



# metro PLUS

THE HINDU



**Vidya Balan** recreates Carnatic singer MS Subbulakshmi's iconic style for a photo tribute **P2**

**HARISH KALYAN BATS FOR LUBBER PANDHU** **P6**



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**“H**air wash, massage and eyebrows,” instructs Mary Lee, speaking to her assistant. Immediately, products are plucked off shelves, the air conditioner is turned on and curtains are drawn. Work begins. “They are all my regulars,” she says, pointing inside. “Can’t tell how long I can talk to you for. This is a busy time for me,” she says, but sits down for a conversation much longer than anticipated. Rose Beauty Parlour behind the busy Vannanthurai bus stop in Besant Nagar, has a no-nonsense yet generous personality that it has borrowed from its owner. The single-room parlour partitioned by sliding doors, has thick leather salon chairs that are permanently reclined as the levers do not work. Bits of Mary’s Oriental connection sit proudly on display – there is a calendar with Chinese dates, posters of *fuk* (pronounced *fook* in Chinese, meaning luck), and several statues of laughing Buddha. “Luck is very important to the Chinese. We replace the *fuk* posters during Chinese New Year. This year, my cousin from Calcutta sent it to me. I think it has helped. But enough about that. Let me begin my story,” she says.

## The good luck club

**By 1968, a group of women of Chinese descent arrived in Chennai, shaping not just eyebrows but also the beauty standards of an entire generation**

A quest to find the connection between Chennai and ‘Chinese beauty parlour’, lead us to Mary’s parlour.

**Uncovering etymology** Mary is one of several people of Chinese origin, who moved with her family far away from home to establish businesses, in the hope of prosperity after their families fled battles of internal strife in 20th Century China. It was a time when the men prefixed restaurants with the word ‘Chinese’, while women did the same with beauty parlours. When asked why ‘beauty

parlours’ and not other professions, Joe Thomas Karackattu, Associate Professor at the Humanities and Social Sciences Department, IIT Madras, who has made two films on South India’s historical connections with the Chinese, says that the ideal choice of occupation was to deal in leather which other native communities here were weary of indulging in, owing to religious considerations. “There is no specific reason for their choice of beauty parlours excepting the low barriers to entry in the art and craft of beautifying the self/other. You didn’t really

need a degree or training (as in specialised equipment in medicine or industry) and hence the entry requirements would have been easier. That to my mind is the best explanation,” he says. However, the Kaos, Lees, Lamas and Chens, who have been in the business for a minimum of 40 years now, have a different answer. “Aren’t most ancient beauty secrets from China?” Mary asks.

**Far away from home** “I was born in Calcutta’s Chinatown in 1959 to my Chinese parents who were from Peking. They had fled the war, I am not sure which one, and arrived in India to begin a peaceful life. I loved fashion and had an interest in taking care of myself. So around Class VIII, my friend and I begged our parents to let us work at the parlour. All I wanted to be was a beautician,”

says Mary, sweeping the silver hair away from her face. “For three and a half years, I trained at Chen’s Beauty Parlour, Bengaluru. By that time, I had married Mr. John Lee, who hails from the Hakka region of China. He was interested in exploring business opportunities in the South. That is why we arrived in Chennai in 1985. After a year of working at a local parlour, we saved up to begin our own venture here in Besant Nagar,” she says, ruminating. “I speak Chinese at home and am fluent in Mandarin and Hakka. There are not many like us here though. It is a small community. But the number of customers who come are large and steady,” she says. Arlene Kao Chaurasia whose parents began Eve’s beauty parlour, Chennai’s first Chinese beauty parlour on Pantheon Road (which later shifted to College Road), in 1968, adds that it has now become essential to protect the name, methods and etiquette followed at

***I speak Chinese at home and am fluent in Mandarin and Hakka. There are not many like us here though. It is a small community. But the number of customers who come are large and steady***

MARY LEE

their brandchain of parlours. “People expect quality and we deliver because we pay attention. Our clients, their daughters and granddaughters come to our parlour till date,” she says. Arlene says that she was practically raised by her parents at the parlour and learnt entirely by watching. Her brother David Kao, runs his own chain of parlours under the same name. Susan Lama, who was born to Hakka parents settled in Kolkata, has seen her fair share of India. When her chef husband wanted to settle down, they moved to Chennai in 1997 in search of peace and quiet. Joined by her sister and brother-in-law, the quartet began Hong Kong Beauty Parlour in Chetpet and Kim Ling Specialty Chinese Restaurant in Anna Nagar. The aim was to make ₹500 a day at the parlour. “It was big money back then,” she says.

Susan says that it is easy to determine why their brand of beauty parlours stand the test of time. “The parlour is an extension of my house. The girls who work there are my family. They are sweet and polite to customers and take care of one another. The job gets done without too much noise and fanfare. Most customers have known the girls who work at my parlour for years. There is a connection,” she says. Mary Lee, who lives in the same complex as her shop says that she is usually just a call away despite requests at odd hours. “I open at 9.30am sharp but if someone needs help with make up or a hair do, I don’t mind opening earlier,” she says. Mary and Susan say that though the Chinese aspects of their personality are slowly slipping away, they still hold onto certain traditions. The Chinese New Year is the most preferred festivity to be part of. At Mary Lee’s, where Chinese is still spoken at home, a Peking duck in honour of her ancestry is cooked along with noodles and other delicacies. Susan says that she prays to all gods and hence does a puja to the sky at her husband’s Chinese restaurant. The staff from both these places are present and a huge feast is prepared. “No Chinese new year is complete without the exchange of the red envelope full of cash. It brings luck to our homes and our businesses and is hence essential, Mary says, adding “After all, it is all about *fuk*, no?”

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**T**he earliest known set of obstacle course races (OCR) were created by armies to test the endurance of soldiers in hostile battlegrounds. To run with steady feet, climb with strength, and lunge forth with brute force, were essential in the survival and protection of their people. Centuries later, the modern iteration of this race invites participants who wish to challenge their strength, without the pressure of an impending life-or-death combat. “If I were to ask you, who the strongest athlete out there is, you would tell me that it is a powerlifter or a weightlifter. If I were to ask you who the fastest is, you would tell me that it is the 100-metre sprinter. If I were to ask you who the fittest is, you would not have an answer. To me, the modern OCR determines the best generalist,” says Bhriгу Sasson, head, sales and revenue generation at Wild Warrior, a lifestyle and adventure company that creates events around obstacle course racing. A race that determines this very generalist will be held on



## Warrior for the weekend

**Jump, climb, lift and run at the fourth edition of the Wild Warrior Obstacle Course Race on September 21 and 22**

September 21 and 22 at the Madras Offroad Academy, Pudupakkam. The Wild Warrior race, currently in its fourth edition, will be conducted in five categories for participants right from the age of 12. If you are missing the drama of the Olympics, this event is likely to compensate, says Bhriгу, as the

team has worked on making this sport spectator-friendly. The first edition started in 2018 by Wild Warrior founder, Vikram Menon, saw niche participation. Over the course of eight years, the interest has increased manifold. Around 700 participants are expected to compete over the weekend. The



five categories of the OCR at this event are determined by distance and number of obstacles including the likes of monkey bars, crawling under barbed wire and nets, carrying buckets, stones and sand bags. Races range from tackling eight obstacles over 200 metres; a 10-kilometre course with 101 obstacles; a two-kilometre course with 21 challenging obstacles; and another two-kilometre course with easy to moderate obstacles. An age-category race open to participants between 12 and 15; 16 and 19; and for those above 35, will take place too. To keep spectators entertained, music performances, games and food stalls will also be available at the venue. The aim though, is to finish and finish well. While the goal is to climb the podium and win the prize money worth ₹2 lakh, this race, much like a marathon, provides a medal for participation alone, due to its complex nature. It requires skill, technique and fast feet. “One can do it at their own pace,” Bhriгу says.

*The Wild Warrior Race is on September 21 and 22. Register at [townscript.com/e/wild-warrior-carnival](http://townscript.com/e/wild-warrior-carnival). Entry is ₹799.*

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Costume designer **Anu Parthasarathy** collaborates with actor Vidya Balan for a photography project which pays tribute to renowned Carnatic singer MS Subbulakshmi

# Notes in fashion

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In 1951, MS Subbulakshmi made her way to Nalli Silks with a blue thread in hand, hoping to have a sari made of the same colour. The colour of the sari then specially woven for her, was so unique that it went on to be referred to as MS Blue. Till date, people walk into silk sari stores, referring to MS Blue, seeking out the exact same shade of inky, iridescent blue.

In a tribute to the legendary Carnatic singer, whose voice, and sartorial sense has inspired generations since, actor Vidya Balan collaborated with Chennai-based costume designer Anu Parthasarthy, who has worked on several films across languages, for a photographic tribute to mark MS Subbulakshmi's 108th birth anniversary.

"Growing up, my mom would play 'Suprabhatam' sung by her, first thing in the morning. My everyday still begins with her voice. For me, MS Subbulakshmi is a spiritual experience. Therefore, this has been a labour of love, and an honour to be able to pay tribute this way," Vidya says.

The idea for this project, titled A Recreation of Iconic Styles, began nearly seven years ago. "This came

from a casual conversation I had with Vidya, where she was telling me how she would love to play the singer in a biopic, if the opportunity came up," Anu recalls, of their creative journey. She had previously worked on Vidya's costumes for *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, and *Guru*.

"I was able to visualise Vidya as a younger MS amma and began to work on the look. They both have similarly beautiful, pear-shaped faces. Vidya's ability to embody a character completely, also made her the ideal choice for this," she says.

Having met MS Subbulakshmi in the past, Anu recalls being mesmerised by her grace and poise. "Something that also struck me was how unique her sari drape was. It looked like a nine yards sari, but was actually six yards. Her saris were all in traditional, bright colours, and remain iconic to this day," she says.

Anu credits renowned flautist Mala Chandrasekhar, the granddaughter-in-law of MS Subbulakshmi for her invaluable insights and guidance through the process of putting together



four different looks for the photos, shot by Rohn Pingalay.

"Many photos, for instance, were in black and white. But Mala ma'am helped me identify the right colours and shades for the saris. I learnt from her that the singer used to wear saris woven by Muthu Chettiar, a weaver from Madurai in the early days, and later, saris from Nalli Chinnasami Chetty," she says.

### Reaching back in time

The creative journey involved meticulous research by Anu for the saris she wore during the Sixties and the Seventies.

From a number of saris that are considered favourites, four were chosen for the photo tribute, each significant in its own way. The iconic MS blue sari that Vidya wore was sourced from the original weaver Nalli Chinnasami Chetty in Chennai. The uniqueness of the saris worn by the singer also meant having to go the custom route, to get it recreated.

Anu says that Subhashini Srinivasan, proprietrix and design head, The S Studio Clothing coordinated the weaving process for the three other saris.



**Iconic style** (Clockwise from above) Vidya Balan with designer Anu Parthasarathy; and Vidya as MS Subbulakshmi. ROHN PINGALAY AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A unique colour combination, the magenta sari with an orange border was woven in the late Sixties, and worn by the singer for the 1968 *sadas* at The Music Academy, Chennai, where she was honoured with the prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi award. For the recreation series, the sari was woven by D Srinivasan from Sri Balavinayagar Silks in Kanchipuram.

The striking blue pearl square sari (muthu kattam sari), which as its name suggests, features pearl squares on the body. "Unlike today's saris which have a broad zari or many lines of zari on the border, the saris of that period maintained a more simplistic style which added to its allure. This was a concert favourite," Anu said, of the sari, which was recreated by weaver V Balakrishnan in Kanchipuram.

Of the popular Ramar Pachai (green) sari with a mustard yellow border which was recreated by weaver D Srinivasan, Anu recalls struggling to find the right shade, and going through several samples. "Mala ma'am had a similar silk cotton sari, and gave me a piece of fabric from it which I used as a reference. The original sari had a fascinating dual combination of sea-green and middle-sea blue with a mustard oil border colour," Anu says, adding that two weavers were needed to operate the loom simultaneously to achieve these contrasting colours.

The size of the ring on her left ring finger, the much loved mookuthi or nose studs she sported, her hair in a bun adorned with flowers, and the exact shade of kumkum on her forehead were other aspects of the look that they worked on.

"MS Subbulakshmi's simple stage persona would always shine through, and we had to keep this in mind while recreating her looks," says Anu.

The photographic tribute and Vidya's portrayal of MS Subbulakshmi is not merely a superficial imitation, but a deep appreciation of the singer's artistry, the team says.

# The world is plural

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A steadfast Karuna from the fishing community of Versova who vows to save her village from an impending climate crisis; a *sampangi* farmer and single mother in Sivaganga whose midnight harvest tells tales of perseverance; With empathy and compassion at the centre, such hard-hitting stories of small yet significant victories from the small towns of India do not often make their way into children's books.

Chennai-based Karadi Tales' The StORI (Stories of Rural India) series that comprises 10 titles adapted from real stories reported from across the country is a deviation. Each of the stories address big challenges that make their way into everyday realities, from migration to climate crisis.

The series started taking shape as early as 2019, following conversations with

Karadi Tales' series of story books adapted from journalistic reportage tells stories of migration, disability, and the climate crisis

journalist P Sainath around the People's Archive of Rural India, a repository of reportage from across rural India. "Many stories [in the archive] caught my eye, and one such story was that of the woman farmer by Aparna Karthikeyan which later became *No Nonsense Nandhini*," says Shobha Viswanath, publishing director and co-founder, Karadi Tales Company. All of the titles barring *Kick It, Rukku!* by Sanjana Ganesh which was released recently are from the PARI archive. Since journalistic reportage forms

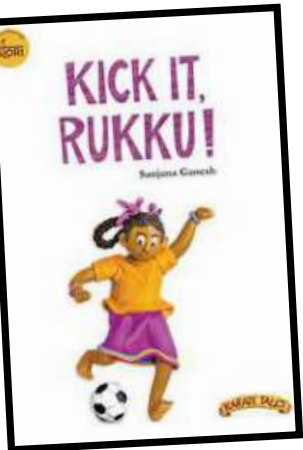
the base for each story, the writers who are often the journalists who followed up on that particular story, take the lead on whether or not to fictionalise it. After all, these are real stories. "The reason we pick the journalists to write the story is because they can get the permissions from their contacts, and they know how much leeway can be taken," Shobha says. The titles are aimed at the age group of 10 and above.

One of the focus areas for this series is for it to reach the education space. A title like *Kick It, Rukku!* for instance does not only talk about gender, but touches upon community, grief and friendship. Which is why the publishers have created a curriculum for each book titled Beyond Boundaries.

"The books can instead be used as supplementary readers for subjects like Civics, Geography and even Environmental Sciences. The curriculum [available online] is a loose roadmap which the educator can follow," says Shobha.

Now with 10 books in its kitty, the series is ever-growing. Currently the team has shortlisted four stories written by journalists across publications. The published books are also being translated into Kannada, Tamil, Hindi and into Marathi audiobooks.

"The hope is also to create empathy within children through these stories," concludes Shobha.



**Sustainable plate** Una Villa; (below) Caesar Salad. THAMODHARAN B AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tamil dishes – mor karunai, rasam, seeraga samba mutton biryani, and mushroom and potato chukka – feature on their menu. The rest is global fusion, with burgers, pizzas, and pastas.

Then comes an unexpected hit: hummus bread, made with nutty, garlic-free hummus, paired with a sweet and mildly spicy Scheszwan maple syrup inside cloudy, grilled pitas.

Chef Elamparuthi's innovative lamb dish, ellipse onion lamb had tulips of onion layers, each filled with minced lamb, placed on a layer of Asian-spiced sauce. It looks attractive, but there is no warning about how dangerously hot it is. The lamb filling is scalding.

The mor karunai is a comforting bowl of home-style tomato rice, topped with a pool of thick, tangy mor kuzhambu and a lattice stack of crispy fried karunai kizhangu (elephant foot yam) sticks.

Chef Elamparuthi plans to keep the restaurant open 24x7. "There are a lot of restobars in and around the area. When the party is over, customers will need a place to have a hearty meal. We're focussing on comforting options like soups and rice bowls," he explains.

I end my meal with their tiramisu roll cake. It comes with a sweet coffee syrup. The dessert was rich, moist, and balanced the bitterness of coffee with just the right amount of sweetness.

Denver and Anisha also share that this Una Villa is just the first of many. KICL plans to replicate this concept across other cities, converting old homes into self-sustaining restaurants that reflect the local culture and flavours.

A meal for two costs ₹1,000. Una Villa is at 24/14, Tirumurthy Nagar, Uthamar Gandhi Road, Nungambakkam.



# Hummus with a view

Una Villa offers a unique dining experience in a repurposed mid-century home, highlighting local and global cuisine

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In Nungambakkam, eateries are a dime a dozen – some have been around for a while, while others are new. But the recently opened Una Villa is different. It is housed in a 60-year-old building.

"This is a mid-century home with great structure. The house itself is repurposed, and we even reused the terrazzo flooring that was demolished during the renovation," says Denver Pereira, one of the architects behind the project.

Una Villa, a part of Kothari Industrial Corporation, was designed by architects Denver and Anisha Murali with the aim of self-sustainability.

The outdoor seating area is especially inviting, offering a peaceful escape from the chaos of Nungambakkam.

"We preserved the Noni tree that was originally in the garden, and we've planted several vegetables, fruit trees, and local spinach varieties. We hope to grow more of our own produce soon," Denver shares.

### THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13603

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#### Across

- 1 Eyelash flirting? (9,4)
- 8 Mongol ruler (4)
- 9 Sweet food made from baked egg whites and sugar (8)
- 10 Chopped pickled cabbage (10)
- 12 Diamond or graphite element (6)
- 14 Bully (6)
- 15 Italian dessert from whipped egg yolks, sugar and Marsala (10)
- 19 Prisoner (perhaps political) (8)
- 20 Kill (2,2)
- 21 Without impurities (13)

#### Down

- 2 Disruption (8)
- 3 Present or past, for example (5)
- 4 Small baking dish for individual servings (7)
- 5 Maggot, say (5)

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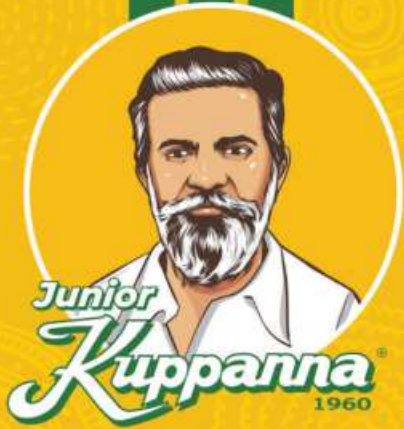
- 6 Of motion (7)
- 7 Obscene stuff (4)
- 11 Shed staff (8)
- 13 New World vulture (7)
- 14 Cleanliness (7)
- 16 Platinidinous (5)
- 17 Kind of rubber (5)
- 18 Bridle strap (4)

Solution will appear in *MetroPlus* dated September 26, 2024.

**Solution No. 13602**

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# Platter from the palace

**Nawabzada Mohammed Asif Ali** discusses Amir Mahal's heirloom recipes that feature at the Daawat-e-Arcot food festival

**Deepa Alexander**  
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In the rabbit's warren of streets that crowds Royapettah, the heat of Chennai's second summer rises in waves. In this neighbourhood, peppered with small restaurants and old houses gently fraying at the edges, stands Amir Mahal, perhaps one of the last vestiges of a world long gone. The stunning red-brick and sage green Indo-Saracenic structure was built in 1798 and converted from office to home by that old India hand, Robert Chisholm. Lanterns hung on the archway swing gently in the breeze and at the end of a long drive lined with cannon stands the palace, the 14-acre residence of the titular nawabs of Arcot since 1876.

According to S Muthiah in his seminal work *Madras Rediscovered*, the French and the British backed rival claimants to the throne of the Carnatic. When the British triumphed in the Carnatic Wars, Muhammad Ali Wallajah became the Nawab and sought permanent residence in Madras. In 1768, Chepauk Palace with its Humayun and Khalas Mahals was built for him, a complex that undoubtedly pioneered the Indo-Saracenic style. When the Carnatic was annexed in the early 1800s, Chepauk Palace also passed into British hands.



**Yesterday once more**  
Nawabzada Mohammed Asif Ali at Amir Mahal; and a dish from the menu at The Great Kabab Factory. JOHAN SATHYADAS AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

starters. Food is served at the table. Our ingredients have always been local, except for saffron. And out of deference to our guests, we have never served liquor, beef or pork."

**Kitchen to table**  
At The Great Kabab Factory, an endless parade of kebabs opens lunch, among them koh e murgh saffron (tender stuffed chicken breast) and talli machli (fish). The masalas are piquant and need to be washed down with the thandai and rose sherbet. It is evident that the meats are cooked the Arcot way – slow enough to leave them charcoal bruised and soft. The mushroom and beetroot kebabs are so pliant that they burst upon the palate like stars. The vegetable shikampuri has more flavour than the Arcot biryani, which must be tried only if you have had a second helping of everything else. The crowning dessert is the Arcot makhan peda and ande ki mithai, a combination so perfect that although made of egg the dessert is never eggy.

Back at Amir Mahal, the Nawabzada speaks of taking these recipes beyond the confines of the palace walls to an international food festival to be held here in February 2025. "The origin of these recipes is lost to time but are drawn from Arcot, Vellore and Ambur. This year we hope to have 100 stalls. There is no greater joy than in feeding people, be it at our culture festivals or the Prince of Arcot cricket trophy."

As we leave, the Nawabzada, a passionate musician, plays 'Love Story' on his Bechstein piano, its notes echoing down the driveway. Arcot's glory is veiled by the mists of time, yet its legacy remains an aura, a taste, and one man's rendition of an old classic in a grand hall.

*The Daawat-e-Arcot food festival is on till September 30 at The Great Kabab Factory, Radisson Blu Hotel & Suites GRT, St Thomas Mount. A meal for two costs approximately ₹4,910 plus taxes.*

# A shine so rare

**Thamalli, a newly-launched bespoke fine jewellery brand features rare gemstones from around the world**

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For 23-year-old Adithi Ganeshan, inspiration is rooted in heritage and tradition. "It could be a small annapakshi on a suryapalakai, athangudi tiles, or the carvings on the Burma teak pillars in Karaikudi. As much as I have travelled, I have also remained rooted to my culture, and love going back to my ancestral home," she says.

The young jewellery designer and entrepreneur brings together culture and the contemporary in her newly launched brand Thamalli, a bespoke fine jewellery line that celebrates rare gemstones and craftsmanship. "Many of these rare gemstones from across the world are not commonly used in jewellery. We are using them in designs that are a lot more wearable for the current generation, as well as for adults with an eye for good design and presentation," she says. Having grown up watching the family enterprise Meenu Subbiah



Diamonds evolve, Adithi says she was clear from the start that she wanted to dabble in the jewellery business. Thamalli, she says, is a dream come true, and something she has been dreaming of since she was 10 years old. The brand has been named in honour of her grandmothers – Thamizharasi and Anandavalli. At the launch, Adithi points to a large print of a world map detailing the rare natural gemstones

Elysian geode collection, with each piece featuring a unique geode selected carefully," she says. Geodes are famous for their unique, striking internal formations, which range from crystalline clusters to intricate mineral patterns. Natural coloured diamonds too find a place in Thamalli, in sparkling chains and earrings that have rare gemstones.

Working with these gemstones, Adithi says, involves extensive craftsmanship. "This reflects on the packaging as well, which is all teak wood and brass, inspired by Chettinad furniture." Given how the gemstones are the pièce de résistance, this is an important aspect to keep in mind through the design process.



"Every piece of jewellery is designed to compliment the gemstone. While we can't customise the stone itself, we can customise the design. Every piece is exclusive," Adithi says.

*Visit Thamalli by appointment at 144 A, North Usman Road T Nagar. Contact 96777 14668*



# An evening of Indian jazztronica

**As part of the multi-city Moon Drops India tour, New York-based fusion artiste Rini will perform in Chennai with her band**

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The city and its many facets are recurring motifs in Harini 'Rini' Raghavan's music. "Performing here feels like coming back home... it is home after all," she says with a laugh. The New York-based Chennai-born artiste will perform in the city on Saturday, as part of her multi-city The Moon Drops India Tour.

A composer, vocalist and violinist, Rini, who was born and raised in Chennai, went on to major in Electronic Production and Design at the Berklee College of Music, and was part of the famed Berklee Indian Ensemble. There is, of course, a Chennai connection that led her to this as well.

"I have always been fascinated by timbres, textures, and synthesizers, and I vividly remember listening to AR Rahman introduce synthesizers in 1992 for *Roja*. Every sound you heard in those songs was so fresh," she recalls. In her music as a fusion artiste over the years, Rini has brought together all of this, with jazz and her strong background in Carnatic music.

In Chennai, Rini will be performing with Ranajoy Das from the drums, Achal Murthy from Luxembourg

**Fusion fun** Rini onstage during a performance. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

on bass, Andrew Cheng from Malaysia on the guitar, and Shahar Amdor from Israel on the saxophone.

Singer Shakthisree Gopalan will also join Rini onstage, to perform 'Magizhini', an indie collaboration single that they recorded in 2023.

"We will be performing original music with probably a couple of covers. The setlist will be a mix of older songs of mine like 'Mango showers', and new ones like 'Kapi in Rio' which released over the last year," Rini says.

The songs are across a myriad of genres – Carnatic fusion, jazz, alt rock, and more. "Kapi in Rio" for instance, has Latin music influences and clave claps, where the audience can clap along and engage with the song," she adds. The tour is named after Rini's 2023 song 'Moon Thuli'. Partnering with Quiriosity, Bengaluru is the first destination for the Moon Drops tour followed by Delhi, Kochi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad after the Chennai performance.

"There is an instant connection with my audiences in Chennai, given how many of my compositions including 'Marina', 'Mango Showers', and 'Filter Kapi' are rooted here. I am looking forward to this," she says. While it has been a little more than a year since her last tour, and performance in Chennai, Rini says she hopes to tour India at least once a year going forward.

*@Barracuda Brew on September 21, from 7pm onwards. Tickets available on skillbox.*







# The loudest curtain call

**The Hindu's 40-day Made of Chennai** celebrations came to an end with a two-day Food and Music Festival

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**The city's many facets** The event saw 53,000 registrations and over 30,000 people on ground over the two days. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Capturing a city and its effervescent energy in the span of a weekend is no mean feat. *The Hindu's* Made of Chennai Food and Music Festival was a clear window into how Chennai celebrates its many facets with wild abandon.

Over September 14 and 15, the festival marked the end of *The Hindu's* 40-day Made of Chennai celebrations that trained the spotlight on the city we call home, in a series of public events ranging from an archival exhibit in the newspaper's office premises to a night dedicated to stand up comedy.

The Food and Music Festival held in Island Grounds was an ode to the city's musical landscape and culinary diversity captured through 10 on-stage acts and 40 food stalls. The event saw a whopping 53,000 registrations and over 30,000 people on ground over the two days. On the music

front, artistes with a longstanding relationship with the city like Yogi B, Arivu and The Ambassa Band; Haricharan and the Drums Kumaran Collective featuring Sireesha Bhagavatula; Maalavika Sundar; Motta Maadi Music; Paul Jacob's Folk Agenda, Gowli, the band, JHANU and Office Gaana regaled audiences with everything from Carnatic folk rock and gaana to industrial rock and homegrown hip hop.

Madhurika Tetali, a creative consultant based in the city, was among the audience and said, "Right from rap and Carnatic to Motta Maadi Music where we could sing along, there was a wide array of music. I really liked the way Maalavika Sundar and her band engaged with the audience mixing her original, independent songs with popular music."

Food, that captures Chennai in all its glory, was at the centre of this experience. Iconic Chennai brands like C Kunhiraman General Stores (famous for selling mango ice cream and mango milk,

year-round), Gopaul Dairy (with house-made butter and jam) and KGN Arifa (known for its paya biryani) did not fail to impress. Stalls serving Mexican tostadas, iced coffee, halwa, sandwiches and ice creams, besides staple South Indian fare also drew crowds in great numbers.

Dinesh Mohan, a city-based screenwriter said, "I was there on both days. It's my first time trying the paya biryani and it was amazing." Rapper and musician Arivu's performance of his unreleased tracks was a big hit for Dinesh. He continues, "Yogi B brought out the kid in me! This is the first time I am watching him perform live, and it really took me back to my youth and childhood."

Madhurika concludes, "Almost the entire city was there, from various parts. To see them groove to music and eat from different historic [food] joints was a very good experience. I am really glad I was there."

*The Hindu Made of Chennai Food and Music Festival in association with ACKO, Beepkart.*

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## Conversations with a typewriter

Madras Busking brought together artists and writers who conversed, listened, and gave people a memory to take back home

**S Poorvaja**  
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The normally sober, and quiet conference room at *The Hindu* office had a different aura last Saturday. The chairs were rearranged in a circle, and all along the walls were different tables for poets and artists, bearing typewriters and sketchbooks.

As part of the *The Hindu* Made of Chennai campaign, the second chapter of Madras Busking set up shop in an unlikely location – an indoor space. The setting however, was no deterrent to the experience, as around 250 people came to interact with poets, writers, and artists.

"Busking involves performing an artform in public. It is common in Europe where one can see people play music in public spaces. We were keen on bringing something like this to Chennai, which brought together illustrators and writers. People can strike up a conversation, get a poem written, or a doodle or sketch made," said GS Sairam

Santhosh, one of the founders of Madras Busking. The community aims to document life in the present for people who visit and interact with them, and is encouraged to take a piece of poetry or a sketch back.

His co-founder Nirosha Shanmugam said, "I talk to people and type out a poem, with the idea of covering our conversation properly. People share something significant from their daily lives, are sometimes vulnerable, or happy. This experience comes with the ability to connect and speak to a complete stranger, and take back a conversation, poem or sketch as a memory of the day," she said.

Urusa Maher and Rohan, were working on poetic illustrations. While lawyer KRB Dhaaranee was speaking to people and typing letters on her typewriter for them, heritage illustrator Aafreen Fathima sketched away while holding long conversations.

Tamil writer Vignesh Gopalan, photographer Muthu Kumaran, and design generalist Anthony Jackson were among the buskers as well.



**Making memories** Nirosha Shanmugam strikes up a conversation with participants. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Designs on my koodai

Sondham features trendy totes, handloom saris, and contemporary silhouettes in cotton

**Chitradeepa Anantharam**  
chitradeepa.a@thehindu.co.in

Shop for a curated range of handloom and handcrafted products at the second edition of Sondham. Sunita Sekhar, founder and curator of the annual pop-up, brings traditional handloom saris, dupattas, and their signature koodai totes.

Sunita collaborates with weavers to craft saris for Sondham. "I visited Kalna and Phulia districts in West Bengal to meet the weavers. Phulia district is known for its superior cottons, and they specialise in natural dyes. In Kalna, which is known for the jamdani weave, we collaborated with master weaver Dev Nath, and will be presenting indigo jamdani cottons exclusively for the pop-up. Each of these jamdani saris takes about two months to be woven," says Sunita.

The koodai totes, which were launched at their maiden edition, will be presented in contemporary designs, and they will also be launching koodai trays this year. "We work with families in and around Coimbatore and Erode for the totes and trays. We provide them colour (mostly metallic) and design (contemporary) intervention, and prefer the biscuit weave and cross knots. The trays make for a good gifting option and work as home decor as well," she says.

Also participating at the pop-up are the Bengaluru-based handloom house Kala Nele, known for khunn, ilkal and kasuti weaves; Chennai brand Brass Tacks, known for classic, everyday outfits made of soft cotton; Ela India that does contemporary garments with hand-blocked fabrics; Citrine that brings contemporary silver accessories and Miniverse with quirky silver jewellery with semi-precious stones.

@Studio Loco, CIT Colony, Mylapore. September 20 and 21, 10.30am to 7pm. For details, call 7200094881

**Handcrafted elegance** The pop-up will present trendy saris from West Bengal. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



### Songs for a cause

Get ready for the grand finale of Paattu Paraak, a Premier League-style music competition under the banner of Paadarivom Padipparivom. The event aims to create opportunities for skilled singers by providing them a platform to showcase their skills. The event is not just about recognising musical talent but also serves as a fundraiser for the NGO Happy Foundation. It is being held at the Akshaya Trust, a facility dedicated to caring for the

elderly. Contributions will go towards supporting their mission of compassion and care. The finale is linked with Akshaya Trust's ongoing efforts to provide shelter, medical care, and emotional support to elders who have no one else.

On September 28, The Akshaya Trust, Velappanchavady. The event is free and is open to all. For passes, call 9740097900.



### Non-stop giggles

This weekend, watch the Tamil stand-up comedy show, Chin Tapak Dum Dum, presented by Chennai Comedy Room, starring the trio of Chockalingam, Mayandi, and Prakash Kumar. The show is family-friendly and promises to crack you up with jokes themed on marriage, love, and parenting struggles.

@Offbeat Ventures, RA Puram. September 21, 7pm. Tickets, priced at ₹399 on insider.in

### Documenting emotions

Meditate on art at an art journaling workshop. A form of art therapy, the event, set to be conducted by Bhanu Vivekanandan, lets you meet new people, share your thoughts, create fun works of art with stickers, washi tapes and other supplies. You can participate with friends and family to explore your creative side and make memories in the process. The workshop helps you understand how journaling transforms emotions into art.

@Backyard, September 21, 2pm-4pm. Open for those aged above 10 years. The fee is ₹1,399, inclusive of journal kit and refreshments. To register, call 7397296868



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Actor **Harish Kalyan** talks about his upcoming film, *Lubber Pandhu*, why the road to stardom is not straight, and more



**Gopinath Rajendran**  
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Interpersonal conflict seems to be a trope that has caught Harish Kalyan's fancy. One of last year's critically acclaimed films, *Parking*, featured his character facing off with a fellow tenant played by MS Bhaskar. This year, Harish is opening his innings with *Lubber Pandhu* – a film centred around cricket, featuring his character duelling with Attakathi Dinesh. Harish says there is more to *Lubber Pandhu* than just the tussle. “The predominant reason I accepted the film was because it's set in a sports backdrop and I've not played many village-based characters. The fact that both of them came together in one script excited me. More than the play-off between two players, there are more emotional conflicts between all the major characters.” Set in Tiruchi, Harish says he did not have to work much on getting the slang right. “There were just a few words, such as *ingutu*, *angutu* that needed to be incorporated. Similarly, they use *pulla* while addressing a younger woman. I've always played cricket but I'm a batsman/wicketkeeper, so I had



**Game face**  
Harish Kalyan in *Lubber Pandhu*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# Pitching it right

to work on the bowling action as I play a fast bowler,” he adds. Interestingly, earlier this year, we had *Blue Star* which was also a film about two foes turning friends in a cricket backdrop but Harish reckons his film is different. “This is more of a family sports drama. Family emotions, upliftment of women, and giving a different perspective about success are some of the aspects *Lubber Pandhu* concentrates on,” he says. “Anbu (the character he plays in the film) respects talent over everything. The film also sheds light on the rubber ball tournaments that are unique to the urban setting along with the commentary.” Harish believes that “a film should get both critical acclaim and also do well commercially”. Comparing his last film,

*Parking*, with *Lubber Pandhu*, he says, “Because of the floods, the theatrical run of *Parking* was affected a little but it gained a good name for itself and did commercially well in theatres apart from doing great on OTT. *Lubber Pandhu* has more heroic moments, fun elements and family sentiment.”



**Family emotions, upliftment of women, and giving a different perspective about success are some of the aspects Lubber Pandhu concentrates on**

**HARISH KALYAN**  
Actor

Earlier, actors turned heroes with an action film in just a year or two after their debut but the current crop of actors doesn't seem to have a preset roadmap towards stardom and Harish is well aware of the reasons. “The current generation of viewers are exposed to a lot more content. We have the OTT as well as formats like web series and even YouTube; so there's never a deficiency of content. It's a task to make people choose a theatrical film. Only if that film does well, does its actor get star value. Past the films, it's the acceptance of the audience that makes an actor a star or an action hero. I would love to do an action film,” says Harish whose next release, *Diesel*, is one such attempt. Circling back to the topic of stardom, Harish adds, “The transformation to a star can happen in one film for an actor and it might take more for others. I was in the mindset to take things slowly and that's changing just now. I'm also getting scripts accordingly and I'm trying to take the best from it. The idea is to do a mix of all genres. The goal is to entertain the audience and choose scripts that will take us up the graph.”

*Lubber Pandhu* is releasing on September 20

# Lucky days ahead

A smartly-written animated satire and musical, *Lucky Dog* will premiere at the Busan International Film Festival

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Eight years ago, Ujwal Nair was planning to head to Canada to study Animation when his plans came crashing down, following a visa rejection. “I have complicated feelings about this whole experience,” he confesses. He recalls being haunted by this rejection, and how there seemed to be no way to escape discussions back then, about immigrating to study, or for professional opportunities. This complex world of immigration and privilege, forms the crux of his animated short film *Lucky Dog*, which is all set to have its international premiere at the upcoming 29th Busan International Film Festival in South Korea. From among 4,351 films, the film has been selected as part of the Wide Angle – Asian Short Film Competition, and is among 10 other films. In *Lucky Dog*, Dice, the four-legged protagonist, decides to follow his owner Disha to Canada. The rules are no different for him though, and he needs a visa. To tell this story through animation seemed like an obvious choice for Ujwal. “I cannot talk incessantly about how much the rejection weighed on me, and was thinking about what would be a fun and interesting way to do this. Film seemed like the best medium to express myself, and animation combines all my strengths – drawing, writing, filmmaking and even acting,” he says. Ujwal is credited as the writer, director, production designer, and cinematographer. The process, though long, seemed achievable, says the Chennai-based self-taught animation artist. With a day job in the field of marketing, Ujwal's weekends for over four years were dedicated to



**Sky high** A still from *Lucky Dog*; (below) Ujwal and Indou. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

working on this satire-comedy, with a small team and a tight budget. “Rather than doing voiceovers for the characters, we realised that the most entertaining way to tell this story was through music and wordplay. Aditi Ramesh, a Bengaluru-based composer then came on board,” he says. The songs in *Lucky Dog*, written by Ujwal and composed by Aditi stand out – each more whimsical, quirky, and thought-provoking than the other. In January, *Lucky Dog* had a special screening at the inaugural edition of Mumbai's Animela Festival. At the 16th International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala (IDSFFK), this was one of two animated films in the competition short fiction section. “The inclusion of

an animated short in this category, and the response we have got at screenings so far has been promising. Independent animation is getting a lot more recognition around the world,” says Indou Theagrajan, co-producer of *Lucky Dog*. The spotlight on *Lucky Dog*, and its upcoming international premiere has them enthused. “At Busan and even in Kerala, the film being included in general categories along with live action films is very encouraging,” says Ujwal. “It is befitting that *Lucky Dog* is having an international premiere in an Asian country, given the themes the film deals with, and we believe this has resonated with the selection committee,” he adds.



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## Sundar C to direct *Mookuthi Amman 2*



Sundar C will direct *Mookuthi Amman 2*, starring Nayanthara in the lead. Ishari K Ganesh of Vels Film International will produce the movie in association with Rowdy Pictures and Avni Cinemax. The makers said in a statement that the film will differ from the premise of *Mookuthi Amman* Part 1, directed by RJ Balaji and NJ Saravanan. As per reports, RJ Balaji is teaming up with Trisha for a film titled *Maasani Amman*. The details of the actors and technicians of *Mookuthi Amman 2* are yet to be announced. Meanwhile, Nayanthara will be part of *Test*, *Mannangatti Since 1960* and *Thani Oruvan 2*.

## Dawn Pictures to back *D 52*



Dhanush's 52nd film will be backed by Dawn Pictures. The film be produced by Aakash Baskaran, who shared the development about his banner on social media. The project marks the maiden production venture of Dawn Pictures. Reports say Dhanush could also direct the movie. Dhanush is currently filming his third directorial, *Nilavukku En Mel Ennadi Kobam*. The actor was last seen in *Raayan*, which released on July 26. The film was Dhanush's second directorial and 50th film as a lead. The actor has Sekhar Kammula's *Kubera* and music legend Ilaiyaraaja biopic *Maestro* in the pipeline.

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