City gets a slice of rural life

Kritika Anuradha, student from a private arts and science college in the city, was one among them. “My parents are native to Padukottai and I accompany them to the village quite often. But to experience village life right here in the heart of Coimbatore, is a different experience altogether,” she said.

The event on Sunday marked the culmination of a month-long sporting extravaganza that was conducted across villages in the state. At least 10,500 players from 4,600 villages took part in this year’s edition. They formed 400 teams, out of which 100 comprised only women. The Sunday event marked the finals for volleyball (men) and throwball (women). Homemaker Suganthi Priya from Devarayanapuram, Coimbatore, who represented the village in the throwball finals, told us, “I was the captain of my volleyball team in my school, but had to bid adieu to sports after I got married. But this fest gave me an opportunity to play again. I am reliving my childhood.”

On the other hand, for Mohana R and Kalaiarasi R, the defending champions of throwball, it was the inspiration from Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar that brought them back this year. “We won last year and received the award from Sachin himself. When we went up on stage to receive our award, he told us that we were a rocking team. We said ‘omba nandri’. It was a goose bump-inducing moment standing next to the legendary cricketer,” said Mohana, Kalaiarasi, who danced like there was no tomorrow to the best of their ability before she left for the game, said, “It’s embarrassing to dance back home in our villages in front of the elders. But we are free birds here.”

The event also saw many flogging new friendships. Manimegalai M from Erode, who took part in the tug-of-war competition along with Shanthi S from Salem, tells us, “I wanted my children to know about the dying rural art forms and brought them here. But when I saw women taking part in tug-of-war here, I decided to give it a shot. I met Shanthi at the venue and we immediately formed a team. I have never been a part of any sporting activity and it was fun. We plan to be in touch. We could probably take part in more events next year.”

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A TASTE OF THE VILLAGES IN THE CITY

The event that grabbed many eyeballs amid all the merriment was a special volleyball match for the differently-abled. The players passed the ball with effortless ease. “We belong to the Coimbatore Paralympics Association and we have been practicing for other championships as well. The paralympic volleyball is just like the regular game. However, the court size is reduced to half and the net is lowered. The players have to sit and pass the balls. They shouldn’t lift their bodies above their waist,” said Durgajay. His teammate Mohan Kumar added, “We have always played indoors. It was refreshing to play under the sun. The beats of puri were an icing on the cake.”

 Visitors also gave a shot at village games like coorval boruthal, gavmothu esuthal, marukku kadithal, thupakkai sadithal, kari pournu edithal. One of centres of attraction was koyargul, sulluva nadai, where participants had to navigate barefoot through a slushy terrain filled with bamboo logs and bricks.

In the meantime, performances by folk artists from various parts of the state had visitors captivated. Be it Jjikkilam, olatham, kodikilam, kokkilam, vilakattam, or karguttam, they all had the audience shaking their legs. Kalaimangam Ramu from Chackarathayar troupe from Alanganallur, Madurai, who performed kokkilam was amused by the reaction of the audience. “People were giving me an inquisitive look and I walked in with my ‘kottai’ and it looks like one many in the city know about kokkilam. It’s quite popular in the southern part of Tamil Nadu,” he remarked. Ramugam artiste Bala, on the other hand, said that the performance was an attempt to revive the dying folk art.”We have started trying to spread messages against plastic, environmental degradation, and HIV through our performances. It’s easier to reach out to people with a message.”

And what a festival without some good food? Foodies were in for a delight as there was an elaborate spread of village delicacies made of ragi (finger millet), kuzhun (bajra), chhora (jowar), ammai (little millet), varava (kodo millet), kuthiravalli (barnyard millet) and kaakuthalai (grass).