– Reproduced from *The Madras Corporation Handbook*, 1950.

Being Cheated at Moore Market

*The following is a passage from Thillana Mohanambal, the novel by ‘Kalaimani’ (Kothamangalam Subbu) and set in the South India of the 1920s, though it was written much later. This particular scene does not appear in the film based on the novel. Dharuman, the drone accompanist for nagaswaram maestro Shanmugasundaram, and Muthurakku, the tavil player, have come to Madras. They are attending on Shanmugasundaram who is undergoing treatment at the General Hospital. One day they decide to visit Moore Market and not knowing it is just opposite are charged exorbitantly for the ride by a wily rickshawpuller. They then alight outside the market and begin their exploration.*

– Sriram V

Dharuman and Muthurakku entered Moore Market.

What struck Dharuman first was the strange orderliness of the town. Here, a mat bazaar stood alone; there, a flower bazaar by itself. Everything had its own place. Somewhere in this market, he was sure, they would also be selling good butter-milk, after all it was ‘More’ Market. The thought crossed his mind that he could buy a tumblerful and drink it. He walked around, looking eagerly.

Good heavens! What a sight!

Everything gleamed. Piles and piles of fountain pens lay stacked on one side, shining as though freshly born. On another side, old trousers were heaped together carelessly, as if someone had dumped a lifetime’s worth of clothing in one corner.

“Tavilkaarare,” said Dharuman, “shall I buy a pair of trousers?”

“That’ll be a dead man’s trousers, brother,” said Muthurakku calmly.

They went on peering into shop after shop. Just then, a man came straight at Dharuman and practically fell on him.

“What is this, man? Can’t you see where you’re going?” snapped Dharuman.

“Oh! Is it you?” the fellow exclaimed.

“I didn’t mean...” he began, but before he could finish, another man who had been following him closely said, “Alright, I’ll give four rupees. Hand it over.”

Immediately, the first man turned pleadingly to Dharuman.

“Please tell me, sir. Just look at yourself – you look like a respectable gentleman. These spectacles belonged to my master, an Englishman. When he went abroad, he gifted them to me. London make, sir! There, they cost a hundred rupees, sir. I’m in need of some money now. And this man here is asking for a hundred-rupee spectacle for four rupees. Should I give it to him, sir? You tell me, sir!”

He kept addressing Dharuman as sir, repeatedly. With every sir, Dharuman felt his own importance growing.

Letting a hundred-rupee spectacle go for four rupees was plainly unjust, Dharuman decided, as a man of righteousness.

“Chi, chi! You shouldn’t sell it like that,” he said gravely, delivering his moral verdict.

At once, the spectacle-seller brightened up. “I knew it, sir! People like you won’t speak wrongly. If I only had money in my hand, I’d have given this to you free, sir. Here, see for yourself,” he said, placing the spectacle case in Dharuman’s hand.

Dharuman examined it carefully. Soft leather on both sides. A shiny, glittering frame. Slightly curved lenses. His heart was completely won over.

“It’s very nice,” he said, reluctantly handing it back.

“Why don’t you keep it, sir? Just give me five rupees. I’ll return that money and buy the spectacle properly,” the man pleaded.

That a complete stranger should trust him so deeply filled Dharuman with happiness. Still, he said modestly, “No, no... that’s not necessary.”

“What, sir? You think I won’t return it? Alright then -- give me ten rupees in hand. You keep it! Let this remain with a good man.”

Dharuman turned to look at Muthurakku. Muthurakku shook his head firmly.

That annoyed Dharuman. When such a fine object was available for ten rupees, why was this man obstructing it like an ill omen?

“Alright, sir. I’ll give six rupees,” said Dharuman.

No sir, keep it for seven rupees,” said the man promptly.

Dharuman paid seven rupees and bought the spectacles.

“Well, Tavilkaarare,” said Dharuman cheerfully, “whose face did I wake up seeing this morning?”

“Not mine,” said Muthurakku dryly.

“Not yours. I woke up seeing Nurse Mary’s face. That’s a lucky face. Otherwise, would I have got these spectacles so cheap?” said Dharuman happily.

On such an auspicious day, he suddenly felt an urge to buy a fountain pen as well and tuck it into his pocket. Muthurakku bought only a dozen hairpins. Meanwhile, Dharuman had managed to buy a fountain pen for three-quarters of a rupee.

“So, Dharuman,” said Muthurakku, “you’ve bought a pen. When are you planning to study?”

Dharuman laughed.

“The pen isn’t for studying. It’s for writing.”

“Well then, you need education first, no, to write?”

“What’s the difficulty? I’ll give it to someone who has studied and ask him to write for me,” said Dharuman, putting on the spectacles with great satisfaction.

They started walking.

Suddenly, ink leaked from his shirt pocket. A long blue streak appeared.

“What is this, brother? Is the pen leaking?” asked Muthurakku.

“Looks like he’s cheated me!”

“That doesn’t matter, Dharuman. Pour the ink out and keep it. You aren’t going to write anyway – it’s only for show!” said Muthurakku.

They began walking towards the hospital.

People who buy new shirts and new shoes naturally feel like wearing them and walking among others to show them off. But Dharuman proved that it is entirely wrong for someone who has just bought new spectacles to go walking around.

Wearing the spectacles proudly, Dharuman said, “Tavilkaarare, shall we walk a little further?”

“Even if I die, I won’t walk in this town.”

“Why? What will happen if we walk?”

“They’ve tarred the road. If it hits your feet, it’ll strike your eyes and ruin your health,” said Muthurakku.

Dharuman burst out laughing.

“What are you laughing at, Dharuman?”

“Now I understand why I bought these spectacles. Such coolness for the eyes!”

“It’s not coolness for the eyes. It’s only coolness for the sight. The moment you take them off, it’ll burn.”

“You’re saying that only because you’re afraid of the expense! Look – I’m wearing them. Is it burning? Tomorrow there’s a procession. Suppose Shanmugasundaram agrees to play the nagaswaram, I’ll wear these and walk all night listening to him.”

“Very good,” said Muthurakku. “No one will even notice that you’re asleep.”

Just then, Dharuman almost stumbled. Muthurakku caught him.

(Continued on page 6)



# Moore Market

This article by Sa Viswanathan (SaVi) was published in Tamil in *Ananda Vikatan* in its issue of June 14, 1962. It offers an interesting view of the place as it was in that decade.

Pilot nib, Blackbird clip, Parker body and Sheaffer cap!

Having taken up various parts of pens of different brands, the seller at Moore Market manages to assemble a complete pen!

● by Sa Viswanathan (SaVi)  
Translated by Sriram V

In the same way, Moore Market is the place where assorted items and shopkeepers come together and operate in a tightly integrated fashion. Old books, old hardware items, old clothes, old bottles, old vessels, and old gramophone players. There is no second-hand item that is not available in Moore Market. As the sun and the moon do not have any substitutes, they have not yet come up for sale here.

What Thiruvaiyaru is to musicians and Guindy is to race goers, Moore Market is to authors. From students at school

to the weak-visioned elderly, everyone would have made at least one visit to Moore Market. The school student comes to buy a second-hand text book at half price while the weak-visioned elder comes to source an old pair of glasses. As crowds, congestion and commotion are integral to the place, there are plenty of pickpockets too. The police therefore keenly watch the market.

Having tied our wallets securely to our waists, we enter.

We can hear many voices from the outer corridor of the market. One of these comes across clearly: "Let the poor eat what the Englishman once ate. Take it for one anna and two annas!" We walk to take a closer look at what mysterious food item is being sold. They are pears! Leaving them to the English to feast on, we walk ahead.

The harsh, grating voice of the fruit seller can be heard -- "Orange one anna, Kamala six!"

Her oranges may be sweet but her cries are not. We have not walked on for ten feet

when many vendors surround us. They are selling a variety of items -- tooth powder, fountain pen, cockroach repellent, and plastic belts! What is not available here?

The name plate announcing that this is Moore Market comes within sight. The foundation stone for the place was laid in 1898 and it was completed in 1900. As the President of the city's municipality was then Lt Col Sir George Moore, the market was named after him.

Let us first go around the outer corridor of this precinct.

We meet up and chat briefly with Shakespeare, Kamban, Kalidasa, Wodehouse, Somerset Maugham, Arnold Bennet, Hemingway, Agatha Christie, Maupassant, Tagore, Khandekar, Kalki and Karunanidhi. They are all there, at the second-hand book shop!

Having identified a book we want, we enquire about its price and are flabbergasted at the reply. "We were informed that we could buy books at half price here. But what you are quoting is even higher than the original cover price," we say.

"What you say is true sir! But this book is out of print. As there is no fresh edition the one that I have is priced so high," says the seller. Left with no option we purchase this old book at the price that is quoted.

In the inner courtyard what is on sale comprises largely clothes, cosmetics and costume jewellery meant for the modern woman. Looking at the items on sale and gazing at the women who are purchasing them we continue our round.

"Do you notice how that eardrop is glittering?" asks a woman of her husband who is clearly a blue-collar worker.

"All that is what people acting in theatre wear," says her husband.

"I am sure that these can be worn by people like me as well," she counters. "Why else do you think they have put up a shop for it over here?" Her husband however pretends not to hear and walks on. Crossing the hazards of the bangle shop, the slipper shop, the ribbon shop and the clothes shop, the husband suffers intensely. We commiserate with his predicament and taking the steps come down to the outer courtyard.

"Whatever you take, 75 paise!" -- thus screams a vendor as he pushes a cart laden with several articles. A crowd immediately surrounds him. Some distance away a woman is selling food. Around her are poor people, flies and dogs. What she is selling are the leftovers from the tiffin carriers that are delivered to the workers at various factories. These



are combined into one dish and that is being sold!

"What the hell is this! It is so tasteless," says a rickshaw

(Continued on page 7)

## Being Cheated at Moore Market

By then they had reached the market gate. Dharuman turned eastward and saw the General Hospital building. A sudden chill went through his stomach.

"Tavilkaarare... Tavilkaarare... I've been cheated."

"Who? The spectacle fellow? Or the pen fellow?"

"No. The rickshaw man. He charged me one rupee just to come to that building opposite!"

"That's alright. Walk carefully now. Don't fall on the road."

Once again, Dharuman stumbled. The road in front of him appeared like a deep pit. In a moment, he felt as though he had grown four feet taller. With every step, he feared he was stepping into a hollow. He lifted his dhoti and walked cautiously.

Muthurakku looked at him with suspicion.

"What is this, Dharuman? Are you on drugs or something? You're behaving strangely."

"No, no! I swear on God -- nothing like that. These spectacles... why do they feel too cool? My whole body is shivering!"

"I can't tell pits from mounds anymore. Mounds look like pits. I'm afraid if I remove these, my head will start spinning. He said these belonged to a 'Durai'. But now it feels like they belonged to Duryodhana!"

"Does even level ground look like a pond now? Enough, enough -- remove them and throw them away."

"If I throw them, someone might step on them and get hurt. Let them be. I'll give them to children."

"So your eyesight going bad isn't enough -- you want to spoil children's eyesight too? Come on!" said Muthurakku, crossing the road.

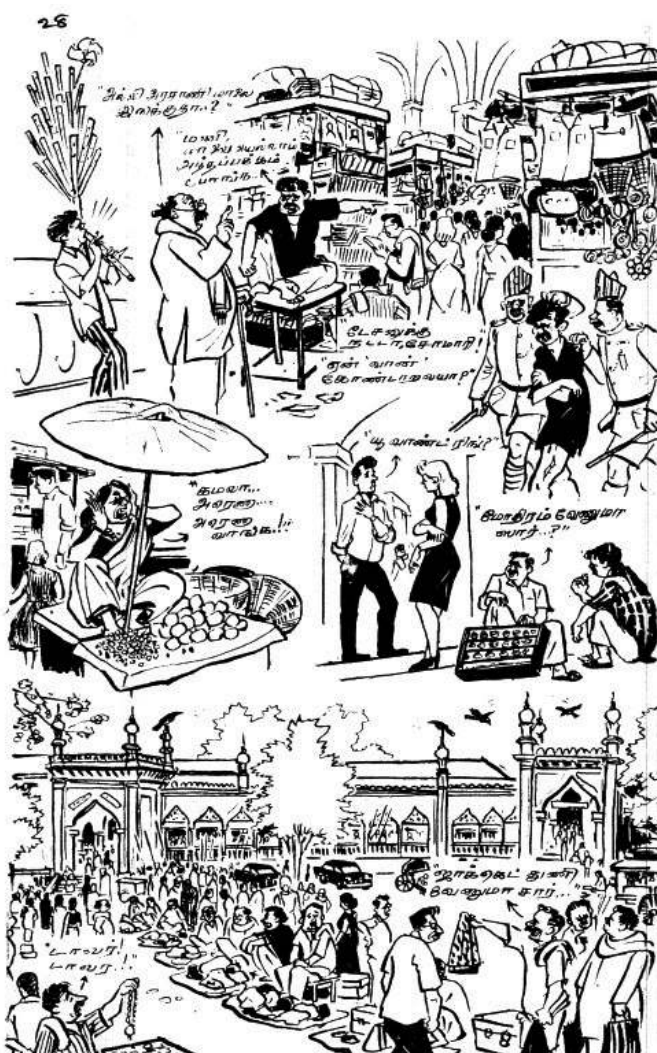
At that moment, Dharuman screamed "Aah!" and jumped back four feet.

The reason was simple.

Half a furlong away, a tram was approaching. Through the power of the spectacles, it appeared as though it were climbing straight over his head! In the force of his jump, the spectacles slipped and fell, breaking instantly.

Fortunately, his eyes were saved.

— Translated by V Nagarjun





## Sa Viswanathan (SaVi) on Moore Market

puller who is wearing a hat on his head.

"How else do you expect it to be! After all it is second-hand food!" is the response.

"Catch him! Don't leave him! Look at him running! Thief, thief..."

A pickpocket runs and five or six people give him chase. They catch hold of him. A constable arrives.

"Hand over the wallet you stole," he thunders.

He examines what is handed over. Inside it is 75 paise.

"Where did you get this from?" interrogates the constable.

"I took it in the crowd where the man selling anything for 75 paise was," was the reply.

"You can explain all that at the station," says the policeman, as he propels the thief forward.

Another scene. A sailor on shore leave arrives. Seeing that he is a foreigner, the rickshaw pullers immediately surround him. "Welcome Sir! Rupees two for one round around Moore Market. Get into our vehicle." The man gets into a rickshaw.

"Look at the good fortune of our Raju. For rupees two he has taken that foreigner all around the market." This is the comment of another rickshaw puller at the stand.

"Right now, your mind is in turmoil, but you must not

lose heart. There is no progress in your profession, and your education seems useless. The wealth line in your hand is weak. The mound of Venus is not all right," a palmist is doing great business in one corner, watched by a huge crowd. We move on.

We overhear the conversation of two people coming towards us.

"Tomorrow, I swear to redeem the chit fund and pay the marwari to whom I have pawned my gold ring. I will then go and give it to my mother-in-law. If I don't do this my name is not Arjunan," says a man to his companion who responds, "That is all very well, but right now let me know where we should go."

Suddenly a thundering voice asks, "O sinners! Where are you going? Where is your soul going? Tomorrow is not going to be yours; think about it! Pay 5 paise and buy this book..."

An evangelist is making this announcement via a handheld loudspeaker. Arjunan and his companion are taken aback.

"Why this bird of ill omen just as we were starting out?" asks the companion.

A small crowd surrounds the preacher and his translator. They proceed to then deliver their sermon in alternating lines of Tamil and English.

"First my friend, you must realize you are a sinner."

"Because you are a sinner you are condemned to die."

"Ha ha haha! Dum dum-dum," an itinerant magician is calling us even while beating his drum, and we walk towards him.

"What I am going to do now is organise a fight between the snake and the mongoose, both of whom I have with me. However, I am not going to get them to fight. Dadum.. then what I'm going to do ...Dadum... I told you that I will make the mongoose fight with the snake... Dadum...I will make you wait till the end... Dadum... I will then charge money from you... Dadum... but I will not do that... Dadum...if the mongoose was to fight with the snake everyday... Dadum... it will kill a snake every day... Dadum... will I then be buying a snake each day... Dadum... is it even possible... Dadum... therefore the fight between the snake and the mongoose is just humbug... Dadum... therefore all of you please listen to my speech... Dadum... you will now witness the snake and the mongoose, traditional enemies, listening to the words of a human and living together in friendship... Dadum... that is true magic... All the great and powerful men who have come here should watch this for some time. Now I request you all to clap loudly and for long... Dadum...ha ha haha!"

We then walk towards the hardware section taking in meanwhile the parrot astrology, the sale of traditional medicinal roots, medication for scorpion bites and a baby with two heads. In the hardware section are second-hand clockwork mechanisms, cycle parts, pump sets, old telephones, radio sets in short, parts for everything except a road engine. Two friends suddenly come across each other – one asks the other as to what he is doing in Moore market.

"The second hand of our clock is broken and that is why I have come here," is the reply.

A woman selling buttermilk cries out, "More! More!"

A small boy asks of his father as to why More is being sold over here.

"This is after all More market," is the reply.

Before coming out into the open we put our hands into our pockets to check if our wallets are there and find that they have vanished. We are startled for a moment and then realize that we had as a matter of abundant precaution tied them to our waists. We then heave a sigh of relief and proceed homewards.

## Madras Nalla Madras and Moore Market

The song *Madras Nalla Madras*, which appeared in the 1967 film *Anubhavi Raja Anubhavi* is picturised on comedian Nagesh enacting the role of a villager who has just come to the city. It describes Madras as seen by a newcomer from the rural heartland. In the song appeared the line, *Ooru Kettu Ponatharku Mooru Market Adayalam* (Moore Market is symbolic of the degradation of the city) and there was a howl of protest from the shopkeepers there. They demanded an apology from Kavignar Kannadasan, the lyricist.

There was good reason for Kavignar penning that line. Moore Market being just next to the Central Station and opposite the General Hospital, was a magnet for visitors from outside the city. They were most often cheated by the vendors here. It came to such a pass that Moore Market was a byword for goods that appeared attractive but did not live up to expectations. A common example was talcum powder filled in near identical tins to the branded original. The top layer alone had powder and the rest was just chalk!

There were other problems as well. In case you touched a product, it was considered sold. And so the wary always made sure to enquire the price and then consider buying an item. In the words of Sir Lancelot Spratt in Richard Gordon's *Doctor and Son*, eyes first and most, hands next and least, tongue never – the maxim for diagnosis of the sick, also held good at Moore Market. And in case you picked up an item on sale and put it back, you would be gheraoed by all the vendors nearby and forced to buy what you touched.

Kannadasan did not budge. The matter died down. The song can still be seen, on YouTube.

– Sriram V

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– THE EDITOR

## Epitaph

If Koyambedu is a feast for the senses, Moore Market was a buffet for the soul – the kind of place where you could buy a second-hand Shakespeare, a vintage gramophone record, a star tortoise, and a sari all in one stroll.

It opened in 1900, thanks to Lt Col Sir George Moore, President of the Madras Corporation who had the noble idea of relocating the erstwhile Loane Square market to a modern and structured bazaar. And what a bazaar it was! Indo-Saracenic architecture, 40,000 square feet, and a layout with outer and inner circles of shops – it looked like someone had asked an artist, "What if Hogwarts sold antiques and pets?"

Moore Market wasn't just a shopping destination – it was an experience. It was Madras's quirkiest address. If you were a book lover, you didn't just browse – you were examined. Sellers knew their wares down to the ISBN and could find you an out-of-print copy of *Moby Dick* faster than you could say "Call me Ishmael".

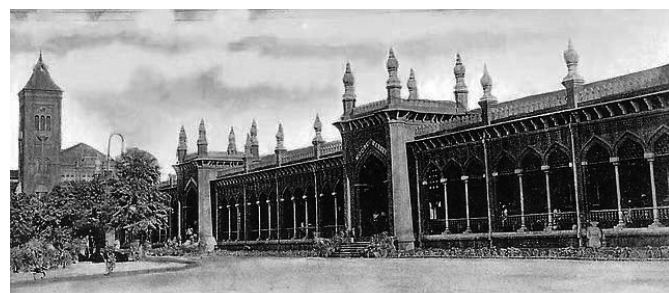
Every item came with a story, and a price that was delightfully negotiable. After a round of haggling (and possibly acquiring a live monkey), people would relax on open platforms to eat, chat, and marvel at their eccentric purchases.

But alas, all good things are eventually eyed by the real estate department.

In the 1980s, Madras needed space, and the Railways were lurking nearby. In 1985, a mysterious fire (read: "Oh no, how terribly convenient!") gutted the market. Vendors were shifted to a new complex built on the filled-in Lily Pond, but the magic simply didn't migrate. The new space lacked the old market's spirit – and possibly its monkeys too.

Today, the Moore Market Complex near Chennai Central station is more of a railway terminal than a cultural bazaar. Its soul lingers in the pages of history books and the hearts of nostalgic Chennaiites.

– TK Srinivas Chari



# Fillip to Kyokushin Karate in Chennai

Sho Sakamoto, a practitioner of the Kyokushin style of Karate from Japan was in Chennai on November 15, 2025. It is common knowledge that in Chennai – the sports and culture rich state capital of Tamil Nadu, the combat sport of karate is very popular, with different styles of karate being taught to willing youth as well as elderly men and women.

Sakamoto's visit to Chennai was a part of his second 'round-the-world journey' to connect with dojos and martial artists globally in order to boost the popularity and strengthen the development of Kyokushin style of karate.

At the time of writing, Sakamoto had conducted training sessions in 43 countries. During his stay in Chennai,

● by  
**V. Venkataramana**

he imparted training to Christopher Rodgers (Chris) – India's men's national champion, and Ash – the women's national champion.

Talking about it, Sakamoto said he was very impressed with the dedication and leadership of Chris and Ash. Explaining that the event was proof of how martial arts can foster friendship and cultural understanding between India and Japan, he said, "I believe this exchange is an excellent example of how Indian martial artists also contribute to global cultural understanding through their devotion to Kyokushin karate".

About his Chennai visit, Sakamoto told *Madras Musings*, "I have been practicing Kyokushin karate in Japan for over 20 years and have earned my black belt. I am currently on my second round-the-world trip, and India is the 76th country I have journeyed to, with this being my 49th country visiting the dojos. I am interested in the global spread of Kyokushin karate, and I continue to engage in cross-cultural exchange by visiting dojos around the world while traveling."

"During my visit to a dojo in Chennai, the first thing that surprised me was that training starts early at 7 am on Saturdays. In Japan, training usually starts not earlier than 9 am.

So, this was quite surprising! I found the training atmosphere very relaxed, and everyone seemed to enjoy practicing karate. On the other hand, the sparring sessions were intense and full of focus. I participated in sparring myself and was impressed by the high level of skill, which I believe reflects the presence of two national champions, Chris and Ash. I sparred with both of them and found their techniques exceptionally advanced – among the highest I have experienced in any country."

The fact that Kyokushin karate, which originated in Japan, is being practiced with such dedication in Chennai, despite language differences, makes for a very meaningful experience of cross-cultural exchange.

National men's champion in Kyokushin style, Christopher Rodgers told *Madras Musings* that Sakamoto had visited them at their Chennai dojo this November 15. "He showcased exceptional skill giving lessons to our students. It was, indeed, a pleasure to host him, and we look forward to meeting him again in the future", said Chris.



National Kyokushin Karate champion with Japanese Master Sho Sakamoto.

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