

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

Vol. XXXVI No. 11

September 16-30, 2026

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What Next for Fort St. George?

The Tamil Nadu government has opened yet another chapter in its century-old search for a new location for its assembly and secretariat. In August this year, the chief minister announced the decision to move and subsequently the government shortlisted three possible choices for the site. It was later announced that Foreshore Estate near Santhome is the chosen victim, sorry, location. There are several questions that remain unanswered by way of the choice, cost of land acquisition and construction (the estimate of Rs 1200 crores for the entire project seems surprisingly low given that the one at Omandurar Estate cost Rs 1000 crores), the long-term impact and the very feasibility of such a place. The other article on the same page addresses some of those issues. This write

up, on the other hand, focuses on what could possibly happen to historic Fort Saint George after the government vacates it. Of course, this question may be a little premature for there are many hurdles to be overcome before, during and as our state's history has shown us, even after, the construction of a new assembly and secretariat. But it is still worthwhile to list out

• by **Sriram V**

the possibilities of what could happen to Fort Saint George.

The government vacating the place does not mean that the whole of Fort Saint George will become empty. Other agencies such as the Army, the Navy and the Archaeological Survey of India will continue to

remain in occupation of their premises, and presumably remain at loggerheads with each other over the maintenance of the precinct. However, if we assume that there will be one contestant less in the process, namely the government, we may be wrong there. For will the government really vacate the Fort? Most unlikely. With a seemingly insatiable demand for space for its ever-burgeoning departments and ministries, the government may not want to really give up what it already owns, namely the four or five acres comprising the present assembly building, its annexe built in 1958, and the Namakkal Kavignar Maligai. It is our surmise that while the present departments in occupation of these buildings will vacate and

(Continued on page 2)

Is Foreshore Estate really the most suitable choice?

Since coming to power quite unexpectedly just over four months ago, it must be said that the new government has had a blockbuster opening full of mass moments, filmy lingo fully intended. From scrapping the Parandur airport project (which was quite expected) to fierce assembly debates (the tenor and language of which have become prime-time debates by themselves), it has been an action-packed start. Latest in the list of high-voltage decisions is the building of a new integrated Secretariat Complex at Foreshore Estate. According to reports, the decision was arrived at after considering alternative sites at Guindy (Highways Research Station) and a plot in Nandambakkam. But is it really an inspired choice?

The journey of the locality is fairly well-documented. Developed as a part of a City Improvement Trust slum clearance project in the late 1950s, the land under consideration became synonymous with the construction of rental housing tenements for the low- and middle-income groups the follow-

• by **Karthik Bhatt**

ing decade. In an all too familiar tale, these tenements suffered from apathy by succeeding governments and over a period of time became unsuitable for habitation. They were pulled down around fifteen years ago and since then the huge tract of land has been lying vacant. At this juncture, it is worthy

to note that this proposal to locate the new integrated Secretariat Complex is the second time in the last five years that there has been a proposal to develop Foreshore Estate. In 2021, the previous government announced the construction of a Marina Business Centre, which did not take off primarily due to litigation issues. With the current development bringing the locality back into focus, it is time to ponder over a few important considerations.

The most obvious point that needs to be debated is its presence amidst a comparatively narrow stretch of an already congested Santhome High Road. The area is home to several schools within a couple of kilometers on either side and

(Continued on page 2)

HERITAGE WATCH

The Long Quest for a New Assembly and Secretariat



Our Heritage Watch this time is rather long, in keeping with the never-ending quest that our Presidency, Province and State have been on. Our Pic 1 is Chepauk Palace, near which in 1896 the Government first thought of building a secretariat. Our Pic 2 is of Ezhilagam which did come up there, around sixty years later. Our Pic 3 is of the present Assembly cum Secretariat, which at least since 1861 has been fulfilling this purpose, though much of the present structure dates to 1910. Our Pic 4 is of the University Senate House that saw the Assembly function in it in 1937, followed by Rajaji (old Banqueting) Hall (Pic 5), which too played host in 1938. Our Pic 6 is of Kalaivanan Arangam which was built to house the Assembly but never did, becoming the Children's Theatre instead. Pic 7 is the new building that the DMK Government constructed in 2010 and which is now a hospital.

WHAT NEXT FOR FORT ST GEORGE?

(Continued from page 1)

move over to the new secretariat, others will step in and occupy the space thus vacated. Even during the brief tenure when the DMK government successfully managed to shift the assembly and secretariat to the new buildings at the Omandur Estate, it handed over the erstwhile facilities to the Department of Tamil Studies. With such a precedent in place, it is very unlikely therefore that the government will simply abandon Fort Saint George.

That said, access to the Fort may become that much easier when it's high security occupants, namely the chief minister, his ministers and the MLAs leave the place. This should be the opportunity that the Department of Tourism can seize. It needs to come up with a tourist and visitor friendly plan for the place, and look at how it can make Fort St. George a more happening precinct.

There are plenty of spaces that are lying empty and which, with some creative repurposing, could be put to earn revenue for whoever owns it. We allude to locations such as the King's barracks, the Parade Square, the casement barracks, the whole of St. Thomas' Street, the vast acreage of shrubbery to the rear of the fort and of course, the assembly chamber itself. The Department of Tourism can negotiate with the stakeholders such as the Army, the Navy, the ASI and the Government of Tamil Nadu and share some of the revenue it may generate post restoration by letting out these spaces for events. At a time when the city seems to be awakening to possibilities in heritage precincts for contemporary events, it would be a pity if Fort St. George is left to its fate, with squabbling government departments, poor maintenance and a visitor unfriendly policy.

Is Foreshore Estate really the most suitable choice?

(Continued from page 1)

already witnesses traffic snarls in their peak hours. Locating the corridors of power amidst such a saturated zone is bound to compound traffic woes on a daily basis. We have been told that plans are afoot to construct an elevated corridor to connect Lighthouse with the Adyar bridge which will help ease the resultant congestion. Executing this is going to be easier said than done, as both the alignments being considered (along Loop Road or along Santhome High Road) are going to come with their own share of problems.

Secondly, the chosen site borders an ecologically sensitive zone and any large-scale construction activity is bound to have an effect on an already fragile ecosystem. While one may argue that there are large scale commercial and residential developments already in the vicinity, it must be remembered that they underwent intense litigation where commercial interests ultimately won. Also, should the government, which is a key stakeholder in environmental protection join the bandwagon? Also, what of the impact to the coastal stretch? While no doubt there will be environmental impact assessments and we will be assured that all precautions will be taken,

no amount of 'green compliance' in the new structure would be able to compensate the disturbance caused by the increased activity levels.

Political parties from across the spectrum have opposed the project on multiple grounds, including lack of public consultation. The fishing community, which is a dominant stakeholder of the locality too has registered its opposition, as it fears loss of livelihood on account of restricted access to the coast. They carry with them the angst of their past representations being unheeded and any attempt that is perceived as threat to their existence will only end up alienating them further.

While undoubtedly there is an urgent need to address the space constraints of the present administrative headquarters, the choice of an alternative site needs to be carefully debated upon and looked into from multiple aspects. Any site chosen is bound to come with its own share of challenges which need to be addressed. We are told that the ready availability of most of the land requirement with the government is said to have tipped the scales in favour of Foreshore Estate, which doesn't help but give one the feeling that it is an easy way out, rather than the outcome of any considered thinking.

Madras Week Madness

The *Man from Madras Musings* has finally recovered from the rigours of Madras Week celebrations. It was tiring, what with MMM flitting from event to event, giving speeches, conducting heritage walks, holding forth on matters of no pith or moment and so on. Madras Day was the killer, with three heritage walks, two talks and then some other things thrown in. By the end of the day, MMM was prepared to call it a day, or as they say, What A Day.

Despite all this, and the Chief's warning ringing in his ears (Never accept more than one event in a day my lad, the problem with you is you do not know when to say no), MMM had plenty of fun, made funnier by the quirky things that happened. And let MMM begin at the beginning. It all began a month or so before Madras Day when a Government Department informed MMM in all confidentiality that it strongly

lines similar to the previous one MMM will not dwell on but merely request you to see this column in MM dated August 16th. The permission did come, not without its own suspense and then came the question on the number of people. The department said this would run into hundreds as they proposed a publicity campaign. MMM therefore asked them to make arrangements for a public address system as he did not propose to ruin his voice shouting from the rooftops.

By the time the publicity campaign received its numerous approvals it was the night prior to the event. And therefore, only those with owl tendencies got to see it. When asked about when to report for the event, MMM was informed two days prior that he needed to be at the venue at 6.00 am. As the next two days went by, this was progressively delayed to 6.30, 7.00 and 7.30 am. On the appointed day, MMM

within a few days. But MMM likes to receive them.

And so, when he was ushered into the chamber of the director of the research organisation he was completely taken in by a lovely floral arrangement which was at the corner of the sofa on which MMM sat. The director drew MMM's attention to the flowers and said it would be his – the director's pleasant duty to present them to him MMM, when they mounted the stage. This delighted MMM and he was all anticipation. Conceive his surprise when after introducing him, MMM, to the audience, he, the director, stepped down and of bouquet there was no sign whatsoever! The flowers were never presented to MMM and he of course, was too shy to ask.

The other event was a delight in many ways, more so because the organisers successfully managed to hide from MMM the fact that

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

expected that the Lord of the People (LP) would be present at a heritage walk that MMM would conduct on Madras Day and so could MMM please reserve the morning for the department?

Now, MMM, old and wise, knew that such things rarely happen as predicted, but he had no option but to say yes. After all, you don't say no when there is a chance that LP may lend lustre to an event. And so he said yes and then forgot all about it. But as the date came closer, the number of calls to MMM's office from the department concerned rose to an extent that those answering them began to feel that a hotline may be more appropriate. But as there was no further talk about LP putting in an appearance, MMM knew that that hope, never strong, had died. Thereafter, MMM was in it only to enjoy the fun.

The first concerned the importance assigned by the department to a chief guest being present. It was initially supposed to be LP and then became a Minister and finally it was the Secretary in charge, provided he/she was not transferred the night before! Then came the question of permissions for the walk, which as it went on

went to the venue by 7.30 only to find not a soul. By 8.00 am around 30 people straggled in and we were all set to start. MMM asked for the PA system and was shown a speaker to be dragged about on wheels. This was all to the good. He then asked for the mic whereupon there was confusion. It transpired that the tender for the speaker had forgotten to mention mic and so there was none.

There being just 30 people, MMM managed on the strength of his own voice, and the event went off well with the department people congratulating each other on what a wonderful job they had done.

Madras Week Mess Ups

Two other events that had their own funny moments, though not in the same class as the one above, pertained to a research organisation and a media programme respectively. Those who know *The Man from Madras Musings* know of his love for flowers – an affinity that is not shared by his good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed. In her hard-nosed world, such things as flower bouquets are a waste of money with nothing to show for them

they were going to present him with an award for what he had been doing by way of promoting the city for several years. It all went off very well, being organised impeccably. It was only on reaching home and unpacking the box that contained the award that MMM discovered that the invoice for the supply of the same was also enclosed. MMM this time did call the organiser and ask him politely if the same had to be paid for. It tickled MMM pink to hear the man tie himself into knots at the other end and hotly deny this. It made MMM's day.

The Jokes Continue

Madras Day may have come and gone but the city continues to keep *The Man from Madras Musings* amused. The latest concerns the decision to shift the Assembly and Secretariat from Fort St. George to the Foreshore Estate. MMM received his due share of requests for interviews, all of which he firmly refused. But one caller stands out in MMM's memory.

"Sir as you may have heard, the CM has announced that the Government will soon vacate Fort St Joseph..."

On that happy note, till next fortnight.

– MMM

Between the Horns and the Silence. A City Full of People

Chennai is not a city that believes in silence.

It begins early. The milkman arrives with his cans, the newspaper lands at the gate, a vegetable vendor announces his presence as though he has been appointed the official broadcaster of the neighbourhood, and somewhere, inevitably, a pressure cooker whistles with the confidence of a morning alarm.

By eight, the traffic has joined in.

There are horns, auto-rickshaws, scooters, school vans, conversations across balconies and the occasional person calling out to someone who is standing perfectly close enough to hear.

We complain about the noise, of course.

We also seem to miss it when it disappears.

I began noticing this when I would return home to an empty flat.

I would unlock the door, put my bag down and, almost without thinking, reach for the switch.

Not the light switch.

The television. The radio. My phone. A podcast. Music. Anything.

The room had barely registered that I had arrived, and I was already filling it.

At first, I thought it was simply habit. Chennai had trained me well. We grow up with sound. There is always something happening somewhere. A neighbour is calling a child home. Someone is bargaining with a fruit seller. A devotional song is drifting out of a nearby house. An auto driver is conducting a spirited negotiation with a passenger. Two people are having a conversation across the road which, whether we like it or not, has become part of our evening entertainment.

Silence, by comparison, can feel strangely suspicious.

But slowly I began to wonder whether I was actually looking for noise.

Or whether I was avoiding what I might hear without it.

There is a particular kind of quiet in Chennai in the early evening.

The city is still busy, but the day seems to loosen its collar a little. The sunlight softens. Someone waters the plants on a balcony. Children are called home for dinner. A scooter pulls into a gate. The smell of sambar travels down the street, often arriving at your house before the person who cooked it has any idea that it has escaped.

And for a few minutes, there is space.

I did not always know what to do with it.

I would put on a podcast while making tea. Music while cooking. Something playing in the background while answering messages. Even the shower acquired its own soundtrack.

Apparently, I was living with the terrifying possibility that I might hear my own thoughts.

The funny thing is that we often imagine loneliness as something dramatic. We picture somebody sitting alone on a park bench, looking sadly into the distance.

Real loneliness is usually much less theatrical.

Sometimes it is simply coming home and wishing there were somebody to tell about the ridiculous thing that happened that afternoon.

Sometimes it is making tea for one.

Sometimes it is seeing something funny and reaching for your phone before remembering that there is nobody particular to send it to.

And sometimes it is just the sudden awareness that the house is very quiet.

I began to wonder whether loneliness was always something to be chased away.

Perhaps sometimes it was simply trying to tell me that I missed somebody.

That thought changed small things.

When I felt the familiar urge to distract myself, I began noticing it instead.

If I wanted company, perhaps I could ask for it.

So I started sending the message I had been postponing. "Are you free for coffee?"

Quite often, people were.

I started accepting invitations instead of saying, "Some other day."

I began going out for a meal even when there was perfectly good food at home, because something is comforting about eating in a place where other people are also eating.

Chennai is particularly good at this.

You can sit in a small restaurant with a plate of idlis in front of you and feel strangely less alone without speaking to anybody.

There is the clatter of steel tumblers, the scrape of chairs, the waiter calling out an order, the elderly gentleman at the next table explaining something to someone who clearly did not ask, and a child negotiating for one more spoonful of ice cream. Nobody knows you.

Yet somehow, you are among people.

Perhaps that is one of the quiet gifts of Chennai.

We are not particularly good at leaving people alone.

Sometimes that is precisely what another person needs.

There is always somebody who will say, "Come home."

There is always an aunt who will ask whether you have eaten, regardless of whether you have just finished a full meal.

There is always somebody who believes coffee is an acceptable solution to almost every emotional crisis.

They may actually have a point.

The city has a way of putting people within reach of one another.

You can walk into a friend's house without an elaborate invitation. You can stop at a neighbourhood shop and end up discussing somebody's daughter, somebody else's new car and the weather, all before buying the one thing you came for.

A park bench becomes a meeting place.

● by
Priyanka Soman

A tea shop becomes a professional.

A temple queue becomes a social gathering.

Even standing outside the house in the evening can turn into a conversation.

These little encounters matter.

Because being surrounded by people is not quite the same as being connected to them.

Chennai can be crowded enough to make you feel anonymous and intimate enough to make you feel known — sometimes within the same ten minutes.

That is perhaps why the city's noise can be misleading.

There can be horns outside and silence inside.

There can be hundreds of people around you and nobody you particularly want to talk to.

And there can be an empty room in which you suddenly realise how much you have been avoiding your own need for company.

I still put podcasts on in the shower.

Old habits deserve some respect.

But I no longer feel compelled to fill every space.

Sometimes I let the room be quiet.

Sometimes I sit with my coffee without reaching for my phone.

Sometimes I walk outside simply because I want to see people.

And, rather unexpectedly, I began noticing more.

The neighbour sitting on

the veranda waiting for her daughter.

The security guard who knows exactly which residents are away before the residents have informed one another.

The old man who takes the same evening walk every day.

The children playing cricket in the street until somebody's mother appears at the gate and announces, with impressive authority, that dinner has been ready for the last twenty minutes.

I had spent so much time trying to keep the silence away that I had forgotten to notice what was happening around me.

Perhaps I had never really needed more noise.

I needed more connection.

And perhaps Chennai had been telling me this all along.

For all its horns, hawkers, temple bells, kitchen whistles, traffic and conversations conducted at a volume intended for three streets rather than one, this is a city built around people.

The sounds are simply the evidence.

These days, when I come home to an empty flat, I still notice the silence.

But I do not rush to switch it off.

Sometimes I make coffee.

Sometimes I call a friend.

Sometimes I simply sit for a while and listen.

And then, more often than not, Chennai does what Chennai does best.

Somebody calls from the street.

Somebody drops in.

Somebody asks whether I have eaten.

And if all else fails, there is always coffee.

Perhaps that is what I have learnt.

Silence is not always loneliness, and noise is not always company.

Sometimes, between the horns and the silence, what we are really looking for is simply another human voice.

In Chennai, fortunately, we have never been short of those.

And perhaps that is what I had been missing. Not another podcast, another television programme or one more piece of background noise — but the ordinary comfort of another human voice.

A friend saying, "Are you free?"

A neighbour asking, "Have you eaten?"

Someone calling from the gate, "Come, have coffee."

Chennai, after all, has never been particularly good at letting people stay lonely for too long.

And perhaps that is one of its quietest gifts.

Sometimes we do not need to fill the silence.

We only need to listen closely enough to realise what it is asking for.

MADRAS QUIZ QUESTIONS

– By Vidya Swaminathan

1. In 1676, which present day Chennai locality was the first village to be added to Madras town, on rent from the Sultan of Golconda?
2. Which Emperor granted the villages of Egmore, Purasawalkam and Tondiarpet on lease to the East India Company for expanding the town of Madras?
3. When was the first organised census of the city of Madras taken, that recorded its population as 3,97,552?
4. In 1855, the first post-box of Madras was put up in which road?
5. Who inaugurated the Victoria Public Hall in 1888?
6. Who founded the Madras Cricket Club in 1846?
7. Name the annual awards instituted by KSA Trust in 2013 to honour the outstanding persons who are doing Chennai proud in various fields.
8. In June 2014, the Indian-born owner Vivek Ranadive of which NBA team had one of his star players conduct a 1-day camp for Saidapet Corporation school students?
9. Who resigned from his professorship at MCC in 1977 due to the monotony of teaching to start *Aside* magazine, subtitled 'The magazine of Madras'?
10. Who took up a job with TTK Maps in Madras in the 1970's and his pursuits to prepare TTK tourist guides for the city led him to become its foremost and celebrated chronicler?

(Answers on page 8)

Website Comments

Depiction of City's heritage buildings through Kolam

(Vol. XXXVI No. 9, August 16-31, 2026)

Heartfelt thanks to Kolam Enthusiasts Admin Mr. Wins Raj and the team Madras Musings for featuring and publishing my Mylapore Kapaleeshwarar Temple Kolam for Madras Day.

It means a lot to me to see my artwork featured on your platform. Thank you so much for recognising and encouraging my art.

Grateful and truly happy!

Gandhimathy Senthilkumar
sivagandhy@gmail.com

Madras Week Events

Annual INTACH Heritage Quiz Competition 2026 for School Children



Heritage Quiz Competition: (Left) Sushi Natraj & Shama Prasanna (right) with Quiz Master Balaji at the centre flanked by the winners.



The Intach Team, Quiz Master Balaji and volunteers.



Quiz Master Balaji with Students.

INTACH's (Indian National Trust Art and Cultural Heritage) annual inter-school city level Heritage Quiz Competition for 7th to 10th standard students was held on August 29, 2026 at Sri Sankara Vidyashramam School, Thiruvannamiyur. The event saw enthusiastic participation with a record registration of 230

children in 115 teams, from 29 schools across the city. The preliminary written round of 20 questions was followed by a keenly contested final round featuring the top seven teams.

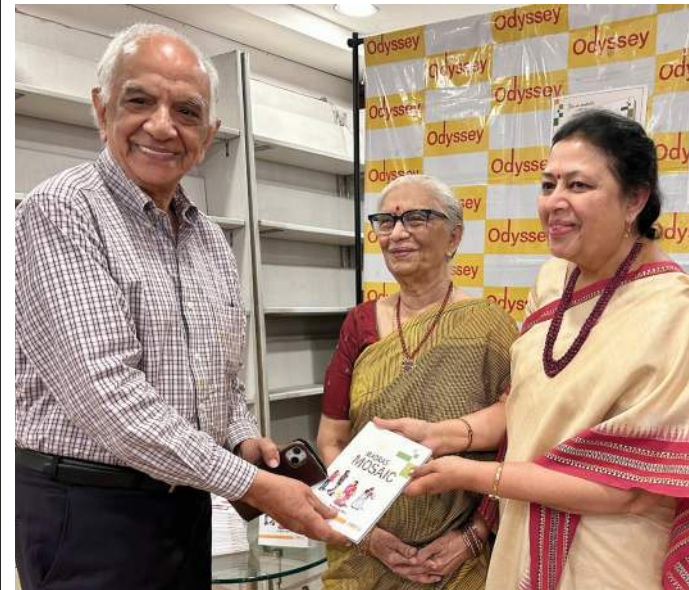
The quiz was ably conducted by Balaji, a seasoned quizmaster, who presented engaging rounds on Indian culture, personalities, Tamil Nadu, Madras and aspects of INTACH. Members of INTACH, friends and volunteers from the Inner Wheel Club of Madras offered their invaluable support with registration, certification and scoring. Student volunteers of Sri Sankara Vidyashramam assisted with dedication.

The winners who will next participate in the State finals to be held before selection for the national finals are: 1st prize: Omkar Sundar Kumar & Svaatanya Iyer (PSBB School, K.K. Nagar). 2nd prize: Sai Kailash Sundar & P. Anirudh (The PSBB Millennium School, Gerugambakkam). 3rd prize: Nithila O & Anjana Kannan (The PSBB Millennium School, Gerugambakkam).

Madras Vision of Day



Book Release



On August 22, 2026, architect and Convenor of INTACH Chennai Chapter, Sujatha Shankar launched the book titled *Madras Mosaic* authored by N. Meera Raghavendra Rao. The first copy was received by former Chief Election Commissioner TS Krishnamurthy.

Sujatha Shankar, Architect and Convenor, INTACH Chennai Chapter screened a documentary film at MEASI Academy of Architecture on August 31, 2026 for students from various architectural colleges in Tamil Nadu. The film traces the architectural journey of Madras and is titled *Madras Vision of Day* named after the city's founder, Francis Day.

The film explores the architectural wealth of our city's heritage.

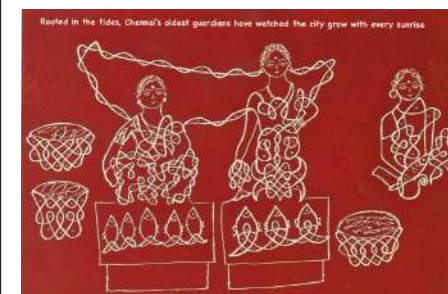
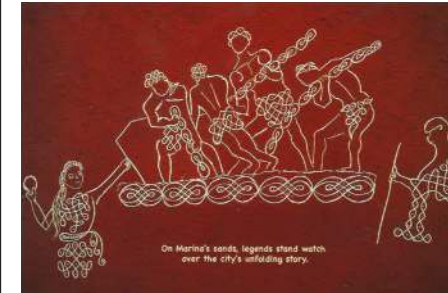
Prizes were distributed to winners of the Madras Day Competition titled Narratives of Madras, a unique initiative for architecture students to explore the city through the lens of cinema. Each presentation interpreted the cinema of their choice depicting Madras with unique perspectives directly or symbolically in five slides in five minutes each. The teams that explored *Madrasapatinam*, *Sarpatta Parambarai* and *Kakamuttai* were awarded the prizes.

Sketches of Heritage Buildings of Chennai by Annette Morais

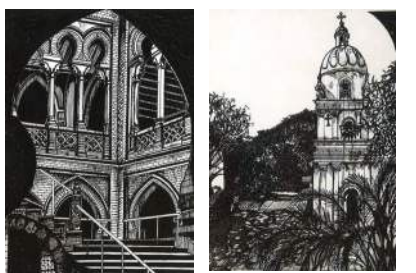
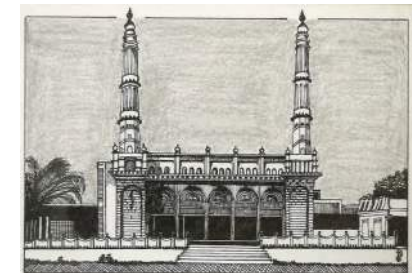
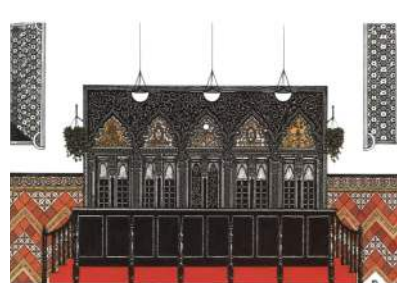
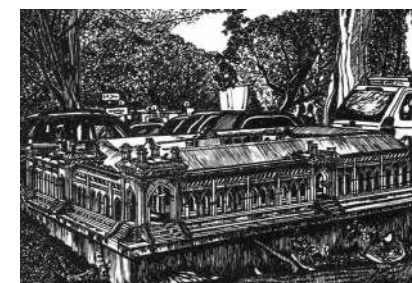


Post cards released during Madras Week

Postcards by Meenakshi Devaraj



Postcards by Pavithra Srinivasan



Dentistry in Madras in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries – II

(Continued from
August 16-31 Issue)

Efforts to establish a Dental College in Madras in the 1920s

The earliest reference to a dental college occurs in Madras government records referring to the initiative of George Bidie, Surgeon-General, Madras. Bidie submitted a memorandum to Robert Bourke, governor (1886–1890) in July 1888, in which he argued that the profession of dental surgery is one in which an Indian would like to excel when put through a rigorous course of training and tuition method as followed in England. In case dentistry was being regularly taught as a profession, it was necessary for the University of Madras to grant a diploma to those qualified. The government acknowledged on 30 August 1888 that it would approve of the University of Madras being invited to establish a licentiate programme in dentistry. In spite of these transactions, nothing eventuated for the next few years.

The next formal attempt towards establishing a dental college and hospital was made in 1906. Additionally, amended proposals for a dental college and an attached hospital and training young Indians towards diplomas in dental surgery were repeatedly submitted to the government in 1907, 1908, and 1909. In the 1909 proposal made to the government with a copy marked to the Faculty of Medicine, University of Madras, details of two teaching programmes are available:

(1) A full-length programme in dental surgery, similar to the training required to earn a 4-year licentiate issued by the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

(2) A 2-year training programme for those already medically qualified with either an MBCM (MBBS) or an LMP or an LMS culminating with the issuance of a certificate by the University of Madras. This certificate programme was provisionally titled the 'Licentiate in Oral Surgery', designed after the 'Licentiate in Ophthalmology' then offered at the Madras-Eye Infirmary (later, the 'Government Ophthalmic Hospital'; and presently, the 'Regional Institute of Ophthalmology and Government Ophthalmic Hospital' in Egmore, Madras). Detailed costing of

required equipment for the hospital and college and for disbursing salaries to academic and non-academic staff was worked out. This document signed by the principal of MMC and the members of the MMC administrative council, was routed through Alfred Gibbs Bourne, Director of Public Instruction, and submitted to the secretary, medical department, government of Madras (Government of Madras, G.O. # 368, 22 June 1909). However, these efforts also never eventuated. The government rejected the proposal with no explanation. Incidentally, the Bengal and Bombay presidencies were seeking support from their respective governments to establish dental colleges and hospitals in Calcutta (presently Kolkata) and Bombay (presently Mumbai). An America-qualified dentist Rafiuddin Ahmed started a dental college in Calcutta (The Calcutta Dental College) in 1920. This institution, renamed later as the 'Rafiuddin Ahmed Dental College' takes the credit of being the first formally established dental college in India, followed by the Nair Hospital Dental College in Bombay – established in 1933.

A renewed effort was determinedly made in MMC under the leadership of George Giffard, Surgeon-General, seeking the Government's attention to offer a formalised dental education at the end of 1918, coinciding with the end of World War I. Alfred Miller of Indian Medical Service and principal of MMC was instructed to draw a scheme in consultation with Christopher Badcock. The Miller-Badcock duo submitted a proposal, routed through Giffard, that emphasized that there were no dental colleges in India at that time (Calcutta Dental College came into existence in 1920) and it would be an advantage to train dentists formally before dental quackery established. Badcock provides an extended outline of the proposed teaching programme in pages 340-341. The preamble of the proposal is reproduced here

1. COURSE AND DIPLOMA.
In Great Britain the course for a College of Surgeons Licentiate extends over 4 years, and that for a University Degree over 5 years. It was therefore recommended that a 4 years' course be prescribed, and that the Faculty of Medicine be moved to ask the University to institute a Licentiate in Dental Surgery.

BOX 1. Preamble of the proposal sent by the Miller-Badcock duo. (Source: Badcock).

(Box 1), which comprehensively captures the context of the new proposal.

In this proposal, Miller and Badcock first speak of the details of the four-year long licentiate in dental surgery, followed by details of contents, pre-required educational qualifications, examinations and their conduct, required academic staff, and the proposed fee structure. They also speak of details of a shorter programme, something similar to the then prevalent Subordinate-Medical Service training programme in the MMC. In 1920, the government sought additional clarifications from Miller. That response instilled some hope that the proposal for a dental college and hospital in Madras would materialise. However, in May 1922, the project was deferred citing financial difficulties. Nevertheless, in December

dental mechanics came into MMC's dental department to train in short-term refresher programmes.

Speaking of short-term training programmes offered to unqualified dental practitioners in Madras, Badcock continues speaking about 'Post-collegiate courses in dental surgery for civil assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons'. This effort strikes as a relevant and useful human-resource development exercise. In May 1920, the chief-medical officers of district hospitals throughout the Madras presidency submitted an urgent request to the government that a six-month long post-collegiate training be offered to assistant surgeons and medical officers of the Subordinate Medical Service (sub-assistant surgeons), who were qualified with either an MBBS or an LMS or an LMP so that

dental department of MGGH in line with other dental hospitals (obviously Badcock meant the Guy's and the London Dental Hospitals, London) in that a considerable proportion of the work was done by students themselves, which of course was out of the question before the special course was started.

In those special-training programmes, four civil-assistant surgeons and one sub-assistant surgeon in 1920 and three civil-assistant surgeons and one sub-assistant surgeon, in addition to a 'private pupil' (details unavailable) in 1921 were trained. Only two such special training programmes appear to have been ever completed. Financial constraints are indicated as the reason for discontinuation. However, the nine government medical officers, who trained in basic, but practical dentistry, on returning to their respective hospitals in districts were enabled with appropriate dental furniture and other relevant materials by the government. Six reasonably equipped exclusive dental rooms in different district headquarters hospitals became available to rural public by the end of 1922.

Badcock speaks of a critical event in this article, which none, thus far, has recorded or reported. That pertains to the movement of the department of dental surgery in MMC-MGGH to the Government Royapuram Hospital (GRH, which transformed into the Stanley Medical College and Hospital in 1934). Space constraint compelled the Madras Medical Department officials including Surgeon-General George Giffard to suggest the department of dental surgery's move from MMC-MGGH to GRH. The GRH was undergoing refurbishment at this time. Giffard issued an order on 24 March 1924 directing the shift of the department of dental surgery from MMC-MGGH to GRH. At GRH precinct, the department of dental surgery of MMC-MGGH was allotted a well-lit, hygienic operating theatre enabled with necessary modern electrical installations and ample water supply, a second room for patient examination, separate waiting and retiring rooms for men and women. Three state-of-the-art oil-pump dental chairs (Fig. 1) were installed, supplemented

(Continued on page 7)

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1922, the scenario brightened slightly since the government again sought freshly prepared costings and anticipated expenditure statements. A progress was imminent (Box 2). Again it proved an illusion in the next couple of years. Badcock clarifies this see-saw experience with relevant evidence and

they could be comprehensively trained in dentistry, enabling them to handle patients with dental problems in rural hospitals. The government of Madras approved this request. MMC's dental department organised training programmes (referred as 'special' programmes) that comprised 15 lectures on dental

In July, 1923, the whole scheme was thoroughly re-considered by the Surgeon-General, the personnel and salaries of the staff, etc., provisionally settled, and the papers finally laid before Government.
A Government Order issued on 8th September, 1923, states, "The Government consider that the scheme for opening a dental school and hospital in Madras should be taken up along with the scheme for the new General Hospital."

BOX 2. Deceptively bright outcomes for a new dental college and hospital in 1923.

data in the section 'The public demand for dental training and for a profession of dental surgery'. In the same section, he further clarifies how some of the already practising unqualified, unregistered dentists and

surgery, delivered by the professor of dental surgery (Badcock?) and the second dental surgeon (name unavailable), five lectures on dental anaesthesia by the instructor in anaesthetics (name unavailable). The attendees were trained in impression-taking, model-casting, and construction of Hammond splints through practical classes. Two critical remarks are offered at this point: (1) Holding of these courses led to an increase in the number of patients treated in MGGH and to more of conservative work was undertaken. (2) It also brought the

The department was to be self-contained, occupying the upper storey of a wing of the Out-patient Department, and was to have its own entrance hall and exits.

At one time there seemed to be a possibility of the building of this Out-patient Department being pushed on as a matter of urgency, and it was when this prospect had definitely faded that the provision was made at Royapuram.

BOX 3. Projected expansion of the department of dental surgery, MMC-MGGH complex.

by a range of dental engines and other relevant instruments and appliances. This facility was a self-contained, smaller-scale dental hospital. The professional staff included a professor of dental surgery (first dental surgeon), a second dental surgeon (assistant dental surgeon), and a dental anaesthetist. Services of nurses and Class IV assistants were provided by the superintendent of GRH. The re-located department of dental surgery in GRH opened for public on 9 April 1924. Badcock comments in the later section of his article that this shift to GRH from MMC-MGGH gained the most-modern precinct, that was earlier intended for development in MGGH. With the shift of the Department to GRH, the plans meant for MMC-MGGH were deferred to a later date, when a greater expansion of this department were to occur. The projected later-date expansion details are clarified by Badcock (Box 3).

Badcock concludes with what he describes as the 'collapse of the whole project: dental hospital, dental college, diploma, and registration'. Almost at the time of reaching final stages of sanction of the

development of the 'new' dental college and its associated new hospital, with the issuance of a GO dated 8 September 1923, the entire project collapsed colossally.

Conclusion

This article fills the gaps in the growth and evolution of western-science based dentistry — teaching and clinical — in Madras. Regrettably we could not undo all knots, e.g., those of H Venkata Rao and HM Rao, pioneers of dental education in Madras in the early 20th century. However, we could decode most of the historical details between 1883 and 1927. We have clarified with relevant evidence that two LDSRCS-qualified British dentists Horace John Gould and Christopher Frampton Badcock were officially associated with the department of dental surgery in MMC and conjointly holding the role of the dental (civil) surgeon in MGGH. We have not been able to categorically establish whether Badcock came to Madras as an assistant (i.e., second dental surgeon), when Gould was the first dental surgeon in MMC-MGGH. What is absolutely clear, however, is that

Gould taught dental surgery to senior students of the MBCM class in MMC from 1883 until the 1900s. We have gathered relevant evidence that Badcock was living in Madras, when Gould was already employed in MMC-MGGH. Most likely, Badcock was a private practitioner during his early days in Madras. Either in 1905 or 1906, he must have been appointed in the service of the government of Madras as the professor of dental surgery and first dental surgeon in MMC-MGGH, succeeding Gould on return to England. Although our inferences about Badcock are subjective, they are reasonably supplemented by details from his published papers in IMG, Calcutta.

That Gould filled in as an academic teaching basic dentistry in MMC and concurrently served as the surgeon treating dental problems of people who came to MGGH is clear from the details supplied in this article. His successor Christopher Badcock made efforts to establish a dental college in Madras, although unfortunately none of his efforts fructified during his stay in Madras, until the 1920s.

Badcock made concerted efforts to start a state-funded dental college in Madras. From the collected records we can see that Badcock's efforts pre-date the efforts of Rafiuddin Ahmad in Calcutta, although importantly Badcock was not as successful as Ahmad, more likely because of the conservative thinking of the government of Madras. Badcock made sincere efforts of professionally training assistant (civil) surgeons from various rural government hospitals in Madras presidency in dentistry for defined periods of time from 1900s.

Overall, until the early years of 1950s, nothing eventuated in the context of an exclusive dental college and hospital in Madras. In the late 1949, the government of Madras, when Poosapetti Sanjeevi Kumaraswamy Raja was the Premier of Madras, approved the development of the department



Fig. 1. Oil-pump dental chair with ornate handrests developed by the medical and dental practitioner Basil Wilkerson, Alabama in 1877 (Source: <https://collection.science-museum-group.org.uk/people/cp121360/basil-manly-wilkerson>).

of dental surgery as the dental wing, while remaining attached to MMC-MGGH. Only during the chief-ministership of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari of Madras state in 1952-1954, the department of dental surgery grew into an exclusive and independent dental wing. The government of Madras at this point of time, approved the construction of an additional floor in the extant outpatient block of MGGH. The Dental Wing of the MMC was formally launched in 1953-1954, training students towards the Bachelor-of-Dental-Surgery degree programme approved by the University of Madras. Another undeciphered element here is under what circumstances and when the dental department of MMC-MGGH, later shifted to GRH, returned to MMC-MGGH precinct!

The Department of Dental Surgery in Madras was developed as a department of MMC-MGGH in the 1880s to teach basic dentistry to senior students of general medicine and surgery *via* theory taught in MMC and practical classes held in the apportioned dental ward in MGGH, coinciding with the appointment of Horace Gould. No formal, exclusive training in dentistry leading to either a diploma or a bachelor's degree occurred during the work times of either Gould or Badcock. This

practice and limiting decisions of the government of Madras can be explained by the nature of developments in teaching and practice of dentistry in Britain. In the late 19th century, dentistry in Britain was seen as a sub-specialty of 'surgery' that came under the ambit of administration and regulation by the Royal College of Surgeons. Those desirous of practicing dentistry were required to hold a basic degree in general medicine and surgery (MBBS or equivalent) training in a British University (e.g., University of Edinburgh, Scotland). This was the reason why the LDSRCS diploma was awarded by the English, Scottish, Irish Royal Colleges of Surgeons. By 1956, the British Dentists Act 1921 had undergone multiple amendments. Consequently, a new, General Dental Council (GDC) of Britain came above the then extant Dental Board (DB) in the context of administration. One key stimulus for the GDC to acquire greater powers than the DB was that the Teviot Committee Report led by Charles Kerr (the First Baron Teviot) made in 1946, which argued that dentistry has matured into an independent medical profession, and therefore, it could govern itself.

(Concluded)

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— THE EDITOR

Young talents bring glory to sports in Tamil Nadu

The year 2026 may well be declared as Year of Glory for Sports in Tamil Nadu! Remarkable achievements on the world stage by a few young talents have made it so. First, it was Chennai – India's cradle of chess with **Vaishali** one of the chess sport's siblings qualifying as the Challenger to the reigning women's world champion. She achieved this with a commanding performance at the Challenger tournament held biennially. Next, her younger brother **R. Praggnanandhaa** created a sensation by emerging as the first Indian Grand Master to capture the title at the prestigious Norway Chess 2026 tournament at Oslo and going on to put up another sterling performance at the Grand Chess Tour. Leading the points table till the penultimate game, Pragg slipped to be held to a draw in the decisive final game against Wesley So to finish runner-up in the Sinquefeld Cup competition. Pragg, who defeated the world championship challenger J Sindorov of Uzbekistan in this competition, however, qualified for the final of the world chess tour and went on to become the first Indian to win the Grand Chess Tour title defeating G.M. Fabiano Carua 15-13, fighting back after trailing by six points before the title clash began at St. Louis in the US.

That was not all for TN sport! What made this sporting state's cup of joy full was the great show at the Glasgow city Commonwealth Games (CWG) by three young Tamil Nadu sportsmen – a promising badminton player, and two athletes – one excelling in the

long jump event and the other a weightlifter.

K.J. Suhaas is an emerging junior badminton player from Tamil Nadu. In 2026, he made headlines by reaching the final of the YONEX All England Junior Badminton Championships, one of the most prestigious junior events globally. His performance is testimony that Tamil Nadu has been producing strong shuttlers through the Junior Badminton League and TNBA development programmes in Chennai. Suhaas is based in Pallavaram, Chennai and his run in the national and state-level competitions reflect his depth in the singles.

Talking to *Madras Musings*, his father Karthik, who is employed in International Sales, Royal Enfield company, tells us that Suhaas started playing badminton when he was seven years old. As he developed into a competitive player, he gained recognition in Chennai's badminton circuit by winning tournaments and gaining strength technically. In 2021, Suhaas decided to take to badminton professionally and is currently training under the Elite programme at the Myndz Badminton Academy in Chennai. The boy's journey in the sport has been marked by steady progress in performance and fitness. As a Khelo India Games participant in the Under 17 and Under 19 sections, Suhaas aims to represent the country in international level tournaments in the coming seasons. According to Karthik, it is his son's goal to win a medal in Badminton at the Olympic Games in 2032.

Suhaas's current national

ranking in the Under 17 Singles is Number 5, at the State level it is Number 7, and in the Under 19 age group, he is ranked Number 3. His climb up the ladder began with a hat trick of titles in the Chennai District Championship in 2022. Between 2024 and 2026 he made a name for himself in the Tamil Nadu State Sub Junior and Under 17 Championships, Tamil Nadu State Junior and Under 17 championships and in three editions of All India Sub junior ranking tournaments. He won the Silver at the YONEX All England

● by
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Junior Badminton Championships 2026 after losing the final to fellow Indian Sai Bhatraju. Following his brilliant show at the All England Junior championships this year, Suhaas is seeking corporate sponsorship to help him compete at the international level in various competitions and realising his Olympic medal dream.

The Tamil Nadu weightlifter **Muthupandi Raja** was born at Kovilpatti, in Thoothukudi district. He competes in the 65 kg category. This year at Glasgow, Raja won the Silver in the men's 65 kg category at the Commonwealth Games. He totaled 286 kg – 126 kg in snatch and 160 kg in clean & jerk. Malaysia's Aznil Bidin took gold with a Games record of 299 kg.

Raja took to weightlifting

at age 12, trained at an SAI centre from 2014, and was coached by Vijay Sharma since 2016. He works with Indian Railways since 2018. After a career-threatening elbow ligament tear in 2019, he came back to win the silver at the 2025 Commonwealth Championships, finished ninth at Worlds with a personal best (PB) 299 kg, and clinched the 2026 senior national title.

Tamil Nadu's Triple Jumper **Praveen Chitravel** is the state's leading triple jumper. He is a multiple national champion and has represented India at the World Championships. He trains in Chennai with SDATN coach Indira, and is known for his consistency over 16.50 m p+ and for being part of India's relay and field-event core. At the 2026 CWG, he jumped 16.58 m to win the Silver medal in the men's section.

Another Tamil Nadu Triple Jumper is Praveen Selva or **Selva Prabhu Thirumaran** in the CWG squad, who has been a Junior Under 20 athlete. At the Commonwealth Games, Selva Prabhu jumped to his season's best of 16.52 m and picked up the Bronze.

All the Tamil Nadu medal winners in the Commonwealth Games 2026, have been lauded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as by the Tamil Nadu Government and Chief Minister Joseph Vijay, who also honoured them with cash awards.

Tamil Nadu's surge in the world of sports showcases more emerging stars. **Neil Samraj**, a 17-year-old athlete has bagged the Youth Under 18 100m

crown at the National Youth Athletics championships in Ludhiana, on September 1, 2026. While emerging the victor, Neil Samraj broke the youth Under 18 national record twice. He clocked 1046 seconds in the final and bagged the Gold. His feat came after his participation in the World U 20 championships the week before. "The experience gained at the world U 20 competition helped me in the race in the national competition," he observed. He shaved 0.17 seconds off the standing national record held by Anshu Rajak since 2023. He attributes his success to his coach Velmurugan under whom he trains. Samraj took up athletics as his sport while studying in Class 9 in school.

At the Ludhiana nationals, one more future star seemed to be emerging from Tamil Nadu – **T Mrithika**, who broke the meet record while winning the 100 m title clocking 11.78 seconds.

Answers to Quiz

1. Triplicane
2. Aurangzeb
3. 1871
4. Mowbray's Road, now TTK Road
5. Lord Connemara
6. Sir Alexander John Arbuthnot
7. Champions of Chennai
8. Sacramento Kings
9. Abraham Eraly
10. S. Muthiah

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