



# THE CHETTINAD

## HERITAGE & CULTURAL FESTIVAL

**EDITION - 2**

**Chettinad / Madurai • 29 SEPT - 4 OCT 2023**



Organised By

**The Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Trust**



# Experiencing the Heritage & Culture of Chettinad

Welcome to the five-day  
Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Festival  
EDITION-2 featuring traditional dance, music,  
lectures, and the famed cuisine of  
Chettinad. Immerse yourself in the  
splendour of centuries-old temples,  
Chettiar mansions, and the  
craftsmanship of the tiles and textiles  
of the region.

Curated by  
**Padma Shri Leela Samson**





pichhadi



## Chettinad

Deep in the south of Tamil Nadu, in what is essentially a rural area in the middle of nowhere, were the 96 villages the Chettiars founded, and which earned them their preferred community name - Nagarathar - the townfolk, or the sophisticated.

With an inborn talent for trade strengthened by a rare financial acumen, the Nagarathars dominated the business world since the early centuries of the second millennium.

In their heydays, a glorious hundred-year period, they built for their homes, fortress-like mansions and filled them with riches they earned from across the seas. They held lifestyle rituals in the grandest possible manner whose conduct helped maintain a community's unbroken tradition, contributed to create their greatest strength, their unity, established their reputation for rare hospitality and paved the way for the creation of an exceptional cuisine.

Apart from using their wealth to make families more comfortable, they invested it for the greater good of the community; they restored every major temple; they built universities; the world of letters and fine arts also equally benefitted from the gracious Nagarathar generosity.

This festival is a reminder of those glorious hundred years.

# Day 1 • Friday • 29.09.2023 • Chettinad

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Inaugural Event

at Meenakshi Sundareswarar Sivan Kovil, Kanadukathan

5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Mangala Isai - Nadaswaram by Vinoth Kumar

Abhishekam

## Light Refreshments

6.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

Lighting of the Kuthu Vilakku to inaugurate the festival

6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

Tala Vadyam - a percussion group performance lead by Ganapathi Venkata Subramanian, Srushti Ensemble

**Dinner** at Visalam, CGH Earth, Kanadukathan

## Day 2 • Saturday • 30.09.2023 • Chettinad

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9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

**Bazaar** at M.S. House, Karaikudi

- Sale of Chettinad merchandise
- Live Demonstrations
- **Discover Tamil Nadu**  
an exposition of photo prints by **Amar Ramesh**

**Saamaan Parappudhal** - Parents' gifts to a Nagarathar bride.

A presentation and display at S.A. House, Kanadukathan

**Visits to Explore the Opulence of Chettinad Mansions**

Kanadukathan - Chettinad Palace, VVR. House

Kothamangalam - Kodai Katha Raman Chettiar Veedu

Athangudi - Sri Letchmi Vilas, R.M.A.R.M. House

Karaikudi - Pothiyar Veedu

Ariyakudi - V.R.M.N. House

11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

**Guided Tour** of Karaikudi mansions with

Architect **Kamalahasan Ramaswamy**

1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

**Lunch** at The Bangala, Karaikudi

**Enchanting Evening Performances at C.V. House, Kanadukathan**

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5.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

"The Influence of Ravi Varma's oleographs on the popular culture of Chettinad" - a lecture by Author and Art Conservator, **Rupika Chawla**

**Light Refreshments**

6.45 p.m.

**Mamiyar Sadangu** - A wedding ritual unique to the Nagarathar Community - an enactment

7.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

**Innisai** - a Carnatic vocal performance by **Dr. K. Gayatri**

**Dinner** at Chettinad Mansion, Kanadukathan

## Day 3 • Sunday • 01.10.2023 • Chettinad

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9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Bazaar at M.S. House, Karaikudi

- Sale of Chettinad merchandise
- Live Demonstrations
- Discover Tamil Nadu - an exposition of photo prints by Amar Ramesh

Saamaan Parappudhal - Parents' gifts to a Nagarathar bride.

A presentation and display at S.A. House, Kanadukathan

Visits to Explore the Opulence of Chettinad Mansions

Kanadukathan - Chettinad Palace, VVR. House

Kothamangalam - Kodai Katha Raman Chettiar Veedu

Athangudi - Sri Letchmi Vilas, R.M.A.R.M. House

Karaikudi - Pothiyar Veedu

Ariyakudi - V.R.M.N. House

9.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.

Architectural Odyssey of Tamil Nadu's Temple Grandeur

Guided tour to Avudaiyar Kovil and the Ayyanar Temples of Aranthangi,

Kuthadivayal and Panjati with Dr. Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan

1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

Lunch at The Bangala, Karaikudi

3.00 p.m.

Spice Trail - Unveiling the secrets of Chettinad cuisine

with Rakesh Raghunathan at The Bangala, Karaikudi

**Enchanting Evening Performances at Chidambara Vilas, Kadiapatti**

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5.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

"Symphony of Styles : Chettinad's Hybrid Architectural Masterpieces"

- a lecture by Photographer Bharath Ramamrutham

**Light Refreshments**

6.45 p.m.

Rarattu - Passing down of Nagarathar values, culture and

heritage in a lullaby - an enactment

7.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

Nritya Anjali - a Bharatanatyam performance by Lavanya Ananth

**Dinner** at Chidambara Vilas, Kadiapatti

## Day 4 • Monday • 02.10.2023 • Chettinad

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7.30 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.

**Architectural Odyssey of Tamil Nadu's Temple Grandeur**

Guided tour of Vijayalaya Choleeswaram Kovil and the Ayyanar Temples at Narthamalai with **Dr. Madhusudhanan Kalachelvan**

Guests opting for this tour may avail of the option of packed breakfast, from their hotels, on prior notice.

9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

**Bazaar** at M.S. House, Karaikudi

- Sale of Chettinad merchandise
- Live Demonstrations
- **Discover Tamil Nadu**  
an exposition of photo prints by **Amar Ramesh**

**Saamaan Parappudhal** - Parents' gifts to a Nagarathar bride.

A presentation and display at S.A. House, Kanadukathan

11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

**"Contribution of the Nagarathar community to the Economic Development of South and South East Asia"** -

Historian **Sam Dalrymple** in conversation with

Educationalist **Alagu Alagappan** at Visalam, CGH Earth, Kanadukathan

1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

**Lunch** at The Bangala, Karaikudi

3.00 p.m.

**Spice Trail** - Unveiling the secrets of Chettinad cuisine with **Rakesh Raghunathan** at The Bangala, Karaikudi

### **Enchanting Evening Performances at M.S.M.M. House, Karaikudi**

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5.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

**"Maharajahs and the British Empire: Rethinking India's Princely States"**

- Author and Historian **Manu S. Pillai**, in conversation with Journalist **Rahul Jacob**

6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

**Kuzhal Isai** - a flute concert by **J.B. Shruti Sagar**

8.00 p.m.

**Farewell Dinner** at The Bangala, Karaikudi





Curated by  
Padma Shri **Leela Samson**  
Bharatanatyam Artiste, Writer & Actress

Leela enjoys the reputation of being a dancer and teacher of sensitivity. Groomed in Kalakshetra she became its Director in 2005 and also served as Chairperson, Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Central Board of Film Certification. Two documentary films have been made on her – ‘Sanchari’ by Arun Khopkar and ‘The Flowering Tree’ by Ein Lall. Leela is the recipient of the Padma Shri Award in 1990. Since her debut in 2015, she has acted in several films including Mani Ratnam’s O Kadhal Kanmani.



Moderated by

## Dr. Krishna Meyyammai

Journalist, Bharatanatyam Artiste, Dramatist, Actor, & Advocate

Krishna Meyyammai is a Tamil journalist conferred with “Doctor of Letters” for her “overwhelming contributions to Journalism and Tamil literacy”. Hailing from the conservative Nagarathar community in Chettinad, she defied tradition to become an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer under the mentoring of the legend, Prof. C.V. Chandrasekhar. Her love for theatre led her to the creation of “Koothu Kottagai” an amateur theatre group, where she crafts scripts, directs, and acts in plays that celebrate the rich heritage of the Nagarathar community. Beyond arts, she is also a practising advocate of the Madras High Court.



## Vinoth Kumar

Nadaswaram Artiste

Vinoth Kumar's journey into the realm of music began at the tender age of six, under the loving tutelage of his grandfather Chettikulam S. Singaram Pillai and his parents S. Soundar Rajan and S. Santhanalakshmi, renowned Nadaswara vidwans themselves. An 'A' Grade artiste of the All India Radio, and winner of the Government of Tamil Nadu's "Kalai Ila Mani" and the "Kalai Valar Mani" awards, his medical practice as an orthopaedic physiotherapist is punctuated by his musical pursuits, gracing stages not only across India but also in countries like U.S.A., Switzerland, Malaysia, and Singapore.



## Ganapathi Venkata Subramanian

Tala Vadyam Artiste

An ardent disciple of mridangist Kanadukathan Ramamurthi Iyer, Ganapathi Venkata Subramanian carries forward the rich tradition of Sri Thyagabrahma Parampara to which he belongs. He is a versatile artiste with profound knowledge of classical scales, western progressions and musical arrangements. His rhythmic proficiency extends to the tabla as well. Apart from a two-decade collaboration with M.S. Viswanathan, he has also worked with other legendary composers Ilayaraja and A.R. Rahman. Noteworthy is his contribution to the musical score of the Hollywood film "The Man Who Knew Infinity".



## Kamalahasan Ramaswamy

Architect

Kamalahasan Ramaswamy, Founder and Principal Architect of the Coimbatore based firm CUBOID, has garnered over twenty years of architectural expertise and a stellar portfolio of award-winning projects across India. As an accredited green building professional, he passionately champions sustainable practices. He generously shares his knowledge through college lectures, emphasizing the importance of planning and design. He's a dedicated advocate for cultural regeneration and construction skills, while simultaneously exploring cutting-edge technologies to bridge the gap between the past and the future in architecture.



## Rupika Chawla

Writer & Art Conservator

Rupika Chawla is a distinguished conservator of paintings spanning a wide range of painting mediums. She is based in Delhi, India where she imparts training in the domain, delivers lectures, and curates exhibitions. She is a prolific writer, her column in the Indian Express for three years deserves special mention. She is the author of several acclaimed books including "Surface and Depth: Indian Artists at Work", and "Raja Ravi Varma, Painter of Colonial India". Currently, her focus is on chronicling the history of the Ajanta paintings, with a special emphasis on Buddha's life story and the Jataka tales depicted in these remarkable caves.



## Dr. K. Gayatri

Carnatic Singer

Dr. K. Gayatri's musical excellence stems from her lineage from the Musiri-Semmangudi Parampara and her mentorship under the doyens, Suguna Purushothaman and Suguna Varadachari. A research scholar in music, Gayatri's skill in composing captivating pallavis and mastery over Niraval, Dvi-Tala Avardhana and rare Talas is noteworthy. The live recording of her concert at the Music Academy, Chennai, during the Margazhi Festival is a celebrated CD amongst lovers of Carnatic music.

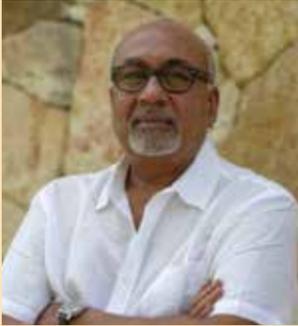


## Dr. Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan

Architectural Research Scholar

Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan is an honoured architecture graduate and a gold medallist in his post-graduation, specialising in conservation and architectural research. With a decade of experience in academia, he mentors students in famed architectural institutions. An avid heritage enthusiast, he has received numerous awards including Prof. Swaminathan Award for his contributions to heritage and culture.

Madhusudhanan curates heritage tours through his initiative "RATHAM" and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Temple Town Planning while serving on a Government panel for temple conservation in Tamil Nadu.



## Bharath Ramamrutham

Photographer & Architect

Bharath Ramamrutham is an acclaimed photographer, renowned for his depiction of Indian architecture, design, and landscape over a 35-year career. His passion for the arts and crafts of India inspires his purist approach to photography, attracting a wide array of prestigious clients. His portfolio, featuring stunning landscapes, architectural wonders, and diverse cultural elements, reflects India's rich heritage. As an avid traveller, he continues to explore diverse cultures and terrains. His works are regularly featured in design publications and major illustrated books, including 'Indian Design', 'Inside India', and several on iconic Indian temples and heritage sites.



## Lavanya Ananth

Bharatanatyam Artiste

Lavanya Ananth's dance odyssey includes mastering the art form under the guidance of the revered Vazhuvoor Gurus S.K. Rajarathnam Pillai and K.J. Sarasa, and a specialised training in Abhinaya from Bragha Bessel. Her talent has earned her the coveted 'A' Grade artiste status at Doordarshan Kendra and she has been honoured with the prestigious "Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar" by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, amongst other accolades. Her performances have graced international platforms such as the Musee Guimet in France, Royal Tropical Institute in Holland, and Stanford University in California, establishing her as a prominent soloist.



## Sam Dalrymple

Historian

Sam Dalrymple is an avid researcher of Indian history, historian and accomplished multimedia producer whose work has left an indelible mark on the world of storytelling. With a portfolio encompassing reputed publications like, The New York Times and The New Yorker, as well as prominent features in TIME, The Economist, BBC, and Reuters, Sam's expertise shines brightly. In 2022, he made waves with his debut film, "Child of Empire", which premiered at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival, while his animated series, "Lost Migrations", was a sell out at the British Film Institute. Now, anticipation builds for his upcoming book, "Shattered Lands: The Five Partitions of India 1935-1975", slated for release by Harper Collins in 2024.



## Alagu Alagappan

Educationalist

Alagu Alagappan hails from the Nagarathar community in Karaikudi. He is an eminent leader with a multifaceted portfolio of community involvement. He is the Founder and Chairman of Blossom Public School and Blossom Bluebells Academy in Thanjavur, as well as the Managing Trustee of AL.V. Memorial Trust dedicated to charitable endeavours in memory of his parents. His extensive contributions extend to being the President of Theosophical Society of India, Thanjavur and serving as a Trustee for Kaanal, a charitable eye hospital, among other important roles in cultural, business and humanitarian spheres.



## Manu S. Pillai

Historian

Manu S. Pillai is a proficient writer known for his lauded works including “The Ivory Throne” (2015), “Rebel Sultans” (2018), “The Courtesan, the Mahatma & the Italian Brahmin” (2019), and “False Allies” (2021). With a background that includes serving as Chief of Staff to Dr. Shashi Tharoor, M.P., working in the House of Lords in Britain, and collaborating with the BBC on the ‘Incarnations’ history series, he has made impressive contributions to literature and history. Manu has earned the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar and has been a notable columnist for Mint Lounge, with his writings featured in various prestigious publications. He holds a Ph.D., from King’s College, London.



## Rahul Jacob

Journalist

Rahul Jacob is a seasoned journalist who can write on a wide range of topics, from global economics to social issues. His career, spanning decades, includes significant roles at the Financial Times in London, where he excelled as the South China correspondent based in Hong Kong. Later, he took on the role of travel, food, and drink editor based in London. Jacob's literary prowess extends to his authorship of "Right of Passage", a captivating collection of travel essays that reflects his diverse experiences and insightful observations. Presently, he serves as a columnist at Mint newspaper.



## J.B. Shruti Sagar

Flautist

J.B. Sruthi Sagar's musical voyage commenced under the teaching of esteemed Balasai, later advancing under the mentoring of Dr. Sundar. His unique blend of instrumental skill and vocal influence imbued his music with the gayaka style. Appreciated for his unwavering dedication to tradition, Sagar has performed in prominent Sabhas and festivals nationwide. Recognised by All India Radio as an 'A' Grade artiste, other tributes bestowed upon him include the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar and the Yagnaraman Award of Excellence. Holding a master's in music and a bachelor's in mechanical engineering, his multifaceted talents shine brightly.



## Meenakshi Meyyappan

Founder & Managing Trustee,  
The Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Trust

Mrs Meenakshi Meyyappan moved to Chettinad, her ancestral home, from Chennai, a little after her husband passed away in 1997, she has committed herself to everything Chettinad. The entire gamut of Chettinad cuisine, rituals/celebrations, family relationships, the architecture/interiors, temples, sarees/textiles, jewellery, and anything that is Chettinad. Chettinad simply grew on her.

Aachi, as she's fondly addressed, focused on the restoration of Senjai Bangala, a family property then in poor condition, and transformed it into 'The Bangala' in 1999, as the first Heritage Hotel in Chettinad. 'The Bangala' has played a significant role in making Chettinad a heritage and cultural destination ever since, and found itself a place on the important Chennai/Kochi Circuit.

Her remarkable skills in maintaining a pristine home, her great interest in food and table settings, impeccable talent with interiors, love for gardening and a fondness for books, has made 'The Bangala' blossom into a fine Heritage Hotel, which to many is more like a home. And, her attention to detail is legendary. Her insistence on the traditional banana leaf lunch in 'The Bangala' is one such detail.

Passion always rewards. The Bangala was ranked by Condé Nast Traveller as one of the Best Restaurants in India, it was placed 27<sup>th</sup> in 2018, and ascended to 7<sup>th</sup> place in 2019. To be hidden in deep south of India and still be recognised by a world-wide magazine is something remarkable. And not to stop with putting 'The Bangala' on the map, she has been instrumental in bringing out three well acclaimed coffee table books on Chettinad: The Chettiar Heritage, The Mansions of Chettinad and The Bangala Table.

Currently her efforts are focused on trying to showcase, highlight and create awareness of the rich culture of Chettinad to the outside world. Hence she has created 'The Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Trust', which is now running the second edition of The Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Festival, an effort to generate the attention Chettinad truly deserves.

## **Commentary**

Both temple tours will be guided by Professor Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan. Professor Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan is an architectural research scholar who also specializes in conservation. He is well versed in the fields of art, cultural studies and vernacular practices. An active heritage enthusiast, his contributions have earned him several awards and accolades.

## **Transport**

Guests may use the car exclusively assigned for each of them to reach the temples (at 9.00 a.m. on Sunday, 01.10.2023 and at 7.30 a.m. on Monday, 02.10.2023) and to complete the tours.

## **Breakfast**

Guests may choose to have breakfast at their respective hotels or opt for packed breakfast. Guests opting for packed breakfast are kindly requested to inform their respective hotels the previous day.

# An Architectural Odyssey of Temple Grandeur

Sunday, 01.10.2023 & Monday, 02.10.2023

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## Tour of Aavudaiyar Kovil and the Ayyanar Temples of Aranthangi, Kuthadivayal and Panjati

### *Aavudaiyar Kovil*

*Sunday, 01.10.2023, 9.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.*

Referred to as “Thiru-Perum-Thurai” in the sacred Thiruvachakam hymns of Maanikkavaasagar, this ancient settlement near Pudukkottai is considered to be the venue of initiation of this 9<sup>th</sup> century CE saint poet. The grand temple complex with massive sculptural depictions of various deities and mural paintings takes us to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Tamil Nadu.

## Tour of Vijayalaya Choleeswaram Kovil and the Ayyanar Temples at Narthamalai

### *Vijayalaya Choleeswaram Kovil*

*Monday, 02.10.2023, 7.30 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.*

This 10<sup>th</sup> century CE temple complex, delicately balancing itself on a small hillock, speaks volumes about the architectural expertise of the 10<sup>th</sup> century craftsmen. A group of 10 shrines, big and small provide an opportunity to learn the different styles of temple designs used in Tamil Nadu.



## **Bazaar - a place where tradition meets utility! at the M.S. House, Karaikudi**

Sat, 30.09.2023, Sun, 01.10.2023 & Mon, 02.10.2023 - 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

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### **Sale:**

- Exquisite Jewellery
- Colourful Sarees
- Elegant Artworks
- Tasty Palagarams
- Crunchy Vathals

### **Live Demonstrations:**

- Coffee by the Yard - making and cooling of filter coffee
- Chettinad Thari - weaving of a saree
- Blossom Threads - stringing of flowers
- Hoofed Earth - crafting terracotta horses
- Flour and Symmetry - drawing of maakkolam
- Crispy Creations - making of vathals
- Snackcraft - making of palagarams

Live Demonstrations will be conducted at 11.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.



**Discover Tamil Nadu!  
at the M.S. House, Karaikudi**

Sat, 30.09.2023, Sun, 01.10.2023 & Mon, 02.10.2023

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**An exposition of photo prints  
by Photographer Amar Ramesh**

**Spice Trail  
at The Bangala, Karaikudi**

Sun, 01.10.2023 & Mon, 02.10.2023 - 3.00 p.m.

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**Unveiling the secrets of Chettinad cuisine  
by Cuisine Historian and T.V. Stardom Rakesh Raghunathan**

**Breakfast** for guests will be served at their respective hotels.



## Day 5 • Tuesday • 03.10.2023 • Madurai

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Check-in into Taj's Gateway Hotel Pasumalai, Madurai

1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

**Lunch** at an Anglo-Indian home

Evening Programme:

5.00 p.m.

**Guided Tour** of the Madurai Meenakshi Temple conducted by  
Dr. Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan

7.30 p.m.

**Folk Dances and Dinner** at Fortune Pandiyan Hotel, Madurai

## Day 6 • Wednesday • 04.10.2023 • Madurai

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**Breakfast at the Hotel**

Option of packed breakfast is available for guests opting for tours.  
Guests availing this option are kindly requested to inform  
the hotel the previous day.

**Choice of Tours:**

1. Visit to the excavation site and museum at **Keeladi**
2. **Jasmine Trail** - A journey with the jasmine flower in its fragrant passage from the field to the market
3. Visit to the Gandhi Museum, Nayakar Palace and a Sungudi Saree Manufacturing Unit

1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

**Traditional Lunch** at an old Saurashtrian home

8.00 p.m. onwards

An exquisite seated **Closing Dinner** event hosted at **Palimpsest House**, where guests can immerse themselves in curated spaces featuring modern art, antiques and engaging discussions

All Events, Artistes, Speakers and Venues are subject to change.

Hospitality Partners

