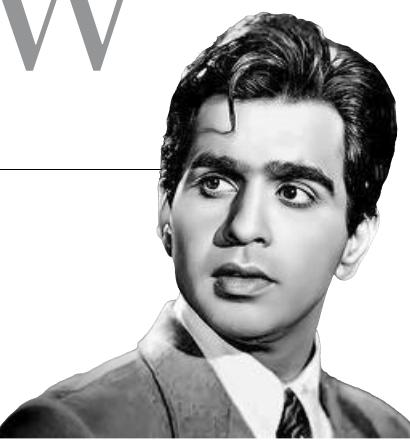


friday Review

THE HINDU

Celebrating a legacyA concert to mark Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer's 117th birth anniversary **P2****Champion of causes**Adivasi rapper Mahi G. uses music to fight social injustice **P3****THE MASTER OF METHOD ACTING**The book, *The Man Who Became Cinema*, deconstructs Dilip Kumar's unique style **P4**

A young Sujatha with Yesudas



With husband Mohan and daughter Shweta

On a melody track

Sujatha Mohan, who completes 50 years as a singer, looks back at her journey

**Subha J Rao**

Sujatha Mohan began her career at a time when society believed girls should not sing in public. She recently completed five decades in singing, and has a strong fanbase that spans generations.

There are those who remember her as the girl with an angelic voice and smile, a gossamer bow holding up her hair as she sang with popular singer K.J. Yesudas. Some others will recall her early hits such as 'Kannezhuthy pottuthottu' (composed by M. K. Arjunan for the Malayalam movie *Tourist Bungalow*) and 'Odakkuzhal vil' (composed by M.G. Radhakrishnan for All India Radio), 'Kaalai paniyil' and 'Oru iniya manadhu' (both composed by Ilaiyaraaja for the Tamil films *Gayathri* and *Johnny*). Her A.R. Rahman phase in the 1990s is remembered for 'Pudhu vellai mazhai' (*Raja*), 'Netru illadha maatram' (*Pudhiya Mugam*) and 'Poopokum osai' (*Minsara Kanavu*), etc. Today's teens and young adults know Sujatha more as a genial judge at music reality shows.

Mention all this, and you can sense Sujatha smiling at the other end of the phone. "I've always gone with the flow, and it just worked out. Even singing was not something that I planned. It happened. I believe in destiny," she adds.

The way she traverses the octaves with ease shows she is a

trained singer. Sujatha learnt Carnatic music from Neyyattinkara Vasudevan and Ochira Balakrishnan, while musicians Rex Isaac and Emile Isaac trained her in light music. "I lost my father when I was just two years old. Because I grew up in a single parent household, there were many restrictions. I remember sneaking into the house at 2 a.m. after stage shows."

Despite the huge popularity Sujatha enjoyed, the disciplined environment at home ensured she remained grounded. "I was expected to study well and get married. I did that too," she laughs.

But, once Sujatha realised music is her calling, she put in the work to create her own niche. "I am fortunate to have got the support of stalwarts such as Yesudas, M. Jayachandran, Ouseppachan, Raveendran, Ilaiyaraaja, Rahman, Vidyasagar, Sirpi and Keeravani," says the singer, who has recorded close to 8,000 songs across languages.

Sujatha sang her way to fame, she took great care of her voice. "I did not want to do anything that would have affected my singing."

So, Sujatha gave up offers to judge reality shows early on in her career since that would have meant staying put in studios for long hours. Despite all this, she suffered vocal issues in 2010, when even speaking became a chore. But she worked hard to regain her voice.

**CONTINUED ON
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Aishwarya Raghunathan

Not all legacies are loud. Some settle in silence, in the grain of a raga, in the pause before a swara. It's hard to describe what Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer's music felt like unless you have sat in front of him and listened. For those of us who have heard him through recordings and anecdotes, tribute concerts are the closest we can get to his art. This month at the Music Academy, yet another such evening marked his 117th birth anniversary, featuring Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath. She was accompanied by R.K. Shriramkumar on the violin, Arun Prakash on the mridangam and Guruprasad on the ghatam.

The choice to open the evening with 'Merusamana' in Mayamalavagowla was not surprising. This Tyagaraja kriti, which compares Rama to Mount Meru, was one of Semmangudi's well-recognised openers, rendered in the chowka kala. For Semmangudi, Mayamalavagowla was never just a beginner's raga. In 'Merusamana', he demonstrated how a foundational raga could carry immense musical authority.

His rendition of the piece was known for its deliberate pacing, especially the notable silence between pallavi and anupallavi. This moment, a breath of space before the percussion joined was observed in this concert too. Shriramkumar's violin paused and so did the percussion, only to re-start as the anupallavi began, creating a space that many rasikas would instantly recognise as Semmangudi's signature style. The niraval and kalpanaswara at 'Gala munanu sobhillu' followed. There was a clear transition from keezh kala to mel kala swaras, separated by a precise, short pause and the percussion elevating it.

The second piece, 'Nenendu vedakudura' in Karnataka Behag, a composition seldom heard in



His bani lives on

Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath performed a concert to mark Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer's 117th birth anniversary

recent times, especially after Semmangudi's era, brought a gentle lift to the concert's momentum.

It's hard to think of a Semmangudi concert without Karaharapriya. The raga was almost second nature to him and true to the tradition, it unfolded with an alapana that brought out its innate karuna rasa, with the singer and accompanists totally engrossed in the music. When

most in the audience expected Neelakanta Sivan's 'Navasiddhi peruvuvalume', the singer pleasantly surprised them by rendering Tyagaraja's 'Rama nee samanamevaru'. The niraval at 'paluku paluku teneloka' was seeped in melody.

After a run of Tyagaraja compositions, Muthuswami Dikshitar's 'Amba nilayadakshi' in Nilambari was presented, offering a

moment of contrast. The chowka kala tempo brought out the raga's gentle sway and the percussionists responded

It's hard to think of a Semmangudi concert without Karaharapriya. True to the tradition, it unfolded here with an alapana that brought out its innate karuna rasa

with thoughtful strokes. A segment of kalpanaswaras followed.

Semmangudi's contributions to Carnatic music are many, but his role in bringing Swati Tirunal's compositions into mainstream concert repertoire stands out in particular. His deep sense of devotion and musical insight gave these kritis a strong footing on the concert stage. Echoing that lineage, the concert next featured the lively 'Gopanandana valarippu' in Bhooshanavali.

Thodi, for many rasikas, is strongly linked with the voice of Semmangudi, a raga that he returned to often, each time with a new intensity. 'Rave himagiri', the swarajati by Syama Sastry, was presented next. The alapana was carved through Thodi's maze of curves and layered intricacies. A special touch came during the kalpanaswara, where the inspiration drawn from the original chittaswara structure created a sense of continuity between the composer and the performer.

Encompassing all the trikalams, starting from the keezh kala and ending with the mel kala, the tani avartanam elevated the mood of the entire concert. Arun's clarity and precision on the mridangam was meticulously followed by Guruprasad on the ghatam. The simple yet aesthetic korvais, embedded with variations in a simple *'thatthikithathom'* phrase – were a treat to lay admirers.

The 'Peru lenna mata' in Kapi, a rakti raga, was taken up next. Semmangudi's fondness for rakti ragas is well-known. He made this javali, composed by Dharmapuri Subbaraya Aiyyar, his own.

'Sapashya kausalya' in Jhnpuri arrived like a familiar face in the crowd. With the switch to madhyama sruti, the Chenchurutti thillana brought in the sparkle of laya and melody that Semmangudi himself relished in closing moments. The mangalam 'Rama chandraya janaka raja manohara', wrapped up the evening.

CULTURE BRIEFS



Celebrating ragas

Barkha Ritu, the multi-city Indian classical music festival by Banyan Tree Events, returns with its 24th edition, with a musical evening featuring well-known Carnatic and Hindustani musicians. To be held on August 3, 5.30 p.m., at Narada Gana Sabha, the evening will feature the santoor recital by Pt. Rahul Sharma, who is known for his evocative renditions that seamlessly blend tradition with innovation, and a jugalbandi by Sandeep Narayan and Jayateerth Mevundi. The duo will weave ragas that echo the spirit of the rains.

Banyan Tree Events, which completes 30 years, was founded by Nandini Mahesh and Mahesh Babu to promote Indian heritage and culture. What started as a single festival, over the years, extended to 12 events. Each highlights an interesting aspect of Indian arts.

Finale of Mudhra's contest

The finale of Mudhra's kucheri competition will be held from August 1 to 6, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. It can be watched on www.paalamtv.com. Out of 56 entries received for vocal, violin and mridangam, 18 have been selected for this year's final round. Six contestants will be competing in each category. The winners will be awarded the title 'Sangeetha Mudhra'; besides getting an opportunity to perform at Mudhra's December festival. The Best Vocalist will receive a cash award and will get to perform with senior accompanists. While the Best Accompanists will get to share the stage with a senior musician.

Test your music skill

Hamsadhwani conducts a vocal music competition on August 3 (3.30 p.m.) and 9 (3.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m.), at Youth Hostel, Adyar. The first segment is for those in the 17 to 22 age group. The contestants must enrol with a list of seven kritis and should be able to sing raga alapana, niraval and swaraprastara. The second segment is for those in the 7 to 12 (sub junior) and 12 to 17 (junior) age groups. Sub juniors have to enrol with a list of three kritis by three different composers and juniors five kritis by the Trinity, Papasam Sivan and Narayana Tirtha. Email hamsadhwani90@gmail.com Spot registration will also be done at the venue 30 minutes before the competition. For details call, 97909 09567.



A play by Shraddha

Theatre Shraddha will stage Indira Parthasarathy's play *Kongai Thee*, on August 1, 2 and 8 at Alliance Française (6.45 p.m.). This is the second season of the play, which will travel to Coimbatore (August 30, 31) and later to Puducherry and Thiruvananthapuram.

Spirit of Youth Festival

The Music Academy conducts the 35th Spirit of Youth Festival from August 1 to 10 at Sri Kasturi Srivivasan Hall. Music concerts will be held at 6 p.m. followed by Bharatanatyam recitals at 7.30 p.m.

- August 1:** Sruthi Ramesh; and Vaishnavi Srivivasan.
- August 2:** B. Sai Harinam (veena) and Shruti Vidhyashankar.
- August 3:** Ananth Mysore and Shreyas Sunil Nair.
- August 4:** Srividya Vadlamani and Keerthana Subramanian.
- August 5:** Aditi Sudarshan (flute) and Nanda Kishore.
- August 6:** Dattaprasad Avadhoot and Aparna Mohan.
- August 7:** Malladi Sindhu Rageswari and Varun Shivakumar.
- August 8:** Gayatri Vibhavari Vyakaranam R. Smrithi.
- August 9:** C. Ramakrishna and Kshirja Govind.
- August 10:** K. Athreyee Krishnan and Nishita Joshi.

Tribute concert

Kalyani Menon Foundation will present a Carnatic concert featuring senior vocalist Sikkil Gurucharan and mridangam maestro Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman with V. Sanjeev on the violin and B.B. Shree Sundarkumar on the kanjira at TAG Centre, Mylapore, on August 2, 6.30 p.m.

Best foot forward

Aswathi K. sincerely engaged with the themes she chose to present



Graceful Aswathi, disciple of Shijith Nambiar and Parvathy Menon
PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

Manasa Vijaylakshme C

As part of The Music Academy's Mid-Year Dance Festival, Bharatanatyam dancer Aswathi K. and disciple of Shijith Nambiar and Parvathy Menon, presented a solo performance, seamlessly weaving bhakti and storytelling.

The evening opened with an alarippu followed by 'Sri jalandhara', a keertanam in Gambhiranatam set to Adi tala, composed by Jayachamaraja Wodeyar. The hymn praised Shiva as the Supreme Yogi, adorned with the Ganga, the crescent moon, and the serpent. Aswathi brought alive the majesty of the deity through clear lines and expressive abhinaya, capturing his cosmic energy and the fierce destruction of Tripura and Taraka. The references to sacred spaces such as Arunachala, Sri Kalahasti and Chidambaram were presented with reverence, anchoring the piece in devotional imagery.

The central piece of the evening was the varnam 'Vanajaksha' in Behag, composed by T.R.

Subramaniam, which gave the dancer ample scope to display her technical agility and narrative sensitivity. Centered on Krishna, the piece unfolded through intricate jathis, interwoven with expressive storytelling. Her portrayal of the serpent Kaliya, subdued by Krishna, was particularly striking, the swift-coiling movements contrasting with Krishna's calm, commanding grace.

In the final piece, the tone shifted to that of a quiet anguish. Set in raga Husseni, 'Eppadi manam thunindatho', a Ramanatata kriti by Arunachala Kavi, voiced Sita's heartache as she questioned Rama's decision to leave her behind. Aswathi's abhinaya was moving, allowing the audience to feel Sita's disbelief and sorrow. Her portrayal conveyed emotional maturity, closing the performance on a note of poignant reflection.

The orchestra included Janani Hamsini Narasimhan on vocals, K.P. Nandini on the violin, Chardutt V.V. on the mridangam and Shijith Nambiar on the nattuvangam. Aswathi's performance stood out for her sincere engagement with the themes she chose to present.



When the mic turns a weapon

Meet Mahi G, an Adivasi rapper, who uses her music to fight social injustice

Neelanjana Rai

Born in the Bronx as a voice of rebellion, hip-hop has always been more than just music. It's a culture, a language of the oppressed, a sonic space where the truth cuts sharper than a melody. In India, where mainstream rap is often hijacked by commercialism and mimicry, conscious rap remains a lesser-travelled path; one that

dares to dig deeper, confront capitalists, question patriarchy and echo resistance. Conscious rap isn't about flexing riches or fast cars but about awareness, using the mic as a weapon. It is where verses become protest signs.

Emerging from this powerful lineage of genre is Madhura Ghane, aka Mahi G, a 28-year-old Adivasi rapper from Maharashtra, whose music is reshaping the meaning of Indian hip-hop. Mahi's journey into rap

didn't begin in a studio, but her village in Ahmednagar during the first phase of the lockdown. As the world paused, she found time to "reflect, reconnect and write". Her verses found rhythm in rage. An IT engineer-turned-rapper from the Mahadev Koli tribe, Mahi turned to hip-hop as a means of storytelling, inspired by poetry she once penned in solitude. When Mahi steps on to the stage, she brings more than just rhythm – she brings revolution.

She acknowledges her parents' role in nurturing her social consciousness. "They listen with enthusiasm, every single time," she shares.

Her debut track, 'Jungle cha raja', captures the struggle of the Mahadev Koli Adivasi community, and is against the systemic neglect in the name of development. During her stay in the village, amid the pandemic, she noticed how "the government tried to strip people's independence, offering rationed supplies while quietly building dams and disturbing ecological balance and agriculture". It "infuriated" her and was the genesis of her first rap – one that changed the trajectory of her life.

It was only when she decided to pursue rap seriously that she met rapper-producer, Ajith Shelake, also known as Rapboss. Mahi says it is with his support 'Jungle cha raja' came to life.

In a few years, Mahi traversed the home ground to perform at India's most prestigious academic and cultural spaces, including Jawaharlal Nehru University, IIT Bombay, Kalina University and TISS. She received the 18th Vidrohi Marathi Sahitya Sammelan Puraskar and in 2025 was honoured with the Fatimabi Savitri Puraskar (for fearlessly speaking out on social injustice).

Mahi uses her poetry to highlight the erasure of tribal

identity, caste inequality, the rights of the transgender community and ecological destruction. Her track 'Haq se hijra hun' is dedicated to the transgender community. It was a result of a question that haunted her during her college days – why transgenders have to beg for money, while cisgender folks accessed jobs and opportunities? While working on the track, she reached out to the Pune-based Humsafar Trust to ensure the song's accuracy. Once they greenlit it, the song was made. Her desire to cast trans-women in the video, was squashed by budgeting issue. So, she asked a male friend to perform instead, which he did for free. Every track is self-funded,

Musical advocate Mahi G. and (far left) with Adivasi folk dancers. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

making her journey financially-challenging. Yet, it did not dilute the impact of her work.

Environmental issues

Her music video on deforestation in Hasdeo for coal mining went viral. "Every voice counts in stopping destruction. It's home for animals and tribes. Why should they leave?" she asks. Her recent single 'Heatwave', in collaboration with Greenpeace, highlights the rising temperatures, burning forests and the reality of millions who work under the scorching sun unnoticed and unprotected.

Mahi's greatest inspiration is "Nature". As a tribal woman, she feels connected to it and finds serenity and strength in it. When injustice stings, she turns to her notebook, knowing she has to speak up.

She's often asked, "Aren't you afraid to call out those in power?" And, she responds: "I'll stop talking when these issues are solved. Till then, I will rap about them." She also hopes that her songs initiate conversations. "I want my music to plant a seed of thought," says the rapper, who doesn't call herself a "rapper, but a storyteller – one who is still learning, growing and refining" her craft.

Mahi dreams of adding melodic hooks to her songs to make them more memorable. She has an upcoming collaboration with the musical group 'Swadesi' and urges artists to stand their ground. "Believe in yourself. No matter what."

Nandini Bhatia

Park is relevant to the present time – when urbanisation is encroaching into spaces, when ethnic groups are being targeted and when immigrations are being forced by conflicts. Written and directed by Manav Kaul, the play was recently performed at Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi. It featured Shubrajyoti Barat, Sumeet Vyas and Gopal Datt.

The play revolved around three men – each suffering from one woe or the other. They reach an isolated park one afternoon, seeking to pass the time in some peace and quiet, but each asserting his claim over an occupied bench. The three benches in the park face the same direction and offer the same view. And three men is all it takes for Park to expose the human need to exercise control over space and its narrative.

What begins as a light-hearted territorial banter



It's all about space

escalates disproportionately. A quarrel over a shared public space turns into a probe into the politics of space – its access or the denial thereof.

The play asks questions – What does it mean to have a full and equal membership in a society? What distinguishes

one's claim or right as superior to the other? Who belongs more to a place – the native who has moved out, or the migrant who has lived there longer; one who can speak the language or the one who contributes with finance and stature; one who

studied there or the one who works there; one who shares a history with the place or one whose future depends on it?

Shubrajyoti plays a government official in dire need of an afternoon nap, and hence, is bent on getting the

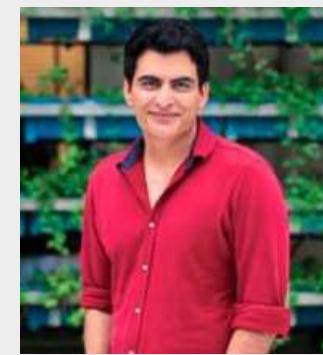
Reality check A scene from the play Park.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

only sweet spot under shade in the park. He agrees that space is a timeless issue and migration, a phenomenon older than history.

Says Manav Kaul, "It feels weird that the things that used to disturb me when I was writing the play in 2007, are more relevant now than they were back then. I don't think it's a good sign for the society, the country or the world at large." When asked if there's a message he wishes to give to the audience, Manav Kaul says, "My writings are a reaction to what I see – things I read, things I value." He believes writing is a by-product of reality and its discontents."

The wit and humour in Manav's writing, however subtle, is not lost. Be it in the age-old trope of 'curious' strangers, eavesdropping conversations in public or constantly stretching personal boundaries.

"You may laugh while watching the play, but give it an adequate thought and you realise it is a reflection of a sad reality", says Sumeet, Vyas, who plays a displaced law graduate. His character demands the perpetrators be displaced in exchange –



It feels weird that the things that used to disturb me when I was writing the play in 2007, are more relevant now than they were back then

MANAV KAUL

demanding justice served in equal proportions to the injustice. As Sumeet points out, "It reflects human behaviour – three people in a park, fighting over an 'ideal' spot when there are three benches available and they could comfortably sit anywhere." Although, he wonders if the play will ever be irrelevant and adds: "Even if we keep performing it for the rest of our lives, these problems will remain."

No matter how well sociologists such as Zygmunt Bauman argue for the liquidity of modern life, the idea of body politics will never cease to exist. Identity is and will remain a seamless matter of debate. Park preserves the art of politically-and culturally-aware storytelling. It is conscious of crises at all levels – regional, national, and global – and treats them with empathy, albeit, discreetly. A reflection, and a reminder of the fact that politics is an undeniable part of human life, quotidian or otherwise.



Online workshop

Sumanasa Foundation presents 'Sarvanga Abhinaya', a fundraiser online workshop by Rajashree Warrier. This immersive workshop will focus on 'body aesthetics of Bharatanatyam, providing participants with a deeper insight into how breath influences expression and fluidity in the dance form. Each session will include an interactive Q&A. The workshop is on between August 1 and 3, at 9 p.m. (IST), 11.30 a.m. (EST) and 8.30 a.m. (PST). Visit sumanasfoundation.org to register.

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Sudhirendar Sharma

Legends are not born, but made, is an adage that seems apt for Dilip Kumar. He was an icon, who evolved into an institution.

Vijayantimala, his co-star in seven hugely successful films, once remarked: "The icon's influence on each generation has been such that there is a Dilip Kumar in every successful actor in Indian cinema".

Dilip Kumar also introduced the technique of method acting to Indian cinema. Russian theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski is said to have laid the foundation of this technique, which was later popularised by American acting coach and actor Lee Strasberg.

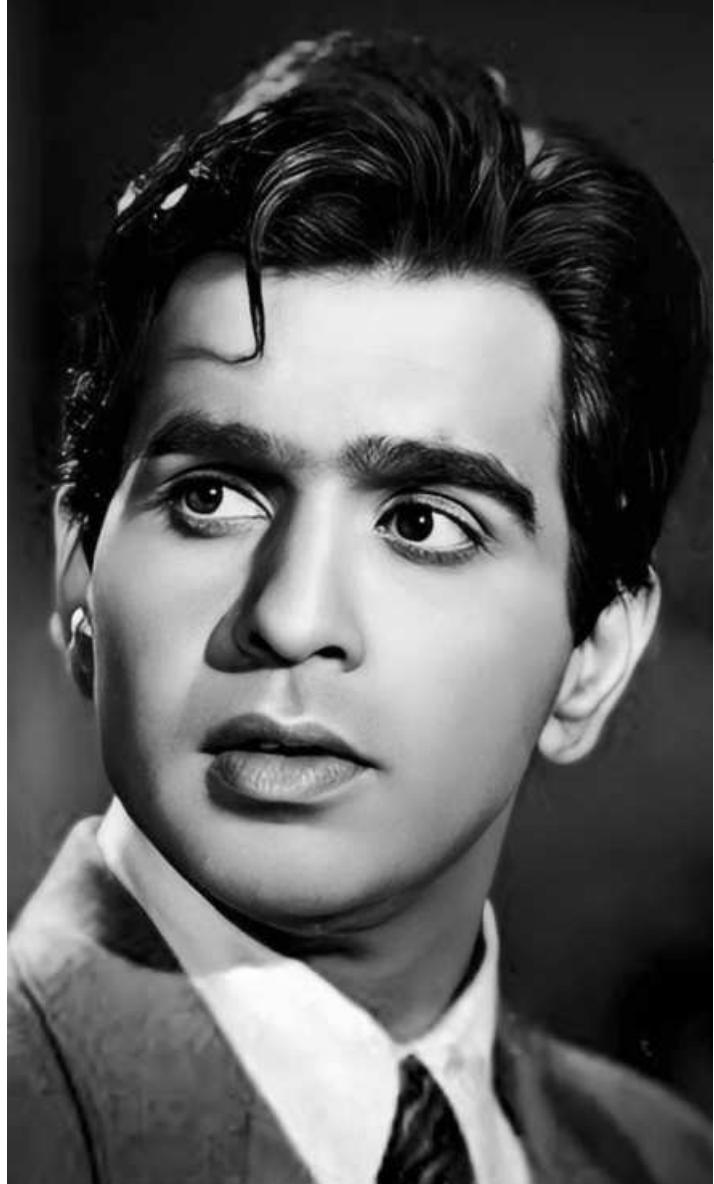
Dilip Kumar's method acting brought about a revolutionary change in the portrayal of characters on screen, and with it the very art of film acting. The unforgettable classics such as *Devdas* (1955), *Ganga Jumna* (1961) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) depict the layers of emotions he continues to evoke in the viewers. Even in the provocative *Jab pyar kiya to darna kya* song one learns that there could be immense power in silence as conveyed by the character of Prince Salim.

Dilip Kumar's magic on screen remains undeniable – a legacy that continues to enchant countless fans.

He developed his method of acting as an antithesis to the widely followed classical acting

The method actor

Written by Ashok Chopra, the book *The Man Who Became Cinema*, deconstructs Dilip Kumar's unique approach to character portrayal



Inimitable Dilip Kumar; with Madhubala in *Mughal-e-Azam* and with Vijayantimala in *Madhumati*. (Below) The book cover.

PHOTOS: THE HINDU ARCHIVES & SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

technique. His method as well as the characters he portrayed carried a strong social bearing. The method was rooted in a kind of cultural re-discovery that helped the character acquire the ability to observe the peculiarities and happenings in society at that point.

Famously known as 'tragedy king', Dilip Kumar's deep involvement with the characters he portrayed believed to have led to serious psychological issues for which he had to consult a psychiatrist in England. The advice given to him was to switch to comic roles, which he did with aplomb and poise.

In *Ram aur Shyam* (1967) and *Gopi* (1970) to name only a few, he

displayed his sense and timing for comedy as well.

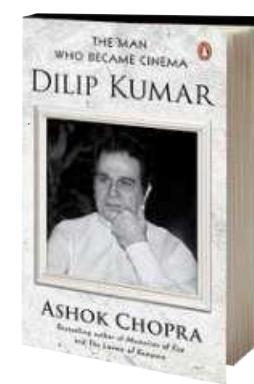
All these facts and more are impeccably captured in the book, *The Man Who Became Cinema*, written by "film buff" Ashok Chopra. Published by Penguin Random House, the book deconstructs Dilip Kumar's cinematic reach and unparalleled timelessness through the prism of 57 films. It explores each of his cinematic characters intricately grouped under six categories – film-by-film, frame-by-frame. The author develops an understanding of how Dilip Kumar exhibited his formidable capacity to innovate and improvise.

Ashok also writes about the actor's 'visual verbal personality composite', a complex mechanism by which his film dialogues were delivered.

Dilip Kumar is said to be the only actor to have integrated audio and visual into a scene, as in, what finally gets conveyed to the viewer are not the words, but a strange modulation of the sound of these words with emotions. This was employed by the actor, particularly in romantic scenes.

His films are considered masterpieces – not just to be watched but observed. According to Ashok, before director Ramesh Sippy started work on his film *Saagar* (1985), he asked Kamal Haasan to watch Dilip Kumar's *Ganga Jumna*. "There are several nuances that every actor should compulsorily watch – to understand the meaning of subtlety," says Kamal.

It comes as no surprise that Dilip is not an actor who is imitated much, but his acting method is examined and studied



It comes as no surprise that Dilip Kumar is not an actor who is imitated much, but his acting method is examined and studied



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Sujatha's voice carries a certain wonder for the world around her – think 'Pudhu vellai mazhai', and you can imagine someone looking wide-eyed at Nature's magnificence. If you listen to 'Ishq Bina' (from the Hindi film *Taal*), you experience a fresh, tender love, with innocence filling its depths. There's a certain purity of sound that serves the demand of the song. The flourishes are there only when needed. Else, what you get is sheer melody.

Over the years, Sujatha says she's never really found any song difficult or been nervous about getting it right, barring a couple of occasions. "I remember 'Anandam anandam' composed by Vidyasagar for *Murai Maaman*. Unnikrishnan sang the male portion, and it had a lot of Carnatic influences. I wondered if I could manage. When I recently met the film's producer, he mentioned how I ended up recording it very fast. But, I was not so lucky with 'Kaathu kaathu dinam kaathu' for *Uzhavan*, with music by Rahman. I gave up after three or four attempts, because I had a throat infection, and Chitra eventually sang the song." There have also been songs where the popularity was way above the effort. "Edho oru paatu' from

Unnidathil Ennai Koduthaen was easy to sing, but I instinctively knew it would go places, because of the emotion behind the song."

A lifelong student of music, Sujatha even learns from reality shows. "I signed up for these shows, thinking it will be a great chance to pass on acquired knowledge. But, now, I have realised that children are great teachers too. They have a way of simplifying some sangathis with ease. So much so that I would think: 'Ada,ippadi kooda paadalaama?' (ah, this can be sung this way too!)"

Sujatha delights in the joy of getting a chance to mould young talent. "Sometimes, you just need to hear two phrases to know a child will go places. It is a privilege to see their growth during the course of the show. I am very attached to these children, and stay in touch. Some like D. Sathyaprakash (Super Singer 3 runner-up) still send across their new work. It feels good to have a ringside view of their journey."

Because she had been a child performer, Sujatha also understands the state of mind of children - their fears and insecurities.

Sujatha's ability to pronounce Tamil words well has impressed many. "My vacations would be in Chennai and so, Tamizh came easily though we did not speak it



(Clockwise from far left) Some of the films that Sujatha sang for - *Unnidathil Ennai Koduthaen*; *Roja*; *Johnny*; and *Tourist Bungalow* PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

at home. For pronunciation, I would listen to the songs of P. Susheela amma and S. Janaki amma. Moreover, during recording, the lyricists would be around, guiding us. All these years, I've operated only on the principle that every song should be sung like it is one's debut song. A singer is the first one translating the music composer's idea into vocals, and it is important to get into the mood of the song. When you think it is your maiden song, you'll be full of butterflies, and that instils a certain discipline," says Sujatha. And, while practice and the quest for perfection are important, the singer says, her first take is usually the best.

Carrying forward Sujatha's legacy is daughter Shweta Mohan, who's a splitting image of her mother and sounds quite similar too. "She showed spark, but I did nothing to further her career. She figured it out on her own," she smiles, adding: "A good voice alone won't do. You need dedication and the ability to learn from one's mistakes."

Sujatha used to be a livewire stage performer before she decided to give it up, because she felt she was not able to give her 100 per cent.

"People pay, because they like the experience of a live show. And, they should get that. Younger singers who deserve a chance. There are other roles to play in life."

Sujatha has sung across genres in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi and Badaga, but is partial to melodies, especially love songs. She has also recorded devotional numbers. "I like to sing songs with soul, songs that are happy."

Now, other than private concerts, Sujatha sings for her granddaughter, whom she looks after when Shweta is travelling on work. "My mother was there for me. I have to be there for Shweta. But I hope to sing till I can. It is a joy unlike any other," says Sujatha.

CALENDAR

Veena duet

Musiri Chamber presents the veena recital by Iyer brothers on August 3, 4.01 p.m. at 48/2, Musiri Subramaniam Road, Mylapore. The duo will be accompanied by T.R. Sundaresan on the mridangam and Karthik on the ghatam.

Dnyaneshwar jayanthi

The 750th jayanthi mahotsav of Sant Dnyaneshwar will be held on August 16, under the guidance of Tukaram Ganapathi Maharaj and assisted by Ragunath Das Maharaj. The event, at Shri Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple, Adyar, coincides with Krishna Jayanthi and commemorates the legacy of Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj, who attained Sanjeevana Samadhi at the age of 22 at Shetra Alandi. The Governor of Tamil Nadu, R.N. Ravi, will deliver the inaugural address, which will be followed by

Dnyaneshwari Parayan, Dnyaneshwari Pravachan by Ragunath Das Maharaj, Harikeertan by Tukaram Ganapathi Maharaj, traditional Dindi procession with bhajans and paduka seva. To register, visit vishwavarakarismathan.com

Namasankirtana festival

Brahma Gana sabha is conducting a six-day namasankirtanam from August 1 to 7 (except on August 3) at 6.30 p.m. at P.S. High school, Mylapore. Performances by Gayathri Mahesh, Visalur Ravi, Aswin Kumar, Kartik Gnaneshwara, Srivaniyam Muralidharan and Sethalapathy Briga Balu will be featured on the occasion.

Brahmostavam

The 223rd Adi Brahmostavam at Arulmigu Sri Periyapalayamman temple, Moolakothalam, Chennai, begins today. The goddess, in special alankaram, will be taken out in a procession during the 17-day festival, which concludes on August 17. Discourse and music concerts will form part of the utsavam.