

Events

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Taala Tamate at Kochi Biennale: a silenced drum takes centre stage

A drum played for centuries by Dalit and transgender communities takes centre stage at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale on Feb. 14.

This has finished · 14 February 2026

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Dates **14 February 2026**
Part of Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2025–26

Where

Fort Kochi
Not recorded yet

You've just missed it — take it home anyway

The 2025–26 Biennale ended on 31 March 2026. The next is expected around December 2027. We made a book of all 72 exhibits, venue by venue, with the photographs — 76 pages, 9 MB.

People have played the Tamate drum for centuries. It has announced deaths, celebrated births, and kept entire communities in rhythm. Yet society pushed the people who played it to the margins. On the evening of Feb. 14, choreographer Dayanand Akhilesh brings the Tamate to the Kochi-Muziris Biennale as a living, breathing force, not a relic. The performance pulls the drum back from the margins to the centre.

The Tamate, also called Parai in Tamil Nadu, is one of India's oldest percussion instruments. For centuries, it has been the heartbeat of Dalit and transgender communities. It announced births, mourned deaths, and kept the rhythm of rituals alive.

Society told the same communities that kept this drum alive that they did not matter. Society marginalized the instrument along with the people who played it. "Taala Tamate" changes that story.

What is Taala Tamate?

J. Dayanand Akhilesh choreographed "Taala Tamate," and the Beru Art and Cultural Foundation produced it with the Aravani Art Project, Adavi Art Collective and Damarugam.

The performance uses the Tamate drum not just as a musical instrument but as a character. The rhythm becomes movement. The movement becomes memory. That memory holds centuries of caste, exclusion, resistance and celebration.

Think of it like this. The drum is the narrator. The dancers are translating its stories into something you can see and feel.

Who is Dayanand Akhilesh?

Dayanand Akhilesh is a dancer, choreographer and artistic director based in Bangalore. His work combines Indian classical dance, folk traditions and contemporary performance. His choreographic works include “Chadara” (selected for Concurso de Choreographia in Mexico), “Kathe” and now “Taala Tamate”. He is also the founder and artistic director of Beru Art Space in Bangalore. The open artistic hub has supported over 20 productions in the past four years.

Beru is not just a rehearsal space. It is a place where artists from different disciplines come together to experiment, collaborate and create without boundaries.

When and where

The show starts at 6 p.m. at Aspinwall Ground, Fort Kochi. The Kochi Biennale Foundation presents it.

Aspinwall Ground is one of the main Kochi-Muziris Biennale venues. If you are visiting for the Biennale, this is one of those performances that stays with you long after it ends.

If you are exploring the Biennale, check out our guide to the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. It lists more events, venues and tips on making the most of your visit.

32 things to do in Fort Kochi in February 2026