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# Culture in every brick at Royapettah

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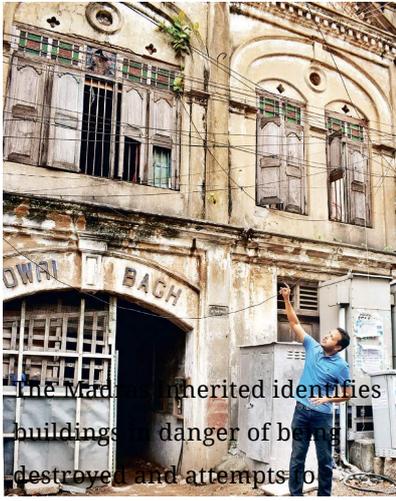
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**By Rochana Mohan**

**Express News Service**

CHENNAI: Gowri Bagh was once a large, two-unit home in Royapettah. With a small gate that led to a covered parking area, stained windows overlooking the street and wooden window frames made from ancient timber, the house was called The Twin House and The Nutshell by subsequent owners in the 1950s.



The Madras Inherited identifies buildings in danger of being destroyed and attempts to preserve them □ RP Raman

However, that was Gowri Bagh in its prime. The Gowri Bagh that rests in Perumal Street now is unkempt, dilapidated and forgotten. It's past and relationship with the people of Royapettah are now forgotten,

hidden behind crates of milk, posters and black mold.

"I'll give it two years for it to be torn down or for it to collapse due to poor maintenance," said Tahaer Zoyab to the crowd of people on Madras Inherited's heritage walk in Royapettah on Saturday. "The tragedy is that if you go inside, it's in a terrible condition, worse than how it

looks outside."

The one-km walk in the small lanes of Royapettah near Express Avenue Mall focused on the many cultural influences in architecture. Zoyab, an architect, specifically pointed out buildings with Portuguese and Islamic design, while also showing houses with metalwork that was popular in Chennai during the 1820s. The walk focused on creating a strong relationship between the locals and the buildings to help in their preservation.

"We are trying to inform people of the cultural and historical heritage of Madras through these buildings and form a bond or an association with it," said Shalini Rajkumar from Madras Inherited. The team from Madras Inherited consist architects and volunteers who map and identify buildings in danger of being destroyed and attempt to preserve and maintain them. "We also try to reach out to residents or stakeholders am try to do something about the houses that makes is usable for a longer period of time."

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