



Ms Vishnu Vardni Anandan, a member of the Tamil Language Council, reads during public transport commutes or early in the morning. PHOTO: COURTESY OF VISHNU VARDNI ANANDAN

BookTalk

Tamil language advocate sees reading as key to emotional health

Gabrielle Marie Sunderaj

Who: Vishnu Vardni Anandan, 21, currently studies philosophy, politics and economics at the National University of Singapore. She is a freelance journalist at Tamil Murasu covering a wide range of topics, from culture and entertainment to community issues and education.

She has been a member of the Tamil Language Council since 2024, contributing to the Tamil Language Festival, and participating in discussions about language and community initiatives.

"Right now, I'm reading *Nexus* by Yuval Noah Harari. I came across it frequently on social media, and since Harari is an award-winning historian and thinker, I was curious to see what all the buzz was about.

The book presents complex historical patterns and philosophical questions in a very engaging, almost TED Talk-like style. It is accessible without being superficial, which I appreciate. His ability to so seamlessly weave together technology, anthropology and the human condition is compelling.

I am also reading *Beast And Man* by Mary Midgley, who was part of the Oxford Quartet. Midgley challenges the sharp divide people often draw between humans and animals, making a case for understanding human nature in continuity with the animal world.

It is a fascinating blend of ethics, evolutionary biology and psychology. What I enjoy most is how she brings warmth and clarity to deeply philosophical issues that are often treated too abstractly.

I try to make the most of small

windows in my day to read, especially during public transport commutes or early in the morning. It is definitely tough to carve out long uninterrupted blocks of time, but I have come to see those in-between moments as reading opportunities.

The hum of the city in motion makes for a surprisingly good backdrop.

I spent my last semester on student exchange in London, and one of the things that struck me was how many people read on the Tube – the London Underground mass transport system. It felt like it was part of the culture – seeing commuters lost in novels or newspapers during their rides. It is not something I have often seen in Singapore, and it left an impression on me.

London also has an incredible range of dedicated book cafes and themed bookstores. I spent some time exploring them and it has deepened my love for reading.

One of my favourite book quotes is: "There is a war that makes us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves."

It is from *The God Of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, and the quote captures the internalisation of power, post-colonial identity and the psychological weight of history. I especially love Roy's style of writing when it comes to describing the main characters' complex childhoods in Kerala.

Reading is essential to me, not just for academic purposes, but also as a way of staying mentally and emotionally healthy. It offers creative and intellectual stimulation amid the rush of our daily routines.

Reading across different styles and cultures pushes the boundaries of what people consider conventional writing."