



Three Historic Tamil Film Prints starring Sivaji Ganesan donated to National Film Archive of India

Acquisition includes NFAI's first-ever copy of 'Thiruvartuchelvar'

Posted On: 08 OCT 2026 11:40AM by PIB Mumbai

Mumbai: 8 October 2026

Three 35mm Tamil cinema classics starring legendary actor Sivaji Ganesan and directed by A. P. Nagarajan have been acquired and handed over to the NFDC–National Film Archive of India (NFDC–NFAI), Pune, by Aparna Subramanian, Film Research Officer at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII).

The acquisition brings Thiruvartuchelvar (1967), Thillana Mohanambal (1968) and Thiruvilayadal (1965) into the national collection. Thiruvartuchelvar fills a significant gap, as the title was previously not held by NFAI in any format. The acquisition also adds a second surviving release print of Thillana Mohanambal and Thiruvilayadal, strengthening the archival protection of two important works of Tamil cinema.

The significance of the acquisition extends beyond the addition of three titles to the collection. The availability of a second surviving print provides NFAI with greater flexibility in managing the preservation and use of these films, allowing one element to remain protected while the other can support activities such as reference, technical assessment, digitisation and comparative examination.



Ms. Aparna Subramanian donating the film reel to MD, NFDC Shri. Prakash Magdum, and NFDC-NFAI Officials, Shri, Bhavesh Pratap Singh and Ms. Leenali Khairnar

Managing Director, National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), Shri Prakash Magdum said: "The preservation of India's cinematic heritage depends not only on institutional collections, but also on the efforts of individuals and organisations that recognise the importance of safeguarding surviving film material. The addition of these three important Tamil films to the National Film Archive of India strengthens the national collection and helps ensure that significant works of Indian cinema remain available for future generations. We appreciate the effort that has gone into locating and transferring these prints to the care of the national archive."

Speaking about the donation, Aparna Subramanian said: "For the past three and a half years, I have been rescuing and collecting film prints. Earlier this year, in January 2026, I donated a print of Rathakaneer (1954) to the NFAI. The handover of selected titles from my collection continues that effort. My aim is to put these prints in the care of a public archive with proper preservation facilities."

While the NFAI collection holds multiple preservation elements of Thillana Mohanambal, only a single preservation element of Thiruvilayadal is currently available in the collection. The donated print of Thiruvilayadal appears to be an optically modified version in the CinemaScope format.

When only a preservation element of a film survives in an institutional collection, its use has to be carefully controlled to minimise the risk of further physical deterioration. Having a second surviving element gives the archive greater flexibility for activities such as reference, technical assessment, digitisation and comparative examination, while allowing the other analogue film element to remain protected. The availability of multiple surviving elements is therefore extremely valuable from an archival preservation perspective.



Frames from Thillanaa Mohanambal (1968)

All three newly acquired prints show magenta colour fading and vertical projector scratches, reflecting the effects of decades of use and storage in tropical and unfavourable conditions. Their condition further highlights the importance of securing surviving film elements within institutional archival collections.

The recovery of the prints began with leads received in August 2026. Thillana Mohanambal was located in Chennai and collected with the assistance of FTII alumnus Sai Sanjay before being transported to Pune. Further leads resulted in the recovery of Thiruvilayadal and Thiruvarutchelvar. On learning that NFAI did not hold a copy of Thiruvarutchelvar, Subramanian prioritised securing the print for the archive. The three prints were collected from Chennai on 13 September 2026 and subsequently handed over to NFAI.

The acquisition adds to NFDC-NFAI's ongoing efforts to identify, collect and preserve surviving film elements and strengthens the national collection of India's cinematic heritage. The prints will support future preservation, research, digitisation and access, ensuring that these important works remain available as part of India's film history.

Source- NFDC - National Film Archive of India | Edgar Coelho/ Priti Malandkar

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