

17th Kathakali Festival Inaugurated at Kalakshetra Foundation in Chennai

The Festival to be held from 18 to 20 September 2026

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The 17th Kathakali Festival, organised by the Kalakshetra Foundation under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India was inaugurated today at the Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium, Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai.

The three-day festival, themed “Kadha Rasa Sangama – Confluence of Essence of Stories”, brings together three prominent Kathakali institutions—Sadanam Academy, Kerala Kalamandalam and Margi Theatre—to present three distinctive productions from 18 to 20 September 2026.



Shri K. K. Mishra, IRTS, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, was the Chief Guest at the inaugural ceremony held at 5:45 PM today. Shri Suresh Kumar Chikkala, Director, Kalakshetra Foundation, was also present on the occasion

The festival opened with “Mandodari”, presented by Sadanam Academy. Based on the Ramayana, the production explores the final moments of Ravana’s life and Mandodari’s response to his death.

On 19th September, Kerala Kalamandalam will present “The Old Man and the Sea”, a Kathakali adaptation of Ernest Hemingway’s celebrated novel. The production portrays the perseverance, determination and struggle of Santiago, the fisherman at the centre of the story.

The festival will conclude on 20th September with “Rugmangada Charitham”, presented by Margi Theatre. The production depicts the devotion of King Rugmangada and the test of his faith and observance of Ekadasi.

As part of the festival, lecture-demonstrations will be conducted from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM on all three days at Rukmini Arangam, followed by Kathakali presentations by students of the Kalakshetra Foundation.

Established in 1936 by Rukmini Devi Arundale, the Kalakshetra Foundation has played a significant role in the preservation, practice and dissemination of India’s classical arts and traditional cultural heritage. The Foundation has contributed to the development and presentation of Bharatanatyam and has supported the transmission of traditional music, dance and craft traditions through education and performance.

Venue of the Festival:

Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium

Kalakshetra Foundation

Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai – 600041

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