



Storytelling on the go A scene from Chennai Kalai Theru Vizha in 2018 ■ B VELANKANNI RAJ

A very Metro fest

Performing artistes from four different backgrounds are set to converge on CMRL's blue line from Airport to Washermanpet today, as part of Chennai Kalai Theru Vizha

■ PRADEEP KUMAR

Are you taking the Chennai Metro Rail's blue line from the Airport this morning? It is likely that you will be caught off guard by performing artistes as part of the Chennai Kalai Theru Vizha 2020, a month-long celebration of the city's oft-ignored art forms and culture.

At 10 am, a pop-rock band, three Carnatic musicians, a folk arts exponent and a theatre artiste will board the train from Airport Metro Station, with just a single thought guiding them – entertain and educate. "It is a lovely concept," says Sunandha Rangunathan, who will be performing solo theatre, assuming the role of Kannagi. "We are excited to perform for people outside the privileged setup, away from the echo chamber. That is one of the reasons we have chosen the peak hours," she adds.

Besides Sunandha, the indie band Othasevuru, Carnatic musicians Akilesh, Rohith and Bharat Narayan as well as folk artiste Vishwa Bharath, are on board. "We are not targeting any specific audience. We want this experience to be an awareness initiative, especially for the folk arts," says Vishwa, who is an exponent of the *parai* (musical instrument) and the traditional dance form, *oyilattam*.

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SUNANDHA RAGUNATHAN

When asked what to expect in her performance, Sunandha begins to explain the circumstances behind its conception. "With the anti-CAA agitation, I felt I was struggling with how to go about one's daily life... when so much of what you know and who you are, has changed. A theatre friend from Washington (US) wrote to me asking what was happening in India, and I was telling him... how do you fight something... like a monster, and not turn into one? How do you hold onto love in these times of hate? I was struggling with that, when I was approached to be a part of [Theru Vizha]," she says.

"I am not one for activist theatre but this wasn't it. This is political theatre, and I wanted to write something that encapsulated what I was feeling at that point. What I wanted was to burn the land from inside-out... cleanse it. What happens to me and others when I cleanse? And that is how this idea (of portraying Kannagi) came to be. It has got a bit of spoken word, Vishwa will play *tavil*, and there will be Carnatic renditions of [Subramania] Bharati's lines. It is all impromptu," she adds.

The Metro Vizha begins from the Airport Metro Station at 9.30 am. The artistes will travel till Washermanpet Metro and back. A second trip will happen on the green line on January 30.