



Beat it The crew members of Nimirvu Kalaiyagam

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

More power to *parai*

Nimirvu Kalaiyagam has been changing the narrative of *paraiyattam*

● NIMISHA S PRADEEP

The parking space behind Vadapalani Metro Station has a motley group of people – all dressed in black T-shirts and blue jeans – gearing up for their performance. Anklets above their red shoes add to the peculiarity of the outfit. They are sitting in a circle, heating their *parai* – a customary practice to up the volume of the instrument. Little Pavan does not know the significance of the perfor-

mance, but he strikes the *parai*, worn on his shoulder, vigorously. A crowd is already here to cheer even before the group begins. And this is how Nimirvu Kalaiyagam, a group that focuses on the traditional art form of *paraiyattam*, begin their performance, which was also the last of the CMRL's Metro Music Edit series.

Nimirvu Kalaiyagam aims to break stereotypes associated with the instrument, and has been performing at pu-

blic places in addition to running a music school, to train more people. The group consists of over thirty members – all students undergo training at Chelammal College. Muthamil Bharathy is the organiser of the group's Chennai branch, whose diversity is what makes them unique. The youngest member is a seven-year-old and the oldest is 58 years old. The team also shows diversity in gender and professional backgrounds – there are lawyers and doctors amongst them.

They begin their performance by saying “*Parai kalai iyarkai makkal*”, raising the sticks up in the air, meaning *paraiyattam* is for all. Throughout the entire one-and-a-half-hour duration of the performance, the crowd remains consistently high – most of them are from the nearby mall. “I came all the way from Tambaram with my family to see their performance,” says Murugan V, an excited audience member. Some even enquired on the process of enrolling for training. Nimirvu Kalaiyagam ends up inducting more people into their team. The undying energy of each and every member is a marvel. “It all comes from *parai*,” says Ranjani R, an active member.

Outside the station, at the parking lot, a motorist is tapping his feet to the beats of Nimirvu Kalaiyagam. Their message is driven home loud and far.