



# metro PLUS

THE HINDU

**An upcoming all-night arts festival trains the spotlight on Kattaikoothu P3**

**NOW, A TAMIL FILM ON A QUEER ROMANCE P4**

**S Poorvaja and Sanjana Ganesh**

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**A**s the sun sets, organisers of Comic Con India are trying to reroute cosplayers at Chennai Trade Centre to step outside for a quick group photo before they lose light. The clarion call brings at least 100 cosplayers in elaborate costumes, pink, purple and blonde wigs and armour that seem true to life, into one colourful, eccentric frame. Multiple Venas, Piccolos, Jokers, Harley Quinns and Darth Vaders pose in front of a temple-like structure. There is no better imagery than this of the city's first comic con.

A cosplayer who rushes to join a group photo excitedly says, "I thought I'd be the only idiot in pink," pointing to her wig. However, she is in the company of others who do not favour derision and critique about cotton candy hair.

Inside the venue, it feels like nearly every attendee is now a *katana*-wielding (Japanese sword) warrior. Bobble heads and manga magazines dominate stalls. There is a rush to purchase posters, some shy meet-and-greets with comic book artists, and several unfortunate dents of the wallet. "I am going broke today," is the most repeated phrase, as participants trawl through the merchandise, which includes comic books signed by Stan Lee, the Marvel comics frontman and the co-creator of several iconic characters, for a princely sum of ₹1.85 lakh.

At Chennai's first edition of Comic Con on February 17 and 18, which drew over 32,000 participants, it is evident that everyone can be anyone they like, and indulge in fantasy that they once thought possible only in other major Indian cities. Now that the Con is finally in Chennai, judgement needs to be shredded at the entrance by the metal detectors.

**Casting the transfiguration spell**  
Roshini Sekhar has been walking with a cosplay medic all evening and has promised to not move around too much so as to protect her costume. "I'm already done with my rounds," she says as she carefully walks in her tiered black dress wielding a massive sword. She cosplays Saber Alter, an antagonist (rather, a dark heroine) of the Japanese visual novel *Fate/stay night*. "Most people think that cosplaying is like fancy dress. The thing they do not realise is that these are months in the making. Because I am in the industry (she's a costume designer), I make many of the pieces I cosplay," she says, adding that people spend



**Shazam!** Cosplayers dressed up as various characters at Comic Con pose for pictures while participants indulge themselves, purchasing memorabilia. THAMODHARAN B AND S SHIVA RAJ

Much like Dan, American comic book writer John Layman who co-created the image comic series *Chew* too is thrilled. "I would rather do a Chennai Con, than say, a Detroit Con. My job is to make people happy that they've met a comic book person and to engage with the fans, which is easy here since everyone is so excited to meet, especially given how rare these interactions are. Here, I'm going to see something different, and touch people in a different way," he says.

**All for one**  
There is something for everyone at Comic Con. There are free gaming stations, cheap posters and stickers, as well as expensive pop-culture memorabilia for everyone to take away. However, the most crowded spaces are the stalls selling anime and manga merchandise, with children pleading with parents to be allowed one extra keepsake.

V Akshara and her sister Riddhishri are carefully perusing through the stalls with their parents and grandmother. The full battalion has arrived at Comic Con and their father is eager to take back some knick knacks from the event. Even the grandmother, Kalyani, says "Pudichirukku, (I like it)," when asked about her experience.

"Comic Con has ended up being surprising, thrilling and comical sometimes because of the cosplay," says Akshara. A passer-by adds that he did not expect that people in Chennai would spend ₹899 for a day at the fest but he is happy to see the uptick. He is sure that it is only the start of what could be an annual gala in the city.

Six-year-old Aarav Nair is Thor today and scrunches up his nose every time he raises his hammer. He encapsulates the spirit with more brevity. "I am having so much fun" he says, stressing on the 'oo's, promising he will be back every year.



Scan the QR code to watch a video on cosplaying on [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com).

## Comic Con Chennai: Homecoming

**We take you inside Chennai's first Comic Con, a multiverse of comic book writers, cosplayers, manga and anime enthusiasts, and tonnes of merchandise**

up to ₹50,000 based on how elaborate their costumes are.

At the contest, there are over 300 memorable characters from popular anime, television shows, films, manga, gaming and comics, battling it out for a cash prize of ₹35,000. While Batmans, Jokers and Marvel characters form a chunk of the cosplayers, one can also see characters from *One Piece*, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Attack on Titan*, *Jujutsu Kaisen* and the Studio Ghibli films.

Wearing a spectacular blonde wig with chunks of spiked hair cascading down his back, a Goku (from *Dragon Ball Z*) cosplayer is constantly stopped for pictures and asked to pose. For these run-ins and photo-ops, there were photo walls set up across the expansive hall, where children and adults alike stop to click photos with the roving cosplayers.

"I have always known about the existence of a small (cosplay) community in the city but to see the



size of participants is shocking. It feels good to know that there are as many people in Chennai indulging a hobby that could easily turn into an obsession," Roshini says.

The size of the audience in the city seems to have stunned all the stakeholders.

Lyricist Madhan Karky who is at

the event to release his Tamil translation of the first volume of *Endwars*, a comic by Amirtharaj Selvaraj, Congress MLA of Thoothukudi's Srivakundam, also expresses his shock at the crowds. "I thought I would mostly see children here. I am not incorrect. Everyone is just

a grown-up child," he says. The lyricist adds that though Tamil pop culture has been replete with comics and illustrations in the past, a translated work requires creating context and a world that is uniquely Tamil. This means that the onomatopoeic sounds 'Bam' and 'Boom' that often find their way in comic-speak need Tamil iterations too. "We have made use of the Tamil letter ஃ (Akku) for this," he says.

Dan Parent, writer-illustrator behind several *The Archies* comics, says that the Internet has made it far simpler to access information about comics, lives and customisations. But life was different when he created the first *Veronica in India* comic during the 1980s. Much of the research had to be done by referencing old books on the country. Tropes were stereotypical in several comics, he says, referencing the *tuk tuks* and Bollywood stars in his comics.

"India looks back at Archies with a lot of fondness. The first con I attended here in India (in Bengaluru), drew the biggest crowd I had seen for my session," he says.

**the capacity, the need or the importance.** Here, she looks at the life of the Adyar Cancer Institute (WIA) through three people," Anitha adds. Following this, Jahnavi Phalkey, founding director, Science Gallery Bengaluru will be in conversation with AS Panneerselvan, fellow, Roja Muthiah Research Library about Scientific Lives and Modern India.

Titled *The Labour of my Ancestors*, another discussion will be led by Vijay. Anitha sets the context, "He is in the process of collecting compositions of nadaswaram and tavil artistes, a lot of it is already lost. He is literally going from house to house collecting them, and also performing them to give them a life in the mainstream," continues Anitha.

The second day ends with a rap performance with a clear sense of the genre being oral history. Tamil Nadu's first all-women rap ensemble Solisai Sistahs, ShankaraTPK and AKalaiva will be on stage.

*LangFest 2024 will be held at DakshinaChitra Museum on February 23 and 24. The event is free and open to all.*



## Mapping cultures

**DakshinaChitra Museum's annual LangFest is back with a focus on biographies and autobiographies**

DakshinaChitra Museum, who also is the curator of the festival.

Day 1 begins with lighting designer, photographer, filmmaker, poet, and founder of Seagull Publishers, Naveen Kishore in conversation with the Editor of *Frontline*, Vaishna Roy on the topic, Life Stories as

Cultural Narratives. Anitha adds, "We have Urvashi [Butalia] of Zubaan and Meena [Kandasamy] talking about women writing their lives and what it means when your community starts writing or gets a



"Another important session is the one with Dr Nikita Mehra where we are looking at the biography of an institution. We often don't think of institutions as having

the capacity, the need or the importance. Here, she looks at the life of the Adyar Cancer Institute (WIA) through three people," Anitha adds. Following this, Jahnavi Phalkey, founding director, Science Gallery Bengaluru will be in conversation with AS Panneerselvan, fellow, Roja Muthiah Research Library about Scientific Lives and Modern India.

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## The power of kindness

The Kindness Foundation is back with the second edition of The International Kindness Festival. The event highlights the powerful impact of kindness across different aspects of life. The focus this year will be on themes such as science, politics, ethics, technology, the arts and education.

The speakers are Con Conlan (founder and CEO of Merit Group), Lalitha Kumaramangalam (politician), Nawabzada Mohammed Asif Ali, Natasha Jethanandani (co-founder and CTO of Kaleidofin), Kiiran Patel (founder of Wellness Cube), Robin Chaurasia (social activist and co-founder of Kranti) and Nibir Mathew (tennis athlete and digital accessibility professional), to name a few. The festival will also showcase a silent auction fundraiser, live music and literary performances, art installations, open mics, a bazaar and food stalls. There will also be workshops and networking opportunities.

@Sri Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall, Harrington Road, February 24 and 25. For details, call 9940255751. It is free and open to all with prior registration at <http://bit.ly/49jprUk>.



**Stage by the sand** (Clockwise) R Sundaramurthy and K Saravanan; file picture of TM Krishna's performance; dancers at the previous edition of the festival. S SHIVA AND THAMODHARAN B



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**T**here is a sense of urgency at Urur Olcott Kuppam a week before the vizha on February 23.

The Ellaiamman temple, the epicentre of the festival, is laced with carefully placed scaffolding. The streets are hence being spruced up and small garbage trucks are bussing away debris lining the road. Soon, there will be boards, banners, mic sets and a makeshift stage outside the temple. Until then, a restless commotion of preparation persists among the organisers.

"If you leave everything spick and span, what will the volunteers do during the beach clean up (on February 18 as part of the festival)," jokes singer TM Krishna to K Saravanan, one of the main organisers of the project.

The Urur Olcott Kuppam vizha, one of Chennai's most popular counter-culture festivals, is happening after a six-year hiatus and Saravanan says that the city has missed much.

For one, the Ellaiamman temple, a seminal part of Urur Olcott kuppam's history, has grown twice in size. It is the site of the festival and one of

## Hymns of the sea

**Spend an evening at Urur Olcott Kuppam as this counter-culture festival full of Amba music, villupaatu and parai returns after a six-year hiatus**

the key reasons for the existence of the area's history and lore. With contributions from several benefactors both from the area and from those who have been associated with Urur Olcott Kuppam, a grander manifestation of the temple has now been created. "In the past, the stage of the vizha faced the sea. This time, the backdrop of the stage will be the newly constructed Ellaiamman temple," says Saravanan. On February 23, alongside the cultural festival, the temple's raja gopuram will be inaugurated.

Besides this, every resident has grown a tad older but has

not lost any vigour. Children who were once part of the audience will now be taking the stage as students from Olcott school will be part of a villupaatu performance. Young women from Avvai Illam will be wielding the parai as part of an all-girls ensemble. Fisherfolk from the region will also take the stage to sing the hymns that form their playlist at sea.

### Steeped in oneness

R Sundaramurthy, treasurer, Urur Olcott Kuppam Fishermen's Sangam,

says that when the festival began several years ago, it proved to people of the region that Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam were not limited to the upper class. It also helped both people from the area and outside gain a better sense of the history of their region. Now, an evolution of their landscape, their local deities as well as the flora and fauna, has been documented for the future.

"Urur was once surrounded by trees. Just take one look at the old MGR film *Padagotti*. It will show you how the area once looked," says Saravanan.

The intention of bringing the 'outsider' back to the kuppam is one steeped in an artistic sense of harmony and belonging to a bigger world.

Singer TM Krishna who has performed at the event since its first edition and has been a part of the core planning

committee since its inception says that there is a larger sense of oneness often exhibited at the event. "It is not that the middle class and the privileged bring our music to the village. Instead, the people of Urur Olcott Kuppam invite us to perform here," he says.

The artiste who has been promoting the event on social media often speaks of this dichotomy with a sense of learning attached to his journey. This probably

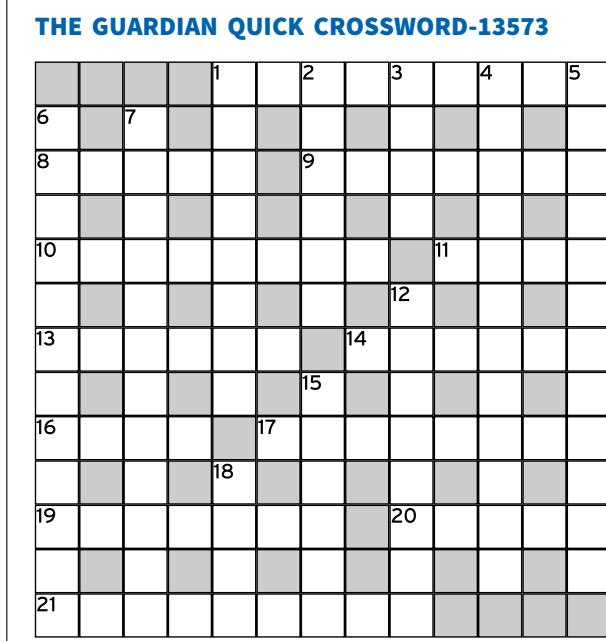
explains his investment in the festival and the friendships that he seems to have fostered in the area. To commemorate this, he will be performing a kutchery too with his friends. "Look out for some surprises," he says. He adds that the event will finish with a cinema song-filled evening by Motta Maadi music.

Six years is a long gap between events and COVID seems to have added several years on the relative time-scale but one thing seems evident. The spirit of the Urur Olcott Kuppam vizha has not died down. Catch the fervour at the festival.

**Urur Olcott Kuppam Vizha 2024 will be on February 23 outside the Ellaiamman temple in Besant Nagar. Entry is free.**



**Urur Olcott Kuppam Vizha 2024 will be on February 23 outside the Ellaiamman temple in Besant Nagar. Entry is free.**



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- Across**
- 1 1960 film about the leader of a Roman slave rebellion (9)
  - 8 Gusto (5)
  - 9 Sharp tooth (7)
  - 10 Look like (8)
  - 11 Incline (4)
  - 13 Pictures (6)
  - 14 Founder of an ancient Indian religion (6)
  - 16 Skin - cover (4)
  - 17 Naturally occurring crystalline sodium chloride (4,4)
  - 19 Refresh one's memory (5,2)
  - 20 Arthur Marx, comedian, d. 1964 (5)
  - 21 Spicy biscuit (6,3)
- Down**
- 1 More humid (8)
  - 2 With eagerness (6)
  - 3 Small bloodsucker (4)
  - 4 Wholesale business (4-3-5)
  - 5 Story told in illustrated panels (5,7)

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

- 6 Luggage for a short stay? (9,3)
- 7 Fail spectacularly (5,3,4)
- 12 Small lead pellets for cartridges (8)
- 15 Voucher (6)
- 18 You (of old) (4)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated February 29, 2024.

**Solution No. 13572**

C	O	S	Y	O	P	T	I	C	I	A	N
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### Butter, sugar, eggs

Have you been looking to perfect the formidable French macaroon? Celebrated pastry chef Pooja Dhingra of Le15 Patisserie is here to help. In an intense two-hour masterclass, Pooja will go over ways to make delicious cakes and cookies. @phoenix marketcity's central atrium on February 24 at 4pm. Interested participants can register at <http://tinyurl.com/yw77n6v>. Participants will be seated on a first come first serve basis.

## Financial literacy made fun

**Reserve Bank of India, Chennai will welcome students for the upcoming Financial Literacy Week**



**S Poorvaja**  
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**A**s one drives down Rajaji Salai, it is hard to miss the towering, light brown rectangular structure that stands out in the facade of an otherwise long, white building. The Reserve Bank of India's regional headquarters in Chennai has the key to many questions young students have - ranging from how the banking system in the country works, to how currency notes can be verified for authenticity.

For the upcoming Financial Literacy Week to be observed by the Reserve Bank of India, students will not just be given a chance to delve deeper into all of this, but will also get to visit the stately RBI building in Chennai. Every year, through the literacy week, the RBI zeroes in on a specific theme, and works on financial education and promotes awareness across the country through a focussed campaign for the same.

This year, from February 26 to March 1, the Financial Literacy Week will focus on children and young adults and will cover three important topics – the power of compounding, basics of baking, and cyber hygiene.

At the financial literacy gallery inside the RBI Chennai building, finishing touches are being given ahead of the Financial Literacy Week for a revamp.

Keeping with the theme, students from schools in the city will be invited to visit the gallery, and learn about a gamut of topics – rural credit, digital payments, features of currency notes, financial inclusion, consumer protection, and more.

Apart from posters detailing these topics which students can read, there will also be installations at the gallery detailing various banking functions, and responsibilities of the Reserve Bank of India with the aim of making financial literacy fun and engaging. A currency verification processing system machine will also be placed at the gallery, for children to get an idea of how this process is carried out.

A host of other activities focussed on financial inclusion and literacy, will also be carried out by banks in Chennai, and across the country through the week. With the focus trailed on young adults and children, it's all about making banking, and the functions of the country's most important financial institution engaging and accessible.



**City landmark** (above) An aerial view of the RBI building in Chennai. FILE PHOTO

**Indian publishing is now veering away from Western concepts and highlighting regional Indian cuisine to make books accessible for children**



## A for apple or appam?

**Nidhi Adlakha**  
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**A** for appam, B for bonda, and C for chaat... If we had to teach our children the ABCs of food, I'd rather opt for something like this and not A for asparagus, B for burger and C for cookie.

As parents and teachers introduce books about food to children, they often borrow from Western concepts. Be it ingredients, dishes, or even food etiquette, rarely have we found books that highlight traditional Indian delicacies and practices. It is only over the last couple of years that Indian publishers have delved into India's rich culinary diversity to bring out engaging titles for children.

Chitwan Mittal, founder-director of Gurgaon-based AdiDev Press – the publication house behind books such as *J for Jalebi* – says, it is only now that Indian children's publishing is coming into its own. "For a long time, Western children's books dominated Indian bookstores, but there has been a clear shift in what the market wants, which is stories rooted in Indian culture and practices," says Chitwan.

So why has it taken Indian publishing a long time to learn from local kitchens?

Sayoni Basu, consultant, Duckbill Books (part of Penguin Random House), explains how one needs to look at the status that English has in our country to understand the phenomenon.

"For many first-generation or second-generation speakers, English remains a language of aspiration. Therefore, there is a certain skepticism about 'Indian English', a belief that somehow 'foreign English' is purer and better," she says, adding how this is easily reflected in the fact that international books often outsell Indian ones, regardless of quality.

While this may be unfortunately true, the onus lies on parents, caregivers, and schools to bring the spotlight back on our everyday foods and lesser-known Indian delicacies. Authors have found interesting ways to make books more accessible.

Suma Subramanian, author of popular book *The Runaway Dosa* (Little Bee Books), says as a child,



she never saw books featuring Indian food "even if that's what I ate at home every day". As an adult, the landscape hadn't changed much. So I realise that my subconscious quest for identity began decades ago," says the author whose book themed on the dosa drew inspiration from *The Gingerbread Man* and the all-time favorite Tamil rhyme, 'Dossai! Amma, dossai'.

Another popular book themed on this rhyme is *Dosa Amma Dosa* by Anupama S Iyer (Tulika). "The book not only connected with children but also with parents and family who would have heard the rhyme and enjoyed it in their childhood. Second, the brightly coloured characters depicted as Channapatna toys worked well with the rhyme, and lent it a playful spin."

### Popular sub-genres

Food as a subject marks an instant connection with children, and has proven to be an effective tool to teach emotions too.

For instance, in *Paati's Rasam* (Karadi Tales), young Malli grapples with the loss of her

grandmother and recreates her favourite rasam. In Andaleeb Wajid's *Mirror Mirror*, which is about body dysmorphia, the girl's relationship with her body is negotiated through food and cooking.

"Food in literature often works to bring together different characters and celebrate diversity. Humour, festivals, mysteries and food are some of the popular themes in children's literature as well. The other books we find that are very popular are the books on food and sustainability. Apart from that, food becomes a way of bashing gender stereotypes in the kitchen and at the dining table," explains Bijal, commissioning editor, Pratham Books.

While Sayoni sees a rising popularity for books for children and young adults, and more diversity in themes, food-centric books are yet to catch up. "Food is such an integral part of the human experience that it often plays an important role in books which are not about food, so to speak. In Shabnam Minwalla's *Zen*, for example, the romance of the contemporary couple starts with an altercation about food and carries on through Swiggy deliveries," she says.

Anurag Minus Verma, New Delhi-based multimedia artist, and author of *Chaa Pizza*, says that each generation of children sees the world through a different lens, and this underscores the importance of incorporating contemporary symbols, ideas, and trends in modern children's literature to create compelling stories.

"The motif of food is particularly significant, serving as a sensory experience that can evoke memories," explains Anurag. He adds, "Through the use of this motif, many interesting narratives can be incorporated, as food often conceals aspects not just of joy but also of history, and personal memories. More exploration of food has yet to take off in children's literature. The possibilities in this realm are endless."



Kattaikuttu  
Sangam's annual  
arts festival has  
their latest work  
*Parvai* in the  
line up

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Complex stories,  
bright costumes,  
expressive eyes,  
song, and dance will take  
the stage all-night long as  
a part of the annual  
performing arts festival  
which celebrates the  
musical theatre form,  
Kattaikoothu.

In its 34th year, this  
annual festival organised  
by the Kattaikuttu  
Sangam seeks to be an  
immersive experience.

# Follow the gaze



With five different  
performances which  
begin on the night of  
February 24, the festival  
will extend into the early

hours of February 25.  
“Our new production  
*Parvai* or *The Gaze*, will  
open the festival. This is a  
complex story set in

**Immersive stage** A past  
performance by Kattaikuttu  
Sangam. AKHILA EASWARAN

colonial India in the 19th  
Century and follows an  
interacial love story  
between a Dutch person,  
and a Tamil koothu  
actress,” says Hanne M de  
Bruin, co-founder of the  
Kattaikuttu Sangam.

Hanne worked on  
conceptualising the play  
along with P Rajagopal,  
co-founder of the  
Kattaikuttu Gurukulam.  
“In *Parvai*, we turn the  
gaze around and look at  
colonial south India  
through the eyes of a  
dancer. The story is set in  
1877 which was when the  
Madras Famine ravaged  
the region,” Hanne  
explains.

While the Kattaikuttu

Sangam’s company  
Punjarasantankal will  
stage *Parvai*, the  
Pachayamman Terukkutu  
Nataka Mandram will  
perform *Dakshya Yagam*.  
The Shri  
Panchaliyamman  
Yagasesna Terukkutu  
Manram will perform  
*Hiranya Vilasam*, the Shri  
Krishna Kattaikuttu  
Kuzhu will perform *Mayil  
Ravanan*, and the festival  
will come to a close at  
4am with *Minnaloli  
Sivapuja* performed by  
Shri Renukambal  
Kattaikuttu Kuzhu.

@Open air stage, Kuttu  
Kai Kudam,  
Punjarasantankal village  
near Kanchipuram on  
February 24 from 9.30pm.  
Entry is free. For details,  
visit [www.kattaikuttu.org/festival-2024](http://www.kattaikuttu.org/festival-2024)



## Inside an artist's mind

The exhibition *The Unseen* John Tun Sein will pay tribute to artist John Tun Sein through illustrations and objects, and aims to showcase his sensitivity to the world around him. The exhibition will highlight his mastery in capturing the moment in its fragility and transcendence. @Goethe Institut, Rutland Gate, Nungambakkam on February 24 from 5.30 pm onwards. Entry is free.

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## Food from another era

The Chola Mandalam food  
festival curated by  
executive chef Jesu  
Lambert has dishes such  
as Oon Soru (aromatic rice  
cooked with meat and  
condiments), Meen  
Kozhunkurai (a traditional,  
ancient fish preparation  
mixed with rice and  
served), Nei Adisil (a  
jaggery-based sweet), and  
Vetrilai Kozhai (chicken  
cooked with betel leaves)  
on the menu. The menu  
has been sourced from  
regions in and around  
Thanjavur, Tiruchi,  
Pudukkottai,  
Thiruvarur



and Nagapattinam.  
“I understood that meat  
eating was common  
during the Sangam period,  
where the chieftain  
brought the hunted  
animals to the village and  
the meat was shared  
equally among the  
villagers. The book *Sanga  
Kaal Samayal* was my  
point of reference for the  
recipes we have recreated  
for the festival,” says Chef  
Jesu.

@Hotel Saverा, Mylapore.  
On till March 3, a la carte  
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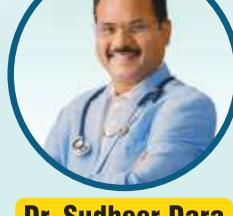
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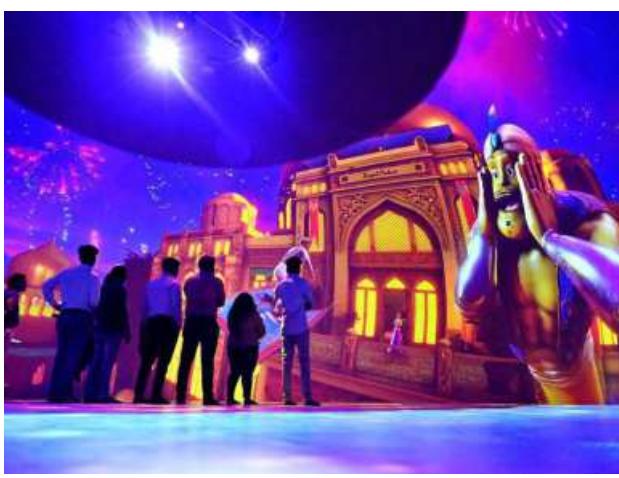
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A visual treat Sun Dance, a 360-degree dome theatre. THAMODHARAN B

## Take a ride with Aladdin

Chennai gets a 360-degree immersive dome theatre called Sun Dance

**Srinivasa Ramanujam**

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We watch two characters taking a roller coaster ride on the walls across the room. We feel like we are on the ride too.

At Sun Dance by Casagrand, said to be India's first 360-degree immersive dome theatre, characters and locations come to life. Located at the Kelambakkam-Vandalur Road, this new Chennai experience hopes to attract audiences of all ages, especially children.

Audiences can watch shows like *Aladdin*, *Peter Pan*, *Saving Tinkerbell* and *Moby Dick*, among others. Each screening will be about 20-30 minutes each.

Thanks to software that enables a single video being played across the room on all sides, Sun Dance will offer an immersive experience to audiences, believe its promoters. "You become part of the entire show and feel like you have experienced the story first-hand. We believe Chennai's audiences will

support this technology, especially children of various ages and their parents too," says K Ravichandran, vice president, Marketing, Casagrand.

Multiple shows, from 4pm to 9pm, are being planned. "Based on public feedback, we will increase the number of titles. We also plan to take this concept to other Indian cities soon," he adds.

The outer layer of the dome is waterproof, and that, paired with the negative pressure immersive screen, ensures an uninterrupted experience regardless of external elements. "We also believe that this will create a brand-new entertainment zone in the popular Kelambakkam-Vandalur Road," adds Ravichandran.

Shows will play from 4pm to 9pm at Sun Dance, to be launched on February 23, at Casagrand Sun City on Vandalur-Kelambakkam Road. Tickets, priced at Rs 100, will be available on bookmyshow. For details, call 8925558533

### Director Jayaprakash Radhakrishnan

on tackling a queer romance in his upcoming film *Kaadhal Enbadhu Podhuudamai*

**Gopinath Rajendran**

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Jayaprakash Radhakrishnan's last film *Thalaikoothal* might not have had a huge theatrical success but is having a good run on Netflix. While the theme of love was just a trope in that film on suicide, it takes centre stage in his upcoming release *Kaadhal Enbadhu Podhuudamai*. The filmmaker, known for his take on contemporary topics, dwells on a queer relationship and how a family comes to terms with it.

#### The first spark

The idea for *Kaadhal Enbadhu Podhuudamai* (roughly translating into 'love is for all') is not new; in fact, Jayaprakash had it right after his first directorial *Lens* (2016). This film features Lijomol Jose and



## Lens of love

Anusha Prabhu in the lead roles while the supporting cast includes Vineeth, Rohini, Kalesh Ramanand and Deepa.

"We are often programmed to think what we are used to seeing... is what is correct. So



when something else is witnessed, for some, the immediate reaction is to blur out that it's unnatural, perverted or a psychological issue that needs counselling. But what matters in the end is humanity. If two people are in love, it's their choice; who they are, how they can love each other and anything related to that is their call," he says.

Jayaprakash believes in a methodical approach to filmmaking, which is apparent when he says, "I have to tell a story from within that world and that world will have a conflict. I try to convey the multiple dimensions of that



**The film is simultaneously about instilling hope, confidence and an eye-opener. People will talk about it, and try to learn more about LGBTQIA+**

LIJOMOL JOSE

problem with multiple characters or situations. A work of art should be the current expression of the writer and the director."

Love seems to be the underlying theme of Jayaprakash's last film *Thalaikoothal* and the core idea of *Kaadhal Enbadhu Podhuudamai* as well, and the director says that it will always be a part of his works. "Isn't it (love) everything? It's not freedom that gives us the

Thursday, February 22, 2024  
THE HINDU  
CHENNAI

**A sensitive approach** A still from *Kaadhal Enbadhu Podhuudamai*; (inset) director Jayaprakash Radhakrishnan.  
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

purpose of life, but our dependence on someone."

**For the love of cinema**  
The filmmaker also strongly believes that the lines between commercial films and what's considered parallel cinema are as distinct as ever. "Streaming platforms are also buying big films just so that their subscribers will keep streaming. As their budget gets exhausted on acquiring such big films, they are not taking the smaller films."

Recalling how a friend asked him why he is not making commercial films, he says, "It's not that I'm avoiding them but just that I have not gotten a solid idea. That's when he said, 'All commercial films are clichés' and it made sense when we look at the relationships, characters and plots in them. Clichés also work with stars and producers because they are already used to it. That's why a new story feels risky to them. It made sense to me. *Naduvula Konjam Pakkatha Kaanom* is one of those rare films with a unique plot and now, *Good Night*."

**Kaadhal Enbadhu Podhuudamai**, which is still doing its festival run, is scheduled to hit theatres soon

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