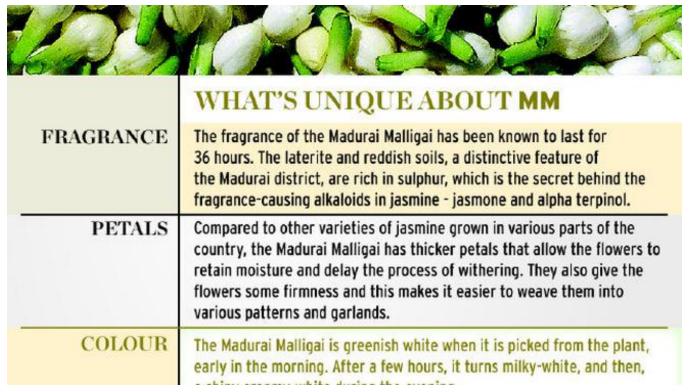
Intrinsic part of ethos of city

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'Madurai Malli' is a flower for all seasons and reasons.

"Madurai malligai is not just a flower. It is an intrinsic part of the ethos of the city. And it is interwoven with the essence of Madurai's rich culture and history, as well as the texture of the everyday lives of its people, their moods and their emotions...," writes Uma Kannan in *Madurai Malligai*, a book celebrating Madurai and its jasmine, published in November 2012 by the Publication Division of Thiagarajar College.

The book captures the fragrance of this unique variety in its entirety in its effort to introduce 'Madurai Malli' to people all over the globe. It is also a tribute to the jasmine variety and the people who earn a living selling it.

The word jasmine, Dr. Uma points out, does not refer to a single plant or flower.

There are many varieties of jasmine found around the world and some of them are shrubs, creepers or climbers. And all of them belong to the olive family of genus Jasminum.

She refers to Madurai as the 'jasmine capital of India,' from where 'Madurai Malli' travels to other parts of the country and overseas.

The GI tag has come as a feather in the cap for the growers of 'Madurai Malli,' though they have no say in fixing its price in the market. "The flower sellers have no role in fixing the price because the flower market is a buyer's market and not a farmers' market." Life is also not a "bed of jasmine" for the retail sellers whose are ubiquitous in the city, especially around the Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple. For these sellers, stringing 'Madurai Malli' is like meditation. She expresses concern in the book over the use of materials such as coloured cotton thread or wool, in the place of the traditional banana fibre, for stringing 'Madurai Malli.'

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