

friday Review

THE HINDU

Margam's timeless appeal

Dancers continue to explore the traditional repertoire of Bharatanatyam p3

Experiments with an opera

The 300-year-old romantic tale of Dido and Aeneas lingers on p4

**THE ICONIC DEEWAR TURNS 50**

The film that sealed Amitabh Bachchan's angry young man image p4

Saying it through dance

Amrita Lahiri | Kuchipudi dancer

Find me any aspect of love and there will be a dance that can express it. Whether it's longing, jealousy, unrequited love, telling a friend the details of a clandestine meeting, gossiping about someone's new romance, or a girl who is not ashamed of her feelings, classical dance has the repertoire and the technique to express it all. Vulnerability is what makes for truly exciting art and that's most evident in sringara – love.

Sringara is considered the Rasaraaj, and for good reason. There is no rasa more enjoyable to watch and experience, but also as difficult to navigate. After all, art reflects life. Interestingly, the songs of *viraha* or separation are richer than those about union, or *sambhoga*.

Padams and javalis are poems that best express every nuance of love. In one, the heroine says, 'I saw his body glistening like gold in the sunset, when we were alone by the river, and I gave myself to him (Tamil padam 'Netru veren endre'). In another song, she says, 'If he comes to my doorstep, I will go {to stand} in front of him, without losing concentration, I will hold his hands, bring him in and make him sit on the bed. With delight, oh my friend, I will keep my bosom on his chest, caress him (from 'Valapu datsa nerane' – a Telugu poem by Kshetrayya).

How ironic that the authors of most poems are men – Dharmapuri Subbaiyer, Kshetrayya and Jayadeva. They write in a female voice, and one marvels at their understanding and celebration of women's emotions. Ultimately, gender does not matter, neither in love, nor in art.

In Kuchipudi, love takes on a dramatic and dynamic dimension. Satyabhama, perhaps the most famous of Kuchipudi characters, is the proud but jealous wife of Krishna. Her story is a lesson in giving up one's ego. She is upset because Krishna favoured Rukmini over her. A similar theme runs through the *Gita Govinda*, where Radha suffers because of her desire to be the only one with Krishna. In life and love, one learns that the key to joy is to let go.

In dance, there are a multitude of situations of love and imagined lovers. The beloved exists only in our reactions to him.

What is interesting are the nuances of the individual experience of love. Sakhi, the friend, becomes most important. She is the one who is listening to the nayika's complaints, to her bragging, to her pleading, and to her pain. There is no real hero. The friend is the main partner on this journey for she is the witness and guide in these experiences of love.

Over centuries, this expression has been perfected and elaborated by hundreds of dancers, mostly female, but also some male, who dare to bring the most beautiful and vulnerable emotion onto the stage – love.

**Mood and metaphor**

Navia Natarajan | Bharatanatyam dancer

"Her lips are fresh red buds,
Her arms are tendrils,
Impatient youth is poised
To blossom in her limbs "

[*Shakuntala and the ring of recollection*
Translated by Barbara Stoler Miller]

When one reads these lines by Kalidasa, one experiences a living, breathing presence of love. This is sringara.

Poetry, sculpture and painting can evoke joy, even exhilaration. Sringara, one of the Navarasas, is layered and profound. To define it in English would be to confine it. While often translated as 'romance', it is much

more nuanced – it encompasses beauty, longing, passion, separation, sensuality, eroticism and divine love.

Whether in Kalidasa's works, Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*, Tamil Sangam poetry, or the *Amaru Shataka*, sringara's essence is evoked through Nature, emotion, and subtle imagery.

The Khajuraho, Konark and Belur temples stand as some of the finest representations of sringara rasa in Indian art. As artistes, we observe and absorb these impressions, allowing them to settle in our subconscious, only for them to emerge later in the pieces we create.

Even early Indian cinema showcased sringara. My choreographies, especially varnams, have been shaped by moments when my mother spoke about the lyrical classicism of certain film songs. For me,

sringara is not just about lovers – it is a complete aesthetic experience.

The beauty of many literary verses lies in their openness to interpretation, allowing the reader to find their own meaning. In one of the *Amarushatakams* (compilation of love poems), four lines capture the subtle yet inevitable drift in a relationship. Seen differently, it becomes a story – of love eroding over time, of silence replacing intimacy.

For a performance, I interpreted it as the woman no longer feeling the necessity to stay, recognising the weight of what was lost. With quiet resolve, she chooses to move on, with the clarity that some departures are not endings, but beginnings.

**Creative bond**

N. Srikanth

| Bharatanatyam dancer

My early years were spent in Melattur and the summer holidays were packed with Bhagavata Mela training. I started performing when I was six and my first role as heroine (Chandramathi) was at the age of 12. Some plays had characters openly displaying sringaram. My first Bhagavata Mela guru Krishnamoorthy Sarma would teach the Sambhoga/Rati hastas and ask me to copy his expressions. When I could not understand some of them, he would smile and say, "You'll understand with experience."

Talking about or explaining those pieces was kind of embarrassing for teachers at that time, possibly because Bhagavata Mela is a ritualistic art form to which a certain amount of sanctity is attached.

As a student of Bharatanatyam, my first guru was a nattuvanar who only taught age-appropriate items. Thus, sringara had to be learnt from life experience.

Aswathy was first my student and we used to perform together long before we got married. At that time, I used to teach her a lot of Khandita nayika padams. I used to tease her that she's good at chiding her lover. It is ironical that the sparring hero and heroine later became life partners. After marriage, we began to explore more of sringara on stage and one of our favourite pieces is the *Ashtapadi* of Jayadeva, 'Sakhi he', which we first presented as a duet.

Today, we teach students who have exposure to myriad forms of sringara – from the subtle to the extreme – and it is sometimes difficult for them to relate to the psyche of the heroine/hero who behaves in a certain way. We're often asked questions as to why she is always waiting for her lover, and why she should send her friend as messenger. If it is an old composition, we cannot tamper with the sensitivities of that era and those characters. To portray progressive thoughts, it is better to choose contemporary poetry.

While performing on stage, our gurus taught us to maintain a certain Ouciyam (decorum). The line between vulgarity and sensuality is a very thin one. While this is a matter of subjectivity, we prefer to keep the depiction of sringara subtle on stage.

For the nayika within

Divya Devaguptapu | Bharatanatyam artiste

Sringara is rasa raja (the king of rasas), because love is all encompassing.

In much of the poetry we sing and dance to in Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam, the poets wisely understood that true fulfillment can only be found in journeys that lead inward towards the infinite. The nayika or heroine stands as a symbol for the seeker that exists in us all.

They expressed this wisdom as life being a seeking of the *jivatma* (soul) longing for union with the *paramatma* (divine) and the nayika (heroine) a symbol for the seeker that exists in us all.

The feminine is our ability to feel and express emotion (*bhava*) and the limitation a nayika experiences within is her viraha (separation), and her state of pining. To me, a nayika is the most beautiful metaphor for an emotional state within – for, she is the divine feminine regardless of gender.

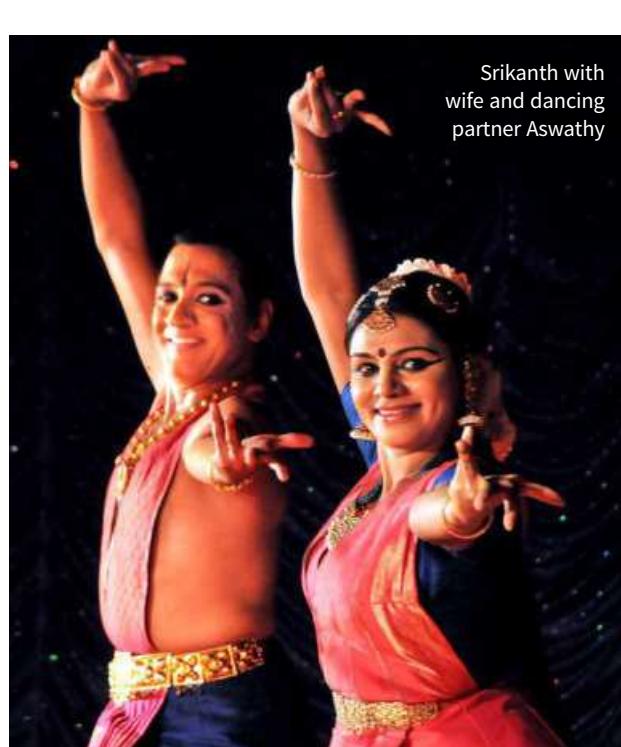
Today, the idea of 'self-love' is everywhere. Self-love is about complete acceptance of who we are without judgement. Our vaggeyakaras wrote about this wholeness of life, love and relationships – be it everyday life in humour-laced javalis, or the ultimate love play between the divine feminine (Radha) and divine masculine (Krishna) in the *Ashtapadis*, or the emotional states of mature relationships in Kshetrayya's padams.

To truly appreciate and understand our poetry requires surrender and a logic transcending acceptance of all emotions – anger, jealousy, sorrow, despair, fear and more. Though we think we experience love because of another human, our perception of the other is actually our inner experience. Our ultimate happiness or *ananda* does not happen because of the presence of another, it happens because we find that inner lover within us! And, that is the essence of our poetry, a longing for a union with our lover within.

In today's world, men and women have been conditioned to analyse everything from a space of questioning and rebellion, rather than feeling.

As a woman raised in the 21st century, I too was subject to this. However, the practice, exploration and becoming various nayikas in these compositions gave me an opportunity to connect deeper with my inner feminine self. To become vulnerable and feel, helping me find wisdom to navigate my relationship with myself with kindness, compassion and acceptance.

For me, the various nayikas are the many emotional states we experience every day. Some days we are 'Khandita', on others we are 'Svadhinapatika'. When we stop hustling, hold space within and feel our emotions, we become the nayika, where there is no morality, judgement or relevance. Only love, inclusivity and acceptance. To me, this is self-love.



FREE

SENIOR CITIZEN ANNUAL HEALTH PACKAGE

**WITH JUST ONE
HEALTH CHECK-UP.
ENJOY A FULL ONE
YEAR OF CARE**

because Golden years deserve Golden care.



**PAY JUST RS. 599/- FOR A HEALTH CHECK-UP AND
GET A SENIOR CITIZEN ANNUAL HEALTH PACKAGE TOTALLY FREE !**

What does your Health Check-up include ?

Glucose Fasting Test | Complete Blood Count | Lipid Profile | Kidney Function Test | Liver Function Test | Urine Test | ECG | X Ray | Physical Examination and Specialist Consultation

What does your Free Senior Citizen Annual Health Package offer ?

6 Senior Doctor Consultations | 24hrs Emergency Duty Doctor Consultation | Discounts on Pharmacy & Investigations | Monthly one Free visit by paramedical team | Free Home Delivery of Medicines and sample collection | 50% discount on Ambulance Services and Extra benefits on IP Billing

Your health matters to us. Act now for your peace of mind !

Chennai Locations: Ambattur, Anna Nagar, East Tambaram, Kilpauk, Poonamallee, T Nagar

Other Locations: Cuddalore | Erode | Nagercoil | Pondicherry | Pudukkottai | Tuticorin

For appointments

+91 9698 300 300

www.bewellhospitals.in



Graceful
Kavita Ramu.
PHOTO: SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT

Evergreen line up

Kavita Ramu highlighted the timelessness of the traditional repertoire



V.V. Ramani

In the present-day dance scenario, where virtuosity and speed seem to dominate proceedings, it was refreshing to see a margam presented by Kavita Ramu, a disciple of K.J. Saraswati. She drew attention to the beauty of traditional repertoire in her presentation for the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's dance festival.

Arunagirinathar's celebrated Tiruppugazh 'Muthaitharu pathithirunagai' in praise of Muruga, where the lyrics pour out in a torrent, worked well as an opening number. Her depiction of the varied facets of Muruga – his persona, the peacock, his vehicle, and the rituals associated with him such as the Kavadi – were interspersed with dynamic sollukattus. Her fine sense of rhythm, finishing every theermanam with a flourish, made for a vibrant opening.

The Khamsa raga varnam 'Samiyai azhaithu vadi' addressed to Sundareswarar of Madurai composed by the Thanjavur Quartet, dealt with the nayika pining for a union with her lord. Kavita, while entreating her sakhi to go as a messenger,

established through her stance and mukhaabhinaya the heroine's anguish. The description of her lord – who has a regal bearing, whose body smells of sandalwood, and the deity whose radiance shines on his devotees – was visualised to establish the character of the nayika.

Bees, cuckoos, and the arrows of Kama, the god of love, are allegories used in Bharatanatyam to communicate emotions. These formed a part of Kavita's vocabulary too. The attention to detail came through in her sancharis and simple communicative abhinaya sans dramatic diversions, and the range of gaits for the hero, heroine and sakhi.

A vibrant Swati Tirunal Dhanasri thillana came as a fitting finale to her performance. The musical team consisted of Swamimalai Suresh and A. Narendra Kumar on the nattuvangam, Kaushik Panchapakesan on vocals, Kesavan on the mridangam, Atul Kumar on the flute and Durai Srinivasan on the veena.

Moving on from sringara to vatsalya rasa, Sathyika depicted the love shown by little Rama's mothers in the popular Tulsidas bhajan 'Thumak chalat Ramachandra' in the Hindustani raag Gara. The bhajan extols the beauty of little Rama learning to walk. Lalgudi G Jayaraman's thillana in Madhuvanti was the concluding piece.

The Aharya abhinaya goes a long way in making the dance more effective. One's attention gets diverted from the dance when the dancer exhibits even the slightest discomfort in the aharya or attire. This happened at Sathyika's recital. Also, the youngster could do well by sharpening her mritta and bringing more intensity to her expression.

The orchestra led by Uma Sathyaranayanan in the nattuvangam played a vital role in enhancing the performance's appeal. The vocalist Janani Hamsini needs to be applauded for her exceptional rendering of every song. Sujit Naik on the flute, Nandini Sai Giridhar on the violin and Dhananjayan on the mridangam were equally good.



behave the way you do? You do know my mind".

Uma Sathyaranayanan, a student of Chitra Visweswaran, has instilled in her disciple the style of her guru. It came through in Sathyika's crisp footwork and the supple, swaying movements.

This was followed by a javali by Pattachiramayya in Khamsa. Javalis are songs with sringara or love as the main theme. The characters – nayaka, nayika and sakhi – often indulge in playful banter. Here, Sathyika portrayed a nayika who expresses her sorrow to her sakhi for being subjected to undeserved blame because her unintentional acts made people misinterpret her and call her fickle-minded. This piece was taught to Sathyika by her previous guru Hemamalini Arni of Hyderabad. Sathyika's abhinaya prowess came through in her portrayal of a Mugdhanayika.

Sathyika Ranganathan.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

central piece of the evening's performance. The nayika calls out to Krishna, 'Oh Yadava, O Madhava' asking him if "is it fine to

Tales from the epics

Athriya Krishnan Balaji chose to focus on a few significant episodes

Manasa Vijayalakshmi C

Athriya Krishnan Balaji, disciple of Vinitha Subramanian, presented her solo recital, incorporating tales from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, at the Margazhi Music and Dance festival organised under the auspices of Kartik Fine Arts.

Athriya began her recital with a pushpanjali in raga Srotaswini, set to Adi tala, a composition by Madurai R. Muralidaran. The next item was the varnam, for which Athriya chose episodes from the Mahabharata, especially those that led to the Kurukshetra War.

As Arjuna steps onto the battlefield, he asks Krishna how he can fight his Kaurava cousins, guru Dronacharya, and beloved grandfather Bhishma. "Just because



Athriya Krishna Balaji.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

you killed your cousins, does it mean I can do the same? If you kill the root of the tree, how will the tree grow?" In the second half, Krishna explains the difference between Dharma and Nyaya and then reveals his true form to Arjuna. The varnam 'Krishna the Omnipresent' set in Ragamalika

was written by Athriya's father, Balaji Krishnan, and tuned by Nagai Sriram. Athriya's sharp footwork, precise adavus and realistic portrayals in this segment stood out.

Next came the keerthanam 'Ramasami dhoothan' (raga Magudhari, Adit tala) by Arunachala Kavi, depicting an episode from the Ramayana, where Hanuman enters Ravana's palace. Hanuman is dragged to the court as a prisoner but he boldly declares, "Hey Ravana, I am Rama's messenger, not just a monkey. My name is Hanuman." After firmly informing Ravana that he will fight him out at a battle, Hanuman urges Ravana to free Sita. Enraged, Ravana orders Hanuman's tail to be set on fire. Hanuman cleverly uses this to his advantage, and sets Ravana's palace ablaze, and eventually, all of Lanka.

The dancer concluded her performance with a thillana in raga Maand, set to Adi tala, and composed by Lalgudi G. Jayaraman.

Athriya's dance performance brought to the fore the timeless appeal of the epics.



Energetic moves

Divya Hoskere kept up the momentum through well-chiselled mritta and expression

Rupa Srikanth

Divya Hoskere is a young Bharatanatyam dancer and academician. A disciple of P. Praveen Kumar, she is a PhD scholar at the School of Humanities at NIAS. Her broad area of research includes the study of the Natyashastra, Indian aesthetics and theatrical design.

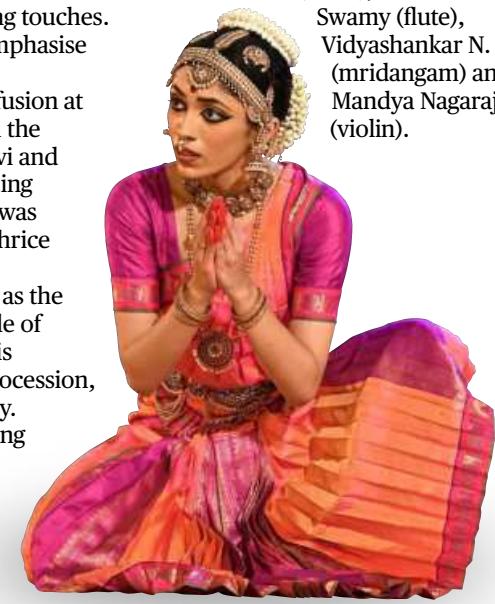
Her scholarship is evident in the neatness of adavus and their perfect timing. She is light on her feet contrasting it with an azhutham – groundedness that defines modern-day Bharatanatyam. In fact, some jathis in the 'Roopamujuchi' padavarnam (Thodi, Adi, Ramaswamy Dikshitar) covered the vast stage of The Music Academy (she performed at the 2025 dance festival). She managed the grounded touch as well. She is confident and energetic.

Praveen's visualisations were interesting, nice 'dhi thas' in one, adding attamis in between another, karvais in the third and adavus in the fourth and turns in the last – small, sparkling touches. His idea of a pause to emphasise the emotion – of awe in 'Roopamujuchi', of confusion at his anger in 'kopamu' in the second part of the pallavi and again of sadness and facing troubles in 'tapa traya', was effective, but repeated thrice over, it lost some sheen.

Describing Tyagaraja as the effulgent lord of the cycle of births and deaths, who is celebrated in a grand procession, was done with sensitivity. Especially the idol shaking

Confident Divya Hoskere.

PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI



Hamsadhwani presents

KAMBA RAMAYANAM

The Vaali Story

The essence of Kamban explained in English and experienced with music

Dr. Priya Ramachandran | Prof. Mohamed Rela
Sri Sikkil Gurucharan
supported by
Sri Mudicondan Ramesh - Veena
Sri Aaduthurai Guruprasad - Mridangam

Saturday, 15th February 6.15 p.m. onwards Youth Hostel, 2nd Avenue Indira Nagar, Adyar

All are welcome



BREAKING THE STIGMA

In the last couple of

decades, we have seen great advancements in the field of reproductive medicine. Today, for couples who are unable to conceive naturally, there is a much higher probability of having children through fertility treatments. However, while many couples are open enough to approach a doctor and share their struggles with family planning, they are not as open when it comes to sharing with family and friends that they are undergoing fertility treatments. This is due to several reasons.

Social / cultural norms:

Popular cultural perceptions that connect natural conception with a person's masculinity and femininity are still prevalent. Couples

grappling with infertility may fear that 'they are not good enough' or that they are 'flawed'. So, they tend to keep their fertility treatments a secret from family and friends. Men, in particular, worry about social backlash if they are seen as being 'less virile'.

Fear of failure:

In many cases, a couple may have to go through more than one or two fertility treatments or IVF cycles before they conceive. The wait is likened to a rollercoaster ride, fuelled by alternating feelings of hope, uncertainty, excitement, disappointment, frustration and helplessness.

Having to share such deeply emotional issues – especially frustration when a cycle does not result in pregnancy – may be difficult for many couples, particularly due to fear of unnecessary advice or social ridicule.

'Not your own child':

Despite the widespread use of social media and communication tools, some myths and misconceptions remain rooted in people's minds. One such is that a child conceived through IVF is 'not really one's own' since it was 'not naturally conceived'. Such statements are deeply hurtful, and parents may fear for their own and their children's social acceptance.

It is important for us to remember that, ultimately, it is a couple's decision on how they want to plan for their family. A couple should be able to make the choice based on what is right for them, rather than who should be



Dr. K.S. Pavithra Gautham,
MBBS, MS (OG)
Managing Director,
BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.

privy to the information.

The rest of us – family, friends, acquaintances and society at large – have to respect this fully. By extending understanding and empathy, we will help create stronger, more loving families in the long run.

www.bloomlifehospital.com
For more details contact
BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.
Velachery & Ashok Nagar.
+91-9489 94989

Path-breaking
Nirupa Roy with Amitabh Bachchan and Shashi Kapoor in *Deewar*.
PHOTO: THE HINDU ARCHIVES



No wall so high

Fifty years after the iconic film *Deewar's* release, its social conflict hasn't faded, and the emotional tapestry hasn't worn out

Anuj Kumar

Once during a conversation, I asked Javed Akhtar about the meaning of Vijay's return to his mother's lap in the climactic scene of *Deewar*. He said the text he wrote with Salim Khan is open to interpretation – "Did he return to the mother because of his ideology or his emotion is still debatable. After all, the mother also goes to the temple to see her defiant son, after he is shot at by her younger son, the upholder of law. It is also some kind of acceptance."

Some scripts are not cast in stone. *Deewar* is one of them. Fifty years after the film shook the conscience of a nation by putting an end to Nehruvian romanticism, its ideas, myth and symbolism continue to speak to us. The conflict hasn't aged, and the emotional tapestry hasn't worn out. The capitalist designs to destroy workers' unity that Anand Babu (Satyan Kappu) seeks to expose are almost complete. Choosing between family and revolution

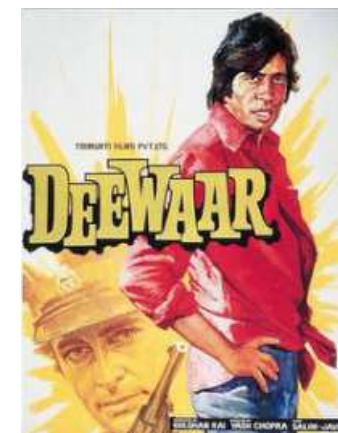
has proven to be a zero-sum game.

The road from the temple still bifurcates into opposing directions and the wall that sprung up between the brothers still stands tall. In fact, new bricks are being added and the scope of windows is being scuttled.

What's different and, perhaps, dangerous is that the bridge under which the two brothers met to resolve their differences is no longer in harness. The ambivalence of the mother (Nirupa Roy), the symbol of idealism, social mores and multiple

perspectives is no longer there. Ravi (Shashi Kapoor) might lose the argument today and, perhaps, his existence too, for the mother has switched to Vijay's side as we have noticed in the film's new-age iterations such as *KGF* and *Pushpa*.

Such is the power of Salim-Javed's screenplay that its dramatic transitions still keep you hooked. The characters are something we care about and root for, even five decades after the film's release. One can find traces of *The Public Enemy*, *Mother India* and *Gunga Jumna*



in the structure of *Deewar*, but the master storytellers wove the plot points from several sources to create an innovative picture of the urban flux.

Deewar released on the cusp of Emergency, when director Yash Chopra was not blindsided by chiffon romance and was keen on filming what was simmering beneath the ground. Produced by Gulshan Rai, it was the second film that Chopra directed outside his own or brother B.R. Chopra's banner, and showed his craft in mapping a socio-political commentary in a slick, urbane mould.

Beyond the brooding anti-establishment tone, the film makes a statement on the system where the degree of corruption counts. When Ravi shoots at a teenager, only to find he is stealing a loaf of bread because his family is hungry, he goes to his house to offer some food. The boy's mother lashes out at his largesse and the state of affairs where the big crooks go scot-free while a young boy is shot at for stealing a few crumbs. In comes the teacher-father (A.K. Hangal). He silences his wife and says it is about the intent, not the amount.

The strand provides Ravi with moral heft to counter his brother's transgressions in the

narrative is dotted with politics of signature. It is a signature that brings down Anand Babu's image in the eyes of his followers. The tattoo society puts on Vijay's arm that makes him an outcast for life too is a signature. Vijay buys the same building where his mother worked as a labourer during his childhood. He desperately tries to regain lost self-respect.

However, keeping the Gandhian spirit alive, the film puts the means over ends. When Vijay asks Ravi to bring the signatures of those who made him an outcast, the mother reminds him that those who let him down were not family.

Deewar started an era where dialogues and action blocks became more important than songs, and MB Shetty's choreography of fight sequences was a big draw. In the iconic fight sequence in a godown, when Amitabh Bachchan, dressed in a knotted shirt, puts his head under a tap, it established him as the angry young man for posterity. The idea has inspired several filmmakers since – the latest tribute was in *Paatal Lok-2*.

Amitabh's monologue with God has become part of folklore. Those who grew up in the 1980s would remember waking up to LP discs playing 'Mera paas maa hai'. When a young Vijay doesn't take the money thrown at him, Davar (Iffekhar) says, 'Yeh lambi race ka ghoda hai...'. The lines proved prophetic, not just for Vijay but also for Bachchan.

R.D. Burman's music, M.A. Shaikh's sound design and Sahir Ludhianvi's verses kept us on the edge. Kishore Kumar's 'Keh doon tumhe' continues to be on the playlist of DJs and listeners, but I can't get enough of 'I'm Falling in Love with a Stranger'. Sensuously rendered by Ursula Vaz, it defined Vijay – an outsider trying to fit in.

CULTURE BRIEFS



Sri Jayendra Saraswathi carrying the renovated Thadangams to the Akhilandeswari temple at Tiruvanaikaval, in Tiruchi.

Thadanga Pratishta utsavam

The Thadanga Pratishta mahotsavam at Sri Akhilandeswari temple, Tiruvanaikaval, near Tiruchi, is set to take place on February 16, between 11.41 a.m. and 12 noon, in the presence of Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi, the 70th Acharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. The ancient tradition of Thadanga Pratishta at the temple was begun by Adi Shankaracharya. The documents presented by Jambukeswaram Devasthanam mentions that Adi Shankaracharya installed the Sri Chakra Thadangams here and initiated the construction of Sri Sankara Math and garden near the Ambal shrine.

Once Akhilandeswari was in a fierce form and to subdue her fury, Adi Shankaracharya, who had come to the Jambukeswar temple as part of his Vijaya Yatra across South India, adorned the two Sri Chakras called Thadangams (Karnabharanam) on the ears of the goddess.

Through centuries, the Thadanga Pratishta has been done by successive Acharyas of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, by performing jeernodharana and reinstallation whenever the need arose. In 1908 (Pilavanga Sankara Samvatsaram 2416) and in 1923 (Rudirotkari Sankara Samvatsaram 2432), Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi performed the Thadanga Pratishta utsavam.

In 1992 (Prajapati Sankara Samvatsaram 2500), Sri Jayendra Saraswathi and Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi performed the ritual. Now, the 70th Acharya, who has undertaken the Vijaya Yatra, responding to the appeal of the devotees and temple authorities, will once again perform the ritual.

Purandaradasa aradhana

Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha has arranged 'Dasavani' Purandaradasar aradhana on February 16, from 8.30 am. at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan mini Hall, Mylapore.

Beginning with a bhajan rendition at 8.30 a.m. the day-long event will feature the following concerts. **9.30 a.m.:** Dhanya Rudrapatna; **10.15 a.m.:** Shruthi Bhat; **11 a.m.:** Abilash Giriprasad; **11.45 a.m.:** Vasudha Ravi; **1.30 p.m.:** Iyer Sisters; **2.15 p.m.:** Pathangi Brothers; **3 p.m.:** Shruthi Shankar Kumar; **3.45 p.m.:** B.Suchithra's 'Nirantara Purandara' — Purandara Charithram; **4.30 p.m.:** Adithya Madhavan; **5.15 p.m.:** Anahita & Apoorva; **6 p.m.:** Sherthalai Renganatha Sharma; **6.45 p.m.:** A.S. Murali; **7.30 p.m.:** R. Suriyaprakash; and **8.15 p.m.:** Srimushnam V. Raja Rao.

Young talent

The Music Academy will feature Y.G. Srilekha Nikshith's veena recital on February 18, 6 p.m. at the Kasturi Srinivasan Hall. She will be accompanied by T. Nikshith (mridangam) and S. Hari Kishore (kanjira). The programme is organised under the endowment instituted by Rajamma and N. Gopalaswami, former CEC, in memory of their grandmother Kanakam Raghavachari.

Sufi notes

Aalaap, in collaboration with Gobbelin Café, presents 'I Found my Beloved: Songs of love from the women of the Bhakti and Sufi traditions' by Shruthi Veena Vishwanath, a Pune-based singer, composer and educator. The event will be held at Gobbelin Café, Adyar, on February 15, 7 p.m. Accompanying Shruthi will be Shruteendra Katagade on the tabla and Babui on the dotara. For better understanding by the audience, the songs to be rendered on the evening will also be translated.

Interactive lec-dem

Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha presents an interactive lec-dem by Natyacharyas V.P. Dhananjayan and Shanta Dhananjayan on Feb. 16, 10 a.m. at Vani Mahal. Titled 'Walk the Talk', it will feature some of their choreographic works. For details call 93810 01357.



A slice of Baroque

Henry Purcell's 300-year-old *Dido and Aeneas* continues to draw audiences

Charumathi Supraka

Like many love stories, the saga of *Dido and Aeneas* is complex and tragic. Rooted in classical mythology, referencing two epics (a minor character in Homer's *Iliad*, Aeneas plays protagonist in Virgil's *Aeneid*) and populated by gods masquerading as mortals (Aeneas is son of Grecian love goddess Aphrodite while Dido, the powerful Queen of Carthage, is compared to Roman goddess Diana) – the narrative brings alive larger-than-life characters. Written as an opera by Henry Purcell, in the Baroque period, *Dido and Aeneas*, even after 300-odd years, remains one of the most-performed English operas.

Yet, for anyone unlettered in Western music and operas, the title 'Dido and Aeneas' could conjure images of togas, tie-up sandals and impenetrable Latin verses set to song. Nothing could be further from the version of *Dido and Aeneas* that recently held a packed audience in thrall at the Bangalore International Centre (BIC).

This production by the Legato School of Music (in collaboration with The Swedish Arts Council and others) sported a resplendent Indian aesthetic that included Kanjeevaram silks, ornate lehangas, pastel kurtas, and even Heer-Ranjha-esque costume touches such as bridal dupattas and block-printed overcoats. Featuring internationally accomplished musicians, two choirs - Capella Bangalore and The Bangalore Men - dancers from The Lewis Foundation of Classical Ballet and an orchestra (complete with violin, viola, cello, bass, keyboard and percussion), the production bridged vast cultural and historical distances through masterful performances.

This is not to say that the opera did not take tuning in - beginning as it does in the middle of many stories and revealing plot and form, simultaneously. Yet, the converging of many artistic

genres and elements such as ballet, orchestral and vocal music, epic poetry and visual art to name some, facilitated ease in getting on board. The audience was made privy to conversations between handmaiden Belinda (essayed by Tanisha Herbert Rozario whose soprano voice struck awe) and the queen Dido, played by Swedish vocal coach Maria Forsstrom, whose mezzo-soprano voice anchored the opera. (Maria Forsstrom also played a key role in the training and rehearsal processes). The audience witnessed the trials and turns of fate - expressed through spectacularly delivered music by the two choirs and the orchestra. Aeneas, the Trojan warrior fleeing a lost battle, was engagingly played by Rahul Bharadwaj. The evil unleashed by the sorceress crackled and sparkled through the stage persona (and clear, soprano voice) of Sangita Santosham, who was effectively supported by Rebekah Alexander and Ketki Herlekar playing the witches.

Jonas Olsson, director of Capella Bangalore and The Bangalore Men, describes the opera, in general, as "a feast for the eyes, ears and soul" as it blends "solo singing, choir, acting, costumes and instrumental music". He believes the Baroque opera has remained relevant "because of the quality of the music and the human desire for timeless beauty."

According to Abishek Gnanaraj, founder and director, Legato School of Music, "*Dido and Aeneas* makes for an ideal introduction to the Baroque opera both for audiences and performers."

A long rehearsal process began in June last year with musicians, choirs, soloists and dancers working separately, till a couple of weeks ahead of the concert. Though "introducing opera to an unfamiliar audience posed challenges", international and local artistes combined forces with the intent to deliver "a rendition of *Dido and Aeneas* that would be emotionally compelling and musically precise", says Abishek.



Melange of styles *Dido and Aeneas* brought together ballet, music, poetry and visual art. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

TODAY PRECISION, PASSION
& the perfect putt await!

Rotary
10X

ROTARY CLUB OF CHENNAI CAPITAL & MADRAS WEST ROUND TABLE 10
in aid of charity present

Chennai GOLF LEAGUE 2025
POWERED BY **HDFC ERGO**

Date: 14 February, 2025
Reporting Time : 12 pm
Venue: Tamil Nadu Golf Federation

16 Feb
7 pm
Radisson Blu Egmore

10 TEAMS

PIN HIGH GUINNY RISERS BIRDIE BUDDIES PIN SEEKERS CHENNAI LOLLI'S CHENNAI SUPER STARS CHENNAI SUPER GOLFERS CHENNAI HINDUSTAN GREEN MASTERS CHENNAI CAPITAL GO BIRDIE

TECH PARTNER