**QUEST 2K18**

**MADURAI: THE GATEWAY TO HERITAGE**

Madurai: An indelibly vibrant city, utterly elucidated by ambiguous space and dynamic people and those of whom are embellished by intangible festive spirits. Ask Google, which is the oldest language in the World, it’ll probably tell Tamil, ask it which is the cradle of Tamil? It’ll probably tell Madurai. The Temple city of India, Food Capital of Tamilnadu, the City which never sleeps, this ancient town has a hell lot of names. It is the oldest continuous inhabited city in the world. The culture the people possess and the tradition they follow is a thing that no set of people in the world can have.

City like appearance and Village like culture is the hallmark of Madurai. Known as the Athens of the East, this city is the cradle of Tamil Civilization and the Tamil language itself. Even after 26 years of Liberalization and Globalization, the city hasn’t lost its tradition and culture to the Capitalist Juggernaut. Be it Politics, Entertainment, Literature, Madurai stands as the most important center in Tamilnadu. The BO collection of a film is determined by the Audience in Madurai. The Political success of a person is also determined in Madurai, if I tell every successful politician in Tamilnadu started their journey in Madurai, it won’t be an exaggeration.

The earliest known record goes up to 3rd century BCE, it has kept up with its rich tradition of quality education and knowledge since then Located on the banks of river Vaigai, Madurai is a colourful city with its culture comprising of music, food, festivals, history and social harmony. In a certain street you would find a mosque, a temple and a church all side by side together, establishing Communal harmony in a firm way. The temples in Madurai stood the test of time from as early as 3rd century BCE. The Meenakshi Amman temple is the temple with most number of statues in its Gopuram which is a testimony of the craftsmanship of Madurai people.

The Message this city provides, Culture is the biggest asset of a nation is a thing that will stand for ages to come.

**CELEBRATING VAIGAI, THE MOTHER OF MADURAI**

Human settlement grew in and around rivers when the species of Homo sapiens thought of settling instead of hunting and gathering. The Great Kingdom of Egypt grew in the banks of the ever flowing Nile, the oldest proper Civilized cities of Mohenjadaro and Harappan Civilization grew in Indus. The Great City of Madurai flourished in the banks of Vaigai, thus becoming the Mother of Madurai.

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 Vaippur 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.

Its the duty of the youth of Madurai to save the lifeline of their city. Its not only about saving the river, its about saving the heritage and history of the Mother of Madurai.