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GENELIA ON THE MAGIC OF CINEMA P4

S Poorvaja

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There is something about the high you experience, watching an edge-of-the-seat victory in a sports movie on the big screen. Closer home however, the sands of Besant Nagar beach that has several teams come together to play Ultimate Frisbee through the year has an inspiring, and almost equally cinematic story to tell.

At the TRIO Invitational Tournament 2025 held in Kuala Lumpur earlier this year, Flywild, one of Chennai's most promising Ultimate Frisbee clubs clinched the gold, becoming the first club team from India to win an international tournament. Facing off players from different countries including Indonesia, China, Japan, Thailand, and USA, Flywild played a well-fought final against the team from the Philippines and emerged victorious, in what was also the club's first international tournament participation.

Sedric Emmanuel, the team's captain, says they initially lost two matches and won one, which meant their fourth match was to decide if they would make it to the quarter-finals. "While we play with no pressure back home in Chennai, this was a lot more challenging. We motivated each other as a team and got through," he says. Once they were in the quarter-finals, their winning streak continued.

The tournament was a culmination of four months of practice, and special camps.

"This was the first international travel experience for many other members," says Siva Raman, who coached the team and topped the stats board in the tourney as the player with the most goals and assists. "We took this as a challenge, and decided to create history for Ultimate in India," he adds.

Paul Pradeep, founder of Puyal, an Ultimate club in Chennai who was also Flywild's manager for the TRIO tournament says that many players who take to



We are the champions

Flywild, one of Chennai's top Ultimate Frisbee clubs, becomes the first Indian club team to win an international tournament. We meet the inspiring athletes behind this feat

playing Ultimate in Chennai, and some who went on this tournament came from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Team captain Sedric who is 23-years-old was job-hunting in the run-up to the tournament, and had also suffered a significant financial setback. "For the TRIO invitational, the Ultimate community and my team helped me secure funds. We are a family, a team of brothers," says the player, whose father is an auto driver.

The sight of grown-up 'annas' diving into the sand, and throwing around a disc

nearly 14 years ago is something Akash Palani still cannot forget.

The Ultimate community came together to fund and help him complete his college education, to become a physical education trainer. "I learnt at a young age what 'spirit of the game' means thanks to Ultimate, and this has guided my life throughout," says the 24-year-old player. His teammate and a gymnastics coach, P Neelakandan says that being introduced to the sport at a young age immensely helped him with exposure. "I feel that since we

do not play for money, we do not fight, and stick together," he adds.

Given that Ultimate thrives on a sport played for passion across the country, many players juggle full-time jobs and make it to practice sessions through the week. S Santhosh, who works as a delivery representative with Swiggy says he finishes his work shifts from 7am to 6pm, and then heads to practice, which goes on till 10pm.

According to Ben Ong, tournament director, winning ahead of the usual Asian powerhouses that are Japan, the Philippines and Singapore

Discs that soar Flywild (in pink) at the TRIO Invitational Tournament 2025. KANG KIT

has put India on everyone's radar now.

"This is the first time a team from India has come this far in a tournament in Malaysia. Many teams that they beat on their way to the gold medal have already told me they want to come back, and look forward to playing the Flywild players again," he says.

This unprecedented win has given the Ultimate community in Chennai, and across the country, much to be enthused about. "I was part of a team from India that went to Malaysia in 2011 for a tournament. It has taken us 14 years to get that gold medal," says Abhinav Vinayak Shankar, a senior player and mentor with Flywild. Abhinav, who saw the young Flywild team clinch the gold as a spirit director for the tournament, says it was very inspiring to see the team as the underdogs, adapt to the local conditions, work together, and rise up to the challenges.

"In the past, Flywild has reached the finals in several tournaments in India, and has fallen short. To see the team seize the opportunity like they did in Malaysia; this is truly what sport is all about," he says.

Meet the masters

The sun is beating down on Besant Nagar beach, and while people are choosing to sit or stand under the trees nearby, a group of women is hard at work – deftly passing a frisbee, and sprinting across the sand.

This all-women team, the Team India Masters Women, has players from different cities including Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Kochi, Mumbai and Chennai, who have come together for their monthly camp in Chennai in the run-up to the World Beach Ultimate Championships (WBUC) in Portimão, Portugal, from November 16 to 22.

"This is the first time that India is sending an all-women team in the Masters category for an international tournament. In the women's Masters category, all players have to be above the age of 30, and we have players between the ages of 30 and 50 years," says Smithi Manickam, team coach.

Smithi, says their focus is on creating a strong statement at the world championships. "It is also important that the players have a great campaign overall. Many of our women players have a host of responsibilities, including careers and families, and they are juggling all of this with their love for the sport," she says.



Who run the world Team India Masters Women during a practice session in Chennai. R RAVINDRAN



Srivilliputhur is a personal favourite; it serves three types of sambar. I also fondly remember the times eating butter dosas late at night at a small hotel near a provisions market in Salem."

In Chennai, he is a regular visitor to Pondy Bazaar's Shri Balajee Bhavan for its onion rava dosa and Rayar's Mess for its unique chutney.

Fan for life For many Chennaites, meals during lunchtime is most satisfying. At

Chennai's Sangeetha, they are priced only at ₹40, till July 24. This limited meal, which also includes a special vada and sweet apart from regular lunch offerings, will be on from 11am to 4pm at select outlets on select dates.

This has seen a lot of patronage; the Parry's branch saw more than 2,000 walk-ins for this offer on the first day. While the meals might be sought-after this season, there are a few people – like TV personality and actor, Bosskey – for whom this hotel has been an everyday haunt



Food for thought Sangeetha restaurant's P Suresh with his daughter, Sanjana Suresh. AKHILA EASWARAN

for the past three years. Every day, at 10am and 6pm, you can find him at the RA Puram branch of Sangeetha – sharing a laugh with a group of friends, some of whom he would have made just that day. "My breakfast is a combination of pongal, dosa, coffee and laughter," says Bosskey, who is friends with everyone at the branch, from the manager to the support staff. He jokes, "Thanks to my daily visits to the hotel, I may soon be entitled to an award for my association with Sangeetha, titled 'Sangeetha...Gallaa Nidhi!'".

For people like Bosskey and many other Chennaites, Sangeetha is more than a hotel. It is an emotion. And that's exactly what the folks running the restaurant intend to be grateful for, as they turn 40. "This (₹40) offer is not about making money. It is about celebration. It is about giving back to the people of Chennai who have given us so much love over the years," says P Suresh, who runs Sangeetha along with his daughter Sanjana Suresh, P Rajagopal and Anirudh Rajagopal.

The ₹40 limited meal offer is on till July 24 at various branches. (July 17 at Santhome, Urappakkam, and Egmore).



What's for lunch today?

Hotel Sangeetha opened in 1985 at Parry's. This month, it celebrates its 40-year-anniversary with a hearty meal and retro prices

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What connects MS Subbalakshmi, KJ Yesudas and a popular Chennai vegetarian eatery?

The answer is Sangeetha, one of Chennai's iconic vegetarian brands that has completed 40 years in the food business. With 34 branches in Chennai and 23 abroad currently, Sangeetha has braved competition and inflation to enjoy continued patronage among the city's foodies.

Known for its hot, crisp masala dosas and meals, Sangeetha's journey started small in Armenian Street, Parry's, where P Suresh set shop.

His father, Padmanabha Pothi, had had considerable experience in the restaurant business, having run hotels in Thiruvananthapuram and later in Chennai's West Mambalam

(Hotel Suprabath) and Broadway (Hotel Swathi).

Suresh's dream was to become a photographer but the hotel business that his father was passionate about kept drawing him. Their 1985 outing at Parry's was named Sangeetha (which means 'music'), as a hat-tip to legendary singers MS Subbalakshmi and KJ Yesudas. "These singers gave so many people peace of mind with their voices. We wanted to do the same through our food offerings," says Suresh, who subsequently became closely associated with the founder of Saravana Bhavan, P Rajagopal (known as Annachi), whom he considers one of his gurus.

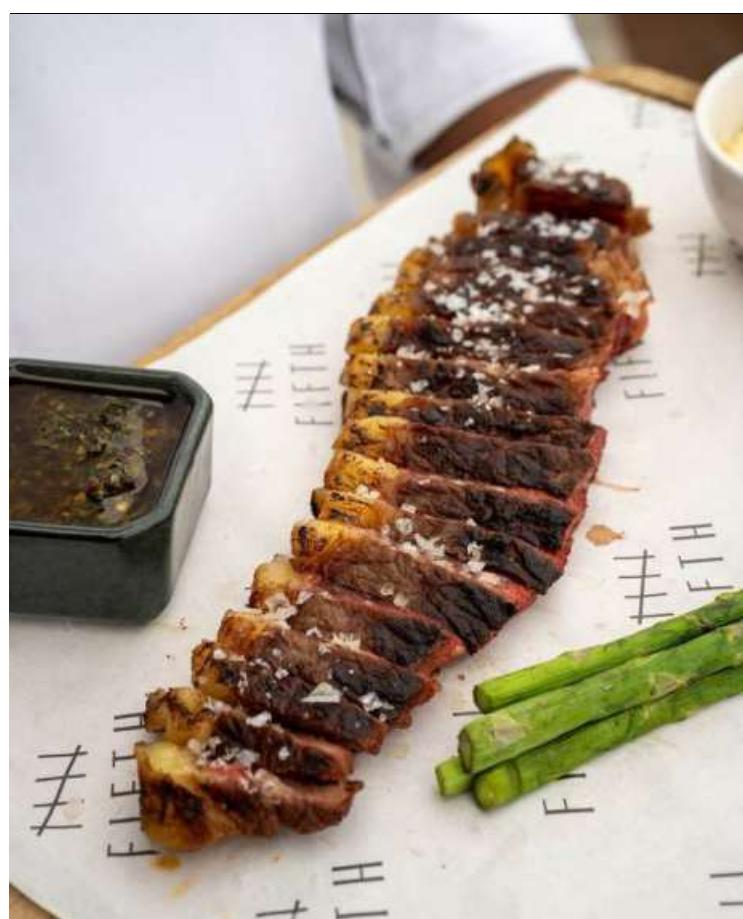
Suresh, whose day is filled with meetings and inspections at various branches, is a foodie himself. "I have travelled the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu and eaten in various places. Kathiravan's Hotel in

Srivilliputhur is a personal favourite; it serves three types of sambar. I also fondly remember the times eating butter dosas late at night at a small hotel near a provisions market in Salem."

Fan for life For many Chennaites, meals during lunchtime is most satisfying. At



Food for thought Sangeetha restaurant's P Suresh with his daughter, Sanjana Suresh. AKHILA EASWARAN



A high steaks affair

Chennai's criminally under-utilised shoreline is now seeing a host of restaurants popping up by the sea. Fifth is one such

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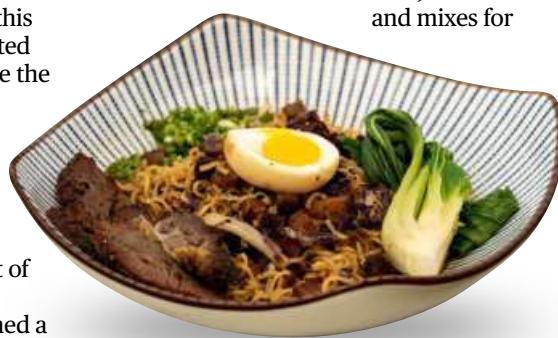
Have you heard of this idea of de-centering romance? A host of young millennials and Gen Z are done trying to build lives around their lovers. Dating is expensive in this economy. The youth would rather build friendships where they can just be, while spending their finite disposable income on an end-of-the-week treat for themselves. I, for one, have de-centered romance and have instead decided to focus all my energies on finding the perfect bite of steak. It is all the meat-cute I need.

At the culmination of this new adventurous dating journey between meat and I, is Fifth on Palavakkam. The bar-cum-restaurant overlooking the sea, is quite easily one of the most romantic spots in the city. The final table, offering a view of the glistening ocean right by the swimming pool of what was originally a villa on this once-rarely frequented stretch, is likely to be the spot where anxious partners profess their love with rings. I am here, ready to acquaint myself with a gorgeous rib-eye cut of imported wagyu.

Fifth, which opened a

month ago, has come up in Palavakkam at a time of an immense hospitality boom in the area. With restaurants like Bask, Origami and Paris Plage packing crowds on the weekend, it is evident that people are keen to drive out, eat a good meal and sip on a drink, with or without the alcohol, and catch the breeze.

Aishwarya Selvaraj, a dermatologist whose content is fairly popular on Instagram, has always enjoyed food, particularly meat. The doctor-entrepreneur had earlier begun L'amour, a dessert studio in Nungambakkam, but shut the venture down last year. She and her husband wanted to continue being in the business and realised that the ECR was seeing a rise in visitors, which is when Fifth was born. Along with Rajesh Kumar, principal consultant, the trio worked their way through several tasting menus to finalise their selection. Rajesh says that they have prepared their own concentrates, sherberts and mixes for

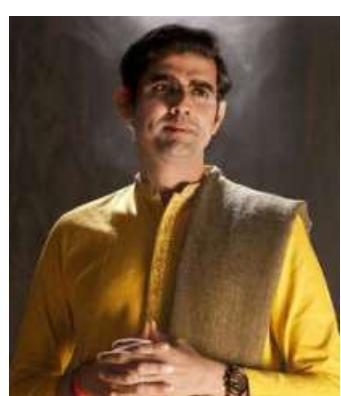


Fifth is at 21, MGR Salai, F Beach Road, Palavakkam. A meal for two costs ₹3,000. Call 9008245684 for details.

The meal ends with a gulab jamun in an Old Monk caramel. Since it is a tad too sweet, I keep the dish aside and lock eyes with what I originally came for.

Let romance be de-centered. Let it even perish. I'm alright. I have steak.

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Tuned in

An evening of soulful sounds and vibrant rhythms as Taalathma brings a unique blend of fusion music to the city. Presented by LK Charitable Trust, this concert features Sikkil Gurucharan in Jannal Oram, joined by an eclectic lineup of musicians – Sayee Rakshit on violin, Ganapathi on tabla, S

Muralikrishnan on drums, Shankar, Varun and Hari on keyboards, and Nigel on the bass guitar. Expect a seamless mix of classical and contemporary sounds on this musical evening. @TAG Auditorium, Mylapore. July 18, 6.45pm onwards. For tickets, call 9840046827.



Unspoken grief

Poochu presents the play *I Hate This*, written by David Hansen. The play is a moving account of one man's journey through grief following the sudden loss of his child to preeclampsia. Told with honesty and

quiet heartbreak, the play explores the unspoken weight of mourning, guilt, and the long road to acceptance. Directed by Denver Anthony Nicholas, featuring TM Karthik and Abinaya R. @Alliance Française, Nungambakkam. July 19, 4pm and 7pm. Tickets at allevents.in.



No rules, just vibes

At Bun Butter JAM, you can paint, strum, scribble or just stare at the wall, while you sip and chill. This art and anything jam offers a relaxed, come-as-you-are gathering where you can enjoy the vibe. Bring your own tools or just show up and soak it in. This is just a space to unwind and create if you feel like it. @Davrah Coffee, Alwarpet. July 19, 4pm to 7pm. For details, call 9176465151.

Bao buns by the beach (Left) The steak; (below) a kimchi cocktail; (inset) and a ramen bowl at Fifth. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



drinks that they hope add to the menu once their alcohol license is approved.

For now though, the light shines on the food. We begin with a host of appetisers including grilled gongura prawns, Seoul fried wings, gochujang soft shell crab, betel leaf beef, Punjabi chole hummus and avocado thokku.

The chole is creamed, then served with an oozing burrata

topped with spicy chilli oil, and tiny methi khakras.

Although the last sentence is a handful to type,

the dish in itself is not a mouthful, making it an addictive snack.

The prawns, in a mild butter sauce, topped with bits of burnt garlic, with a whiff of the smell of the ocean from the table,

makes for a perfect bite. The same however, cannot be said of the soft-shell crab which is unfortunately covered in a sweet-sauce akin to gochujang but mostly tastes of fried oil.

Three appetisers stand out – their duck pastrami with sliced duck encased in a soft bun; the tender meat wrapped in a neat, contrasting beet leaf; and the humble mango chunda with bits of brie, atop well-buttered sourdough. Although a bowl full of fluffy white rice appears alongside a fragrant Kerala-style coconut milk-based prawn mappas curry, I pace myself because I know what is next.

Served on a cutting board with a selection of chimichurri, house jus, mashed potatoes and flaky Maldon sea salt, the wagyu rib-eye is meant to be eaten by cutting through the meat using a curated selection of knives made from various Indian wood. I chose the rosewood knife and cut through the beef. Buttery and indulgent, this cut of steak imported from Dubai, has the perfect char and an elevated depth thanks to the Santa Maria grill. Rajesh says that they have been booked out through the week and this steak has been in high demand. It is easy to understand why.

The meal ends with a gulab jamun in an Old Monk caramel. Since it is a tad too sweet, I keep the dish aside and lock eyes with what I originally came for.

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A culinary bridge Luchi with aloo dum and cholar dal; chingri malai curry; and amparor shorbot. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



generation before us who were involved in the kitchen, are slowly giving up, and the new generation is not able to keep up," he says.

At Park Brasserie, the team stays true to their Kolkata flagship.

The first course is a basket of luchi, served with a

Art beyond words

A panel discussion on using sign language and the need for greater inclusivity in the arts



Tune in (From left) Srivatsan Sankaran, Swetha Kulkarni, Dhinesh RP, and Haseena S. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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The recently concluded photography and art exhibition, Anaiavarum – Echoes of Heritage: A Celebration of Past and Inclusivity, by Madras Photo Bloggers, and jointly organised by the British Council, Nam Veedu Nam Oor Nam Kadhai, and the Madras Literary Society, held a panel discussion titled Sign Language as Art, focussing on the importance of using sign language and the need for greater inclusivity in the arts.

The panel featured deaf artist Swetha Kulkarni (artist and photographer), Haseena S (deaf stage performer), and Dhinesh RP (deaf filmmaker), who shared their experiences and the importance of representing deaf voices and perspectives. The discussion was moderated by Srivatsan Sankaran, founder of Madras Photo Bloggers and the Deaf Artist NFT Collective. The entire sign language programme was being interpreted by Roja A and Nithya Giri.

Swetha spoke on the importance of empowerment and positivity through her work, "I don't feel negative when someone gives me a negative comment, I feel it encourages me to do even better."

Haseena shared how she uses sign language, body language and facial expressions to convey emotion in her performances, "From childhood, I have been practising the songs by using the sign language in front of the

mirror. I know that this song is something which everyone enjoys. So, I want even a deaf person to enjoy and have the same feeling," says Haseena.

"I have been focussing on different stories, and converting them into sign language is how I want to support the community," says Dhinesh while talking about the strength and creative skills of the deaf community.

Dhinesh also pointed out the lack of awareness and accessibility in the film industry. As a solution, he suggested greater on-screen visibility for sign language interpreters, highlighting the need for more balanced representation, proposing a 50/50 screen presence alongside hearing actors, rather than the current imbalance where hearing individuals dominate.

The panellists elucidated on the difference between Indian Sign Language (ISL), British Sign Language (BSL), and American Sign Language (ASL), which are not mutually intelligible. Even though there is a mutual sign language used during specific times, like airline safety, most communication relies on country-specific sign language.

"This event embodies our commitment to championing inclusion, expanding access, and making our libraries vibrant, welcoming spaces," said Viji Thiagarajan, director, Libraries South Asia, British Council.

The event was presented with media support from The Hindu's Made of Chennai initiative

Kolkata comes calling

6 Ballygunge Place, the storied Bengali restaurant, arrives at Park Hyatt with a menu that honours home kitchens and forgotten recipes



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time-honoured Bengali dishes to a new audience.

At the helm of this pop-up is Chef Sushanta Sengupta, who co-founded 6 Ballygunge Place in 2003 with the vision of bringing Bengali cuisine out of the home and into the world of fine dining. "From the inception of our restaurant, we always felt like Bengalis will never eat Bengali food outside their home. But times are changing culturally partly because these dishes are not getting made at home anymore. The

main course continues with a silken chingri malai curry, made with coconut milk, (a nod, the chef says to Southeast Asian influence on Bengal's coastline).

It is paired with basanti pulao, and kosha mangsho, a slow-cooked mutton in a thick, dark gravy. Vegetarian options

flavourful bhaja masala aloo dum, and an unassuming cholar dal, which is sweet and savoury in equal measure. A raw green chilli and a slice of Gondhoraj lemon adds oomph to each bite.

The table is then laden with steaming rice, and bhortas – a til badamer bhorta made with sesame and peanuts, and a chingri (prawn) bhorta, both slicked with a pungent mustard oil, and best eaten with your hands. "These bhortas are very rustic and not all Bengali homes make it, but we picked it up from some districts. It is like a Bengali version of podi that you mix with rice and ghee in the South," says Chef Sushanta.

The main course continues with a silken chingri malai curry, made with coconut milk, (a nod, the chef says to Southeast Asian influence on Bengal's coastline). It is paired with basanti pulao, and kosha mangsho, a slow-cooked mutton in a thick, dark gravy. Vegetarian options

include delicate chanar kalia, chenna (ricotta) dumplings in a similar coconut milk curry and mochar paturi, banana flower, mustard and coconut, wrapped in banana leaf and grilled.

The meal closes on a sweet note, as all Bengali meals must. The indrani, mini rosogollas served in a thick creamy rabri, is topped with crunchy chopped nuts. Also try the festive nolen gur ice cream, infused with Bengal's beloved winter jaggery.

At a time when regional cuisine is increasingly finding pride of place on India's fine-dining map, 6 Ballygunge Place's visit to Chennai feels like a moment of culinary diplomacy – a cultural bridge laid gently, course by course.

Park Brasserie at Park Hyatt Chennai is hosting the pop-up by 6 Ballygunge Place from July 16 to 20. A meal for two costs ₹1,350. For reservations call 8939871440.

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Venues In Chennai

Cathedral Road: Dass Community Hall, No.55, Opp. Maris Hotel - 600086

Egmore: Guild Of Service, 18, Casa Major Road - 600088

Anna Nagar: D. K. Kalyana Mandapam, W-114, 3rd Avenue, Near Round Thana - 600040

Ambattur: Arul Jothi Kalyana Mandapam, 162 A, Redhills High Road - 600053

OMR: K.V.L Kalyana Mahal, 161, Opp. Accenture, Opp. Bharat Petroleum

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

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

(This Venue Starts From Tomorrow 18.07.2025, Friday)



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The arts come alive
It's time to celebrate public arts. Chennai's Mixtura Vizha, in its fourth edition, seeks to do exactly that. Audiences are invited to witness a vibrant mix of music, dance, theatre, and visual storytelling across three iconic public venues. Nine artistes and ensembles will perform simultaneously across the venues — but with a twist: the performance schedule is a surprise.

Attendees are encouraged to come with an open mind. Featured artistes include Adam Greig (Western classical piano performance), Adityanarayanan (Carnatic music), Brass Ensemble from the Sunshine Orchestra (Instrumental music), Charumathi Chandrasekar (Bharatanatyam), KS Thejal, a Tamil medley and dance fusion, Thilagavathi Palani (Kattaikkuthu) and Thedal Arts Theatre (Tamil play). Presented by SNS Arts Development Consultancy in collaboration with KM Music Conservatory, Chennai Metro Rail Limited, Greater Chennai Corporation, and The Glassbox, this year's edition reaffirms the festival's values of accessibility and artistic innovation. Entry is free for the events, to be held at Thiru Vi Ka Park (Shenoy Nagar), Central Station and Urban Square (Kathipara Junction) from 5pm to 7.30pm, July 18.



The way forward
Tamil cinema is spreading its wings. At the recently-held FeTNA International Film Festival (FeTNA), held earlier this month in Raleigh, North Carolina, 65 short films and 12 feature films were showcased. The highlights of the fest included a documentary on Veerappan, followed by a rare conversation with Nakkheeran Gopal, and Kolzhippannayin Chelladurai by Seenu Ramasamy. Apart from screenings, the festival also included sessions by directors Rajkumar Periasamy (*Amaran*) and Mari Selvaraj (*Vaazhai*), who discussed the various facets behind their projects. Conceived by the Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA), the film festival hopes to be a blueprint for Tamil cinema's prospects in the future. Next year's edition hopes to include a Kids Film section and a film market, among other things.

A new voice
Malayalam rapper and songwriter Hirandas Murali, popularly known as Vedan, is set to make his Tamil cinema debut in director Vijay Milton's upcoming Tamil-Telugu bilingual, tentatively titled *Production No. 5*. The film, produced by Rough Note Production, features Telugu actor Raj Tarun in the lead. Vedan, known for his politically charged and socially conscious music, rose to prominence with his debut track 'Voice of the Voiceless' in 2020. His work often addresses issues of caste, class, and marginalisation, and he has become a notable voice in Malayalam independent music. In 2024, his song 'Kuthanthram' from *Manjummel Boys* brought him mainstream recognition, accumulating over 50 million streams. The yet-untitled film, currently in its dubbing stage, also stars Ammu Abhirami, Bharath, Sunil, and Aari Arjunan.



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Thirteen years after she was seen in the Telugu film *Naa Isham* co-starring Rana Daggubati, Genelia Deshmukh returns to familiar territory with the Telugu-Kannada bilingual film *Junior*, releasing on July 18. Director Radhakrishna Reddy's film starring Kireeti Reddy and Sree Leela was offered to Genelia much before she was signed for Aamir Khan's *Sitaare Zameen Par*. Edited excerpts from a conversation:

Question: You were very young when you debuted in cinema. Did you grasp the enormity of the change it ushered into your life?

Answer: Cinema chose me, rather than the other way around. I had done an ad film, was spotted outside my college and chosen for a film. I came in like a curious kid in a candy store. I have always had

Tryst with films Genelia; and in a still from *Junior*, starring Kireeti and Sreela. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Genelia Deshmukh, who returns to Telugu cinema after 13 years with *Junior*, chats about her memorable films

this nervous energy that made me learn. I did not know the film language, had no idea what 'cut', 'take' or 'retake' meant.

Q: You would also listen to story narrations in the preferred language of the writer/director. How did you resonate with their narration, considering you weren't familiar with Telugu or Tamil initially?

A: I am not a linguistic person but I would pay attention and listen to understand the emotions. A few people would explain in English to make me feel comfortable. I'd tell them that they can narrate in their preferred language and I will get the vibe. I also took the effort to learn my lines in Telugu and Tamil. For instance, I learn two pages of dialogues for a scene in *Bommarillu*. I preferred it that way. I would never take the shortcut of saying 1,2,3,4,5... for the lip movements.

Q: You worked in *Shankar's Boys* and simultaneously did *Satyam* in Telugu, a relatively smaller film that also did well. Did you make those decisions or did you have someone who could be a sounding board?

A: I took the decisions, mostly. If I was lost, I would turn to Riteish.



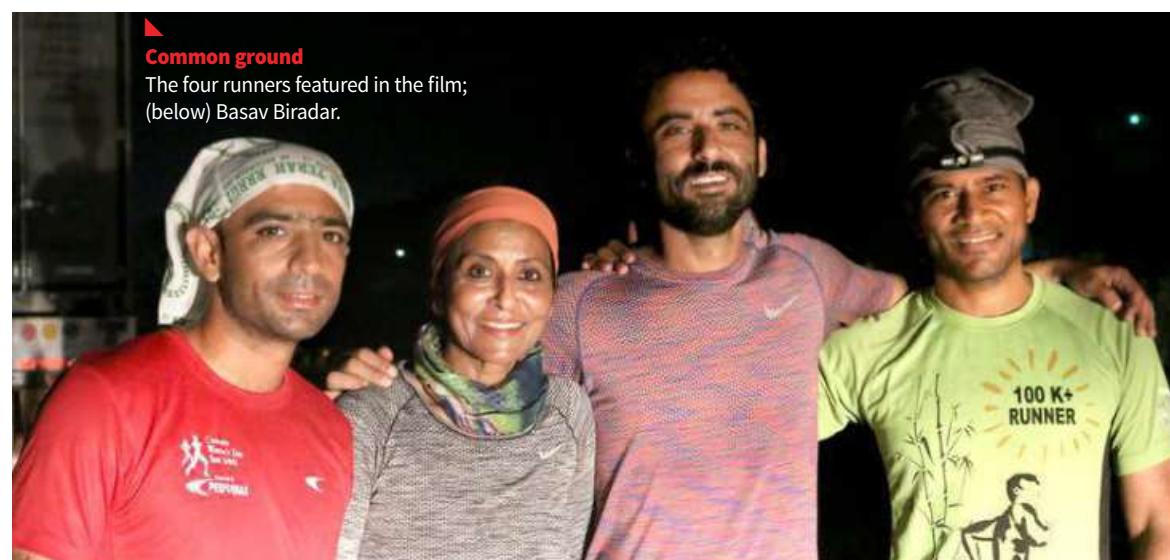
People did not know back then that we were dating. He had a much better understanding of cinema. I would primarily credit the directors and producers for casting me in such different characters and the audiences for accepting me. I have worked with stars and newcomers and treated my work with respect. Even today, I don't like to use the word 'fans'. I prefer well-wishers or audiences.

Q: What made you take up *Junior* after all these years?

A: I have a bucket list of characters that I want to portray and this character of a boss woman is one of them. It is a drama between a father and son (V Ravichandran and Kireeti), and I play a strong character; there is power play. When Radhakrishna narrated the story, I was surprised that he chose me. At the time, I was at home, not looking for work or auditioning. I've never done a dual language film and loved the process of filming both in Telugu and Kannada. I have a full-fledged, well etched out character. It is so tough for female actors to get such characters.

Q: After working 15-16 hours a day for several years, you took a sabbatical for a decade. Did you face withdrawal symptoms even though you enjoyed a new phase of life with marriage and motherhood?

A: I loved and still love acting, but the fame... not so much. I stepped back from acting but I became an entrepreneur and a producer, made mistakes and learnt. That experience helped me portray my character in *Junior* without making it appear caricatured. Even in *Sitaare Zameen Par*, I could understand the emotions of my character – of a wife who wants to have a child, the marital tussles and egos... Life experiences can enrich the portrayal of such character.



City run

Basav Biradar's latest film, *One Foot In Front Of The Other*, chronicles the journey of four runners who decide to run from Bengaluru to Chennai

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Basav Biradar says his new film, *One Foot In Front Of The Other*, which chronicles the journey of four runners who decide to run from Bengaluru to Chennai along the highway, is a political act. "There is a lot of individuality when people speak of ultra-running, including the loneliness of the long-distance runner and other clichés." And yet, what struck him about the people featured in the film, Chandra Gopalan, Manikandan Seran, Krishan Dhall and Santhosh Padmanabhan, was that "they see it as a community activity".

Unlike traditional marathoners, who train with particular races and outcomes in mind, these four runners, Basav says, did not have any such goals. "In the hypercapitalist world we live in, I found it interesting," says the Bengaluru-based writer, filmmaker and researcher. "They are not overselling individual achievements or looking at material gain, but as a lifestyle that brings people together." The four runners, all of whom are part of

Runner's High, a running community in Bengaluru, are also not ideologically restricted. "These people with different backgrounds find a common ground, not just in the sense of sport but life," says Basav, who believes that this community spirit is vital today, at a time when so much alienation exists. "It gives you hope."

The film opens with a shot of the runners traversing down the dark streets of Bengaluru at dawn, the city calm and silent, save for the occasional call of the koel and the soft, rhythmic thudding of



shoes against asphalt. From there, it moves to a scene depicting the planning behind the Bengaluru-Chennai run, "the first time they did it (a city-to-city run), but after that, they ran many more times like this," says Basav.

The narrative then segues into the backstories of each runner via interviews, interspersed with footage of the actual run. Not only do the interviews explore the runners' motivation, but they also offer insights into who they are, including their vulnerabilities, struggles, and moral frameworks through which they view the world. "I didn't want the film to look like a sporty, running film, but bring back the idea of regular people doing this sort of thing."

Besides the backstories, the film also highlights the relationship between the four runners. In one part of the film, for instance, we see Krishan struggling on the third day with blisters and pain, leading Basav to expect him to give up. "It looked untenable at that point: he was struggling." Krishan, however, did not, choosing instead to stay there and let the day pass. Basav says it taught him a great lesson on how to keep at it. "That specific incident offered an understanding of the kind of love they have for each other."

One Foot In Front Of The Other, which is self-funded, will have a preview screening on July 20 in Bengaluru. Basav, who has also sent the film for a couple of festivals, says he will make the film accessible post the festival circuit. "I am trying to find the best model for this film, and deciding where it can go."

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