



# metro PLUS

THE HINDU

**Chennai headbangs to a new sound as the metal music scene in the city evolves P2**

**VIJAY'S GHILLI RE-RELEASE IS A CELEBRATION P4**



## Ciclo Cafe

While Ciclo cafe is a name Chennaites are already familiar with, Scoops by Ciclo is new. Sanjana Ramesh, the brand's production head now doubles up as an ice cream maker.

There are 12 flavours that can be enjoyed in the Kotturpuram outlet. "I had almost 55 flavours to begin with and after multiple trials, reached here. To our surprise, the cookie dough ice cream, which was the last flavour we added, has become our best seller," shares Sanjana. It is creamy with chunks of chocolate and buttery dough.

"We have masala chai, coffee, and tiramisu flavours, all of which are Ciclo favourites. The tiramisu is one of our most popular desserts here so it was a no-brainer to include it," she adds. The masala chai ice cream is bold and has a punch, and comes doused in crumbly Parle G biscuits.

"We make our ice creams in small batches to keep things fresh. The ingredients we use to make the ice cream are of very good quality. The churning is from an Italian company

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## The Nakku Popsicles

At The Nakku Popsicles in Anna Nagar, sale begins only at 7pm and goes on beyond 1am. Tapping into nostalgia, this bright and colourful ice cream cart has become a popular spot. It is run by Gorikapudi Surya, who worked in the port as a crane operator, then discovered his passion for making frozen desserts last year.

"When you think of ice creams, it is always a scoop over a cone or in a cup. If not this, you have popsicles that are water-based. I saw this gap in the market as a great opportunity to become an entrepreneur. I wanted it to be a cart rather than a dine-in so found this design online," shares Surya.

We try their popular favourites, lemon cheese and triple choc. They are vibrant even without the use of colourants. While the lemon-flavoured stick is bright, creamy and subtly sour, the triple chocolate is smooth made with Belgian dark chocolate. These desserts are stored at -22 degrees Celsius and are torched before they are served. "The torching is not a gimmick although that is something our customers enjoy filming. When it is too cold, you can't taste anything. We bring the temperature down a bit so that you get a burst of flavour in the first lick itself," Surya says.

Toppings are sold separately and the crevices on the surface of the treat improve the cling factor.

*The Nakku Popsicles is at 10th Main Road, Anna Nagar. They are priced between ₹70 and ₹150*

## Sanjana Ganesh

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The wardens and teachers of Besant Nagar's Avvai Home TVR Girls' Higher Secondary School are insistent about preserving the sanctity of lunches and dinners at this school-cum-boarding.

On days when food is delayed by a few minutes though, a concert of cacophony brews. Students like A Kaviya, hold their plates as one would, the parai, and begin with simple beats. Their *vaai paadu* (vocal rhythms) spill out through spoons, and fingers become their *kutchi* (sticks). "I have broken pots at home because of banging a tune on them," she says.

During moments like this, the canteen hears booming percussive sounds – *thaku-ku-tha*, being the most basic of the *vaai paadu* holding the instrumentalists together. A symphony ensues.



Moving to the rhythm Parai attam performers from Avvai Home TVR Girls School. S SHIVA RAJ

## To the beat of the parai

An all-girls parai group from a school in Besant Nagar drums up a beat that is impossible to resist



## Strictly Desserts

Not too far away, Snehit Jambulingam who is the chef and owner of Strictly Desserts waits for her mango trees to be ready for harvest. "We started the business because of these two trees. One is of the Banganapalle variant and the other is senthura," Snehit shares.

She believes that nostalgia sells. "Our mango sticky rice pudding ice cream with coconut is based on my travels to Thailand. The kamarkattu ice cream is a tribute to my mother who made sure

The school has meticulously groomed a group of 20 young women to form the only regularly performing all-girls parai attam group in Chennai. For two days a week between 3pm and 5pm, the foray of this school resembles a concert venue.

N Deepan, their parai attam teacher, says that three such teams of 'Avvai Home Girls' have graduated from the school. The current crew is relatively new and had most recently played at the Urur Olcott Kuppam Vizha in January this year. "Don't buy their shy demeanour. They are all *vaaiadis* (chatterboxes)," he says.

Deepan, who runs the popular Nanbargal Gramiya Kalai Kuzhu out of Korukkupet says that he has seen this group blossom over time. The instrument, for the longest time, was only played by men. More recently, mixed groups of men and women play together.

However, it is rare to see a team entirely of girls.

"Adding a cultural programme to their education has increased their confidence significantly. You should see the number of cups they have won over the years," he says.

Sangeetha Shivakumar, part of the core team organising the Urur Olcott Kuppam Vizha, says that the parai attam programme began at Avvai Home in 2016 as part of the Vizha's cultural outreach. An extensive selection process ensued when an announcement regarding parai was made.

She adds that they performed at the festival in 2017. "It was envisioned as a programme for that year alone but on the day of the festival one of the girls looked terribly sad and asked me 'Avlo dhana?' (Is this it?). That is when we decided to keep the programme going," she says.

Charulatha, a student of Class XII has been playing the parai

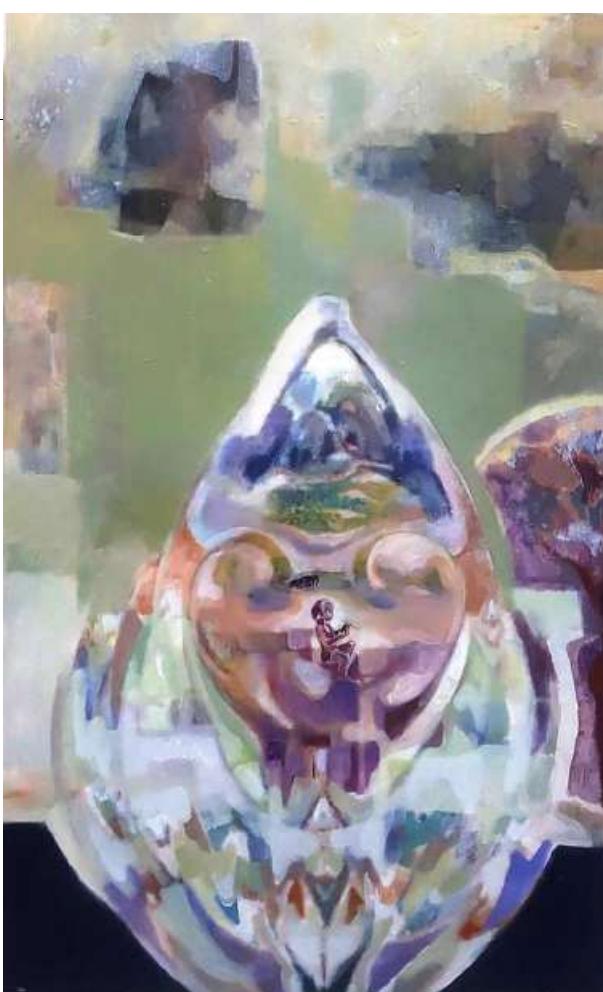
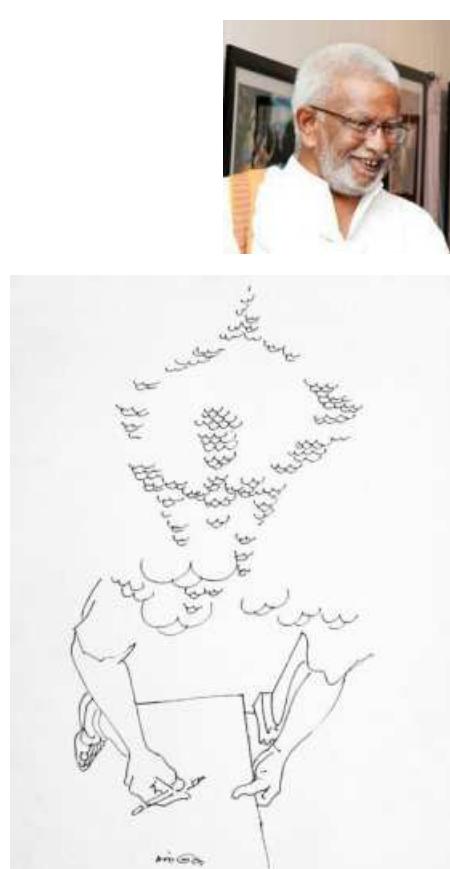
since Class VII. "I've learnt over time, so much so that I have blisters from playing the instrument. I wear them with pride," she says.

Students from the group have gone on to play at a number of events organised by the Department of Arts and Culture of the Tamil Nadu Government. R Monika, a student of Class VIII says that her favourite performances has been at the Urur Kuppam Vizha, where there were hundreds of onlookers, disco lights and a gentle sea breeze.

Charulatha says that she is leaving school soon and the opportunities to play the parai will significantly diminish. Does this mean she will have to give up playing the instrument? "I have already booked a spot with Deepan anna's group. We create a ruckus during meal time here despite the scolding. The beat is a part of us. It isn't going anywhere," she says.







**Dialogue in colour** (Clockwise from left) An untitled artwork by K Nataraj; a sculpture by Maria Anthony Raj; sketch by Chandrasekaran Gurusamy; and the artist. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

upcoming artists from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry and Maharashtra are showcasing their work through different mediums including paintings, sculptures, and even podcasts.

"This year, we are also felicitating senior artist Chandrasekaran Gurusamy with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Over 50 drawings and sketches of his from the 1980s and 1990s are a highlight of the display," adds Nataraj. A veteran sculptor who hails from Ambasamudram, Tirunelveli, he has constructed an open-air art museum on the banks of river Thamirabarani. He has researched, catalogued and erected over 600 sculptures of scholars who have dedicated their life and work to humanity, and Tamil arts and culture.

Each artist displays two to three works each, and the underlying thread is their politics and ideologies. And so, artworks that speak about the aesthetics of sustainable living and of living in harmony with Nature will be on display, along with those that speak about compassion in Buddhism and the temperance it offers.

"We think it is our responsibility to educate upcoming talent about what we intend to convey, and so age was never a criterion for this curation," says Nataraj. Works of senior artists like Maria Anthony Raj from Cholamandal Artists' Village and Purushothaman T will be on display, apart from known names like B Venkatesan, Anthoni Guruz D, Puviyarasu Kannadasan, and V Selvakumar among others.

Curve will be on display at Lalit Kala Akademi, Greams Road, Egmore until April 30.

titled Curve, as we approach the end of the festival.

"We as artists have been continuously working on an art camp with a focus on Dalit atrocities, and environmental issues that we have been hearing of late. For the last three years, Neelam joined hands with us to bring Dalit art and aesthetics to the mainstream," says artist Nataraj K, curator of the show.

"Our politics is centered around marginalised communities and the adversities they face. The artists whose works will be on display, though not necessarily from the margins, share the same politics. That was the only requirement when the works were curated," adds Nataraj.

Multiple works of all 30 artists will take over the gallery – both senior and



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**W**hat is the month of April synonymous with apart from the scorching summer? Resistance. For the last three years, Pa Ranjith's Neelam Cultural Centre has honoured the birth month of BR Ambedkar with unbridled celebration. The month-long

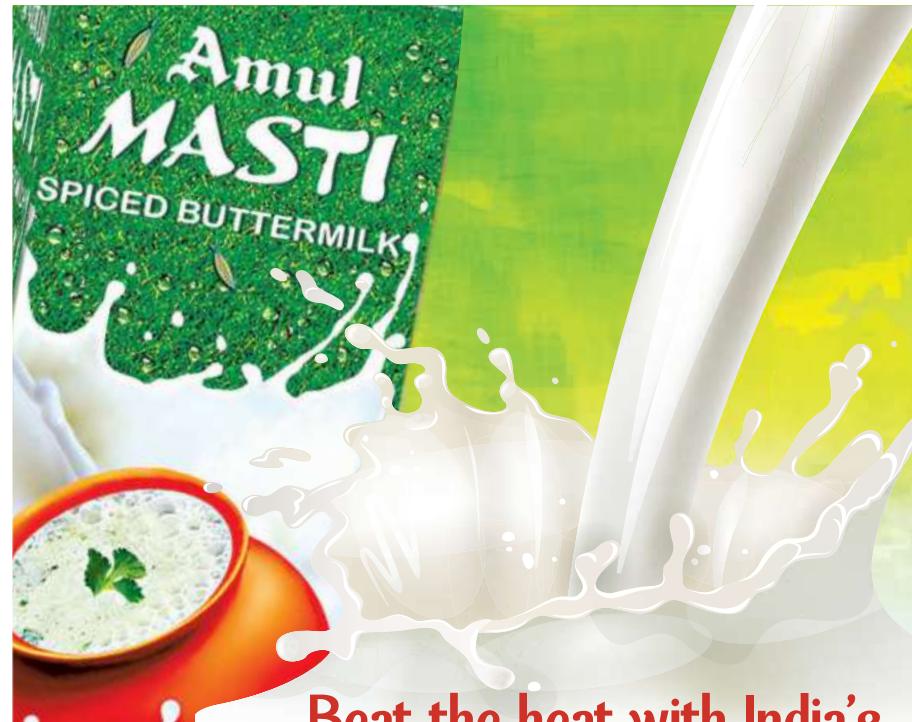
Vaanam Art Festival includes talks, panel discussions, art exhibits, performances and film screenings that champion the cause of Dalit resistance and social justice. This year, the walls of Lalit Kala Akademi showcase the works of 30 artists in an exhibition

multiple works of all 30 artists will take over the gallery – both senior and

### Vignettes of life

Prasanna Ramaswamy and her team stage the fourth edition of theatre performances based on Sahitya Akademi-winner Imayam's short stories in Tamil. Adapted and directed by her, the play will be for 80 minutes without an interval. New stories will be performed in this edition, and one from the older edition will also be staged.

@Medai, Alwarpet. April 27, 7pm onwards. Tickets are available on bookmyshow. For details, call 9094038623.



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distributed buttermilk brand in the country (source: Nielsen Retail Audit Q4 2023) and is available in shops and Amul parlors near you.

If you're on road braving the sun, there can't be a better drink than Amul Masti to keep yourself hydrated, even more so as it packs only 57 calories in a 200ml serving. Can there be a tastier and functionally fitting beverage? Difficult. Buttermilk is also a perfect companion with meals so why do the prep work when you can have it easy with an Amul Masti Buttermilk family pack of 1 litre! Masti ensures you're never far from a refreshing pick-me-up. As temperature soars, keep it close at hand- at home, in the car or wherever summer takes you as it is the quintessential Indian refreshment for surviving and thriving through the hottest months.

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## Pixels and power ups

Relive arcade nostalgia at the Versus Festival, a day-long extravaganza with esports tournaments, art, anime, and workshops

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**F**or those of us who grew up in the late 1990s and early Noughties, going to an arcade gaming parlour to play racing and fighting games was a fun pastime.

Gaming parlours of late have become more sophisticated with the advent of technology. The parlours often lack the charm of the old parlours, as do the games.

This is where the Versus Festival comes into play. A day-long celebration of gaming, art, and anime, the festival aims at expanding the fighting game tournament culture in India. Fighting games are a genre of video games where players directly control characters who engage in hand-to-hand combat against one another.

Adithya Mahesh, senior member IndianFGC, and the founder of Versus Festival says, "The fighting games community is pretty old. We've been playing since 2007-08. But in the last five years, we started noticing that there are a lot of sub communities popping up."

The festival aims at providing a

platform to sub-communities that have a similar DNA such as cosplay and anime enthusiasts. Founded and presented by esports banner Daijoubu, the Versus Festival is being organised by artist community Sunshine House, indie music community Circle of Love, The Chennai Scene, Indian FGC (fighting game community) and SSB India (Super Smash Bros community).

"We (gaming communities) conduct weekly meets and plays, and it was during these meetings

**The festival will feature a free arcade gaming zone, panel discussions, quizzes, food, art, and shopping stalls**

that we discovered that the Tamil Nadu Government is actively trying to back these kinds of efforts. One of our biggest backers is the ESAT federation of Tamil Nadu," he says. The Electronic Sports Authority of Tamil Nadu is an apex body of esports that recognises gaming seriously, ever since the Asian Games added this as a category.

Many micro communities like the cosplaying, artists and the

quizzing communities are coming together. For example, there is going to be a group of people who play this obscure Japanese card game," he says, adding that The Board Room, one of Chennai's earliest boarding game cafés, will be participating as well.

"When you buy a ticket for the Versus Festival, you will be able to compete in two tournaments. One is for Street Fighter 6 and the other is for Smash," he says.

This edition of the festival will see competitors from six different states and a few international participants from West Asia and Bangladesh as well. The tournament winners will receive cash prizes up to ₹1 lakh.

Apart from this, the festival also features a free arcade gaming zone, panel discussions, quizzes, food, art, and shopping stalls. Also on the agenda are workshops for prop-making by Adithya Ashok, an anime-themed art workshop by Derek D'Souza, and even a sushi making class.

**The Versus Festival will be held at the IIT Madras Research Park, Chennai on May 19 from 10am to 9pm. Tickets are on skillboxes.com at ₹763. Find them on Instagram @theversusfestival**

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Let's Start!

All smiles Vijay and Trisha in a still from *Ghilli*; (below) director Dharani. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND JOHAN SATHYADAS

**Why a 20-year-old film**  
starring Vijay is being celebrated by Tamil cinema fans today



# Ghilli, once more

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**I**ne of Chennai's important landmarks is the Gemini flyover. Very close to this landmark is the Little Flower School for the Blind and the Deaf – which was the venue in 2004 for the audio cassette release of Tamil film *Ghilli* starring Vijay, Trisha and Prakash Raj.

It was here that the tunes of 'Appadi Podu' and 'Arjunar Villu' played for the first time, and subsequently, echoed in cinema halls when the film released to a

rapturous reception in April 2004. Cut to April 2024, these tunes are still playing as the film's re-release has crowds thronging theatres, despite the IPL buzz. Why is a 20-year-old Tamil film still being celebrated? Director Dharani has the answers.

**Question:** We last met 20 years ago and spoke about the same film, and here, we are, speaking about it yet again...

**Dharani:** When I heard about the re-release, I imagined that it would be a one-day celebration, like a Vidyasagar concert or an AR Rahman concert. I never imagined

that it would become such a celebration. People in the theatres are literally completing the dialogues. The film and its content has remained alive till now, and I'm grateful to the media and fans for celebrating it that way.

**Q:** Why do you think *Ghilli*, which has been played multiple times on television, is still being celebrated?

**Dharani:** I think it is because of the emotion behind the lead actor, who played a 'good boy', and for that, I am indebted to writer Gunasekar who helmed the Telugu original, *Okkudu*, which we remade as *Ghilli*. It has a naughty protagonist, who

**S Gopinath, cinematographer**

I'm thrilled about the re-release hype, and I still fondly recall shooting at the massive seven-acre set, which was conceived by art director Maniraj, where all the lighthouse and beach sequences were shot. I was injured during its shooting and had to take a small break while recuperating; so, while I shot the entire film, I requested KV Anand (the late cinematographer) to step in to shoot the 'Appadi Podu' song sequence alone.



**AM Rathnam, producer**

*Ghilli* was – and is still – a success because it treats its protagonist not as a hero but as a normal boy. We are very happy that its re-release is doing well in cinema halls and that audiences are lapping it up. There is a general craze for part-2 films now; *Baahubali 2* and *Gaddar 2* were hits. We are planning a *7G Rainbow Colony 2* currently and similarly, I will try taking steps to create *Ghilli 2*.

quarrels with his sister and has a strict father. All these aspects are very relatable to family audiences, then and now. Plus, all the actors in the film – Vijay, Trisha and Prakash Raj – are still very relevant today.

**Q:** Take us back to 2004, and tell us how you managed to pitch the idea of *Ghilli* to Vijay and producer AM Rathnam...

**Dharani:** I had finished *Dhool*, starring Vikram, and my assistants and I just wanted to go watch a film. Telugu film *Okkudu* had released, and we watched it in Midland Cinemas. It was gripping from the first scene, but I became very anxious as the film proceeded. I had a story idea based on a kabaddi player, another storyline on a romance between a guy who hid his girl in a lighthouse, and another road film idea. *Okkudu* had all these

three elements in them. We immediately met producer AM Rathnam, requested him to get its remake rights and make it in Tamil with Vijay.

**Q:** *Ghilli* remains one of Vijay's most rewatchable films. How did his presence add to the storyline you had in mind?

**Dharani:** Vijay had till then not attempted so much humour in his films. In *Ghilli*, we were determined to get that sense of humour out. I would usually act and showcase what I wanted, and Vijay would immediately deliver that effortlessly in front of the camera; he was almost like an AI model replicating exactly what we had in mind. His comedy timing was excellent, and all the family sequences involving him, Ashish Vidyarthi, Janaki Sabesh and Jennifer were a hoot.

**Q:** You have a long-standing equation with music composer Vidyasagar, whose tunes in *Ghilli* have audiences dancing in theatres even today...

**Dharani:** During every composing session, we have a *thagaraaru* (argument), but it was always an *ambaana thagaraaru* (friendly argument). He insisted on having melody tunes, and I used to tell him, in a friendly way, to give those tracks to directors like Radhamohan and Viji (smiles). For this film's template and speed, I wanted slightly fast-paced numbers, and he delivered in a big way.

**Q:** Finally, can we look forward to a *Ghilli 2* sometime?

**Dharani:** *Ghilli* getting a re-release now is the second part (laughs). I don't know if we would have got such a reception even if we made a *Ghilli 2*!



# The chase is on

What director Hari offers in *Rathnam*, starring Vishal and Priya Bhavani Shankar



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**D**irector Hari is an interviewer's delight; he loves to share interesting anecdotes about his films – some of which are cult classics today – and gets excited when you point out a deft filmmaking touch past the Sumo car chases and fast cuts he has become synonymous with.

His upcoming *Rathnam* sees him collaborating for the third time with Vishal after *Thaamirabharani* (2007) and *Poojai* (2014). Excerpts from an interview:

**Question:** In our previous interview, you had said that you don't write scripts but narrate them for it to be written by your assistant directors. How does that work?

**Answer:** I don't write scripts, I narrate the story and it keeps getting recorded, which is then turned into written content by my ADs. I don't have paperwork for the screenplay at all; scene construction

happens, which doubles as the screenplay, and from there, I jump to dialogue writing. At that point, I ask them to tell me what they have written while I come up with the lines for those scenes. Once that's done, then comes the paperwork, but even then, I don't write anything though it's been 17 films (laughs).

Improvisation happens until the day before the shoot.

**Q:** ...And this unorthodox style, I heard, spills over during the shoot and post-production as well?

**A:** I don't use precise technical terms to describe a scene to my technicians; I just explain how I want it to be. If I'm going to use editing terms with an editor, he might get irritated after a point. When they're specialists in those streams, you leave it to them about

**Q:** For a filmmaker known for fast cuts, having single-shot sequences, toning down action sequences are some examples of change we spotted in your last film *Yaanai*. Is that you evolving as a filmmaker?

**A:** My move comes from needing challenges while making a film; the *Yaanai* interval shot, for example, runs for around 350 feet. As far as the other changes are concerned, I see films made by my friends and that could probably influence my work as well.

In *Rathnam*, I've pulled off a five-minute single shot, without any stitching, where there are vehicle tracking shots, an action sequence involving rope work, and a chase sequence involving blasts and vehicles toppling.

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**Rathnam** is scheduled to release on April 26

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