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When Words Fall Short, Music Speaks: Singer K.S. Chithra Remembers the Voices of Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle and S. Janaki at the 57th IFFI

CHENNAI – 26 Nov, 2026 Some voices do more than fill a room with music. They become part of our childhood, accompany us through life's milestones and remain with us long after a song has ended. For celebrated singer K. S. Chithra, the voices of Asha Bhosle, S. Janaki and Lata Mangeshkar have been just that. At a masterclass titled " Lata Mangeshkar Talk: The Voice That Echoes Forever in the Memory of Asha Bhosle and S. Janaki" at the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Chithra took the audience on a deeply personal journey through the music and memories of the legendary singers, moderated by actor and filmmaker Suhasini Maniratnam.

The conversation began on a note of warmth and familiarity, with Chithra admitting that she was a little tense but confident that Suhasini would put her at ease. Their shared history soon found its way into the conversation, as Suhasini recalled how songs from films in which Chithra had lent her voice had become an integral part of her own journey. What followed was less a formal discussion and more a meeting of memories, with anecdotes often giving way to melodies.



Looking back at her beginnings, Chithra spoke of growing up in a family with a strong musical environment, participating in competitions and learning classical music. Singing, she said, was the one thing she knew she could do well, although she had never imagined it would take her so far. Her entry into film music seemed almost accidental. She recalled singing film songs at recreational clubs, often beginning with songs made popular by P. Susheela.

Asked about the voices she admired most, Chithra named P. Susheela, S. Janaki and Lata Mangeshkar. She even used to imitate Janaki in her childhood days, laughing as she admitted that the singer's distinctive style was impossible to reproduce.

Speaking of Lata Mangeshkar, Chithra reflected on the emotional depth of her singing, particularly her devotional songs, and shared one of her favourite Lata Mangeshkar melodies with the audience.