

Only the st for the guests

How Arts and Craft Centre sells
return gifts at affordable rates

high demand for handcrafted
goods with religious motifs

Sundaram

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The Centre can
produce upto 2000
gifts per order and
functions from
Yanaikkal

wedding return gifts that range
from ₹10 to ₹300, the most popular
of which are colourful *kumkum*
pouches, decorated *aarthi* plates
and handcrafted *chowkis*.

“A divine touch to the return
gift is something most people
prefer. *Chowkis* with figures of
Lord Vinayaga or Guberan are
popular,” she said. “A recent trend
is gifting customised keychains
with the couple’s initials.” Gifts
such as wall hangings and murals
and silk-thread jewellery are also

making their way into
the market.

The centre is also
known for producing a
plethora of affordable
art and craft products
for specific events. For
anniversaries, Asha
and her team make
colourful couple dolls
out of rubber and baby
Krishna dolls for chil-
dren’s birthdays. The
gifts are accordingly ad-
justed to match themed
events.

“Recently, we pro-
vided gifts for a kid’s
birthday party where
the theme was ‘buses.’
We gave every kid that
attended the party a
mouthorgan with im-
ages of buses painted
on it,” she said.

The Raj’s Art and
Crafts Centre also pro-
vides art and craft ma-
terials to the locals and
conducts classes and
workshops on painting
and crafting.

**Customisation
is key when
it comes to
innovative
ideas for
return gifts.
Customers
want
something
that is
meaningful.**

—Asha Raj, Raj’s
Know How Arts
and Craft Centre



A fruit that has all the nutrients your body needs

Avocado has become an
incredibly popular food
among health conscious
individuals. Often re-
ferred to as a superfood, it is
rich in nutrients which in-
clude vitamin K, folate, an-
tioxidants, fibre, vitamin C,
potassium, vitamin E, niacin,
riboflavin and healthy fats. Get
your healthy dose of Avocado
every day and reap all of its
benefits.

Loaded with fibre

Avocados are high in good fat
and fibre, so that they can help
you feel full for longer, thus
helping in weight loss. Soluble
fibre is known to be able to feed

the friendly gut bacteria in the
intestine, which are impor-
tant for the optimal functions
of our body.

Contains potassium

Potassium is an important
mineral that most people
don’t get enough of. The high
potassium present in the
avocados is linked to reduce the
risk of blood pressure, heart
attacks, stroke and kidney
failure. Avocados contain more
potassium than bananas have.

Keeps you healthy

One study that looked at the
dietary habits and health of the

people who eat avocados, found
that they are much healthier
than people who do not eat
avocados. They have a much
higher nutrient intake. People
who ate avocados regularly
also slowed weight loss, had a
lower BMI and significantly
less belly fat.

Protects the eye

Avocados not only increase the
antioxidant absorption from
other foods, they are also high in
antioxidant themselves. Studies
show that these nutrients are
linked to drastically reduced
risk of cataracts and macular
degeneration, which are
common in elderly persons.



Children enroll in interactive sessions and skill training

Grassroot education to equip a child for life

● **Keerthana M Sundaram**

School is not the only knowledge powerhouse,
a sincere student can start learning at every
effective locus. Madurai Seed is one such
habitat where children from disadvantaged
backgrounds are given an opportunity to empower
themselves. Started in 1999, this non-profit organ-
isation works at the grassroot level to educate
young minds by setting up free education centres.
We talk to its president Karthik Bharathi about
setting up of the organisation and what it envi-
sions to accomplish in the near future.

As a child, Karthik, a resident of Karumbalai
volunteered to help the needy and destitutes. He
was a part of the City Corporation’s Adult Lit-
eracy Programme and was an active member of
the National Service Scheme. “With the help of
likeminded volunteers, I started the Madurai Seed
in 1999. The primary aim of Seed was to uplift the
lives of children who grew up in the slums around
Karumbalai. Twenty years ago, a majority of the
population in the area was uneducated. Even the
school-going children were unable to read or write

properly. I felt the neces-
sity to create an alterna-
tive education centre,” he
says.

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—Karthik Bharathi,
Madurai Seed

Soon, Seed became that
one stop where kids gath-
ered after school. From
reading, writing, speak-
ing to life skills, they were
taught everything that a
normal school does. Stu-
dents from the near-by lo-
calities are enrolled at the
beginning of an academic
year. A majority of these
kids belong to disadvan-
taged backgrounds. Im-
pressed by the Seed’s in-
tent and work, Asha For
Education, Boston, USA
and Friends of Madurai
SEED, Zurich, Switzer-
land are supporting them
with regular funds.

On weekdays, regular
classes are conducted between 6 pm and 9.15 pm.
The different classes at Seed are: Vaandugal Aran-
gam (Classes 1-4); Vergal Arangam (Classes 5-8)
and Kanavugal Arangam (Classes 9-12).

They also organise a free summer camp every
year, where guests conduct interactive sessions
with the kids. Skill classes are also held during the
month of April and May. They have a library that
houses around 5,000 books.

Madurai Seed releases a yearly magazine, *Pud-
huYugam*, and they also focus on imparting the
habit of saving money by creating internal saving
accounts called the Thenkoodu.

“Seed has a legacy of
producing students, who
are highly qualified and
are doing well in soci-
ety. At present, most
of the volunteers who
are taking care of Seed
are its former students,”
he says. *Vizhudhugal* is
their alumni association that
is also involved in supporting
the organisation.

