

fridayReview

THE HINDU

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How the multi-faceted **M.B. Srinivasan** sparked a choral revolution in Chennai. A birth centenary tribute

S. Ram

Among the many who shaped the cultural and musical landscape of South India in the 20th century, M.B. Srinivasan (1925-1988) stands out for his contributions as a composer, ideologue, innovator and institution builder. This year marks his birth centenary. Fondly known as MBS, more than a music director he was a visionary who believed in the power of music as a tool for social change. Also, his contributions to Tamil and Malayalam cinema, Indian choral traditions and progressive cultural movements remain invaluable even decades after his passing. Born in Andhra Pradesh on September 19, 1925, he had his schooling at P.S. High School, Chennai. During his college days at Madras Presidency, he was drawn to communist ideals and soon aligned with the communist movement. As an active member of the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA), he played a key role in mobilising artistes, playwrights and musicians towards socially-relevant art. He married Zahida Kitchlew, a Kashmiri Muslim and daughter of freedom fighter Saifuddin Kitchlew.

It was Srinivasan who gave K.J. Yesudas a memorable break and composed the song ‘Ettumanoorambalathil’, which won S. Janaki a National award, as well as ‘Ragam Sree Ragam’, which earned P. Jayachandran the Kerala State award. He wrote the lyrics for Usha Uthup’s hit movie song ‘Peethambara O Krishna’. His first Tamil film song had lyrics by the well-known Jayakanthan for the film *Paadhai Theriyudhu Paar*. Srinivasan even played the lead role of an eccentric professor in John Abraham’s *Agraharathil Kazhuthai*, which went on to become a popular, and perhaps, one of the most controversial Indian films.

Welfare activities
Srinivasan was the founder of Cine Musicians’ Union and played a major role in securing labour rights for them, fighting for fair wages and regular hours. As chairman of Indian Performing Rights Society (IPRS) for several years, he strove to protect the rights of music composers, lyricists and provide royalties to them. Rightfully so, an auditorium has been named after him as MBS Memorial Hall in Chennai. He was one of the founders of FEFSl (Film Employees Federation of South India) and was nominated by the

Collective sound

The Madras Youth Choir (MYC) celebrated its golden jubilee with a concert in Chennai in 2023. Some of its senior members, who have been with the choir for decades, were trained by Srinivasan. Renamed as Madras MBS Choir (MMC) in 2024, it carries forth his legacy of spreading messages of love for humanity, richness of India’s languages and the greatness of its poets. To build awareness MMC conducts workshops in choral music techniques for teachers and students, and outreach programmes across schools. It also conducts the annual inter-school Indian choral music competition. All this effort led to the Sangeet Natak Akademi recognising the choir’s efforts with a grant. The choir was also invited by the Akademi to perform at events such as the M.S. Subbulakshmi centenary celebrations in 2016 at Shanmukhananda Sabha in Mumbai, and the Shresht Bharat cultural festivities in Thanjavur in 2019. In 2017, it was invited to participate in the International Choral Music Festival in Washington. Currently, the choir is on the lookout for new voices.

ILLUSTRATION: SAAI



former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the Advisory Committee of NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training).

Pioneering efforts
While his work in films are significant, Srinivasan’s true legacy lies in his pioneering efforts in choral music. In 1970, along with wife Zahida, Vasanthi Devi (Vice Chancellor of Manonmaniam University) and K.S. Subramanian, he launched a youth choral group for a programme on All India Radio (AIR) under the banner – Bharathi Ilangnar Isai Kuzhu. The radio show, *Ilaya Bharatham*, was well received. This led to his forming the Madras Youth Choir in 1971 and as its composer-director trained young enthusiasts. He chose songs penned by Subramania Bharati, Muhammed Iqbal, K.C.S. Arunachalam and Rabindranath Tagore. He then choralised the compositions, which became popular, especially among the youth. He was the director of AIR Choral Group, Chennai, for eight years and composed over 200 choral compositions based on Indian classical and folk melodies, infusing elements of Western harmony into Indian music. His riveting compositions include Bharati’s ‘Vasana Kavithai’ - *Mazhai*, in a six-part choral arrangement, Bharatidasan’s *Amma unthan kai valaiyai*, Tamilanban’s *Bhagat Singh*, and the Telugu poet Dasarathi’s *Pillalaara*, which became a household song in the late 1970s and 1980s. In 1986, he helped set up the Kerala University Choir. M.

Jayachandran, today’s leading music director, was once a member of the Kerala University Choir. He describes Srinivasan as a musical genius and considers him as his guru. Well-known Carnatic vocalist Sudha Raganathan and musician and composer Rajkumar Bharathi were part of the AIR Choir Group in Chennai and also sang in the Madras Youth Choir. Recalling her association with Srinivasan, Sudha says: “A stickler for time and discipline, MBS sir was an epitome of perfection. I have worked with him for five years and was always amazed at his penchant for ‘newness’ in sound. His music carried the pulse of the people, the cry of justice and the tenderness of hope and dreams. Through his choirs, he proved that voices united in harmony could be stronger than any slogan, more enduring and effective than any speech. He gave music a conscience and in every note that he wrote, there was courage, compassion and the dream of a better world. I cherish my memories with MBS sir.”

Awards for excellence
Srinivasan won several awards including the FIE Award for Creative Excellence in Choral Music, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Creative/ Experimental Music and Kerala State Film Awards for Best Music Director. The Malayalam films *Nirmalyam*, *Swayamvaram*, *Prayanam*, *Swathi Thirunal*, and *Utharayan*, for which he composed music, won National Awards. Srinivasan conducted mass singing with nearly 6,000 children across Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. He died of a heart attack while conducting a choir in Lakshadweep on March 9, 1988, but his spirit lingers. He gave us songs that spoke for the people, launched voices that became legends and built choirs that still echo his vision. His inspiring call ‘Come, let’s sing together,’ focussed on youth and collective singing. The MBS Youth Choir (also referred to as MBSYC) was established in 1988 in Thiruvananthapuram to celebrate his memory. The Madras MBS Choir and its sister group in Kerala, MBS Youth Choir, have been working together to keep Indian choral music alive. The Madras MBS Choir will celebrate founder M.B. Srinivasan’s birth centenary with a special concert tomorrow at the P.S. High School auditorium.



To Teacher, with love

Sarada Teacher, who passed away recently, was known for her precision as a Bharatanatyam artiste and impeccable teaching technique

V.P. Dhananjayan

Alladi Sarada (Sarada Hoffman), born in 1929 in the Adyar Theosophical campus, never allowed anyone to use the title ‘Guru’ before her name, instead always preferred to be called ‘Sarada Teacher.’ Resident-students at Kalakshetra also lovingly identified her as ‘Chinna Sarada’ because the senior scholar, S. Sarada, her elder contemporary, was also guiding all of us through a comprehensive education in naatya. Chinna Sarada is known for her uncompromising precision as a Bharatanatyam artiste, as well as an exemplary teacher who is instrumental in creating and standardising a Kalakshetra methodology for Bharatanatyam. Because of these efforts of Sarada Teacher and many other teachers, the world has recognised the Kalakshetra methodology as the best foundation for Bharatanatyam, unifying

several loosely-knit traditional training systems that helped in establishing a Kalakshetra legacy. Sarada Teacher was Rukminidevi Amma’s ideal model for shaping a keen precision on the physical body and in bodily execution. She, in turn, transferred that to her immediate lineage, creating a galaxy of Kalakshetra models starting with Yamini Krishnamurthy, Adyar Lakshman, C.V. Chandrasekhar, Shanta and myself, Krishnaveni Lakshmanan, Ambika Buch, Kala Ramesh, Savitri Jagannatha Rao, Balagopalan, Janardanan, Neela Satyalingam (Sri Lanka) and Balasundari Prathalingam (Sri Lanka). N.S. Jayalakshmi (teacher) also helped Sarada Teacher in this process. Years later, well-known Kalakshetra alumni such as G. Narendra, P.T. Narendran and Shijith Nambiar/Parvathi also studied under her and were guided by Sarada Teacher. Even though Rukminidevi cast Chinna Sarada in a few major roles such as Parvathi in

‘Kumarasambhavam’, Vasanthavalli in ‘Kuttrala Kuravanji’, Andal in ‘Andal Charitam’, as a true acharya, she later let her sishtyas shine in the lead roles in most of the Kalakshetra productions. Some examples include Sarada Teacher performing the role of the main sakhi while Shanta played Radha in ‘Geeta Govindam’. In the Ramayana series, she immortalised the role of Manthara in ‘Sri Rama Vana Gamanam’ and she, along with Shanta, appeared for two

lightning-quick minutes as apsaras in ‘Paaduka Pattabhishekam’. Rukmini Devi cast Shanta in these productions to match Sarada Teacher’s precision and perfection. I had the good fortune of playing the role of Periyazhwar opposite her Kodhai or Andal. Some of Sarada Teacher’s own small choreographic ventures include Naatu Padal, Kummi, Kolattam, Tiruppugazh verses and bhajans. ‘Murugan Thiruvurul’ was the only full-fledged

dance drama she choreographed in Kalakshetra. Unfortunately, Kalakshetra has failed to regularly perform it, unlike their other productions. In my book, *Beyond Performing: Art & Culture*, there is a four-page article on Sarada Teacher, throwing more light on her work and contributions to Kalakshetra, which owes her a monumental tribute. Accolades may not be many, but they are notable – conferred by institutions such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi (1996), The Music Academy’s Sangita Kala Acharya (2008), Venkatakrishnan Mama’s ‘Sankarabharanam’ and Narada Gana Sabha’s Natyarangam. She later moved to California, settling down under the good care of her children, Geetha Hoffman and Krishna Hoffman, along with his wife Paulomi Pandit (also her student). A special mention must be made of her receiving the first Rukmini Devi Medal for Excellence in the Arts, instituted by the Centre for Contemporary Culture, New Delhi.



Guiding light Sarada Teacher with her students Dhananjayan, Shanta, Savitri Jagannatha Rao and Ambika Buch. PHOTOS COURTESY: V.P. DHANANJAYAN & KALAKSHETRA FOUNDATION



▲ **Sacred steps** Meenāṭchi is set against the cultural backdrop of Madurai and (below) Divya Nayar.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Manasa Vijayalakshme C

When dancer-choreographer Divya Nayar speaks about her new work ‘Meenāṭchi: The Goddess Reigns’, it is less about reviving mythology than about recognising the goddess within us. To be staged under the aegis of her dance institution ‘Dakshina’, on September 21, 6.30 p.m., at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, it will be streamed on September 22.

Set against the cultural backdrop of Madurai, the performance traces Meenakshi’s journey as princess, lover, queen, warrior and ultimately, as goddess. Blending dance, music, poetry, and textile traditions, ‘Meenāṭchi’ seeks to capture not just a mythic narrative but the spirit of Tamil culture and heritage.

“For me, the identities of a daughter, sister, mother, lover, even a warrior are the easiest to choreograph,” says Divya. “Because these are lived experiences. I have had to be a warrior myself, in personal and professional spaces, when something went wrong or when loved

When sculptures speak

Divya Nayar’s ‘Meenāṭchi’ tells the story of the goddess as carved in the Madurai temple

ones needed protection. In that sense, Meenakshi is easier to understand as a daughter and a warrior than as a goddess. The divine is simply the whole of these parts.”

The production opens with a royal couple longing for an heir and a daughter is born from a sacrificial fire. This child, Meenakshi, grows into a remarkable woman, revered for her courage and compassion. Unlike most

women of her time, who stepped outside their homes, she was raised not to be a bride but a commander and lead her people.

The highlight of this work is its layered visual aesthetic, achieved through collaborations that honour fading textile traditions. Divya draws on her early training at Kalakshetra, where the uncut fabric drape was intrinsic to stagecraft. “It’s all about the beauty of the unstitched

fabric, whether it’s the sari or *panchakacham*. Partnering with Tuhil, a collective devoted to reviving the handloom, was appropriate because their ethos is deeply rooted in Tamil tradition. Their handlooms are not mass-produced but carefully revived designs, making the costumes of the production an extension of the story.”

The production also draws on the expertise of hereditary makers of temple jewellery in Nagercoil. “Temple jewellery is integral to Bharatanatyam. But the craft is disappearing



because the younger generation from these families do not see a future in it. This collaboration became a way to acknowledge and spotlight that legacy,” shares Divya.

If textiles and jewellery provide the visual vocabulary, literature forms the soul. The choreography is woven with passages inspired by the *Thiruvilayadal Puranam* and *Meenakshi Pillai Tamil*, with compositions chosen by Professor S. Raghuraman.

For Divya, the most personal element in the production is her love for stories. The dance drama opens not with a straightforward retelling of the goddess’s life, but with a person walking into the Madurai temple, where the sculptures begin to narrate Meenakshi’s story. “If you have been to the temple, you know the sculptures are larger than life, you can see the veins on their legs, the toenails, the expressions. I often wondered: when the temple shudders and no one is around, do they come alive? That imagination became the heart of this production.”

What, then, does she hope the audience carries home? “That the story is eternal. Questions are often raised about whether Bharatanatyam needs modern, social themes to remain relevant. But a timeless story, told with beauty in music, textiles, and dance, can move anyone, whether from Madurai or Manhattan. It’s like *Toy Story* or *Night at the Museum*, where the inanimate comes alive through imagination. Classical arts too can transport you, offer escape, and give you something lasting to take back,” says Divya.

Up close and personal

Enchantment traces Pt. Ravi Shankar’s life, but misses his music



▲ Yohan Chacko and Aarabi Veeraraghavan.
PHOTO: S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

V.V. Ramani

It was the story of an artiste who strode the world of music like a colossus. His creativity and musical acumen shaped the imagination of an entire generation and continues to inspire young musicians. Credited with placing the sitar on the global map, Pt. Ravi Shankar’s journey was traced in the play *Enchantment*, staged recently at the Museum Theatre. Written and directed by Gowri Ramnarayan and presented by JustUs Repertory, the production was a fundraiser for REACH, a non-profit organisation dedicated to tuberculosis care and prevention.

Encapsulating the many facets of a phenomenal artiste – whose persona and music continue to resonate in public memory – within the framework of a short play is no easy feat. Gowri chose a linear narrative mode to highlight the defining moments of Pt. Ravi Shankar’s life.

“Artistes are here to enact his life story, not recreate his persona,” said Gowri Ramnarayan at the outset, addressing any misgivings about the play’s approach. Clad in a kurta-pyjama and shawl, Yohan Chacko portrayed the sitar maestro, while Aarabi Veeraraghavan took on the role of the sutradhar.

Enchantment began with Ravi’s childhood days in Benaras, then his travel to Paris, his stint with elder brother and celebrated dancer Uday Shankar’s company, where he explored and developed his musical skills, alongside dancing and acting in productions, Ravi’s intense training in gurukul parampara under the legendary Allaudin Khan at Maihar, his marriage to the guru’s daughter Annapurna Devi and their troubled relationship. It also touched upon his love for dancer Kamala Shastri and his marriage to Sukanya. All these formed a significant part of the narrative. Towards the end, *Enchantment* spoke about his phenomenal success in the West (apparently, he was uncomfortable with the label ‘world musician’), playing at the Woodstock Festival and collaborating with the likes of

George Harrison of the Beatles and violin virtuoso Yehudi Menuhin, his rivalry with Vilayat Khan and his composing music for the film, *Anuradha*. All these aspects unfolded mostly through conversations between the protagonist and the sutradhar. The narrative was interspersed with projected images, dance sequences and rendition of songs.

Yohan was impressive in his portrayal, adding strength to the dramatization of the artiste’s journey. However, what irked many in the audience was the disproportionate focus on Ravi Shankar’s personal relationships. Even if this was a deliberate choice, the portrayal lacked emotional depth. Moreover, some of the lines used to convey this side of Pt. Ravi Shankar could have been subtle and dignified. The humour, at times, felt caricatured. The depiction of guru Allauddin Khan, too, left much to be desired – particularly in a brief sequence when Aarabi played the Ustad by just wearing a shawl over her top.

Another sore point in *Enchantment* was its portrayal of Annapurna Devi. It largely focused on her personal traits such as being insecure and jealous of the women in her husband’s life and tyrannical towards son Shubhendra. At the time, Annapurna was the only woman surbahar player and was regarded as a musician of equal, if not greater, calibre than Pt. Ravi Shankar. But these aspects were overlooked.

From Ganga arathi in Benaras and Balasaraswati’s ‘Krishna nee begane’ to Pt. Ravi Shankar’s iconic song from the film *Anuradha*, the dance sequences by Bharatanatyam artistes Renjith and Vijnna ran parallel to the narrative rather than being a part of it. The musical score relied more on well-known vocalist Bombay Jayashri Ramnath’s singing. The sound of the sitar, the real protagonist of the evening, was hardly heard.

Besides Vidhya Subramaniam in a cameo role, Renjith and Vijnna’s students were part of the play. The recorded music also featured singers Aditya Prakash, Chaitra Sairam and Vignesh Ishwar.

Suganthi Krishnamachari

Doing a play based on real events is difficult. There must be absolute fidelity to the truth. And yet the play must not be stodgy like a documentary. The difficulties get compounded when the subject you are dealing with is a war. Theatrekaran in collaboration with NCC-UDAAN was, therefore, taking on a challenging theme, when the troupe decided to stage a play on the 1971 Indo-Pak war. But to their credit, the directors of the play (Raghavendr and Sabarivas) handled the subject sensitively.

The play *1971 war: Oru Vetri Thorakkadikkapattadh* (concept and curation by retired Major General Indrabalan), staged in Narada Gana Sabha, showed the brutalities inflicted on the East Pakistanis by Tikka Khan; Chief of Army Staff Manekshaw’s advice to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to defer war against Pakistan until conditions were more favourable; India’s attack on Pakistan through air, sea and land; and Pakistan’s surrender to the Indian forces.

The war story

Theatrekaran’s play handled the difficult subject of the 1971 Indo-Pak war sensitively



The actors portrayed battle scenes, guerilla warfare and the horrors unleashed against the East Pakistanis effectively, sometimes resorting to shadow play. When Lt General Niazi of Pakistan says to Major General J.F.R. Jacob that India is a Hindu country, the latter points out that the Indian military forces best represent the melting pot that

India is – Jacob is a Jew, Idris Hasan Latif of the Air Force is a Muslim, Manekshaw is a Parsi, and Lieutenant General Aurora is a Sikh. Maybe such an exchange between Niazi and Jacob didn’t actually take place, but it was heartening to hear it being said on stage.

Loud background music drowned out dialogues, for instance Mujibur

Rahman’s spirited address to his people. Scenes where actors delivered important lines would have been more poignant without any music. Sabarivas explained that since many of the younger generation seemed unaware of the 1971 conflict and of India’s victory in the war, the title *Oru Vetri Thorakkadikkapattadh* (a victory that has been defeated) was chosen for the play. Wouldn’t *Oru Vetri Marakkapattadh* (A victory that has been forgotten) have been more apt?

Eighty-seven year old Major Krishnaswamy (later Colonel), who led his forces deep into enemy territory during the war, addressed the audience after the play. He said that some years ago, when he visited Dhaka, Sheikh Hasina, the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh asked him, “When did you last visit Dhaka?” To which he replied, “Last time, I didn’t visit. I entered Dhaka.” He added that another difference was that in 1971, he had been holding a gun, but was now holding his wife’s hand. Hasina joked, “What you are now holding is a more potent weapon than a gun.”

Celebrating Shakti

As Navaratri approaches, evenings will resonate with music. To celebrate the spirit of the festival, a series of special events, spread over ten days, are being organised at different venues across the city. Here’s the list.

ABHAI (Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India) presents a series of performances on September 25 at Akshaya Arts Auditorium, Virugambakkam. Performance by the students of Radhika Kalyani at 5.45 p.m. will set the tone for the evening. This will be followed by the dance recitals of Maya Shyamsunder’s students (6.20 p.m.); students of Dhakshayani Ramachandran (6.55 p.m.) and students of Latha Ravi and R. Ramya (7.30 p.m.). The event is open to all.

Mudhra’s ‘Navarathiri Vaibhavam’, will be held from September 23 to October 1. Each day’s concert will be streamed live on



www.paalamtv.com at 6.30 p.m. The curtains go up with H. Rathna Prabha’s vocal concert. Performances to be featured on other days are: September 24: Vishruthi Girish. September 25: Ranjani Vasuki. September 26: Radha Bhaskar. September 27: Sumithra Vasudev. September 28: Archana-Aarathi. September 29: N.S.

Kamakshi. September 30: Chaitra Sairam. October 1: Kamala Deepti.

Chennai Fine Arts will present a ten-day festival between September 22 and October 1. All concerts will be streamed live on facebook.com/chennaifinearts at 11.30 a.m. Musicians will render Kamalamba Navavarnam on each day. Sithukadu T.G.M.

Venkateswaran’s nagaswaram recital on September 22, at 10.30 a.m. will be followed by Adyar Amarabharthi Sathsangam’s ‘Kamakshi Pravaham’. Performances to take place on other days are: September 23: C.V.P. Sastri.



September 24: Sowmya Acharya. September 25: A.S. Murali. September 26: Yamini Ramesh. September 27: Carnatica Brothers. September 28: K. Harish Narayan. September 29: Salem Gayathri Venkatesan. September 30: Kolkata Padmavathi Saranathan. October 1: Kolkata Vijayaraghavan.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore, hosts a music series, organised under Smt. Saroja Parasaram Memorial Endowment, between September 22 and 30 at its main hall. To begin with a puja on September 22 at 6 p.m. the evening features Abhilash Venkitachalam’s vocal concert. Artistes to perform on other

days are: September 23, 6 p.m.: Sankari Krishnan. September 24, 6 p.m.: Chinnmaya Sisters. September 25, 6 p.m.: Mambalam Sisters. September 26, 6 p.m.: Akshay Padmanabhan. September 27, 4.30 p.m.: Aishwarya and Soundarya, and 6.30 p.m.: Easwaran Bhattathiri. September 29, 4.30 p.m.: Lalitha Mohan and 6.30 p.m.: Vidya Kalyanaraman. September 30, 4.30 p.m.: Vivek Moozhikulam followed by Amrutha Venkatesh’s vocal concert at 6.30 p.m.

Veena Nadanjali: Narada Gana Sabha Trust in association with BIFAC and Kalakendra will present an ensemble performance featuring 108 veenas, led by B. Kannan, will be held on September 21 (6.30 p.m.) at Narada Gana Sabha. Aswini Srinivasan will accompany on the mridangam and Sainath on the ghatam.



► **Coastal symphony**
(Clockwise from far left) Ustad Amjad Ali Khan; Shakir Khan; Samandar Khan; and Armaan Khan.
PHOTOS COURTESY: SHOWHOUSE

When ragas ride the waves in Goa

The festival, ‘Malhar and the Sea’, showed how classical music is as integral to the region’s musical heritage as Fado and folk forms

Chitra Swaminathan
chitra.swaminathan@thehindu.co.in

The clouds played peek-a-boo as raindrops splashed against the window. When the aircraft began its descent at the Manohar International Airport (Mopa) in North Goa, a carpet of green stretched endlessly on either side, with hardly a hint of concrete in sight. Outside the terminal, Portuguese-inspired architecture and the iconic ‘Under the Coconut Tree’, a creation of the famed Goan cartoonist Mario Miranda, caught the eye. Driving out, the view remained unchanged for a few kilometres – verdant stretches and hills draped in tropical foliage – a landscape quintessentially North Goa. There couldn’t have been a better start to a trip that found its rhythm at the ‘Malhar and the Sea’ music festival.

Goa is best known for its vibrant

folk songs, distinctive Konkani art forms, and of course Fado – a legacy of its Portuguese past. But contrary to the common perception that classical music is not a significant aspect of its soundscape, the region has produced legendary Hindustani musicians such as Mogubai Kurdikar, Kishori Amonkar, Kesarbai Kerkar, Dinanath Mangeshkar, and Jitendra Abhisheki. Annual festivals are even held in memory of some of them.

Kishori Amonkar, the trailblazing vocalist, took immense pride in her Goan ancestry. Fluent in both Konkani and Marathi, she credited her roots with shaping her identity and artistry. Jitendra Abhisheki too drew liberally from the cultural fabric of Goa, collaborating with the state’s poet-laureate Bakibab Borkar

to weave its linguistic and poetic sensibilities into classical music. A mention of Kesarbai Kerkar, who hailed from the Goan village of Keri, brings to mind her popular khayal ‘Maan na kariye’ in raag Gaud Malhar – a reminder of Malhar’s special resonance with Goa, the land of a long, lush monsoon. The festival’s title, ‘Malhar and the Sea’, couldn’t have been more apt.

In its second edition this year, the festival made room for diverse artistic expressions, much like the



Echoes of Fado

Renowned Fado singer Sonia Shirsat, who performed at the festival, was introduced to this music by Portuguese guitarist António Chainho. Her repertoire spans Goan folk songs, Indo-Portuguese classics, Western pop ballads and devotional music.

A legacy in gold

Three artists from Karnataka to exhibit Mysuru paintings in London



► **Tradition shines**
(Clockwise from far left) Krishna with Ashtabariyas by Shashank Bharadwaj, Mahishasuramardhini by Umanagendra; and Yashoda Krishna by J. Dunderaja. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shilpa Anandraj

Mysuru paintings offer an artistic window into our rich cultural past. Introduced by Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar III in the 19th century, the tradition flourished under Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar’s patronage. During his reign, palace artist Y. Subramanyaraju began teaching the art form to students across Karnataka. One such student was J. Dunderaja, who trained at Karnataka

Chitrakala Parishath and is today among the most sought-after Mysuru painting artists.

He, along with two more artists from Karnataka – Umanagendra and Shashank Bharadwaj – will travel to London for their debut overseas show – Swarna Kala. The trio will exhibit more than 70 traditional Mysuru paintings (Mysore Chitrakala) at the Bhavan, London, from October 2 to 7.

Dunderaja, recipient of the National Award, Mysore Dasara

Award and Karnataka Lalit Kala Academy award, speaks about the upcoming show in London and their efforts to preserve the art form. He also specialises in Thanjavur paintings. Explaining the speciality of Mysuru paintings, Dunderaja says, “It uses original 22 K gold foils, hence the show is titled Swarna Kala. Themes depicted are from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and mythology.” The art form occupies a space between modern and realistic styles.”

Speaking about the process,

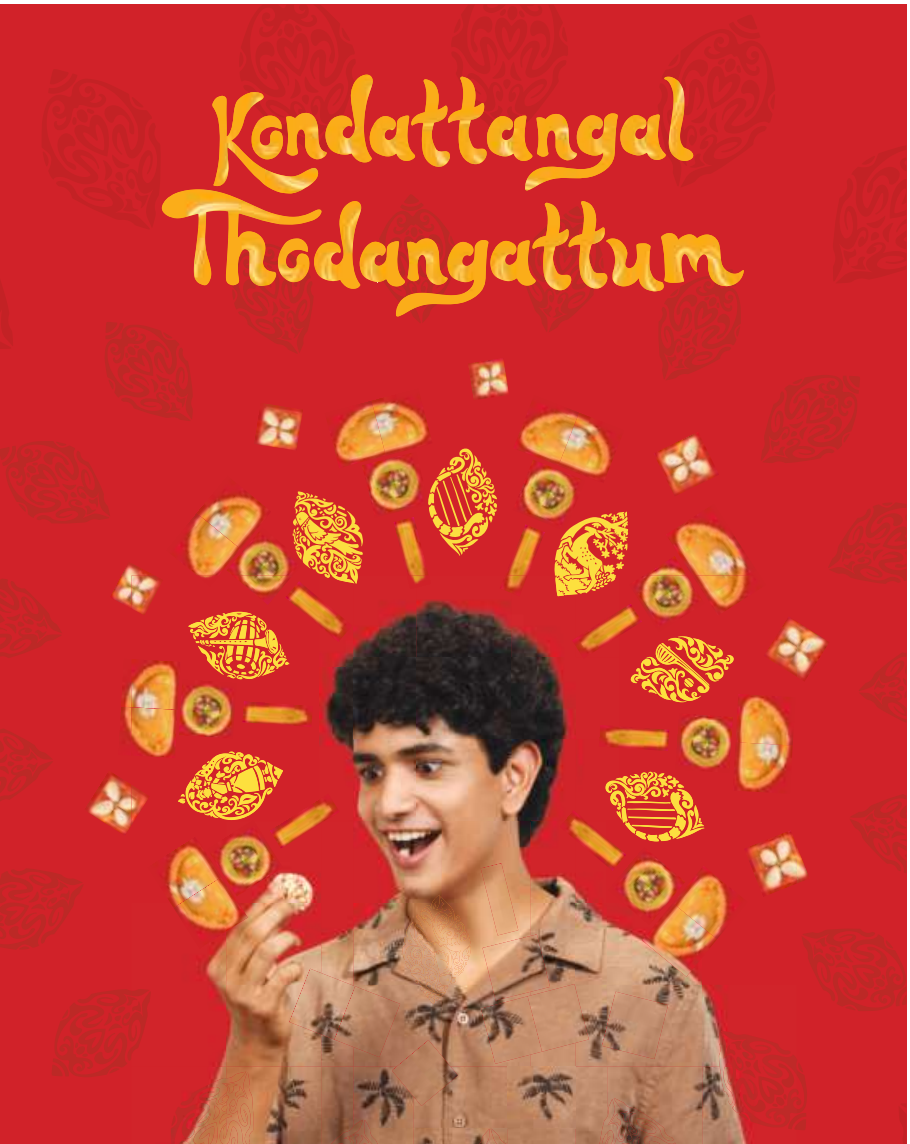
he says, “First, the paper is pasted on a plywood sheet and dried. Then we do the drawing, followed by embossing, which involves placing pure gold foils on them. After this comes the colouring. Earlier, we used natural dyes, but today, most use regular paints and colours.”

The price of these art works depend on the gold rates. “It means only those who can afford can buy. As for me, I am just happy creating them. Even that is not easy as the cost of the raw material has gone up. I manage by teaching and through the few orders that come my way.”

“After my training Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, I decided to pursue it as my profession, says Dunderaja, who has taught more than 1,000 students and teachers. He has had over 10 shows across the country. “The Central Government, through DCH (Design Centres for Handicrafts) sponsors artists like me. This has been a huge help.”

Dunderaja works for eight hours a day for a week or 10 days to create a 1 1/4 ft. painting. “The art works are priced ₹15,000 and upwards depending on the size and the gold foils used. With increasing awareness about heritage and culture, Mysuru paintings have become popular among art lovers.”

Umanagendra, who was Dunderaja’s senior at Chitrakala Parishath, is also an art teacher. Says Shashank Bharadwaj, a software engineer-turned-artist, “The show is an effort towards cultural preservation. I am not just a painter but an interpreter, who wants to create a dialogue between this traditional art form and contemporary global audiences, and ensure its stories and techniques resonate with generations to come.”



COMING SOON

Nithya Amirtham Thuritham: Alandur | Mylapore
Madipakkam | Iyyapanthangal
Nithya Amirtham Sweets: Perambur | Anna Nagar
3rd Avenue | Vanagaram

BRANCHES

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Award ceremony

The C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Alwarpet, honours Harikatha exponent Vishakha Hari with the Saraswathi Puraskaram 2025 on September 20, 10.30 a.m. Sowmya Swaminathan, chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation; and Principal Advisor, National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, will present the award. The evening also features harikatha by Vignesh Chandrasekharan, student of Vishakha Hari.

Talent showcase

Sarvani Sangeetha Sabha Trust has organised the 22nd edition of Talent promotion Akhanda Sangeetham on September 20, from 9 a.m. at Ragasudha Hall, Mylapore. Disciples of veteran gurus will perform on the occasion. The day-long event begins with Murari Sudarshan and Amulya Yendluri's veena duet at 9 a.m.

Accent on devotion

Hamsadhwani presents an evening of bhajans on September 20, 5.45 p.m., as part of N.K. Mahadeva Iyer's centenary celebrations. It will be followed by a musical conversation 'Thithikkum Thirumurai', featuring Sargurunathan Odhuvar and Isaikavi Ramanan. Venue: Youth Hostel, Adyar.

Dedicated to vaggeyakaras

Natyangam, the dance wing of Narada Gana Sabha, presents Vaggeyakara Bhartham, to take place today, 6.30 p.m. at Sathguru Gnanananda Hall. Organised in collaboration with Nrithyopasana Trust, the event features musician Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath and dancers Parshwanath Upadhye, Shruti Gopal, Adithya PV and students of Upadhye School of Dance.

Kathakali festival



Kalakshetra Foundation presents its 16th Kathakali festival 'Bhava Bhavanam - Ras Rajasa,' at Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium, Tiruvannamur. Inaugurated yesterday, the three-day festival features the following thematic productions. Today, 6 p.m.: 'Thodayam' followed by 'Purappadu' from 'Banayudham'. Tomorrow, 6 p.m.: 'Pakuthi Purappadu' from 'Bakavadham'.

Four-day workshop

Want to learn Javalis of various composers? Enrol for a four-day workshop, to be presented by Mani Krishnaswamy Academy, on September 20, 21, 27 and 28, 7 a.m.-8.30 a.m. Senior musician Geetha Raja will conduct the sessions. For details contact +91 7411916098.



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VENUE & DATE

1. Salem - GVN Mahal (Near St Joseph HSS School Junction) **25th Sep Thursday**
2. Coimbatore - Thai Hotel (Junction Opposite) **23rd Oct**
3. Kanchipuram - 9 or 16th Oct (Any one day)

**Audition time:
9 AM onwards**

Artist : Lead Hero & Heroine 20 - 27 Age (Above Height 5.6 inch) BE,
PG Preferable Male 10 & Female 10 Supporting Artist (During Visit bring 3 multicolor photo)
Camera Man / Stunt - Arumugam & Vijay Jhaguar Thangam / Dance With Gymnastics /
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Paramparagatha Moolamnaya Sarvagnya Peetam Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam to Chennapuri

This is the first visit of the 71st Sankaracharya after being anointed to the Peetam on the auspicious Akshaya Trithya on 30th April 2025

The Acharyas would perform the CHANDRAMOULEESWARAR POOJA and SARADA NAVARATHRI MAHOTSAVAM between

Monday, 22nd September 2025 And Thursday, 2nd October 2025
at the VIDYA MANDIR CAMPUS

Pattna Pravesham on Saturday, 20th September 2025 at 5.00 pm
from Kamarajapuram Bus stop, Velachery Main Road to
Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Vidya Mandir, Tambaram (E)

Their Holinesses will inaugurate the exhibition **வீரபுத்ர வீரகல்**
on Sunday, 21st September 2025 at 4.25 pm

வन्दே गुरु परम्पराम्

ALL ARE WELCOME

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For full details of the Vijaya Yatra and Sarada Navarathri, please access the separate link in : www.srikanchimahaswamividyamandir.org