

Published: August 16, 2012 20:05 IST | Updated: August 16, 2012 20:05 IST

## Role reversal – urban to rural

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SPECTACULAR: Students performing at the cultural competition Photo:G. Moorthy

*At Keezhamattaiyan youths were sensitised to village life, tradition and culture*

The slow-paced village life often attracts urban visitors. Keezhamattaiyan or Kovilmattiyam, as wall painting has plenty that leaves visitors awestruck. That is what scores of college students barefoot on the village streets.

As a mark of respect to Valagurunathaswamy Temple, also known as Karuppasamy Temple at Temple, the use of footwear inside the is banned. But ironically, hygiene takes a backseat as visitors wear in their hands.

Valagurunathaswamy Temple is believed to be 13th Century temple that houses a mutilated inscription about donation of land to the temple during the period of Maravarman Sundarapandian Meetta Sundarapandian' (1216-1238 AD). The inscription also provides details about list of temple land.

Students presented these facts during Heritage 2012 spread over two days of cultural contests TATA DHAN Academy organized the fest with an aim to provide space for students to learn, connect and respect village culture, tradition and beliefs.

Students found that villagers travel long distances for availing medical care besides being victims of shortage. They also concentrated on issues like primary education, sanitation, alcoholism and were asked to spend time with villagers who shared their unique beliefs and battles for better

Event coordinator J.A.N. Vijayabharathi says, "Students walked through narrow streets to collect interesting information for documentation."

## Learning the roots

“Learning about heritage, traditions and culture is similar to knowing our roots. Hence ‘Herit platform for students to understand village traditions besides processing challenges of develop

“Heritage 2012 was not a usual cultural festival organized in colleges. It was aimed at enabling ways of life and tradition directly from the villagers,” says Vijayabharathi.

The competition gave time and opportunity to students for observing situations and evolving : cultural and traditional knowledge that exist in the village. Under the ‘Pracharan – marketing students identified three local products – Lotus tube, Eecham mat and palm water (pathanee market in urban areas. The students developed strategies that would help the villagers to earn

Under the ‘Talash-Identifying potential development leaders’ event, students moved door-to-d leaders who could rub shoulders with villagers for the development of the village.

In ‘Chitralkha-drawings’ competition, colours spoke a lot about poverty and problems of Kee: also participated in other events namely–Varnabharathi-rangoli,’ Prasar- communication wit development quiz, Mudra – States’ folk dance,’ and ‘Manthan-debate.’

The festival also provided space for students to perform in cultural competition. In Sanskriti - competition – students mesmerized villagers with their attires representing the village deity I farmers. Similarly, in Mudra-folk dance programme students displayed their knowledge and s various States of the country.

As many as 66 students from six city schools participated in 11 events and Thiagarajar School emerged as over all winners. Earlier, villagers welcomed students with oyilattam and kummi.

## Mutharayars

R. Venkatraman, retired professor, Madurai Kamaraj University, says the village has two dom Mutharayars and Poyars. Mutharayars were local chieftains who ruled the region between Th: Tirumayam. In the 10th century AD, with the rising of Imperial Cholas, Mutharayars moved t settled down at Keezhamattiayan village. “As they belong to ruling community, discipline rem

‘Into the Past, Onto the Future’ screamed posters. The event’s motto was ‘taking urban India t

Keywords: [Keezhamattiayan](#), [cultural festival](#), [Chitralkha-drawing](#), [Heritage 2012](#)

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