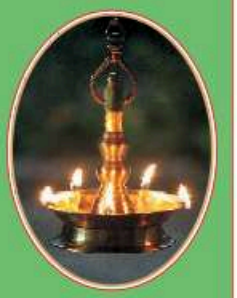
INTACH

MADURAI CHAPTER

December 2014

Issue: 2 December 2014 e-Newsletter of the INDIAN NATIONAL TRUST FOR ART AND CULTURAL HERITAGE - MADURAI CHAPTER

Convenor's Message



Dear readers,

This is the second e-newsletter of INTACH - Madurai Chapter! Through this, the executive committee members of INTACH - Madurai Chapter hope to reach out to our existing members while encouraging new members to join us. We believe that, jointly, we can do much to create an awareness of the need to promote, preserve and project the uniqueness of Madurai. As you are aware, we are committed to the promotion of Madurai's art, culture and heritage, and have also been making concerted efforts to encourage the young children and youth of Madurai to appreciate their culture, heritage and city.

We invite you to contribute articles, photographs, etc., to future editions of this e-newsletter.

Hope you enjoy reading it!

- Uma Kannan

INTACH - MADURAI CHAPTER

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORMED ON FEBRUARY 2014


Craft, Community & Heritage


Natural Heritage


Heritage Tourism


Heritage Education and Communication Service


Documentation


Architectural Heritage


Intangible Cultural Heritage


Material Heritage


Heritage Academy

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   Founder Convenor
2. Mrs. UMA KANNAN
   Convenor
3. Mr. P. RAJESH KANNA
   Co-Convenor
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   Treasurer
5. Mr. R. HARESH
6. Mrs. VALLI ANNAMALAI
7. Mr. M.D.VEL
8. Mr. G. VASUDEVAN
9. Dr. ARAVIND SRINIVASAN
10. Mrs. CHITRA GANAPATHY

INTACH – COMMITTEE
(For the Nine Divisions)

Committee Co-ordinators:

1. Natural Heritage	- Mr. R. Haresh
2. Intangible cultural heritage	- Mr. Aravind Kumar Sankar
3.Heritage Tourism	- Dr. G. Vasudevan
4.Heritage Education	- Mrs. Chitra Ganapathy
5.Documentation	- Mr. M. D. Vel
6.Craft, Community and Heritage	- Mrs. Valli Annamalai
7.Architectural Heritage	- Dr. Aravind Srinivasan

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INTACH - MADURAI CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

HOMES THAT HOUSE HISTORY

Division : Architectural Heritage
Venue : Laico Hall (Lions Arvind Institute)
Date : August 17, 2014
Resource Persons : Rajesh Kanna & Jeyesh J. Mehta



STANDING TESTIMONY: To preserve for posterity.

INTACH Madurai Chapter's Heritage Home Hunt initiative brought to fore the need to preserve old houses and to see them as storehouses of stories and not just shelters



"Our house is nothing less than a palace. I maintain it like a temple," says Valliammai Aachi, about the 130-year-old Renganthan Chettiar Mansion in Athangudi. She takes pride in the ornate teak-wood pillars, fresco-painted ceilings and the grand mutram of the house. "It's an exemplary work of art conceived by our forefathers," she says. For Ashok, owner of the famous 'Rettai Gopuram Veedu' or the twin-tower house at Virudhunagar, his house is a proud legacy. "It was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi. People there continue to see it with sanctity and revere us as a patriotic family," says Ashok. Likewise, Karupanan's 110-year-old house in Sholavandan was visited by Jawaharlal Nehru. "We have a plaque at the entrance mentioning the event," beams Karupanan.

As many as 40 participants from five districts around Madurai took part in the Heritage Home hunt, an initiative by INTACH Madurai Chapter to identify houses that are at least 75 years old. The heritage home owners were awarded at a felicitation function last Sunday at LAICO Hall. Many of the owners shared stories and history behind their houses. As part of the initiative, a team of historians, conservation architects and students embarked

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INTACH - MADURAI CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

on the mission to track down heritage homes in the districts of Madurai, Virudhunagar, Sivagangai, Dindigul and Theni. "We were able to identify hundreds of homes," says Rajesh Kanna, Co-Convener of INTACH Madurai. "Our aim was to look at how people value and maintain their houses. We gave more preference to century-old houses where family members continue to live for generations. We also took into account the modifications done to the original structure. The next step to the home hunt would be to document the aesthetics of the architecture and the antiquity of the construction techniques."

"There are a number of heritage houses lying vacant and locked around the temple area in the heart of Madurai. But people are unaware of the worth and value of these houses," says Rajesh Kanna, who branched out into the outskirts like Navinipatti, Sholavandan, Usilampatti and Mangalum near Melur, where many antique houses were identified. "Most old houses have unique features. Some of the materials used were even imported," says Srividya, whose 120-year-old Mathalai Nadar house in Virudhunagar is known for the vibrant stained-glass ventilators. "During the day, the glasses cast a wonderful glow into the living room. As my grandfather was a seafarer, he brought in tiles from Italy and Myanmar for the house," says Srividya.

Inhabitants of the heritage homes also consider the houses as the symbols of their ancestors. Some of them consider the homes as harbingers of good luck. Says Dr.V. Mohan, who lives in a joint family in his 80-year-old house in Perungudi, "We have seen over 100 successful child births in the house. For about 40 years from 1930, before the noon-meal system was introduced, we used to feed all the children in our village in this house." K.V.S. Pandian also has similar sentiments attached to his 75-year-old house in Virudhunagar. "I have preserved the belongings of my grandfather in a separate room. He built the house and I believe his soul still resides here."

The project also highlighted the need to preserve the houses. Nachiappan from Athangudi shared how he successfully renovated the house his grandfather built in 1930 without doing any major structural changes. "This has given hope to people owning heritage homes in Athangudi. They rethink and opt to renovate instead of selling or demolishing the old structures," says Nachiappan. Conservation architect G. Balaji says, "Houses in the olden

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http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/homes-that-house-history/article6335279.ece

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days were built in compliance with the elements of Nature. The materials were sourced locally and were eco-friendly and bio-degradable. The purpose of the mutram was to let rain and sun-light into the house."

Historian Dr. R. Venkatraman explained the evolution of the concept of housing and Vastu Shastra in ancient India. "The concept of bungalows was first brought in by the British. But even before that we had



Mr. M.D.Vel handing over the award to the proud heritage house owners.
Also seem to the left - Mr. Jeyesh Mehta, Treasurer - INTACH Madurai Chapter

havelis and kottais," he says. "So, luxury living was not new to India. Most of our heritage homes also had ample space and areas earmarked for various purposes, even for the pet animals. For instance, every old house had a cowshed in the backyard."

INTACH is continuing the home hunt and is welcoming more entries. Owners of heritage houses may visit www.intachmadurai.org to know more.

Proud heritage house owners and participants of the Heritage Home Hunt



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An innovative program by the chapter was launched last year at Virudhunagar – a historic town near Madurai, which has over 100 Heritage homes. A Heritage walk was organised to these houses, and aspects like the facade, layout, ventilation, storage, building materials used and other unique features were studied. In June 2014, a project named – 'Heritage Home Hunt (H3)' was conceived by INTACH committee members- Rajesh Kanna & Jayesh Mehta, to bring these marvels to limelight. This project is a first of its kind in identifying and conserving the Heritage houses of Madurai & it's neighbouring districts- Virudhunagar, Theni, Dindigul and Sivagangai. House owners were invited to submit photographs and write up of interesting happenings, occasions & district architectural features of their house which is at least 75 years old. At a grand felicitation function by INTACH MADURAI on 17 Aug 2014, a presentation of these Heritage houses was made to the public & each house owner was awarded. Renowned historian Dr. R.Venkatraman and Restoration Architect Mr. Balaji addressed the gathering with their valuable knowledge and emphasised that ancestral homes are treasures to be preserved for posterity. H3 turned out to be a unique experience for the participating families. This event was generously sponsored by INTACH member Mr. Ligi George.

The ongoing project aims to inculcate a sense of pride and responsibility in the minds of people of the region and to sensitize them about the upkeep and maintenance of Heritage houses.



Heritage Home in Chettinad



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HELP THE RIVER RUN



The Krishnampathy tank in Coimbatore

Division : Natural Heritage
Venue : Fortune Pandian Hotel, Madurai
Date : September 24, 2014
Resource Persons : Vanitha Mohan, Managing Trustee
Siruthuli, Coimbatore

~ SIRUTHULI ~

If Coimbatoreans can rejuvenate river Noyyal, can't Maduraiites bring Vaigai river back to life?

For long enough the Vaigai river has been like a neglected wound across Madurai. Barely a decade ago Coimbatore's lifeline, Noyyal too was in a similar state.

Like Vaigai today, Noyyal in 2003 resembled nothing more than a glorified sewage drain clogged with debris, chemical effluents, solid wastes and the city's sewage. The monsoon rains had failed for three consecutive years and all the wells in the city were dry. The groundwater table depleted drastically and there was no water even at a depth of 1,000 feet. Long stretches of the river's 40 km route crisscrossing the city was parched and people queued for miles for water.

Obviously, the river could not co-exist with the city's explosive growth. Someone somewhere had to make a beginning and reverse the deplorable condition. Several committed corporate citizens and philanthropists did. They envisaged the river's potential and thereby the city's rebirth. They formed themselves into 'Siruthuli', an NGO, to work to rejuvenate the water resources in their city. Gradually eco-conscious citizens from all walks of life joined in to make it a massive peoples' movement.

Today, most of the urban water bodies have been reclaimed. There is a substantial increase in the city's water table and lush foliage blankets several areas, campuses and parts of the river bed. Together, the citizens of Coimbatore have rewritten the story of their water bodies.

A reimagining of the river's place in modern Coimbatore is gaining traction, smiles Vanitha Mohan, the Managing Trustee of Siruthuli. Earlier, if Cauvery was in full spate the Noyyal too would flow vast, wide and deep. But over the years, rampant and illegal sand mining, encroachments, unchecked dumping of debris and waste pushed the river in her death throes. Once the river dried up, the network of tanks it fed also disappeared.

http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/society/help-the-river-run/article6446231.ece

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The beginning was not easy, says Vanitha. "When we started mapping the Noyyal river basin and were at sea figuring out how much work had to be done, we were criticised for being publicity hungry."

Siruthuli knew the battle could be won only with peoples' support. Awareness about environment's fragile nature and the organisation's objectives was generated. Given the air and water disconnect of the people, it took three years to garner public support for restoring the river and rejuvenating the nine tanks that garland the river. And when one lakh people walked in the Noyyal yatra, it signalled the time for change.

A major challenge was to channelize and desilt the waterways and the tanks and erect rainwater harvesting structures across the city to allow water to percolate down to the aquifers. To effectively manage waste was another hurdle. The use and throw complacency required a large scale awareness for people to shift to 'reduce, reuse and recycle waste'.

Intensive door-to-door campaigns in six major municipal wards finally saw the citizens cooperating to convert the garbage into effective manure. "It took just 10 months and now very little waste goes to garbage dump yard," says Vanitha.

With sustained efforts, the grey concretes were gradually changed into green covers by establishing happy tree zones, tree parks, and planting saplings following the Miyawaki method, a Japanese concept of urban forests where in 11 saplings can be grown together in a 3 by 3 feet pit.

Nurture Nature camps with children and adults, students and professionals became a regular weekly activity for reaching out and connecting with the people. It helped to turn around the distressing state of the city's tanks. The first tank revived was Krishnampathy.

Periyakulam, the biggest lake spanning 325 acres, was cleared of its garbage, raw sewage and toxic waste. The water hyacinth that bred in dirty waters was harvested and converted into organic manure. With people lending a helping hand every Sunday, the landscape changed into a no-scrub ground.

"When 3,000 volunteers turned up the first Sunday of operation clean-up, all of us were smiling because we could sense people were taking up the ownership of their city," says Vanitha. On the last day of cleaning before the monsoons, not less than 10,000 people poured onto the lake bed to clear the mess. Machines can do the same job faster and efficiently, but when people participate like this, it has a deeper satisfaction and meaning and success is guaranteed.

"Together we have made it happen," says Vanitha. When people believe that they can change the world, things begin to happen and the change comes. "Now, if you fly over Coimbatore, you will see more greenery and water," she smiles.

The Madurai chapter of INTACH had invited her and her colleague Sujani Balu to talk about their decade's work that helped chart a course for Noyyal and once again nourish life across the city. Coimbatore now gets water at 25 to 60 feet. The Temple Town's powers that be have perhaps made a beginning by understanding how it can be achieved.

When our rivers, tanks, lakes come alive people feel a sense of belonging because they have contributed to the revival. "This ownership," believes Vanitha, "will also ensure that things do not turn messy again".

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When from a water surplus city, we became water-starved, people realised it was a do or die situation. So we gave a mantra that 'when water runs, make it walk. When it walks, make it sit. When it sits, make it seep down'. Siruthuli's 'clean Kovai, green Kovai' motto now inspires people to give back to mother Nature. It has been a spiritual experience so far.

Vanitha Mohan, MANAGING TRUSTEE, SIRUTHULI

The city was eating up its own water resources and we were anxious whether people will join us in this long journey. Ultimately, it was the collective energy and peoples' power that won. Now so many people know about Noyyal and the restoration work. Siruthuli in Tamil means one small drop and we have progressed drop by drop. Such involvement of people can yield only good results.

Sujani Balu, APEX MEMBER, SIRUTHULI

NATURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Natural Heritage Committee meeting was held on Friday, the 19th September, 2014 at Fortune Pandyan Hotel, Madurai

Mrs. Vanitha Mohan and Mrs. Sujani Balu from Coimbatore made a presentation on the activities of Siruthuli. Starting from inception they gave an account of their inspiring journey which has had a significant impact on the water bodies, water table and the environment of Coimbatore. They have been able to bring about a change in the minds of people in Coimbatore from all walks of life, young and old, to take a keen interest in their surrounding and to even physically participate in the activities of Siruthuli, sometimes against many vested interests. They conduct many programs regularly on environemental topics for raising the awareness of school children. Both of them answered the many questions from the audience. Around 22 members of INTACH Madurai Chapter were present.

- R. Haresh
EC Member and
Co-ordinator - Natural Heritage Committee

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MADURAI'S SOUVENIR – 'URUMI' LAUNCH

Division : Heritage Tourism
Venue : Thiagarajar College, Madurai
Date : November 19, 2014
Resource Persons : Nikita S. Veejay

Impressive bargains

Nikita S. Veejay has filled in the gap in the shopping experience of domestic tourists and foreign travellers in Madurai. People can now grab those perfect lightweight and inexpensive souvenirs before leaving the city.



SOMA BASU

Temple Town Madurai has several irresistible oddities that are pretty and witty, historic and enchanting, tasty and delicious, fragrant and elegant. Yet, one never – or rarely – found anything sporting the "I love Madurai" tag.

Now finally Madurai has arrived on the souvenir scene. Thanks to the INTACH local chapter that brought in youthful Nikita S.Veejay from Chennai to design and offer some simple and affordable items to tourists to take home the Madurai essence.

She unveiled the first batch of collectibles – key chains and fridge magnets – at a simple event organised by INTACH. "The major task," says Nikita, "was to highlight the cultural aspects of the city besides the Meenakshi Temple it is so famous for."

To keep the theme local has always been the crux of her every project. "There is a niche market for souvenirs and out-of-the-box merchandise as they invoke a sense of allegiance to the place you belong to," says the 26-year-old founder of Urumi, a brand that boasts of a line of ethnic and eclectic products.

Though key chains and fridge magnets are very common souvenirs sold all over the world, Nikita's products are different. While others sell these items mostly made in ceramic, Nikita does them in plastic and rubber given the better shelf life and printing quality. But more important is the theme chosen for the products and the narrative behind each of the design or the symbol, she asserts.

Knowing about why a thing has been highlighted or the story behind the symbol makes even a simple item unique, says Nikita. For Madurai, she carefully chose five themes besides the Meenakshi Temple.

The fragrant Madurai Malli unrivalled in allure and popularity, the city as Tamil Nadu's food capital known for the 'mess' culture selling tasty and local dishes and Kannagi, the legendary character in Tamil epic 'Silapathikaram' offer a holistic view of the ancient city, she says.

She has also taken care of crafting every letter and packaging the items attractively. For instance, in the "I Love Madurai" theme, the letter 'M' has been designed like a temple gopuram. Nikita feels when you give these special touches to the item, it trends immediately. "You feel proud about your culture," she adds.

Her first product launched two years ago, the "Iyer USB" – a 4GB pen drive in the shape of a Tamil Brahmin priest wearing puttai and veshti – was an instant hit.

We released 200 pieces in the first batch and there was such a great demand to increase "Iyer's memory space" that we did repeat batches with 8GB USB drives, says Nikita.

Continued on P4

PHOTOS: S. JAMES

> But more important is the theme chosen for the products and the narrative behind each of the design or the symbol. Knowing about why a thing has been highlighted or the story behind the symbol makes even a simple item unique

http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/impressive-bargains/article6618173.ece

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... Impressive bargains

Continued from P1

The Madurai-born, Chennai-raised MBA degree holder was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug early. "I always dreamt of having my own store of souvenirs and merchandise," she gushes. Also extremely fond of travelling, she was taken in by the abundance of souvenirs the world over.

The kitschy, quirky, retro, funky products made her dream big enough to launch her own line --Urumi. Lot of thought went into it, says Nikita, because I wanted to put South India on India's tourism map first with some desi creativity. Call it kitsch art or pop art, from kili josiyam and metal calendars to T-shirts, coffee mugs, quiz boxes, notepads, coasters, stickers, posters, hand bags and cushions, all having local themes with pan-India appeal have become fashion statements, according to Nikita.

It appeals to the buyers, majorly youngsters, for its Indianness or its intrinsic South-Indianness, she says. Following the coffee shop model for retailing, Nikita sells her products out of two dozen stores and



kiosks in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and has also tied up with the Taj group of hotels in Coorg, Chennai and Bangalore. She also actively participates in the free markets in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore.

Nikita is well aware of the many players in this segment now. Bengaluru-based Chumbak was among the first to enter into the relatively unknown market space, whose owl and elephant-themed bags, purses and Tees were a big hit among the young crowd. Later brands like Masala Chai, Urumi, Arty Souk, Pink Jalebi, Happily Unmarried and Goli Soda, to name a few, flooded the market with their off-the-wall products and drawing the hep young crowd.

Realising that hobbies are becoming a big business, Nikita launches a fresh collection of items with new themes and designs twice or thrice a year. "It is exciting to be competitive," she smiles. Nikita feels Madurai missed offering good souvenirs for long even though there is a huge market. There is abundance of civilisation here but very little conservation, she points out, adding, "all that the city needs is a doable USP."



Pick up the 'Marvel@Madurai' souvenirs from:

Chola Arts shop at Hotel Fortune Pandiyan and Hotel GRT Regency; The Mallipoo shop at Madurai Airport; The Temple Book Shop at Meenakshi Amman Temple; The Gandhi Museum; Hotel Germanus; Factory Fresh Shop on Madurai-Rameswaram Highway; Hotel J.C.Residency; The Gateway Hotel, Pasumalai; Heritage Hotel, Hotel Sangam; Hotel Supreme; DHAN Foundation

Uma Kannan ,Convener
INTACH - Madurai Chapter,

"Souvenirs are an importnt aspect of the tourist experience. They are symbolic reminders of fond memories during vacations. They serve as mobile ambassadors of the city and have traditional and cultural value as they capture the feel of the city. They are also educative - when memories fade they serve as reminders and bring back memories."



Mr. M.D. VEL, Executive Committee member and past Co-convener was instrumental in roping in Urumi:

"It is a shame that an ancient city like Madurai had no souvenirs designed, produced and sold in an organised manner whereas abroad cities less than 100 years old market themselves so well with a range of appealing souvenirs. Now, Urumi with the 'Marvel @ Madurai' collection will enable tourists from all over to take a slice of Madurai back. This would also strengthen the pride for the city. INTACH will facilitate in keeping this small but significant initiative going."



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PHOTO GALLERY – 'URUMI' LAUNCH



Urumi Souvenir's on display



Mr. M.D. Vel giving an overview of Urumi





(L to R) Mrs. M.D. Vel, Nikita S. Veejay, Uma Kannan, Mr. Saravanan, Manager - Cholan Arts Emporium, Mr. M.D. Vel, and Mr. Rajesh Kanna



Mrs. Bhavani Vel, giving the vote of thanks



Nikita introducing Urumi Souvenir's

HERITAGE WALKS

In the year 2008, INTACH Madurai Chapter initiated "The Heritage Walks". Heritage walks to historic sites are organized every 2nd Sunday.

We encourage young and old to join these walks and learn on-site about these historic places. This is a great experience and activity based learning for youngsters.

Those interested in joining these walks may contact

Mr. P. Rajesh Kanna

Co-convenor

Mobile: 94433-32292

E-mail: rajeshkmadurai@gmail.com

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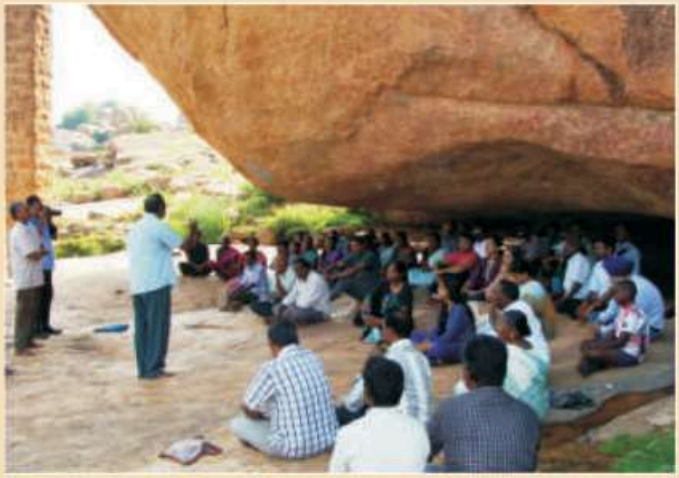
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PHOTO GALLERY OF HERITAGE WALKS



Enthusiastic Participants at Thenparankundram



Dr.V.Vedachalam expains the Heritage Importance of Keelavazhvu



How to take replica of stone inscription-Dr.Vedachalam



Participants at Melathirumanickam Heritagev walk



Participants at Poikaikaraipatti Village



Participants Green move at Melathirumanickam

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TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS CAKE RECIPE



Ingredients:

Butter	- 150 grams
Sultanas	- 200 grams
Cashew nuts	- 100 grams
Tutti frutti	- 50 grams
Brown sugar	- 130 grams
Dry ginger powder	- 1 tsp
Cinnamon powder	- 1 tsp
Baking soda	- 1 tsp
Baking powder	- 2 tsp
Water	- 1 $^{1}/_{4}$ cup
Eggs	- 2
Maida	- 300 grams

Preparation :

Grease and dust the baking pan and keep it ready.
Sift flour and baking powder together and keep it aside.

Method:

Mix all the dry fruits and nuts in a bowl. Dust it with a tsp of flour and keep it aside.

Add baking soda, sugar, water, butter, dry ginger powder, cinnamon powder and cook over medium flame until it boils.

Simmer for 2-3 minutes after it boils. Then remove from heat and let it cool completely. Once the mixture has cooled, you can pre heat the oven at 180 degree C for 15 minutes.

Beat 2 eggs lightly with a fork and add to the cooled mixture. Beat eggs into the mixture until well combined.

Fold in flour and baking powder mixture gently until well combined.

Add the cinnamon powder.

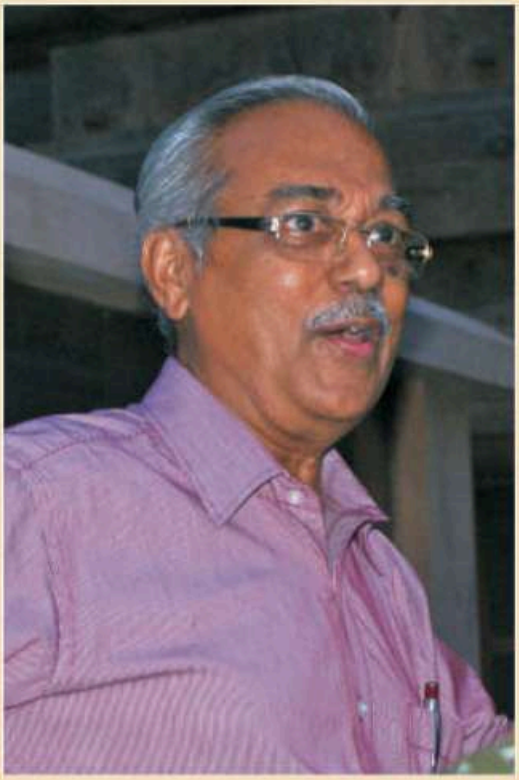
Pour mixture into the greased tin and spread it out evenly with a spatula.

Bake for 1 hour or until a skewer inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.

Once baked, cool it and then invert the cake.

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HERITAGE TALK



On 14 June 2014, renowned historian & professor Dr.Venkatraman gave an enlightening talk on Palaeolithic Age. The audience learnt that 5 billion years ago, the sun was a new-born celestial body. Palaeolithic sites in India include Athirambakkam, Soan valley, Kurnool and Narmada valley.

UPCOMING EVENT

"WHAT'S IN A NAME"

Following many interesting and meaningful events by INTACH Madurai Chapter Our proposed event for December 2014 is - "What's in a name".

Dr. Venkatraman and Dr. Vedachalam renowned historians will share the significance of names of people, places and events.

Historians have used the names given in inscriptions to identify the period and the clad which people belong to. There have been places named after people, and the reasons behind it are very interesting.

INTACH Madurai Chapter, plans to have an interactive meeting to bring out the importance and significance of names in the past and present. The event is planned for December 2014.

Kindly give your suggestions and do share interesting information about names of people and places, etc - which can be shared. Looking forward to your participation.

- P. Rajesh Kanna
Co-convenor
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