

friday Review

THE HINDU

Stringing together stories

Bharathi Thirumagan keeps alive the villupattu tradition p2

The timeless appeal of Gitanjali

Select verses from Tagore's popular work released as an audio series p3

**THE ACTOR AS A FRIEND AND MENTOR**

Delhi Ganesh was always eager to back young directors p4

In quest of the right track

Indie musicians fuse genres and tap into social media to capture their audience, but still struggle to record and release an album

Neha Kirpal

New Delhi-based electronica producer and DJ A Little Bit of Everything's (popularly called Alboe) music has grown exponentially since his debut in 2021. His new nine-track album 'Enroute 24' features Indian instruments such as the tabla, harmonium and santoor, which match the tunes of house music, breakbeats and blues. It switches from Hindi to English and back as the mood dictates.

Releasing an album was a big risk for Alboe. "I do not think there is enough time and attention for an album if you are not a famous artiste. It is far easier to continuously promote singles than an album," he says.

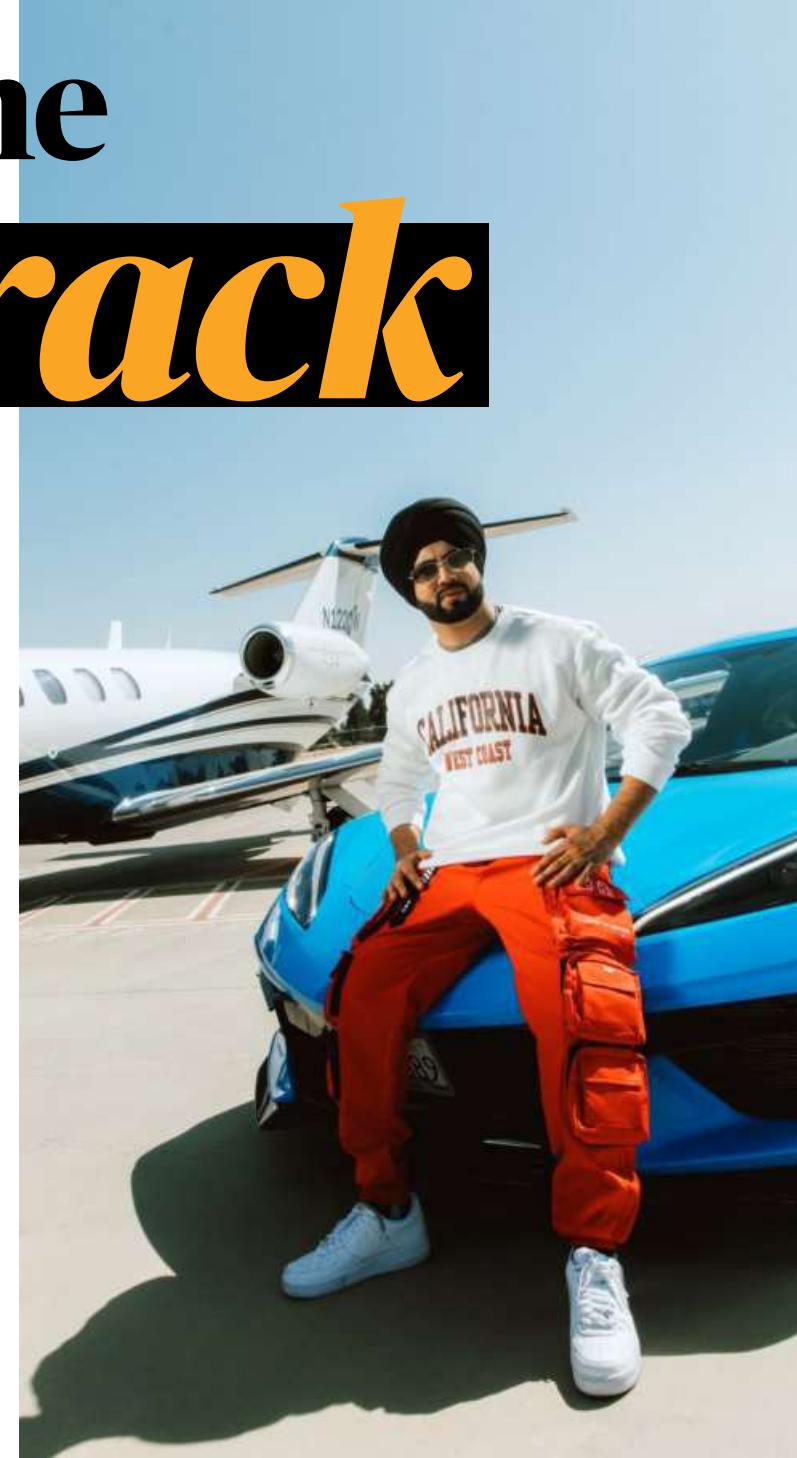
Though Alboe has got to play at many big festivals such as Magnetic Fields, ZIRO Festival of Music, Gaia Festival, Cymbal and Pravaas Experience, he does not think it has become easier for live electronic artistes to get performance opportunities. The less said about an album opportunity, the better. "Many promoters of clubs and venues choose to programme commercial or techno DJs who have a proven track record. This restricts the exposure to new homegrown sounds and culture," adds Alboe.

Experimental music
Fusing genres is intrinsic to 19-year-old I-pop and RnB composer and performer Raman Sharma's sound. From pop to indie and Bollywood to EDM, Raman's music is experimental, transcending genres and ages. Raman started extensively making music during the Covid lockdown. With an average viewership of close to one million and a loyal fanbase of 1,55,000 followers on Instagram, he is a growing sensation in the Indian pop landscape. Known for his tracks such as 'Jadui Pari' and 'Too Dazed', Raman's latest track is the heartfelt 'Dekho na'.



While growing up in India connected him deeply to classic Indian sounds, living in California exposed him to hip-hop, pop and cinematic soundscapes. "I love how music today doesn't have to fit into one box. I'm all about mixing and blending different genres to create something fresh," he says. Currently studying in California, he makes frequent trips to India. "It's tough to lock down consistent performance opportunities. Festivals are happening all the time, but being split between two places makes it hard to really seize those chances," he shares.

Raman is one of the few indie artistes who seems to have had an easier time recording and releasing. "I've got my own studio space in my apartment, so I'm constantly cooking up new music. The recording process is where I feel most at home, where I can dive deep into my ideas without worrying about logistics. So while live performances might be tough to nail down right now, recording albums and singles has been easier for me."



I'm fortunate that I have this space to create freely whenever inspiration strikes."

A dynamic fusion
Bengaluru-based indie alt-rock band The Sandcats hit the ground running with its debut release, 'Lounge Lizards', in August this year. The Sandcats blends 2000s garage rock, post-punk and modern pop to create music that is a dynamic fusion of high-energy riffs and emotive lyrics, and has been featured on all major English radio stations across India.

The band's newest single is 'Urban Control', which dives into the struggles of navigating a world shaped by capitalism. The band does not believe in defining itself with one genre of music. "It's more like not putting a boundary surrounding our sound and having the freedom to experiment uncompromisingly," says Ritwik Bhaumik, the band's composer, guitarist, singer, songwriter and producer. With limited budgets, however, recording albums has been a bit of a challenge. "If you can make



your demo sound as close to the final version, then you're able to get the final touches done on the song and get it ready for release with a limited budget. But if you just have an idea and are not proficient with playing multiple instruments and knowing the basics of producing music, it can be a costly affair," adds Brahmos Ryan Sharma, the band's



guitarist/bassist.

California-based urban Punjabi hip hop artist D Cali's discography includes a string of Punjabi hits, such as 'Desifornia', 'What to Do', 'Radio Girl', 'Chorni', 'Teriyani Gallan' and 'Personal Jet'. His glamorous music videos are known for their high production values and have millions of views on YouTube.

D Cali recently released his third single, 'I Love You', from his upcoming debut album Urban Domination. D Cali believes that most people have exposure to western music but like to live with a desi vibe. "Fusion music allows an artiste to connect with twice the number of people, as there are two different vibes to a single song," he says.

Social media boom

Social media has helped The Sandcats reach fans across the world. But for it, the team would not have met a brilliant artiste like Aadya Naik, with whom the band is collaborating for the artwork and lyric video for 'Urban Control'. "It's

amazing to see how different people across the world resonate with a track, but in their own way. We've found so many like-minded people who get our vision and are willing to support us," says Bhaumik.

According to Alboe, social media helps build one's brand. "There are many artistes who have become famous thanks to social media. You can use it to promote shows, message your audience and show them BTS, build interpersonal relationships, and more. However, it has also become increasingly important for musicians to get skilled at their social media presence. This can be both a blessing and a bane," he says.

Raman too owes a lot of his reach and success to social media. However, he also feels that social media isn't always kind to artistes who are introverts and like to focus on their craft without the constant pressure of posting. "The algorithm demands consistency, and if you're not someone who thrives off that kind of engagement, it can be tough."

Digital distribution

All this was a lot more difficult in the past, when artistes had to deal with middlemen and the feedback was not immediate and real-time like it is now. Global chart-topping singer-songwriter/producer Rohan Solomon feels that advancements in technology and digital distribution platforms have made the releasing process a lot easier and more accessible. Social media has personally helped in gathering feedback and eliminating the middleman. "But we always come across DIY musicians/producers who produce their records at home, and don't quite live up to the potential of what they could have sounded like," says Rohan, who has studied music production and audio engineering and worked at a studio in New York City.

According to him, indie artistes do need the push of marketing and promotion to really get their music out there and heard.

CULTURE BRIEFS**Annual fest begins**

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chennai Kendra, gears up to host this year's annual festival of music and dance from November 22 to January 15, 2025. R.N. Ravi, Governor of Tamil Nadu, will be the chief guest and inaugurates the cultural festival. The inaugural evening will feature Vishakha Hari's harikatha.

There will be concerts by senior musicians including Sudha Ragunathan, Vijay Siva, Lalgudi G.J.R Krishnan - Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, and A. Kanyakumari, and discourses by Dushyant Sridhar, Sivasri Skandaprasad, and thematic presentations by Ghatam Karthick, Tiruvarur Bhaktavatsalam and Subhasree Thanikachalam.



This year's festival is spread over three segments – individual performances will be held from November 22 to December 12.

The second set of programmes will be from December 13 to January 1, 2025, featuring vocal and instrumental concerts bringing to a close the music series.

The third segment, featuring solo dance recitals as well as group productions, will be held from January 2 to 15, 2025.

Each day's programme from January 1 to 13 will begin with Dr. Sudha Seshayyan's Thiruppavai upayanasam.

The events are to be held at Pottipatti Gnanaamba Obul Reddy Auditorium and at PAC Ramasamy Hall, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore. The festival is open to rasikas.

Talking dance

Sri Kala Ranga School of Dance celebrates 20 years with a special production titled 'Conversations', showcasing stories and dialogues from mythology featuring Ganesha, Vyasa, Brahma, Saraswathi, Shiva, Nandi and Kali. The event, open to all, will be held on November 16 at Narada Gana Sabha Main Hall (6 p.m.). According to Srithika Kasturirangan, founder of the school, "In today's world of shrinking attention spans, meaningful conversations have become rare. My aim, through dance, is to help children discover the joy of a good conversation and develop their skill to listen. This will create lifelong memories for everyone involved. We have included stories from different original Indian texts and languages with research inputs from Rajani Arjun Shankar."

**Music workshop**

The Music Academy has organised a music workshop 'Techniques of Aesthetic Sound Production' with an Acoustic Violin to be conducted by senior violinist MSN Murthy on November 16, 10 a.m. at Kasturi Srinivasan Hall. It is open to students and rasikas. Registration fee: Rs. 50. The programme is organised under the endowment instituted by the family members of Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu.

**Ode to earth**

Bengaluru-based Bharatanatyam dancer and theatre actor Anuradha Venkataraman presents 'Bound by Soil - A requiem for the forgotten' on November 22 at Alliance Francaise of Madras (7 p.m.). The production, which draws inspiration from ONV Kurup's Malayalam poetry 'Bhoomikooru Charamegeetham' (a requiem to earth), echoes the earth's sorrow as it grapples with the loss of its progeny and the desecration of its resources. From ancient tales of forest sacrifice to modern-day exploitation of natural resources, the narrative weaves a commentary on humanity's unchecked parasitic growth and its toll on both Nature and marginalised communities. Tickets on bookmyshow

Seamless synergy

Divya Nayar and Bhavya Hari chose a new format to highlight the relevance of mythology in modern times



Well-conceived (Left) Divya Nayar. (Above) Bhavya Hari with Srilakshmi on the violin. PHOTOS: M. SRINATH

V.V. Ramani

It was heartening to see the aesthetic outdoor space of Sunaadhalahari filled with rasikas on all three days of 'Nrtya-Samskaram 2024 - Shakti Mahima'. The dance festival, hosted by Charsur Arts Foundation, in association with Kala Sadhanalaya, featured Carnatic musicians and Bharatanatyam artistes, who came together to create a work on an assigned theme.

'Bhagavathy' was the theme dancer Divya Nayar and vocalist Bhavya Hari got. They chose a narrative storytelling format, communicating the puranic details of Devi and her relevance in contemporary times.

The story unfolded as an interesting conversation between a granddaughter, who feels terrified seeing the fierce

image of the goddess, and her Ammuma (grandmother), who patiently dispels the girl's fear by explaining how the deity is a symbol of strength and compassion. She narrates the story behind the fierce goddess who vanquishes Tarakasura, which symbolises the triumph of good over evil. The detailing of the goddess by Divya Nayar was dramatic.

Relevant theme

The dancer then expanded the space to include the 'Kavu' temple, where she experiences a feeling of comfort with the devi. She skilfully wove in a concept that is socially relevant through the depiction of an annual festival, where hierarchies are broken and where devotees from all walks of life unite to appease the goddess.

The judicious choice of songs, folk melodies and ritualistic

music stood out. The chorus to visualise the power of Devi, and a tanam (rendered by Bhavya Hari) were sensitively done. At the same time, the dancer's powerful narrative stood out in her explorations of the chakras in a human body, woman power and childbirth.

Theatrical elements such as the *thiraiselai* (curtains), for the transformation of the dancer's costume and headgear to portray the devi, and the use of handheld masks in a sequence where Devi asks Ganesha and Kartikeya to paint her portrait, were interesting.

Bhavya's rendition blended seamlessly with Divya's dance movements. Sarvesh Karthick on the mridangam, Ashwin Subramanian on the cymbals and Srilakshmi on the violin enhanced the appeal of the performance.

Suganthy Krishnamachari

A villupattu recital titled 'Bhoomiye Saami' (Earth is God) was presented by Bharathi Thirumagan, daughter of villupattu exponent Subbu Arumugam, as part of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's 'Vazhiya Vaiyagam' series. Bharathi pointed out that the tip of the *villu* pointed upwards to God's abode, and the other downwards, with the bowstring bridging the gap between the two. Thus, the *villu* shows us the connection between God and Earth.

Bharathi's son Kalaimagan, a trained classical musician, presented his grandfather's song – 'Rama kaayam, Janaki maayam'. It praised the various manifestations of Shakti – as Visalatchi, Kamatchi and Meenatchi – and concluded that ultimately it was Vayalatchi (agriculture) that brought prosperity to the world.

Bharathi posed the question – who is a permanent hero on Earth? The answer? The farmer. She warned against



Driving home a message Bharathi Thirumagan and team performing at BVB PHOTO: M. SRINATH

Stories on string

Bharathi Thirumagan's humour-laced villupattu recital was rich in meaning

indiscriminate felling of trees, and spoke of how Tataka, the demoness, who would go on to be killed by Rama, tore up trees.

Subbu Arumugam wrote a song 'Vayale Vaazhgave' in Nattai raga, using the mettu of the first, third and ninth

charanams of Tyagaraja's 'Jagadanandakaraka'. He presented the song in the 145th Tyagaraja aradhana. He later used the verses in a villupattu recital for Doordarshan's rural programme 'Vayalam Vazhvum'.

When asked about the

relevance of 'Jagadanandakaraka' to a rural programme, Arumugam apparently replied that Tiruvariyaru, where the kriti was sung every year during the Tyagaraja aradhana, was surrounded by rice fields! Kalaimagan presented the song

for 'Bhoomiye Saami', and D. Pratima danced to it.

This is the first time dance was used in a villupattu performance. Bharathi explained that villupattu was about *iyal* (literature), *isai* (music) and *natakam* (drama). All these years, the only theatrical elements in villupattu were the emotive words of the presenter, and, at best, a few hand gestures. Dance was included this time, because the theme was Earth. 'Can't Earth's rotation and evolution be seen as dance?' asked Bharathi.

Harini danced to 'Yereduthu Vayalarom', a song praising farmers. For 'Kadavuloda Kaiyai Irundai', a song about planting saplings, A. Sai Deekshini was joined by two other dancers. Bharathi's presentation was laced with humour, while Kalaimagan's singing made the programme a meaningful, delightful treat.

Harikesanji Trust and Narada Gana Sabha Trust jointly present the 147th jayanthi celebration of Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavtar today at Narada Gana Sabha Mini Hall (6.30 p.m.). Vocalist Spoorthi Rao, along with Deepika Venkatraman on the violin and R. Akshay Ram on the mridangam, will present a concert featuring the composer's songs.

Katha and kutcheri

Madhuradhwani presents the following concerts at Arkay Convention Centre. Schedule: Today, 6.15 p.m.: D.B. Ashvin (vocal). Tomorrow, 6.15 p.m.: Vechoor N. Harihara Subramania Iyer tribute concert by Rathna Prabha H. November 17, 6 p.m.: Charubala Mohan Trust will honour Pt. Janardhan Mitta with 'Sitar Vadya Shiromani' title followed by Sriram Parusuram's violin concert (6.30 p.m.). Nov. 18, 6 p.m.: Kadhaig Arivon Aaraivom', a short story by Indira Soundarajan, to be presented by Renu Meera followed by Isai Kavi Ramanan's

'Maadham Thorum Maha Kavi' (6.30 p.m.) organised jointly by Madhuradhwani and Sevalaya. November 20, 6.15 p.m.: Dr. Sudha Seshyan's discourse with Santhosh Subramaniam on the vocals will take place as part of Tamil Moovar series, organised by Madhuradhwani and *Anmajothi*.

Sreevalsan Thiyyadi

P eruvanam Satheesan Marar was in his early twenties when the percussionist found a junior's slot at what heralds the annual temple festival season in Kerala – the Tripunithura utsavam. To get placed along one end of the front row of chenda drums at the four-hour ensemble was still an achievement. For, this utsavam has been a royal harbinger to summer-time cultural celebrations across the State. This month-end, as the eight-day event begins, Satheesan will lead a couple of rhythmic concerts at the same venue near Kochi.

This has been the routine since the start of this decade. Only, this time, Satheesan is fresh after his 60th birthday celebration, which saw an impressive gathering at his Peruvanam village near Thrissur. Connoisseurs and admirers spoke highly of the lyricism gracing his melams featuring 120-odd artistes – be it the Panchari variety set to multiples of six beats or the more aggressive Pandi that



Let the beat begin

Lead melam artiste Peruvanam Satheesan Marar gears up for Kerala's annual temple festival

tapers in cycles of seven. Like most members of the temple-allied Marar community in the 1960s, Satheesan cannot recollect his earliest involvement with melam. "We boys customarily assist elders in the percussive rituals at the neighbourhood shrine; I began doing so around the age of five," says the virtuoso, reputed for the cadence typical of his legendary father Chakkamkulam Appu Marar. The formal debut happened when 15-year-old Satheesan presented a 40-minute solo tayambaka on the chenda. That was at the famed Tiruvullakavu, with his

Ritualistic Satheesan Marar leading the Panchari Melam. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

brothers providing the rhythmic accompaniment on the bass drums and cymbals.

Satheesan's principal guru is theoretician Kumarakuraparam Appu Marar. "Along with deep knowledge, he had immense patience. He was so kind that we sometimes felt if he had been a strict disciplinarian we would have learnt faster," he says with a smile, also acknowledging the training under his uncle Peruvanam Appu Marar. Once Satheesan was strong in the fundamentals, his father taught him the essence of the challenging 14-beat adanthakooru that comes midway in a tayambaka. The youngster later took his advanced lessons from Pallavur Kunjukutta Marar, staying at the exponent's home near Palakkad.

The felicity and imagination he developed as a tayambaka artiste helped Satheesan in gaining expertise in melam, which, however, offers no room for improvisation. "You need to equip yourself to conceive a rhythmic performance of no less than three hours," says Satheesan. "Among the two common melams, Pandi demands more focus from the anchor. Panchari has more gravitas,



It is not easy to conceive a three-hour percussion performance without enough knowledge of rhythm

SATHEESAN

but it inherently guarantees smooth progression."

Satheesan also occasionally demonstrates his virtuosity in the more sonorous panchavadyam. At the orchestra with 60-odd people playing five kinds of instruments, Satheesan would lead with the slender timila that generates resonant taps and rolls. The hourglass-shaped edakka is another key presence in the symphony. Satheesan plays that as well, despite no formal training. Further, using the edakka as the accompanying drum, he sings Sopanam music. "Not that I learned it systematically but can manage to perform," he says, rendering in Pantuvarali raga the famed Chandana charchita ashtapadi from *Gita Govindam*.

Talking about the qualities a melam artiste should possess, Satheesan, whose sons Yadu and Mohan are promising percussionists, says, "Physical fitness is extremely important. Also, learn to be a team player. Youngsters have a lot of opportunities; old commanding ways don't work any longer."

CULTURE BRIEFS



Cultural melange

Minna Minni Melange, a three-day arts festival comprising dance, music, storytelling and lecdems, will be held from November 15 to 17, at The Medai, Alwarpet.

Organised by

musician Anugrah Lakshmanan, the performance each day will begin at 6 p.m. Day one features 'Rukmini Devi - A life' by Leela Samson with Harinie Jeevitha, followed by a Hindustani concert by Vighnesh Bhagavath and Shridhar Gaonkar Chittepaal; and 'Monkey Business', a story telling session by Shobha Vishwanath.

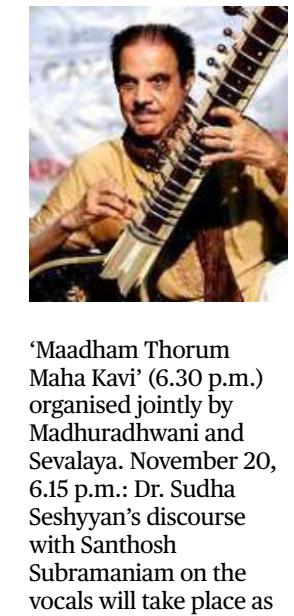
A Carnatic vocal concert by Amritha Murali; 'A Mridangam story' by Praveen Sparsh and Lawrence; and a Bharatanatyam performance by ShriNaagi Venkatesh will feature on the last day.

Tickets at:
<https://tikki.com/minnaminni/c/melangefestchennai24>

Dedicated to Muthiah Bhagavtar



Harikesanji Trust and Narada Gana Sabha Trust jointly present the 147th jayanthi celebration of Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavtar today at Narada Gana Sabha Mini Hall (6.30 p.m.). Vocalist Spoorthi Rao, along with Deepika Venkatraman on the violin and R. Akshay Ram on the mridangam, will present a concert featuring the composer's songs.



'Maadham Thorum Maha Kavi' (6.30 p.m.) organised jointly by Madhuradhwani and Sevalaya. November 20, 6.15 p.m.: Dr. Sudha Seshyan's discourse with Santhosh Subramaniam on the vocals will take place as part of Tamil Moovar series, organised by Madhuradhwani and *Anmajothi*.

Shillpi A Singh

On the first day of the Chhath Mahaparv, Sharda Sinha, the voice synonymous with the four-day festivities in Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, and among the natives of these States spread across the world, fell silent. The 72-year-old doyenne of Bhojpuri and Maithili folk songs had multiple myeloma.

She departed the world on Nahay-Khaye, which kick-started the festival, and her mortal remains were cremated on the ghats of the Ganga on the third day, almost as an offering to Chhathi Maiyya, whom she always sang in praise of.

One of the most poignant moments shared from her final stay at AIIMS, Delhi, was a video of her on oxygen support, somehow sitting upright on a chair for her daily riyaz. She lost her husband Brijkishore Sinha in September this year, and chose to sing a heart-rending thumri – ‘Saiya nikas gaye, main na ladi thi, dus darvaze band kiye tha, na Jane kaunsi khidki khuli thi’ (My love is gone. I did not fight with him. I’d closed 10 doors, I wonder which window was left open).

Sharda released a song for Chhath this year too, without much ado, from the hospital. Aptly titled, ‘Dukhwa mitayein Chhathi Maiyya’, it was a call to the goddess to relieve her of pain.

Connecting to the roots

Sharda was a torchbearer of Bihar’s folk tradition, who fiercely protected the richness of Bhojpuri and Maithili languages. Her voice connected people to their roots, gave them a sense of pride and was an indispensable part of their lives.

Known lovingly as Bihar’s ‘Kokila’ (nightingale), Sharda’s voice was all about emotion. She didn’t just stop with singing folk songs; she revived them by creating a bridge between the past and the present and between nondescript hamlets and the world.

Sharda was born in a village



Folk in a new light

Sharda Sinha, who passed away recently, gave traditional songs a contemporary resonance

in Bihar. From her early years, she was drawn to the rhythm and stories embedded in the songs of her homeland. For her, they were oral histories. Her rendition of poet-saint Maithil Kavi Kokil Vidyapati’s works established her firmly in the world of folk. Her interest in music blossomed at a time when folk music was largely relegated to rural communities, and was seen as something alien by mainstream media.

But Sharda felt she had a responsibility to carry the music of her people to a wider audience. And, she fulfilled it beautifully. At a time when women merely stepping out of their houses was a significant feat, she became a standout star and a disruptor. She brought dignity to women’s presence in

the art world, teaching everyone that an artiste can become an ambassador of culture, language and a region.

At a time when art turned commercial and when Bhojpuri songs touched the heights of vulgarity, she kept singing her brand of music, and managed to draw in the audience. She ensured Bhojpuri songs got the respect they deserved.

Sharda's repertoire included work songs and lullabies. They captured rural life's subtle cadences. She shared the unspoken stories of mothers, sisters, and daughters in rural India

Sharda was also known for her wedding songs (*vivah geet*) narrate the emotional journey of a bride leaving her family and entering a new life. Her voice gave these traditional songs a contemporary resonance; making music became an intrinsic part of weddings across the globe.

Sharda’s repertoire included work songs and lullabies too. They captured rural life’s subtle cadences. She shared the unspoken stories of mothers, sisters, and daughters in rural India, offering listeners a glimpse into the lives of those who laboured quietly, sang softly, and loved fiercely.

Sharda also ventured into Hindi and Magahi (also known as Magadhi), further expanding her cultural footprint. She ensured that each song retained its regional essence, refusing to dilute the dialects or rhythms that made these songs unique. She brought raw, unembellished folk sounds to mainstream cinema. Among her popular film songs are ‘Kahe toh se sajna’ from *Maine Pyaar Kiya*, ‘Babul jo tumne sikhaya’ from *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* and ‘Taar bijli se patle’ from *Gangs of Wasseypur* 2.

Sharda remained a daughter of Bihar, loyal to the soil that birthed her music and her dreams. Her life and career were a testament to the importance of preserving regional identities within the broader Indian cultural mosaic. In an era where popular trends often overshadow folk music, Sharda Sinha managed to carve out a niche that was uniquely hers. She was an artiste who respected her roots, but wasn’t afraid to adapt to newer ways of reaching out, be it an Instagram reel or a YouTube release.

Sharda Sinha may have departed, but has left a legacy in the voices of those who will sing her songs, in the rituals carried out to her tunes, and in the hearts of millions who will remember her as a symbol of an unbroken cultural continuum.

Plug into the bard's verses

A new audio series celebrates the timeless appeal of Tagore's *Gitanjali*



Devika S.

A book that continues to be discussed, translated and read 114 years after it was published in India is Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gitanjali*. The Bard of Bengal won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 but he was known much before that as a popular writer of short stories, novels, poetry, dramas and songs. A voluminous collection of 157 poems, *Gitanjali* has stirred people’s imagination like no other. The way Tagore expressed his thoughts and emotions through the verses has inspired generations of writers and artistes.

Santhosh Kana, a teacher and writer, recently launched an audio series ‘Tagore’s *Gitanjali* – A Musical Pilgrimage’, featuring 18 poems. His narration sounds soothing with the melodic notes of the sitar playing in the background. He spent three to four years choosing poems and appropriate ragas for each. In an interview, Santhosh shares the excitement of putting together this series based on the book he grew up reading.



Question: What inspired you to create an audio series and how did you think of using Indian classical music?

Answer: When I first read *Gitanjali* during my school days, I was instantly drawn to it. Later, I was able to connect with the poetic and philosophical depth of the work. I wanted to share this with people and found music as one of the most natural tools for this expression. Hence, the choice of the sitar for background score. The instrument, like the book, is distinctly Indian.

Tagore’s writings have a lyrical richness to them, and *Gitanjali* is a fine example. The Bengali original is quite musical and Tagore had even prepared the notations for each poem. Rabindra

Sangeet is an incredible confluence of musical tributaries from varied lands and languages. The initial effort was to understand the emotions evoked by each poem, the mood and imagery in it. Crafting the background music to suit the poem’s structure and flow and its emotional intensity was the main part of the process.

Q: What elements do you consider essential in maintaining the integrity of the original?

A: First and foremost is my subjective experience of the text. That’s why each reader’s journey is different; it opens a new door to the work. For me, *Gitanjali* has a meditative and deeply reflective tone throughout and, therefore, I decided to capture and communicate that in my series. I am overwhelmed by the response to my approach of blending music, voice and visuals. You know how particular Santiniketan and Tagore lovers can be. One of the best comments I have received was from Amartya Mukherjee, faculty of Drama Department at Visva Bharati. He said, ‘This is an excellent example of music therapy’. I would like to give special credit to Anandu Pai, who did the music production, and Paulson KJ, who played the sitar.

Q: Could you share the thought process behind selecting specific poems? What drew you to these pieces?

A: Since I have read *Gitanjali* in English a number of times, while taking up a project like this, I wanted to select verses that would encapsulate the essence of the book’s dominant philosophy. Taking up all poems for a musical format would have been tedious and a mammoth task. That’s what I felt. Therefore, I selected 18.

Q: How do you view the timelessness of Tagore’s poetry, and how does it speak to today’s world?

A: Any writer or work of art gets revisited as years pass. Tagore’s vision will be relevant for all times. He didn’t advocate any sort of spiritual escapism from life; rather, he insisted on gracefully facing challenges and understanding life in its totality. The poems in *Gitanjali* connect us to Nature and fellow humans – kindling empathy and sensitivity. Tagore’s poems expressing his vision on holistic education are relevant too. *Gitanjali* is a call to create a more compassionate world, where there are no narrow walls of sects and beliefs, where rational thinking replaces blind faith.



Keys to melody



Students of Madhuradhwani Sangeetha Sabha at a performance.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Anniversary special

Sheela Unnikrishnan’s dance school Sridevi Nrithyalaya commemorates its 37th anniversary on November 20, 6 p.m., at Vani Mahal, T. Nagar. To be held in the presence of Suresh Kumar Chikkala, IOFS, director, Kalakshetra Foundation, the evening will include felicitation to Ezhumalai, lights and sound technician (6.15 p.m.) and a special performance (in Melatutti style) by the students of Sridevi Nrithyalaya (6.30 p.m.).

Tamil play

Under the auspices of Narada Gana Sabha, Prasiddhi Creation will stage its play *Ambi Mama* on November 17, 6.45 p.m. Venue: Sathguru Gnanananda Hall.

Sundaram and Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti graced the occasion.

The students played some popular Carnatic kritis including ‘Rara venu’ and ‘Entaro’, and film songs such as ‘Isayil thodanguthama’ and ‘Nilai kaigiradhu’. The evening also included a thematic song composed by Martin in four ragas.

Vadivel on the mridangam, Hari Babu on the rhythm pads and Hariharan Sudhan on the tabla accompanied the ensemble.

Keyboardist and music teacher M.S. Martin’s Madhuradhwani Sangeetha Sabha celebrated its 10th year recently.

The event, which was held at Narada Gana Sabha, featured a special performance by Martin’s students.

Legendary musician T.V. Gopalakrishnan, teacher and composer Rukmini Ramani, and vocalist Saketharaman were the chief guests. Cleveland V.V.

NOT SO SWEET: RISKS OF GESTATIONAL DIABETES



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

In India, approximately 5 million mothers-to-be have gestational diabetes every year – and the number is increasing each year. The term ‘gestational diabetes’ means that a woman develops diabetes during pregnancy. It may be caused by several factors, including familial history of diabetes, poor eating habits, obesity, and leanings towards diabetes before the pregnancy.

Risks To Be Aware Of

A major risk is the possibility of birth defects for the baby, particularly neurological developmental defects and cardiovascular defects. Moreover, the baby’s blood flow may be affected, causing

the baby to grow very big. This may cause intrauterine growth restriction, and possible complications during delivery time, so such babies are usually delivered via C-section. Even so, the baby may face breathing difficulties due to respiratory distress.

Another risk factor is polyhydramnios or the buildup of amniotic fluid during pregnancy, which is associated with risks such as premature delivery, water breaking early, umbilical cord prolapse, placental abruption, or bleeding. Other risks include the possibility of the baby contracting neonatal jaundice, hypothermia or

polycythemia (change in the blood cells) after birth.

A worrying aspect is that since the mother is diabetic, the baby will also be diabetic through the pregnancy. Furthermore, babies who are born with diabetes indicators may experience hypoglycemia, so maintaining a proper feeding routine is crucial after delivery.

Testing and Next Steps

Upon confirming pregnancy, we do a fasting blood test for the mother-to-be. If the result is more than 92, we put them on a low-carb, high-protein diet, to keep the blood sugar levels stable. We also carry out a Glucose Tolerance Test or GTT around 24 to

26 weeks, wherein we give the woman 75 grams of glucose and check her body’s response. If the results are on the borderline or higher, we implement a strict diet. If the values are elevated, the woman may be put on a medication routine.

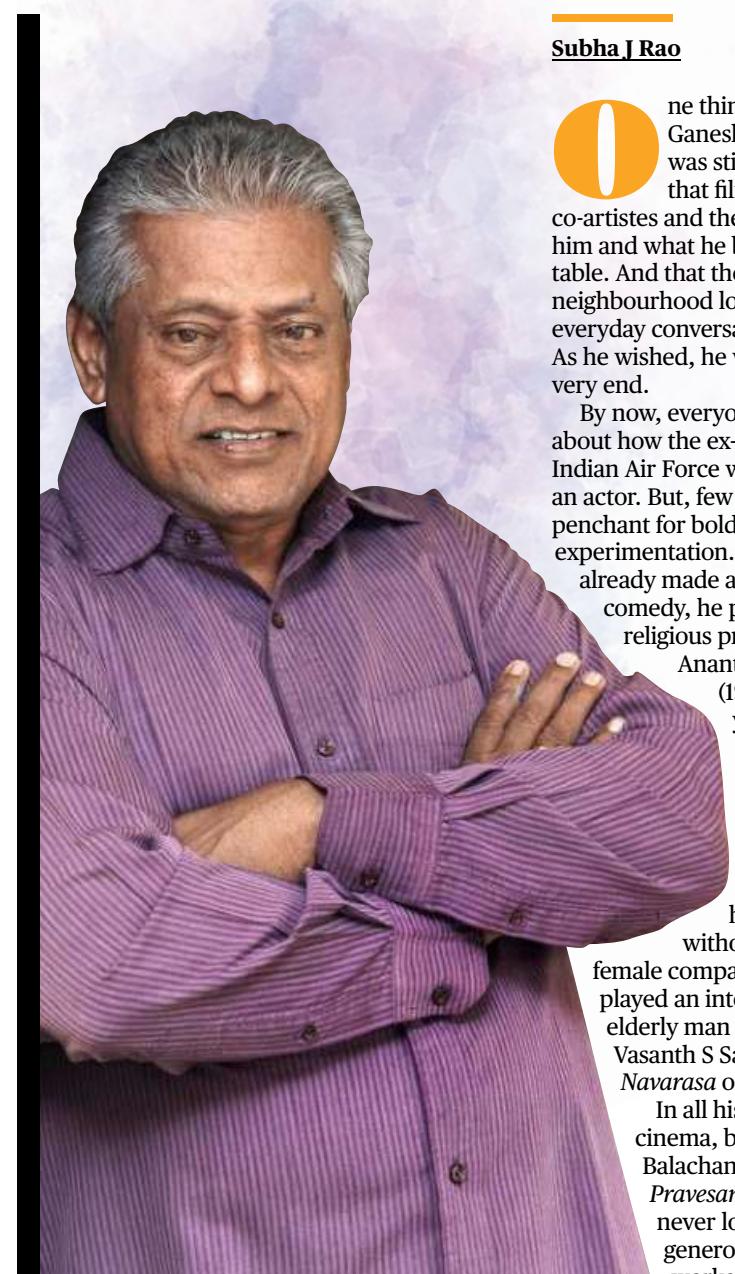
Our aim is a safe, healthy pregnancy and delivery, and we all (doctors, parents-to-be and family members) have to work together to achieve it.

www.bloomlifehospital.com

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

An unknown facet of Delhi Ganesh

The actor constantly backed young directors, often working for a nominal amount in their projects



Subha J Rao

One thing that Delhi Ganesh knew when he was still active was that filmmakers, co-artistes and the audience loved him and what he brought to the table. And that those in the neighbourhood loved their everyday conversations with him. As he wished, he worked till the very end.

By now, everyone has written about how the ex-Corporal of the Indian Air Force was imitable as an actor. But, few speak of his penchant for bold experimentation. When he had already made a mark in comedy, he played the religious preacher-singer of Ananthu's *Sigaramm* (1991), who begs a young fan (Ramya Krishnan) to sleep with him, because he can't marry and he's afraid he would die without knowing female company. In 2021, he played an intensely jealous elderly man in director Vasanth S Sai's *Payasam in Navarasa* on Netflix.

In all his 48 years in cinema, beginning with K Balachander's *Pattina Pravesam* (1976), Ganesh never lost his creative generosity – he worked in films by up

and coming directors for a fraction of his market rate. This decision kept him contemporary. He was never seen as a yesteryear actor, and he remained 'cool' for children who grew up in the 2000s. For them, he is Alfred Pennyworth in *Put Chutney's What If Batman Comes to Chennai*. Age did not wither his infinite variety, wisdom or make him bitter.

Actor-writer-director and mimicry artiste K. Manikandan who directed him in the heartwarming *Nari Ezhuthum Suyasardham* (2015), now on Sony LIV, remains struck by the actor's professionalism. "I was 21 years old, he would have been in his early 70s. His 'Appadeengala sir, saringa sir' (okay sir, sure sir) was a constant. We were a four-member crew and shot with a 5D camera, but he gave it the same dedication he would, a movie. He even refused the balance payment."

Manikandan recalls how Ganesh kept the set a happy place with his mimicry and trivia. Incidentally, this was the period when the veteran actor wondered if he should give up acting, because he was feeling stagnant. The next decade would show him he was cherished.



"I wrote the part keeping only him in mind, because it was close to the vibe he gave me – that of a person young at heart."

RS PRASANNA



Creative camaraderie Delhi Ganesh on the sets of K. Manikandan's *Nari Ezhuthum Suyasardham*; and with Aravind SA

PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

young directors were a delight to work with. In an interview to The Hindu, he said: "With no preconceived notions, they provide enough creative fodder for actors. And...they respect talent and age. They push me to give my best, but also ensure that lunch is served to me at 1 p.m. sharp, considering my age."

When National Award-winning director Vasanth S Sai was an assistant to K. Balachander on *Achamillai Achamillai*, he got to share a room for 60 days with Delhi Ganesh in Kutralam. Years later, he gave Ganesh one of his finest roles in *Payasam*. "KB Sir loved him a lot, because he was sincere. There would never be any mistakes in dialogue or reaction. He'd only add value to the scene. I was hesitant to call him for *Payasam*, because he had just had heart surgery, but I could not think of anyone else. In his autobiography *Pillayaar Suzhi* that was released recently, he narrates his momentous life with so much humour. I'd compare him to Nagesh Sir in terms of what they brought to a project."

Ganesh was known for his collaborations, most of them steeped in comedy, with Kamal Haasan and Crazy Mohan – *Avvai Shanmugi* and *Michael Madana Kama Rajan* rank right on top. Madhu Balaji, Crazy Mohan's brother, has fond memories of working with Ganesh. "Mohan always called Ganesh his lucky charm. When he wrote for a film, he would always insist that Ganesh be roped in for some role. Their association began in 1975 or 1976 when Mohan was writing for Kaathadi Ramamoorthy, who introduced Ganesh to the stage too. Their first drama was *Honeymoon Couple*. Mohan always felt that if you looked at a character as a fruit, Ganesh could extract the last bit of juice from it. It is near impossible to fit the slot he's vacated."

part keeping only him in mind, because it was close to the vibe he gave me – that of a person young at heart. If he had not done it, I would have been heartbroken."

Director Surrya M Narayanan, who, as a 19-year-old, made the short *Unakae Uyiraen* (2013) with Delhi Ganesh, shares Prasanna's observations. "On the first day of the shoot, he said, 'Surrya sir, naa ready'. He used 'Sir' just to give me confidence and to set the tone of that set," he says. When a young Surrya yelled 'Action' no one moved. And then Delhi Ganesh whispered. "Surrya, first, you say 'Roll camera', they will say 'Rolling', and then, you say 'Action', okay?" And that's how I called my first proper shot."

Prasanna played Ganesh's son in the short. "He was very affectionate, and when I was nervous, ensured I delivered my lines. At the end of the day's shoot, I told him that if I ever made a film, he would be a part of it."

In KSS, Ganesh aced the part of Chandrasekharan, the father-in-law who turned cool and encouraging of the prospective son-in-law after knowing he has erectile dysfunction. "I wrote the

part keeping only him in mind, because it was close to the vibe he gave me – that of a person young at heart. If he had not done it, I would have been heartbroken."

On his part, Delhi Ganesh felt

The missing link

Oor Koodi Ther Izhu had many interesting elements but didn't quite fit in with the festival's theme



From the play *Oor Koodi Ther Izhu*. PHOTO: M. SRINATH

with the disclaimer that it was not about faith. If a playwright feels devotion should not be portrayed in a play, that is fine. But you cannot then have an entire narration, tongue-in-cheek though it might be, about a temple festival and the sthalapurana of temples. If the idea was to show togetherness during a festival, the theme could have been explored from a different angle. Do temple festivals foster a spirit of camaraderie? Of course, they do. But are temple festivals about faith? Most certainly. Then came the second disclaimer – it was not a 'sanghi' play. What was the need to bring in politics?

In the introduction, we were told that the play was about water. How often did water feature in the play? Suthapa's penance is under water. Azhagar crosses the Vaigai to attend Meenakshi's wedding.

People squirt water on Azhagar during the festival. To claim on the basis of this, that the play is about water was a bit of a stretch. And so, the play didn't quite fit in with the theme of Bhavan's series celebrating Mother Earth.

before leaving the temple.

The use of shadow puppetry in the play was innovative. The tune of the iconic Malayalam boat song 'Kuttanadan punjaiyile' was used for the song 'Malaya desam thottu', when thieves arrive in a boat to steal an idol. Pictures and videos in the background added to the visual appeal of the play. There was also a clever use of props.

For example, each of the actors had a blue cloth, which served as many things – water, baby Meenakshi and a garland. The cast (Sahana, Anthony Xavier and Nandakumar) captured the audience's interest.

However, one was left with some questions. The play began

SATHYAM | ESCAPE | INOX | DEVI | SANGAM | CASINO | ALBERT | WOODLANDS | EGA | PVR - AMPA | PALAZZO KAMALA | T-NAGAR AGS | UDHYAM | S2 PERAMBUR | BHARATH | IDREAM | MAHALAXMI | KRISHNAVENI | KKNAGAR KASI KASI TALKIES | INOX LUX | PVR GRAND - VELACHERY | PVR GALADA - PALAVARAM | PVR ICON VR MALL | REDHILLS PVR ECR - PVR | INOX NATIONAL | INOX MARINA | S2 THIYAGARAJA | MAYAAJALI | ECR - VIJAY PARK | MAMANDUR - C3 CINEPOLIS | TEVP CINEMAS | AMBALAUR - RAKI & MURUGAN | VILLIVAKKAM - AGS | OMNI AGS | MADURAVAYAL - AGS KOYAMBEDU - ROHINI | PORUR - GK | THAMBARAM - VIDHYA & MR & NATIONAL | CHORMPET - VETRI | KOLATHUR - GANGA PADI | SIVA SAKTHI & LAXMI BALADHAR | GREEN | REDHILLS | RAJAH MOVIE PARK | THIRUVANMIYUR - RAJ & ROLLING THALASSI STUDIO | KODUNGALUR | VENKATESWARA | BHANU | VIKRISHNA | VIKRISHNA | CHENNAI | SRI LAKSHMI | PALLAVARAM - JANATHA | THIRUNINRIVUR | VELACINEMAS | MINJUR - MANI & KK CINEMAS | MEDA VAKKAM - KUMARAN KANCHIPURAM - BABU & ARUNA & KARTHIKEYAN & BALAJI | MOLOKADAI - SHANMUGA & PANDIAN | THIRUVOTRYUR - MSM & ODEAN MANI ANAKAPUTHUR - GANESH & VELCO | AVADI - MEENAKSHI & REMI | UTHUKOTTAI - KUMARI | GUDUVANCHERRY - VENKATESWARA SRI BRINDHA | TIRUTHANI - DURGA & GK GODEN | AMMAYARKUPPAM - BABU | PALLAVARAM - JANATHA | ADAYAR - GANAPATHYRAM

studio green films pvt.ltd uv creations

K.E. GNANAVEL RAJA

KVN



ABI & ABI

ENTERTAINMENT

ABIRESH ELANGOVAN RELEASE



Violin concert



Musiri Chamber presents Musiri 125, a special violin recital by TKV Ramanujacharyulu, accompanied by Guru Raghavendra on the mridangam. The event will take place on November 17, 4.01 p.m. at 48/2, Musiri Subramani Road, Mylapore.

Flute recital

The Music Academy has organised B. Vijayagopal's flute recital today at 6 p.m. under the endowment instituted by Dr. Rajappa Ekambaram in memory of Prapancham Sitaram. Parur M.S. Ananthkrishnan (violin), Neyveli R. Narayanan (mridangam), and Nerukunam S. Sankar (kanjira). Venue: Kasturi Srinivasan Hall.

Bharatanatyam performance

Natyarangam has organised the following Bharatanatyam performances on November 16 at its mini hall: 6 p.m.: S. Sowmya Lakshmi, disciple of Geetha Chandran, and 7.30 p.m.: Meghna Lokabhirama Raju, disciple of Renjith and Vijnna.