

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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## The politicisation of heritage – a necessary evil in present times?

Last week saw the CM of Tamil Nadu laying the foundation stone for an open-air museum at the Keeladi archaeological site, another for a museum at Gangaikondacholapuram and launching a website on the Keeladi excavations. TN archaeology has never had it so good as far as Government support is concerned. But the heavy political overtones of the event coloured everything. That what should have been a matter of national rejoicing, especially the news on the Iron Age findings at Sivakalai, was reduced to a regional event, shows how much politics, at Centre and State levels have entered even matters such as archaeology.

That the Keeladi excavations, stunning though their findings are, having been the subject of much politics is well known. This is unfortunate but true. The excavations began in 2015 and when the second season ended there were

● by Sriram V.

accusations levelled against the Archaeological Survey of India for transferring the officer in charge chiefly with a view to scuttling the work done so far. This it was felt was essentially to deny Tamil Nadu its true historic legacy. The Central

Government was quick to deny it and from then on the issue assumed political and regional colours. The matter went to court and since then, it is the TN State Department of Archaeology that is carrying on all investigation.

If indeed the accusations against the Central Govt. and the ASI are true, it is all most unfortunate. That what should have been seen as a matter of national pride should have been governed by petty regional insecurities is not edifying. On the rebound, Keeladi has benefitted, for the TN Government, like its counterparts

(Continued on page 2)

## Chennai mourns the loss of thousands of Olive Ridleys – Could this not have been prevented?

Recently, Chennai was left shaken by the mass deaths of Olive Ridley turtles whose remains were strewn along its coastline. News reports say that dozens of carcasses were found in Marina Beach, as well as at sites between Neelankarai and Besant Nagar, Neelankarai and Kovalam, and Napier Bridge and Foreshore Estate. The death toll is said to have crossed 1,000 with many more bodies reportedly floating in the open sea. The cause of death has been identified as drowning. Alarming, Andhra Pradesh has also reported similar mass deaths of Olive Ridleys.

Olive Ridleys are a critically endangered species that swim across the Pacific Ocean to nest on our shores and lay eggs on our beaches between January and April each year. In fact, Chennai's coastline is among the few remaining nesting sites for these turtles. The reptiles must surface frequently to breathe, and (though official reports are yet to be released) it is suspected that net entanglement is the cause of the mass deaths. Squid and cuttlefish fishing uses large, weighted nets, while trawler vessels use big, cone-shaped nets that target the bottom of the sea to

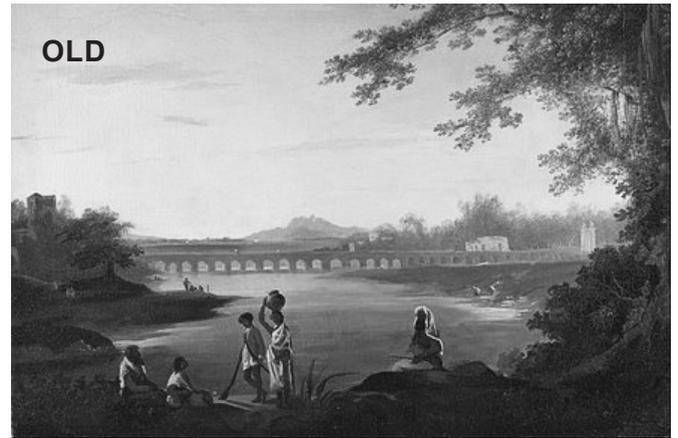
devastating effect. It is argued that mechanised vessels and commercial fishing expeditions have the heaviest footprint in this regard. In an interaction with *Mongabay India*, activist Nityanand Jayaraman says, "In

● by Varsha V.

Tamil Nadu, they were first introduced in Kanyakumari, with the notion that the sea was inexhaustible. This practice goes against the ethos of artisanal fishermen, who traditionally take only what they need from the sea."

## HERITAGE WATCH

### A Bridge on the River Adyar



It was in 1728 that Coja Petrus Uscan built the first bridge across the Adyar. It was named the Marmalong Bridge after the village of Mambalam that was the closest settlement. In 1783, William Hodges executed a painting of the bridge, which is our OLD. The bridge has not survived and in its place stands a wider and more modern Maraimalai Adigal Bridge, as befitting today's traffic conditions. But standing by one side, and remarkably free of any posters, is Uscan's plaque commemorating his construction, in three languages

– Latin, Persian and Armenian. Our NEW is a picture of the plaque, taken by your Deputy Editor. It is a sobering thought that in three years this plaque will turn three hundred!

The Tamil Nadu Marine Fisheries Regulation Act forbids mechanised fishing and trawling operations for up to five nautical miles from the coastline. However, reports say that this rule was flouted to a great degree this year. *The New Indian Express* quotes Tree Foundation founder Supraja Dharini thus – "We are getting a large number of turtle carcasses south of fishing harbours. The ocean currents are moving from north to south, similar to what is observed in Chennai. The turtles killed by trawl fishing nets between Pulicat and south AP coast are all getting washed ashore on Chennai beaches."

The southern bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) took suo moto cognisance of the matter and criticised the administration for being lax in its monitoring and enforcement of the rules ahead of the nesting season. The reports submitted by the Tamil Nadu Forest and Fisheries departments was also observed to be disappointing in their lack of information on disciplinary measures against offending trawlers. The NGT has reportedly sought a detailed report on compliance regarding the use of mandatory Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in trawl nets. In the meantime, the Fisheries

(Continued on page 2)

## THE POLITICISATION OF HERITAGE

(Continued from page 1)

in other States and the Centre, is not known for going out of the way to support archaeological research. But stung by the quick by the Centre's perceived indifference, it was quick to act. Work on Keeladi and sites such as Sivakalai in Thoothukudi have progressed briskly.

While it is truly delightful that the Iron Age, based on scientific research is now shown to have originated worldwide from this region, we cannot overlook the fact that funding for such studies has come only because the State Government is in proactive mode and is keen to score points against the Centre. The statement by the CM on the occasion of releasing the Iron Age findings reflected all of this – that Iron Age began on Tamil soil (it was not Tamil soil during the Iron Age) and that all these findings were due to the Dravidian Model Government.

An academic finding needs to be broken to the public with less overtones but then politicians will be politicians

whether it be Centre or State. After all we have a party at the Centre that forever considers the Mughals and the previous incumbents in power post-Independence to be the root cause of all trouble. And we are forever seeing not-so-well researched revising of history. So why should TN be any different?

The problem with such strong identification of a project with one political entity, in this instance the DMK, means that it is a certainty for cold storage when another political outfit comes into office. And what happens then? While history can be open to interpretation, archaeology sadly cannot. It would be best that all political entities bury their differences and celebrate what is being found. But then that would be an ideal world would it not? In the meanwhile, let Keeladi and other such archaeological sites get the attention they deserve. And may we get to see the excavations, museums and publications completed before attention shifts elsewhere.

## Chennai mourns the loss of thousands of Olive Ridleys

(Continued from page 1)

department has swung into action – reports claim that 24 trawlers were apprehended whilst operating in prohibited zones. The forest department has also set up a command and control centre at Besant Nagar beach to monitor the situation and coordinate response in collaboration with the fisheries department, the Indian coast guard, and state coastal security. The initiative will also engage with and take the support of the fishing community, who along with volunteer activists have been enlisted to share photos or videos of offending trawlers; authorities have also warned trawlers that fuel subsidies stand to be revoked in the face of violations until the end of the nesting season. In addition, an awareness campaign aimed at trawl fishermen is also underway.

One wonders whether this is sufficient. A long-term, sustainable solution demands not only an enforcement of the rules but also a deeper understanding of the reasons why some offenders continue to disregard regulations. It is reported, for instance, that fishermen are dealing with tougher conditions in which to ply their trade – not only have costs increased but volatile climes have made it harder to

travel deeper into the sea. Good catches are said to be caught closer to the shore; and mandated devices like the TED – a metal object that fits into a trawl net – are seen as measures that stunt already reducing catch. While there is little question that offending commercial fishers must be deterred by punitive action, there is perhaps a case to be made to also encourage a change of habits by exploring alternatives, be it a different method of fishing or alternate livelihoods during the season.

As for the lapse in monitoring and enforcement, the question remains as to why we so often have trouble executing our rule book. Is the problem perhaps a lack of resources? Even if that were the case, one can't help but wonder why arrangements cannot be made for the period of the annual nesting season which follows a predictable schedule. A considerable amount of financial resources has been earmarked for projects relating to our beaches under various heads, including the much-touted Blue Flag initiative. It is hard to imagine a cause more aligned with the spirit of the project and deserving of funding than protecting the ecosystem of our beaches. Our Olive Ridleys are certainly more important than ropeways.

## Airport adventures

**T**he *Woman from Madras Musings* was walking through the airport with a marked bounce in her step. She was feeling relieved at making good time; the city she was flying out from was an unfamiliar place, and she had no friends or family – or credit card, for that matter – to count on in the event of a missed flight. However, WMM soon discovered that she had much left to worry about. Her flight was delayed. She could have made peace with the hold-up but for the announcements made by the airline staff – much like an executioner who favours death by a thousand cuts, the attendant announced a succession of delays that each purported to be 'only fifteen minutes' but added up to two hours altogether. They also delighted in playing

sort of door one sees in horror movies. For one, it was closed. For another, it was sternly padlocked with not one but two rows of thick chains. WMM and the group lingered about for a while, unsure of what to do. An airport security official appeared presently, and jiggled the lock with a key; he then pulled at the chains in vain. He gave up and returned ten minutes later with a colleague. They battled the chains together until they gave way, and the doors creaked open to reveal an escalator that descended into a boarding gate with seating. WMM and the other passengers gasped at the sight and were thankful to see that there really was a flight waiting to take them on board.

The rest of the flight was uneventful enough, and WMM was feeling grateful when she landed home.

particular teacher did this all the time, and that she was not to mind his words. WMM thanked the boy for his reassurance and wished him goodbye as they parted ways at the exit.

### Borders

**T**he *Woman from Madras Musings* was visiting family in Thiruvannamiyur when she was ambushed by the neighbours at the gate. WMM knew them well. They were enjoying the evening breeze and having a bit of chit chat, and wanted to tell WMM a juicy story about their security guard. It transpired that one of them had broken their mobile phone, which had to be fixed at a service centre in Adyar; she was unable to go herself due to a variety of rather good reasons, and had

### SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

a form of Russian roulette with the boarding gate which kept changing often enough to keep the passengers in a constant state of suspense. In fact, at one point, the boarding gates mentioned on the physical boarding pass, the digital display at the airport and the airline website were all different from each other. WMM had to call the Better Half for help who checked online and – to her horror – gave her information of a fourth gate. WMM was on the verge of relinquishing all hope of escaping the blasted place and was considering applying for a job at the airport when an attendant appeared megaphone in hand, loudly asking passengers on her flight to report at another boarding gate altogether.

And so, WMM and co began to make their way to the promised land. The airport signage made them walk a considerable distance – fifty kilometres in WMM's opinion, a number B.H. is wont to suspect – and led them past all sorts of cafes and shops and down escalators. At one point, there were no more signs. The group reached a dead-end where there seemed to be nothing in sight but a smoking lounge. It was an eagle-eyed passenger who pointed out that a double-door adjacent to the lounge featured a faded placard that displayed their promised gate. WMM earnestly asks readers to believe her when she says that it was exactly like the

Why, she didn't even mind waiting at the carousel for the check-in baggage to come in. WMM had grown rather used to the drill. One must linger until impatience makes itself known, at which point an astute airport official realizes that a display of action is required, and switches on the carousel. Then one must watch an empty carousel go round and round with no sign of a bag – or anything else for that matter – for the next ten minutes or so. It is only after this traditional period of waiting that the bags slowly appear and one gets to go home. This trip was no different, of course. WMM had plopped herself on one of the chairs at the airport, resigned to the long wait. She should have noticed then that the seats around her were filled with school students; they were presumably returning from an excursion (fourth or perhaps fifth standard, judging by the height). And so, when WMM went to the carousel when her bag appeared, she was swarmed on all sides by children; and when the teacher yelled at the kids to form a line, WMM was conscripted into the exercise. To her alarm, she found herself in the middle line of the formation, marching with the children to the exit. At one point, WMM moved too slowly for the teacher's taste and was mortified to be subject to his ire. The child in front turned around with a commiserative air and assured her that this

sought the watchman's help. She had asked him – quite nicely, WMM is told – if he could take the phone to be repaired; she would pay him the necessary amount for the commute, too. The watchman asked where exactly the service centre was located, and upon learning that it was "just across the bridge" he leapt back like a startled deer. He explained that he had never travelled that far and had no intention of doing so now, in the sunset of his life; why, he would even have to cross a river! No, he repeated, madam must forgive him for he could never make such a long trip. WMM learned that in the end, he caught an auto and bade the poor woman go by herself, refusing to even accompany her.

WMM was quite entertained by the anecdote, not least because it reminded her of the Pater back in the day. He also would exaggerate distances to wiggle out of activities that didn't suit his fancy. WMM had thus grown up in the environs of Mylapore believing that any place that lay beyond RA Puram, the Marina beach and Nungambakkam was "too far" and that traveling there demanded a great deal of planning and preparation. As WMM expected, Pater was very appreciative of the watchman when she told him the story.

– WMM

# Sundaram Finance Mylapore Festival 2025

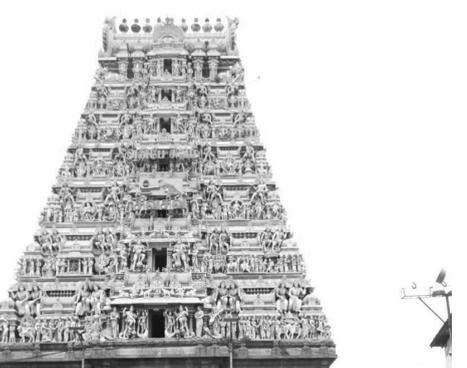
The Mylapore Festival was held during January 9-12, 2025. It began with a kutcheri in the Navaratri mandapam inside Sri Kapaleswarar Temple, moving out of Nag-swara Rao Park. The concert was presented by the students of Meenakshi Srinivasan, Mandaveli. That evening, there were three events at the Main Stage arena – Sannidhi Street quadrangle – Nagaswaram, choral music and a dance drama themed on poet-writer-freedom fighter Subramania Bharathi, performed by members of the Rukminidevi Natyakshetra Foundation, with Premnath directing

the show. The Food Street was abuzz with nine stalls serving snacks of Maharashtra and Mumbai, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. There were four walks and one tour during the Festival wholly supported by Sundaram Finance.

Food Walk was held on January 11, starting from the Indian Bank gate, N. Mada Street by Sridhar Venkatraman explored Mylapore's iconic and new food places. Tour for children on Cycles held on January 12 was led by Ramanujar Moulana, covering some Mylapore landmarks starting from Rasi store gate on Sannidhi Street, near Sri Kapali Temple zone. Mylapore

Temples: Histories, Legends, Stories held on January 12th was led by Dr. Chithra Madhavan starting outside the east gopuram of Sri Kapali Temple, covering three temples. Discover the World of Traditional Games on the Floor of Sri Kapali Temple held on January 12, was led by Vinitha Sidhartha. Three Stories of Sri Kapali Temple was held on January 12 by Pradeep Chakravarthy for children, 7 years and above, starting at Navaratri Mantapam in temple.

– Mylapore Times



# Remembering Maniam

மணியம் 100 (1924-2024): சரித்திரம் படைத்த சித்திரங்கள் by Maniam Sélvan (Sūpra. Bālan, Writing Support), Poompuhar Pathippakam, Prakasam Salai, Chennai 600 108 2023, 192 pages, Rs. 960/-.

*Sarithram Padaitha Sithirangal* (hereafter, Maniam 100) was launched in Chennai on 22 October 2023, synchronising with the birth-centenary of Maniam (Thandarai Umapathy Subramaniam), a highly regarded fine artist of Madras.

The soft, velvety cover offered a rich feel. The azure hue on the front cover was pleasant. The back cover was slightly different – Aegean blue – but delicate and hard to distinguish from the front cover. The large, thinly embossed imprint of Maniam's characteristic signature sparkles as the centroid on the front cover. A lotus flower in a curvy Reuleaux occurs in lieu of the title on the second 'M' in மணியம், thanks to the creativity of Subramaniam Loganathan (Maniam's son, Maniam Selven, Ma. Se.) — the author. This spurred me to look for Maniam's signature pattern over time – he signed using English letters during his early-career days, and roundish-Tamil letters in later 1940s with the start of the *Ponniyin Selvan* serial by Ramaswamy Krishnamurthy (a.k.a. Kalki Krishnamurthy, Raa. Ki.) in *Kalki* magazine, he signed using angular and right-slanted letters in 1950. At this time, inimitably, he connected the diacritical hook of 'ணி' with the stem of 'ய'. The evolution of Maniam's signature over time

is available in page 57. His shift to using angular, italic-like letters has several meanings – font psychologists consider angular letters (when used in free hand) represent novelty, impact, and seriousness of purpose, and the use of right-slanted letters represents emphasis and distinction. Maniam's forthright, angular signature effusively embodies clarity overflowing with artistry.

The front cover is superbly embellished with one of Maniam's popular artworks – the imposing c. 2.5 m tall Harihara panel of Badami – slightly reworked and presented as a *Chiaroscuro* by Ma. Se. The Harihara panel extending from the front cover to the back cover across the spine is in polychrome. The back cover includes a medley of Maniam's diverse art works, presented in blue and sepia drawn from Ra. Ki.'s *Sivakaamiyin Sabadam*. The book cover is a feast to eyes and far-reaching to mind. The cover leaves an impressive foretaste of the contents and genre.

A sharp and elegant charcoal-pencil portrait of Maniam by Ma. Se. occurs at the start of the book, followed by bountifully illustrated tributes to Maniam by Krishnamurthy Rajendran (distinguished author and former editor of *Kalki*), Sivakumar (film artiste), and Thiruppur Krishnan (renowned writer and editor of *Amudhasurabhi*). Rajendran passionately recalls many an interaction between Ra. Ki. – his father – and Maniam. Zealously, Rajendran speaks of Maniam's works that decorated Ra. Ki.'s magnum opera *Sivakaamiyin Sabadam* when started as a serial in *Kalki*. He speaks of how his



Fig. 2. Maniam taking a photograph with his Baby Rolleiflex at Subramanya shrine, Brihadeswarar Temple, Thanjavur.

sister Anandi Ramachandran (née Krishnamurthy), as a young girl, used to pose for Maniam to develop India-ink line-sketches illustrating Sivakaami's various dance *karana*-s. Using pleasing prose, Rajendran takes us on an enchanting journey about Maniam as a Kalki-artist and his association with Ra. Ki. Film-artist Sivakumar's tribute cap-

words but more with delightful illustrations fill pages 34-184. For reasons of brevity, I will be speaking of only a few chapters here.

Pages 35-44 – கல்கியோடு குருகுலவாசம் – capture Maniam's formative days. Further to speaking of Maniam's childhood in Mylapore, Ma. Se. highlights how Maniam came under the tutelage of Ra.

● by Anantanarayanan Raman,  
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tioned *Chiranjivi* (implying here 'timelessness') is brief but packed with warm thoughts of Maniam and his artistry. Following these, Supra Baalan clarifies his role in this book.

Eighteen chapters of fewer

Ki. when Maniam was pursuing the diploma at the Madras School of Art, superintended by the renowned sculptor-artist Debi-Prasad Roy-Choudhury (1899-1975). Maniam considered Roy-Choudhury and Ra. Ki. as key influencers in his life. Ra. Ki. organised a trip to experience the Ajanta and Ellora sculptures in 1944. From Ra. Ki.'s article *Ajanta Adishyanghal* (*Kalki* Deepavali Malar, 1944), partly



Fig. 4. (left) Maniam working in front of Mahavishnu in Lalitasana on Adishesha. (On right) enchantingly embellished artwork by Maniam published in an issue of *Kalki*.

reproduced in *Maniam 100*, we understand that how Maniam was hyperexcited visiting these relics and how he brought those artifacts to life on paper and canvas. A lovely reproduction of the breath-taking Tripurantaka (Rajarajeshwaram, Thanjavur, 10th century) occurs as a double-page spread (pages 42-43), done jointly by Maniam and his Kalki-colleague Chandra.

In pages 45-49, Ma. Se. speaks of Maniam acquiring a Baby Rolleiflex in 1948 (Fig. 2, above). In its time, the Rollei was a state-of-the-art photographic device equipped with a twin-lens reflex capability. Ma. Se. explains that Maniam invested in a Rollei that was well beyond his means only to achieve the best outcomes in his artworks because he relied on the photographs as points of reference. Two B&W photographs made by Maniam, as samples, are available in page 49, which speak well of Maniam's photographic skill and the camera he owned proudly. The chapter *கற்பனையையும் மீறிய சித்திரங்கள்* eloquently declares Maniam's involvement in Ra. Ki.'s *Ponniyin Selvan* that started appearing in *Kalki*,

October 29, 1950 (Fig. 3, below). Snapshots of a published note by Ra. Ki. on his travel to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) along with Maniam and a few others occur in pages 58-59, offering us a fascinating read with regard to the style of Tamil prose used in Madras in the late 1940s and the kinds of details they saw in Sri Lanka.

The chapter *பார்த்திபன் கனவும் அப்பாவின்கலைப்பணியும்* (pages 67-82) includes amazing details referring to Maniam as the Art Director of the cinema *Parthibhan Kanavu* (1960). This chapter includes many less-seen photographs of various film artistes, and illustrations of dress designs (page 75) and hair-do-s (page 74), plans of sets and scenes, crafted historical replicas used in film shooting, further to several examples of Maniam's pre-production artworks. Page 72 contains a B&W photograph of the outdoor set of a 7th-century Kanchipuram street, imaginatively recreated by Maniam, which captivatingly transports us to that time.

The chapter *பாதாமிச் சித்திரங்கள்* (pages 107-115) includes an elegant artwork of Mahavishnu in Lalitasana on Adishesha in p. 109 (Fig. 4). This is enchantingly embellished by Maniam with his artistic freedom. Here, Ma. Se. explains Maniam's systematic approach to creating artworks: that Maniam first made a photograph of the original sculpture using his Rollei ensuring that he got every micro detail of the original sculpture, including the accompanying ornamentations such that the pendant oil lamps and ornate plates used in ritualistic worship; second he meticulously noted other minute points as line mark-

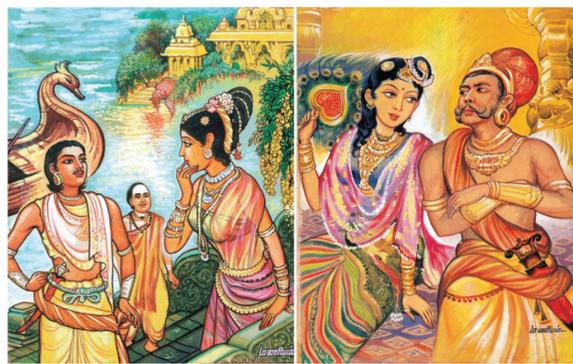


Fig. 3. Maniam's characters from *Ponniyin Selvan*.

## A celebration of horticultural artistry at Chennai Flower Show'25

The Chennai Flower Show, which was inaugurated by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on January 2, captured the city's imagination with its breathtaking floral art. This fourth edition of the 18-day festival was organised by the State Horticulture and Plantation Crops department and ran till January 19.

The show featured a wide variety of blooms from renowned horticultural destinations like Ooty, Yercaud, Kodaikanal, and Krishnagiri. It was a feast for the eyes, as visitors enjoyed the colorful, intricate floral sculptures, vibrant flower beds, and attractive array of hanging baskets and potted plants.

– Thamayandhi R



ings in his sketch-book; third he made a second photograph by standing a friend in front of the sculpture to ascertain scale and proportion. Maniam then re-created that sculpture on canvas, incorporating details from his memory of the sculpture further to using the photographs he made, availing artistic freedom to imagine and embellish, yet exercising the fullest care in not marring any detail of the original. Ma. Se.'s concluding words here are powerful (p. 115):

'Without using words, Maniam created his artworks and improvised them as his conscience directed and dictated.'

Ma. Se.'s above comment is

edifying, because we are aware that moral conscience dictates us – ordinary mortals – to align our actions with ethical principles, whereas a gifted artist's conscience instructs him/her to align his/her creative work with aesthetic principles and the deemed improvisation.

The chapter *ஓவியர் மணியும் ... உடனிருந்து வியந்தவர்கள் கருத்து* (pages 161-175) includes brief recollections of Maniam by a few of his contemporaries, disciples, and later-time admirers. This adds shine to *Maniam 100*.

The closing chapter *என் விரல்களை இயக்கும் அப்பா* (pages 184-191) is a

touching, personalised narrative by Ma. Se. In simple, but using a dignified Tamil prose, Ma. Se. describes how he inherited the artistic talent from his father and how he sustains that learning with excitement and gusto even today. Towards the end he says (page 191):

'I passionately believe that this book (*Maniam 100*) will lift the minds of both admirers of Maniam and those with an artistic mind to a different plane. This book will also be a spark triggering every person interested in fine arts. I am also confident that this book will inspire those interested to pursue their specific chosen pathways. That will be the victory of this book.'

I could not agree more.

*Maniam 100* impressed me by its overall grandeur, steeped in grace, poise, and style. The greatest gift any reader can get is the generous supply of scintillating artworks by Maniam, aesthetically incorporated by Ma. Se. I enjoyed reading every word; and, undeniably, I delighted in feasting on every illustration. The publisher Poompuhar Pathippakam deserves our kudos for printing this volume handsomely. Every Tamil-speaking household should possess a copy of *Maniam 100*. Well done, Ma. Se. An impressive and ever-lasting contribution to Madras's history, culture, and heritage.

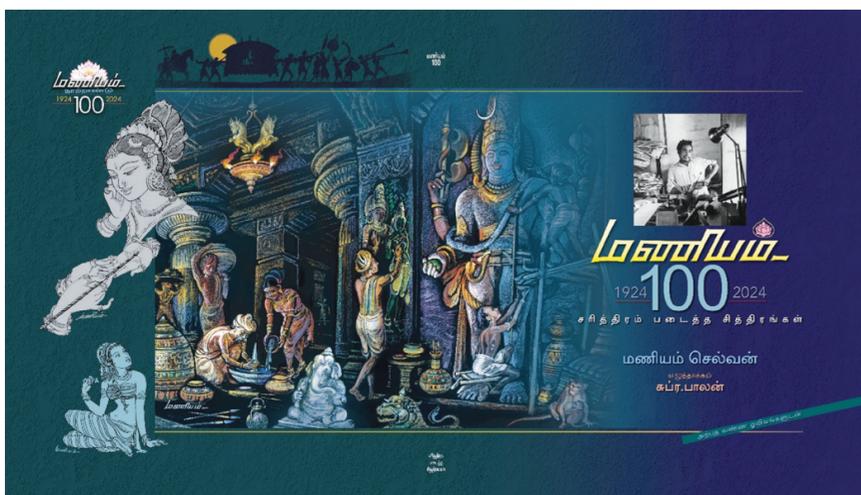


Fig. 1. Front and back cover spread of *Maniam 100*.

# Preserving Tamil Nadu's Geological Legacy

Tamil Nadu, a state renowned for its cultural heritage and ancient landmarks, is also home to a wealth of geological wonders that span billions of years. From the ancient rocks of the Eastern Ghats to the volcanic landscapes of the Western Ghats, these formations offer a crucial window into the Earth's history. As much as the state's cultural richness defines its identity, its geological heritage holds equally significant value. However, with the rising pressures of urbanisation and industrialization, the need to preserve these unique geological sites is becoming more urgent.

The geological history of Tamil Nadu dates back over 2.5 billion years, containing some of the oldest and most significant rock formations on Earth. The Eastern Ghats, stretching across the state, are home to a diverse range of rocks such as gneiss, schist, and quartzite. Formed during the Archaean era, these rocks were created under immense pressure and heat deep within the Earth's crust. Over time, tectonic movements brought these ancient formations to the surface, offering critical insights into the planet's early crust and tectonic shifts. One of the most significant geological landmarks in the region is the Eastern Ghats Granulite Complex, which plays an essential role in understanding the Earth's early history and crustal evolution.

To the west, the Western Ghats feature the Deccan Traps, an expansive region of volcanic origin formed by eruptions that took place around 65 million years ago. The lava flows created a vast plateau of basaltic rock, one of the world's most unique geological formations. The Deccan Traps are not only crucial to understanding the Earth's volcanic history but have also played an important role in the region's

agricultural success. The rich, fertile soil resulting from the volcanic eruptions has been a boon for agriculture, making the region an agricultural hub. Moreover, these volcanic rocks are closely linked to the mass extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous period, adding to their geological importance.

Beyond these ancient formations, Tamil Nadu also features an array of sedimentary rocks, such as those found in the Cuddalore Basin. Comprising sandstone, limestone, and shale, these rocks provide a valuable record of the Earth's changing environments. They document transitions between marine and terrestrial ecosystems, offering a glimpse into the planet's dynamic geological processes. The diversity of these formations underlines the geological complexity of Tamil Nadu, highlighting the forces that continue to shape the landscape.

Geo-heritage refers to the protection of geological sites that are scientifically, culturally, or aesthetically significant. The Nilgiri Hills, part of the Western Ghats, are a prime example. Composed of ancient granite and gneiss, some of which date back over 1.5 billion years, these hills have witnessed tectonic activity, climate changes, and volcanic eruptions. Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, they are not only a crucial geological landmark but also a habitat for unique species, highlighting their ecological and geological importance.

Another critical geo-heritage site is the Meghamalai Hills, which are known for their striking limestone karst formations. Over millions of years, erosion and chemical weathering have shaped caves, stalactites, and stalagmites within the limestone, creating an intriguing landscape. Meghamalai is also a biodiversity hotspot, hosting many endemic species



of plants and animals, which underscores the region's ecological value. Its geological and ecological importance further emphasizes the need for preservation.

Tamil Nadu is home to a total of 16 recognised geo-heritage sites, each showcasing a unique aspect of the region's

Nadu's geological landmarks. The region's vulnerability to these events is compounded by the impacts of climate change, which include more frequent and severe weather events. Extreme conditions such as heavy rainfall and rising temperatures threaten to accelerate the degradation of these ancient

the protection of Tamil Nadu's geological wonders. By promoting responsible tourism and encouraging visitors to respect the environment, Tamil Nadu can strike a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation, ensuring the preservation of these sites for future generations.

Public awareness campaigns are another crucial aspect of conservation efforts. Educating local communities, visitors, and policymakers about the scientific, cultural, and ecological value of these geological sites is vital. Engaging the public through outreach programs and educational initiatives will help foster a sense of collective responsibility for the preservation of Tamil Nadu's geo-heritage. Furthermore, collaboration between government agencies, environmental organizations, researchers, and local communities will be key to the successful implementation of these conservation strategies.

As Tamil Nadu continues to grow and evolve, it is imperative that its geological legacy is protected and preserved for future generations. By adopting comprehensive conservation strategies, promoting sustainable tourism, and raising public awareness, the state can ensure that its geological treasures are safeguarded. Preserving these sites is not merely about protecting rocks and landforms; it is about safeguarding a vital part of the Earth's history and ensuring that future generations can continue to learn from and appreciate these natural wonders.

● by Faisal Abass  
Research Scholar, Department of  
Earth Sciences

geological history. These sites span across the state, ranging from ancient rock formations to volcanic landscapes and sedimentary basins. They form an intricate mosaic of geological diversity that has shaped the region's history, ecology, and culture.

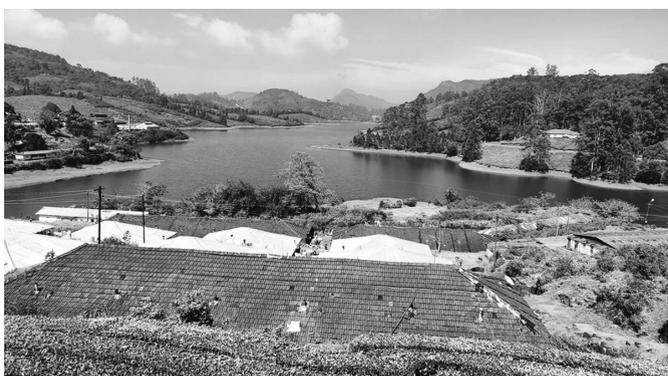
However, these geological sites face mounting threats due to the pressures of rapid urbanization, industrialisation, and unregulated tourism. Expansion of infrastructure, mining, and agriculture is leading to deforestation, soil erosion, and habitat destruction, particularly in sensitive areas like the Nilgiri Hills and Meghamalai. The rise of unplanned tourism further exacerbates these threats, often leading to littering, damage to fragile ecosystems, and the degradation of rock formations.

Moreover, natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and earthquakes pose a significant risk to the stability of Tamil

formations, necessitating urgent and effective conservation strategies.

A comprehensive and multifaceted approach is essential to preserve Tamil Nadu's geological legacy. First and foremost, the implementation and enforcement of strict environmental regulations are crucial to preventing the over-exploitation of these sites. Establishing protected areas and geo-parks will play a key role in safeguarding critical geological sites while promoting research and education. These protected areas could also serve as hubs for environmental awareness, where visitors can learn about the importance of preserving the state's geological heritage.

Sustainable tourism practices must be prioritized to reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism on these fragile sites. Eco-tourism initiatives that minimize environmental damage will be essential in ensuring



A view of the Meghamalai hill station, near Chinnamannur, in Tamil Nadu. Picture courtesy: The Hindu.

# The Bazaars of India – in Chennai

“What do you sell o ye merchants?”

Richly your wares are displayed....”

This poem by the Nightingale of India rings in my ears as I wander through the CERC Exhibition Grounds at Kalakshetra Road, Tiruvanmiyur – which hosts an exhibition once a month. Called variously as ‘Chennai Santhe’, or ‘Hasthakala’, or ‘Kalaa Utsavam’ or ‘Karigar Mela’, it has stalls from almost all parts of the country displaying fabrics, ready-made clothing, artefacts, traditional paintings, home decor items, metal/wood/earthen cookware, traditional toys – wood and brass, ceramic wares – jars, mugs, pots, handloom bedsheets, cushions, bags with handwork, Kolhapuris and jooties, trinkets and accessories of every type, and food and spices unique to each region. To add to the festive vibes, they also sometimes have folk dances to

the beat of *dhols*, and puppet shows and magic shows. Most recently they have added a pet adoption drive on weekends.

What is so different about this exhibition? Firstly, it brings the wares directly from the artisans to the buyers. Secondly going through the exhibition is an education in itself about the variety of crafts, weaves and handwork that different regions of our country are known for. When Ms. Sarojini Naidu penned the poem I began with, it was against the backdrop of the Swadeshi Movement. We were under foreign rule and the self-esteem of our countrymen was at a low. The poem, which is a panorama of sights, sounds and colours of the market, probably intended to promote pride in our home grown arts and crafts.

Now browsing round the stalls of the ‘Santhe’, taking in the kaleidoscope of art and colours, it seems it is our turn now to do something for the

traditional art and crafts of our country to flourish.

I will go over briefly on the various items that are generally available in these stalls.

**Fabrics and Sarees:** Let us start with the most women-centric category! You have silks, cotton, handwoven, block printed sarees and fabrics from different regions: Bandhani, Kalamkari, Banarasi, Muga and Eri silk, Sambhalpur, Ikkat, Ajrakh, Tussar, Kota, Chanderi, Venkatagiri, Jamdani, Patola, Uppada, Gadwal, Mangalgi, Pashmina, Pochampalli, Chettinad, Mad-

trinkets made of lac, beads and wood. Bangles – these deserve separate mention. You have rows and rows of these ‘circles of light’ that bring joy to the wearer – again I am reminded of our Nightingale’s *The Bangle Sellers*. You have glass bangles from Firozabad, brass bangles from Moradabad, stone bangles from Hyderabad



wood carved wall panels, corner pieces, wood resin trays and bowls. Dhokra art by the tribal communities is also available.

**Cookware and Pottery:** There is a sea of shiny blue ceramic pottery as well as rust brown clay and Terracotta pots, pans, mugs, jars. I have also seen black pottery from Manipur in the stalls. Besides these you also have huge Chettinad brass vessels and storage jars that were probably used decades before ‘online ordering’ of food came on us. These can now be a collector’s item. Iron and cast iron cookware - a healthier option which many are now switching over to, is also available.

Lastly, there are display boards asking you not to bargain with the artisans; the prices anyway are reasonable and will not dent your pockets. Do come and visit the next time the ‘Chennai Santhe’ is held - it is advertised in the newspapers. There is no entry fee and there is ample parking space. It has something for everyone besides being an ideal scouting ground for antiques or dolls to supplement your Navaratri collection, and the ubiquitous return gifts, or party favours with a touch of tradition. Enjoy the experience and take home a work of art, this will not only highlight your mantlepiece but will also help keep the hearth warm in some rural part of our country.

● by Sujatha Chandramouli

urai, Narayanpet, to mention some.

**Needlecraft:** Hand embroidery like Chikankari, Zardozi, Aari, applique work, mirror work, Toda embroidery, Phulkaari, Gota Patti, Kashmiri, Kutchi, Kantha, etc. – these are showcased on sarees, dress materials, cushion covers, table runners, bags, etc. The motifs, colour combinations and floral/geometric designs are typical and distinguishing for each type of work.

**Paintings:** You have miniature paintings from Rajasthan, Madhubani of Bihar, Warli art, Pattachitra, glass paintings, paintings on leaves, old stamp paper, etc. If you ask, the artisans are only too happy to explain how the painting is done and may also do a small demo. You will marvel at the artistry and effort needed to create a small painting.

**Trinkets and Accessories:** You have beautiful, oxidised necklaces, earrings, fine filigree work from the regions of Orissa and West Bengal. You also have

and Jaipur, lac bangles again from Jaipur. Besides this you also have beaded bangles, shell bangles, wood and oxidised metal bangles.

**Food Items:** Here you have different types of spices, pickles, preserves, papads, mouth fresheners, and *churans* (digestive powder).

**Bags and Baskets:** Bamboo, straw and jute – environment friendly specialties from the east and northeast.

**Dhurries, Mats and Bedsheets:** Handwoven cotton and semi-woollen mats, dhurries and quilts from Mirzapur and Punjab.

**Marble and White stone:** Intricately carved and inlay work on marble/white stone on lampshades jewel boxes – a sample of the skilled craftsmanship of Agra and Jaipur.

**Metal craft, Wood craft:** Traditional brass and bronze lamps and figurines from Tamil Nadu, miniature replicas of daily use cookware, wooden toys, spoons, cutting boards and ladles, keychains, large



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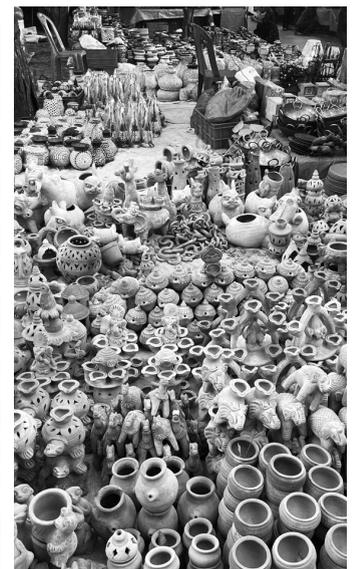
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– THE EDITOR



# Fifty Years of Viswanath's immortal innings at Chepauk

It's been half a century since G.R. Viswanath crafted his immortal innings at Chepauk and those fortunate enough to witness it, like me, can still recall so much of it. The passage of time has in no way diminished its stature and memories of his ethereal strokeplay are still razor sharp. For the next generation it has become so much a part of cricketing folklore that even they are aware of the greatness of his 97 not out sculpted on January 11, 1975, the first day of the fourth Test against West Indies and that it occupies a very special place in the honour list of Indian cricket's finest knocks.

Viewed from any angle Viswanath's 97 not out – his falling just short of a hundred somehow magnifies the enormity of his achievement – takes its place among the numerous bigger knocks scripted by Indian batsmen over the years. Numerically it is well short of 319, 309, 281 and 236 not out – some of the easily familiar scores in Indian cricket – but as far as dazzling strokeplay, the quality of the bowling, the fighting qualities akin to the boy who stood alone on the burning deck syndrome it is on a pedestal as far as sub non three-figure knocks are concerned. The fact that no one

else got more than 19 is a statistical detail that underscores the value of the innings to the side as also the result which saw India win by 100 runs.

West Indies had won the first two Tests but India won the third at Calcutta so the series was very much open as the teams assembled at Chepauk. MAK Pataudi playing in what turned out to be his last Test series won the toss and elected to bat. But India lost both openers Farokh Engineer and Eknath Solkar with just 24 runs on the board. Viswanath entered at this stage. He had top scored in both innings at Calcutta with scores of 52 and 139 and confidence personified quickly gave indications of playing another substantial knock. But at the other end the innings continued to flounder against the four-pronged pace attack of Andy Roberts, Bernard Julien, Keith Boyce and Vanburn Holder supplemented by the off spin of Lance Gibbs. On a surface that helped the fast bowlers the role of Gibbs was going to be minimal but Roberts in keeping with his reputation was proving to be a menace. He was menacingly fast as he also made the ball bounce disconcertingly.

Twenty four for two became 41 for four before Ashok

Mankad helped Viswanath to increase the score by 33 runs when he was out for 19. Roberts who dismissed Mankad was now unstoppable and he quickly sliced through the late order. He bowled Madanlal and Karsan Ghavri and had Erapalli Prasanna caught behind by Murray. The pace spearhead had now taken six wickets and India were 117 for eight.

But as long as Viswanath was at the crease there remained hope for the Indian

● by  
**Partab Ramchand**

team and the Chepauk crowd for whom he was always a favourite. He was in the forties when Bishen Bedi joined him for the ninth wicket. So far Viswanath had been elegance personified bringing off text book strokes as only he could the trademark square cut being dominant. Now left with only Bedi and B.S. Chandrasekhar both the very definition of tailenders he had to take on full responsibility. He did so by farming the strike bringing all his skill and experience into play. To his credit Bedi provided able support fully aware of his role – no flour-

ishing strokes just putting bat to ball and staying put at the crease. But the crowd had eyes only for Viswanath who now blazed forth with daring shots on both sides of the wicket. He drove, pulled, hooked and cut the ball repeatedly to the fence and skipper Clive Lloyd just threw in the towel as far as trying to get Viswanath out and concentrated on getting the wicket of Bedi. Finally after the ninth wicket had added 52 precious runs Bedi was bowled by Gibbs for 14.

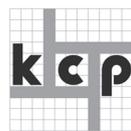
Joined by last man Chandra, Viswanath now pressed for further glory, racing through the 80s into the 90s. He also did his utmost to keep Chandra from the menacing fury of Roberts. Off the fast bowler's fourth delivery of his 22nd over he took a single which meant that Chandra had two deliveries to negotiate. Roberts ran in bowled a ball trifle shot of a length outside the off stump it took the edge of Chandra's helpless bat and went to Lloyd at gully.

Chandra who made just one left the crease but not before an apologetic gesture to Viswanath who was on 97. As the players left the field with the Indian innings terminating at 190 the capacity crowd at Chepauk rose and cheered

Viswanath all the way. The applause was loud and long till it reached a crescendo as the little figure entered the pavilion and vanished from view. A share of the applause was also reserved for Roberts who finished with seven for 64. He established a mastery over every batsman save one who in fact mastered him. Viswanath had delighted the delirious Chepauk crowd for 228 minutes hitting 14 fours. And when Raj Singh Dungarpur one of the selectors said "all things considered I don't think I have seen a better innings" he echoed the views of every one present on the ground that day.

The immense value of Viswanath's innings must also be seen against the backdrop of what happened thereafter. West Indies got a slender lead of two runs on the first innings. The Indian batting was seen in better light the second time around. They compiled 256 with Viswanath finishing as the second top scorer (46) behind Anshuman Gaekwad's 80. Requiring 255 for victory West Indies were bowled out for 154 Prasanna finished with a match haul of nine wickets but there was little doubt as to who had done the most to shape the significant triumph that saw India square the series.

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