



# Krishna will sing

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## **Krishna will sing-AAI's capitulation raises worrying questions about why his concert was cancelled**

- T.M. Krishna, a leading Carnatic vocalist, has previously commanded a full lawn in Delhi's chilly season tradition of classical music and dance performances in Nehru Park.
- His scheduled participation in a Spic Macay programme this weekend was always going to be a big draw. But in a move that should shock anybody concerned about the threats to free expression, the programme was abruptly cancelled, after its sponsor, the Airports Authority of India, suddenly bailed out.
- The public sector enterprise constituted by an Act of Parliament may have been the target of a sustained attack by trolls, angry with Mr. Krishna for being an outspoken critic of the Narendra Modi government.
- But rather than capitulate, it should have had the courage — and summoned up the necessary official support and protective cover — to ensure that the show was conducted.
- The AAI has said it has called off the show because of "some urgent engagements", an explanation that has found few takers.
- For one, there was no attempt to clarify what these pressing engagements were.
- The weak and incomplete explanation seemed to confirm that the AAI had surrendered to social media threats.
- As a musician, Krishna has attempted to break barriers of orthodoxy, caste and class.
- The Delhi government has done well to step in and organise a concert of his at another venue.
- In doing so, it has called out the AAI's capitulation to bigotry and called the bluff of those who threatened the show.
- At the same time, the staggering silence of those higher up — namely, those in political power at the Centre who exercise informal control over public sector enterprises — lends credence to speculation that the AAI

may not have acted on its own.

- But even if it had, that such threats could result in the cancellation of a concert speaks poorly of the capacity of the Indian state to stand up in the face of intolerance and intimidation.
- The decision to hold Krishna's concert is not only about a musical performance but an assertion of the democratic ethos.

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