

metro

PLUS

THE HINDU

Tips and tricks on how to kickstart your fitness journey by veteran runners **P3**

HARRIS JAYARAJ'S SON, SAMUEL, HITS THE RIGHT NOTES **P4**

Animal prints are back

There is no escaping them this year. Leopard, tiger, cheetah, zebra, Dalmatian... these busy prints are turning wardrobes into a menagerie. From skirts, coats, and dresses in suede, velvet, silk to jeans with loud animal prints, it's louder than ever.



As 2025 rolls in, let's say goodbye to avocado toast, loud luxury and Brat summers. What is in store? Team MetroPlus lists 25 things that we think will trend this year. How many will you tick off?

The quarter century mark

ILLUSTRATIONS: SOUMYADIP SINHA
DESIGN: XJG SATHEESH

Biophilic art

In increasingly urbanised spaces, people will seek out bits of Nature, attempting to make sanctuaries out of their homes. Nature-inspired art, with earthy tones and botanical themes, will be preferred over dark themes. Think Claude Monet's Waterlilies. A soft, natural colour palette with mineral honey and light peach that evokes springtime and sunsets or a fun, energetic palette with versatile shades of blue are likely to rule the year.



The translated word

With South Korean author Han Kang winning the Nobel Prize in Literature and the cascading interest that the Hallyu or the Korean pop and culture wave has had on literature from the country, translations are in the spotlight. Japanese and Korean healing fiction set in bookstores, laundromats, and even department stores will also amass more fans.

Creative gigs

Raw, unfiltered lyrics and a high-energy club aesthetic will take over pop music in 2025. Gen Z listeners value unconventional gig experiences, and so, concepts like the Kitchen Rave in Mumbai — where the lines between a DJ booth and a chef's station are blurred — are surely the way forward.

Micro restaurants

Look forward to intimate dining as chefs and restaurateurs set up smaller spaces which allow them to specialise, experiment and cater to niche audiences. We will also see the rise of cosy supper clubs, as smaller groups gather for thematically planned dinners. Look forward to making connections over candlelight.

Bitcoin bubble

It sounds crazy, but bitcoins are likely to hit \$200,000 given that US President-elect Donald Trump plans to adopt crypto currency as part of the US strategic reserves. The price of the cryptocurrency has gained 44% since Trump won the US presidential election. Institutional investors like Bernstein Private Wealth Management also predict the price of Bitcoin will double by the end of 2025.



South Indian food goes global

Dosas are already a hit, and Alappuzha's red fish curry is next in line, alongside Madurai's mutton chukka. From New York to London, expect to see more restaurants, food festivals and pop-ups celebrating authentic regional recipes for a growing, and increasingly appreciative, Western audience.



Reset retreats

After yoga vacations and spa holidays, these retreats promise to not just recharge travellers, but to increase resilience, purpose and longevity, and reset our biological rhythms. Travel is set to be all about disconnecting from the everyday humdrum and retreating into a cocoon with likeminded individuals and reworking the way you eat, sleep, and exercise.

Smarter phones?

By the end of 2024, only select iPhone models and some flagship Android devices were shipped with generative AI features. This could change in 2025 as several smartphone makers will launch mid-range handsets infused with AI features coupled with upgrades to camera, battery and processor.

Multi-verses

The universe-building of the last few years is primed to explode in 2025. The YRF spy verse will get its first female-led entry in *Alpha*, while Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR will face off — and, in all likelihood, dance off — in *War 2*. Meanwhile, the horror universe of Maddock Films (*Stree 2*, *Bhediya*) is inching towards its endgame. There are also a dozen sequels in the works in Telugu and Tamil, as filmmakers explore new worlds. Are you ready?

Girl Math

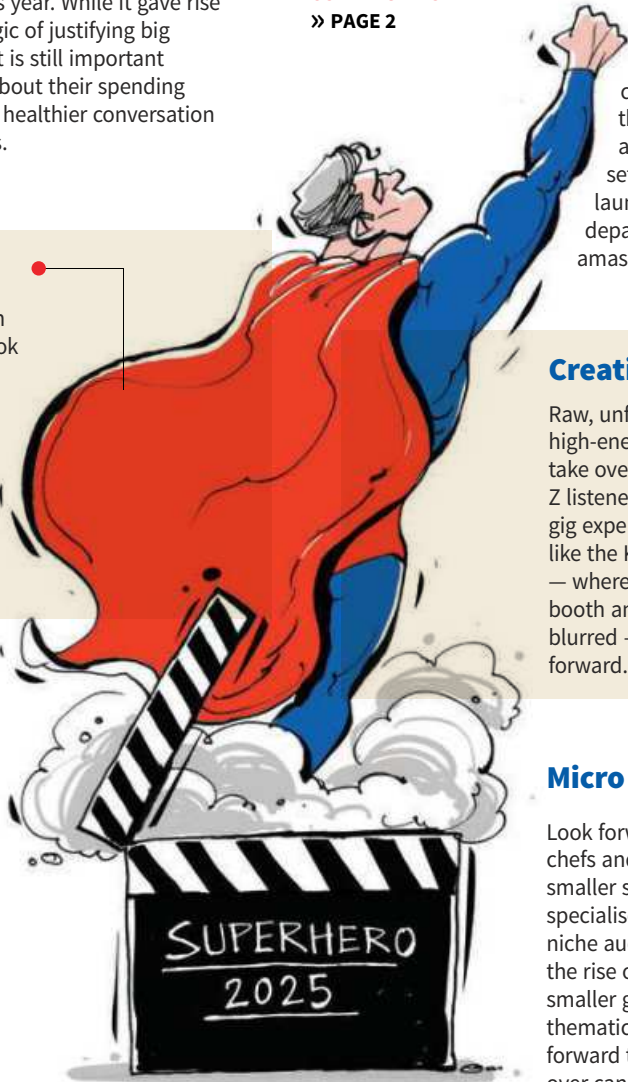
This playful, yet controversial topic in personal finance took social media by storm this year. While it gave rise to a lot of debate about the logic of justifying big spends, experts believed that it is still important because it got people talking about their spending habits. It could translate into a healthier conversation about investments and savings.

The superhero rises

After arguably the worst year in cinematic history for comic book cinema, 2025 is do or die for superhero movies. Major Marvel and DC titles like *Thunderbolts*, *Fantastic Four*, *Superman*, *Captain America: Brave New World* and more are looking to break through the rug.

Travel for love

Yes, that's a thing now. And it's not just the Gen Z or millennials who are taking the plunge. Dating apps and matrimonial sites are passe. People now want to make connections in real life. They want their meet-cute while on vacation.



CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 2

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Video game tourism

After film tourism, this is the new trend. Gamers are now flocking to locations where their favourite games are set. For example, fans of *Assassin's Creed* are travelling to destinations like the Colosseum in Rome, and Notre Dam.

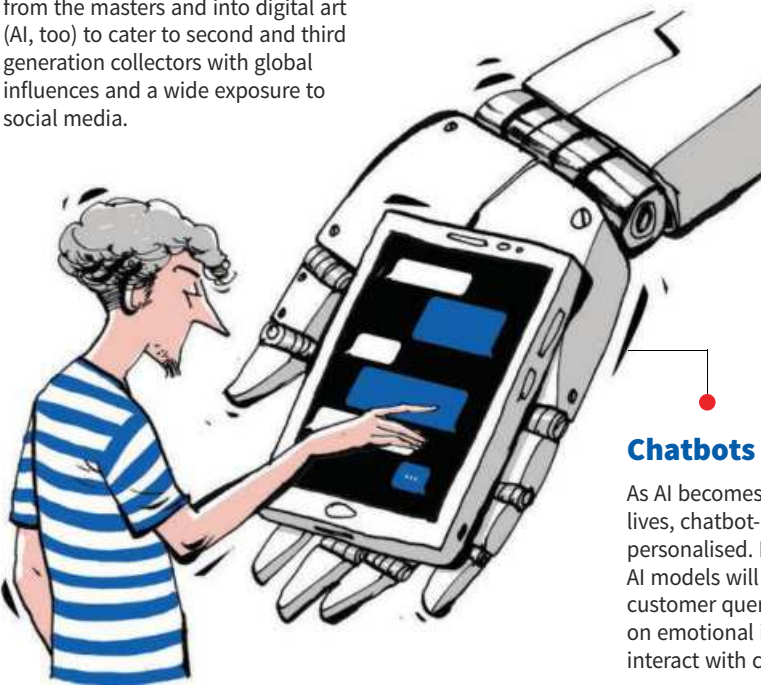


A tequila sunrise

While the sober-curious continue to experiment with zero spirits, the International Wine and Spirits Research (IWSR) says that tequila continues to snag markets world over. The calorie-conscious particularly prefer this form of alcohol as it acclimates well in a cocktail glass. A picante was surely cheered on New Year's.

The new Indian art fair

It is the year of the Indian art fair. Fairs scheduled for 2025 will move away from the masters and into digital art (AI, too) to cater to second and third generation collectors with global influences and a wide exposure to social media.



Matching steps

Running clubs across the country are becoming hotbeds for dating. In 2024, Puma and Bumble got together to host a singles-only running event. According to Bumble's recent survey, nearly three in four Indians (72%) would be open to go on a sports-themed first date and as many as 44% consider lack of interest in sport, a deal breaker.

The quarter century mark

CONTINUED FROM
» PAGE 1

Consider me, influenced

Social media personalities and stand up comedians will continue to snag book deals as publishers will attempt to cash in on the influencers' followers count.

Chatbots get personal

As AI becomes more entrenched in our daily digital lives, chatbot-based services will become more personalised. Fine-tuned natural language processing AI models will be better equipped to handle complex customer queries. These chatbots will also be trained on emotional intelligence parameters so they can interact with customers in a more mature way.

Soft savings

2024 was the year of experiences with people travelling for concerts, sports and more. The goals in life have moved from homeownership and comfortable retirement to experiencing life in the moment. This trend has seen the rise in short term investments and saving for the purpose of spending on experiences, rather than long term.

Videogame mania

Owing to the breakout success of *The Last of Us*, *Fallout* and *Arcane* in putting the 'videogame adaptation curse' to rest, the year will witness big screen adaptations of many popular videogame franchises like *Minecraft*, *Silent Hill*, *Mortal Kombat* and more.

Wellness at the core

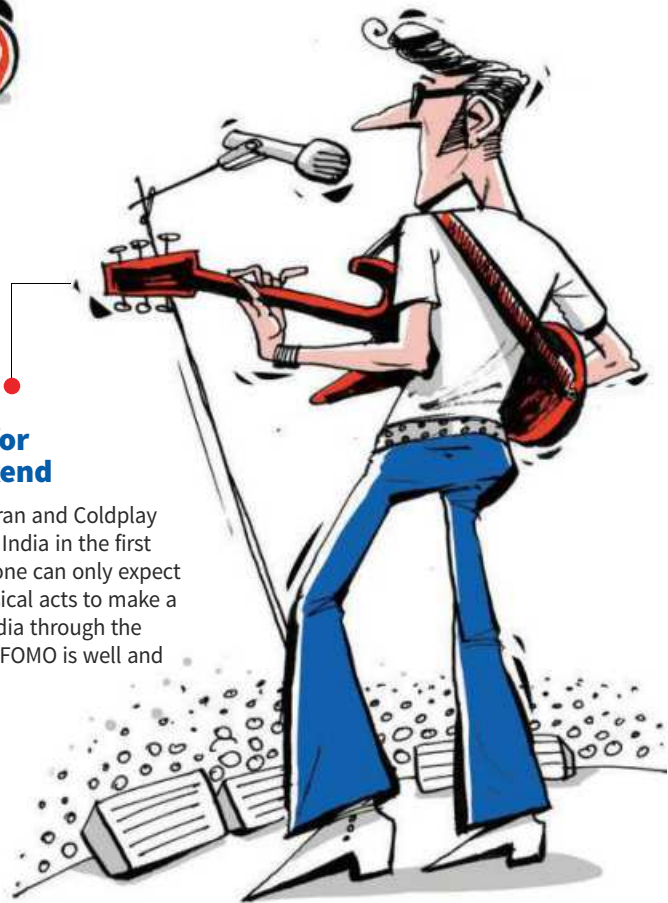
The emphasis on personal health and well-being is only going to peak this year and home designs will see dedicated wellness spaces taking centre stage. From home gyms and yoga studios to meditation rooms and spas, these spaces will focus on bringing calm to everyday life.

Bubble skirts

Bubble skirts and bubble-hem dresses will have a moment. This trend that made its debut in the 1950s has made repeated comebacks over the last few decades. You saw elegant Princess Diana wearing one at the Cannes Festival in 1987. Now recently Zendaya, Kylie Jenner, and Blackpink's Rosé have joined in.

Primary play

This year, we ditch the basics and revive the whimsy of childhood creativity in home design. We will see the embracing of bold, vibrant colours like red, yellow, and blue, alongside playful patterns. Think hand-painted furniture, funky murals, curved furniture, asymmetrical decor, and whimsical patterns that will create spaces reminiscent of childhood art projects.



Concert for the weekend

With Ed Sheeran and Coldplay all set to tour India in the first half of 2025, one can only expect more big musical acts to make a beeline for India through the year. Concert FOMO is well and truly a thing!



Priyadarshini Paitandy
priyadarshini.p@thehindu.co.in

The pastel pink soup in front of me looks like it is dressed for the Met Gala. It even has a pleated white tutu-esque skirt. Except that is not a tutu but a hot pot made of paper. Interestingly, the soup is served on it. Called kami-nabe pot, it is made of washi, a traditional Japanese paper. Though this hearty soup, brimming with tofu, chicken, and broccoli, feels great on this rainy day – a word of caution – if you don't like the taste of fermented miso or seaweed, this may not suit your palate.

At Origami, a new Pan Asian resto bar in Palavakkam, influences are drawn from Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore and Vietnam. The menu is consciously devoid of the usual suspects like chilli chicken and Phuket fish. Instead you find yaki buta skewers, Thai prawn crackers and yang nyoom tong dak among others. "The idea is to bring in an Asian experience and not focus on what is already being served in most places," says Arasu Dennis, consultant.

Located in Green Meadows resort, Origami is housed inside an orange A-frame building with a terracotta tiled roof. An alley leads me to the door, opening up to a space with large origami birds – which are actually lights – hanging from the high glass-panelled ceiling. Today, the DJ's beats are interspersed with the steady pitter patter of the rain.

On the far end is the elevated bar, where the mixologist is



From gochujang in whisky to shiso leaves in cocktails, Origami draws influences from Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore and Vietnam

Yakitori meets gunfire



rhythmically shaking up a cocktail. Our first drink feels like a treasure hunt. It is called Gunfire and conceals a combination of flavours. The drink is sweet with an underlying taste of milk. It also has light rum, red wine, spices, orange juice, dried pomegranate tea, and milk.

"While creating the cocktails we decided to stick to the core of the concept which is Pan Asian, and give importance to the ingredients," says Harinath, the director of The Masons (a bar school and consulting company), who conceptualised the cocktail menu at Origami. Which explains why you might find gochujang in your whisky, and ingredients like umeshu

Bursting with flavours This new resto bar serves soup on paper and engages the palate with innovative combinations. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

plum, yuzu, matcha, shiso leaves, truffle oil, soy sauce, and shiitake mushroom in your drinks. Starting this weekend, there will be small martini trolleys making their way to each table where the bartender will create a cocktail for the guests. Our guests can see techniques like throwing, where the martini is aerated, it's almost similar to the filter coffee making process," says Harinath. The starters arrive at a quick pace. The chicken yakitori,



served on a grill, has a rich, smoky flavour, and is tender. What follows is crispy shiitake mushroom, drizzled with black and white sesame seeds. It is average at best, with a goopy sweet coating. The spicy chicken Shanghai potstickers are so smooth they almost slither off the chopsticks. But so good, we polish off the entire portion. The savoury meat filling with hints of Sichuan pepper is fiery, and pairs well with our next drink that tastes of peanut butter and is rightfully named Nutty.

Next, we ditch our cutlery to make a happy mess with the mushroom bao that has lettuce flowing out. The bao is soft and the first mouthful reveals a crunchy mushroom patty with cheesy insides. As Joey Tribbiani says, "What's not to like?"

We end the meal with sticky rice and glossy chicken teriyaki and yet another cocktail, Kaboom. With gin, apricot, honey syrup, and agave nectar, this smells like a freshly mowed lawn. Refreshing!

Time for desserts. First, a Japanese cotton cheese cake that melts in the mouth. The matcha ice cream, though beautiful green in colour, has an overpowering matcha flavour – slightly bitter, and vegetal, with a dash of sweetness.

And now we are finally done. But the rain insists we stay and enjoy another drink, explore unusual combinations, while letting the music transport us back to the last decade.

A meal for two costs ₹2,000 plus taxes. Origami is located at Green Meadows Resort, 4, 364 A, Anna Salai, Palavakkam.

Baked and loaded

The Madras Bake Sale returns with 25 home bakers, trending desserts, live music, and puppies

Sangita Rajan
sangitarajan.pb@thehindu.co.in

One of the most popular genres of content on social media will invariably be food, more specifically desserts. Videos of batter being mixed, melting chocolate, rising puff pastries, icing being piped on perfectly baked pastries will always take the cake. There is something new trending every week that everyone wants to get their hands on. Born from this desire was the idea to host a bake sale for the women home bakers to give the city a taste of the internet.

The Madras Bake sale, hosted by entrepreneurs Maaria Tanveer, Cindana Manickavel and Priya Anup, coming up with the third edition, is a platform that elevates promising home bakers. "We're doing this because these home bakers don't have big budgets for advertising and social media. They also might not have knowledge of taking high quality photos and videos," says Maaria, who is a home baker herself. "This event will take the customers to the source.

After two successful editions of the bake sale, this year's event will feature 25 home bakers like Cranked Palette, Hew and Frost, Amtams and more. "We curate the sale in such a way that no two bakers are selling the same goodies," she says, adding that some bakers will also be selling pet-friendly baked goods as the event is open to pets.

The sale will also play host to a pet adoption drive by iadopt.in, a Chennai-based pet adoption organisation.

There will also be stalls set up by Magic Colours and Sugar Shine India, manufacturers of baking accessories and decorations.

The event will be elevated with live music by three artistes – Band Souled Out, and solo artistes Anjali Manoharan and



Sweet treats (Above) Baked goods from the Madras Bake Sale 2024; (Below) Live musical performances. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Aanchal Bordoloi. Since the goods get sold out quickly, the event will also have stalls by commercial outlets like Mexe, Boba Baba and more.

When asked what to look out for at the bake sale, Maaria says, "Ironically, at bake sales, savoury items do very well because those are few among the many desserts. But this year, the pistachio kunafa chocolate is trending." In 2024, this

dessert took the Internet by storm. It did not take much time for bakers in the city to jump on the trend and create their own iterations with this combination of salty, nutty and sweet tastes. "This is going to be big this time. I have seen bakers make chocolates, brownies, and even dream cakes with this khunafa pistachio."



At Chettinad Sath Sadhana School, Adyar on January 5 from 11am to 6pm.

Chef-tested weddings

Ananyaa Desikan
ananyaa.d@thehindu.co.in

K Damodharan, popularly known as Chef Damu, is a television personality, teacher, author, and holder of three world records. As of December 30, he adds another feather to his cap as a wedding planner. Through Chef Damu's Suvaiyin Sangeetham - Caters and Events, he aims to not only cater weddings but also plan them.

"I have been cooking for 35 years now, and during that time, I've catered about 10 weddings. When organising my daughter's wedding, we saw the potential and challenges of wedding planning," shares chef Damu.

The menu features event staples as well as many of chef Damu's signature recipes like vegetarian mutton biryani, vazhaikai vanjaram fry and more.

Chef Damu's services extend beyond food. From décor and finding a priest to organising musicians and even planning the couple's honeymoon, his team handles multiple aspects.

The packages - Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum - include dishes from various parts of India, along with Pan Asian and Continental options. "We have expert cooks from across the country. For sweets, we have mithaiwalas from Kolkata to prepare authentic Bengali desserts," he says. "In addition to meals, we'll also provide *seer batchanam* (sweets and savouries exchanged by the bride's and groom's families), and *kattu saadham* (mixed rice) packages."

To book Chef Damu's Suvaiyin Sangeetham - Caters and Events, contact 9840083111 or visit chefdamu.com.



New beginnings Chef Damu at the launch. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



The festival to-go bag

The Hindu Lit for Life is on January 18 and 19 but the excitement is not relegated to the weekend. Here is everything you can do in the run up to the event

Sanjana Ganesh
sanjana.g@thehindu.co.in

Booking a ride

Mobile libraries tend to elicit attention in neighbourhoods as they transform public streets into reading hotspots. *The Hindu's* mobile library on wheels will be cruising past areas in the city and halting at spots like Anna University, Anna Nagar Metro, VR Mall, Thiru. Vi. Ka Park, Alsa Mall and Arumbakkam metro until January 19. Public can hop on and off, take a look at the collection in the library and donate books.

Learning Muthiah's Madras

Historian S Muthiah's writings brought the Madras of yore to life. Through him, we learnt about why British administrator Sir Thomas



Munro's statue occupies the prime spot on the arterial Anna Salai. We also know of the sweet treats and imported goods available at Spencer' Mall because of his writings in *The Hindu's* Madras Miscellany column. Historian V Sriram brings the writings of the famous chronicler of Madras through a heritage walk on will begin from Gymkhana Club gate and will conclude at Spencer Plaza on January 4.

Magic under the moonlight

Watch films that educate and delight in equal measure on a screen whose backdrop is Chennai's vast, endless sea. Previous editions of this event have elicited enthusiastic responses with children and adults alike, lounging by the sand and casually enjoying classic Tamil hits. This

A pacy start

Do fitness resolutions that involve running feature high up on your 2025 list? Let these Chennai runners above the age of 60 inspire you

among the first couples to run together," Malthy laughs, recalling their beginnings. They have participated in over 23 half marathons, and most recently, ran at the 50th year of the Berlin Marathon in September 2024. An active part of the Bessie Flyers chapter of Chennai Runners, Capt Dr Narasimha makes a strong case for people looking to start running to join a group. "You will not be conscious of your pace or your tiredness - the pitter patter of feet running all around you will get you into

the groove. Couples who can, especially, should run together. It is a great bonding activity," he says.

Malthy, a clinical psychologist adds that running as a part of a group has taught them patience, concentration, discipline, better decision making, and most importantly social skills.

"Except for stray dogs in a few areas, Chennai has been especially safe for women to run, in my experience. When I used to train for full marathons in peak summer, I used to start running by

Run like the wind (Clockwise from far left) Selvanayagam, Baba Arasan, Malthy and Capt Dr Narasimha. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

myself from as early as 3am, and I have never faced any issues," she says.

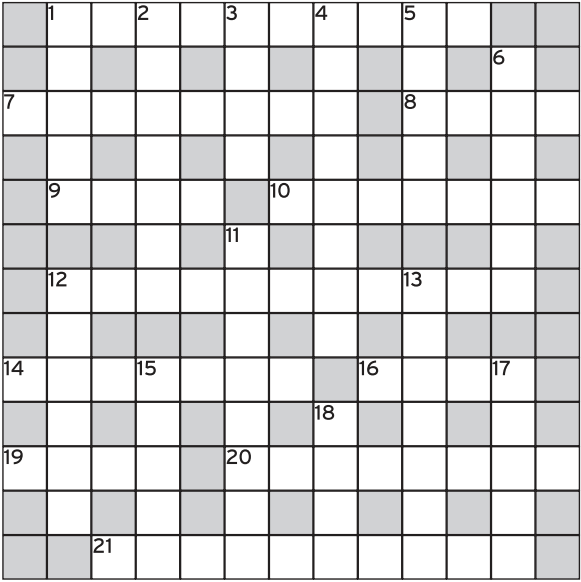
The first few months of the year already seem packed with marathons for runners like Baba Arasan, a retired Forest Department official. On Friday, the long distance runner will head out of the city for the Hyderabad airport run. "I have participated in over 300 marathons so far and half marathons are my favourite," he says, having been running for over fifty years now. From the Vasai Virar marathon in Maharashtra to the Tata Steel marathon in Kolkata, Baba has been travelling to run quite a bit, and rattles off a list of his best timings and finishes. "In the 2019 Chennai Marathon, I finished the half marathon in 1 hour, 25 minutes and 26 seconds," he says.

For people across ages who want to get started on their running journey, Yasir Sultan, president, Chennai Runners says they have a yearly couch-to-5k program which is free of cost. This, he says, has been extremely useful for senior citizens and the Chennai Runners has seen an uptick in people above the age of sixty sign up. "Instead of them randomly trying to run, we guide them on what to do and have mentors and coaches on board. Once their training is done, they are absorbed into one of the sixteen chapters we have, and they can run all-year-long," Yasir explains.

For people looking to be bitten by the running bug this year, we ask these veteran runners for tips and tricks.

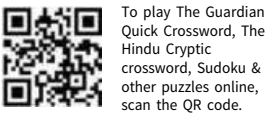
Selvanayagam, Narasimha, and Malthy, all unanimously preach waking up early, given how Chennai's hot climate makes it impossible to go out for a run in the late morning or afternoon. "I also advocate for everyone getting a medical check up done before they start, and with running, I believe that a proper method should be followed. Start with simple mobility and stretching, then walk and jog and slowly pick up from there," Malthy says, adding "Most importantly, running teaches you how to listen to your body."

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13623



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- Across**
- 1 Complete (10)
 - 7 Uninterrupted (8)
 - 8 Wonky (4)
 - 9 Promote (4)
 - 10 Introduction (7)
 - 12 Wrongly interpret - I censor smut (anag) (11)
 - 14 Give evidence (7)
 - 16 Increases (4)
 - 19 Let the cat out of the bag (4)
 - 20 Hypocritical (3-5)
 - 21 Parallel to the ground (10)
- Down**
- 1 Toady (5)
 - 2 Greek goddess of divine vengeance (7)
 - 3 Addict (4)
 - 4 Woman teacher (8)
 - 5 Lag (5)
 - 6 Active grievance (6)
 - 11 It's thrown at newly-weds (8)
 - 12 Breakfast dish (6)
 - 13 Aglow (7)

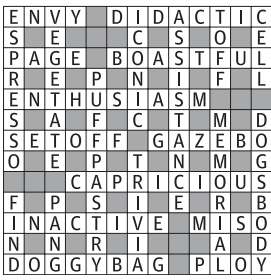


To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 15 Verboten (5)
- 17 Words used in a magical incantation (5)
- 18 Non-starter (2-2)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated January 9, 2025.

Solution No. 13622



edition on January 11 at Marina beach promises the same.

Getting schooled

When stories gain voices, small worlds that are tucked in one's imagination end up coming alive. *The Hindu* aims to do the same. Storytelling workshops across city schools will be held between January 6 and 8.

A room full of stories

Children's literature in India is currently experiencing a boom. A panel discussion on the topic The World of Indian Children's Books/ Pictures and Words: The Story of Children's Books in India will be held on January 5 with moderators Amrita Patwardhan, and writers Sandhya Rao, Radhika Menon and Shailaja Menon. Titled Tales and Talks, this event will take place at the British Council at 5pm.

Get quizzical

This new year, get ready with sharpened pencils and a sharper mind. If you have encountered information about the authors who have been part of the previous editions of The Hindu's Lit for Life and their works, here is your chance to win prizes. The quiz will feature on *The Hindu's* website and print editions. Keep a look out.

Sign up for the events at @hindulitforlife on Instagram. The Hindu Lit For Life is in association with Christ University. Associate partners: RR Donnelley, Blue Star, NITTE, Uttarakhnd Tourism. Bookstore partner: Crossword. Water partner: Repute

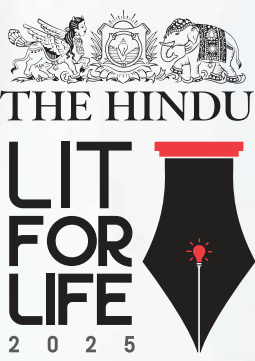


To register for the event, visit <https://newsth.live/LFL2025ED> or scan the QR code.

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TALES AND TALKS

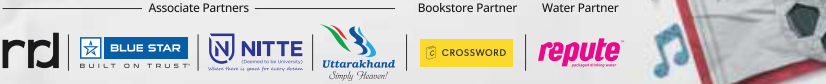


Join us for an insightful panel discussion on the evolution of children's literature in India, where words and illustrations create impactful stories for young readers. Moderated by **Amrita Patwardhan**, with panellists **Sandhya Rao, Radhika Menon, and Shailaja Menon.**

On January 5, 2025
From 5 pm to 6 pm
at British Council, Chennai



Scan the QR code to register



Music composer Harris Jayaraj's son, Samuel Nicholas, who has debuted with independent single, 'Aiyaiyo', is looking at taking up film composing too

Srinivasa Ramanujam
srinivasa.r@thehindu.co.in

The year was 2001. AR Rahman was ruling the roost, not just in Tamil film music but also dishing out memorable albums like *Lagaan* in Hindi. Ilaiyaraaja was still sought-after, working on films like Vikram-starrer *Kasi* and the Vijay-Suriya-starrer *Friends*. And that is when *Minnale* hit screens. The sound of 'Maddy O Maddy' echoed in theatres, even as the melodic strains of 'Vaseegara' captured the imagination of many. Gautham Menon had arrived as a filmmaker, and with him, brought along an exciting new composer called Harris Jayaraj.

Minnale released in February 2021, when Harris



Fresh tunes
Samuel Nicholas with his father Harris Jayaraj. THAMODHARAN B, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The sound of home

was looking forward to becoming a father. When he was basking in the success of the film, he became a father to a baby boy named Samuel Nicholas. "I was a toddler then and was oblivious to the impact this film had on our lives," says Samuel, "Growing

up, I used to take *Minnale* for granted, but as the days have gone by, I am revisiting these albums and wondering how this person packed so many good songs in it," he says, referring to the early work of his father.

The right noise

At Studio H, the composer's studio-cum-residence in Valasaravakkam, Samuel Nicholas has had the best seat in the house, during the making of many superhit Tamil film albums. "In my formative years, I didn't see my father much, because he was working day and night on his films," he recalls.

Once he reached an age where he "would behave", Samuel would be let in for a recording session but with a strict dictat: to stay completely silent. "I would observe who's coming and visiting. Sometimes, just to amuse himself, he would record my voice." Samuel's first music

contribution was in Suriya-starrer *7aum Arivu*, where Harris recorded a chorus of children. He has since, been actively involved in many film albums, assisting his father on musical work and working on his own tunes.

Keep it young

Samuel Nicholas is 23 now. Much like his father did way back in the 2000s, Samuel also harbours dreams of making it big in the music industry. The first big step towards that is his recently-released independent single, 'Aiyaiyo'. Part of the Think Indie series and directed by Sanaa Mariam, the catchy melody - a song that Samuel has composed, sung and danced in as well - is representative of all things young.

"I am very camera shy. The real challenge in 'Aiyaiyo' was dancing in front of the camera," he recalls.

Samuel is aware of the expectations from an artiste in today's Instagram-first world, where one has to, apart from composing and singing, also



The real challenge in my independent single, 'Aiyaiyo', was dancing in front of the camera. We tried to rehearse my reactions to things as little as we could and still try to nail the expressions.

SAMUEL NICHOLAS

package a music video with a dance hook step to go with it.

"I think it's exciting. I'm going for dance classes too, apart from improving my music. My father regretted not learning to sing, and so he pushed me to train my vocals. In recent live shows, where I played the guitar and sang, we tried a choreographed dance-music routine for which the response was overwhelming," says Samuel, who is also inspired by AR Rahman and Yuvan Shankar Raja, apart from being influenced majorly by his own father's work.

He is now listening a lot to dance music and Anirudh's tracks, a composer that he feels "is killing it" at the moment. "I love 'Chaleya'."

Samuel is not the average struggling music composer; he sits in a posh music studio, probably one of the best in Asia, and has access to the best of singers. All this because he is Harris Jayaraj's son, a fact he repeatedly acknowledges in conversation. How does he react when people call him out on grounds of nepotism? "I would totally agree with them," he states. "But I also think it's not a bad thing if it results in good music. It's also bizarre that while children of doctors and lawyers are encouraged to take up the same professions, children of film industry professionals are not looked at in the same way. At the end of the day, whoever makes good content will be rewarded."



The story goes on Nagarjun Sharma, Sandeep Sunkad, Rukmini Vasanth, Srinidhi Bengaluru and Chethan D Souza during the The Hindu's Kannada cinema roundtable 2024 at the Courtyard in Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Content rules

The Kannada cinema roundtable 2024: Actor Rukmini Vasanth, directors Sandeep Sunkad and Srinidhi Bengaluru, lyricist Nagarjun Sharma and stunt choreographer Chethan D Souza discuss their year

Vivek MV
vivek.mv@thehindu.co.in

Rukmini Vasanth, an emerging actor from the Kannada film industry, felt Upendra's directorial *UI* was the standout moment in Kannada cinema in 2024. "The fact that he was returning to the big screen as a director after almost a decade got me very curious about the movie. His films have a unique philosophy that makes you think," she said.

Rukmini was part of the *The Hindu* Kannada Cinema roundtable at the Courtyard in Bengaluru, along with directors Sandeep Sunkad (*Shakhahaari*) and Srinidhi Bengaluru (*Blink*), stunt choreographer Chethan D Souza and lyricist Nagarjun Sharma. The mention of Upendra's film, which hit the screens on December 20, 2024, spurred a discussion on film literacy among Kannada audiences.

"During the pandemic, people got exposed to films from across the world. Nowadays, they are intolerant to poor content," said Chethan. Echoing his thoughts, Nagarjun noted, "Audiences are smarter than filmmakers. They are decoding every dialogue and lines from a song," he said.

With a decent mix of content-oriented films and big-screen spectacles, it was an interesting year for the film

industry. Nagarjun wrote the lyrics for the viral songs from *Bheema*, composed by Charan Raj. "I had lots to take away from the film's album. The emotions differ from one song to another. The idea was to balance the serious aspect of the song with a funky tune and lyrics."

For Rukmini, after an intense portrayal of lost love in Hemanth M Rao's *Sapta Sagaradaache Ello* films in 2023, starring in star vehicles such as *Baanadaryall*, *Bagheera*, and *Bhairathi Ranagal* was about reaching a wider audience. "I know that there are people who don't watch romantic dramas. For them, a superhero film or a star-driven movie is a must-watch. That's why *Bagheera* and *Bhairathi Ranagal* interested me. Despite my characters having less contribution to the star, I aimed to make them memorable," she explained.

The action in *Bagheera* set a new benchmark in the Kannada film industry. "We wanted the fights to be slick and close to reality," said Chethan. The punches, effects, and fallings had to look natural. We had to convince people

that he was a common man fighting for justice," he described. On the contrary, in *Max*, the blockbuster film starring Sudeep, the focus was on his screen presence and style during the fight scenes. "That's Sudeep's strength. His fans come for it," he added.

The thrillers *Shakhahaari* and *Blink* received immense praise from critics and film buffs from across the country after it dropped on OTT platforms. "I didn't make the film for the OTT space. It was because of the lack of theatres and immense competition from different films that we had to shift to the streaming space."

Srinidhi had a similar story to tell. "Like for *Shakhahaari*, my film *Blink* had demand but we couldn't allot screens for the audience. Soon after the release, the IPL and general elections were major obstacles. After its OTT premiere, we got a huge demand for the Telugu-dubbed version."

Nagarjun, who worked on the Kannada hit independent song 'Mayavi' with Sonu Nigam and Sanjith Hegde for Salim-Sulaiman's YouTube Channel, said he aims to do more such projects. "In independent music, we need to write a complete story and convey it through a song. I loved that process."



Return of The Family Man

Actor Manoj Bajpayee has wrapped filming for the third season of *The Family Man*. Created by Raj & DK, the popular spy series is set to return next year on Prime Video. Manoj, who plays Srikant Tiwari in the series, posted a picture on Instagram and wrote, "Shooting wrapped!! For Family Man 3! Aur thoda intezaar." The third season will witness the return of Priyamani, Sharib Hashmi, Ashlesha Thakur and Vedant Sinha, amongst others. Gul Panag is also a part of the new season.



Nemali arrives

The makers of Vishnu Manchu's pan-Indian film, *Kannappa*, have unveiled the first look of actor Preity Mukundhan. The poster features Preity as Princess Nemali. *Kannappa*, an attempt to tell the story of a Shiva devotee, features Mohanlal, Prabhas and Akshay Kumar in prominent roles. Kajal Aggarwal, Sarathkumar and Tamannaah Bhatia are also set to play important roles. The film, directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, is scheduled to hit theatres on April 25, 2025.

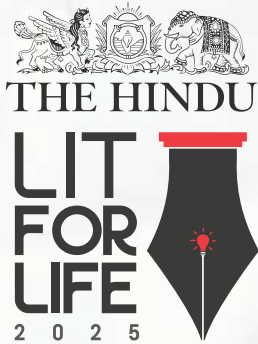
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