

# Madurai malli symbolises ancient Tamil traditions&rdquo;

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STAFF REPORTER



Uma Kannan, Executive Committee Member, INTACH, Madurai, looking at a flower palanquin during a workshop in Madurai on Saturday. Photo: G. Moorthy

Madurai malli (jasmine) symbolises ancient Tamil traditions and remains as one of the few remnants of our cultural past which needs to be protected. It has a great demand among the Indian Diaspora in places such as Malaysia, Singapore, Dubai and also in Western Europe, especially France, according to Uma Kannan, Executive Member, Indian National Trust For Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

Addressing a workshop on 'Madurai malli project,' organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and INTACH at Thiagarajar College here on Saturday, she said

that the aim of the workshop was to make sure that the craft of tying flowers provided a means of livelihood to the trainees. The other major aim was to preserve and protect the tradition which was fast succumbing to cultural invasions in various forms.

She said that the idea was to bring about a sense of acceptance among women to the changing cultural realities and get accustomed to keep in pace through changes by innovation in the areas of tying, designing, packing and selling. It was an effort aimed towards innovation-driven sustainability where tradition and modernity were linked.

Ms. Uma also said that it was time the corporate world and the traditional sectors of producers and sellers complemented each other well, thus protecting the heritage. The trainees would also be linked up to event managers, wedding halls, temples, hotels, corporate institutions, hospitals, educational institutions florists and travel agents from whom they could procure orders.

Arvind Kumar Shankar, Convenor, INTACH, said that the workshop would prove beneficial to the women who could use the inputs gained here to make it successful at a higher level.

M.D. Vel, Co-Convenor, INTACH, said that Madurai malli represented the older traditions and “we should protect it and not let it go the Madurai Sungudi sari way which has almost faded away from memory.”

Providing analogies from Tamil film music industry and watch manufacturers, Mr. Vel insisted that “we have to meticulously work on accommodating the changing trends and deliver the needed stuff.” He also gave an instance of jasmine fragrance being used as anti-depressant in aroma therapy.

Shyam Gupta, Vice-Chairman, CII, Madurai, said that Madurai malli was famous even in cities such as New Delhi. More than 100 women from Vilacheri and other rural areas, besides college students, participated in the workshop.