

**Heritage Value of Ancient Jain Caves and Monasteries around Vaigai River Of
Madurai Region**

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The recent excavation at Keeladi village on the Bank of Vaigai River in Madurai conducted by ASI has claimed that the settlement unearthed is more than 3000 years old as the archaeological evidences found are similar to the Harappan civilisation. This paper is based on a study of the Ancient Jain Caves and Monasteries around Vaigai River of Madurai region, the historical and natural setting, the heritage value, the present status of sites and threats in conserving the invaluable heritage which has a continuous and long history since 5th Century BCE. The study is conducted by site visits to the archaeological sites exploring the archaeological, epigraphical evidences and literature study. The areas of study include the cluster of sacred hills and pilgrimage sites namely Samanarmalai, Nagamalai, Pasumalai, Yanaimalai and Perulmal malai.

Keywords: Vaigai River, Madurai, Jain caves, vestiges, monasteries, sacred hills

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