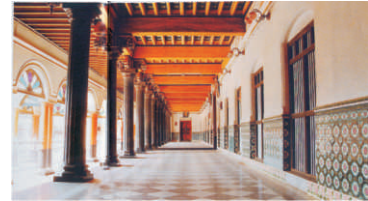


Classic Chettinad

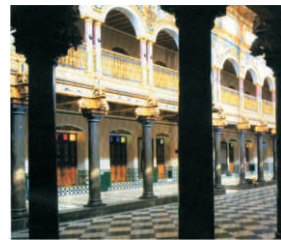


A citadel of culture, cuisine, charm and character, classic Chettinad is captivating as one meanders through its palatial mansions, ancient temples and lavish houses. Its intricate arts, sculptures and extraordinary handicrafts are as renowned as its cuisine.

Chettinad is home to the Nattukottai Chettiars called the Nagarathars, a prosperous banking and business community.

Chettinad, which was strategically placed on the old trade route helped its people in taking a leading part in trade and commerce, not only within but also outside India in places such as Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and other South-East Asian countries. These business people moved during the last century to these far flung countries as merchants, bankers and moneylenders, and made large amounts of money.

Between 1850 and 1940, they were at their pinnacle and were being called the 'Official Moneylenders of the Empire'. Their wealth was shipped home, in the shape of timber, marble, tiles, vessels, trunks, chests, toys and artefacts, back to their villages, where it was all poured into creating fabulous, palatial homes, each intended to be a resilient symbol of the Chettiar's might.



Almost an open museum, Chettinad showcases some of the best architectural marvels. It has some of the finest buildings in the country, many of them over a hundred years old. The finest of imported materials and skilled labour were used and houses were embellished with marble and Burma teak, wide pillared courtyards, imposing gates with intricate woodcarvings. Remnants of a rich legacy, a Chettiar home is a study on how human dwellings can exist in harmony with nature. Culture echoes on the painted pillars and tradition speaks, as the sensation of time standing still is reinforced inside every mansion.

These structures have an amazing sense of architectural balance. The houses are built on a rectangular, traversal plot that stretches across two streets, with the front door opening into the first street and the back into the second. There would be a series of inner courtyards. The basic design comprises a *thinmai*, enclosed courtyard surrounded by family rooms. The walls are smooth and are made of special plasters, which are usually finely ground mixtures of powdered shells, lime, jaggery and spices. The entrance door is usually made of extraordinarily intricate wood carvings of mythological figures.

The *thinmai* is a raised platform that served as a meeting place and also as accommodation for travelers and visitors. The inner courtyard has special significance. Lined with classically beautiful pillars made from granite or teakwood, it served as the venue for many ceremonies that the community performed, from birth to marriage and death. The main places of interest in Chettinad are Raja Place located at Kanadukaathan Karaikudi, Pallathur, Prithali and Kothamangalam, which houses the most lavish homes in Chettinad.

Insulated from the sun, the high ceilings, special wall plasters(made of a mix of eggshells, eggwhite and myrobalan), Athangudi floor tiles and open courtyards characteristic of Chettinad buildings helped the Chettairs stay cool, literally in the heat of summer.

The tiles are a superb handmade product, made in the nearby village of Athangudi. Using sand, local

Contd.

Cultural Calendar for May 2007

May 7

Programme to mark the 146th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

May 16

Film: 1942 A Love story
Language: Hindi
Directed by: Vidhu Vinod Chopra
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

May 23

Ghazal Recital
by Mr. Sudath Samarasinghe
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

May 25

Esraj Recital by Mr. Sujeewa Ranasinghe
Lecturer at the University of Visual & Performing Arts
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00p.m.

May 28

Film: Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam
Language: Hindi
Directed by: Sanjay Leela Bhansali
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m.
Duration : 3 hrs

May 30

Bharatha Natyam Recital by the Students of Natya Kala Mandir Presented and choreographed by Kalasuri Vasugi Jegatheeswaran, Director Natya Kala Mandir & Teacher at ICC
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

(Admission to all programmes is free on first come first served basis)



water, cement and pigments, its patterns are unique and floors tiled with them are very cool to walk on.

Stucco art was very popular, with Gods and heroes given equal prominence.

Kottan-weaving is unique to the area. Kottans were originally baskets used as packaging and as containers for gifts and offering during family rituals. Weaving colourful hand dyed kottan, sometimes embellished with beads and crochet, is a leisure craft for the women.

Antique shops are spilling over with goods. Best finds would include the quaint pewter jars, oilcans, mugs and bowl in lovely blues and greens imported from Czechoslovakia; the lacquer-work Burmese bamboo boxes and bowls that gleam in blacks, reds and browns; and the furniture. There are record players, telephones, crystal, ceramic, chinaware, old pictures, wooden artifacts, jars of face cream and hair pomade imported from the UK a century ago, carved wooden chests from China...et al!

The Chettiars also built grand temples in the typical style, which leave every visitor's soul nourished. There are also numerous temples in the region. Pillayapatti, Ariyakudi, Kovilur, Elayathangudi are all worth a visit.

The Chettiars followed a clan temple tradition, meaning a marriage was recognized only if the bride and the bridegroom received wedding garlands from their respective clan temples. The first of the

Contd.



Indian Cultural Centre

133, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 4, Sri Lanka
Telephone: 2500014, Fax: 2598674
E-mail: icc@sltnet.lk
ICCR Website: www.iccrindia.org

SANDESH
The monthly newsletter of the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo

May 2007

Call of the Mill, Oil on canvas, 102 x 85cm, Ramkinker Baij

Past Events

5th March

Kesariya Rang de – To mark the Holi festival a Bhangra dance programme by a ten-member Bhangra Troupe led by Ms. Sukhvir Kaur



The Indian Cultural Centre organized a programme entitled “*Kesariya Rang de*” to mark the Holi

festival on 5th March. This was presented by a 10 member Bhangra troupe from Punjab. The energetic dancers performed Jhumar, Luddi, Gidda, Daankara and many more dances.

The Bhangra Troupe also gave a lecture cum demo on 6th March for the students of the National Drama & Theatre Foundation.

16th – 18th March

“Segar's Exhibition” – An exhibition of paintings in serigraph by Segar



Mr. Segar, well known artist, had an exhibition of paintings in serigraph at the Centre from 16th to 18th March.

The exhibition was inaugurated by His Excellency Shri Alok Prasad on 16th March. Segar displayed around 20 of his works.

21st March

Nav Pratibha – a display of new talent in Indian classical music and dance - performance by the students of the Indian Cultural Centre

Nav Pratibha – A display of new talents in Indian classical music & dance. The annual show of



performances on sitar, violin, tabla, Hindustani vocal, Carnatic vocal music, Kathak & Bharatha Natyam

dance recitals by the students of the Indian Cultural Centre was held at the Bishop's college auditorium on 21st March. The event was presided over by the High Commissioner for India in Sri Lanka Shri Alok Prasad and Pt. W.D.Amaradeva graced the occasion as Guest of Honour.



The evening started off with a classical sitar recital in which the students trained by Dr. Nirmala Kumari Rodrigo presented an item, a composition based on raag Kafi set to Madhyalaya Teental which was composed by their guru Dr. Nirmala Kumari Rodrigo.



The classical sitar recital was followed by the Carnatic vocal music recital by the students trained by their guru Kalasuri Ms. Arunthathy Sri Ranganathan. It started off with a “Keerthanam - Vathapi” and concluded with a Meera bhajan.



Carnatic vocal music recital was followed by Violin solo in raag Puryadhanashri and concluded with a group performance “Kajri” – a Hindustani semi-classical style of singing that has been adapted as an instrumental composition by their guru Visharadh Somasiri Illesinghe.

Hindustani Vocal music students trained by Sangeethpathi Mr. Premadasa Mudunkotuwa presented a Bhajan.



Past Events... Contd.



This was followed by a tabla recital by the students of the Centre trained by their guru Visharadh S.W.Randoowa. Aspects of tabla playing - *Uthaan, Kayada, Mukhda, Tukda & Rela* - were displayed.

The instrumental and vocal music recitals were followed by dance recitals. The Bharatha Natyam dance students trained by Ms. Vasugy Jegatheeswaran commenced the dance recital with a dance item “Anjali”



followed by a classical item set to a fusion music piece called “rhythm”.



The Kathak dance students trained by Ms. Moksha Samarasooriya presented “Ganesh Vandana” followed by a Classical Kathak dance item.



The Kathak dance recital was followed by a Bharatha Natyam dance recital by the students trained by their guru Ms. Subashini Pathmanathan. They started with a classical item entitled “Sabtham” and concluded with a dance item for the song “Sinthu nathyin Isai Nilavinile”.

23rd March

Bharatha Natyam Recital by Ms. Yamuna Sivaparan



Ms. Yamuna Sivaparan, student of Kalabhooshanam Leelambigai Selvaraja presented a captivating Bharatha Natyam recital at the Centre. Her performance commenced with a Ganapathi Vandhana and was followed by Alarippu, Varnam, Samhara Thandavam, Keerthanam, and concluded with a Thillana.

LIBRARY

Recent Library Accessions

A Photographic guide to the Birds of India

Including Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Pakistan and Bangladesh
Samarpan, Amano
New Delhi : Wisdom Tree, 2006, 159p.

The Divine Peacock : Understanding Contemporary India

Murty, K. Satchidananda (ed.)
New Delhi : ICCR, 1998, 187p.

Bilateral Diplomacy

Rana, Kishan S.
New Delhi : Manas Publications, 2002, 283p.

Panchsheel and the Future : Perspectives on India-China Relations

Ranganathan, C.V. (ed.)
New Delhi : Samskriti, 2005, 391p.

Self-care for Women

Sheth, Parul, R.
New Delhi : National Book Trust, 2006, 156p.

India : Historical Beginnings and the concept of the Aryan

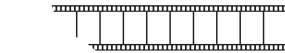
New Delhi : National Book Trust, 2006, 201p.

On the other side of Midnight : Fijian Journey

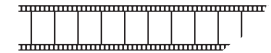
Lal, Brij V.
New Delhi : National Book Trust, 2005, 163p.

The partition of India

Singh, Anita Inder
New Delhi : National Book Trust, 2006, 91p.



Films in May



1942 A Love story



In 1942 the British ruled India, a time when people were either working for the British or rallying for underground meetings and protests against them. Against this background, Narendra alias Naren Singh, is in love with Rajeshwari Pathak. But their romance is not an easy one, for Naren comes from a wealthy family, and Rajeshwari is poor. Then there is the fact that while Naren's dad, Diwan Hari Singh, is a toady of the British, awaiting a higher title, Rajeshwari's dad is actively involved against the British. Now Naren has to choose between his dad's hatred for the revolutionaries and his love for Rajeshwari - which may make him a revolutionary himself, and set him up against his very own father.

Language: Hindi
Chopra

Starring: Anil Kapoor, Manisha Koirala & Jackie Shroff
Directed by: Vidhu Vinod

Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam



Gokhale & Helen

The traditional family of Pundit Darbar (Vikram Gokhale) gets a visit from Sameer Rafilini (Salman Khan), from Italy, who has come as a pupil to learn music and singing. Darbar and his family accept him. Sameer meets Nandini (Aishwarya Rai), Darbar's daughter, and both fall in love. But Darbar wants Nandini to wed Vanraj (Ajay Devgan). Nandini is heart broken, but does reluctantly marry Vanraj. When Vanraj finds out that Nandini is in love with Sameer, he takes her to Italy, so that both can be together again. Nandini discovers true love..

Language: Hindi
Starring: Salman Khan, Ajay Devgan, Aishwarya Rai, Vikram
Directed by: Sanjay Leela Bhansali

Classic Chettinad... Contd.

clan temples, Elayathangudi is 25km from Karaikudi (situated in the Sivagangai district). The temple is known for its great sculptural value and has the biggest tank of the region. The city is known for the Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple. The Mathura temple, rich in sculpture is a little over 5 km from Karaikudi. The famous Pillaiyarpatti is 12 km away from Karaikudi. It attracts visitors in droves. It is the best known of the Nagarathar clan temples. The kovil temple tank, said to never dry, seems quite a miracle in this otherwise dry region.

The Chettinad gourmet has carried its aroma and flavour far and wide. A gourmet's delight, Chettinad is a dash of spice and everything nice. From Chettinad pepper chicken to the fluffiest idlies, from the finger licking chutneys to curries, Chettinad has it all. Hospitality has been perfected to a fine art here. Essentially vegetarians, the Chettinad people imbibed a taste for non-vegetarian food on their travels and the South-East Asian influences are clearly visible. The Chettinad cuisine reflects the lifestyle of the people. The women use sun-dried and salted vegetables, seeds and fruits in their cooking. Apart from the main courses, there are plenty of mouth watering snacks typical of the cuisine

The Tamil style of *Mughlai* food can be savoured in the *biryanies* and *paya*. The latter is a kind of spiced trotter's broth eaten either with parathas or appam.

Chettinad is a region full of surprises, and a centre for artefacts, paintings and sculptures all of which are highly prized in India today.

Source: *Shaji Nair*; Incredible India