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Tamil Nadu

Songs for posterity: TN, Kerala Irula tribals plan folk music album

The songs are set to music by Aandi, Palanisamy, Balan, Suresh, and Krishnan using traditional instruments like thavil, porai, kokal, and jalra.



Writer Odiyan Lakshmanan and folksinger Nanjiyamma releasing the cover of the music album on World Tribal Day (August 9) (Photo | Express)

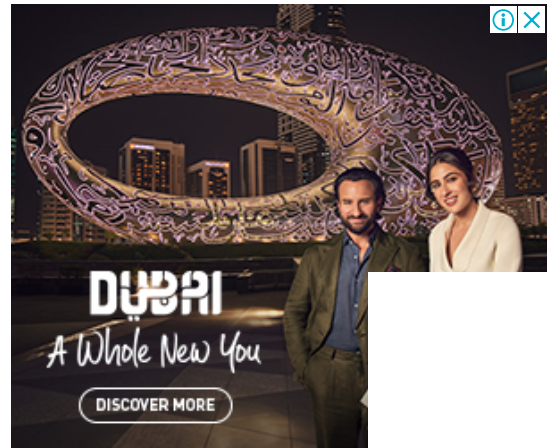
R Kirubakaran

Updated on:
16 Aug 2024, 8:15 am
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COIMBATORE: In what could possibly be the first tribal music album of Tamil Nadu, members of the Irular community of

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The Irula community of Coimbatore and Attappadi region in Kerala have set to music some of their traditional songs that capture their lives and livelihood. The album, 'Emthu Naadu Mael Nadu', produced with the help of activists, is likely to be released in September.

The cover of the album was released on World Tribal Day (August 9) by Irula singer Nanjiyamma whose 'Kalakkatha' song in Malayalam movie 'Ayyappanum Koshiyum' won her the national award for best



Aug 21, 2024 7:2



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Tholampalayam panchayats in Coimbatore and Attappadi regions, respectively.

The songs are set to music by Aandi, Palanisamy, Balan, Suresh, and Krishnan using traditional instruments like thavil, porai, kokal, and jalra. The songs were rendered by Thulasiammal, Selvan, Rajendran, Thulasi, Ponni, Paaru, Valli, and Malathi. The work has been coordinated by Adivasi Kshema Samithi (AKS) of Kerala and Tamil Nadu Palangudi Makkal Sangam (TPMS).

“The Irulas have a long history. Though the region is separated

into states by borders the people

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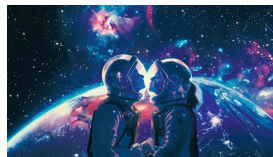
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into states by borders, the people living in the 35 hamlets of the region share a common heritage and culture. Their songs and tales are the record of their history. We want to pass them on to the future generations and what could be a better way to do that than music? Our four years of hard work has finally borne fruit,” said Odiyan Lakshmanan, writer and tribal activist. He claimed that this is the first tribal music album in Tamil Nadu. The work for the album began in 2018 but was delayed due to the Covid-19 outbreak, he said.

Lakshmanan says Irular language does not have a script. In his book ‘Sappe Kokalu’, he has documented 45 Irula songs explaining their lifestyle and history. Of this, 11 have been selected for the album. “The album is a part of our initiative to establish a tribal music school in the region,” said M Rajan, district secretary of Adivasi Kshema Samithi (AKS) in Attappadi.

Expressing his gratitude to patrons, Lakshmanan said Shamir Mohammed, a music studio owner in Coimbatore, offered the facility for free. “He just asked for a bottle of honey as charge. Likewise, several people have contributed to the album,” he said.

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