



metro PLUS

THE HINDU



Chennai embraces the Christmas spirit with pink trees and ice cream baubles **P3**

ARIVU, PAAL DABBA SET TO SPIT VERSE **P6**

Chennai's busiest season is upon us. Team *MetroPlus* helps you plan your to-do list through these pages as the city opens its doors to art, theatre, culinary and music events

THE LONG WEEKEND

parallel exhibits



Untitled

A display of portraiture through the Avtar Foundation for the arts collection curated by Anish Gawande.
@Alliance Francaise of Madras, December 12 to 19, from 10am to 5pm.

The Divine Spectacle

Paintings that explore religion, spirituality and existence.
@Forum Art Gallery, until January 5, from 10.30am to 6.30pm.



The Significance Within

A group show by Kinetics Madras spanning mediums and genre.
@Gallery Veda, until January 12, from 11am to 7pm.

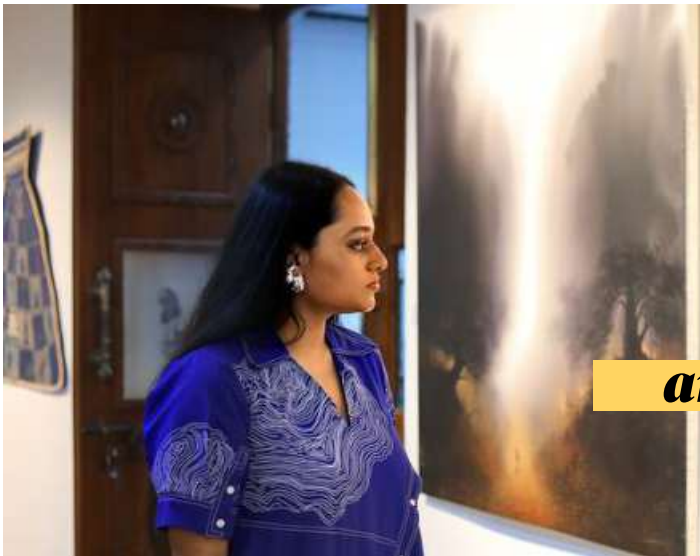
Gowri S

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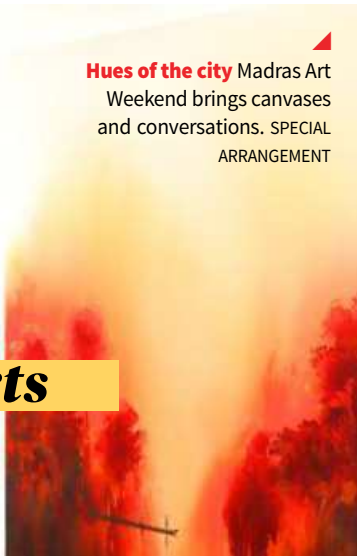
Last week, the precursor show of the upcoming contemporary art festival Madras Art Weekend that highlighted over 60 artists from South India titled Spotlight on the South opened to a sizeable crowd – debunking all the unsaid rules of the niche, elite personality of a fine art gallery. Chennai showed up in surprising numbers as the artists selected from over 1,000 entries received through an open call over social media, took up every inch of the walls.

Sure, to an aesthete's eye the display was crowded and in parts even underwhelming as artists of varying degree of skill gathered within the same walls leading to a display that was inconsistent in quality. But it also contributed to a movement within Chennai's young art community, which included students from the Government College of Fine Arts, Egmore and others, who had never been represented by any gallery in the city before.

Now in its third edition, Madras Art Weekend's primary aim is to drive conversation, says founder Upasana Asrani. The event that started as an experiment quickly transformed into an annual affair following the interest it received from collectors and artists alike. The weekend has now grown into a four-day festival, with art and jewellery showcases, panel discussion, collectors' home tours and a fashion display. "Contemporary artists from the South need to be put on a



arts



Hues of the city Madras Art Weekend brings canvases and conversations. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A changing palette



pedestal," says Upasana.

However, art born from the proud home of the Madras Art Movement is still missing, as this year the focus seemed to have shifted to fashion, jewellery and design, with a keen eye on the conservation of culture.

Says Upasana, "The highlight [of this edition] would definitely be Mr Mehta [of Mehta and Sons] bringing down Milaaya Art Gallery's

Threaded Visions and their expert craftsmanship with jewellery by Anjali Bhimrajika Jewels, giving us an insight into the connection between jewellery and art." The session also hosts Delhi-based art and design collector Shalini Passi, who rose to

quick fame following her appearance in the Netflix reality series, *Fabulous Lives vs Bollywood Wives*. A fashion showcase will accompany this display on Day 1.

Another session that merits anticipation is a panel discussion that explores metaphors in artistic practice that brings iconic contemporary artists Rekha Rodwittiya and Jayasri Burman in conversation with Sunaina Anand and Uday Jain. There will also be a conversation by Sethu Vaidyanathan, Saloni Doshi and Narayan Lakshman, moderated by Ranvir Shah, which will revolve around connoisseurship.

Some of India's leading galleries like Dhoomimal Gallery, Art Alive

Gallery, Archer Art Gallery, Art Magnum Gallery, Tao Art Gallery, Art Nouveau, Artworld Sarala's Art Centre and Gallery Sumukha will bring their respective collections to Chennai.

With conservation at the core of the programming this year, a conversation around the importance of preserving heritage, while planning for a sustainable future will have Mrinalika Bhargava Deo of the palace-turned-boutique stay Belgadia Palace, Mayank Bhutra of Erode Clothing, and young contemporary artists Jayesh Sachdev, Lakshmi Madhavan and photographer Amar Ramesh in conversation with Umah Jacob, director, external relations and outreach at India Art Fair. Another panel discussion on design will be moderated by Mumbai-based interior stylist Samir Wadekar.

The Folly in Amethyst will host an art and fashion showcase with collections and products from sustainable brands like Akaaro, Erode Clothing, Anushka Khanna, Indru and Knots Bag. A display of art and ceramics by Kaash, Hashtag Collective, Ramkumar Kannadasan, Arun Velayutham, Ravi Vaturi and others will also be on view.

Upasana says that they have been overwhelmed with the response to every open call, and other registered events, which, she believes, shows the strength of the art community within Chennai.

MAW in association with The Hindu Made of Chennai is open from December 12 to 15. Find the complete schedule @madrasartweekend on Instagram.



Primordial Elements

Through the medium of granite, Jacob Jebaraj views the modernity of art through the lens of tradition set in stone, both metaphorically and literally.
@Art Kin Centre, until December 15, 11am to 7pm.

Haunting Cargos

Paintings by Sovan Kumar.
@First floor, Lalit Kala Akademi, until December 15.



Shripad Gurav and Subrata Paul

Drawings from the Indo-Portuguese architecture of Gurav's hometown, and sculptures by Paul that are a celebration of life.
@Sarala's Art Centre, till December 16.

Gowri S

This is the story of a musical that was born almost three decades ago. And as with most stories, this one too, has a prologue. As someone who stepped on stage as early as in the 1970s with the likes of Barry John (the English-born Indian theatre director who has gone on to mentor many Indian stars like Shah Rukh Khan), it was only upon setting up her own Primetime Theatre Company in 1991, that Lillete Dubey was able to actualise her dream: platforming original Indian writing in theatre.

Before long, Lillete's love for music set her on a quest to find an original piece of work that had music. This is where Sandip Kanjilal, an MTech from IIT and a self-taught music composer, came into the picture. "He had this beautiful, tongue-and-cheek body of work called *Jaya* based on *The Mahabharata*. As we know, *Jaya* was the original title of *The Mahabharata* and also means victory. But at what cost? Whose victory?" The questions were aplenty. In 1998, *Jaya* opened to a full audience. But after 40 grand shows, the curtains came down due to an



Grand spectacle A still from a previous performance of *Jaya*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

theatre

Yudhisthira's rock ballad

unexpected tragedy.

"It is my passion project. It is my blood, sweat, tears, money and love for music invested in this play," says Lillete, adding, "This play had to come back."

After six months of gruelling work, with a completely fresh score, *Jaya* is back on stage. "It's *Jesus Christ Superstar* meets *The Mahabharata* meets Greek tragedy," she laughs. "*Jaya* is so contemporary that it begins with Yudhisthira singing a rock song!"

After pursuing well-known

composers, she finally met Ashutosh Pathak. "Like me, he found it challenging, nerve-wracking and exciting," Lillete recalls. More than a 100 artistes auditioned. Six months of regular rehearsals later, the play is completely operatic, narrated only through sounds, rap, rhyme and full-length songs.

While many revisionist narratives of *The Mahabharata* have been discussed time and again, *Jaya* attempts to simply present the epic as is. The narrative starts at the end of *The Mahabharata* when the

Pandavas undertake the climb to mount Meru, only to fall. After the resounding success at the Bengaluru show in August, Lillete is fairly certain of how Chennai will embrace her magnum opus production. "South India really knows its epics."

Jaya will be performed on December 15 at 4.30pm and 7.30pm at Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Auditorium, Chennai. Tickets on BookMyShow from ₹499 onwards.

It's a Brat winter

Gowri S

In an endearing show of how an ensemble takes shape and form, a group of little actors sing 'A Million Dreams' from the hit musical *The Greatest Showman*, as their older counterparts join in seamlessly. The harmonies resound in The Little Theatre's rehearsal space, Cheriana.

This scene from one of the rehearsal evenings of The Little Theatre's annual Christmas Pantomime, *Bratman*, indicates the importance of an ensemble.



Over the past four months, this is exactly what the team has been trying to achieve.

Over the last 28 years, the pantomime has become synonymous with the holiday season in the city. While the classic format of a pantomime remains true to its genre (think: a dame, innumerable songs, and slapstick humour), every year, a fresh crop of Chennai's young theatre nuts takes the stage.

The script and storyline, charted by the actors themselves almost always skirts the absurd, while also bringing forth the classic good versus evil trope. This time around, *Batman* is in the picture – a character that has

always been close to artistic director Krishnakumar Balasubramanian (KK). "We wanted to put our own panto spin to the character of *Batman* to create *Bratman*."

He continues, "We want to give the fans something to play with, but at the end of the day, it's a Christmas pantomime: a spoof of the entire universe, a take on popular culture and also current events. More than going into the history of the comics, we take what people most relate to and you blend it with every idea that comes in through improvisation."

The narrative loosely goes thus: what if someone or something takes over *Batman*'s psyche and thought processes and makes him into *Bratman*? What if he becomes a supervillain? What will he be capable of then? What ensues in Gotham city following this forms the story.

Would the director be willing to reveal what songs we can look forward to? After some hesitation, he gives away one. "One of my favourite songs by Elton John, 'I'm Still Standing.'"

On December 14 and 15 at 3pm and 7pm, and on December 16 to 19, at 6pm in Museum Theatre, Egmore. Passes on thelittletheatre.explara.com



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#15, Bank Street, Kilpauk



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#106,Jawaharlal Nehru Salai, Thirumangalam, Anna Nagar



Poonamallee
#186, Trunk Road, Poonamallee



East Tambaram
#1, Kannan Avenue, New Balaji Nagar Main Road, Selaiyur



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Claus and effect

From baubles in the shape of doughnuts to pink trees, here's what's trending in the world of Christmas decor this year

Shelves at Christmas stores are heaving with shiny metal cupcakes, doughnuts, aeroplanes, ice cream cones... This year there has been a departure from traditional to non conventional baubles.

"We, of course, have the traditional angels and stars, but people also want something new to add to their trees. They portray their own personalities through the decor," says Tinu Santiago of Advent Christmas Store on RK Salai. "A lot of our clients are pet lovers so we have puppy baubles, and almost 25-30 of our clients are home bakers so we have a lot of doughnuts and ornaments in the form of baked goodies," she says. For a lot of people, space is a constraint, so they also have pencil trees that are slimmer versions of the usual voluminous trees, says Tinu. Which is another reason why the store also has compact nativity sets replete with lights, music, and revolving layers, each depicting different scenes from the night Jesus was born.

This is Advent Christmas Store's first year in Chennai. The store opened in Bengaluru in 2019, followed by Goa in

Reindeer, gnomes, and figurines of Santa are the source of much excitement in Roy's Wonderland on Valluvar Kottam High Road. The other popular entrants this year include a train track that has a train chugging around the Christmas tree, and a tree with Santa in his sleigh doing his rounds.

Roy's Wonderland is also a pop up store like Advent and opened its doors last month. "We also have stores in Mumbai, Goa, and Bengaluru," says Nivedha Roy, who joined the business that was started in 1996 by her husband's family, and is the digital marketing head. The little store stocks 500-plus accessories, including 18 varieties of trees. "The biggest one is 12 feet and is priced at ₹55,000," she says, adding that everything is imported from Germany, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and Indonesia.

“Our family is passionate

When it comes to sales, trees remain the most popular. However, for some, the focus has moved from trees to larger setups



2021. "My market research showed that Chennai has last-minute shoppers. A lot of them start buying ornaments and trees by December 10," smiles

Tinu as she makes her way through the store that is brimming with fun artefacts like a lighthouse with Santa's sleigh going around it and LED

fashion

Bling central

A two-day showcase will display Studio Renn's [Prime]al collection



For Mumbai-based jewellery brand Studio Renn, working on its collection [Prime]al has been all about creating its own design language.

“Our design has always followed a more creative expression format. We identify a subject, keep studying it over multiple years and develop a collection,” says Roshni Jhaveri. Roshni and her husband Rahul co-founded Studio Renn nearly six years ago, and are back in Chennai for the fourth time to showcase their jewellery at Collage, on December 11 and 12.

Known for its quirky, unconventional jewellery, Studio Renn's first collection

Art inspired A model wears the weave hoops.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

[An]otherness was inspired by the concepts of atrophy and rot. The third edition of [Prime]al, which is Studio Renn's second collection, was crafted based on a study of indigenous art. "Our pieces are named basket, weave, and vessel, which highlights the process of creating objects," Roshni explains.

Their earrings, rings, bracelets and necklaces which will be showcased, are made of 18k gold, with diamonds, Zambian emeralds and rubies.

Roshni says that Chennai is a very discerning market. "They are forward thinking in what they react to, and most of our experimental work," Roshni says.

“People are opting for what works for them, instead of following a trend,” she adds.

The collection will be on display at Collage, Rutland Gate, Nungambakkam till December 12 from 11am to 7.30pm.

**MADRAS
ART WEEKEND**

GET READY FOR CHENNAI'S MOST
ANTICIPATED ART EVENT OF THE YEAR
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GALLERIES**

(left to right) Archer Art Gallery, Tao Art Gallery, Dhoomimal Gallery, Art Alive Gallery,
Milaaya Art Gallery, Art Nouveau, Art Magnum, Artworld and Gallery Sumukha

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THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13620

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Across

- 1 Nifty device (11)
- 9 Commotion (3,3,3)
- 10 Organised (3)
- 11 Folded back part of coat collar (5)
- 13 Enormous (7)
- 14 Length of step (6)
- 15 Halfway (6)
- 18 Puzzle (7)
- 20 Rigged (5)
- 21 Stop (3)
- 22 A good one stops to help (9)
- 24 Shocking — tea in salons (anag) (11)
- Down**
- 2 Be in arrears (3)
- 3 Messy (7)
- 4 Financial gain (6)
- 5 Deep chasm (5)
- 6 Filing system (4,5)
- 7 Bertrand Russell, for instance (11)
- 8 Self-governing (11)
- 12 Tip grader (anag) — bird (9)

To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code



- 16** Conflagration (7)
17 Not liable (6)
19 Continues (5)
23 It could be high cream (3)

Solution will appear in
MetroPlus dated

December 19, 2024.

Solution No. 13619

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600086

Arul Jothi Kalyana Mandapam, 162 A, Redhills High
Hall - 600053

Lakshmi Hall, 50/40, 100 Feet Rd, Near Ashok Pillar,
Opp. CSI Church - 600083

(This venue starts from tomorrow Friday, 13-12-2024)

Aishwarya Thirumana Mahal, No.176, Velachery Main
Road - 600100

(This venue starts from tomorrow Friday, 13-12-2024)

K.V.L. Kalyana Mahal, 161, Opp. Accenture, Opp.Bharat
Petroleum - 600019

(This venue starts from tomorrow Friday, 13-12-2024)

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Brushstroke of history Cricket Match in India (1792) by Thomas Daniell. ASTAGURU AUCTION HOUSE

of rustic Indian life,” Sneha adds. The players in coloured trousers are positioned as fielders while the scorers are seated as they observe the game. “Although the building’s [behind] exact identity remains uncertain, it anchors the scene in the historical and cultural context of British-occupied India,” adds Sneha.

The work is an important cultural document in Daniell’s seven-year-long record of 18th Century colonial India and its sights and sounds, absorbed during his elaborate travels. He arrived in India in 1786 after obtaining permission from the East India Company to travel to Calcutta to work as an engraver, with his nephew, William, as his assistant. The Daniells’ sketches and aquatints became a rare visual archive of the landscapes, architecture and culture of the region when photography as a medium did not exist.

“During this period, the Daniells meticulously documented their journey through sketches and paintings, focussing on India’s diverse landscapes, architectural marvels, and cultural activities. Notably, their itinerary included Madras (now Chennai) in 1792, making it highly plausible that this painting was created during their time in the region. The reference to The Island as the location of the cricket ground is informed by historical records, which indicate it was the sole cricketing venue in the city at the time,” adds Sneha.

This iconic painting aside, the upcoming auction titled Historical Masterpieces will also showcase work by Modernists like Jamini Roy, Manu Parekh, SL Haldankar, KM Adimoolam, Homi J Bhabha, Rabindranath Tagore, A Ramachandran, Paresh Maity, Jehangir Sabavala, BC Sanyal, and several others. The collection also includes sculptures by eminent artists such as Himmat Shah, T Vaikuntam, Krishen Khanna, and Sankho Chaudhuri.

The online auction will be live from December 14 to 16 on astaguru.com

One of the oldest paintings depicting cricket is set in colonial Madras. The Thomas Daniell work, estimated to be valued between ₹7 and ₹9 crores, goes under the hammer on December 14

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The year is 1792. A large, lush swathe of green is speckled only by a lone cow and a group of men in scatter. A closer look reveals a set of stumps and a batsman mid-swing. A white pavilion not so far away suggests the presence of players at ease, while an unidentified building behind the field screams European influences.

We are in the middle of a quintessential British pastime in colonial Madras of the 18th Century: a game of cricket, only frozen on canvas in oil paints.

This painting titled Cricket Match in India, its ephemeral quality reminiscent of Daniell’s feather-touch mastery, is one of the earliest depictions of the sport, and is set in 18th Century colonial Madras, more

specifically the Island. It is possibly the oldest painting of cricket, its provenance tied to the Tagore family collection and its publication in Maurice Shellim’s *India and the Daniells*. It was part of a private collection in Calcutta for many years, until acquired by Mumbai-based auction house AstaGuru. On the heels of the grand, moneyed spectacle of the IPL auction, the painting also goes under the hammer on December 14 and is estimated to be valued between ₹7 and ₹9 crores.

“[The painting] is not only an early visual document of cricket in India but also a rare example of Daniell’s work in oil, a medium which is more rare when compared to his prolific watercolours and aquatints,” says Sneha Gautam, vice president of AstaGuru Auction House.

A closer look at this piece reveals many fine details. “At the centre of the composition,

cricket players are depicted in various poses, engaged in the game. Their attire, with coloured trousers, adds vibrancy while the seated scorer nearby provides a casual, observational element. A grazing cow in the foreground introduces a touch



Black rice halwa, decor and diamonds

The one-day Karaikudi Sangam will showcase the best of Chettinad’s art, culture and culinary excellence

Chitradeepa Anantharam
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Karaikudi Nagarathar Sangam Chennai (KNSC), founded in 2015, has been conducting pop-ups in the city to highlight the culture of the community.

With a mission to showcase the talents of women entrepreneurs from the Nagarathar community, and to facilitate a platform for networking, the fourth edition of the sangam’s pop-up will bring together over 100 women entrepreneurs.

Products that will be showcased range from clothing, art and craft, home décor, skin care, personal grooming, health foods, and jewellery.

A food court is an integral part of the Karaikudi Sandhai, and the event will showcase the food from the Chettinad region. Live food counters will dish out snacks such as kuzhipaniyaram, vella paniyaram, pachai thaenkuzhal and kavuni arisi halwa. Apart from this, an elaborate ela sappad (traditional meals served on banana leaf) by Thiruvengadam Catering Service priced at ₹500 per person, will be available on a first-come-first-serve basis for 500 people.

Traditional Chettinad jewellery such as the *kazhuthiru* (ornament worn by women) and *gowrisangam* (ornament for men) and more such intricately handcrafted gold and diamond jewellery that talk about the rich legacy of the community will also be showcased. There will be stalls displaying pencil sketches of elegant Chettinad mansions, highlighting the beauty of these homes, facades and courtyards. Stalls will also showcase traditional Chettinad utensils and lamps in



culture

Heritage vignettes Pencil sketches of Chettinad architecture and range of brassware will be available at the fair.

brass and stainless steel, woven baskets, spice powders, home decor and textiles.

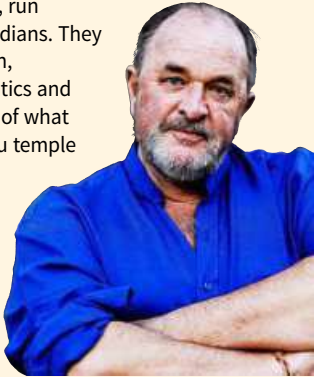
This initiative aims to ensure that the legacy of Chettinad’s artistry and culinary excellence continues to thrive while empowering more women to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

@YMCA Grounds, AC Convention Centre. December 15, 10am to 8pm. Entry is free. For details, call 94441 95740.

STEPOUT

Road less travelled

The links between Indian history and the rest of the world, run through the earth’s surface, mimicking the imaginary meridians. They spread across the globe, telling stories through art, religion, technology, astronomy, music, dance, literature, mathematics and mythology, which have been central to the understanding of what constitutes Eurasia. A visit to Angkor Wat, the largest Hindu temple complex in the world, led author William Dalrymple to contemplate these themes in detail. These meditations led to his latest historical non-fiction *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World*. On December 14, the author spends time discussing Indianisation and the country’s global impact at a book launch by Prakriti Foundation. @ Anna Centenary Library Auditorium, December 14, 11am. Free entry.



Joy to the world

The Madras Christian College Alumni is back again this season with its annual concert to usher in the spirit of Christmas. A specially designed 70 X 30 feet mammoth stage with a 10,000 Watt sound system will help carry the melodies and harmonies across the massive open ground. This year, the concert will feature first time performances by The Korean Children’s Choir, along with nine other Chennai-based choirs. @The MCC Higher Secondary School Grounds, Harrington Road, Chetpet. December 17, 6.30pm onwards. Entry is free.



Alt+Tab moments

Ramkumar Natarajan presents his stand-up comedy special Alt + Tab - Life of Ram. In this special, he will get real and personal, and share stories from his life as well as talk about his fitness journey. His life as an IT project manager and the path to becoming a stand-up comedian will also feature prominently in his set.

@Janaki Ammal Auditorium, APL Global School, Thorapakkam. December 15, 6.30pm. Tickets at bookmyshow



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Indulge in a feast for the senses and savour a seasonal spread of indigenous cuisines representing the communities of the Nilgiris Biosphere at The Habba, the heart of the four-day event – The Nilgiris Earth Festival (TNEF) which begins on December 19.

At the central event on December 22, The Keystone Foundation in Kotagiri will turn into a hub for indigenous foods, and a cosy market will spring up for locally-sourced produce, honey, and art. Along with food, music, and dance, speakers including CK ‘Bablu’ Ganguly from the Timbaktu Collective, Arshiya Bose, founder, Black Baza Coffee and environmental activist G Sundarrajan of Poovulagin Nanbargal will talk on climate activism, food sovereignty and biodiversity.

While the Timbaktu Collective strives to empower rural communities towards sustainable lives with equal rights for all genders, Black Baza Coffee works with over 650 small coffee producers in the Western Ghats to strengthen biodiversity-friendly farming practices, and Poovulagin Nanbargal (Friends of Earth), is an NGO dedicated to conservation and sustainability. Author and philanthropist Rohini Nilekani will be the guest of honour who will

Taste the hills

A four-day annual celebration of food, culture, and ecology, that unites local communities and global voices honours the rich heritage of The Nilgiris



also present the annual Nilgiris Earth Award during the event.

Sandesh Kadur’s *Nilgiris: A Shared Wilderness*, produced by Rohini Nilekani, will be screened. Sandesh and Rohini will also share a glimpse into the making of the film and its central themes.

Presented by the Nilgiris Foundation, a sister concern of The Keystone Foundation, the TNEF will be held at multiple venues around the Nilgiris and

Feast for the senses A traditional dance in progress; artisanal teas; foraged produce; and on the menu at the festival. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



A celebration of sharing,” says Pratim Roy, founder-director of The Keystone Foundation, adding that topics like foraging will open discussions on working towards a sustainable planet. “These are global and urgent narratives and the TNEF aims to forge meaningful relationships across boundaries.”

Day one of the festival begins with a session on forgotten greens and heritage grains with Devi Lakshmikutty of Bio Basics, and Shruti Tharayil of Forgotten Greens that showcases heritage rice, wild edibles, and medicinal greens as well as unique farming and foraging traditions of India.

What follows is a special experience centred around a tasting menu featuring Badaga cuisine, curated by educationist and restaurateur Suresh Belliraj in collaboration with Chef Kartik Pendse at Donnington Bakehouse in Kotagiri. It will be accompanied by a Badaga cultural performance.

At a session on tea, visitors can explore Nilgiris’ artisanal teas at Tranquiltea Tea Lounge in Coonoor with Sandeep Subramani. Besides a haiku-inspired creative walk with poet Shobhana Kumar through Lovedale’s estates, there will be a farm-to-fork sojourn at the Emerald Lake near Udhagamandalam with Vishanth Kumar, a regenerative farmer and chef.

Guests can experience the flavours of high-elevation organic produce and farm-to-table wood-fired cooking and raise a toast to people growing high mountain organic produce. Over lunch prepared by chefs Vishanth Kumar and Karan Thakker, Vishanth, the founder of Kikui Farms & Red Hills

Tea Estate, where he grows organic vegetables, reflects upon his life at the region’s iconic farm.

Concludes Pratim, “Listening to accomplished speakers will inspire us to care deeply for the Earth.”

Log onto mef.thenilgirisfoundation.org



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Samyukta PC and *Draupadi-Duhassana Tarkkam* by three pairs of performers; *Solladi Sivashakti* by Theatre Nisha and *Daksa Yagnam* by the Sangam; *Won't You Listen to Me* by A Bharathi and P Sasikumar; and *Shoorpanaka: A Search*, by Parshathi J Nath, among others.

“The main aim of the festival is to bridge the urban-rural divide,” says Hanne, adding: “People in Chennai are unaware of koothu and that it is alive and kicking; while people in the

The Kalai Thiru Vizhaa is on till January 4 at Kattaikkuttu Sangam, Punjarasantankal village in Kanchipuram. Entry is free, but donations are appreciated. For details, 9944369600, mail info@kattaikkuttu.org, look up kattaikkuttu.org.

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Between 10am and 5pm.*

“To produce a single such sari takes six months and 29 women working eight hours a day. If it’s an urgent order, it will take five months to produce a lacework sari and for that the women work more than eight hours each day,” explains Sister M Arul Sahaya Selvi who oversees the Mulagumoodu project. The delicate lacework and embroidery by these women, also make it to frocks, dresses, saris, handkerchiefs, napkins, table cloth and mats,

With the opening of a dedicated space at the Little Flower Convent in Chennai, the work of these artisans practising a slowly vanishing craft, is now available through the year. “We, the ICM Sisters, have opened a room to display not just what the lace and embroidery artisans create, but also handwoven products by visually-impaired women. You are not buying a product, but rather supporting an artisan.



Among the popular recipes, Tasha highlights her fool-proof chicken biryani. “While many recipes are quintessentially Sri Lankan, I edited the book to include simple options. I’m working on a part two with more complex recipes. One of my favourites is the red chicken curry. For beginners, I recommend pol sambol. Fry an egg, butter a slice of toast, layer it with pol sambol, and take a bite. It’s my regular breakfast and a great way to start the day. Give it a try!”

A bowl of crab and vegetable soup, featuring large pieces of crab meat and green vegetables in a light-colored broth.

Jayaflava (victory in Sinhalese). Since I live between the UK and Sri Lanka, I blended this with Craig David's song 'What's Your Flava' for *Jayaflava*."

Tasha, with her Ceylon Moor-Colombo Chetty and Sinhalese roots, describes herself as a true "achcharu" (a Sri Lankan mixed pickle).

"My parents worked, so I watched a lot of television which was mostly cooking shows, and would try to recreate those dishes later. However, my journey with cooking Sri Lankan food began at university. In the UK, I craved colour in my meals. The food was beige – potatoes, bread, meat. My mother always said meals should have the colours of the rainbow, so I began cooking," she recalls.

With over 100 recipes, *Jayaflava*



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Time and rhyme

All about *The Grandys*, an upcoming animated series that gives a makeover to Tamil poet-philosopher Thiruvalluvar

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Vijay Ashokan hated learning the *Thirukural* as a child. “We would have to memorise it and it was very difficult. Even if we made a small mistake while reciting or writing it, we would be chided.”

Learning the ancient Tamil text by rote irked Vijay as a child. “I developed an aversion towards the text and its author, Thiruvalluvar,” he recalls. Luckily, after schooling, he chanced upon a translated version of the book that changed his perspective. “I realised the depth of his work.”

Cut to 2024, and Vijay Ashokan, now a Chennai-based motion picture architect (someone adept at filmmaking, live action and animation), is coming out with *The Grandys*, an animated web-series aimed at children between the ages of three and six.

“As the historicity of Thiruvalluvar is uncertain, there is a lot of mystery about how he looked and what kind of a person he was. What if he was a cute, bubbly guy who loved children? That’s the thought with which I started *The Grandys*,” reveals Vijay, whose VA Studios also works on videos for the Tamil Nadu School Education Department.

The Grandys will feature Thiruvalluvar taking a trip on a time-machine and arriving in 2024, where he finds children struggling to learn his work. Each episode will be about 22 minutes long, with episodes dropping weekly.

It will also bring to life through animation a few popular personalities from the past. “There’s Bruce Lee for *ozhukkam* (discipline), Mohammad Ali for *pugazh* (fame) and so on,” he says.

The Grandys is brought to life using 2D classical animation, which features hand-drawn strokes. “Every art is hand-drawn and digitally animated using various software. Motion capture was used to get details like hairstyles. We did not

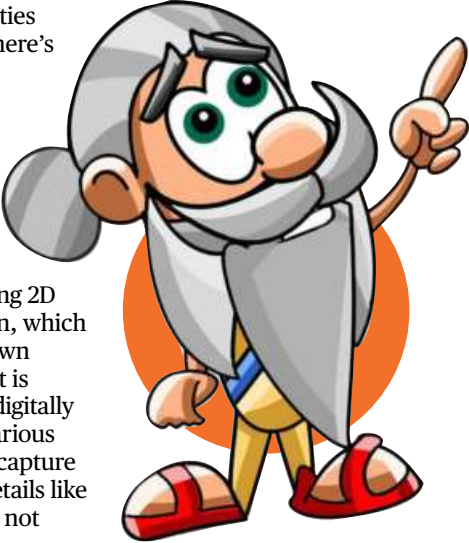


want to use a lot of technology because it might dilute the creative strokes.”

The series was initially titled *Mr and Mrs Thiruvalluvar* as it also features his wife, Vasuki in a vital role, apart from a princess and a science genius, among others. But that would mean limiting the audience to the Tamil diaspora, and the makers thus chose to re-christen it. “I don’t see this as an effort to promote the Tamil language,” explains Vijay, “Rather, it is to promote a Tamilian who had words of wisdom that could be useful, irrespective of where you are from.”

Based on response to this series, Vijay will embark on another concept revolving around Thiruvalluvar but aimed at the six-nine age group. “Parents we pitched these ideas to were happy because kids won’t get addicted to them, rather learn a thing or two that will hold them in good stead for life.”

Episodes of The Grandys will stream on Reliance Animation’s YouTube channel (Big Animation) in Tamil in December, followed by Hindi and English versions. All episodes will be streamed in Amazon Prime Kids from April 2025.



Rappers Arivu and Paal Dabba want audiences to return home drenched in sweat, with feet tired from dancing at their concert, Petta Rap, on December 15

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Arivu and Paal Dabba’s tryst began before they were formally introduced to each other. “When Paal Dabba’s ‘Ai ai ai’ came out, a mutual friend told me that Paal had danced in the video of one of my songs – ‘Namma Stories’. That is when I began following him on social media. I had even sent him a message congratulating him,” Arivu says.

Paal, on the other hand, was an avid listener since Arivu’s first major album *Therukural*. “I heard ‘Kalla Mouni’ and ‘Sanda seivom’ and was wondering who this guy churning banger after banger was,” he says.

These years of mutual admiration have culminated in both trailblazers of Tamil rap coming together to perform at Petta Rap.



Tamil rap nation

Arivu says that this is a crucial time for rap in the mother tongue. “We are all just about figuring out how to experiment, rap and bring diverse voices in our mother tongue. While I bring the flavour from Arakkonam, brother Paal does it from his area,” he says.

Paal Dabba finds its way in both their work and is crucial to their identities as artistes. A lesson that he learnt at a dance workshop in Chennai by a famous international artiste, is

something he repeatedly goes back to. “People were breaking down his style of dancing and discussing that international form at length. The artiste however asked everyone to focus on learning and finding ways to adapt a local flavour to the form. It isn’t right to speak as though the local artform isn’t valid,” he says.

Language, he says, is instrumental in revealing an individual and a community’s roots. “That is why I am a representative of Tamil. I want to take these stories and ensure

it connects to my people and the world,” he says.

Taking off from here, Arivu says that language, a medium created hundreds of years ago, has found ways to speak through his tongue after traversing generations. “My role today is to keep it alive until my last breath,” he says.

Success gripped both these rappers when they were young. They have travelled to various stages across the world and are looking forward to these experiences outside of themselves. What do their

mothers have to say about their success? “My mother is a fantastic singer but has only always sung only at home. Although she is happy about my success, I feel pained by the knowledge that others like her have not succeeded in becoming singers. I want to collaborate with her and bring her to a recording studio,” Arivu says. He adds that his mother chides him on certain occasions, asking him to stop expressing a view. “It is likely that I might have enjoyed saying the line at the interview over having sung a song,” Arivu says.

Paal Dabba says that with success comes a healthy dose of fear. “I am the first in my family to enter this industry. It is certainly new for everyone and sometimes scary for my mother but I have sat her down and had a chat. I have told her ‘This is how it is going to be’.”

Soon, Paal will release his single ‘X’, a digression from his usual upbeat rap full of whimsy. “This is an experiment. A slow rap about my love life and its implications with a little bit of fiction. I took it upon myself as a challenge to experiment,” he says, making an ‘X’ with his hand, saying he would much rather not have this character back in his life. Arivu says that he is fearful of writing love songs and has contemplated ‘love’ for years because the harsh reality is that it is deeply political. Someday though, he hopes to experiment.

Both rappers have much to say but would rather conserve their energy to perform at the concert. “It is going to be fun. We want everyone to go back with a grin of satisfaction, drenched in sweat and all danced out,” they say.

Petta Rap by Arivu x Paal Dabba is at Island Grounds on December 15. It begins at 6.30pm. Tickets are priced at ₹499 and ₹999 on insider.in, bookmyshow, skillbox and actcevents.com. The Hindu Made of Chennai is the celebration partner.

Reel journey

123 films from 50 countries will be screened at the 22nd Chennai International Film Festival, kickstarting today

like *The Room Next Door* by Pedro Almodóvar, *Memories of a Burning Body* by Antonella Sudasassi Furniss, among others. Embassies and cultural



institutes of various countries have also contributed to the festival. The Australian Consulate-General is presenting two critically-acclaimed Australian films, *My Melbourne* (14 December, 12.15 pm at Six Degrees PVR Sathyam Cinemas) and *Force of Nature - The Dry 2* (13 December, 10am at PVR INOX Citi Centre Mall).

Films made by the diploma students of the Tamil Nadu Government MGR Film & Television Institute will also be screened at the festival. That is not all; eminent personalities from the film industry will also conduct a series of masterclasses and conversations for the student community.

Movies

The Department of Visual Communication, Avichi College of Arts & Science is curating these sessions.

For details and registration, visit chennaifilmfest.com

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Between the swirling maelstrom of cosplayers in neon wigs, teenagers swinging wooden katanas with a little too much flair, and an almost oppressive sea of yellow straw hats, a periodic “Kamehameha!” is hollered with unsettling conviction at Comic Con Delhi 2024.

Through this delightful chaos at the nippy NSIC grounds strides Rana Daggubati, calm as a summer sea and visibly amused. His eyes twinkle when they land on my homage to Eiichiro Oda’s popular series, and without missing a beat, he grins, “You look like you’re from *One Piece*, not *The Hindu*.”

We are ostensibly here to talk about his role in

Anime’s moment

Rana Daggubati on *Solo Leveling* and the untapped multi-lingual treasure trove of anime

Rana Daggubati in the dubbing studio. CRUNCHYROLL

Crunchyroll’s Indian dubs of *Solo Leveling*, a Korean manhwa-turned-Japanese anime, where the Telugu star lends his unmistakable



baritone to Barca – its formidable Night King-inspired villain. With the electricity of Delhi’s 13th annual nerd meetup buzzing around us, it

is impossible to ignore the larger cultural moment anime is having in India. So, has the bad guy from *Baahubali* truly joined the

obsessive ranks of India’s otakus and weebies?

“When it comes to Japanese influence, my first memory has to be Kurosawa,” he says without hesitation. “There’s a slice of him in every filmmaker.” Kurosawa was his gateway, followed by a steady binge of Japanese gangster films. Much later, anime and manga entered the scene. He names *One Piece* and *Berserk* as favourites but admits he was a late bloomer. “I grew up on Indian comics. Manga and anime only came into focus after a trip to Japan during *Baahubali* promotions.”

The trip not only deepened his appreciation for the medium but also planted the seeds for his work in *Solo Leveling*. “Once you discover these things late in life, they start influencing the way you approach storytelling.”

Voicing the icy villain in *Solo Leveling* started to feel a little more than another gig. It was a chance to immerse himself in a craft that is just as revered in his homeland, as it is in its country of origin. “Japanese voice actors are like cult heroes,” he notes. “I watched bits of the anime but wanted to bring my own thing to it. It’s about capturing the ethos of the character, not mimicking someone else’s performance.”

What fascinates him most about anime is its tonal elasticity. “It’s the only art form I’ve seen that can swing from extreme gore to deeply emotional storytelling in the blink of an eye,” he marvels.

Rana’s career, too, mirrors this kind of versatility. From the pan-Indian triumph of *Baahubali* to distributing Payal Kapadia’s *All We Imagine As Light* and now dubbing a

Korean-Japanese adaptation in three different languages; he seems to thrive on cultural cross-pollination. “It’s not about consciously choosing multi-lingual projects,” he says. “It’s about telling good stories to the widest audience possible. Whether it’s dubbing, subtitled, or reimagining a story for a new culture, that’s part of the job.”

This atmosphere extends to his hopes for anime’s growth in India. “We need today’s anime fans to become tomorrow’s creators,” he says. “Like Japan, we have this ancient storytelling tradition that’s waiting to be reimagined across a variety of formats.”

Solo Leveling ReAwakening is currently in theatres. The second season is set to premiere on Crunchyroll in January 2025