

Tamil pride in verse

Rapper and singer-songwriter
Iykki Berry's new single is a nod to
Thanjavur, her hometown



Fit for a queen The musician in 'Ithihasam'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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Iykki Berry's alter ego oscillates between two personalities: that of the "funky, vibe-y, cute-sy, effervescent Barbie", and the "stubborn, bold, raw and rooted queen". When one of these personalities takes over, the words write themselves. Her new single 'Ithihasam' taps into the latter. The rapper and singer-songwriter – a familiar face and name, thanks to her debut in the reality television show *Big Boss 5* – hails from Thanjavur and discovered the world of hip hop only in 2015. Before that, pop icons like Michael Jackson and Lady Gaga and their distinct soundscapes reassured little Iykya Kamaraj of the world of possibilities in music. Cut to 2024, and 'Ithihasam', released on November 1, celebrates Tamil pride, through crisp verses that honour the many greats of the Tamil literary world.

Iykki calls 'Ithihasam' a "magical work for the whole crew". It started with an impromptu beat that Dev Major – who has composed the music for the song – belted out on a random evening. Iykki was quick to jam to that beat with verse:

I believe in the sun/ I do surya namaskaram. You're doing pazhi pavam, you gotta do parihamam.

"We moved on to other work until we got a call from [AR] Rahman sir's office. They said they are going to launch an Unreal Engine music studio and asked if we would like to work on a music video," recalls Iykki. Unreal Engine is a software tool used to create interactive, 3D visual worlds using realistic lighting and special effects. Iykki continues, "We were very excited to experience this new technology. This meant, we didn't have to look for a location, whatever we needed was created virtually." The song was shot in ARR Film City in collaboration with the Ustream team who facilitated the

visualisation of the video. "We went back to the studio and finished the song in five to six hours! We shot it in nine hours and we could do so only because of this technology." A music video that typically takes three or four weeks for production was wrapped in four days' time. Dev's music, especially the leading wild horn interlude, sets character to the song. "The beat hit me hard, and I wanted to touch my roots. I decided I wanted to show the world where I come from," says Iykki, adding, "Thanjavur is a majestic place and holds a lot of Tamil literary importance. I wanted to show everyone that this is me."

In the video, Iykki appears as a queen, the inspiration for which came from Velu Nachiyar, the queen from Sivaganga who waged war against the East India Company in the late 1700s and reclaimed her territory. In another frame, she is seen draped in black and red, surrounded by shades of red, in an ode to the Tamil epic *Silappathikaram*'s heroine, Kannagi. The verses also invoke Aditya Karikalan, hailed as one of the greatest emperors of the Chola dynasty and Avvaiyar, one of Tamil's most notable women poets, as verses that hail women and their infinite possibilities make up the rap.

Iykki's lyrics lean towards the inspirational, for the sheer reason that a large part of her following comprises women, especially little girls. "Whenever they listen to my songs, I want them to feel empowered." The rapper is planning to release another single titled 'IYKKI', that will be a stark contrast to 'Ithihasam', in both its tone and appearance. It will delve into the dream of a girl, and will be futuristic. As of now, 'Ithihasam' is on the move – through live performances across different Indian cities. The first stop, naturally, is Chennai. The Ithihasam Tour, curated by Quriousity, will also feature fellow musicians like J-Queen, Nixon, Kiran Surath and Arcus in performance alongside Iykki.

Ithihasam Tour will be at Dank, T Nagar from 7.30pm on November 8. Book tickets on skillbox.com.

Road to a kinder city

Chennai celebrates kindness through a 20-foot-wide canvas decorated and painted over three days by more than 1,200 people



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Kindness is a virtue. World Kindness Day (November 13) serves as a gentle reminder of this.

Chennai-based Kindness Foundation celebrates it each year with a different community project that brings people in the city together to help them express kindness. "We ran this programme even through the pandemic and have held spoken word and photography events," says Mahima Poddar, founder and managing trustee of the Kindness Foundation.

This year's theme is the expression of kindness through hands and gestures. A canvas with tracings of over 20 hand gestures, decorated and painted over three days by more than 1,200 people at the Anna Centenary Library, is the centrepiece of the event. Each gesture on the canvas has a theme, ranging from mental health and environmental preservation to women's rights and safety. This year's Kindness Week is sponsored by the Drop Dead Generous programme, part of the

Suspended Coffee Movement. Visual artist Vijayaraghavan S, the mind behind the theme, explains that since the installation was placed at the library, it became essential to include elements of academia and literature. "We decided to use writings and quotes along with drawings of hand gestures," he says, pointing to the 20-foot-wide canvas.

"This library is a space open to everyone and not membership-based, and we wanted a space accessible to all age groups and social strata without barriers," says Mahima.

Along with the canvas, another installation this year is about the five primary love languages. A cut out of a person is at the centre, surrounded by five poles, each representing a love language. Different

colours of thread are tied from each pole to the figure, symbolising how we express our love – through acts of service, gift-giving, quality time, physical touch, or words of affirmation. "People come and tie threads based on their love languages, and at the end of the day, we will have a heat map of the city's love language," says Mahima.

Heart in hand Kindness Day installations at Anna Centenary Library. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

STEP OUT



Melodies of the fall

The Madras Musical Association (MMA) presents Autumn Classics, a concert featuring the MMA symphony orchestra. Spend an evening listening to orchestral music, especially concertos. Jeremiah Christopher, will be playing a full-length piano concerto by Mozart. The 80-strong choir with the 35-piece orchestra will provide an aural treat to the audiences. @The Museum Theatre, Egmore on November 8, 7pm onwards. Tickets priced at ₹500 and ₹1,000 and are available on bookmyshow.com.

Konnichiwa Japan

The Consulate-General of Japan in Chennai, in collaboration with ABK-AOTS DOSOKAI, Tamilnadu Centre, presents Chennai-Japan Expo 2024, a one-day cultural event that will showcase the various aspects of Japanese culture, tourism, education and work. A mix of Japanese dolls and bonsai will also find a place. Japanese martial arts such as judo, karate and kobudo will be demonstrated and visitors can also learn the basics of Ikebana (flower arrangement). The Japanese traditional tea ceremony will be performed alongside the Soran-Bushi dance.

@VR Mall, Anna Nagar, on November 9 from 11am to 8pm. Entry is free.



Fusion infusion Biryani, spring rolls and momos with a twist at JK Select. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



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Chennai is home to many legacy restaurants. Some preserve their old-world charm, while others strive to cater to today's fickle diners by reinventing themselves. With new eateries cropping up frequently, is nostalgia enough to attract customers? Junior Kuppanna, in the business for 64 years, has embraced change since the 2020 lockdown, attempting to reinvent itself. Its latest venture is JK Select on Chamiers Road. "We intend to be like a Rajinikanth movie that appeals to every section of society. We want to retain diners within the brand by offering them the upscale food and experience they enjoy at other restaurants," says Balachandar R, the chain's executive director.

This vision comes alive with dishes like Madurai mutton momos and chicken chukka spring rolls. The dimly lit space features comfortable seating, simple wooden tables, and vibrant artwork. "We noticed that people usually come to dine and leave promptly. This outlet offers a relaxed dining experience. From service to plating, everything is different here," Balachandar adds. As we tuck in, we see that the Madurai mutton momos are



Pallipalayam to peri peri

As Junior Kuppanna opens JK Select, its 21st outlet in Chennai, executive director Balachandar R weighs in on how the chain is reinventing itself to stay relevant

served with a ginger-y salsa dip. The thin momo wrapper encases a filling of minced mutton, flavoured with garlic, red chilli and fennel. The chicken chukka spring roll is especially addictive when dipped in the sweet and spicy chilli-garlic sauce. Minced meat seasoned with dried chilli is wrapped in a pastry sheet and fried to perfection.

Fusion is always a culinary gamble, and here it is an exciting one. The pizza rotta, a parotta-based pizza, is an indulgent dish topped with chicken chukka, vegetables and a generous layer of mozzarella. Greasy and filling, it is balanced by unlimited glasses of piping hot garlic rasam.

"We still have traditional dishes like Pallipalayam chicken and Madurai mutton; these are our core offerings. We're just

experimenting with flavours. Even the peri peri chicken or paneer we serve on coin parottas has a 'Kongu-ised' touch. We've created these combinations based on feedback from our customers," Balachandar explains. To sample some Junior Kuppanna classics, we try this very Kongu-style mutton biryani made with jeeraga samba rice, served with a large piece of nalli resting on the steaming rice. The light and refreshing nandu puttlu, with tender shredded crab and a well-spiced vanjaram fish fry

are also on the menu. From the JK Select menu, the chicken rezala and ghee rice disappoints; the gravy is overly salty with undercooked meat.

Junior Kuppanna is spread across 20 other locations in Chennai, each with unique concepts. "As part of reinventing, we tried various ideas. Some succeeded, some didn't. For example, Junior Kuppanna Junior didn't work, but the 24-hour outlet in Urban Square is thriving. With many verticals, we have the scope to experiment; we can focus on biryani, meals, parotta and tiffin, or offer North Indian and Chinese dishes," Balachandar says.

With outlets in Colombo, Malaysia, Singapore, and Dubai, the brand is set to expand to the US and Australia in 2025. Balachandar says "We're building a JK-verse, where AI and automation are valuable assets. In today's world, both tradition and modernity are celebrated, and AI-driven marketing and training are useful. In the kitchen, we're exploring combi ovens and automated parotta-making machines, which will help maintain consistent quality and improve service speed."

JK Select is at No.12, LRS Towers, Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar Road, Nandanam. A meal for two costs ₹1,200.



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

7 Carry out an investigation (6)
8 Bin operator (anag) — one's working on a trial basis (11)
14 Altogether (7)
15 Kind of rose (7)
16 Universe (6)
17 Documentation (6)
19 Cathedral city of North Rhine- Westphalia, seat of the Krupp industrial dynasty (5)
21 Storage facility (5)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated November 14, 2024.
Solution No. 13614

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Across
1 Stout (6)
4 Rain cloud (6)
9 Hopeless feeling (7)
10 Tubular pasta (5)
11 Sheer (5)
12 Knife for the end of a rifle (7)
13 No-frills (11)
18 Busy (2,3,2)
20 Means of mass communication (5)
22 Hybrid beasts of burden (5)
23 Overshadow (7)
24 Adage (6)
25 Complimentary (6)
Down
1 Peppery root vegetable (6)
2 Tack — abets (anag) (5)
3 Knife used in dissection (7)
5 Hint (5)
6 Windfall (7)



Divya, part of a team of women auto drivers that calls themselves Veera Pengal

The ride begins

Meet these women auto drivers from Chennai, who won Coop 2024, a competition held at IIM



entrepreneurship. Apart from a cash prize of ₹50,000, they will also have a year-long mentorship programme to

Seventy percent of women auto drivers in Chennai are

Veera Pengal Munnetra Sangam, registered in April, has about 400 members currently

VPMS is supported by a non-profit organisation called Empowering Communities through Education, represented by Vijaya Gnanaprasad, an IT employee who also backs community-based initiatives. “We are trying to highlight the issues of women auto drivers to the society. Registering members as a cooperative immediately opens up better opportunities, like taking up contracts and working like a B2B model. We are also exploring options to tie up with rail or bus line authorities,” he says, adding, “Very few people in Chennai know this group exists – whenever someone spots them, the first question is: ‘Oh, so women drive autos in Chennai?’ We are trying to be more visible and highlight their lives and aspirations.”

Gilded heritage

This traditional Kashmiri ornament is finding new life with modern brides

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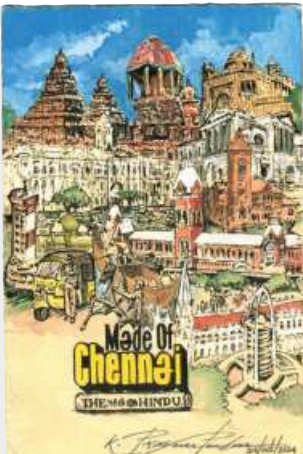
The dejhor is a talisman of heritage that is worn by the Kashmiri Pandit bride before the wedding processions. It has three parts – a chain, the

Today, her designs include dejhors that can also be worn by women who do not have an inner ear or even a lobe piercing. "I'm planning a series of Tibetan pieces with corals, inspired by jewellery from Leh and there will be a dejhor in that series as well," she concludes.

*Ratika's Designer Jewellery
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details, call 9840266669.*



Golden revival Ratika Kaur wearing the dejhor. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



City of stars
(Clockwise from far left) Art by Subhashree Sridhar; Prasanna Pandian; Aishvarya Ashok; Anisha Maria; and Abirami. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Chennai, yours truly

The entries received for the 'Dear Chennai, with love'
initiative captured the city in all its glory

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The formats were varied; sketches, poems, scrapbooks, essays, and even collages, but the love for the city tied it all



For the city's younger

Poetry, musings about the language, the sea, the architecture, heritage and more featured on a number of postcards from the students of the University of Madras. In all the entries and odes to the city which made up the entries, one thing was evident – the city's many myriad facets capture one's imagination like no other.

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HOUSE OF DIAMOND



Meet **Pani** actors Sagar Surya and Junaiz VP, Malayalam cinema's newest villains

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We meet Don Sebastian and Siju KT in actor-turned-director Joju George's debut film *Pani*, a revenge drama, as they execute their first contract killing; they seem to enjoy being killers for hire. As the movie progresses, the emotions these two characters evoke range from utter dislike to revulsion. While Don is fidgety, Siju is silent, conveying menace with his eyes.

Meeting actors Sagar Surya (Don) and Junaiz VP (Siju) is a revelation of the amount of work they have put in to 'get into character'. The two Joju George discoveries are savouring their moment in the sun.

"This film is a golden opportunity for me," says Sagar, who has so far done small roles in films such as *Upacharapoorvam* *Gunda Jayan*, and *Jana Gana Mana*. He was also part of a Malayalam television series, *Thatheem Mutteem*.

The boys are here



A big break
Junaiz VP and Sagar Surya.
THULASI KAKKAT

Pani has been extremely satisfying and rewarding, especially in terms of the feedback coming their way, he says. The two actors hold their ground in the presence of seasoned actors. "I have worked very hard on this film. Movies are hard, getting a good break is difficult. Somehow I have been lucky. It must be the blessings of my late mother," says Sagar, who has a Master's in Engineering.

This is Junaiz's first acting job. He has been a content creator on Instagram since 2016. "I have always wanted to act but I didn't actively pursue it, nor did I tell anyone about it. Joju (George) *chettan* would have seen something in me for him to offer me the role. The content I create is comedy-based, while the role in the film is very different," he says.

Joju first saw the two together as participants in a popular TV reality show. They had become friends on the show, and Joju noticed their camaraderie. Their admiration for Joju is evident as they talk about him. "We met him after the show, and he suggested that we needed to 'strengthen' our bond. To do that, we lived together in a house in Thrissur for four-odd months. It was a sort of quarantine; we did not interact much with others. It was just the two of us," Junaiz adds.

Getting philosophical, he says, "The film has changed me in many ways. It helped me conquer some of my fears – of heights and speed. The first scene atop the building, for instance, was terrifying. Similarly the high-speed chases... shot using the Russian Arm camera [U Crane] which moves at a high speed."

Praise for *Pani* has been pouring in, from actor Kamal Haasan, and directors Anurag Kashyap and Karthik Subbaraj among others.

They say, "It is a combination of luck and hard work. Joju *chettan* came into our lives at the right time!"

A ticket to fame

All about Dinesh Shenoy's Kannada short film *Madhyantara*, which won top honours at the National Film Awards this year



Reel talk
Ajay Neenasam and Veeresh in *Madhyantara*.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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At 54, Dinesh Shenoy found his purpose. Two years later, he proved how one is never too old to start again. The 56-year-old's filmmaking dreams are at an all-time high after his Kannada short film *Madhyantara* clinched two National Awards this year. Dinesh won the Best Debut Director honour, while veteran Suresh Urs bagged the Best Editor award.

Madhyantara is about two passionate film buffs (played by Ajay Neenasam and Veeresh) who do odd jobs before getting their big break in the film industry. "Producer RF Manikchand, in an interview, spoke about his love for films. Living in Chikkamagaluru, he couldn't afford the ticket price of 50 paise. He had 25 paise, and his friend could afford 25 paise. So one of them watched the first half, while the other watched the second. Later, they would share details."

The anecdote gave birth to *Madhyantara*, an ode to the Kannada cinema of the Eighties. Collaborating with Shashidhar Adapa, the well-known art director, gave Shenoy

confidence. "He was excited to do a period film. Adapa had the sense of that era. We used many props, including clapboards."

Editor Suresh Urs, once a regular collaborator with Mani Ratnam (*Thalapathi*, *Roja*, *Bombay*, *Iruvar*, and *Dil Se*) was another important addition to the film. "He was so valuable for the project. He travelled with me on this journey and gave inputs at every juncture of the production."

He adds, "As we shot the entire movie on celluloid, Urs was thrilled to edit the footage as the project took him back to his early days of his profession. He would always say that in digital filmmaking, directors take a lot of shots, and the actors are visibly tired because of that. In celluloid, the making is precise."

After being screened at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa, the film competed at the National Film Awards. To make *Madhyantara* a proof-of-concept short film was a wise decision, feels Shenoy. "Instead of narrating a script to a producer, I felt it was better to show my team's capability through a short film. With that, the producer can understand what kind of imagery I can produce on screen."



Bromance in the air
The makers of Malayalam film, *Bromance*, starring Arjun Ashokan, Mathew Thomas and Mahima Nambiar, have announced a release date: February 14, 2025.

Helmed by Arun D Jose of *Jo and Jo* and *Journey of Love* 18+ fame, the film has been written by Arun along with Raveesh Nath and Thomas P Sebastian. It also stars Kalabhavan Shajohn, Binu Pappu, Shyam Mohan and Sangeeth Prathap.

Akhil George is the cinematographer while Chaman Chakko is the editor. Govind Vasantha handles music.

Earlier this year, *Bromance* was in the news after a car, reportedly driven by the stunt choreographer, with Arjun, Mathew Thomas and Sangeeth Pratap, met with an accident while shooting a car chase sequence.



Spin king
Cricketer Harbhajan Singh is now set to shine on the big screen. After *Friendship* (2021), his first Tamil film, the offspinner is now starring in yet another Tamil film, titled *Savior*.

Directed by John Paul Raj, *Savior* has Harbhajan Singh playing the role of Dr James Malhotra. Oviya, GP Muthu and VTV Ganesh are part of the starcast as well.

Backed by Seantoa Studio, *Savior* is a thriller-drama set in a hospital. While music is composed by DM Udayakumar (DK), cinematography is handled by Manick.

Apart from representing the country, Harbhajan has also played for Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings in the IPL.

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