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THE HINDU



In Kumbakonam, an immersive dinner brings Sangam-era poetry to life **P2**

ATHARVAA'S COP ACT IN *THANAL* **P4**



PHOTOS BY: PRASANNA MAHADEVAN

You have heard their voices inside the metro rail, at Chepauk's cricket stadium, and on the streets, but do you know them? We reveal the faces behind the city's most iconic sounds

# Chennai through its sounds

## Sachin Sundar, Greater Chennai Corporation garbage anthem

If we told you that a song on garbage becoming a city-wide pop-culture moment, you would be calling us out for spinning yarn. But Sachin Sundar's garbage anthem 'Namma Ooru Samma Joru' is a shining example of the phenomenon that anything can happen. This 27-year-old's song that plays from the speakers of battery operated garbage vehicles, is one that invites bouquets and brickbats alike. "I thought it would get trolled but when I met this sanitary worker who collects waste at home, he told me that people request the number," Sachin says.

Sachin's father, M Sundar, a sanitary officer with the Greater Chennai Corporation, told his son that senior officials at the local body were looking for a bright and catchy song to encourage better waste management. "In a couple of hours, I wrote, composed, and sang the song. I had sent it in as a draft but everyone at the Corporation seemed to enjoy it and the first attempt at the song was approved," he says, chuckling. Sachin says that his father often teases him. "I don't wake up too early because I work late. My father says, 'Here you are, sleeping, while Chennai wakes up to your song'."

Sachin, who is the music director of the film *Andha Eazhu Natkal* releasing on September 12, says that the producer of the film gave him the opportunity only after listening to the garbage anthem. "I feel proud and socially responsible after having created that sound. I hope we can all play a part in making Chennai a better place," he says.

## Sanjana Ganesh

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Chennai is a two-syllable word. In its pause, lies a rise and a fall, a push and a pull. In this pause between 'Che' and 'Nnai' the city comes alive; it is in this pause that you find its people. You wake up to some of them, celebrate with them, and sometimes even strictly adhere to their instructions. But do you know the people who make Chennai's soundscape iconic? Come, let's meet them.



## Rahul Nambiar and Ranjith Govind

CSK anthem

For years now, the lion's roar at the Chepauk stadium has been followed by a loyal and foot-thumping rendition of Chennai Super Kings' (CSK) ancient anthem 'Idhu Chennai Super Kings'. But back when it was created in 2008 during the first edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL), Ranjith Govind and Rahul Nambiar, two of the four singers on the track, said they had no idea what they were recording for composer Mani Sharma. "At that point, nobody knew what the IPL was or what it was going to be. We just thought it might be a fun song to clap to at a game. Ever since though,

during every four, six and wicket, when the song plays at a CSK game, it is great to see the crowd come together and sing this anthem we recorded ages ago," says Rahul. Ranjith says that though the two singers have sung hit numbers across various film industries in India and are well known for their work, their contribution to the CSK anthem is hardly known. "I do not think anyone ever recognises us [and singers Naveen Madhav and Suchitra] from this song but it is always a delight to see it play during the tournament. We once performed this song live some 15 years ago with a whole band and got to watch the match from the performance stand. That was a cool experience," he says. Ranjith and Rahul say that they are honoured to be a part of one of Chennai's most cherished celebrations – the moments when CSK plays – and they wouldn't trade it for anything else.



## Devasena ES

Chennai Metro Rail voice

Devasena ES's first job as a call centre employee was answering the phone and saying "Hello, this is Pizza Corner. How may I help you?". Is that what prepared her to eventually becoming the announcer for Chennai Metro Rail? "When I was a call centre executive, people often told me that I had a nice voice. At a time when I switched different careers and eventually landed a job in tech, I was miserable and wanted to move to a different field. That is when I came across an article in *The Hindu* that said they were offering training for people to be radio jockeys (RJ) and voice-over artists. I didn't think I was cool enough or cut out to be an RJ but I ended up eventually becoming one!" she says.

"I was RJ Deva on a popular radio channel in Chennai for years. But I also

continued my voice work on the side. I was asked by the National Film Development Corporation if I would be interested in submitting my voice for the Chennai Metro Rail. That is where it all began," says Devasena.

The former RJ says she had no idea her voice was used until the moment a friend called to say that he had recognised the voice inside the metro. "I took the train from Teynampet to a few stations and back to confirm that it was indeed me," she says. Devasena is used to being behind the scenes and says that the limelight is a fuzzy place for her but is thrilled to have her voice recognised. "At shops, when I ask for things, people often say they've heard my voice somewhere. Then it hits them," she says. Devasena continues to record the names of new stops and lines added to the Chennai Metro Rail network and hopes to be the voice inside the train for many years to come.

## S Poorvaja

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An array of musical performances, and a curation of the best food that the city has to offer across cuisines awaits the city at *The Hindu's* Made of Chennai Food and Music festival on September 13 and 14 from 4pm onwards.

On the first day, the line up includes Gaana Balachandar, Anthony Daasan and Pradeep Kumar. On day 2, the Drum Fighters will bring some energetic beats onstage. Tamil band Oorka, musician Paul Jacob and folk and playback singer Chinna Ponnu will also take the stage, followed by multi-genre Indian band Thaikkudam Bridge.

Nothing makes for a better accompaniment to entertainment than great food. At the Food and Music festival, people can try out popular Chennai street food delights including mango ice cream from C Kunhiraman General Store and bun butter jam from G Gopaul Dairy as well as biryani, desserts, and other favourites from brands from Chennai, Sattur and Coimbatore.

For the public coming to the festival at the YMCA grounds in Nandanam, the entry points will be through YMCA gate 1 or via Chamiers Road (Lotus Colony), SPIC ground. Parking will be

# Your festival guide

At *The Hindu's* Made of Chennai Food and Music Festival, take in musical performances and sample some of the best food the city has to offer. Here is a guide to parking, entrances and schedules



available at three points; SPIC ground, Hockey ground at YMCA and the Nandanam Arts College. If you want to check out *The*

*Hindu's* Made of Chennai Food and Music festival on September 13 and 14, register at [madeofchennai.thehindu.com](http://madeofchennai.thehindu.com).

**Music to my ears** (Clockwise from above) Thaikkudam Bridge; and a route map with designated parking areas for the festival. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



**CASAGRANT** building aspirations Presents **Made Of Chennai FOOD AND MUSIC FESTIVAL** THE HINDU Powered by **SRM**

*The Hindu* Made of Chennai is presented by Casagrand and powered by SRM. Associate Partners: Tata Tea Chakra Gold, Tata Coffee, Hell Energy and Orchids International School. Artist partner: ACTC Food Curation partner: Annam by Shabnam. Health partner: Apollo Hospitals. The event is also done in partnership with Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation, Greater Chennai Corporation, Greater Chennai Police, Greater Chennai Traffic Police and Namma Marina, Namma Pride. Radio Partners: Big FM, Fever FM and Radio One.



A plate of yellow rice with meat and vegetables, garnished with fresh herbs, served next to a small bowl of the same dish.

**According to Sangam texts,** ancient Tamilakam was imagined as five ecological landscapes. How do these terrains taste when they are plated today?

The time was the Sangam era. The people of ancient Tamilakam ate what the land offered. As centuries passed, trade routes opened, and foreign flavours tiptoed into the pantry, ancient traditions slipped out the back door, making space for pillow idlis and fiery Chettinad gravies. Curious to discover what his ancestors feasted on, Harish Venkatasubramaniam, resort manager, Mantra Koodam by CGH Earth in Kumbakonam, turned to the verses of Sangam literature, the oldest surviving body of South Indian text. With Chef Maruthavanan Kumarasamy translating those findings into edible stories, Aatrapaduthal was born. Set beside the river, this dinner experience takes guests on a culinary journey across the five landscapes of Sangam-era Tamilakam. “When I joined CGH

Earth, I was tasked with defining Tamil cuisine,” says Harish. Penned in old Tamil, the Sangam verses demanded scholarly help for Harish to crack their culinary clues. “It took me more than a year to understand that *aambi* means mushroom, and *kurumpuzhil* refers to quail,” he says.

According to Sangam texts, ancient Tamilakam, which included present-day Tamil Nadu, parts of Kerala and Karnataka, was imagined as five ecological landscapes. Kurinji meant the mountains; Mullai the forests; Marutham, the agricultural plains; Neithal, the coastlines; and Palai the arid stretches. For Harish, it was non-negotiable that each of these terrains find representation on the plate.

“Food wasn’t the central theme in Sangam literature but love and war were,” Harish explains. “So we had to read between the lines,

pick up on mentions of dishes, textures, cooking styles, or what the meal tasted like to develop our dishes.”

They ruled out later imports like chili and tomato, and leaned on ingredients that were native, like gooseberry, pepper, ginger, shallots, and tamarind. “That’s why we say it’s reimagined,” Harish adds, reflecting on the impossibility of recreating exact recipes.

The meal starts with a lemon-pepper salad from Kurinji, made with groundnuts, bottle gourd, and coconut. The mutton liver starter on the meat menu comes with a unique foxtail millet masala. The combination of mushroom, yam, and seeraga samba rice is comforting.

The Mullai region offers adai served with horse gram and garlic sauce. For meat eaters, there was a smoky charcoal-grilled mutton dish, followed by a country chicken curry where the meat is marinated and cooked in a garlic-fennel gravy.

Marutham, introduces a vegetarian starter of stone-grilled country vegetables with liquorice. The dal-and-rice pancake, shallow-fried and served with butter jaggery mix, feels more like a dessert masquerading as a starter. Later, a mutton and seeraga samba rice dish arrives, cooked like a one-pot meal. The seafood menu leans heavily on Neithal. There is squid grilled with local spices, mackerel seasoned in the style of the Thondinagara Neithal women, and tiger prawns stone-grilled with lemon and ginger. Main courses include murrel fish cooked with seeraga samba rice, anchovies in a coconut-based gravy, and angel prawns in a bold pepper-cumin sauce.

Palai might contribute the least to the menu but leaves the biggest impression. The sesame-flavoured quail, fried in ghee, stands out as the star of the course. Following closely is a tender mutton curry.

Desserts draw their gentle sweetness from jaggery and liquorice. Whether in kodo millet milk halwa, or the foxtail millet payasam, each calls back an era before refined sugar entered the kitchen.

*Aatrupaduthal at Mantra Koodam, CGH Earth, Kumbakonam, is open from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. For reservations, call 7530083613.*



# Chennai gets an accent

**C**hef Rijul Gulati's luggage has an odd mix of things: large quantities of pav, truffles, spice blends, tiny shorba cups and pressure cookers. The head chef from Indian Accent, Mumbai, has now landed in Chennai with these and more for the Up North X Indian Accent popup. "We serve our shorba in these cups. They are handmade in Manipur, each one different from the other, and the small pressure cookers are what we serve our dessert in," he says with a smile, touching upon how seriously they take all culinary aspects including plating.

While Chennai's Up North, at the Pullman Hotel, is known for its hearty North Indian meal and experimental fusion flavours, Indian Accent – with outposts in Delhi, Mumbai, and New York – is recognised for its innovative approach to modern Indian cuisine and is on the list of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants.

"After an overwhelming response last year, we are back in Chennai again," says Rijul. The seven-course meal will feature new dishes and old favourites from Indian

Accent's tasting menu. "These are staples that one expects at Indian Accent. It's a signature of the brand, and so we have them at most of our popups," he explains. The globally-acclaimed restaurant does not believe in resting on its laurels and strives to innovate constantly, he says. "We are continuously updating ourselves and evolving with the times."

Expect their iconic chaat and seasonal produce. "We are inspired by the streets of India, and we always explore what's around during a season. That way, we celebrate all the flavours, and traditions of India," says Rijul, who started out with the restaurant in Delhi, before moving to Mumbai in 2023 to set up the new outlet.

Alongside the eternal stars like daulat ki chat, blue cheese naan and shorba, and warm dodra burfi treacle tart, the menu here will also feature new entrants like Delhi papdi chaat with kachalu and chana; buttery Malwani shrimp pulao; baked beetroot with goat curd and ravioli made of khandvi; and bite-sized pao bhaji with chilli maska among others. And what is the chef's favourite? "The black cod with pickled masala," he smiles.

*The popup is from September 11 to 13, 7pm onwards. ₹5,999-plus taxes. Call 9150001758.*



**Flavour of the North** (Right)  
Chef Rijul Gulati; (above) black  
cod, masala carrot, and apricot  
chutney. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.

# *A room, not of one's own*

Author Prajwal Parajuly inhabits a Chennai space where art, noise, and occasional mayhem make solitude feel strangely overrated

**A**s living arrangements went, this one promised to be far from normal.

I decided that getting a permanent place in Chennai only made sense. Shuttling between the unparalleled luxury of my Sri City apartment and a different hotel or club room every weekend got old. Renting a little slice of Chennai would mean, more than anything else, circumventing the need to frequently pack and unpack. I cast my net far and fortified myself for a week of flitting from one underwhelming apartment to another. Fortunately, a colleague alerted me to a housing situation she assumed would be uniquely up my alley. Her friend ran Pagir, a community arts organisation, and was looking to let out the flat that housed it. Yes, I wouldn't have flatmates. No, the space wouldn't be wholly mine. Yes, yes, no one would use my bathroom but I. No, no, the space – this continued to confound me – wouldn't be wholly mine. It was a bizarre living arrangement. I couldn't wait.

My potential apartment was part of a comfortable two-storied bungalow that I hoped had been built in the 1970s but was barely 30 years old. It boasted a rooftop terrace. The landlady lived downstairs. I'd rent the upstairs. The living room opened up to a balcony the size of my New York apartment. The balcony wall sported a hand-painted illustration of a wise tree. Posters showing off positive



reinforcements crowded the living-room walls. It was like I had stepped into a Deepak Chopra book. One of the three bedrooms was massive. Two of the bedrooms had en-suites, and there were windows in the pantry. Everywhere you looked, there were windows. Everywhere you looked, there was light.

The flat was on one of the four Seaward Roads. This particular Seaward Road had several independent homes. The apartment buildings were neither old nor new. The tree-lined street was quaint in a way that harked back to a Doordarshan cliché from the

1980s. The beach was a five-minute walk away. If you went the opposite direction, you'd encounter mom-and-pop shops, fruit stalls and cute dosa joints.

The space sang to me. But it wasn't so straightforward, the landlady cautioned. I'd have to deal with people in the apartment during the day – this was a place for conversations and questions. I'd already read a pamphlet about Pagir helping discover people's "many different selves through art, play, music, film, movement, silence and talking together." I was perfectly okay with all

that as long as my bedroom and bathroom were out of bounds. I moved into my weekend flat in Chennai one rainy day.

It is, by far, the wisest thing I have done in the city.

First, there are the non-humans. My landlady has two dogs and a cat, all rescues. Noah, who is part golden retriever and part indie, is mellow, the wise guy of the trio. Kalai, the indie-mix, is still nervous around people. Jackson, the English tabby cat, looks majestic but is less imperious than many cats. Kalai curls up next to me when I nap. Noah

sleeps on the floor close to us. Jackson, the cat, doesn't care if I live or die. Kalai is afraid of my suitcase and often runs away with my flip-flops. I have learned to hide my bag and place my shoes on a pedestal.

It isn't just the animals keeping me company, though. There are also noises of thought-provoking provenance at various hours. One morning, I wake up to the sound of dancing feet. It is decibel-defying melodies another day. I am still confused about the singing conches from a few weekends ago. Sometimes, there's a knock at my door when I am mid-siesta. A theatrical group inquires if I'd like to partake of their *vadas* and coffee.

Friends and family often wonder why I put up with this. Why not just get a place that's entirely mine? they ask. They have a point. I've been known to be uncomfortable having people I know, let alone strangers, over. But there's something wonderful about an organisation that ironically calls itself a community arts space. I like this little sliver of earnestness in a jaded world. The absurdity of sharing space with people who aren't flatmates appeals to the whacko in me. I like stepping into the apartment not knowing what might transpire. Will Carnatic music waft from underneath the door? Will I walk into a mural-painting workshop? Or a talk on shore ecosystem? I don't have the patience to watch five-year-olds learning to finger-paint, but I like that something that gives them so much joy happens in my living quarters. That alone makes the accommodation arrangement worth it. The animals are just an added bonus.

*Prajwal Parajuly is a novelist. Karma and Lola, his new book, is forthcoming in 2026. He teaches Creative Writing at Krea University and oscillates between New York City and Sri City.*

**Across**

**7** Valley in Kerala (6)  
**8** North American ground squirrel (6)  
**9** Strike with the open hand (4)  
**10** Not compulsory (8)  
**11** Dismissal from office (7)  
**13** Aquatic mammal with webbed feet (5)  
**15** 0.01 seconds (5)  
**16** Brown coal (7)  
**18** Self-aggrandising (8)  
**19** Disposed of (4)  
**21** Collective art form (6)  
**22** A turning-point (6)

**Down**

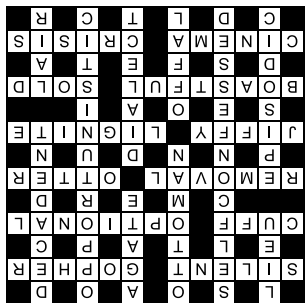
**1** Place in French (4)  
**2** Acknowledged (4-9)  
**3** Long low seat (7)  
**4** Fine-grained variety of chalcodony (5)  
**5** Taking immediate advantage (13)  
**6** Unrestrained gratification (8)

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- 12** Consisting of several distinct periods (8)
- 14** Manner of speech (7)
- 17** Variety meat (5)
- 20** Wild animal's den (4)

### Solution No. 19





**Sangita Rajan**  
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Who are you, where are you from? For designer Vivek Karunakaran, these questions go beyond identity. They are the foundation of Adayalam, meaning identity, his new cultural property. Set to debut at the Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Festival this year, it is envisioned as a travelling showcase that threads together fashion, craft, art, music, and design.

“The whole idea of Adayalam stems from this deep-rooted feeling that it is so important for us to identify talent, and then collaborate to create something more meaningful,” he says. The first edition will bring weavers, musicians, designers, and artists into one space, positioning the showcase as both a dialogue and a platform for exchange.

For Vivek, Adayalam is also the outcome of years spent navigating how the South of India is perceived within the fashion world. “I remember when I went to Lakme Fashion Week in 2007, how underrepresented I felt about the South of India,” he recalls. “From then on, something struck me – the unwavering spirit of trying to change that ideology, that we are not as invisible as you think we are, and there is so much more to give.”

The Chettinad Heritage Festival, with its focus on living traditions, became the natural setting for the debut of Adayalam. Among the highlights is a textile installation created with three weaving families from the region, each contributing saris that carry the memory of their looms and lineage. “Adayalam is not there to just promote who we already know,” Vivek says. Beyond this, he is clear about the kind of conversations Adayalam should spark. In a world where identity is often reduced to curated social media profiles, he wants the



# Weaving an identity

**Designer Vivek Karunakaran** is all set to launch Adayalam at the Chettinad Heritage Festival

platform to go deeper.

Collaboration is central to the project. For the debut, Vivek has brought together artists, musicians, jewellers, and designers whose practices are rooted in cultural identity but open to reinterpretation. He admits that curating such a mix is a process that will evolve over time. “Right now, the spirit is to

bring people together and make it happen, rather than to plan every detail. With the right collaborations, the impact can be far greater. That’s something I will learn and refine as Adayalam grows.”



Photograph from Amar Ramesh's Pillar series

That spirit also extends to music and photography. At Chettinad, Vivek will present a collaboration between Carnatic vocalist Sandeep Narayan and contemporary composer Bjorn Surrao, creating a performance that bridges classical tradition and modern soundscapes. There will also be a collaboration with photographer Amar Ramesh, who will be displaying fine art prints of his works on culture and identity. “We are reimagining the genres of what each of us do, but to create something that is very different and beautiful,” he says. It is the kind of convergence he hopes Adayalam will continue to foster across art forms, from food and textiles to design and performance.

As the showcase opens in Chettinad and prepares to travel beyond Vivek says he hopes to evoke a sense of rootedness that makes people want to be part of the journey.

*The fourth edition of Chettinad Heritage and Cultural Festival is scheduled from September 12 to 16.*



**Strings and dramatics**  
*Enchantment*, a biographical play on sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, directed by Gowri Ramnarayan, will premiere on September 12 in support of REACH, an NGO working for tuberculosis care and awareness. @6.30pm on September 12; Museum Theatre, Egmore. For tickets, log onto [bookmyshow.com](http://bookmyshow.com).

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**Bhuvanesh Chandar**  
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Remember the promising young boy you saw 15 years ago in *Baana Kaathadi*? The smile remains unchanged; the energy and potential are all there, but the man he has become is far different from the boy he was.

Everything Atharvaa says ahead of the release of his new film, *Thanal*, paints a portrait of someone who strived to put his best foot forward and is now finding a rhythm to his run. The actor is excited about his current slate, a feeling he says comes from the joy in exploring himself as an actor, something that was apparent in his last release, *DNA*. “It feels nice. We plan life, but life has its own plans too, right? A couple of months ago, I had *DNA*, which was received well. We didn’t really plan the release of *Thanal*; but I am glad that it’s coming out. I believe that a film decides its own fate.”

The actor hints at having entered a rather new phase of his career, one in which the process concerns him more than the results. “It’s no longer just a job for me, and so I have started enjoying it. Every day, it’s exciting to wake up in the morning and look forward to that day’s shoot. More importantly, I have started enjoying the process of creating a character.”

This is also why the Ravindra Madhava-directed *Thanal* might be the last time he plays a cop on

## Through the tunnel

**Why actor Atharvaa**, whose Tamil film is set for release, is enjoying the process of cinema without worrying about results

screen, having already donned the khaki in *100* and *Trigger* (and the web series *Mathagam*). “I love doing cop roles, and I feel like a different person the moment I wear the uniform. But, even though all three of my cop films are different, I find it somehow limiting me as an actor.”

The actor says he gets a kick from collaborating with the director and finding the character. “I feed off the director’s energy now. So my director, for those 60 days of making a film, is part of my close family circle. I prefer talking to my director daily.”

Atharvaa’s previous release, *DNA*, garnered acclaim from the audience. What stood out is his portrayal of a vulnerable man battling grief and hopelessness. Of late, it’s refreshing to see actors like Atharvaa and

Sivakarthiskeyan break the notion that it’s not ‘heroic’ to show vulnerability or play a character battling mental health issues. Atharvaa says this evolution is the need of the hour. “Firstly, it makes it easier to connect to audiences, but more importantly, people are now enjoying films for the content.”



***I was blown away after watching F1 recently. I would love to do something like that – or Rush, which is one of my favourite films***

ATHARVAA



*Thanal releases in theatres this Friday*

**Cop act**  
Atharvaa. JOHAN SATHYADAS

In *Thanal*, Atharvaa’s cop character takes on an ex-military man, played by Ashwin Kakumanu. You wonder if Atharvaa would be keen on playing the other role, as a villain or anti-hero. “I would love to. I’ve become more attentive about my surroundings, so now my perception is that there are three worlds: the world that you’re looking at, the world I see through my eyes, and the actual reality. So the common point of where you and I meet becomes reality.” Citing *Thanal* as an example, he elaborates, “What my character does is right from where he stands, but the villain (Ashwin’s character) has his own rightful reasons.”

Recently, director AR Murugadoss, in an interview, highlighted how Tamil cinema is facing a dearth of young heroes. On the flipside, many industry pundits are wondering if there is a deficit of content for young heroes, like Atharvaa. The actor, however, believes that content and collaboration are all that matter today. “Everyone is on the lookout for directors who have sensible scripts. In today’s world, if you spot a director who is sensible, and is able to execute his idea, he is the next big thing tomorrow,” he says.

Up next, Atharvaa is all ready to take on two pivotal projects. He will be seen in *Idhayam Murali*, a film titled after the famous nickname of Atharvaa’s father, the late actor Murali. After that, he will get to shine on a bigger canvas, in Sudha Kongara’s *Parasakthi*, co-starring Sivakarthiskeyan and Ravi Mohan. He laughs it off when asked if he feels nervous about the upcoming months. “I used to be anxious in my initial years. Now, I understand that the process is more important. It is exciting to switch between roles in a span of one month.”

## From the heart

Malavika Mohanan is all smiles as she talks about her recent outing, *Hridayapoorvam*, starring Mohanlal

**Shilpa Nair Anand**  
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Malavika Mohanan celebrated Onam at her hometown in Payyannur, with family and friends, while basking in the success of *Hridayapoorvam*. As much as being part of the film was special, it was the fact that she was working with two people whose films she had watched growing up – actor Mohanlal and director Sathyan Anthikad – that made the project even more close to her heart. She calls the experience of *Hridayapoorvam* “overwhelming”.

Of course, her excitement was mainly because she shared the screen with Mohanlal. “Though I have worked in popular films with big actors before, the difference is that I am a girl who has grown up in a different place. I grew up consuming Hindi films because I was in Mumbai. I watched Malayalam films because of my parents [who are Malayalis]. I did not grow up watching Telugu or Tamil films. So, even though [in these languages] you know how big these actors might be, it is not like Mohanlal, whose films you have watched growing up. That Mohanlal was in front of me... making me feel surreal!” Though she thought that the feeling would be gone in a couple of days, she confesses it never left her.

For context, Malavika has acted with Mammooty (*The Great Father*), Rajinikanth, Vijay Sethupathi (*Vetta*), Vijay (*Master*), Dhanush (*Maaran*), and Vikram (*Thangalan*).

That look of wonder or awe worked in Malavika’s favour during the shoot of *Hridayapoorvam* because Mohanlal’s character, Sandeep Balakrishnan, is the recipient of her character, Haritha’s, father’s heart. “It goes with character,” she agrees, laughing.

She talks about the first scene in the film, in which Haritha meets Sandeep to invite him to her engagement. “So, that was the first day of my shoot – there was some awkwardness and unfamiliarity. And my last scene was the last day of filming. I see him off at

the airport. So, there was a level of familiarity; it was a pretty clever way to shoot!”

What added to the experience for Malavika was getting to see first-hand the legendary pair of Sathyan Anthikad and Mohanlal at work, especially their camaraderie as a duo. “It was quite something to watch them – two artists who have collaborated in over 22-24 films together. They have practically grown up together.”

Reminiscing about how she landed the role, Malavika says when she got the call from Akhil Sathyan, she thought it was for a film he might be directing, since both of Sathyan Anthikad’s sons are filmmakers. “That was when he told me it was for a film his father was making. Everything happened very quickly.”

Malavika is on a roll. Apart from *The Raja Saab*, set to release later this year, her Tamil film, *Sardar 2*, with Karthi, is also ready for release. “I have been working on these films for a while. It is just that the releases are happening back-to-back,” she signs off.



**A dream come true**  
Malavika Mohanan. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



## It’s a wrap

Heard the latest rap track, ‘Parotta & Beef’? Chennai-based Tuhin Menon chats about his hit track’s journey

**Nainu Oommen**  
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Last November, it was a particularly stressful day for Tuhin Menon, CEO, Asiaville, a Chennai-based media-tech company, when he spent an entire day shuttling between work calls and duty delegation at his office at Palarivattom, Kochi, unable to spare time for a break.

Consequently, all Tuhin could think of was a plate of steaming flaky parotta and some sizzling beef roast – a craving he satisfied immediately after work.

The next day, Tuhin, drawn to lyric and poetry as a child, woke up with an ode to Kerala

parotta and beef, which he immediately jotted down. “I remember waking up with a special feeling, realising how food can help you get away from the monotony of day-to-day life,” says Tuhin. This is how a stressful day led to ‘Parotta & Beef’, a rap song which has garnered over one million views on YouTube. The track was produced by Sandeep Tulsidas aka Yestey, and distributed by Divo Music.

“I am completely taken aback by the response. The most gratifying feeling is the outpouring of messages from people,” says Tuhin, who founded Asiaville in 2019. “Rapping is something that I have liked since my early days. I

**Plated right** Tuhin Menon in *Parotta & Beef*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was doing gigs in New York with my friends from India, Pakistan, Australia, and Japan. We used to go to underground rap sessions and participate in rap battles,” says Tuhin.

“Rap is the background music to my life,” says Tuhin, a fan of East Coast rap, which originated in New York. “Apart from The Notorious B.I.G., Tupac Shakur, I was into artists such as Big El, Rakim, and Jurassic 5,” he says.

The video is filled with loud colours and quirky settings to

convey the “transcendental experience” felt by the protagonist after taking a bite of parotta and beef. It was shot in Chennai in three days and directed by Vijay Siddhartha Ravindranaath. “The challenge was in getting into the three characters – an employee and two rappers. The fundamentals, like understanding a character arc and staying true to it, were the same. But, one thing I realised is that there is no room for subtlety... you have to come across as hard-hitting,” says Tuhin, whose other acting stints include a role in *Barozz 3D*, and theatre with Chennai-based theatre artist Michael Muthu.

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