

# friday Review

THE HINDU

**Destination Kanchipuram**

A lecdem explored the Temple City's history through music and literature p2

**Life on the big screen**

A new book throws light on Girish Karnad's journey in cinema p3



## NOURISHING KOLKATA'S JAZZ SOUL

How the iconic Trincas remains one of the best venues for the genre p4

# The dance of the mind

Ahead of International Yoga Day, Odissi exponent Surupa Sen on why we need to embrace both stillness and movement

**R**un faster and you will get there quicker," is all we hear and do in our lives. We are constantly surrounded by the demand to cope, no matter how. On the other end of the spectrum, our ancient practices teach us to be still.

Yoga and classical dance are both indigenous traditions of India that seek the same goal – to be aware of the breath and let the *prana* guide every action. To engage both the body and the mind to act at once for a holistic experience. The ancient practices suggest that we pause to engage deeply with life, and compassionately with ourselves.

Yoga enables the mind-body balance that helps us make better choices for living.

Dancers are complex movement artistes. They have to be contortionists, martial artists, poets, storytellers and sculptors all at once. They do not just bring an idea to life when they dance but create life itself in each moment. As a dancer, my body changes every moment to adhere to a complexly shifting mind. From the slightest quiver of a lip and the fleeting

angle of the eye to the gentle tremble of a finger, all come together to express a single nuanced emotion.

For a dancer, the body is a living instrument. If my body must go to places that my mind seeks in its imagination, I must train to stretch its potential so that I may inhabit those boundless worlds. Thus when the body, mind and spirit come together, we have reached our goal.

Martha Graham, the great contemporary dancer and choreographer said, "I am a dancer. I believe we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living".

In the pursuit of excellence, for the past 35 years that I have lived the life of a dancer at Nrityagram (the gurukul founded by Protima Gauri on the outskirts of Bengaluru), yoga and other kinds of cross-training has been integrated into our daily schedule. For years now we have studied and developed body kinetics that combine different perspectives of training to specifically nourish and inform the Odissi body.

In my initial years as a student, I



The perfect balance  
Surupa Sen.  
PHOTOS: KARTHIK VENKATRAMAN

found a lacuna in the application of yoga practice to the lines of alignment within which the Odissi dancer must function. Most practitioners of yoga may not be dancers or necessarily understand the forces acting on a dancer's body. I felt this to be the central reason for the injuries I faced as a dancer. I therefore attempted to understand on my own, through study and research, ways to heal myself and ensure that none who trained with me would suffer the same damage. Choosing selectively from different forms of body work, we created a curriculum that would enhance our potential as Odissi dance performers.

At Nrityagram, the dancers begin their day with a walk or run, then clean the gurukul spaces, followed by body conditioning exercises. Each day is a different model that must respond to the body's need for that particular day. In order to do that, dancers must first prepare their mind so that it assimilates the body's needs ensuring the right choice of exercises to better their practice for that day. Each bone and muscle must be oxygenated and lubricated to sufficiently deliver at the highest level. Once this preparation is complete, a further warm-up is done in class before the rigour of complex dance vocabulary is undertaken. After many hours on the dance floor, we allow the body time to de-stress with stretches that are suited for each dancer to recover as quickly as possible.

Nrityagram has been at the very forefront of establishing the idea that the longevity of a dance career depends on the adequate protection and respect we must give to and have for our bodies. Both choreographically and as performers, we have pushed our abilities to render new dimensions of skill in the classical dance world. This, in turn, has inspired artistes to explore new and more efficient ways of working both in Odissi and other dance styles.

Dance traditions in India have been handed down through generations of artistes. As we gaze at the dancing figures on temple walls, we seek what they have – yogic stillness and a flexible body. Yoga and dance together can help us achieve this.

Though AI and bots have entered the human space and threaten to do all that we can, it cannot for now express what the dancer's body can. Until then, let us continue to nourish this extraordinary instrument called the human body through yoga and dance.

The writer is the artistic director of Nrityagram.



## Farewell Shakti

The pioneering East-West band's last album, *Mind Explosion*, will release on August 1

**Chitra Swaminathan**  
chitra.swaminathan@thehindu.co.in

The collaborative sound of Shakti, which changed musical discourse worldwide, will echo one final time when *Mind Explosion: 50th Anniversary Tour Live* releases on August 1. The tracks of the album trace the band's voyage through genres and geographies.

With the passing of its celebrated Indian frontman, tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain, this is the last offering from Shakti's stable.

For jazz exponent and Shakti co-founder John McLaughlin, *Mind Explosion* is about camaraderie and creativity. "On December 15, 2024, a curtain came down on a monumental part of my life. After 55 years of countless concerts, recordings, travels, meals, and laughter together, my brother Zakir departed. The group Shakti, which we founded together in 1973, has ended. I sincerely hope other 'Shakti' kind of groups will follow. The kind of groups

that unite diverse cultures for one reason only: joy, because for 50 years joy was the unshakable foundation of Shakti. We brought joy to each other and to listeners," said the 83-year-old maestro through an email to *The Hindu*.

The Shakti story began in 1969 when Zakir first met John. Both frequented the same music store in Greenwich Village in New York. In 1973, they met again in the living room of celebrated sarodist Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's residence in California. After which John remarked about Zakir: "We were musicians from the same family in another life". Soon the formidable duo launched Shakti with ghata virtuoso Vilku Vinayakram and maverick violinist L. Shankar. From 1975 to 1977, they toured extensively and released three studio albums and one live album.

In 1978, Shakti disbanded but regrouped in 1979 as Remembering Shakti. Along the way, Zakir and John brought on board mandolin prodigy U. Shrinivas, singer Shankar Mahadevan and kanjira ace Selva

Ganesh. In 2014, after Shrinivas' untimely death, Shakti lost steam but only to make a second comeback in 2020, this time bringing experimental violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan into the fold. The Pandemic struck and the lockdown was spent recording *The Moment*. In 2023, Shakti celebrated 50 years with a world tour, making memorable stopovers at several Indian cities. In 2024, *The Moment* won the Grammy for Best Global Music Album.

"We planned to release *Mind Explosion* last year but Zakir's death left us shattered," says Souvik Dutta, the U.S.-based music entrepreneur, who has been long associated with the band. He was also the man behind Shakti's 50th anniversary concerts and the producer of its *The Moment*.

"Unlike his vibrant self, Zakir sounded exhausted when he called me in November 2024. He wanted to take some time off. He told John that he would be fine soon. He was conversing with all of us on our



The group Shakti, which we (Zakir and I) founded together in 1973, has ended. I sincerely hope other 'Shakti' kind of groups will follow

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

WhatsApp group. Suddenly, his health began to deteriorate. After his passing, we lost the enthusiasm and energy to take the work forward. But we decided that we had to do it for him. His absence was felt every moment and in every musical aspect. It was painful. So much that even the cover design went through at least seven iterations before John arrived at the final one," recalls Souvik adding that like John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, Zakir and John's work revealed untapped facets of their imagination and eventually changed the music world.

The band wanted to round off its golden jubilee celebrations with a live album. Recording engineer Sven Hoffman recorded all 29 concerts performed across the globe. The musicians listened to these recordings and zeroed in on six tracks - 'Kiki', 'Giriraj Sudha', 'Lotus Feet', '5 in the Morning 6 in the Afternoon', 'Sakhi' and 'Shrini's Dream'.

*Mind Explosion*, mixed by George Murphy and mastered by renowned keyboardist Scott Kinsey, carries a big slice of Indo-jazz music history. Dedicating the album to Zakir bhai's memory, Shankar Mahadevan, Ganesh Rajagopalan and Selva Ganesh see the album as a documentation of Shakti's efforts in creating a music world without borders.

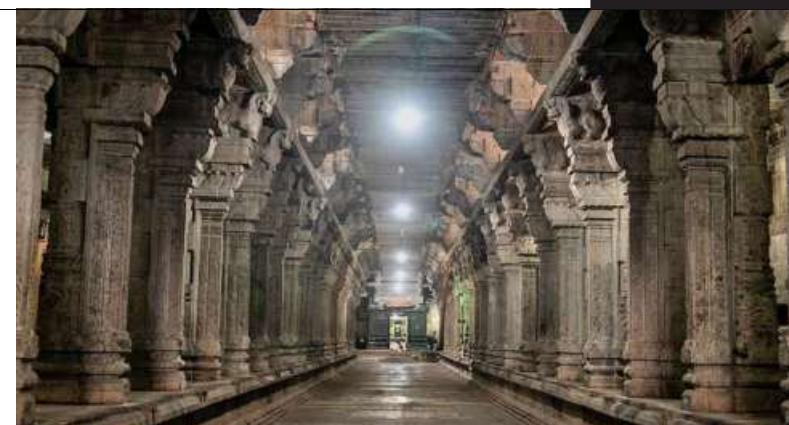
**P Srihari**

**M**adhusudhanan Kalaichelvan wears many hats – architect, epigraphist, historian, researcher, and passionate advocate of heritage and literature. In a scholarly lecture-demonstration on Kanchipuram, he seamlessly wove together music, literature, religion, tradition, architecture and dynasties. His delivery, marked by classic, free-flowing Tamil, held the audience in rapt attention. Vocal support was provided by Bhavya Hari, whose thoughtful choice of ragas and singing complemented the narrative.

Organised by Sruti Sampada and titled 'Kanchipuram in Raga and Rhythm', the presentation traced 2,000 years of the Temple City's storied history, at Arkay Convention Center recently. At its heart, the lecture was also a clarion call to Carnatic musicians – urging them to expand their repertoire by embracing and popularising Tamil devotional compositions, many of which remain under-represented on the stage.

The earliest literary reference to the city of Kanchi appears in the Sangam-era text *Perumpaan aatru padai*, authored by Kadiyalur Uruthirankannanar, observed Madhusudhanan. He added that the name 'Kanchipuram' came into usage a few centuries ago. During the Vijayanagara period, the city was administratively and culturally bifurcated into Shiva and Vishnu Kanchi, reflecting the twin religious traditions that flourished therein. Two rivers – Palar and Vegavati – flow through the city, nurturing its landscape and heritage.

The musical evening began with the Dikshitar kriti 'Chintaya maa', a composition on Ekamranatha in Bhairavi, preceded



# Destination Kanchi

**Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan, with Bhavya Hari, presented interesting facets of the Temple City**

by the virutham 'Kallaa pizhaiyum' by Pattinathar. Madhusudhanan mentioned that the concert would also conclude in Bhairavi, drawing on the Puranic reference to Kanchipuram as 'Bhairavi Vanam'.

**The history**

Ilanthiraiyan was the first known ruler of Kanchi. Then, the Pallava dynasty ruled for over six centuries, marking a golden era for Kanchipuram, beginning around the 3rd or 4th century CE, as evidenced by copper-plate inscriptions, noted Madhusudhanan. Subsequently, the city came under the rule of the Cholas and later the Telugu Cholas, with the

Pandyas holding sway briefly. This was followed by the reign of the Vijayanagara kings, leading up to the British rule.

Devotional treatises and compositions in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, and Pali have enriched the literary and spiritual heritage of Kanchi. Saints and poets such as the Nayanmars, including the Thevaram Moovar and Manickavachakar, along with Poigai Azhwar, Bhutath-Azhwar, Peyazhwar, Thirumazhisai Azhwar, Nammazhwar and Thirumangai Azhwar, and the Carnatic music Trinity have sung the glory of its temples and deities.

Kanchi is renowned for its three famed vimanas or kotti-s: Rudrakoti (Ekamresa), Kamakoti (Kamakshi), and Punyakoti (Varadaraja). The city is home to as many as 14 Divyadesams and five Paadal Petra

Sthalams. A particularly striking literary aspect, said Madhusudhanan, is Thirugnanasambandar's masterful use of prosody (yaappu), where he employs paired lines with identical phrasing but divergent meanings. As an illustration, Bhavya rendered the verses 'Paayu maalvidai' and 'Sadai anindhadhum' in Sankarabharanam, bringing out their nuanced meanings.

Madhusudhanan next delved into the context of the hymn 'Alam thaan ugandhu', in which Sundara, having lost his vision completely, records the miraculous restoration of sight in one eye as he worshipped 'Ekamba'. Bhavya sang the verse in Kamboji. Over the centuries, several poets have sung the praises of Ekamresa, including Kachiappa Sivachariar, the Irrattai Pulavargal, Kalamega Kavi, Madhava Sivagnana Swamigal and Kachiappa Munivar.

The narrative then transitioned into Srivaishnava traditions and the Divyadesams of Kanchi – beginning with Thiru Athiyur, the sacred shrine of Varadaraja, and the four other temples situated in Vishnu Kanchi: Thiru Vekha, Thiru Velukkai, Thiru Attabuyakaram and Thiru Thanka (Thooppul). According to the 'Satyavrata Kshetra Mahatmyam', Lord Varadaraja manifested in the Punyakoti Vimana from Brahma's sacrificial altar (yajna kunda) – a divine event that forms the axis connecting the five Vishnu Kanchi Divyadesams. Thirumangai Azhwar's pasuram 'Solluvan sorporul' is the first of 10

dedicated to Paramechura Vinnagaram (Vaikuntanathan Perumal Kovil), famed for its architectural splendour, noted Madhusudhanan. The verses celebrate not only the deity but also the military conquests of the Pallava king, traditionally credited with the construction of the temple. Bhavya rendered it in lilting Maand. Another temple, Ulagalandha Perumal Kovil, encompasses four Divyadesams within its precincts – Thiru Neeragam, Thiru Kaarakam, Thiru Kaavaanam and Thiru Ooram. The same Azhwar, in *Thirunedunthaandakam*, masterfully weaves together multiple Divyadesams – mentioning nine in a single verse, beginning with 'Neeragaatthaay'. The layered pasuram was sung in Hamsanandi and Desh.

**Prolific literary output**

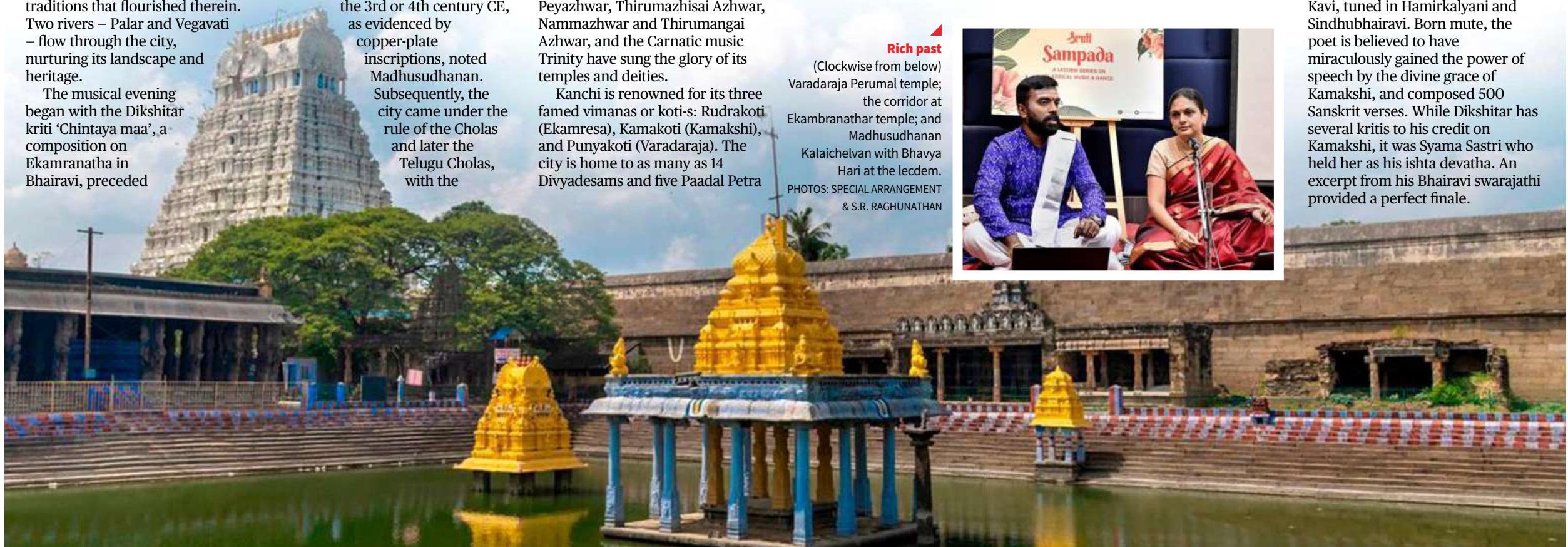
While many acharyas have authored texts in praise of Varadaraja Perumal, Vedanta Desika stands apart for his prolific output and philosophical depth. Revered with honorifics such as 'Sarva-tantra Svatantantra' and 'Kavithaarkika Simham', he displayed remarkable command over both Tamil and Sanskrit, as reflected in his works numbering over 100. Among these are six Tamil Prabandhams and three Sanskrit hymns dedicated to Varadaraja. In addition, he has authored stotras on other Divyadesams in Kanchi. In a verse from 'Meivirada Maanmeyam', Desika extols the glory of Varadaraja flanked by His consorts,

Sridevi and Bhudevi. Bhavya sang the verse 'Peda irandai oranam adaindu' in a delectable blend of Saranga and Brindavana Saranga.

Varadaraja is one of only four deities to have been praised in compositions by all three members of the Tiruvarur Trinity – the others being Kamakshi (Kanchi), Neelayatakshi (Nagapattinam), and Dharmasamvardhini (Tiruvaraiyu). Among the Trinity's offerings to Varadaraja are Tyagaraja's 'Varadaraja ninne koru' in Swarabhushani, Dikshitar's 'Varadaraja avava' in Gangatarangini, and 'Samini ramanave' in Anandabhairavi. Others who have sung on Varadaraja include Purandaradasar, Margadarasi Seshayya, and Walajpet Venkataramana Bhagavtar, said Madhusudhanan. The rendition of the Swarabhushani kriti captured the grandeur of Garuda Seva.

The next focal point was Kumara Kottam and Muruga. The segment began with 'Mooviru muganal potri' from Kachiappa Sivachariar's *Kandha Puranam* rendered in Shanmukhapriya. This was followed by 'Muttuppattu' from Thiruppugazhi in Kathanakuthuhalam, and 'Ponkulavum andam' from Chidambara Munivar's 'Kshethrikovai Pillaiyamizh', set in Valaji. Arunagirinathar's contribution to the repertoire of talam and sandham is immense.

The event closed with a focus on Kamakshi, through two evocative renditions. The first was the shloka 'Raaka chandra' from *Mooka Panchasati*, composed by Mooka Kavi, tuned in Hamirkalyani and Sindhubhairavi. Born mute, the poet is believed to have miraculously gained the power of speech by the divine grace of Kamakshi, and composed 500 Sanskrit verses. While Dikshitar has several kritis to his credit on Kamakshi, it was Syama Sastri who held her as his ishta devatha. An excerpt from his Bhairavi swarajathi provided a perfect finale.



# Striking imageries

**Clarity in footwork and apt bhava marked Kavya Ganesh's dance recital**

**V.V. Ramani**

**T**he beauty of the Bharatanatyam margam lies in its structured format, yet it allows the artiste to reimagine and present it in their own distinct way. This was evident at the recent performance by Bharatanatyam dancer, Kavya Ganesh, for the HCL series, hosted by the Music Academy.

Soft vocals, mild music from the instruments and graceful poses by the dancer set the tone for a vibrant opening. Kavya began her performance with sage Patanjali's 'Shambhu natanam', portraying the lord of dance. The movements were marked with clarity as she conveyed the essence of the hymn. The music composition was by O.S. Arun.

Kavya next presented the Swarajathi 'Maamohalahiri meerule', a composition by Kadigai Namashivaya Pulavar in raga Khamas. She expressed well the emotional turmoil of a nayika longing for Muruga. Kavya conveyed the myriad shades of love using the imagery of a lotus. While its beautiful colour, shape and fragrance bring joy to the heart, the flower's blooming at sunrise



to reach out to her lord or not. The jathis, composed by Ramamoorthy Sri Ganesh, stood out for precise footwork. However, a little more grace would have enhanced the impact.

The Annamacharya kriti 'Palumaru' in Chakravakam, again portrayed a sakhi urging goddess Alamelumanga to let go of her anger and indifference towards the lord. Kavya did justice to the piece. However, the nayika-sakhi interaction in two consecutive compositions was a trifle weary.

The dancer next took up the thumri, 'Na kadamb na kunj', which depicts Radha waking up from a dream and searching for Krishna.

In her longing, she begins to identify and imagine herself as Krishna, before realising that both Radha and Krishna are one and the same. Kavya beautifully conveyed this transition from Radha to Krishna.

The Amritavarshini raga tillana, composed by Satish Venkatesh, with verses from the *Valmiki Ramayanam*, was the concluding piece. The depiction of monsoon and the joys associated with it lent vibrancy to the piece.

Janani Hamsini's singing was soulful and in synchrony with the dance. Kiran Pai on the mridangam, Sujith Naik on the flute, T.V. Sukanya on the violin and Hemanth on the nattuvangam provided good support.



Nithyashree dancing in front of a 10ft Nandi statue.  
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# Art in an urban setting

**VR Chennai transformed into a performance space with dancer Nithyashree's presentation at 'Pradosha Arpana'**

**Manasa Vijaylakshme C**

**T**he atrium of VR Chennai in Anna Nagar echoed with music and sounds of the salangai during 'Pradosha Arpana', an event curated by Laasya Dance Academy, Bengaluru.

Anchored around the legend of Pradosham, when Shiva consumed the deadly poison and danced to restore the cosmic balance, the evening unfolded before a majestic 10-ft Nandi.

The evening featured Bengaluru-based Bharatanatyam artiste Nithyashree, who presented three pieces that she performed more as an offering. She commenced with 'Pradosha Samayadi', set to raga Purvikalyani

and Adi tala, which made for a fitting invocation. Composed by Padma Charan and choreographed by Gowri Sagar, the dance evoked the solemnity of twilight, when Shiva dances in response to the gods' prayers.

The interplay between the rhythm of Ganesha's drums and Shiva's cosmic dance was conveyed through confident footwork and apt abhinaya.

**Ode to Nataraja**

The second item 'Thillai ambalam', a shabdam, brought a shift in the tone. This Ragamalika piece, set to Adi Tala, traced the emotional arc of a devout woman pining for Nataraja, the Lord of Chidambaram. The shabdam, composed by Thanjavur Arunachalam Pillai, offered the

young dancer an opportunity to delve into the layered emotions of Virahotkanditha nayika.

The final piece, a Shiva padam, was a crescendo in every sense. Composed by G. Gurumurthy with music by Bala Subramanya Sharma, the choreography celebrated Shiva as the embodiment of the five elements, the seven swaras, and the Omkara.

Nithyashree's transitions between vigorous tandava and delicate lasya mirrored the duality of Ardhanarishwara, the union of Shiva and Shakti.

Pradosha Arpana was not just a Bharatanatyam recital, but a reclaiming of a public space for cultural memory – reminding one that even in an urban setting, spirituality can be invoked through art.

Karthik Bhatt

**C**hennai Corporation's recent announcement of a 10 per cent entertainment tax on entry fees for concerts, dramas, shows or events conducted on the premises of any institution may have come as a surprise to artistes, but, this is not the first time such a resolution has been passed. If we look at history, the world of theatre faced a similar situation in the early years of Independence.

T.K. Shanmugam's contributions to the world of Tamil theatre went beyond his role as an actor-producer. The man, popular as 'Avvai' Shanmugam after portraying the saint-poet Avvaiyar in a play, considered the welfare of an artiste as a prerogative to the growth of the art itself. He undertook several activities with this as a focus and, in 1934, founded a handwritten tabloid – *Ariyuchudar* – exclusively for the theatre fraternity. He also founded *Ariyuviruttu Sangam* in Madurai (1938), an organisation for the personal development of artists, where they could read magazines, learn languages and listen to speeches by leaders. In 1949, Shanmugam was also instrumental in the founding of Nataka Kazhagam, that worked towards the betterment of theatre and improvement of the financial status of actors.

#### Support from artistes

He found support in notable names from theatre and cinema – S.S. Vasan, A.V. Meiyappa Chettiar, M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, N.S. Krishnan, S.V. Sahasranamam, V.C. Gopalratnam and K. Sarangapani – who were associated with Nataka Kazhagam since its inception. Director K. Subrahmanyam and comedian T.N. Sivathanu officiated as secretaries, while Shanmugam was the first president of the working committee. A.V. Meiyappa Chettiar gave a generous donation of ₹ 2,501 to the organisation at the time of its founding.

To raise funds for its working,

# The scene repeats

Chennai Corporation's announcement of a 10 per cent entertainment tax reminds of a similar move in the 1950



Echoes of the past (Clockwise from above) T.K. Shanmugam in the Tamil play *Sivagamiyin Sabatham*; as Avvaiyar; and a scene from TKS Brothers' play *Raja Raja Chozhan*. PHOTOS: THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Nataka Kazhagam organised a series of ticketed shows – music, dance and drama – which spanned over a month. These shows were held between March and April in 1950 at an open air-theatre on the Congress Grounds (from where it functioned), said to be first-of-its-kind in the country. Crowds, in large numbers, thronged these performances that were also presided over by several political leaders such as C. Rajagopalachari, R.R. Diwakar (Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting) and B. Gopala Reddi (Finance Minister of Madras). The Nataka Kazhagam had set the perfect stage for its efforts to address the then prevailing issue of entertainment tax on entry tickets for performances.

**T.K. Shanmugam was instrumental in the founding of Nataka Kazhagam, which worked towards the betterment of theatre and improvement of the financial status of actors**

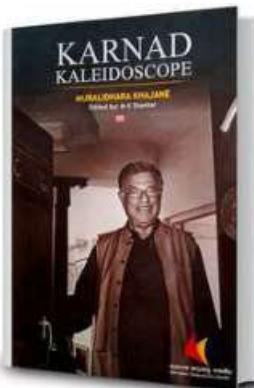
It was in 1947 that the Government of Madras proposed a bill, which raised the entertainment tax to 33.33%, from 18.75%. It caused a stir in the theatre fraternity and resolutions were passed at conferences held in Madras and Thanjavur against its implementation. In a detailed statement issued to the press, TKS Brothers came out strongly against the move with a statement that spoke about the financial aspects of theatre production.

Nawab Rajamanickam Pillai (founder of Madurai Devi Bal Vinodha Sangita Sabha) had said that with the proposed increase in levy, he would wholeheartedly invite the government to take over the running of his troupe. Better sense prevailed, as the final legislation had a graded rate of tax (12.5 per cent for tickets priced under ₹ 3, 20 per cent for tickets from ₹ 3 to ₹ 5 and 33.33 per cent for tickets priced higher than ₹ 5). While it was a welcome relief, the industry, led by Nataka Kazhagam, soon came out with a call to abolish the levy.

**Appeal for tax exemption**  
In April 1950, Nataka Kazhagam sent out a plea to the Government of Madras, requesting a total exemption of tax to theatre performances. A delegation, led by Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar, met the then Chief Minister P.S. Kumaraswamy Raja and B. Gopala Reddi in July 1950 and explained the rationale behind their plea. They stated that the emergence of cinema as a popular medium of entertainment had affected the growth of theatre and that it required the state patronage to sustain itself. The role of plays as a potential vehicle of propaganda was stressed upon, as also the fact that the existing revenue in-flow to the government on account of this levy on dramas was meagre.

Their attempts led to the desired effect, as the government announced an exemption for plays from the ambit of entertainment tax "with effect from April 1, 1951", followed with a similar exemption for music and dance.

**Cinematic wizard** (Clockwise from right) The book cover, a still from the film *Ondanodu Kaaladalli* and Girish Karnad in a still from the film *Samskara*. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



enamoured by Girish's personality and intellect. Soon after, Vaikuntaraju asked me to write a piece on Girish. I was nervous since I was a novice; but my Editor insisted."

Muralidhara next went to meet Girish for the article. "Girish realised that I had not only watched his films, but had also read the books they

were adapted from. So the interview went on smoothly."

"Girish was a student of mathematics who took to cinema. He learnt the craft on-the-go. When he was asked to make a documentary on Da Ra Bendre, he went to FTII (Film and Television Institute of India), Pune, and watched 65

documentaries, and read books on filmmaking. There is so much more about Girish that could not be compressed into this book.

At that time, there were directors, composers, and screenplay writers with new perspectives, out to make their mark. Hence, their films felt different. Girish's *Samskara* was one such – an iconic film."

*Karnad Kaleidoscope* documents Girish's journey from *Samskara* to *Kanooru Heggadithi*, which was his last. The book also includes the classic *Utsav*, directed by Girish and produced by Shashi Kapoor. There are interesting anecdotes shared by actors, writers, and cinematographers, including B.V. Karanth and L.V. Sharada, who worked with Girish. "The idea was to present his cinematic journey chronologically, giving the reader a peek into the behind-the-scenes. My years as a journalist at *The Hindu* and the stories I

wrote about Girish and his works then helped me write this book," says Khajane.

After the first meeting, Girish and Muralidhara met often. "We would discuss literature, theatre and cinema. A few years later, I asked Girish if I could write a book on him. He refused straightforwardly saying, 'I will write one myself'."

**The last interview**  
Girish's health started deteriorating, "despite this, he gave *The Hindu* an interview, which turned out to be his last. After the interview, Girish asked me to meet him again, alone, and that is when he asked me if I was still keen to write a book on him and that I could go ahead. 'I do not think I can, but can share my notes with you for your book,' he said. I was moved because he was generous to me," says an emotional Muralidhara, who started writing the book during the pandemic.

"The best part of the book are the photographs. Since I worked with *The Hindu*, I was able to access them from the newspaper's archives."

Says M.K. Shankar, "*Karnad Kaleidoscope* is a result of an organic evolution over the years and not a result of an impulsive decision. Having worked as a film journalist, Muralidhara delves deeply into Girish's creations as a filmmaker and brings together varied aspects of his distinct style. Hence, 'Kaleidoscope' in the title."

According to Shankar, who teaches Hindustani music and writes and directs plays, "the book can be divided into three parts – Girish's filmography, people who worked with him in films and his unfinished works."

"When he passed away, Girish had scripts for over 25 films ready. He always thought in terms of script first," says Muralidhara Khajane.



## Beyond the stage

*Karnad Kaleidoscope* documents Girish Karnad's journey in cinema

**Shilpa Anandraj**  
shilpa.anandraj@thehindu.co.in

**T**here are plenty of books that celebrate Girish Karnad's contributions as a playwright and theatre director, but his celluloid journey has been vastly ignored. There is no documentation of it," says Muralidhara Khajane, senior journalist and the author of the book, *Karnad Kaleidoscope* (published by Karnataka Chalanachitra Academy and edited by another senior journalist M.K. Shankar).

The book was first released at BIFFES-2025 in March by Sadhu Kokila, chairman of Karnata Chalanachitra Academy and at Suchitra Film Society in April. This is Muralidhara's second book, his first is *Random Reflections – A Kaleidoscopic Musings on Kannada Cinema*, also

published by Karnataka Chalanachitra Academy and co-authored with Subrahmanyam Vishwanath.

Sharing the whys and hows behind the book, Muralidhara says "I never planned to write a book on Girish or any other personality.

In fact, I never dreamt of writing a book, simply because it is tiring to chase publishers." *Karnad Kaleidoscope*, he adds, "happened after a long-drawn process. It includes many of my interactions with Girish during my journalistic years."

Muralidhara goes back in time and recalls his association with the renowned actor and playwright. "I was introduced to Girish in 1984 at the office of the Bengaluru-based *Vaara Patrika* (a Kannada weekly) by its Editor B.V. Vaikuntaraja, who was also a playwright and screenplay writer. I was



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Sreya Ghosh

Kolkata and jazz – two words that bring back sepia-tinted memories of a musical tapestry that rang across the ages. The likes of Louis Banks, Usha Uthup, Pam Crain, and Carlton Kitto lent a certain vibrancy to the city, and immortalised its jazz soul. And, venues such as Trincas and Blue Fox on Park Street nourished that soul, along with a side of deviled crabs and prawn cocktails.

Blue Fox was renowned for its jazz and food, while Trincas offered a complete entertainment package, blending music, food and variety shows.

As jazz swept Calcutta of the 1960s and 1970s, it mirrored the city's cosmopolitan spirit – a meeting point of global influences and indigenous charm. The nightly crescendos of music were more than performances; they were collective experiences. Today, nostalgia flavours every such musical memory.

## Cheers to Jazz

The iconic restaurant Trincas remains one of the celebrated venues for the genre in Kolkata

Imagine the warm glow of Trincas' lights reflecting off clinking glasses, the rhythmic hum of conversation amid soulful notes, and the unmistakable aroma of spiced delicacies whisked to eager patrons. Park Street's pulsating rhythm was almost the heartbeat of the city itself.

Trincas has, indeed, evolved over the decades, adapting to the changing rhythms of Kolkata's culture. Beginning as Flury & Trinca in 1927, this iconic venue on Park Street transitioned from a Swiss tea room to a music bar by 1969, becoming a cornerstone of Kolkata's jazz scene. It transformed into a



vibrant hub of nightlife, hosting legendary jazz performances and floor shows. The velvet stage, low-slung furniture and air-conditioned interiors gave it the feel of a Chicago jazz club meeting a Parisian cafe.

Now, Trincas embraces a more

**High note** (From left) Usha Uthup at Trincas; a singer performing at the restaurant's Jazz evenings; and Park Street in the 1930s. PHOTOS COURTESY: THE HINDU ARCHIVES AND TRINCAS

relaxed and family-friendly vibe, with Sunday brunches that celebrate its culinary heritage. The bustling nightlife of the past has given way to a more diverse experience, blending nostalgia with modern tastes. The restaurant continues to honour its legacy with live music and a menu that pays homage to its storied past.

Anand Puri, the third generation owner of Trincas, says: "It is not just the music but the vibe. So, we hosted everyone from musicians to magicians." He has embraced its jazz heritage. The newly-launched weekend jazz lunches at Trincas, where the ambience is high on nostalgia. This reimagination has made jazz accessible and appealing to a new generation. The Trincas Timeline Project is a community-based memory project that collects stories, photos and anecdotes from patrons, musicians and historians, creating a cultural treasure trove of the iconic venue for current and future patrons.

Singer Usha Uthup, who hails from Kolkata, began her music journey at Trincas. Her first live performance on October 1, 1969, was held here. She lent a unique dimension to the restaurant's already lively music scene with her charisma, Kanjivaram sarees and flowers in her hair. "I had the best audiences in this city. And, it has been a fantastic run," says Usha.

While jazz's popularity has waned in other parts of India, Kolkata has managed to hold onto its jazz heritage. The city continues to celebrate jazz through events such as JazzFest, which has been conducted since 1978, and attracts jazz lovers from all over. In January this year, at Art Meets Jazz, Louis Banks and Usha Uthup showcased the enduring love for jazz in the City of Joy. Says Usha: "People still want to listen to 'Sweet Caroline', 'Those Were The Days', 'Roberta Flack' and 'Killing Me Softly'."

## CULTURE BRIEFS

### Choodamani award for theatre

Sri Krishna Gana Sabha will present Choodamani award for theatre on July 5. A series of Tamil plays will be staged as part of the festival to be inaugurated on June 26. Director Sp Muthuraman will present the awards on July 5 – 'Nataka Choodamani' (sponsored by Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti) to dramatist, actor and director TV Varadharajan; and 'Tyakkunar Sigaram K. Balachander Award of Excellence in Theatre' to theatre artiste Lavanya Venugopal. Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti will preside over the award function. The following is the list of plays to be staged at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha.

**June 26:** *Killadi Maplae* by Sathyasai Creations.  
**June 27:** *Lakshmi Kalyana Vaibohame* by TOM Mediaas.  
**June 28:** *Kapidhwaja and Kaanal Neero* by Dummies Drama.  
**June 30:** *Ennadi Penne* by PMG Mayurapriya.  
**July 1:** *Kalavu Neekiya Padalam* by Three Entertainers.  
**July 2:** *Ithu Nyayama Sir?* by UAA.  
**July 3:** *Sikkal Sivaraman* by Stage Creations.  
**July 4:** *Maadhu + 2* by Crazy Creations.  
**July 5:** *LKG Aasai* by United Visuals.

For tickets and other details contact 044-281470806.

### Special concerts

The following concerts, organised by The Music Academy, will take place at the Kasturi Srinivasan Hall. **Today, 6 p.m.:** Tiruvarur Girish will render Narayana Tirtha compositions. He will be accompanied by Pakala Ramadas (violin) and A.S. Ranganathan (mridangam). The concert is held under the endowment instituted by P. Obul Reddy and P. Ganambala. **June 24, 6 p.m.:** Adithya Madhavan (vocal) with V.S.P. Gayatri Sivani (violin) and Kaushik Sridhar (mridangam). The programme is organised under the endowment instituted by K. Vivekanandan in memory of his grandfather Semmangudi R. Srinivasa Iyer.

### CALENDAR

### Bharatanatyam performance

Natyarangam, the dance wing of Narada Gana Sabha, will feature the Bharatanatyam performances by Aparna Mohan, disciple of Shafeekudin and Shabana (6 p.m.) and by Lakshmi Priya, student of Shijith Nambiar and Parvathy, at 7.30 p.m.

### Debut show

Dhashwana R.G., Hamsini Raghavan and Hanish Srinivasan, students of Nrithyodaya will present their Bharatanatyam debut performances today, 6.30 p.m. - 8.30 p.m., at Rasika Ranjani Sabha mini hall, Mylapore. The event also marks Bharatanatyam dancer Mahati Kannan's nattuvangam debut. Senior Carnatic vocalist S. Sowmya and senior Bharatanatyam artiste Priya Murle are the guests of honour.



### Shoorpanaka in a new light

The India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), under the Arts Practice programme, presents 'Shoorpanaka: A search', an hour-long performance by Prashathy J Nath, on June 22, 7.30 p.m. at Medai - The Stage. The seeds for the piece were sown when Parshathy was at Ninasm Theatre School in Karnataka and she says

the feedback from her mentors gave the play its present shape. She will blend different performance traditions such as Koodeyattam, Koothu, Oppari and Parai to add a new dimension Shoorpanaka's story.

With music inspired by folk traditions, *Shoorpanaka* includes an original oppari composition by Pa Thriivenkatachami. For tickets, support@ticketed.in



### Three-year music course

Swami Haridas Giri School of Music invites applications from Carnatic music students (12 to 40 years), for a three-year course in Carnatic music in the intermediate and advanced levels. Applicants should know a minimum of five varnams. Classes, to begin in the first week of July, will be held on Tuesdays and Fridays, from 5 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. After completion of the course, candidates with an Undergraduate degree in any discipline, are eligible to enrol for MA (music) course offered by the Madras University. Faculty members: Prof. R.S. Jayalakshmi, C.R. Vaidyanathan and Padmini Ravi. Application is available at Narada Gana Sabha office. For more details call 2499 3201.

Mooralala Marwada, the 11th generation folk singer from Kutch, will also be a part of the event

### Shailaja Khanna

**B**arkha is a word every classical music aficionado will know and they will also be familiar with raags such as Megh, and Miyan ki Malhar. A festival celebrating the monsoon and quaintly termed *Baarish*, has also been creating ripples of late. A brainchild of arts-curator Minhal Hasan, this quarterly event, a joint venture with Excursors and India Cultural Hub, will be held at the Travancore House, New Delhi, tomorrow.

Minhal Hasan has, in the past, has put together theme-based celebrations, like those inspired by Kabir and some on towns like Pushkar and Amritsar. He says, "We have forgotten to celebrate the rain and focus only on the chaos it creates. We should celebrate it at least for a day."

Celebrating the monsoon is a tradition unique to India, where it has been honoured for centuries through dance, music and paintings.

*Baarish* is envisaged as an

immersive holistic experience and not just confined to a visual or aural experience. Conceived to include a walk through a tunnel, evocative of the rains, it promises to be a multi-sensory experience with mist and rain related digital imageries.

The evening promises to be informative too with historian Eric Chopra sharing a historical perspective of the impact of rains on art with an illustrated talk on paintings of medieval India.

The music has been specially curated for the event. Minhal Hasan explains: "*Baarish* will present different soundscapes focussing on the theme rather than the artistes."

The first concert in the series is titled 'A Symphony of Rain' and will feature Kumar Sarang, a santoor player from Benaras. He will be accompanied by Ashim Bery, Lalit Kumar and Anant Raina. The finale will feature Mooralala Marwada, a 11th generation folk singer from Kutch. The ensemble includes artistes such as Anirban Ghosh, Yusra Naqvi, Diyatom, Nikhil, Pranay, Subhankar and Vaibhav.

The event encores July 26 and August 23.