

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)  
announces an Informal Talk

by

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### **Madras in the 1930s: Metropolis of the Avant-garde**

During the 1930s, Madras – South India’s only major urban metropolis at the time – became the center not only of intense new political developments, but also of an unparalleled burst of cultural activities, such as the advent of the “talkie” (Tamil sound cinema), the emergence of a literary avant-garde, the revival of “classical” dance and music, and many other phenomena. This lecture will be an attempt to think about this important moment in Indian cultural history and how one might go about reconstructing it with as much complexity as possible. Ideally, we would like to know what it felt like to have lived in that moment, what Madras’ citizens saw, heard, smelled and tasted, and what they thought and spoke about. Our journey to the Madras of the 1930s will take its cue from literature and film, and in particular the writings of the inimitable icon of early twentieth-century urban Tamil modernity, Puthumaipitthan (1906-1948), whose name, lit. ‘one who is crazy for newness’, itself is unmistakably avant-garde.

**Tuesday, 8 November 2016 at 10 am**  
Room 2002, CSMC