



TO EXPAND OUR HORIZON

தொடுவானம்



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OUR WAY TO A COMMUNITY

Thoduvaanam is an art and literature magazine. Our Tamil culture has evolved tremendously over the years. With the Tamil population now living all over the world, it is shaping the diversity of our culture. In other words, our lifestyle has greatly influenced our worldview. The aim of this magazine is to represent the Tamil identity in the 21st century. The scattered nature of our population should not hinder our sense of unity. It is with the aim of strengthening this communal thought process that we have published this magazine. On the one hand, the magazine serves to highlight contemporary issues such as the heterogeneity of Tamils whilst on the other hand, we intend to recall Tamil history. It is not about mourning, but to encourage us to stand up for our country, Tamil Eelam. The magazine is designed with various contributions from Tamil artists from all over the world. We Tamils should be proud of our heritage, confident in our identity and the magazine should make a small contribution to this.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

1

Tamil is one of the oldest languages in the world, with a history of over 3,000 years and literary work dating to over 2,000 years ago. It is thought to be as old as Latin and older than Arabic.

Tamil script consists of 12 vowels, 18 consonants, and one special character called the "ayta ezhuthu" in the Tamil script. The vowels and consonants combine to form 216 compound characters, bringing the total number of characters in the script to 247.

2

3

Over 76 million people speak Tamil worldwide.

Tamil is one of the seven classical languages of the world along with Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Chinese and Arabic.

4

5

Thiruvalluvar was a famous Tamil poet and philosopher. Thiruvalluvar was born 31 years before Jesus. Therefore, the Tamil calendar goes 31 years before the "Christian".

நாடா கொன்றோ காடா கொன்றோ
அவலா கொன்றோ மிசையா கொன்றோ
எவ்வழி நல்லவ ராடவர
அவ்வழி நல்லை வாழிய நிலனே.

This poem by Avvayar, written around 2,000 years ago, says that a land does not have any innate characteristic of its own. It is as good as its citizens are. She says to the land - you are a settlement (inhabited) at some places, a forest (deserted) at others; depressed at some places, raised at others. You do not have any defining characteristic. You are as good as the citizens who occupy you are.



THARMALINGAM

SASIKUMAR

Who are you?

My name is Tharmalingam Sasikumar. I am a family man and have two children. I work in the temple as a Hindu priest and I am also the President of the Hindu Umbrella organisation. Professionally, I am an Ayurvedic cook in the House of Religions, Pastoral Counselor (deathbed attendant) and mediator.

How did the Hindu temple Saivanerikoodam come about?

It all started in a small studio room with myself and four of my friends. We had many open questions about Hinduism which nobody could answer - our rituals were not in our mother tongue Tamil, the unaccep-

table caste system still existed and there is no equality between men and women. Through this conversation it was clear to us that we must construct a Reformed Hindu temple. We contacted all 23 Hindu temples in Switzerland to implement this reformation, but none were willing to do so - none of them were ready.

In order to broaden our knowledge and understanding, we made twelve trips from South India to Nepal. In 2002, we gained the recognition of Thalaivar Velupillai Prabhakaran. One member from our group, also had the opportunity to speak with him about this reformation, which strengthened us further to achieve our goals through his en-

couragement. In 2007 the first Hindu temple was built with only CHF 1,500 and we faced resistance from many - there were several individuals who criticised us. However, we pursued our goal with more conviction. In 2015 we succeeded in constructing this temple with the Kopuram. The construction was facilitated with finances from the Hindu Society and the money saved from the temple through hard work.



What are the differences with other temples?

Our prayers are in Tamil and everyone is permitted to be trained as a priest or priestess - gender should not play a role. However, we do recommend that those engaged in training one should abstain from the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and meat. Individuals are also allowed to participate in the rituals up to the altar. All 23 temples do not offer mourning rituals as this is considered an impure ritual in Tamil society. Priests do not perform these rituals. We also intend to accompany people in times of mourning as birth and death are natural and a part of life.

That is our goal - we wish to pass on our language, culture and religion to the next generation, and we want to

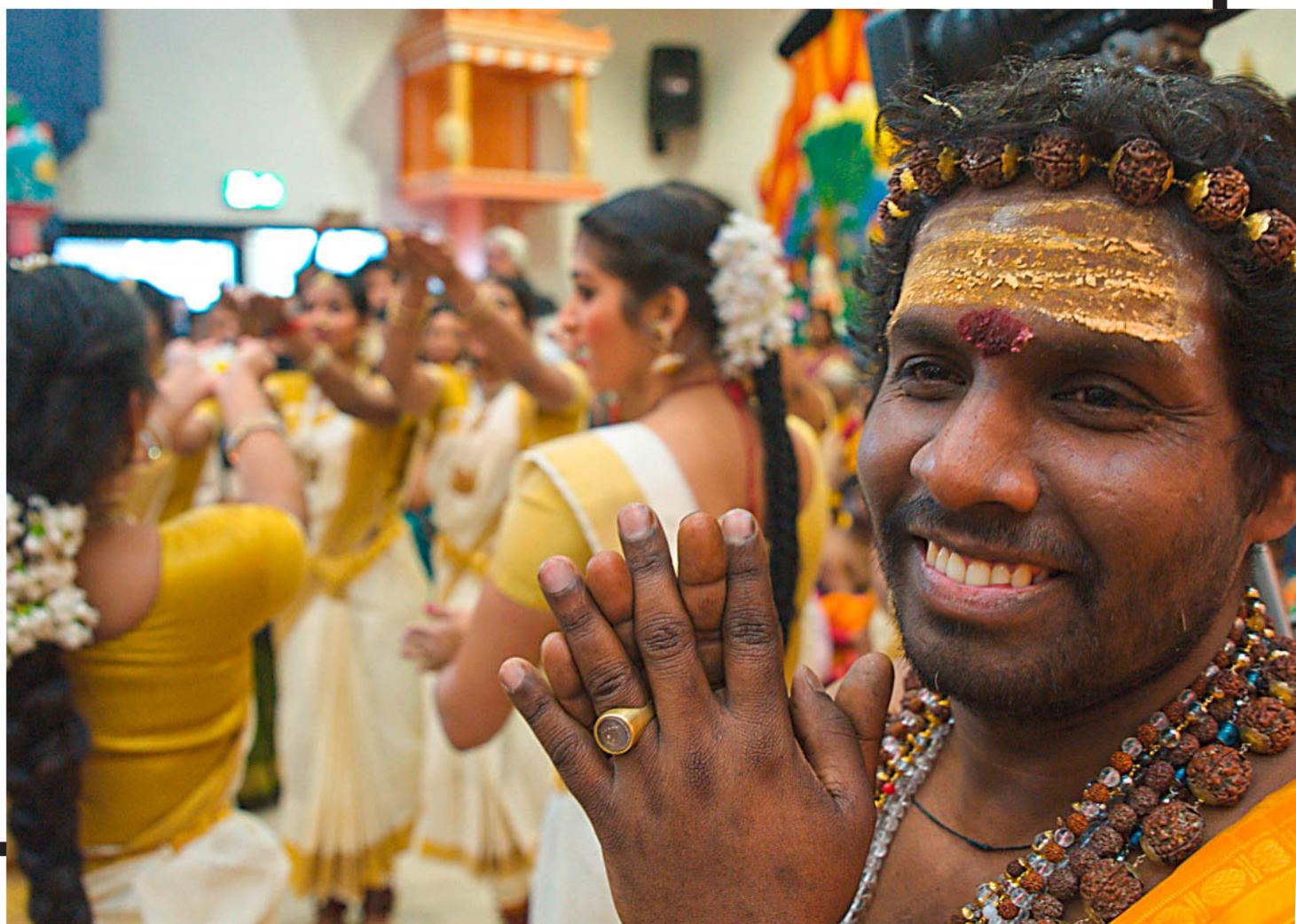
eliminate all forms of discrimination, such as caste, foreign-language barriers and gender inequalities.

How has society reacted to this?

All over the world we have received critical feedback including insults. For example, many mentioned that we are too young, and would not complete the task or would not implement it for a long period of time etc. There were a lot of prejudices against us. This reformation has only been sung as a poet, but we are the first ones who have brought it to fruition - we are proud of that. We have now achieved the recognition of the Tamil Society and mass support now. People feel heard now; they are not just spectators, but also participants.

What is the current status?

There are two temples in Switzerland, one in Tamil Eelam and one in England. In 2007, we held Tiruvizha (festival) where we had 50 individuals and now over 8,000 individuals attend. All 23 temples are under one roof. In the temple, we also have an archive with 3 million records about Tamils. As a new project, we intend to establish a group of old aged homes for Tamils. We also provide legal assistance for asylum seekers and own an aid organisation in Tamil Eelam. At the same time we promote music, art and culture through the awarding of prizes.



Zayrah David



Can you please introduce yourself?

I am Zayrah. I am a Tamil Trans person, 23 years old and live in Basel. My roots are in Eelam.

What is it like to be a Tamil transwoman?

After a lot of research, I found out that I am one of the few Tamil Transwomen. This has brought some challenges - especially with society and family.

When did you realise you were a trans woman?

Most Trans people feel something is wrong with them quite early. I realised it when I was 6 years old. At that time I did not understand why I had to be with the boys and was not allowed to play with the girls. I also played with clothes in my childhood. My parents found out about it and a conversation ensued. My parents then forbade me to play with clothes. I suppressed this feeling and came out as a gay Tamil at the age of 14. Through this, I rediscovered my connection to femininity. My parents and Tamil society did not like this. I faced issues at home as my parents did not like it - I attempted suicide. Then I came out to my parents. I told them that I liked men and I needed make-up to feel comfortable. After years of struggling, I moved out of my home and this allowed me to get to know myself. That is when I realised that I am not a gay man who needs make-up but that I am a woman in a man's body.

How did Tamil society react?

I often receive hate comments from Tamil society. It strikes me that they use any reason to put me down. The support from the community came with time when I raised awareness on social media. Even after a Tamil YouTube video where I explained the issue in Tamil, I gained further support from the community. Some even called my family and told my parents to accept me.

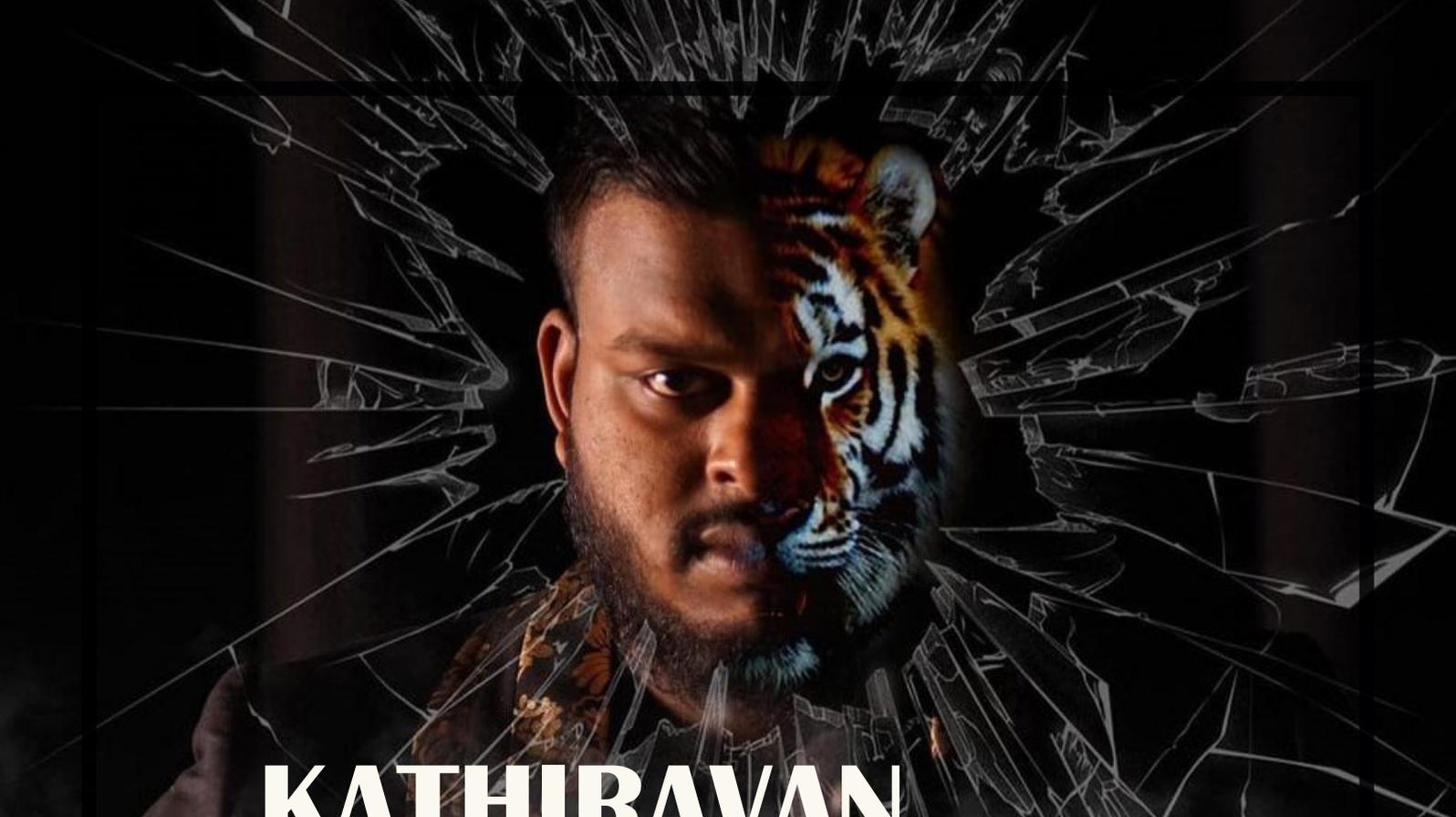
Do you think Tamil identity and trans identity are at odds?

I am a proud Tamil and a proud Trans woman - a proud woman. In Tamil history, there are Trans people - we existed even then. After all, the Koovagam festival in Tamilnadu portrays that a Tamil person can be a Trans person and that is celebrated. So for me, Tamil and Trans identity go hand in hand.



What could we do to enable more trans persons to have a more comfortable environment within the community?

Education. People need to understand that being a Trans person is not a voluntary choice. I came into this world as a Trans person - it was not a choice of mine.



KATHIRAVAN

When did you start rapping?

I started rapping when I was 15. At that time I rapped in Germany. It was only in 2020 that I started rapping in Tamil.

What was your motivation ?

My motivation was to convey our story to the youth. As sad as it sounds, history is being forgotten. Other mainstream artists create songs that generate a lot of clicks. However, after two years it is forgotten again. I want to motivate our people to fight for what is important.

Who or what was your inspiration?

Thalaivar

Is there a certain style of rapping? If so, which one is yours ?

There are many styles. You can rap aggressively, softly, about love and about history. My style is aggressive and real talk.

Are there any particular places you would most like to rap or rap in?

I would most like to practice my talent in Tamil Eelam.

Is there anything that you do not like to do in rapping ?

Mainstream songs

Music to rise

We want Tamil Eelam
Amma un Pillai Pt.2
Elu Elu Tamizha
Puliyin Paadai
Heavyweight
Press Meet
Enge Area
Kalavaram
Rap God
Vaaripuli
Puratchi
Anjaan

*“You can hide the truth but
never delete it”*

Yvonne A.

What is your name and what is your passion?

My name is Yvonne A. Torrington. My passion is dancing, singing and acting.

How did you discover your passion and what do you value the most about it?

I discovered my passion when I was very young. I had loved to listen to music and had always tried to sing along. Following that, dancing came up as well. What I value most about my passion is that I have beat/rhythm as there are some who love music but do not have the beat. I also appreciate having the passion for Indian classical dancing, which is very spiritual.

How do you view your role as a dancer in Tamil society?

I do not view it as a task, but as mentioned earlier - a passion and hobby. Besides my school, studies and work, I learnt dance and passed it onto other children. It is not a task, However, the passion that I pass on is very well recognised in Tamil society. In our society, many have the passion to learn this cultural dance and the interest is also very high. Many dance performances are organised to showcase this passion on stage.

What are the challenges of being a dancer in Tamil society?

It is a very good question. There are many who achieve dance and the challenge is to understand the dance itself and express it well. Another challenge is to be well-received with the dance. There is a certain competitive struggle to see who does it better than the other. There is always a certain competition.

How has dancing changed you as a person?

Dance has changed me as a person in that I also respect dance. I have learnt to be disciplined in life. In summary, I can say that dancing has taught me to respect people, how to be disciplined in life and to be on a spiritual level with people and feel empathy.

Would you recommend dancing to the next generation and if yes, why?

Definitely. By learning a dance, you grow a lot as a person. It causes you to look at the world differently. You pass on to the next generation not only the dance style, but also the treasures of the culture and how to be respectful and disciplined. I think it is important that the next generation takes this on-board and does not stop at the previous generation's progress but continues to climb up the ladder to pass on the use of it.



Torrington



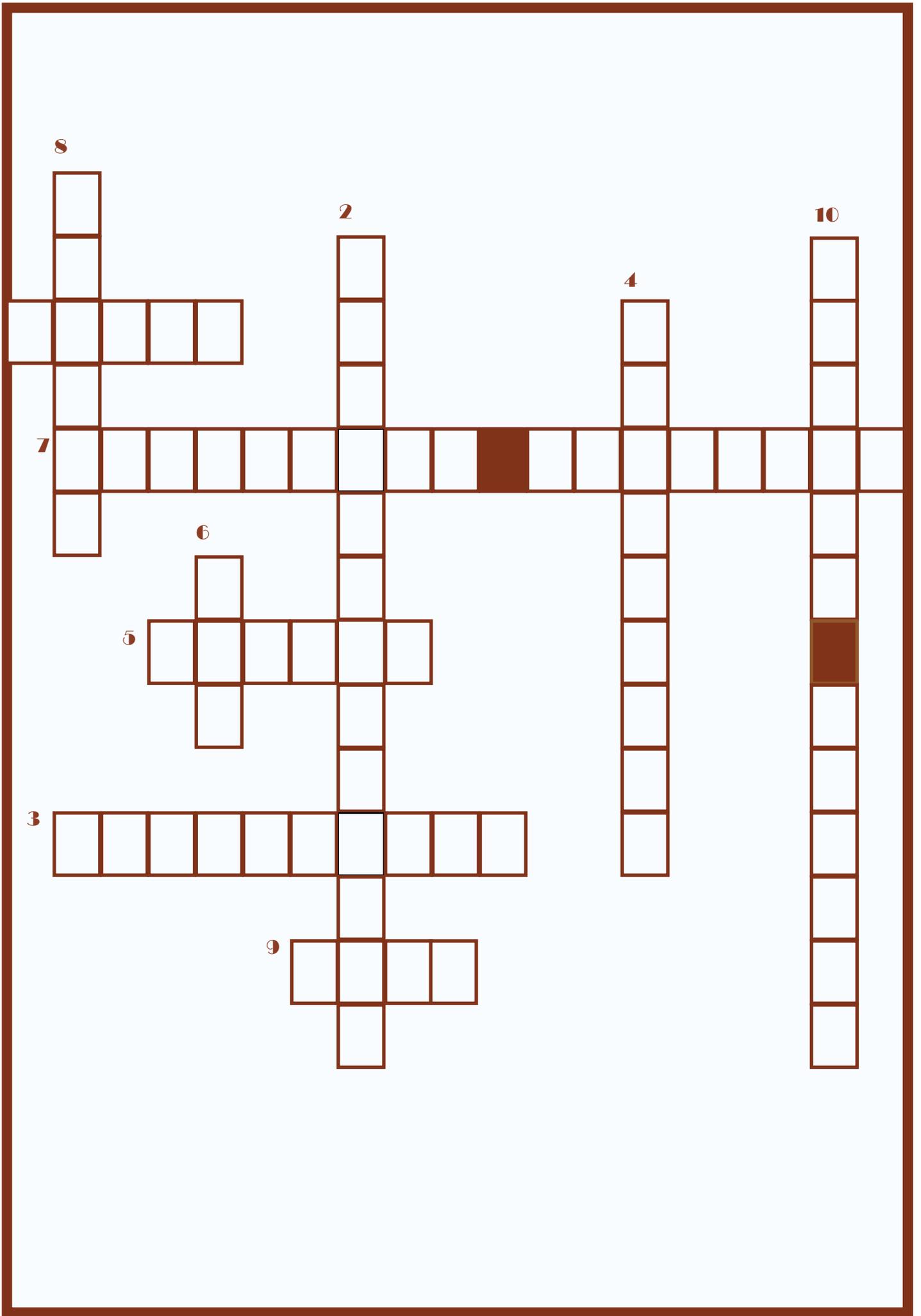
What is your next step as a dancer?

I as a dancer have now become a professional dancer and have two schools with different dance styles. One is Indian classical („Bharatanatyam“) and the other is Bollywood/Zumba. In both dance styles, I realised that you can develop so much. After my dance debut (Arangetram) I realised that what I had been learning for ten years is similar to a baby coming into the world, learning to crawl and slowly learning to walk - learning to dance is exactly like that. As a dance teacher, we can also learn from our students. That is why I also think that we can exchange a lot and develop them together. My next step is to commence the next stage of further education and to develop myself there.

“The challenge is to understand the dance itself and express it well”

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

- 01. Name one of the oldest languages in the world.**
- 02. What is the name of the most famous Tamil philosopher?**
- 03. What is the name of the work written by the philosopher?**
- 04. Name a country where Tamil is recognized as an official language.**
- 05. Name a traditional Tamil festival.**
- 06. What else is the Tamil language worshipped as?**
- 07. What was the first Tamil prayer book that was printed?**
- 08. What else is the meaning of the word Tamil?**
- 09. Name a traditional Tamil instrument.**
- 10. Where in the world did people first speak Tamil?**





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வெல்வது உறுதி