

CELEBRATING VAIGAI, THE MOTHER OF MADURAI

When the evolution of Homo Sapiens happened, they began to settle along the river banks forming civilizations. Egyptian civilization on the banks of River Nile and the Harappa-Mohenjadaro along the Indus, and thus getting the name, The Indus Valley civilization. As we turn the pages of history, we come to know that the Ancient Pandian civilizations flourished along the banks of this river Vaigai.

Of the three greatest dynasties of Dravidian Culture- The Cheras, Cholas and the Pandiyas, Pandian Dynasty flourished in trade and human resources. Vaigai formed a natural boundary for Madurai, thus making Madurai a Strong Fort for managing the majestic kingdom. It also helped the people trade with the other kingdoms and for travel.

Madurai, mentioned as Madura by Megasthenes, the greek messenger to India, was an important cultural and economic center since time immemorial. The oldest record for any proper Civilization is of Harappan and Mohenjadaro, but the recent excavations have changed the thoughts of historians as a whole. The excavation in Keezhadi makes the city of Madurai and its Civilization, one of the oldest in the world. All thanks to the holy Vaigai, the mother of Madurai.

Vaigai was once an important river that held ports of Vaippar and Azhagankulam which were hot spots of Indo-Greek trade. There was a time when the Vaigai River was a lifeline for the region. Along its banks, people hunted, fished and lived, settlements were established which later powered the area's industrial growth. Even during the period of Britishers, the river stood as an important source of drinking water to the then Madurai district. But, the release of industrial and bio-medical

waste and domestic sewage into the river and decreasing rainfall has led to the river's woeful state.

Lately, the condition of the river has further worsened, making it one of the dirtiest rivers in the country. Adding to the woes of inadequate rainfall for a decade, the dumping of garbage, encroachment on the banks of the river, excessive sand mining and other anti social activities have created a dull status for the holy river.

It's the duty of the youth of Madurai to save the lifeline of their city. It's not only about saving the river, it's about saving the heritage and history of the Mother of Madurai.