

CHENNAI • Thursday, January 8, 2026



# metro PLUS

THE HINDU

**Jallikattu season kicks off** with the revival of cultural pride, aiding local economy **P2**

**CELEBRATING TAMIL STORIES WITH SARIS** **P3**



**His decision to release Master in theatres revived Tamil cinema after the COVID-19 pandemic**

VISHNU KAMAL  
Kamala Cinemas



**Vijay's film is one tentpole release in a year that helps us tide over three bad months at the box office**

ARCHANA KALPATHI  
AGS Cinemas



**Vijay's films usually account for 20-23% of the total gross revenue for theatres in most years. So his retirement is definitely a huge loss for distributors and exhibitors**

SRITHER S  
Secretary, Tamil Nadu Theatre Owners Association

**With upcoming release Jana Nayagan, 'Thalapathy' Vijay bids goodbye to cinema, triggering heartbreak and nostalgia among fans and the Tamil cinema fraternity**

**Bhuvanesh Chandar Srinivasa Ramanujam**

bhuvanesh.chandar@thehindu.co.in  
srinivasa.r@thehindu.co.in

**“F**or the fans who gave up everything for me, I'm giving up cinema itself.” These words of Tamil superstar Vijay – fondly known as ‘Thalapathy’ – rang through Malaysia's packed Bukit Jalil Stadium a week ago, during the recent audio launch of *Jana Nayagan*.

The release of any Vijay film is special in Tamil Nadu, thanks to his popularity. But *Jana Nayagan*, set to hit screens soon, is all the more special – with this swansong, the star is bidding goodbye to films after plunging full-time into politics with his party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam.

For millions of Vijay fans across the globe, this release marks the climax of a rollercoaster of emotions. “Only after I heard him speak at the audio launch, and the umpteen fan edits that followed, did it hit me that we will no longer have such celebrations at the theatres,” says an emotional Vicky Vijay, a Salem-based auditor and ardent fan of the actor.

#### Path to glory

In the 1980s and 1990s, the once scrawny and self-effacing actor made a quiet entry into a power-packed Tamil film industry, ruled by the likes of Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan. Vijay had backing – he is the son of popular director SA Chandrasekhar – but his choice of roles, screen presence and penchant for action and dance was what quickly made him a force to reckon with. Today, few actors in Tamil enjoy the kind of youth following that Vijay has amassed over the decades. “We will miss him on the big screen,” producer Archana Kalpathi of AGS Entertainment said, during the release of *The Greatest of All Time*, Vijay's previous film.

Archana has had multiple links with Vijay's work over the years; first as a fan, which she became after watching *Kadhalukku Mariyadhai* (1997) in school. Then, as a theatre owner – Archana is the CEO of AGS Cinemas, a leading multiplex chain – and a producer, having bankrolled projects like *Bigil* and *GOAT*. “From an exhibitor's point of view, his film is one tentpole release in a year that helps us tide over three bad months at the box office. His one film has a guaranteed opening and collection. The revenue that we get from his film is what we use to deal with our slower months. It will be a big vacuum, and it will be hard to fill,” she says.

These are indeed big shoes to fill. Srither S, secretary, Tamil Nadu Theatre Owners Association, distributor and exhibitor, says that there will be a great loss in revenue. “In the last six years, except for 2025,” – only the second calendar year since 1992 to not see a Vijay film – “Vijay has had at least one film every year. And on average, his film would account for 20-23% of the total gross revenue from theatres that year. So his retirement is definitely a huge loss for distributors and exhibitors,” he says.

“If we felt his absence in a year like 2025, then imagine how great a loss his retirement would cause,” says Vishnu Kamal, owner of Kamala Cinemas in Vadapalani. “It's a huge loss; in a year like 2023, we had two Vijay films (*Varisu* and *Leo*) among the top five highest-grossing films. In 2024, again, *GOAT* took the top spot, and as far as Kamala Cinemas is concerned, the re-release of *Ghilli* came second, thanks to tremendous footfall. So he's a major contributor,” adds Vishnu, stating that a prime reason for this is that audiences from all age groups come to theatres to watch a Vijay film.

He stresses that theatre owners will miss a “symbol of hope,” recollecting how the star's 2021 film *Master* – one of

## One last dance



#### ‘Hold the gun, Siva!’

Clashing with *Jana Nayagan* at the Pongal box office is **Sivakarthiskeyan's *Parasakthi***, and this has triggered excitement among several fans of Tamil cinema, who believe that Sivakarthiskeyan is Vijay's ‘successor’. This buzz gained ground after Vijay ‘handed over a gun’ in a scene in his previous film, *The Greatest of All Time*, to Sivakarthiskeyan, something that is widely believed to be a passing-of-the-baton gesture. Scoffing at speculations of a tiff and referring to his close camaraderie with Vijay, Sivakarthiskeyan said at a recent event, “No matter who says what, this Pongal is an Annan-Thambi Pongal for all. It's good for cinema when we celebrate each other's films.”

the first big-ticket releases during the pandemic, with a cap on 50% theatre occupancy – helped theatre owners recover from the brutal months. “I can say this confidently – the decision to release *Master* in theatres revived Tamil cinema after the COVID-19 pandemic.”

#### Steps to fame

Beyond business, what Tamil cinema would truly miss is a performer who could dance like a charm and perform

action sequences with conviction. This ‘complete entertainer’ is what Vicky says he would miss on screen. “Sure, we have Sivakarthiskeyan slowly following in those footsteps, but today, Vijay is the only entertainer who ticks all the boxes,” he says. Tirupur Subramaniam, distributor and exhibitor, too, admits that he will miss Vijay as

a hero. “As an actor, what I liked about Vijay the most, something newer generations of stars can also learn from, is that he has always been a commercial actor and someone who cared about the box office. His only policy is to ensure that the producer who invests money in him recovers that money and earns a profit. Both Rajinikanth and Vijay have been doing that, and that's a quality I like,” he says. However, Subramaniam is

not perturbed about the retirement; he calls it an inevitable progression. “Since the times of Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, when a star leaves, a new star has always risen to fill those shoes. So while we are sad that he is retiring, we are also confident that someone else will fill his position.” Srither too agrees. “I strongly believe that cinema will always thrive even without Vijay. The newer generations of stars will take over.”

In fact, Srither believes that *Jana Nayagan* isn't his last film. “I can't divulge why I believe so. Regardless, this film will do really well at the box office. The fan who usually watches a Vijay film twice will watch this five times.”

Vicky's plans with *Jana Nayagan* tell you that Srither wasn't exaggerating. “I watched *GOAT* five times, *Varisu* six times, *Master* seven times, and *Leo* 10 times. I watched both *Kushi* and *Sachein* twice when they got re-released,” he reveals, “I would watch his films first to celebrate, and during the subsequent times, to observe the audience around me. For *Jana Nayagan*, I haven't fixed a count. I will watch it as many times as possible because I don't know what the future holds. Going to a new Vijay film isn't about whether it's good or bad. It's a celebration.”

The fan is quite excited to watch the H Vinoth directorial because it seems to be of the same style as the Vijay commercial films he grew up watching. “That is, the films he was doing between 2003 and 2010. I am hoping it would be a *pakka* commercial potboiler.” There have been speculations – enlivened by the recently released trailer – that *Jana Nayagan* is the remake of Telugu superstar Nandamuri Balakrishna's 2023 action

thriller *Bhagavanth Kesari*. Vicky says he wouldn't mind it even if that were true. “*Bhagavanth Kesari*, on paper at least, is a film tailor-made for Vijay.”

In a build-up to his swansong, Vijay fans are ensuring that there is enough pre-release buzz. So much so that they requested Kamala Cinemas' Vishnu to play a 2014 Vijay film (*Kaththi*) on this New Year's Eve, only for the evening shows to get sold out within 12 minutes of bookings opening. “This is an emotional moment for all of us. We are excited to watch his film, but the fact that we won't see him after makes it bittersweet,” says Vishnu. He adds, “As a theatre owner, I am petrified because the demand for tickets has already skyrocketed. There are only 1,000 seats in a screen. How can we satisfy all those who want to watch the First Day First Show?”

Vijay has been a star who has consistently moulded himself to become what fans want him to be, but while retaining his unique core. For fans, this release will be bittersweet. For, while we may not know what *Naalaiya Theerpu* holds, this Pongal belongs to the *Jana Nayagan* of Tamil cinema.



# The making of a *jallikattu* bull

**A**





# Pleats of stories

Designer Naushad Ali and Sundari Silks collaborate on contemporary saris that celebrate craft and Tamil culture

**S Poorvaja**  
poorvaja.sundar@thehindu.co.in

For designer Naushad Ali, inspiration for his latest collection, a collaboration with a legacy Chennai brand Sundari Silks, was all around him; in a language he loves, and in Tamil heritage that he deeply respects.

Jasmine flowers in various stages of bloom, markings from the *panchangam* or the traditional Tamil calendar, narrow temple borders, and motifs representing anklets, *nethi chuttis*, and pieces of jewellery. On saris in bright purples and blues, subtle beige, yellow, ivory, mint and a gauzy gold, these are just some elements that are woven in, each with a special significance, and a story of culture to tell.

“I was drawn to elements that have shaped Tamil visual culture for centuries. These references hold a quiet sense of ancestry and identity. My own design language has always leaned towards minimalism, restraint, and clarity, and I wanted to bring that sensibility into the sari form without disturbing its essence,” Naushad says.

Featuring 24 saris, the collection, which was unveiled in Chennai on Tuesday has been nearly two years in the making. A few years ago, Puducherry-based Naushad

worked with Sundari Silks on a menswear collection. The decision to collaborate on saris is something he says has taken people by surprise.

“I have designed saris for my label’s collections in the past; but it usually is to break the monotony. One sari would probably feature in a full collection. This collaboration with Sundari however was an interesting challenge,” he says.

To begin work on the collection, Naushad and Manmohan Ram, managing partner, Sundari Silks recall their journey to

Benaras, to meet with weavers, decide on colours and ultimately, get the saris woven there. “This was a collection that was initially conceived for Kanjivarams, but we realised that we had to play around with silks given the work we wanted done on the saris. The saris had to be light, comfortable and wearable,” Naushad explains.

Given the intrinsically Tamil elements that inspire the collection, zeroing in on the colours of the saris too was a well-thought out effort. “We have colours like ‘Ramar pacchai’, a type of green for instance which is very unique to our culture. I wanted to bring these colours back but with a fresher approach, while also wanting to break what a typical sari from South India looks like. We experimented with combinations like pastel mints with reds, and a translucent beige with gold motifs for instance,” the designer says.

From gulmohar flowers, jasmine buds described in Tamil poetry and narrow temple borders, the motifs might be many, but have been used sparingly through the

saris. This is deliberate, Naushad says, to let the colours and weaves take precedence, letting a minimal aesthetic shine through.

“We know many young sari wearers for instance, do not like accessorising with heavy jewellery, and were excited about having a sari that featured jewellery motifs instead,” he says.

At the T Nagar Sundar Silks showroom, Manmohan says that the collection will be made available for sale and displayed in a way that reflects the thought that has gone into its making. “The collection has just the right balance, with Naushad bringing together traditional and contemporary design elements and motifs,” he says.

“We have always been experimenting across our womenswear, menswear and even accessories, and this was an opportunity for us to work on a contemporary collection and champion creativity,” Manmohan adds.

Priced ₹28,000 onwards and available at Sundari Silks, T Nagar



## Pongal crafts carnival

Chennai will host the Pongal Shopping Carnival, organised by Indian Artisan Bazaar, ahead of the festive season. This exhibition showcases traditional and contemporary art, handicrafts, home furnishing, and textiles and more from across the country. @CERC Grounds, Thiruvanniyur, On till January 11. 10.30am to 8.30pm. Entry and parking is free.

70+ DESIGNERS FROM ACROSS INDIA

**STYLE BAZAAR**

DESIGNER & LIFESTYLE EXHIBITION

FASHION | DECOR | JEWELLERY | LUXURY

LAST DAY TODAY

WEDDING & PONGAL SPECIAL

**8 JANUARY**

**HYATT REGENCY**

ANNASALAI, CHENNAI

TIMING : 10 AM TO 9 PM

Fashion | Decor | Jewellery | Luxury | Bridal | Western Sarees | Suits | Lehengas | Footwear | Gown and a lot more

**FREE ENTRY**

**PADMA SESHADRI BALA BHAVAN GROUP OF SCHOOLS**

hosts

**sprint**

10<sup>th</sup> Edition

PSBB - Inter School Athletic Meet

8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Periamet, Chennai

Inauguration

Chief Guest: **Mrs. M.V. Mahalakshmi**  
Principal, S.B.O.A School and Junior College, Anna Nagar

Guest of Honour: **Mr. Vimalraj Jayachandran**  
National Tennis Player, International Athlete - Sports Commentator (Hormuz, PSBB School)

Valedictory Function  
**Dr. K. Jothi**  
Associate Professor  
YMCA College of Physical Education, Chennai

**JOCKEY**

FACTORY SECONDS UPTO 50% OFF

10 am to 8 pm • Open All Days • Master / Visa Card Accepted

INNERWEAR • LEISUREWEAR • ACTIVEWEAR • KIDSWEAR • SOCKS

**Venues In Chennai**

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

**Cathedral Road:** Dass Community Hall, No.55, Opp. Maris Hotel - 600086

**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

**OMR:** K.V.L. Kalyana Mahal, 161, Opp. Accutture, Opp. Bharat Petroleum

**Sholinganallur:**

Org. by: Surya Agency Pvt. Ltd.

# Dindigul after dark

At Ponram, Dindigul Nights celebrates family recipes and regional favourites enjoyed through generations

**Chitradeepa Anantharam**  
chitradeepa.a@thehindu.co.in

For 27-year-old Mani Ram, a fourth-generation entrepreneur who runs Ponram – a restaurant that was founded by his great-grandfather Ponram Yadav in Dindigul in 1973 – curating the newly launched dinner menu, has felt like flipping through a family album. Each of the 10 dishes on the menu takes him back to his childhood – to memories of grandparents, aunts, and uncles, relishing carefully prepared meals and outings with his grandfather to neighbouring villages in search of specific local flavours.

“I vividly remember accompanying my *thatha* to Natham, about 20 kilometres from Dindigul,” says Mani Ram. “The region had several stone quarries and a large population of labourers. From as early as 6am, small eateries would open to cater to them serving poricha parotta, a staple for quarry workers. It was affordable, filling, and kept them satiated through long shifts.” These memories led to the inclusion of this regional speciality in Dindigul Nights, Ponram’s new evening-only menu.

The larger idea behind the menu is to introduce Dindigul’s local night-time cuisine to a wider audience. “That desire to preserve and popularise everyday traditions resulted in this menu, which is served exclusively in the evenings.”

Across the region, familiar dishes have evolved through subtle tweaks and additions. Take kothu parotta, for instance. In Madurai, it is typically prepared by adding eggs and salna – a flavourful, spicy gravy often served with parotta, idli, or dosa – before mincing the mixture on a hot tawa and serving it piping hot. In Dindigul, however, the dish takes on a different identity and is known as set parotta. Here, the parotta is torn by hand into a few large pieces, combined with chunks of meat, and finished with a ladle of thin, steaming salna poured over the top. “Even poricha parotta is prepared differently here,” says Mani. “In Dindigul, it is shallow-fried, unlike in Virudhunagar, where it is deep-fried.”

Seafood finds pride of place on the menu, with dishes such as idiyappam served with prawn sodhi, ilandosa paired with nethili karuvadu thokku, and mini idli accompanied by meen kuzhambu. Meat lovers can opt for

kothu kari – made with mutton or chicken – served alongside mini poori, idli, dosa, or idiyappam.

Mani Ram recalls how his grandmother, Jaya Ramachandran, now 63, prepared her own versions of karuvadu thokku and meen kuzhambu at home, serving children mini-sized poori and idli. “We wanted to pass on that experience, so we retained the size,” he adds.

Karipaniyaaram here deserves a special mention. Painstakingly crafted in large paniyaarakkal, the dish requires a batter that retains its softness for a long time. Black gram is used, with the proportion of fenugreek carefully adjusted to achieve the right texture. The stuffing is made with either minced



**Generational taste** Every dish on the menu tells a story, drawn from family memories and the food culture of Dindigul after dusk. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mutton or chicken, while the accompanying chutney steals the spotlight. “It’s a simple chutney made with dried red chillies, coconut, roasted channa dal, and garlic,” says Mani. “Traditionally, it is smeared over the paniyaarams before serving, and we follow the same method at the restaurant.”

With Dindigul Nights, Mani Ram says he hopes to celebrate the spirit of his hometown by offering a dinner menu that goes beyond biryani. The showcase brings back into focus dishes rooted in Dindigul’s several home kitchens and night-time stalls serving up lip-smacking meals.

Ponram is located at Ashok Nagar. Contact 7824008301.

Dr.K.Parasaran (Chairman) & the Board of Trustees of

**VEDA PATA NIDHI TRUST**

offer

**“SHRADHANJALI”**

**SRI CHANDRASEKHARENDRA SARASWATHI SWAMIGAL**  
(Mahaperiyava)  
on Thursday, 8th January, 2026  
at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore.

**PROGRAMME**

4 pm : Pooja  
4.10 pm : Veda Parayanam  
5.30 pm : Aarthi

**VEDA PATA NIDHI TRUST**  
Bhavan's Building, 18-22, East Mada Street, Mylapore, Chennai-600 004.  
vpnt1983@gmail.com

To know more and support our work please visit  
www.vedapatanidhitrust.org

**VEDA PATA NIDHI TRUST**  
40 YEARS  
OF DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO VEDIC EDUCATION





# Colonial hangover?

**Rewind to the glamour of the 1950s** at The Quarter, offering South Indian tapas, quirky cocktails and an opulent space for quiet conversation

**Sanjana Ganesh**  
sanjana.g@thehindu.co.in

Salon doors set the tone for the evening. At The Quarter, set in The Savera's premises, we step into Madras of the 1950s, a city exiting the coloniser's presidency, in the midst of creating an identity of its own. This cocktail-forward bar, blends South Indian tapas, Madras Checks, and old world charm – and brims with opulence. The lighting is dim, and the music, quiet. The display wall, filled with miniature Premier Padminis and Ambassadors, shares an intimate personal collection. Nivruti Reddy, who comes from a

long line of entrepreneurs, including her mother Nina Reddy, and is behind 60-year-old Savera Hotel's younger brands, Brew Room and Andhra Tiffin Room, says that The Quarter centres the city as an emotion. "It is not a themed bar. It is a quiet, comfortable place without jarring music aiming to ensure there is both food and shared conversation. We've tried to keep the menu fun. There are bar nibbles, small plates and mid-plates that play to our strength, especially with our South Indian flavours" she says. While the glamour of the intimate 40-seater bar by Studio Reve is a draw, what allows The Quarter to break-free from Colonial

primness, is the playfulness of the menu and the space. Wrapped in jade, with a private-dining area called Suite 101 (the first ever suite at Savera) the bar lends itself to high-pitched laughs, and secret conversations. Our meal begins with an unlikely vadumanga focaccia served with delectable gongura, garlic and podi butter. The buttery-soft bread is made in-house, through Savera's well-established bakehouse. Lotus stem chips, and sweet potato fries, both quoted in an in-house seasoning similar to piri piri, are finished with a hot honey glaze. Nivruti says that the portions have been kept small and priced accordingly because here, one should ideally order many tapas portions to share. "You don't want to be stuck with one starter alone. This way, you try a variety and decide what you like," says Nivruti. Accompanying the nibbles are a slate of cocktails, all Madras-based, hoping to rekindle the memory of lost flavours and scents. We try two savoury cocktails, the Biryani and the Thenga Manga. The

Biryani, served with a raita that sits like a pearl thanks to molecular gastronomy, is surprisingly delicious. While one can smell the long-grain basmati rice before sipping the glass, the drink, with bourbon as the base, is spiced with biryani masala and vetiver, and sweet with bourbon. The pea-foam atop the Thenga Manga sundal is a bit dense but the drink, made with rum, raw mango and coconut, is delicious. All pours are a generous, (and now standard) 60ml. Try the Guntur Accent, The Quarter's take on popular picante. With tequila as the base, this cocktail is spicy with Guntur chillies, and gongura pickle. If you like gins, you are in for a treat. At The Quarter, the gin-based drinks including the Amrutham, Mukkani, and Burma Bazar, with infusions of bael nuts, jackfruit, mango, and Chettinad spices, are



▶ **Madras musings** (Clockwise from left) Mount Road mutta puffs; interiors; and Mylapore Degree. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

delicious and the perfect amount of sweet. To ensure that you eat enough carbs to offset the alcohol, order paruppu podi arancini, and chicken 65 sliders. Also try the Andhra rotti where the meat is shredded and smothered with spices, served atop buttery bread. And bite-sized prawn uthapams, served with a papaya chutney. Our mid plate recommendations cannot be complete without the cloud mutta thokku, the bar's take on the classic eggs Benny, served with a fried bread, chilli Hollandaise, and a jam-like tomato thokku. The gilma biryani bowl, akin to a nasi goreng bowl, is full of chicken 65 pieces, and pineapple jam. Also try the Nallampatti paneer, topped with a thick Kongu special gravy, served with tiny coin parottas. "We were insistent that there were just as many vegetarian options. They are certainly not focussed on paneer alone," Nivruti says. Before you leave, do not forget to try the classic Madras Coffee Cake served in a brown paper cover, laden with soft, fluffy coffee cream. This is our pick over the filter coffee cocktail which looks beautiful but is unfortunately corrupted by the taste of acerbic cloves. If you like an amalgamation of Reese's pieces and Bounty, the foreign chocolates, our Dubai and US aunts and uncles used to bring, end the meal with peanut, chocolate, coconut, and crunch instead. The Quarter's expansive menu, and stellar

ambience, seems like a promising place for grown ups to have a drink and conversation, without grinding techno thudding in the background. That should be reason alone to make a reservation.

*The Quarter is at The Savera, Dr Radhakrishnan Road. A meal for two costs ₹2,500 including drinks. Reservations are mandatory. Call 9841310006. Open from 6pm to 12am.*



**A heritage meal**  
This weekend, popular Chennai Chef Gokul Kumar Mohit (Goku), and cookbook author Vishalla Vairavan will present the traditional Nagarathar Virundhu. The feast showcases a cuisine shaped by the Nagarathar (also known as Nattukottai Chettians) community's trading legacy. The non-vegetarian menu features mutton uppu kari, meen kulambu, eral masala and kozhi milagu kari. Vegetarian highlights include masala cheeyam, palakka kola, thayir keeralai, vellai poondu sadham, pacha milagu kulambu, vathal kulambu, along with thogayal, kootu and poriyal. The meal concludes with carrot payasam and aadi kummayam and other traditional sweets. On January 11, Vishalla Vairavan's residence, Adyar. Slots at 12pm, 1pm and 2pm. The meals costs ₹1,200 for vegetarian and ₹2,000 for non-vegetarian. Pre-booking: 9841074777.



**Jewels and weaves**  
Amethyst hosts an exclusive Pongal pop-up celebrating fine jewellery and handloom heritage, featuring Amrapali Jewels, House of Masaba, and Dharki. A key highlight is Fine Jewellery Volume II by House of Masaba in collaboration with Amrapali Jewels. Also, Dharki's selection of Benaras sarees and blouses, created through ethical, loom-to-label practices that honour India's weaving traditions. On January 8, 9 and 10 between 11am and 7.30pm at Amethyst, Royapettah.

**Nidhi Adlakha**  
nidhi.adlakha@thehindu.co.in

Remember the joy of chewy toffee? Of late, there has been a nostalgia-driven revival of the traditional confectionery. Nestled in Raison, a village in Himachal Pradesh, Big Bear Farms has been making toffee since 2022. Co-founder Nikita Kapur, 36, says they began in their home kitchen in Kullu Valley. "We first introduced them during the festive season, expecting them to be a limited offering. The response, however, was overwhelming, and it soon became a permanent part of our range," she says, "Nostalgia was not something we set out to create, but it has naturally found its place in our brand." Today, they retail three variants: original caramel toffee, chocolate caramel and most recently, coffee caramel toffee. Down South, Le Cordon Bleu Chef Pooja Srinivasan launched Inippu Indulgence to spotlight heritage toffee. "I am also a mother of two young kids and I noticed that my kids and my nephews don't enjoy chocolate cake! The joy of indulging in a piece of shared pastry or dessert has been swapped for caramel, ice cream, and toffee," says Pooja of the Chennai-based brand, adding how this mindset led her to create bite-sized toffees. South Indian heritage ingredients are the heroes at Inippu Indulgence and bestselling flavours include filter coffee, and Tuticorin sea salt. "Our original heritage toffees also include pure vanilla bean, Malabar spice, and Dakshina cocoa. We introduced rum- flavoured toffees for this festive season, and also had a limited edition drop for Halloween that included roasted pecan Malabar spice, brown sugar and salted butter," explains Pooja, who will launch nut inclusions for her upcoming Wedding Edit.

**Why toffee?**  
But what is it about toffee that has got these brands invested? Nikita says the love received from customers across the country has been a driving factor. "The toffee is made by hand in small batches, and slow cooked. "Nothing is



▶ (Clockwise from far left) Toffee at Big Bear Farms; and Inippu Indulgence. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



says. At her brand too, toffees are entirely handmade. "I started with trials in my home kitchen and I have slowly step by step increased production in a commercial kitchen tweaking the product as our volume increases." Another brand born out of kitchen trials is Tarvoti. Based in Goa, Preethi Hirendra Dhekne, 44, launched the label in 2023. "My husband is in the merchant navy and while sailing with him I discovered a new joy of picking up local treats from various countries. During Covid, my husband took a break from sailing and we missed our dose of foreign chocolates. One day, we curated a unique toffee at home using local cashew, and an idea to market this unique concept as a 'gift of Goa' was born." And hence the name Tarvoti, which means 'sailor' in Konkani. The brand offers three different flavours: roast almond, cashew coffee, and country cashew. "The latter is a rustic combination

inspired by the ginger used in traditional Goan sweets. We will soon introduce new regional flavours such as coconut, banana, and mint". She explains how sugar and butter are cooked together to form a creamy caramel that is then mixed with nuts and other "secret" ingredients to form the core of the toffee. "Toffee squares are then coated with chocolate and sprinkled with nuts."

**Keeping it handmade**  
As with any business, the challenges of running an artisanal confectionery business in India are many. Nikita says one of the biggest challenges is consumer awareness. "Reaching customers and helping them understand why an artisanal product behaves differently from a factory-made one. For instance, while some consumers immediately recognise shorter shelf lives as a sign of freshness, many still associate

longer shelf life with better value, not realising it often comes at the cost of high usage of artificial preservatives," she says. Pooja agrees. "Toffees have a nostalgic touch to them so for it to be revived, organic word of mouth has been the best way to get the word out." Given that the concept of artisanal confectionery is not very popular in India, Preethi says most people tend to associate toffee with mass products like say a Coffee Bite or an Alpenliebe. Manufacturing is also not easy. "We need to maintain strict atmosphere control during the production process as our toffee is very sensitive to humidity and temperature," says Preethi who once tried using freeze-dried fruits in the toffee, but they went soft. At Big Bear Farms, the initial hiccups faced were in trying to figure out how to ship a fresh product across the country. "Through the seasons, particularly the summer months, when they would begin to melt. We were determined not to use artificial preservatives, which meant learning the limits of the product: how it reacts to temperature changes, travel time, and storage. There were moments when we chose not to ship at all, or redesigned our packaging entirely, simply to protect the toffee," says Nikita.

**A win-win**  
It took Pooja four months of trials in her home kitchen to launch the brand. "I had made the toffee entirely out of brown sugar and jaggery, focussed on each piece being sizeable enough that it was comparable to an Indian sweet like a Mysurpa." Initial feedback was that it was too sweet and too big, and that led her to modify the recipe to what it is today, by experimenting with different types of sugars and cooking processes. And all this effort by brands has not been in vain given the rise in demand for artisanal toffee, and proof is in the many gifting hampers with boxes of these chewy treats. Says Nikita, "We continue to receive stories of how the toffees take them back to childhood, their nani, their school-days, holidays, and hill stations. It's truly amazing to know that our toffees evoke such warm memories."





As the lotus blooms

At Sharan Apparao's workshop The Many Lives of the Lotus: Between Sacred History and Contemporary Claims, the visual motif of the lotus will take centrestage. She will engage with questions of iconography, visual continuity, and cultural transmission through the lotus as both motif and symbol. Sharan, an art curator and the founder of Apparao Galleries in Chennai, has been associated with the visual arts for four decades.

The Many Lives of the Lotus is on January 17, 12.30pm to 1.30pm at Lady Andal Seminar Hall.

Money matters

Rohit Sarin, who has three decades of experience in private banking, will explain in simple terms about how to build the habit of investing. At his workshop Unlocking Wealth: Secrets to Getting Rich at Any Age, people across ages can learn to build wealth and grow their corpus. It will not only look at how money works, but also at how to make it work.

Unlocking Wealth: Secrets to Getting Rich at Any Age is on January 18, 10.30am to 12.30pm at Ground Floor, Annexe Building. For those aged 18-plus.



The all-new  
**Kia Seltos**

Presents

**THE HINDU**  
**LIT FOR LIFE**  
2 0 2 6

THE SHARPEST LITERATURE FESTIVAL IN INDIA

In association with

**CHRIST**  
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ARTS & DESIGN

**NITTE**  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TIRUPUR

To register, visit  
thehindu.com/lit-for-life/  
workshop

There will also be a screening of the documentary Wild Tamil Nadu, that has been produced by Sundram Fasteners and directed by wildlife photographer Kalyan Varma, on January 18; 11am to 12.30pm and 3pm to 4pm at Lady Andal Seminar Hall.

Akila Kannadasan  
akila.k@thehindu.co.in

While authors take centrestage at The Hindu Lit For Life, workshops running alongside the main events have also managed to draw enthusiastic participants. Over the years, the literature festival has seen experts from publishing, translation, theatre, art, and even mathematics handhold participants through interactive workshops that offer a peek into their field of expertise. This year at Lit For Life, one can learn to write a play, read and write the Tamil-Brahmi and Vatteluttu scripts, take a deep dive into handling deep fake, and even do a little workout with a fitness coach.

Scripted

For those whose heart beats for theatre, author, playwright, and journalist Gowri Ramnarayan is set to offer insights on how to write a play in the workshop Hands on: Write a Play? She will be picking three famous scenes from iconic plays for the exercise. "There is a world classic, an Indian classic, and a play that I wrote so I can give a personal perspective," she says.

"When you write a play, you're not writing it to be read; you're writing it to be performed," says Gowri, adding that there are many challenges for a playwright. "In a play, the entire frame on stage is before the eye of every spectator. You can't direct them to look at someone's hand or action. Everything is seen. How do you make sure the viewer is looking at that action you want them to look at?"

While writing a play, a playwright has to depend on the actor to communicate the story. This is different from a novel, feels Gowri. "I'm not writing a novel in which between me and the reader, there is nothing but the words on the page," she says. A novelist has the liberty of a



several thousand words to describe a character and setting. "But narration and description are shut out for the playwright," she adds.

Brevity is key. Also, a playwright has to show. "It's a different art. In terms of length, in terms of giving a full experience within a limit of time," she says. Gowri says she will underline the challenges; and the solutions she found as a playwright.

Hands on: Write a Play? is on January 18; 2.30pm to 4.30pm at Ground Floor, Annexe Building, Lady Andal. Open for those aged 20 and above.

Deeper than deep fakes

With AI being the buzzword now, learn how to create a lasting narrative for yourself at Shantanu Tungare's workshop titled Owning Your Digital Self in the AI Era. "The session is about deep faking yourself before deep fake deep fakes you," says the Mumbai-based Shantanu, a filmmaker who is best known for his pioneering work combining cinematic craft and AI-driven creativity.

Shantanu will teach participants how to create a strong narrative online in an era in



which a profile photo and a few seconds of voice recordings are sufficient to deep fake a person to doing or saying things that might do harmful things for their identity.

"I will show how to build an online brand using AI tools; what exactly AI does, how to identify deep fake and how to build narrative immunity on deep fakes," he explains. Shantanu says that AI can never be countered with technology. "It will always outsmart you," he says, adding: "But what it cannot outsmart is the narrative you put of yourself"

Shantanu suggests we use our instinct to pivot into something that AI can never know. "I'll also be teaching how to clone your voice, how to clone yourself and how to use ChatGPT and Gemini to have a two-way conversation to figure out who you are, what your motivations are and come up with a strong narrative about yourself."

Owning Your Digital Self in the AI Era is on January 17, 10.30am to 11.30am and 3pm to 4pm, for those aged 18-plus at Lady Andal Seminar Hall.

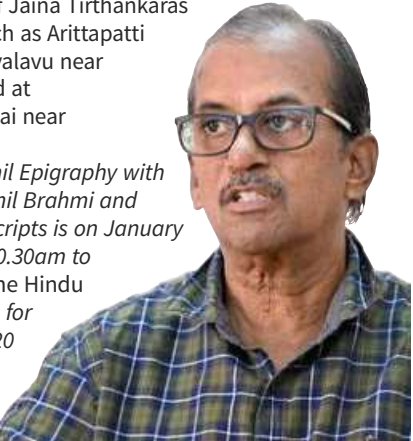


To register for The Hindu Lit for Life, scan the QR Code

Demystifying epigraphy

V Vedachalam, a retired Senior Epigraphist from Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, will take participants into the fascinating world of the ancient Tamil-Brahmi script. In his workshop Early Tamil Epigraphy with the focus on Tamil Brahmi and Vatteluttu scripts, Vedachalam, who holds a doctorate, will be teaching participants to read and write the scripts, also throwing light on the bas-reliefs of Jaina Tirthankaras in places such as Arittappati and Keezhavalavu near Madurai, and at Kazhugumalai near Kovilpatti.

Early Tamil Epigraphy with focus on Tamil Brahmi and Vatteluttu scripts is on January 17 and 18, 10.30am to 4.30pm at The Hindu studio. Open for those aged 20 and above.



Mind and body

Health and fitness coach Priti Chawla's session will be an interactive one with movement and breath work involved. "I have divided the workshop into two parts," says Priti. "The first will be about fitness' general components and learning to follow a structured fitness programme," she explains, adding that this will be followed by a 25-minute practical component. "We will then move on to the philosophy of fitness and wholesome living, delving deep into what one needs to do to achieve a healthy living plan for life."

Beyond the Body: The Philosophy of Fitness and Wholesome Living is on January 17; 10.30am to 12.30pm at Ground Floor, Annexe Building. Open for 18-plus.



**AKBAR HOLIDAYS**  
Start Affordable Holidays

**GREECE**

06 Nights / 07 Days

**₹ 1,59,999\***

Offer Discount : **Book Now & Get Discount** upto **50000/-** Per family ( 4 pax minimum )

**GLIMPSES OF EUROPE**

8N\9D

**₹ 2,35,999\***

**EUROPEAN MARVELS**

12N\13D

**₹ 3,05,999\***

**EUROPE JEWELS WITH LONDON**

14N\15D

**₹ 3,39,999\***

**AKBAR HOLIDAYS PVT LTD., Chennai**

+91 86526 38094 / +91 70458 47787  
+91 86579 24903 / +91 93440 05201  
sales.ftmaa@akbarholidays.in

**Inclusions**

FLIGHT, ACCOMMODATION, VISA, MEALS, TRANSPORT, SIGHTSEEING, TOUR MANAGER

Scan Here

**10<sup>TH</sup> JAN DAY 2**

**52ND EDITION**

**SAARANG '26**  
BEYOND REALMS  
SONATA THE HINDU  
Coca-Cola Language

**ANGEMI**

**BRODHA V**

**DJ VIOLA**

**\* EVENTS \***

**SPOTLIGHT LECTURES:**  
GV PRAKASH  
KHARESMA RAVICHANDRAN

**LIVE**

**SAARANG PRESENTS**  
**VENUE: IIT MADRAS**

**BOOK TICKETS ON KYN**

**FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM**

**MEDIA PARTNER**  
**THE HINDU**

Presenting Partner

The all-new  
**Kia Seltos**

In association with

**CHRIST**  
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ARTS & DESIGN

**NITTE**  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TIRUPUR

Associate Partners

**ORCHIDS**  
The International School

**HINDUSTAN**  
GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS  
CHENNAI

**SBI**  
Savings Bank

**IndianOil**

**IOB**

**NEW INDIA ASSURANCE**  
The New India Assurance Co. Ltd.

**Akshayakalpa**  
Organic

**ICEAI**  
GROUP

**KPL**

Education Partner

**SSVM**  
INSTITUTIONS  
COMBODRE

State Partner

**CITIZEN**

Regional Partner

**DBS**  
Bank of India

Tourism Partner

**YOUTH FOR PEACE**  
YOUNG LEADERS

Bookstore Partner

**CROSSWORD**





# National Arogya Expo & Ayush Conclave 2026



ORGANIZER

January 9th to 12th - 2026

HEARTFULNESS INSTITUTE  
BABUJI MEMORIAL ASHRAM, MANAPAKKAM,  
CHENNAI-600125

தேசிய  
ஆரோக்கிய மாநாடு

ஒருங்கிணைந்த ஆயுஷ் மருத்துவ சேவை,  
சித்த மருத்துவத்தின் தாயகத்திலிருந்து...

## இலவச மருத்துவ முகாம்

ஆயுர்வேதா, சித்தா, இயற்கை மருத்துவம், யுனானி, ஹோமியோபதி, யோகா & தியானம்

- |                          |                          |                  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| ▶ அல்சர்/செரிமான நோய்கள் | ▶ நீரிழிவு நோய்          | ▶ ஆட்டிசம்       |
| ▶ மூலம்/பெளத்திரம்       | ▶ தைராய்டு               | ▶ வாத நோய்கள்    |
| ▶ கல்லீரல் கோளாறுகள்     | ▶ முடி உதிர்தல் பிரச்சனை | ▶ பித்த நோய்கள்  |
| ▶ பித்தப்பை கல்          | ▶ தோல் நோய்கள்           | ▶ கப நோய்கள்     |
| ▶ இருதய கோளாறுகள்        | ▶ ஞாபக மறதி              | ▶ பெண்கள் நலன்   |
| ▶ உயர் இரத்த அழுத்தம்    | ▶ புற்று நோய்            | ▶ ஆண்கள் நலன்    |
| ▶ இரத்த சோகை             | ▶ சிறுநீரக நோய்கள்       | ▶ ஆஸ்துமா, கைனஸ் |
| ▶ வெரிகோஸ் வெயின்        | ▶ குழந்தைப்பேறு          | ▶ ஒற்றை தலைவலி   |
| ▶ விந்தணு குறைபாடுகள்    | ▶ எலும்பு மற்றும் மூட்டு | ▶ மன அழுத்தம்    |
| ▶ கருவுறாமை              | கோளாறுகள்                | ▶ உடல் பருமன்    |

