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THE HINDU

What's Squid Game's connection to India?

Scout for some smooth rocks to find out **P2**

WHY MADDY CHEERED RACER AJITH IN DUBAI **P4**



Page perfect (Clockwise from right) Children browse through books at The Little Lit Fest in Goethe Institut, Chennai; actor and storyteller Janaki Sabesh. AKHILA EASWARAN AND R RAVINDRAN

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For parents who want their children to start reading more and for children wanting to delve into a different range of genres, where does one start? Amidst constant discussion about screen time, books, and how to strike a healthy balance between the two, the city of Chennai is currently home to a host of interesting initiatives that facilitate a love for reading and losing oneself in the magical world of words.

At the Goethe Institut in December last year, a gaggle of children watched on in delight as children's author and illustrator Ashok Rajagopal enacted scenes from his much loved book, *Gajapati Kulapati*. The eager, young audience joined him, imitating characters, and interrupting his talk to tell the author their favourite parts of the story. Katharina Gorgen, director of Goethe-Institut Chennai said that The Little Lit Fest, pegged as Chennai's first children literature festival, was supposed to celebrate the city's three publishing houses – Tulika, Tara, and Karadi Tales for their fantastic work on children's books. In the process, it also ended up shining light on the sheer number of children who read.

Over the course of last year, many new reading initiatives for children apart from the literature festivals have also cropped up.

Bhuvaneswari Rajasekar, a parent, set out to steadily build a collection of books for her two young children during the pandemic. "As the collection grew, I had friends and acquaintances constantly seek me out for recommendations," she says. Six months ago, with over 5,000 books for ages one to 14,



Word play

Bhuvana started the Tiny Explorers Library. "Parents can sign up for either a five-book or eight-book plan. We have our catalogue online and books will be delivered home. The initiative has fifty members and the membership costs less than a bucket of popcorn," laughs Bhuvana.

One way to get children to pick up a book, she says, is through storytelling. "I have conducted sessions everywhere from parks, to learning spaces to even birthday parties since an increasing number of parents want children to be engaged in a more meaningful way," she says. Chennai's many silent reading chapters see children accompanying their parents to sit and read, in a calm, idyllic setting and Bhuvana also says

she takes books to the Mylapore Reads chapter at Nageswara Rao park, for children to borrow.

Bookstores and spaces dedicated for children to read, are few and far between. But, Chennai's newest reading space and library for children has an unlikely location. At Budan House in Alwarpet which houses the quaint Kup Modern Kitchen and Coffee bar, tucked away on the first floor is a sunshine-filled space with shelves of neatly arranged books. The brainchild of Jivesh Goenka, founder of KUP coffee roasters, the Page27 children's library was inspired by his son's love for reading.

Anannya Parekh, library educator at Page 27 kids library, says their diverse

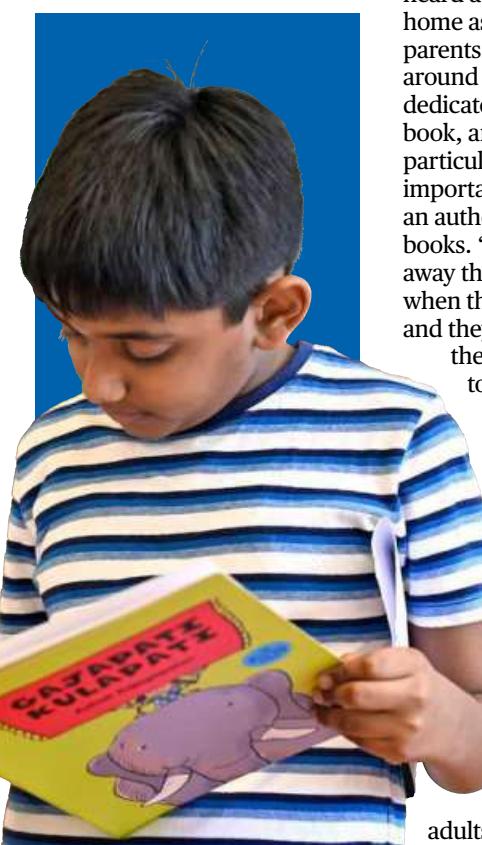
From an experimental book club, a dedicated reading space and several storytelling sessions, much is happening in Chennai to ensure children fall in love with books



I am of the firm belief that children's books sometimes are more for the adults than the children

JANAKI SABESH
Actor and author

collection reflects how much more nuanced and layered children's books have become over the years. "We have realised that while reading is a solitary act for adults, it is a social and communal act for children. Librarians can facilitate this experience, and I ensure that children pick up and enjoy whatever they want to read," she says. Their membership programmes include a day pass, quarterly pass and yearly pass, and the library also hosts



And as for children's books, she strongly believes there is much to go back to, in the themes dealt there. "I am of the firm belief that children's books sometimes are more for the adults than the children," she says.

Where clay meets creativity

Celebrate craftsmanship and community, and explore handmade ceramics at the Auroville International Potters' Market



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Are you looking for a range of functional tableware or contemporary collectors' pieces? Seventeen ceramic artists from Auroville and Puducherry will come together this weekend to display their work at the seventh edition of the Auroville International Potters' Market.

The market, started in 2015 by Auroville potter, Ange Peter, is an invitation to visitors to explore this ancient art, meet

the artists behind the work, and take home some souvenirs.

Puneet Brar of Windglaze Pottery Studio says that the highlight of this event is the array of handcrafted ceramic pottery. She says, "The incredible possibilities of this craft can be seen at this potters' market and the idea is to spread awareness. Ceramic pottery straddles both art and craft and as a result, each artist comes with his/her unique creations. Every year we have visitors from all over the country to shop for high-quality products."

Shaping up Creations by Anna Morozova, Adil Writer and Toshia Parmar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"We have a tent exclusively for young adults where one can try their hand at pottery and understand why this is such a nourishing experience," Puneet adds.

According to Adil Writer of Mandala Pottery, Auroville, each of the artists will present ceramic creations in the form of tableware, wall tiles, home decor, garden decor, sculpture

or jewellery. From functional objects to exhibition-worthy sculptural pieces, the market will have objects starting from ₹200 onwards.

Works by Toshia Parmar and Adil Writer are on display too. Toshia has specially designed a range of tableware that is soda-fired. Adil has soda-fired



sculptural teapots and related tea-accessories, made of porcelain, which are wood-fired in an atmospheric firing technique where soda is sprayed into the kiln near peak temperature, usually over 1200 degrees centigrade, nearly 20 hours into the firing. The results speak for themselves, demonstrating why Mandala Pottery and Rakhee Kane's Aavartan Pottery are passionate about this very specific firing technique.

A stand-alone exhibition, titled, No Metaphors, Please!, will feature striking works of the participating ceramic artists.

K Palanisamy, a traditional master-potter from Pudukkottai, has been invited to demonstrate his craft at the market on all three days. He will be creating Ayyanar horses, elephants and other traditional figures at the venue.

@Visitor Center Auroville (Tamil Nadu)
Puducherry, January 24 to 26, 11 am to 6 pm.
Entry is free. For details, call 9884120010.



Power of images
Chennai Photo Biennale's fourth edition explores the theme Why Photograph? with exhibitions under phase two beginning on January 23 and ending on March 16.

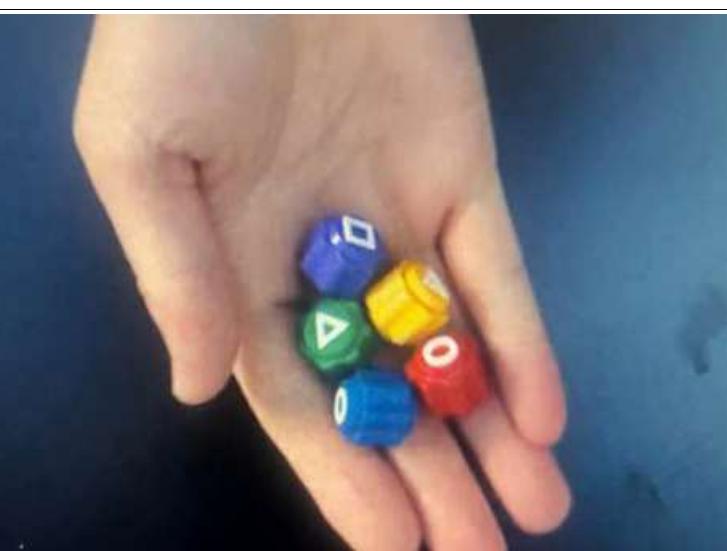
Catch the shows: Love and Light – A Site of Infinite Possibilities, a Sunil Gupta retrospective; and What Makes Me Click!, a global children's photography exhibition @Government Museum, Egmore. CPB's open-call exhibition featuring photographers from 30 countries @VR Mall, Anna Nagar. The edition will also showcase Alt: Analog, on analog photography @Forum Art Gallery, Adyar. For more information, call 9962249371.



Know your nation

Get ready to test your knowledge about your country by participating in the Republic Day Quiz. LatentView Analytics presents its annual quiz in association with

Solympics. This quiz is open to all, and registration is free. Participants can join individually or form teams at the venue. Winning team stands to win prizes worth ₹50,000. @TN Rajarathinam Kalai Arangam, RA Puram, January 26, 2pm onwards.



Squid Game's Indian connection

Gonggi, featured in *Squid Game 2*, has deep Indian roots. Gen X calls it pacheta, kuzhangal, or sagargote. Learn about this age-old Indian game

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If you are Gen Alpha, hooked on the wild twists of *Squid Game* Season 2, it is likely that your curiosity about Gonggi is off the charts. Here is a fun fact: Gonggi is played in India too. Just ask someone from Gen X – your mom, aunt, or grandma – about *pacheta* (Rajasthan), *kuzhangal* (Tamil Nadu), *kacha kayala aata* (Telugu), *sagargote* (Marathi), or *paans guti* (Assamese), and watch them unlock a treasure chest of childhood memories.

Gonggi, or 'five stones,' is a timeless Indian game that demands nothing more than nimble fingers and five trusty stones. No

fancy boards, no gadgets – just your hand and a playful spirit. The stones can be smooth pebbles, *kodi* seeds, grey nicker beans or even shiny cowrie shells. There is however, a catch: they need to be the perfect size. The stones used in Gonggi must be just the right size – not too big or small. They should be large enough to be swiftly lifted with your fingertip yet small enough to fit together comfortably in the palm of your hand. The Goldilocks zone of stones, if you will.

Gonggi is not just about speed – it is a test of skill, timing, and pure fun. Gen X-ers will regale you with stories about carefully selecting the "perfect" stones, as it is all about reflexes, focus, and hand-eye coordination.

It is proof that sometimes the simplest games, born from resourcefulness, offer the most enduring joy.

This game, often played in groups, is not a race to finish first but a test of timing and precision in catching the stones. For anyone from Gen X, the process of selecting and preparing stones was a ritual in itself. Sarbani Dev, a veterinary college lecturer, recalls, "After selecting five stones that fit in the hand, we would rub them on the floor to smooth out the rough edges. This was crucial because stones with sharp or uneven surfaces were hard to play with. Finding naturally smooth

stones was considered lucky."

Rashmi Shah, a lawyer, adds, "In the '90s, another option was using larger cowrie shells – glossy, oval-shaped seashells. Back then, when shopping was not just a click away and resources were limited, stones were the best tools. I even had three sets of 'five stones'." A distinctive feature of the game is that all players sit on the floor, adding to its intimate and grounded charm.

To play, the five stones are first spilled on the floor. You choose one stone to toss in the air, then pick up one stone at a time while catching the tossed stone before it lands. Once all five stones have been collected, you repeat the process, increasing the difficulty by picking up two stones at a time, then three, and finally all four. In another step, you hold all five stones in your palm, toss them gently in the air, and flip your hand over to catch them on the back of your fingers.

The game continues with another round where you place the stones back on the ground, toss one stone in the air, and quickly gather all four before catching the airborne stone. The final stage, known as the "bridge step," involves forming a bridge with the span of your hand. As one stone is tossed in the air, the remaining stones are passed through the bridge while simultaneously catching the airborne stone.

This game, rooted in reflexes, focus, and skill, embodies the simplicity and joy of childhood, creating a timeless connection across generations.



Nostalgia trip (Left)
Players trying out the game; (below) A still from *Squid Game Season 2*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Foliage of stories

Explore the vibrant world of artistic quilting in this year's Birds of Paradise quilt art exhibition

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pieces known as one-block wonders. "These are being shown in India for the first time, and is a unique concept. We take one printed fabric, cut it and rearrange them in various kaleidoscopic patterns," says Varsha.

Quilting is attracting younger enthusiasts seeking a creative outlet and a break from screens. "It's a mindful and meditative practice that more people are discovering as an artistic pursuit. This time, our youngest participant is in her early 20s and the oldest is above 80," she says.

This year, the judge will be Pat Archibald, a textile artist and tutor based in Edinburgh, Scotland and she will decide the top three entries, one honourable mention and one judge's choice award. The Square Inch, will also give a special award titled The Royal Inchworm, which will be chosen by Tina.

Birds of Paradise, an exhibition of theme-based quilts will be held from January 24 to 28 at Sri Sankara Hall, TTK Road. Inauguration is at 4pm on January 24. Entry is free.



Stitch perfect (Top) Tina Katwal and Varsha Sundararajan; (Right) Submissions to the competition.

SANGITA RAJAN



Ahead of the launch of his debut book *Simple, Not Easy* Raj Ganpath speaks about simplifying fitness and the need for empathy in present day fitness discourse

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In the introduction to his debut book, *Simple, Not Easy*, Raj Ganpath says that the book is an unusual mix of science, reason and positivity meant to provide clarity and inspiration. There is a consistent reference to the word 'simple' all through his book, published by Westland Publications. It makes sense if you have worked out with Raj at The Quad, a Chennai-based new age functional fitness bootcamp he co-founded in 2011. Or if you have seen him on Instagram where he posts short videos every single day about strength training, lifestyle changes, nutrition, fitness myths and more.

In a market that is saturated with books, YouTube videos, reels, and posts on fitness, Raj, a certified coach, initially had a

different vision of this project. "Sixteen years ago, when I had just begun my journey in the fitness industry, the only book that seemed worth writing was a loaded book that would prove to everyone how much I knew about the subject. It took

working with many people over the years to realise that most do not have a problem with the 'what' any more, they need the

'why' and the 'how,'" he says.

When we meet Raj at The Quad's office in Chennai, he holds up the book and says "I did not want a scary, big book and was keen on a light, short one that did not intimidate people," he says. As a debut author, Raj says he found the timeline the most challenging, even though he was able to write it all in a whirlwind six weeks – given how familiar he is with the topic at hand.

In 100 chapters divided into seven sections that include nutrition, movement, sleep, weight loss, stress and consistency, Raj says that the book aims to make people independent and take control of their own fitness.

"The whole fitness industry is built around making you dependent on something – be it a workout or a diet program. The book however preaches the opposite; that you do not need to know or remember so many things,

Fitness fables Raj Ganpath, and the book cover. JOHAN SATHYADAS

and appeals to your logical side," he says.

In the age of endless reels on social media promising quick fixes, plans and more, Raj tackles two very topical themes in his book – about how fitness is not just for fit people and most importantly, that it is not finite.

"I have been very adamant about one message; the fact that it is always about the big picture and about consistency. Most people believe that fitness has an end date and is something they can finish, when it should be about management and something they should keep at in the long run," he says.

With empathy missing in a ton of the fitness discourse happening online and offline, Raj emphasises on how fitness is about functionality for the common person first. "Fitness is not just for athletes or actors, and shouldn't be restricted to looks or performance. For the common person, we need to keep in mind that they are doing this in addition to their jobs, their lifestyle issues, amidst work stress, late nights and a host of other things.

"Empathy is a necessity," he says. Raj says that people who take to fitness wanting to be an actor or behave like an athlete will break.

Much like his reels on Instagram that have four points, or five simple steps, Raj chalks this down to a simple cycle as well. "For fitness to make you feel better, you need to be consistent. This in turn will happen only if there is convenience which is a result of your plan being simple and accessible. And all of this won't happen unless there is motivation, kindness, positivity or empathy," he says.

When asked what is something he hopes people imbibe from the book, Raj says, "Brutally simplify things for yourself. Be kind to yourself because you are trying your hardest."

STEP OUT

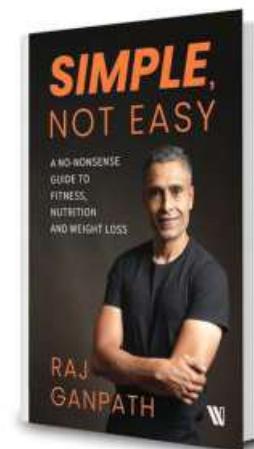


Gandhi, King, justice

US Consulate General Chennai in association with Smithsonian Institution, Meridian International Center, Reeti Foundation, Chennai Photo Biennale, and the Anna Centenary Library is organising an exhibition titled "City of Hope: Gandhi, King, and the 1968 Poor People's Campaign". The exhibition showcases Mahatma Gandhi's influence on civil rights in the United States and India's influence on Martin Luther King Jr.'s daring vision for economic justice. @Anna Centenary Library, Kotturpuram. On till January 30, 9 am to 5 pm.

Groove to the beats

In the mood to listen to some beatboxing? Giridharan is a beatboxer known for blending diverse musical styles such as dubstep, techno, folk, and Tamil kuthu. Originally from Chennai and now based in Los Angeles, he discovered his passion for beatboxing during his school days. His performances showcase a fusion of global and regional influences. He will perform in Chennai this weekend. @ Lakshmi Convention Hall, Mylapore. January 24, 6 pm. Entry is free.





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"I have built myself a playground," says Janani Kannan. A pastry chef trained at Le Cordon Bleu, Janani Kannan launched her first dessert cafe Maison Indulgence in December 2023. Ice creams and horning around with flavours however, was always on her mind. Securing the location where Gelarto, Chennai's newest gelato parlour, is currently housed was the push she needed, to delve into making these flavours a reality.

In the freezer display at this brightly lit ice-cream parlour painted in hues of pink and blue, there are 30 different flavours with names such as Boom Boom Boomer for a bubblegum gelato, a ceremonial matcha gelato called a Perfect Matcha and sugarcane flavoured sorbet called Madras Mocktail.

Just a few days after its limited launch, Gelarto is filled with people, though it is a weekday. The location, as Janani says, makes it hard to miss. The gelato parlour is now where the very recognisable Subway once stood at Khadar Nawaz Khan road.

Janani says her experiments with flavours began after an

Brain chill

intensive four-week online course with the Carpigiani Gelato University in Italy. "Apart from the cotton candy and bubblegum flavours, everything is natural with no-added essence. While around 15 flavours which include pistachio, milo, chocolate brownie and vanilla bean will remain untouched, we will replace some fruit flavours depending on the season," she says.

We dig into their very confidently named World's Best Pistachio gelato. Made from Sicilian pistachios, every creamy spoonful is bursting with flavour. Given how pistachio is all the craze now and is on ice creams, chocolates and desserts everywhere, Gelarto's take on it is a winner. Among the more experimental flavours, the guava

Fancy a scoop of the World's Best Pistachio gelato in a waffle cone? Chennai's newest gelato parlour Gelarto has 30 flavours to choose from



A scoop of joy Chocolate and berry cheesecake flavours at Gelarto; (below) a view of the parlour. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

chilli has a nice hit of spice, and the ceremonial matcha thankfully does not go too overboard with its strongly flavoured main ingredient. If you are someone who loves citrusy desserts, there are quite a few options to pick from. The Fior Di Limon which is a Lemon curd gelato is a welcome alternative to the more easily available icy lemon sorbet, and since strawberries are in season, the Mahabaleshwar strawberry gelato is a current hit.

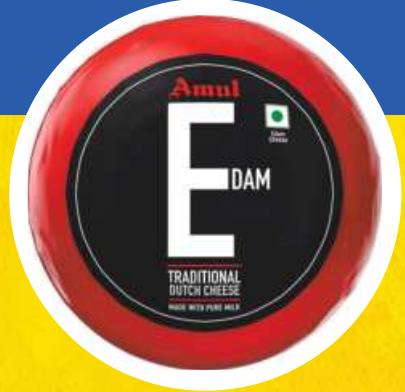
There are four no-added-sugar-diabetic-friendly flavours as well - chocolate, vanilla bean, shahi gulab, and coffee hazelnut.

While the sheer variety is a great USP for Gelarto which is located within walking distance from three other popular ice cream parlours and several dessert stalls and cafes in the area, it helps that the gelato is not overwhelmingly sweet. For diners who wish to try many flavours at the parlour there is a limited menu of four types of fries and two pizzas at present, for some savoury relief. In the future, Janani says that some items from Maison Indulgence's menu too will be available here, and she plans to have ice creams from Gelarto available there as well in the summer.

"The 30 flavours currently available are only a part of a comprehensive list of 70 flavours I have worked on for Gelarto," Janani says. In the coming months, they hope to put out a lot more new flavours - a Mexican hot chocolate gelato and a goat cheese gelato with fig relish and candied walnuts are on the anvil.

Follow @gelartoclub on Instagram. Gelato is priced from ₹150 onwards.

A Taste of International Flavors, Right at Home.



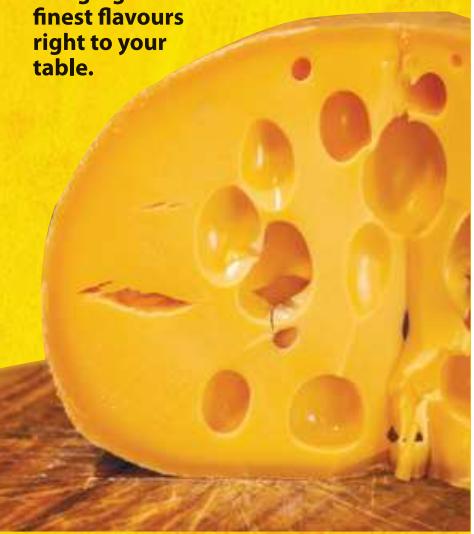
If you've ever wanted to bring the sophistication of international flavours to your home, Amul Edam Cheese is the perfect addition to your kitchen. Originating from the charming village of Edam in the Netherlands, this cheese has the essence of gourmet indulgence, now made locally in India, offering you a premium experience at an accessible price.

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love the finer things, nothing beats the simplicity of enjoying it raw, allowing its unique flavour to take center stage.

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"CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE"



Vidyodaya alumni reunion

The Vidyodaya Schools Alumni Association is hosting its annual reunion. Alumni can reconnect, honour retiring teachers, and get updates on the school's current activities. Twelve scholarships totalling ₹1.44 lakh will be awarded to students from low-income families. On January 25, from 2pm to 6pm at the school campus, T. Nagar, For details, call 9841094333.



Threads of time Pieces from the collection. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the time of closing down the label in 2019, she had a workshop in Chennai and two retail outlets in Chennai and Bengaluru. After a hiatus of a few years, the label came back, but with a different focus.

"When I ran the label, I focussed a lot on the garment construction aspect of it. For this collection however, the

silhouettes are really simple because I want the focus to be on the textile. My conversations with artisans have forced me to challenge my own prejudices and way of thinking, and the importance of facilitating a culture of innovation," she says.

For sale at Silkworm Boutique, G-7, Gems Court, 14, Khader Nawaz Khan Rd, Nungambakkam until February 2. Visit brasstacks.co.in

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HOUSE OF DIAMONDS

Tale of the loom

Anaka Narayanan's capsule collection The Maheshwar Edit is her first foray into weaving fabrics

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Anaka Narayanan's capsule collection The Maheshwar Edit, has a story to tell.

In 2022, Anaka, the founder of Brass Tacks headed to Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh for an apprenticeship with weaver Nisha Verma. "I was keen on learning how to weave and knew that to commit the process to muscle memory, I would have to do this for a long period of time," she says. I went in with an open mind and told myself that if I wanted to delve deeper into production and design, they cannot be treated as two distinct fields," she says.

Anaka's first foray into textile weaving has now taken shape as this

capsule collection which is now on display and for sale at Silkworm Boutique in Chennai. The collection has shirts and tops in bold stripes for men and women made using non-mercerized cotton yarn, to ensure the fabrics are soft and breathable.

As a part of this display, near the rack with Anaka's collection is also her story on display, through photos which chronicle her experiments with the warp and weft.

"A large part of why I like handlooms is that the fabric does not completely fall flat. The texture gives it character and there is a certain unevenness that comes from the charm of being handmade," she says, of the fabric used.

Anaka began Brass Tacks originally as a clothing label in 2007. At

All in the family

Actor Manikandan on this week's release, *Kudumbasthan*, featuring the struggles of a family man



Step up A still from *Kudumbasthan*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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In a scene straight from Manikandan's last film, *Lover*, the actor and I were served some unpalatable tea before our interaction started, which turned out to be the first topic of conversation. "Teaku set potturukanga pola (I think this is a set work for tea)," starts Manikandan, as we settle down to talk about his upcoming family film *Kudumbasthan* (Family Man). Excerpts:

Question: Tamil cinema was replete with family films a few decades ago from makers like V Sekhar, Visu and Bhagyaraj. What has changed now?

Answer: Rajeshwar Kalisamy (Director of *Kudumbasthan*) and I are fans of Edgar Wright. He asked me to imagine a film written by V Sekhar and directed by Edgar Wright and that's how he pitched this film to me. I remember my childhood films like *Varavu Ettana Selavu Pathana*, *Viralukketha Veekkam* and *Koodi Vazhthal Kodi Nanmai* which realistically portrayed the lives of middle-class families. I keep saying how if Sekhar sir had framed the film like, say, Majid Majidi, then ours would have been international films too.

Our idea was to try such a film. Presenting a comedy-family film at the pace of an action film excites me. A family man's struggles have always been there but in today's digital world, they have evolved. *Kudumbasthan* talks about that. A friend had written in a script how earlier, we all used to be together in the streets and television confined us to our respective houses. Now, mobile phones are confining each member of the family to one corner of the house. So, films on joint families are not relevant anymore and films only reflect what's currently relevant.

Q: How was it to play a character who speaks the Kongu Tamil dialect?

A: Getting the Arcot slang



Presenting a comedy-family film at the pace of an action film excites me. A family man's struggles have always been there but in today's digital world, they have evolved.

MANIKANDAN

for around eight hours is a task and so is unloading all the baggage after packing up. I look in awe at what the masters of this craft have pulled off earlier.

Q: Your films have always had you in the boy-next-door, relatable roles. What about them intrigues you?

A: I prefer picking roles with societal relevance. In *Lover*, for example, the director wanted to make sure my character did not feel alien to the audience and that's why he had many similar attributes to many like us.

There is no given route to the next level; it's all trial and error. I will fail if I follow the trajectory of someone successful before me. Right now, I'm happy with the success of presenting the truth of a film in the right manner.

Q: In your recent interviews, you shared your experience of working with talents you once looked up to, such as director Shankar and actors like Rajinikanth and Ajith...

A: It's a dream come true moment for me. I want to shout out loud and express my excitement, but I have to put a lid on it and act professional (smiles).

Q: You also said recently that actors don't have the liberty to give flop films anymore. How does one experiment with films within these limitations?

A: It's challenging. A film can be tagged as experimental if it is different from what's considered industry standard. To reiterate Kamal Haasan sir, my audience and I aren't separate entities. If I enjoy a film, the audience will enjoy it.

Q: If getting into a character is this challenging, does it take a toll on you to come out of it?

A: Imagine you had a

happy occasion at your

house and in the set, it's

drastically the opposite

as you have to work on a

depressing sequence.

Forgetting all those

happy emotions and

holding on to this mood

Madhavan, whose latest release features him as a railway ticketing inspector, on his recent choices

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R Madhavan has been working more consistently – and unpredictably – in Hindi films. He was a monster in a hoodie in his last release,

Shaitaan; his next, *Hisaab Barabar* is a comedy on banking scams. Madhavan plays a gentle, if parsimonious, ticketing inspector with the Indian Railways, a failed chartered accountant who sets out to unmask a major fraud. "I'm embarrassed but I have six films releasing in the next two years," Madhavan says. "That's a step-up from doing just four in Hindi in the last 10 years."

Excerpts from a chat:

Question: It's difficult to trace a pattern in your recent filmography. You have done three streaming shows, a biopic, a horror film, a psychological thriller...

Answer: In the 2000s, nobody believed Aamir Khan's *Lagaan* will do well. Nobody thought *Rang De Basanti* would become an iconic film, or *Guru* or *3 Idiots* or, a little later, *Tanu Weds Manu*. There was no pattern or formula these films were following. They were not residues of a previous success. However,

they were all made with conviction and had a unified directorial vision. So my analysis was: find a subject you really connect with, and do it with bravado and conviction.

Q: Filmmakers like Anurag Kashyap and Gautam Menon



Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan, Amitabh Bachchan, Rajkumar Hirani, Rajamouli. I will take inspiration from them.

Q: You have spoken before about Indian films being measured with a Western yardstick...

A: Indian filmmakers, including Anurag Kashyap and Gautam Menon, have made evolved films that need to be seen internationally. They need to continue to do that. We should not keep yardsticks of Western films as what we want to reach up to. I'll give an example: there is a word in the English dictionary called 'wailing'. When something tragic or unexpected happens, people in Asia wail. Actors in Western films do not know how to do it. Similarly, song-and-dance is an integral part of our culture. You cannot have an Indian function without songs. How can that be looked at and ridiculed?

Q: All We Imagine as Light, made by FTII alumnus Payal Kapadia, became a global sensation. As the current president of the institute, what has been your role in nurturing filmmaking talent?

A: I am extremely proud of Payal and all the other former students who have made a mark. I am not an administrator and I don't run the day-to-day functioning of the institute. My role is to make sure that everything functions smoothly and we take the curricula to the next level. FTII, besides being the premier filmmaking institute of the country, is one of the greatest facilities available to film students around the world. My hope is that when somebody graduates from FTII, the industry should be waiting with bated breath to pick them up. They should be comparable to an IIT or IIM graduate.

Hisaab Barabar will stream on Zee5 from January 24

Train of thought



Fast track

Madhavan was recently seen cheering for actor-racer Ajith Kumar at the Michelin 24H Dubai. "I am a huge fan of Ajith and what he has achieved as a racer. In today's world, where the need to stay relevant in news is paramount, he can put his career on hold and follow his heart. And he does it with such grace!"



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