

# Secrets of City Preserved in Houses of Mylapore

*Three architects will be conducting a Heritage Walk through homes that are over 50 years old.*



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By Chandni U

Driving a car through Mylapore is difficult. The best way around is on foot. If you are not in a hurry and are looking at the busy streets and the buildings you pass by, you will realise that the features of the houses change dramatically within two or three minutes of your walk.

Architects Tahaer Zoyab and Anisha Murali are hosting a Houses of Mylapore Heritage Walk on Sunday. They will take you through the houses that are about 50 years old, around the Kapali Temple, and explain their characteristics and architecture.



This walk is a

part of the Houses of Mylapore project that is undertaken by Triple O Studio. To get a better understanding of the project, we met Tahaer and his team in Gandhinagar. We sat together in their studio, which was being renovated.

“During the walk, we will take people along the houses surrounding the Kapali Temple and explain the architecture. But we don’t really have to talk much because the houses speak for themselves. They are amazing. Each house is different from the other.”

Yet, there are some basic features that you find in them all. For instance, the thinnai — the semi-open space in the front is beautiful with its intricate grill work. You can't see any more of the house. But once the doors open, you can see as far as the back of the house, which may lead to a small courtyard.

“The sad part is that some of the houses are not maintained well. They have so much real estate potential,” adds Tahaer. Also, around 52 houses around the temple are locked! “It was quite a shock. Few people know who the owners are. That is what we hope will come out through this project.”

So, what exactly is the Mylapore Project all about? “The idea is to recognise well-maintained houses that are more than 50 years old. Right now, our sphere of influence is limited. We aren't looking at all of Mylapore. So people can contribute by sharing pictures and information with us. Once we identify good houses, we pick the best ones and hang a plaque in front of them in recognition of this. This will inspire them to keep it maintain it and inspire others to do the same,” he explained.

Anisha chipped in about her experience in Mylapore. “During my college days, I used to go there for bhajjis and filter coffee, of course. Now, working for this initiative, it has been a whole new experience. When I approach a family and ask them for permission to explore their house, they welcome me with a smile. It's always nice to have a conversation with them, explaining the architecture and making them understand the value of their house.”

Triple O Studio was established by Tahaer and his wife. They work on various quirky projects apart from regular residential projects residential projects. In 2010, they undertook the namma toilet project, now it's the Mylapore project. “Basically, we take up any kind of project, as long as it is in the realm of design. We are excited about this current project. I believe through motivation and recognition, traditional houses can last much longer and it will have a domino effect. If it succeeds, we would love to start a Houses of Triplicane next,” said Tahaer. For now, the Mylapore Project is working in full swing. To take part in the walk, come to Ambika Appalam Store, North Mada Street at 7am on January 10. For details, check out their Facebook page, Houses of Mylapore.

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