

## Cultural community finds a platform to network better

Social groups and networking opportunities are aplenty these days for entrepreneurs, students and others in Chennai these days, but what about the cultural community?



Artistes from various avenues met at an eatery recently to connect with each other  
Chennai:

For a city that takes immense pride in its collective of musicians, dancers, singers, etc., it's surprising that outside the Margazhi season, opportunities for them to collaborate come in limited measure. Keeping this in mind, 'ACRI Culture Meet', a place for cultural professionals was organised at Ashvita Bistro in Alwarpet on Wednesday.

Coordinated by Ramya Rajaraman, founder of Artspire (which was the local partner for the initiative), the event drew people from diverse backgrounds in the city – performers, theatre practitioners, art managers/ teachers, photographers, among others.

"ACRI stands for Arts and Culture Resources India. It actually started off as a Facebook group in 2013, by Rashmi Dhanwani. It was a space for artistes across every field to discuss opportunities, residencies, fellowships, workshops, etc and share resources. Today it has grown organically to 45,000 members. That's when we realised that everyone should meet face-to-face to take these collaborations ahead," said Ramya.

The ACRI group has grown to become one of the largest resources for upskilling, funding, and employment opportunities for the creative sector in India. Hence, after Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai, Chennai saw its first-ever meet this week.

"The response was extremely positive, and it was wonderful to see the interactions and exchange of ideas. Now we are looking at holding this on a quarterly basis and get more people to participate," she added.

Photographer Madhavan Palanisamy was one of the attendees at the event, and was excited at the opportunities for collaboration. "Very often, when people in this community interact offline, it's very difficult to form a genuine connection. The intentions beyond the financial angle aren't clear. But this was an occasion where we could actually understand where the other performer or artist is coming from, and facilitate a solid bond," he said.