



# metro PLUS

THE HINDU



**Classic flavours** match contemporary style at the newly-opened Machaan Restobar **P2**

**HOW THE *EQUALIZER* INSPIRED THIS TAMIL FILM** **P4**

THAMODHARAN B



**With *Andhagan* and *GOAT*, Prashanth is eyeing a strong return to Tamil cinema**

The remake was supposed to be helmed by a couple of other directors before it was taken up by Prashanth's father, actor-director Thiagarajan. "The way he gets work done is admirable. He has just two assistant directors for the entire movie; his entire set is calm and there is no hurry."

#### Ruling the Nineties

In the Nineties, when Tamil cinema fans were establishing the superstardom of Rajinikanth, and lapping up the variety that Kamal Haasan offered, Prashanth rose fast in the ranks as a romantic hero: he got to work with directors Mani Ratnam and Shankar in his initial years in the industry. Those experiences, he believes, shaped him up. "They were like ironsmiths, making me into the actor that you see today." That includes attempting risky sequences in *Thiruda Thiruda* without any safety harness, something that was not in vogue during those times. "I remember running throughout, jumping from a motorcycle to a jeep, and then atop a horse and then to a train. There were many near-death experiences I had during that shoot, but because I was young and raring to go, we just went ahead."

*Jeans*, another memorable project then, featured Prashanth and Aishwarya Rai in double roles. "Till then, dual action subjects were filmed by rewinding already-shot footage and exposing it again. For *Jeans*, we let the film run, without rewinding. We merged that in the computer. *Jeans* pushed computer graphics to another level. It was an epic attempt, for which director Shankar deserves credit."

#### Entertainment is key

The last decade might not have yielded great results, but Prashanth is set for some course correction. Apart from *Andhagan*, he also has an important role in Vijay's much-awaited *The Greatest of All Time* (*GOAT*), directed by Venkat Prabhu. In fact, Vijay, with whom he shares a warm camaraderie, released the promo song for *Andhagan*. "Vijay is like a brother to me. He is a truly wonderful person and a gentleman."

He is not perturbed about the growth of some of his contemporaries who did not enjoy the dream start he did, but have still managed to churn out box-office blockbusters in recent times. "See, in a year, we have more than 100 films releasing in theatres. As an actor, if I act in four films, there are still 96 other films for audiences to enjoy. There is always space and scope for other people. Everyone has a place and time, and a journey to undertake."



To watch video interview, scan QR code

**Srinivasa Ramanujam**  
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Around 30 years ago, the Prashanth household gathered at the main hall in their T Nagar bungalow. Prashanth had just written his medical exams and was set to become a doctor, something that his family desperately wanted.

However, there was a catch: film directors were waiting with scripts, in which they wanted to cast Prashanth.

"I still remember that day because it felt like a board meeting. It happened right here," says the actor, at Prashanth Gold Tower, now a popular landmark in Chennai. Recalling that day in the early Nineties when he was still an adolescent, he says, "We discussed my future and decided that I would do one film. If it became a hit, I would become an actor. If it failed, I would study to become a doctor."

What came in handy were all the co-curricular activities that he was exposed to: Prashanth was already adept at playing the piano, riding a horse, playing table tennis and performing a variety of martial arts.

His first film, *Vaigasi Poranthachu* released in 1990 to much fanfare and even before that hit screens, legendary Malayalam writer-director MT Vasudevan Nair had spotted Prashanth and cast him in *Perumthachan*. He subsequently did a Hindi film (*I Love You*) and a Telugu movie (*Prema Sikharam*).

"No other actor in India would have dreamt of such a start to his career," beams Prashanth.

Three decades later, Prashanth, now christened 'Top Star' by Tamil cinema fans, is still living his dream. This August 15, his *Andhagan* – the Tamil remake of Hindi hit *Andhadhun* – hits screens, and later this year, he will be seen in Vijay's *The Greatest of All Time* in a supporting role.



***I'm looking forward to Andhagan, GOAT and doing more interesting work. This is one profession where we have one simple goal: to entertain audiences. Anything we do is a step towards that***

PRASHANTH

#### Blind trust

*Andhagan* has been long in the making, but Prashanth is upbeat about its appeal. "The movie has elements of dark comedy and surreal cleverness in how each character evolves. It's like a maze. For the Tamil version, we have made it larger than life and we're looking forward to audiences watching it in Tamil," he says, about the film that boasts a star-studded cast including Priya Anand, Simran, Karthik and Oorvasi among others.

## Yarn by the dozen

A two-day exhibition organised by Crafts Council of India will see a gamut of weaves and textiles on display



**S Poorvaja**

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Every corner of the country has a unique weave and a story to tell – about artisans, their unique craftsmanship and a history of the fabric passed down generations.

Stepping into the upcoming textiles and accessories show by the Crafts Council of India will lend the chance to experience all of this, and revel in the rich textile history of the country. The bi-annual textiles and accessories show will be held on August 9 and 10 at the MRC Centre, Chennai and is being organised close on the heels of National Handloom Day, observed on August 7.

"The textiles and accessories shows have been happening for more than two decades now, and



**Thread traditions** Over 40 participants will display weaves. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

this year, we have double the number of people exhibiting with over 40 participants. This includes master artisans, designers, weavers and entrepreneurs each uniquely presenting their craft," says Jayasri

Samyukta, executive committee member, Crafts Council of India.

The textiles and accessories show will have Vimor's vintage revival silk cotton saris, handblock prints and natural dye fabrics from Pracheen, Ramkumar Halder's dhakai jamdanis, Tarini's saris which celebrate the Odisha's handloom legacy, patolas from Gujarat by Patola Weaves, jamdani and tangail sarees from Biren Basak, and Shantipur revival saris from Ssahaworks. Apart from saris, there will also be contemporary kurtas from Kaayaa, unstitched textured kurtas and blouses from Kapaas Kolkata, Indo-Western outfits from Hiranya and embroidered co-ords from Piar. Anavila will also present its new collection in whites and pastels.

The main objective of the show is to have customers interact directly with the people behind these textiles, which Shripal Shah, founder of the Ahmedabad-based brand Asal who is among the participants says, is extremely important. "Asal started in 2001 to revive traditional practices, and we focus on the traditional practice of making yarn through a takli spindle. While there is a lot of discussion and emphasis on weaving, we want to also create awareness about how important it is to use handspun yarn," he explains.

*The Crafts Council of India textiles and accessories show will be held on August 9 and 10 at MRC centre, Santhome High Road from 10am to 7pm*

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#### Reel cut

Prashanth in stills from *Vaigasi Poranthachu* (1990), *Jeans* (1998) and *Andhagan* (2024). THE HINDU ARCHIVES





**Crystal Woo Dimsum House** is focussed on bringing authentic flavours from Hong Kong to Chennai, complete with a dim sum cart and egg tarts

**S Poorvaja**  
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A shiny steel cart is pushed around Crystal Woo Dimsum House, cane baskets neatly arranged on top of it. It stops at our table. The lids of the baskets are removed with a flourish, each containing a different type of steaming hot dim sum.

“Instead of waiting for your food, you can just take your pick. This way, you aren’t left hungry or waiting,” says Dhasa S, a partner at Crystal Woo. In Chennai’s burgeoning Asian food scene, dim sum are plentiful, but the cart concept is unique and something they are excited about, she adds.

At this new Hong Kong-inspired restaurant, dim sum obviously, is the pièce de résistance. Apart from those on the cart, there are ornamental dim sum baskets suspended from the ceiling. A large

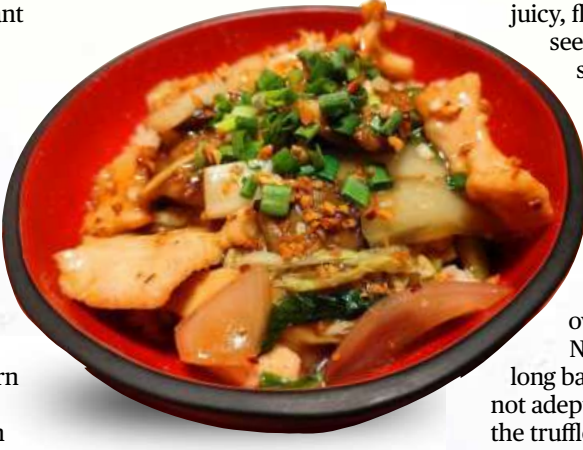


# It’s raining dim sum

glass on one side of the restaurant shows us an assembly line of kitchen staff making the said dumpling by the dozen.

“I have always loved Chinese cuisine, and have immensely enjoyed food in places like Din Tai Fung. I grew up in Malaysia and have eaten some amazing Chinese food there, and was keen to bring authentic dishes here,” says Dhasa.

We begin our dim sum sojourn with an XO prawn hargao, soft dumpling wrappers stuffed with



juicy, flavourful shrimp. Prawns seem to be Crystal Woo’s strong point – while the prawn shumai is fresh and steamed to perfection, it is the prawn toast from the starters section, a crunchy bread crusted with sesame and filled with shrimp, that wins us over.

Navigating a soupy xiao long bao can be hard if you are not adept at using chopsticks, but the truffle chicken and golden



**Comfort in a bowl** (Clockwise from left) An assortment of dim sum; chicken hokkein fried rice and a view inside. S POORVAJA

butter, and Vietnamese pho beef flavoured ones make the effort worth it. We resort to balancing the steaming hot xiao long baos on a large spoon, and ensure we get enough of its soupy goodness before proceeding to dig into the flavourful meat inside.

**Take your pick**  
Crystal Woo has a host of vegetarian dim sum options as well including combinations such as bok choy and ricotta, broccoli and chestnut, and asparagus and miso. The radish cake, an appetiser pick which comes highly recommended, has an interesting sweet and spicy flavour profile, but is texturally befuddling. Is it soft, or chewy? We can’t decide.

From among their mains which also include dan dan noodles, mee goreng, XO fried rice, and burnt garlic fried rice, we pick the chicken hokkien fried rice. This is comfort in a bowl – warm rice and

egg topped with a mildly spiced stir fry of vegetables and chicken.

Keeping with the theme of the restaurant, we end the meal with a freshly-warmed Hong Kong style egg tart which is just the right amount of sweet, and is light and airy. The other option, a fried ice cream, is a more indulgent and cloyingly sweet pick.

While there are bubble teas and iced teas on the menu, Crystal Woo is also expected to start serving alcohol in a couple of weeks.

In its compact menu, Crystal Woo manages to include a host of options that you can take your pick from, depending on whether you would like to keep it heavy or light. However, you could also let their hero dish take centre stage, and focus on the light, flavourful, and steaming hot dim sum. Everything else can come next.

*Crystal Woo Dimsum House is on the third floor, Oyster Building, 9, Khader Nawaz Khan Road and is open from 7pm to 10.30pm. A meal for two costs ₹1,500. Contact 9787997870.*

# Sow coffee-scented seeds

**Vithai, a new roastery in Chennai, champions coffee from Tamil Nadu, promising aromatic cups of the morning elixir sans chicory-heavy bitterness**

**Sanjana Ganesh**  
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Conversations with Vignesh V over a cup of coffee, quickly turn into an education about brewing, blends, moka pots and biodynamic farming. For someone who did not drink a sip of the beverage until 2015, this consultant is now fluent in coffee-speak. He can talk at length about his travels to obscure, forested hills in Tamil Nadu, and his meetings with coffee farmers there while also going over the process of pouring the perfect cup. “Who knew that great robusta could come from Kanyakumari,” he asks.

Over the course of his journey as a connoisseur, Vignesh co-founded Davrah Coffee in 2022 – a kiosk-cafe focussing on specialty coffee from the State to ensure that some of the farmers he met during his travels, got their due. Much of the coffee was purchased directly from the estates up in Coorg, Palani, Kodaikanal, Yercaud and Nilgiris, Vignesh says.

Vithai, his latest venture, is another effort in this direction. This coffee roastery is working with producers to use technology to elevate the quality of coffee at these estates. “Besides the payment directly going to the farmers for the beans, we will also be providing a quality bonus over and above the market value of the coffee. This automatically means that the quality of coffee increases,” he says.

Vignesh says that though coffee estates might seem like indicators of wealth, coffee farming is not particularly profitable. Through Vithai, Vignesh says that he has accumulated data that can determine the use of technology to improve soil management and promote organic and sustainability initiatives. This is hence an attempt to preserving great



**Land of gold** Much of the coffee is purchased from estates in Coorg, Palani, Kodaikanal, Yercaud and Nilgiris. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

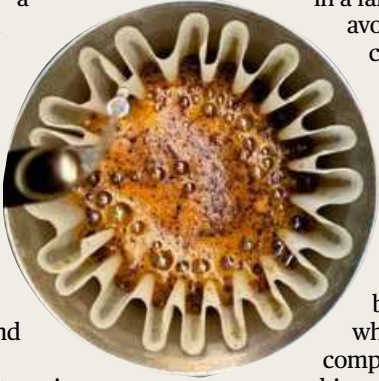
coffee quality while working around the evil that is climate change, he says.

The roastery functioning out of a small space inside Tuscan Table, a cafe in RA Puram, houses a top-notch coffee roaster that uses UV light to evenly roast the beans. Vignesh hoists a bucket of green beans from Balmaadi Estate in the Nilgiris, and pours out a small batch for his morning roast. “These were grown in a farm that also grew avocados, oranges, cardamom, peppers, vanilla and kadukkai (myrobalan),” he says. A sniff of the raw beans proves that coffee seeds can indeed smell like fruit and flowers. Decoction is after all, bean juice. However, when the roasting is complete on this new machine, a familiar aroma of a full body coffee takes over. All that is left to do is pour a cup.

Vithai intends to be an entirely Tamil brand. “The logo has manjal and kungumam with a hand holding a coffee plant. The coffee will be sold in a manja pai (yellow bag) to ensure that we do not use plastic packets,” he says.

Vignesh adds that he is only roasting in small batches and all of the coffee is sent by India Post. The new beans, partnerships with farmers, roasting style and grinds, today are all engaging experiments. “No two cups of coffee here are ever alike,” he says.

*A minimum order of 250 grams is priced at ₹450. Contact 9042477100 or @vithaicoffee on Instagram.*



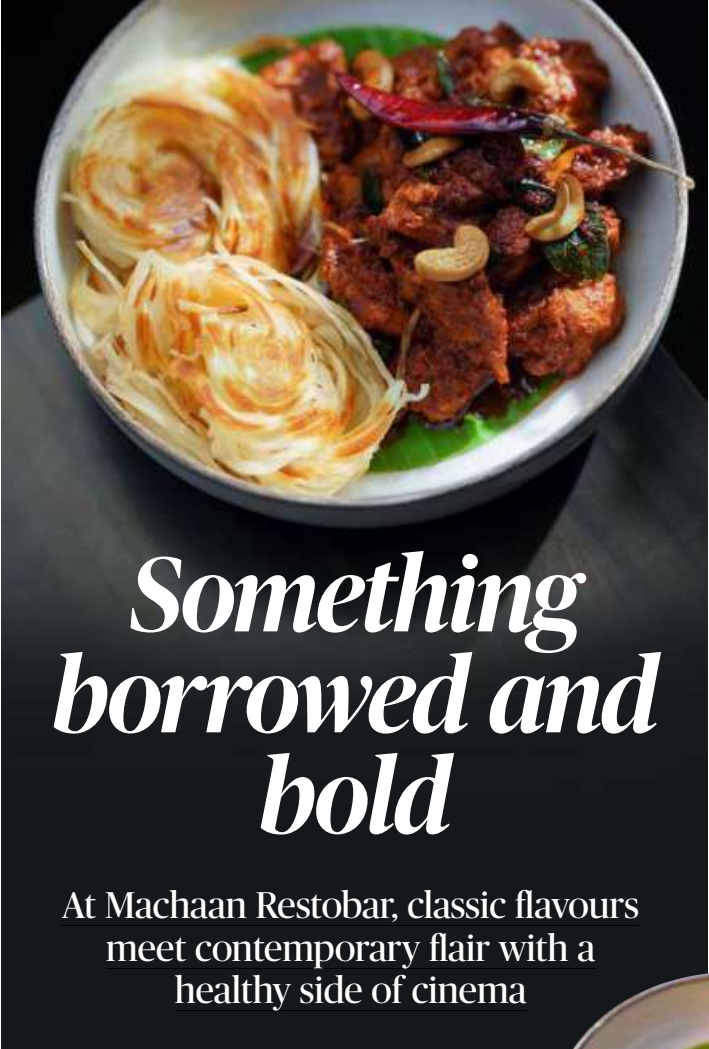
**Sangita Rajan**  
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If we take the idea of a dimly lit local bar that serves complimentary peanuts and cornflakes, and elevate it to match contemporary style, we get Machaan Restobar. The cocktails are potent, yet smooth. The starters and side dishes are spicy and familiar, but innovative at the same time.

Even with the brightly marked posters announcing the opening, it takes a minute to find your way to the cosy interiors of this eatery, located at an almost speakeasy-esque location that detaches you from the outer world. “That was the idea. We wanted people to feel like they’re in a hidden location, so they can relax,” says celebrity Chef Koushik S who has curated the menu for Machaan.

Restaurants that serve fusion food are a dime a dozen. Some hit, but most miss the mark. Koushik seems to have found the key. “I like to keep it simple. Source local ingredients, dig deeper into your knowledge, and figure out what works and what doesn’t,” he says.

The karupatti rum smash, served with a smoking stick of cinnamon is a sweet symphony of palm jaggery and rum that echoes a *panakam*. It pairs well with the flavour bomb of the curry leaf pesto potato that nobody could stop reaching for, and the mirppakaaya muttai – a fried egg entrée, that is tossed in a spicy green chilli coating and topped with raw onions. Both are best eaten while crispy and hot. For spice lovers, a succulent Mangalore chicken uruvai is the best bet. Chicken infused with curry leaves and a myriad of spices, is served with a side of mildly sweet Mangalore buns that pairs well with the sweet



**At Machaan Restobar, classic flavours meet contemporary flair with a healthy side of cinema**

cocktail murattu kuthu, made with pineapple and coconut water, that packs more innocent than it is with a larger-than-usual measure of rum.

**Mix and match**  
Try the gin and red wine-based kurchi madathapetti, funnily named after the popular Telugu song from the film *Guntur Kaaram*. It packs quite a punch, so tread lightly and munch on the adipoli beef – which may not be the most tender meat you would find on this menu, but with the flaky parottas, it acts as

a familiar companion to your drink. When you are ready to move on to the main course, sample the Pallipalayam spaghetti – regional-style chicken cooked in Pallipalayam style, served on a bed of spaghetti flavoured with garlic, chillies, and coriander. While the spaghetti tastes like a spicier version of the Italian classic aglio e olio, Koushik refuses to make the comparison. “I’m not

**Flavour bomb** Mangalore chicken uruvai; (below) quick gun Murugan vadai with Jailer chutney. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

going to name it South Indian aglio e olio just to make it sound appealing. It is a spaghetti with the flavours of Pallipalayam chicken,” he says.

Calling a spade a spade seems to be a common theme, as the main course menu also contains a vendakkai mor kozhambu spaghetti, which he says is an ode to the sevai mor kozhambu combination – but that might be an acquired taste for most.

The in-house, made-from-scratch tajin – a spice mix made of lemon zest, coarsely ground chillies, and salt – is generously sprinkled on many of the entrées. It adds a layer of zing to the heavily spiced, fried dishes that do a great job of soaking up all the alcohol. If that does not do the job, we recommend you end the drinking spree with a tall glass of chilled boondi mor, a spiced yogurt drink complete with loads of mint, coriander, ginger, chillies, and topped with crispy boondi.

If you must end the meal with something sweet, try the chaaklate kaapi cake, but be warned: it is a decadent chocolate cake with hints of coffee, and the portion size is overwhelming. It is quite heavy, and one slice is plenty for a table of four.

*Machaan Restobar is located in Ampa SkyOne on Nelson Manickam road. A meal for two with alcohol costs ₹3,000.*



## THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13596

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### Across

- Discourage (3,3)
  - Monk’s garb (5)
  - Rather — with less delay (6)
  - Runner-up’s award (6)
  - Enthusiastic enjoyment (4)
  - Mad, bad Roman emperor, assassinated AD 41 (8)
  - Study and collection of coins (11)
  - Team game with sticks (8)
  - Fall in drops (4)
  - £10 (6)
  - Do something as a favour (6)
  - Austrian symphony composer, d. 1809 (5)
  - Header (anag) (6)
- ### Down
- Essential dietary requirement (7)
  - A Christmas Carol character (4,3)
  - Predictions (9)
  - Country forming the western part of Hispaniola, independent since 1804 (5)
  - Temporary encampment (7)

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- Jungle hero created by Edgar Rice Burroughs (6)
- Type of tenure (9)
- Eerie (7)
- Gratify one’s appetites (7)
- Mass of small rounded pebbles (7)
- Brood of chicks (6)
- Large expanse of water (5)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated August 8, 2024.

**Solution No. 13595**

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C	H	A	N	I	P	R	O	L	I	F	I	C
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This Madras month, step into Vyasarpadi, home to a unique self-reliant industry led by the area's women

Women with the chisel

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The synchronised ‘tick, tick, tick’ of a hammer hitting wood greets us the moment we enter Sathyamoorthy Nagar. Children who have just returned from school run about; a baby cries nearby; a scooter veers into the street: all to this consistent background score.

We follow the sound to trace its source. Through narrow lanes, we end up finding women seated in front of their houses, chopping treenails using a chisel and a block of wood. They add the slivers to a steadily-growing pile by their feet. This mountain of chipped wood will be supplied to hardware stores in the city, aiding carpenters, plumbers and those involved in electrical work. Every wooden wedge counts.

“My mother would chop *kattai* after sending us to school and completing all her chores at home,” says M Manimegalai, head bent in concentration. She looks up briefly and adds: “I learnt this from her, and have been chopping wood from the time I was 12.” The 33-year-old drags a sack of wooden blocks to her doorstep every morning at around 11am. She then arranges a pedestal fan opposite her and settles down to work with her chisel, hammering away at the blocks.

“I see this as an office job,” she says. “I take short breaks in between; fix targets, and wrap up by 5pm to tend to my two children.” A kilogram of treenails fetches the women ₹50, and Manimegalai chops around eight

kilograms a day. Of the ₹400 she makes, she shells out ₹200 for the wood that she sources from timber dealers in the city. There are over 50 women like her engaged in the task at Sathyamoorthy Nagar alone. Others from the nearby JJ Nagar also join them.

**Means to an end**

N Sakthivel from Vyasai Thozhargal (a movement that consists of youngsters striving for change) has been documenting the day-to-day of these women for over two years. “I grew up surrounded by women chopping *kuchi*,” says the 30-year-old documentary photographer, adding that his mother too was involved in this line of work. “After children would leave for school and men for work, the women would come to sit outside to chop,” he recalls. “Many



**On her own terms** There are over 50 women from Sathyamoorthy Nagar who are engaged in this line of work. N SAKTHIVEL

women from Vyasarpadi work as house help in the city; as helpers at the Stanley hospital, and also sell flowers,” he points out. But some of them prefer to work at home crafting treenails, owing to the freedom the job provides.

L Gomathi has been involved in chopping treenails since she was 10. “My father was an alcoholic, and my mother had to raise five children by herself. I had to drop out of school to give her a hand,” says the 49-year-old. Today, her husband delivers the finished pieces at wholesale hardware stores in Sowcarpet, that in turn supply to several others across Tamil Nadu.

“The work is not easy; it affects my back,” says Gomathi. She recalls a difficult phase: the day her father broke her wooden slate when she was in class III. “He couldn’t afford to send me to school,” she says. Although Gomathi had no choice but to make peace with the situation at home, she is clear about sending her daughters to school. “One of them wants to become a teacher,” she says. Only when both of them turn independent working women, will Gomathi retire. “It’s all I think of when I chop wood, every single day.”

Despite the work being taxing, S Padmavati says she enjoys the perks. The 45-year-old can chop half a kilogram of treenails in an hour and has been at it since age 12. She points to a gold chain she is wearing and says, “I saved up for many years to buy this.” Padmavati is clear that her chisel wields power and is thankful for it. “I decide when I want to work. I forget about my problems when I work. Here, I am my own boss.”

# Epic money for everyone

Ankur Warikoo discusses books, finance and more in Chennai

S Poorvaja  
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In the midst of answering a barrage of questions from an audience of young working professionals at Ramanujan Intellion Park, Taramani, entrepreneur Ankur Warikoo paused and said, “I like how practical Chennai is.” The event was organised on the sidelines of Bookchor’s Lock the Box Book Fair hosted by Intellion, and the audience listened in rapt attention as the author and content creator discussed finance, investments, relationships, and how important it was to keep learning.

After two bestselling books *Do Epic Shit*, and *Get Epic Shit Done*, Ankur released his third book *Make Epic Money* earlier this year. “You are your most important asset,” he stated in the initial pages of the book, and this seems to have been a common refrain in his writing – to take care of, and put oneself first. When asked if this is what resonated with his readers, Ankur said he would like to believe so. “What the Gen Z hates is being prescribed to, or told there is only one right way. The message I try to share is how everyone has their own journey. In my books, I talk about a set of principles that they can use to design their own journey,” he said. His upcoming books will be based on careers and relationships.

Three successful books later, Ankur says he never sets out specifically to write a book. “I love writing. I do not sit to write a book, I sit to write, and a book comes out of it,” he laughs.



**Money matters** (Left) Ankur Warikoo. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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**Egmore:**

Guild Of Service, 18, Casa Major Road - 600008

**Anna Nagar:**

D. K. Kalyana Mandapam, W-114, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Near Round Thana - 600040

**Ambattur:**

Arul Jothi Kalyana Mandapam, 162 A, Redhills High Road - 600053

**Ashok Nagar:**

Lakshmi Hall, 50/40, 100 Feet Rd, Near Ashok Pillar, Opp. CSI Church - 600083

**OMR Sholinganallur:**

K,V,L Kalyana Mahal, 161, Opp. Accenture, Opp.Bharat Petroleum - 600019

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**The colour of power**

Artist and textile designer Lakshmi Srinath unveils her new line, Vermillion. This collection celebrates the Tamil month of Aadi, and in order to honour the goddesses, the artist will also unveil her installation symbolising *maa vilakku*, a lamp. “I have created saris, blouses, palazzos and western wear using various shades of red, which in the Hindu tradition symbolises goddess Shakthi,” says Lakshmi Srinath.

@Tvam Art and Design Studio, RA Puram. August 2, 2pm to 7pm.



**Lessons from Draupadi**

Junior Sakhi Mandal Sahyog, a ladies club, presents *Draupadi, A Monologue*, featuring Anjana Chandak, a Bengaluru-based artiste.

@The Museum Theatre, Egmore. August 6, 11am.

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**All at sea**  
A still from *Boat*; (below)  
Chimbudeven.  
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# On the same boat

Director Chimbudeven on his upcoming film starring Yogi Babu that was shot in challenging conditions on sea

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Director Chimbudeven is evidently in a hurry as we manage to get him on a call mere days before the release of his upcoming film *Boat*. As always, last-minute work has piled up but that does not stop the cartoonist-turned-filmmaker from talking in detail about how he came up with the Yogi Babu-starrer. Most of the film's runtime is expected to unfold around a boat full of people out in the open sea, and Chimbudeven says it was an engaging experience penning the story.

**Words on water**  
“I’ve read Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* during school days and that’s the inspiration behind the film. Over the years, novels like Sandilyan’s *Kadal Pura* and *Thanneer Desam* and several films have also fascinated me with a story set at sea. The sea is like a living being – given the ambience with clouds, sky, wind and the weather – and it keeps evolving. That, along with the political situation back in 1943 and the

power of humanity, is what *Boat* talks about. A friend’s grandfather’s grandfather was one among around five lakh people from Madras who vacated when a Japanese plane bombed the city, and he told me how a certain section would jump into boats and take to the seas to escape the bombings,” says Chimbudeven.

The filmmaker concedes he was clueless about how to go about the shooting process while writing the story. “We met with a lot of hurdles while shooting the film. Cinematographer Madhesh Manickam and I scouted for locations; all the spots had heavy tides. The tides were better at Rameswaram but it’s crowded. We finally chose Uvari near Tiruchendur.”

But that was not even half the bridge crossed for the makers of *Boat*. “We needed a boat that could hold ten people and the one we initially got barely had space for the artistes to move around. Then (late) art director Santhanam found a boat in Kerala that had to be modified in Rameswaram, as we don’t have oars-propelled boats anymore,” he adds.

Be it *Boat*, or his previous films like *Pulikecei*, *Irumbukkottai Murattu Singam* or *Puli*, many of the filmmaker’s works have been set against a period backdrop. “We are leading a sophisticated life today because of our forefathers’ decisions, ideologies and movements. Our lives

**Chimbudeven has worked with comedian-turned-heroes in the past too. One of his biggest hits, *Imsai Arasan 23m Pulikecei* (2006), featured Vadivelu in the lead role.**



are influenced by our history, so it interests me the most,” says Chimbudeven.

**Another layer**  
Based on the trailer of *Boat*, which showcases the people on the boat hailing from different ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds, one can interpret the vessel to be the country itself. Chimbudeven, indeed, is known for such metaphors in his works. “A scene can have two layers; if the first layer has a solid main plot backed by good performances, no one will mind the second layer having metaphors. When I used to be a cartoonist, we did this in our works and when I apply the same to films, they are interesting here as well. In *Imsai Arasan 23m Pulikecei*, for example, there is a shot showing multiple paintings on a wall and there’s also a Pablo Picasso painting. It doesn’t necessarily have to be noticed or understood but if it does, it’s a bonus,” says the filmmaker.

Speaking of *Pulikecei*, it marked Vadivelu’s first film as a solo lead and it was the same with Santhanam and Ganja Karuppu in *Arai En 305-il Kadavul*. Now, with *Boat*, he is teaming up with Yogi Babu who has turned lead after being a comedian for years.

“If a story demands a certain actor and if the producer can make a profit out of it, anyone can turn a protagonist. I personally pick actors based on what the story requires and sometimes a hero would do the trick and sometimes a comedian would ace it. If the business aspect works out, then it can’t get any better,” says Chimbudeven who has tried everything from Western (*Irumbukkottai Murattu Singam*) and magical realism (*Oru Kammiyum Moonu Kalavaanikalum*) to hyperlink narratives (*Kasada Tabara*) and anthologies (*Victim*).

“Within the first 20 years of inventing cinema, all the genres of films have been done. Irrespective of the format, the idea is to deliver a successful film and irrespective of the genre, the audience will celebrate it if it’s interesting.”

*Boat* is releasing in theatres on August 2

## Rain, rain, go away

Director Vijay Milton on his *Mazhai Pidikkatha Manithan*, inspired by Denzel Washington’s *The Equalizer*

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Remember the ripples that *Goli Soda* created way back in 2014? A humble film, it told the story of teenage boys forced to fight back, catapulting ace cinematographer Vijay Milton as a filmmaker to watch out for.

Ten years later, Milton is now making films for the likes of Shivarajkumar and Daali Dhananjaya, and the production values are exponentially bigger. After a delay due to the pandemic – and production banner Infiniti Film Ventures’ line-up of films with lead star Vijay Antony – Milton’s *Mazhai Pidikkatha Manithan* is finally set to release this week.

Milton says he was adamant about this title, as it creates a sense of mystery about the character, which, Milton says, is the niche of the film. “In fact, *Mazhai Pidikkatha Manithan* is inspired by *The Equalizer*, starring Denzel Washington. In that film, the mystery behind this lead character hooks you, and they drip-feed the information throughout the film. I have tried something similar.”

There is a sense of biblical poetry in the dialogues that feature in the promo material, which Milton says comes from his affinity towards Russian literature. “My father inculcated the reading habit in me since I was six or seven,

and I eventually stumbled upon the translated versions of Russian literature. Those days we used to get these big novels in Tamil for as cheap as ₹2. Because they are translations, the way the characters converse in these stories would be a bit biblical,” explains Milton.

One thing Milton wishes to change through *Mazhai Pidikkatha Manithan* is how bloodshed is normalised to the current generation of audiences “You won’t see gruesome fight scenes or bloodshed. You will feel the anger behind the action, but how we depict the anger is where I have drawn a line,” says Milton.

*Mazhai Pidikkatha Manithan* is also the first film coming out since Milton worked with a superstar, Shivarajkumar, in 2022’s Kannada film *Bairagee*. Milton says the experience of working on such a production led him to introspect his own filmography. “My style is a bit too earthy and realistic. Even when it comes to punch-dialogues, I would prefer to write them in more natural modulation. But when it comes to big stars, it should be a notch higher, and I have realised that I failed to do it in my films.”

Despite being a filmmaker for almost 20 years, Milton believes he has not changed. “I want everything on set to be under my supervision. Maybe I want that control because I am both the director and cinematographer.”



Vijay Antony, Vijay Milton and Sarath Kumar on the sets of *Mazhai Pidikkatha Manithan*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Former Indian and CSK player Ashish Nehra on his unique coaching methods

## THE GAME IS ON

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If there was an award for ‘Most Animated Coach of the Year’, Ashish Nehra would definitely be in the running.

For, much like football’s Pep Guardiola of Manchester City, Nehra, currently the coach of Gujarat Titans, patrols the boundaries during IPL matches, constantly chatting and interacting with his players on cricket strategies.

It is a coaching style that is not too familiar to Indian cricket fans, but this is Nehra’s style. “That’s the way I am,” he says candidly over a virtual conversation, “If I am not operating the way I feel like, I should be in the movies. Because there are retakes there, but not in sport. As a coach, one should do whatever is best for the team.”

Nehra knows that, as does his Delhi teammate and friend, Gautam Gambhir, who was recently appointed as the coach of the Indian team. Gambhir, known as an aggressive coach, is currently on his first official assignment in Sri Lanka and Nehra wishes him well. “GG is very passionate, hardworking and never minces his words. With him, there will be transparency. Indian cricket has shown positive results in

the last few years and under Gautam, that will only improve,” says Nehra, who is part of the commentary team in the ongoing India-Sri Lanka series.

**‘CSK is special’**

Ashish Nehra, a left-arm pacer with a gift to swing and seam the cricket ball, tasted success as an Indian fast bowler in the early 2000s. Later, once the IPL gained popularity, Nehra also had a memorable stint with the Chennai Super Kings, a phase he looks back with fondness. “It was a great franchise but they were also lucky that MS Dhoni and Stephen Fleming stuck together for a long time. CSK is a special franchise even for youngsters, who learn a lot.”

MS Dhoni, who has been associated with the Chennai franchise since its inception, is younger than Nehra, but that has not stopped the pacer from learning from him. “For me, the most important thing about MS (Dhoni) is that he has been the same with people, irrespective of results.”

At his prime, Nehra’s deliveries were considered hard to face but he himself had to face quite a bit of hardship; Nehra was injury-prone and had to reportedly undergo almost ten surgeries during his playing days. Prod him about that and he says, “Experience teaches you how to handle these things. It also required a lot of mental strength to overcome those phases. I tell youngsters to take care of themselves, especially if they want to play the longer format of the game. For batting, wicketkeeping or spin bowling, fitness is key, but it becomes the all-important factor for a fast bowler. 80 percent of pace bowling is about how you handle your body. Whoever is fitter will play longer.”

India-Sri Lanka matches are streaming on the Sony Sports Network



**The most important thing about Dhoni is that he has remained the same, irrespective of wins or losses**

ASHISH NEHRA

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