

What is the December Season?

It has nothing to do with Christmas as you may think. In the South Indian city of Chennai, December is when the weather is at its best. Moreover, it's the Tamil month of *Margazhi* or the time of devotion. Since South Indian Classical music is based on devotion or *Bhakti*, this is the perfect month for the music and dance festival.



December is a time when *Kutcheris* or concerts are held all over the city. Chennai, being the hotspot of Classical South Indian music and dance, an artist is considered privileged to be able to perform during the 'season'. With over 2000 concerts held at nearly 60 different venues, the December Season attracts people from the world over. Besides concerts, there are many lectures, demonstrations and workshops as well as the more informal gatherings where the audience discusses with the artist. At a music hall, concerts go on throughout the day with various artists performing. The length of each session has, however, been reduced from the 4 hours they used to be.

Most of the concerts are free and anyone can walk in without a penny in their pocket. Of course they should be able to resist the delicious food served as part of the festival. Many *sabhas* or gatherings have their own canteens where the cooks serve traditional meals on the banana leaf.



From 1998 onwards, The Other Festival, held during the December Season showcases almost any form of art, be it music, dance, painting or theater. It encourages new forms of expression, which needn't necessarily be classical in style.