

Published Date:	Saturday 24th April, 2021	Publication:	The Hindu [Chennai]
Journalist:	Sangeetha Kandavel	Page No:	4
MAV/CCM:	622,728/38.44	Circulation:	466,149

# GI tag sought for Vilachery clay toys

## Clay is taken from village tank

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CHENNAI

The Kulala Handicraft Artisan Welfare Association has applied for the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the famous clay toys made at Vilachery in Thiruparankundram, Madurai.

The MSME Intellectual Property Facilitation Centre and NABARD's Madurai Agri Business Incubation Forum were the facilitators for this application filed by P. Sanjai Gandhi, advocate, High Court and IPR attorney.

Officials of the Geographical Indication Registry in Chennai confirmed the filing of the application.

"The toys are made of clay from the Vilachery tank and nearby places. All the artisans here make dolls by using mould and paint them by hand," said Mr. Gandhi.

These artisans live around the villages of Vilachery, Melamathur, Keelamathur, Melakuyilkudi, Keelakuyilkudi, Thuvariman, Sambakudi, Karadipatti, Tattanur and Vadivelkarai of Madurai West taluk.

### Historical details

According to the historical details given in the application, the artisans of Vilachery worshipped at a Karuppannaswamy temple, which was 300 years old.

The statue of the main deity of the temple was made of burned clay. The temple was developed and administered by Vilachery villagers. Inside the temple, one can see colourful mud horses of various sizes, which are donated by potters during the annual festival celebrated in the Tamil month of 'Purattasi'.

"Every year, new horses replace the older ones, which are dissolved in the pond. These are the evidence that people from Vilachery have been making clay dolls for long," Mr. Gandhi said.

P. Sivakumar, CEO of NABARD-Madurai Agri Business Incubation Forum, said the filing of the application was supported by NABARD, the MSME Intellectual Property Facilitation Centre and Madurai District Tiny and Small Scale Industries Association (MADITSSIA).

The current business volume of these toys is around ₹15 crore, and it can be increased to ₹50 crore with new marketing strategies. "There are over 550 families and 250 manufacturers involved in this business." These products are exported to the United States, Germany, Malaysia, Singapore and the West Asian countries through merchants.