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Passionate Chocko Valliappa with his self-designed clocks; with a Chettinad home decoration background; and (below) the happy sun clock. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Clocking time for a creative pursuit

From carpets to cobwebs, businessman and entrepreneur Chocko Valliappa converts them all into arty timepieces

A few years ago around Christmas, entrepreneur Chocko Valliappa, founder of Vee Technologies, a business process and operations consulting company, was in Norway for a meeting. He was an hour early so to kill time, he strolled into a store that looked invitingly festive. Inside, he saw a cheerful red circular carpet with a border fringed with a pattern of children holding hands. "I could see a clock in that carpet," says Valliappa, who picked it up without hesitation.

Back in his home in Bengaluru, Valliappa designed a wall clock with the carpet, sandwiching it between glass. When visitors walk into Valliappa's apartment on Palace Road, the bright red timepiece leaps to attention, instantly drawing the eye.

The apartment is filled with intriguing time pieces. Taking up most of the wall behind the dining table is a rectangular tie and dye circle patterned fabric with a clock in the centre. "This was a bedsheet I spotted in a local market – my wife was surprised to see me picking it up and asked me what I wanted it for," grins Valliappa.

The hobby horologist's latest purchase is a cobweb from a hoodoo store in the US. "Can you imagine paying $300 dollars for a cobweb?" he asks. "It is a real cobweb imprinted on a velvet cloth. It will be a great backdrop for a clock," he says.

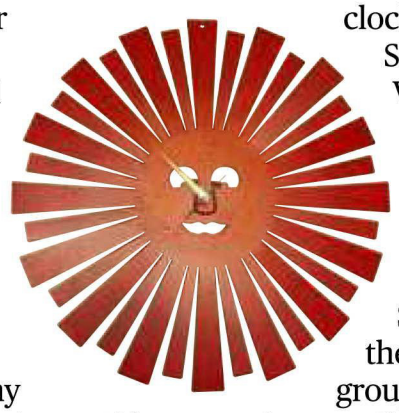
From an Egyptian papyrus and Broadway posters to a striking photograph of the Eiffel tower, Valliappa has crafted clocks on unusual backgrounds and his apartment is a veritable museum of these time pieces that transport you from the US to Paris to Africa.

Time travel

One of his most striking pieces is a gorgeous art work featuring a Madonna-faced woman in red on which Valliappa has projected time through cleverly fitted projectors on the roof. "I picked up this art work in Chitra Santhe, the annual art carnival in Bengaluru," he says.

For the fourth generation scion of the family of Karumuttu Thiagarajar Chettiar, horology was always a hobby but he embraced clock-making passionately only 10 years ago. Now his offices, homes and the college the family runs are all embellished with his works. "I must have made about 50 clocks to date," he says, pointing to his tiny studio set in his apartment, where more works are in progress.

Valliappa's personal favourite is the clock on his office table – a yellowish Jaisalmer marble piece on which he has placed a barometer, on which the time is projected. "Watches - especially smart watches have so many dimensions. They can tell so many other things besides time. With the barometer I have tried a multi-dimension clock," he says.



Inspiration can strike from anywhere, says the well-read, widely travelled Valliappa, who shuttles between Delhi, Bengaluru and Salem. His social media posts are filled with pictures of interesting clocks he has sighted – an ancient building in Washington DC atop which stands a clock marking time through the ages, and an antique clock in Duluth, among others.

Given his obsession with clocks is he punctual? Says his friend, Vikram Ponappa, restoration architect and photographer, "Whether it's a very laidback Sunday at 4pm with the Gutter Gang (a group of six who have known Chocko for a long time and used to meet outside and sit in a clean gutter) or a Zoom meeting or work meeting, I have never known Chocko not to keep time."

He adds with a grin, "Chocko calls his hobby Klockology, but we call it Chockology."