

## **The Vaadhyar's House: A culinary heritage experience by Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels in the heart of Chettinad**

Chettinad, a unique region of over 78 villages scattered on the red arid soil of Tamil Nadu's Sivaganga district, is well-known for its rich culture, cuisine and history. Chettinad's main inhabitants were the prosperous Nattukottai Chettiar community of businessmen and bankers. The Chettiars who migrated to other countries to trade in articles like salt, spices and gems, sent back lavish furniture and fittings from those countries to accentuate their palatial mansions. Some of these mansions have been restored as heritage hotels to showcase the region's abundant cuisine, culture and legacy.

One of these palatial mansions has been taken over by Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels to add to its collection of heritage and design led hotels. **The Vaadhyar's House**, newly conserved and restored by The Park Hotels, began its life as a summer house about 150 years ago. The new house opposite the grand mansion was built with many windows on the ground floor that provided cross ventilation, mainly to support a leisurely recreational lifestyle. The upper floor had a feel of a covered verandah which allowed ventilation from all directions, keeping it cool during sultry Chettinad summers. Colourful stained glass was used to create interesting light patterns. The patriarchs of the house used this amply ventilated space as an escape from the summer heat to enjoy each other's company over a game of cards. Over the past 70 – 80 years, the house had been rented to a series of teachers and became known as "Vaadhyar's House" which translates to teacher's house.

A year and a half ago the house was in ruins – the roof had fallen in, glasses were broken and missing. Studies were done and under the leadership of Priya Paul, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, The Vaadhyar's House was brought back to its original form with some adaptive reuse, plugging-in modern day comforts of air conditioning and services such as toilets and kitchen yet capturing the traditional essence of indoor and outdoor living.

The Vaadhyar's House has two large shaded front and rear courtyards. The front street-facing courtyard faces the spectacular Chettinad mansion proposed as The Park's new heritage, 21 room hotel. The air-conditioned ground floor main Hall is flanked by covered verandahs for casual seating. The first floor function room is covered with clear and coloured glass creating beautiful patterns. Antique elements are mixed with Italian furniture and contemporary lighting to create a new design language for Chettinad.

The Vaadhyar's House opens in September with the menu featuring international and local specialities. The signature delicacies will weave the flavours of traditional spices and wood fired stoves of the region with new age culinary twists.

Time: 10:30 am to 11:00 pm

Distance to Kanadukathan: 1 hour drive from Trichy airport, 2 hour drive from Madurai