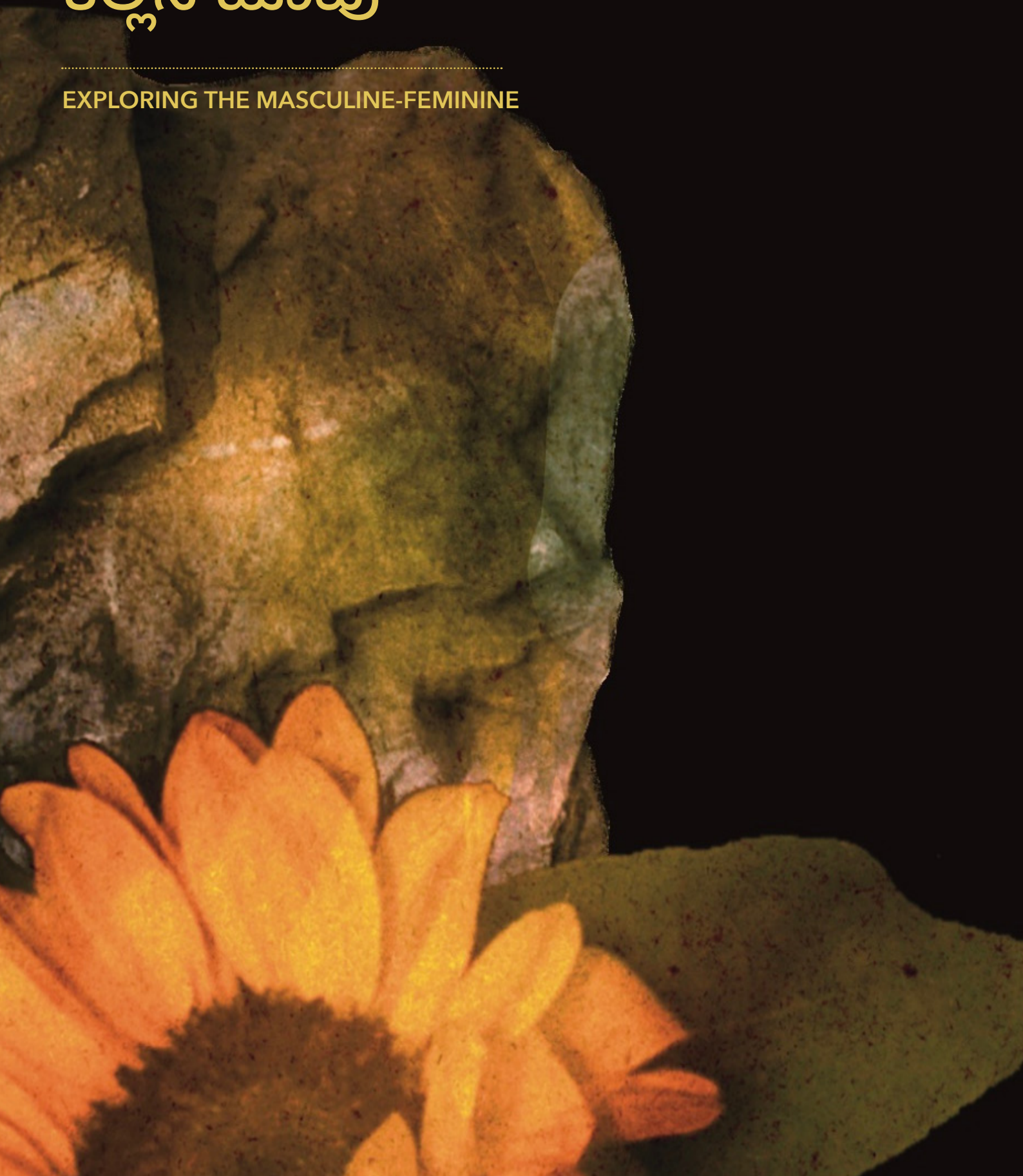
STONE FLOWERS
पत्थर के फूल
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು

EXPLORING THE MASCULINE-FEMININE



Stone Flowers/Pattar Ke phool
16th Edition of October Jam

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Featured artists

Jaiprakash Kumar
Tene Theatre
Gaana Vimala
Kinari
Adavi Arts Collective
Big Bang
Minchu Arts Collective
Bangaluru 47 Gaana Singers
Buguri Children's Library
Buddideepa
Arul D Vijay
Anushi Agrawal
Ekta
Anoop Gupta
Savita Rani
Deepak Kurki
Mirra
Du Sarawathi
Deepak Srinivasan
Abdul Jat
Aarab Jat
Asif Ramaya
Rumi Harish
Queer Poets' Collective
Razaai
Sunainya (Sunil Ram)
Raju Ranjan
Sipahi Lathor
Piyush Kashyap
zeropowercut

Mirrors Fellowship

Aarya Pathak
Smriti Girish
Sumit Sute
Mia Jose
Ektha Harthi
Dadapeer Jyman
Kevin Fernandes
Vaibhav Jadhav
Aagaaz Theatre
Avinam Manger
Aryakrishnan R
Vikas Kumar

Venues

Our Theatre Studio
Dr. Gopal Raju First Grade College
Shoonya Centre for Arts and Somatic Practices
Samsa Bayalu Rangamandira
SMArt Studio
The Nirali Collective
Goethe-Institut/Max Muller Bhavan, Bangalore
1Shantiroad Studio
Samvada Baduku
Kala Sahita: Performing Arts Space
Glasscrafters
CIEDS Collective
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OCTOBER JAM IN THE CITY

EKTA & ANGARIKA

When we first began curating October Jam, it was a conscious attempt to occupy public space for the arts. In 2010, Bangalore was at the cusp of transformation that continues today, with the emergence of the metro, influx of migration and flows of capital that once served the garment industries and public sector companies but now subservient to Information Technology, construction and real estate firms. As the name suggests, the Jam was imagined as a way to reclaim public spaces for artists, across disciplines, to collaborate, share ideas and experiment.

Bangalore already had a rich tradition of using public spaces since the 80s for the arts and for protest. In the initial years of the jam, our effort was to create spaces for artists across disciplines to meet, without the pressures of producing 'finished works' or bending to the dictates of the market. This resulted in beautiful collaborations and experimental works.

Public space, or so we believed back then, would allow diverse audiences to interact with art works, inspire cross-class conversations and form new kinds of communities in a city that was growing more segregated day by day.

The process of curating the jam led us to imagine the use of space based on our interactions with the diverse communities in the city - sometimes someone's house, someone's courtyard, common spaces in a basti, Ambedkar Bhavans, wedding and community halls. However as the city began to move towards being a smart city, public spaces have shrunk for free and open expression.

We began to grow conscious of the way in which public space was becoming gentrified- by capital protecting the interests of the middle class/upper castes, but also by certain artists themselves, who 'occupied' public space for their practice, in ways that aligned with the state agenda or represented only a certain history of the city.

We learnt how violent the transformation of the city was for a certain class of people. Who should occupy public space was determined in large part by design and aesthetics in which the state continues to play a disproportionate role. The October Jam in 2017 in fact, was a tribute to the memory of Cubbon Park which used to be a space of work, leisure and rest for many diverse communities like street vendors, sex workers, transgender communities before CCTV cameras were installed,

security increased and fences were erected.

Along with the diverse public who used to occupy the park, we created 'scarecrows' as a protest against the middle class/upper caste aestheticization of the park. There was no common space for diverse publics to use for leisure[1].

It has always been hard to navigate identity and difference in the context of arts practice and representation. As a response to what we were witnessing around us, the intent of the jam began to change. We decided to go down other alleys, where we drifted towards excluded groups and tried to learn more about not just oppression and discrimination, but their resilience and creativity. We began working with artists who were similarly politically inclined and learnt how there are many different ways to resist, create, question and transform.

The jam was infused with a new energy and commitment to unlearn our own ways of seeing , by learning from artists from diverse geographies, class and caste positions. In other words, we have been to pay attention to both, the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics. We grew more attentive to the way in which artistic expression emerges from the labour of generational occupations, community wisdoms, rituals and mythologies and how it begins to get appropriated within the corridors of capital.

Through conversations with our friends, we started learning about cultural resistance and how artistic expression is closely intertwined with assertion and agency for communities that have been marginalized in social and cultural contexts. Alongside, we have retained our belief in collaborations across cross caste-class- geography as a way of building solidarities.

We were critical of our own vocabularies and the ways in which we represented the distance and proximity between the urban and rural. For example, the way we perceive performance in urban contexts is different from the way in which 'performance' is embedded within the daily lives of rural and agrarian communities.

We began to play with the idea of distance between stage and audience, experimenting with different performance formats. Who had the time and the resources to access the arts? A memorable moment was hosting 'Purabiya Taan' a Bhojpuri concert by Kalpana Patowary, as a love letter from the city to migrant workers in Bangalore who are only invisibles in the transformation of the city, even though they are central to the construction of the same.

The curatorial impulse of October Jam is based on an emotional and political response to what we have absorbed through the year and as a way to publicly share our learnings and questions. The festival is also shaped by the preoccupations of individuals working at maraa.

We believe politicization is a process. It is only through the act of doing that we can learn, think and challenge and this, we hope, is reflected in our curation and programming of the festival. At a time when funding can neutralize the radical potential of the arts, October Jam, for the last 16 years, has stood as an independent festival, made possible by crowd-funding efforts.

All events at October Jam are free and non-ticketed, to ensure access for different kinds of audiences. We collect donations at every event, a portion of which are given back to the artists, after we cover travel/production costs. In spite of constraints, we always ensure artists receive an honorarium for their participation.

We hope the experience of performing at the jam, in unlikely venues, found and public spaces and for different kinds of audiences is compelling for the artists we invite. A long standing joke is how many friends who have performed at the Jam for the first time, have gone onto become very popular! While we have stuck to non-ticketed and free events, we have also learnt that perhaps it does not always create access or build audiences. It is when you take a performance to people that they feel it is organised keeping them in mind. We

1 https://homesweethomestudio.org/There-is-no-Public-Space_ekta

realise that ticketing performances is a healthy culture to pay for the labour of artistic expression.

A big part of the festival is the practice of hosting, which is not just about logistics but also about finding ways to have conversations outside and around the performer and performance. The act of hosting involves receiving people, eating with them, letting them cook, raising a toast and also working together to make something happen.

The word "xenophilia" comes to mind, where the Greek words xenos, which means "alien, stranger, or foreigner," and philia, which means "love, attraction, or a strong liking". Hosting is a form of xenophilia to counter what is better known as xenophobia, which refers to the fear of outsiders. In these times of fear and suspicion of the outsider, the immigrant, the rootless, we feel there is a need to find grounds for meeting outside of points of differentiation.

In October Jam, aside from the event itself, we also get to converse about our collective visions, failures, strengths and vulnerabilities. In some sense, moving away from professionalism, which is a Western notion around productivity, our approach imbibes a space to go beyond clock-time.

A few images come to mind from this year's jam: Gaana Vimala cooking beef in office and exchanging Gaana songs with Kinari, Rumi Harish and Ataullah Ji singing ghazals to each other, Deepak demystifying deconstruction in movement arts and practice, to hearing Anoop Kumar telling us about suppressed masculinities and Savita and Sarsi meeting in appreciation for each others' work as feminist performers across two different generations.

There are also times when audiences, artists and us, as organisers, discuss the experience of the event. Sometimes this space is precarious precisely because it is uncensored and open.

Free wheeling conversations can run the risk of discriminating, triggering or provoking someone negatively. This is the risk of openness, to have a moderately wide spectrum of free speech and expression, with the belief that everyone has a right to express, but must also be sensitive to not hurt anyone directly or indirectly.

This year, we were aware of ensuring that people felt safe during the jam, by talking to people through the jam about how they were left feeling and also putting in place mechanisms to ensure that artists had their privacy and boundaries were clearly drawn out without losing the porosity and ease between all of us.

The one aspect we are yet to crack is how we can include different people whose labour is compensated but not recognised in the same way as others. People who set up stage, lights, sound, transport and are invited for specific tasks that we are not skilled to manage. How does their world view inform the Jam? How can this hierarchy be broken, where one need not assume that a 'worker' is not interested in a rap concert or in a film screening? The art industry has placed workers in a hierarchy in relation to artists and this is a bridge we intend to cross in the coming years, where their participation is imagined beyond the task assigned to them.

At the heart of it, the Jam is a reckoning with the social-political climate we are enveloped in. Given the deep seated divisiveness in our society, we feel it is crucial to carve out solidarities and stand by each other against the overwhelming sense of fear, paranoia, suspicion and hate that is being actively mobilised. We are also existing under a fascist right wing government where culture is wielded as a weapon to assert an 'official' narrative. Histories, stories and lived experiences that are counter to this are in constant danger of being erased or appropriated.

October Jam stands in opposition to the censorship of market and state, as a space for artistic expression, radical friendship and cultural resistance.


October Jam is an independent arts festival supported by artists and friends of Maraa
marāa
A MEDIA & ARTS COLLECTIVE

STONE FLOWERS

CURATORIAL NOTE

Imagine this. In a large expanse of arid desert, a stone lies under the shade of a flower. They share a comfortable silence, sitting side by side, observing the world around them. Before this, the stone and flower never had much of a chance to speak with each other. They were, of course, aware of the other's presence. But suddenly encountering each other in proximity for the first time , they were slightly hesitant to strike up conversation. Just curiously sneaking glances at each other from time to time..

How smooth and polished the surface of the stone is, thought the flower. So chiselled in shape and defined in form. How many colours and textures in a single petal, wondered the stone.

This sort of quiet assessment went on for a while, until finally, the flower broke the silence.

How does it feel, asked the flower to the stone , to stay in one place for such a long time? It might look as though I am stationary, answered the stone. But with each passing wave and breeze, I feel I am always changing. Breaking and forming.

The flower had not considered this possibility, of an invisible change, seeing as the flower's own states of transformation were always so visible.

You are beautiful! The stone was suddenly overcome by a rush of emotion, and then withdrew a little shyly.

The flower smiled wryly. With beauty comes decay. I wonder if beauty can exist without the desire to possess it or destroy it? The stone had not considered that perhaps the flower too, desired seclusion and privacy.

What are you afraid of? The question echoed loudly in the large expanse of the desert.

Silence, whispered the stone.
Fragility, whispered the flower.
Crumbling, said the stone.
Falling, said the flower.
Being moved from place to place without any place to call home.
Growing extinct. Destroying. Being taken against my will.
Both turn to each other.
I never knew you felt this way.

Just as the flowers' fear of extinction is undermined by its blooming beauty, the stone's fragility is contained behind its concrete appearance. Nothing is as it appears. 'Beauty and the beast' is a great metaphor of how dualities within and around us play out.

Beauty cannot live without Beast: she contends her love as a weapon against the tyranny of her family and the ruling class at large. Her desire can itself be read as bestial or uncontrolled; yet,it is ironic that only when the beast finds "true love" the spell on the young prince will be broken. And thus the play between the beauty and beast continues endlessly, a dance to death. The stone and the flower, the masculine and the feminine, the Beauty and the Beast reside in each of us.

The 16th edition of October Jam, was an ode to these dualities that coexist in all of us. Stone flowers//Pathar Ke Phool//Kallina Hoovu is an intergenerational multilingual conversation around the masculine feminine. The struggle lies in observing how these two play out inside and outside of ourselves? If we were to look at gender as an expression, more than an identity, it pushes us to imagine ourselves quite differently. It is a response to our states of becoming.

It is to make space for missing conversations, shared silences, and differences – within ourselves, with others, and the world as we experience it. In an effort to celebrate and empathize with the beauty and the beast, the jam featured unlikely pairings: the flower and the stone, beauty and decay, motion and stillness, masculine and feminine. To meet the monsters that lurk inside each of us, inside the families, communities and the societies we build.

This zine gives you an experience of the jam, featuring interviews with the artists featured in the jam and reflections from members of maraa on the theme of the festival. It is a way to continue conversations off the stage, beyond the performance, to trace the experience of masculine and feminine in each of the intersecting contexts that took place in the festival.

OCTOBER: A MONTH OF RESISTANCE

BHUVI KALLEY

As a student of philosophy, I entered Maraa and October Jam fresh out of college Azim Premji University, believing I had a somewhat decent understanding of cultural resistance and gender. Suffice it to say, this understanding was completely (de)constructed. Throughout the jam, I found myself to have only touched the surface of this topic.

In university, I was part of a group called Queer Space, which organised various screenings and events aimed at unpacking queerness and its history. However, within these discussions, there was an implicit assumption among the core committee members that we already understood queerness and gender. The reality, however, was that we hadn't created a space for introspection on gender for ourselves. This left us with inflated egos and a half-baked understanding of our own identities.

Looking back on the three years I spent as a student, I see someone completely disconnected from her body because my experience of queerness had somehow become entirely about something intellectual or about attraction. This wasn't fully conscious but there was a collective understanding on campus of queerness only in relation to sex that I had absorbed. However, when October Jam introduced me to masculinity,

I was pushed to reflect on the various things I had unconsciously absorbed on a bodily level—things I knew intellectually but realised I had not fully embodied or processed emotionally.

In this context, one event stood out to me—Rumi's performance of Journey of a Voice, where he explores the sexuality of various raaga's, to free them of the patriarchal structures of classical music. The performance left me in awe, but it also left me deeply envious of him. I watched as Rumi oscillated effortlessly between the masculine and feminine on stage. One of his ragas could embody femininity, masculinity, desire from a man or a woman, or even reject all of these notions entirely.

I found it baffling that one person could take on such different forms of masculinity with such ease. It was clear to me that, in that moment, Rumi was liberated, and that I too, deeply craved that kind of freedom. Until then, I had never considered myself unliberated (and still don't). As a cis

Brahmin woman living comfortably with my parents and having come out as queer without much difficulty, I was privileged and had access to lots of information growing up. Yet, I sat there, full of envy.

Rumi's performance took me back to my second year in university when I entered my first relationship with a woman. She was a lot more feminine than I was, and being with her pushed me into a peculiar form of masculinity. I am still unsure if this push came from an internal or an external place. After we began dating I stopped wearing my brighter, more feminine clothes—clothes I had loved wearing before the relationship. I no longer felt comfortable walking or sitting the way I used to because it felt "too feminine."

I found myself suddenly jealous of people who were more masculine than I was. I would also never ask her to hold me or touch me in softer ways; it felt as though doing so might threaten her attraction to the masculinity I had newly adopted.

Through this masculinity, I realised I started feeling strangely powerful in a very specific queer circle. People began referring to me as the "top" or as someone who could suddenly "get girls". Her attraction validated this perception further; it felt as though she was drawn to the masculine figure I was presenting, a version of myself that felt more powerful but was also, a lot more fragile.

I was only able to articulate what happened to me during that time and the envy I experienced during Rumi's performance after reading Sunil Mohan's autobiography (a soon to be released memoir of a trans man). Sunil discusses even in supposedly unconventional settings how social morality subtly pushes us back toward the norm.

He talks about how this can be confusing be because, after a point, it's hard to discern whether your behaviour is a result of genuine personal change or the influence of social morality dictating how you should exist in a relationship. This was exactly what I was experiencing, I had slipped into this conventional masculinity even though I consciously had no desire for it. Reading his autobiography clarified why watching Rumi perform and embody various forms with such ease made me feel envious. Rumi had a bodily understanding of masculinity being a gender expression, something I definitely did not have and really craved for.

Another performance that really struck a chord was Anoop Gupta's Sattu Sherawali Da. The play explores the life of a young man in prison, grappling with complete isolation and slowly unraveling his mind. The performance jumps between reality and delusion, depicting how the protagonist begins to find a strange comfort in his isolation and misery. In my interview with Anoop, he explained that unpacking these stories in self-imposed isolation offers a unique perspective into masculinity, particularly for cis-het men. This resonated with me.

For me, reflecting on masculinity and femininity has always felt secretive and playful and something I never wanted to share with friends. This isolation is self-imposed, much like the protagonist's. Yet, I don't entirely hate it. When I am isolated, I have the freedom to imagine myself in any form. Similar to Anoop, I don't know if this exploration of gender and masculinity in isolation is 'right' but there is a comfort in it.

During my process of interviewing artists for this zine, a conversation that has really stayed with me was the discussion between poets who are a part of the Queer Poets Collective. Over lunch, we had a long discussion about how gender in Kannada operates differently from gender in English, particularly regarding pronouns and poetry. This made me think about how social morality slips in with language and begins to shape our understanding of queerness and masculinity.

In my predominantly English-speaking circles, much of the language surrounding queerness seems to always fixate on sex—discussions about "tops" and "bottoms," "good hands," or who could best navigate casual relationships.

Maraa presents

STONE FLOWERS

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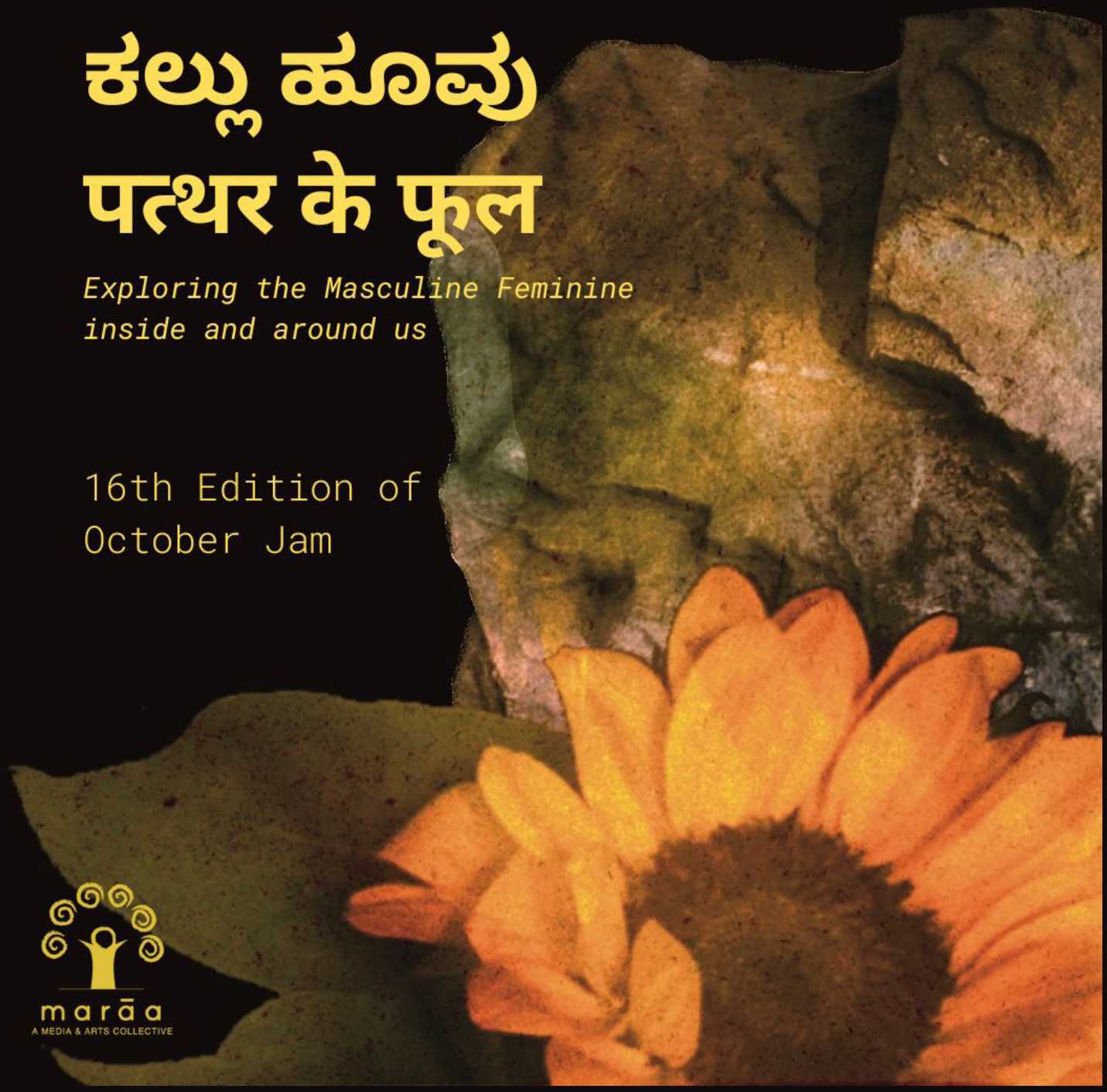
पत्थर के फूल

Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us

16th Edition of
October Jam



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Maraa presents

STONE FLOWERS
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Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us

16th Edition of October Jam

1
Tuesday

Masculin Feminin
1966
103 Mins

French, 6 PM
Maraa, Indiranagar

2
Wednesday

Sattu Sherawali Da
Performed by
Jaiprakash Kumar
Directed by
Anoop Gupta
65 Mins

Hindi, 7-9 PM
Our Theatre Studio
Koramangala

4
Friday

Kappeya Kanasu
Performed by
Tene Theatre
Devised by
Ekta and Angarika
Supported by Samvada
60 Mins

Kannada, 1-3 PM
Dr. Gopal Raju First
Grade College, Anekal

5
Saturday

Kinari & Gaana Vimala

7-10 PM
Shoonya Center
for Arts and
Somatic Practices,
Lalbagh Road

6
Sunday

BEAT IT!
Adavi Arts Collective
Big Bang
Minchu Arts Collective
Janadhikaara

5-8 PM
Samsa Bayalu
Ranga Mandira

9
Wednesday

Aakrosh
1980
144 mins

Hindi, 6:30 PM
Maraa, Indiranagar

11
Friday

Upar Wala Kamra
Performed &
Directed by
Anoop Gupta
80 Mins

Hindi | 7-9 PM
SMART Studio, Ulsoor

12
Saturday

NOTION(S): In Between You & Me
Performed &
Directed Savita Rani
60 Mins

English, 7-9 PM
Nirali, Jayanagar

13
Sunday

Maatu: A silent conversation
Deepak & Mirra
60 mins

7-9 PM
Goethe Institut,
Indiranagar

16
Wednesday

Water Lillies
2007
85 Mins

French, 6:30 PM
Maraa, Indiranagar

18
Friday

Exhibition of Rumi Harish's paintings
(till 22nd Oct)

6 PM
1 Shanthi Road,
Shanthinagar

19
Saturday

Kappeya Kanasu
Performed by
Tene Theatre
Devised by
Ekta & Angarika
Supported by Samvada

60 Mins, Kannada
11 AM -1 PM

Love Purana & Pakshi Purana
Performed by
Du Saraswati
Performance Design by
Deepak Srinivasan
60 Mins, Kannada

3-5 PM
Samvada, Banjarapalya

20
Sunday

Lifafiya
Performed by
Anushi Agrawal
Co-Devised by
Ekta
Produced by
Maraa
105 Mins

Hindi, 6-9 PM
Kala Sahita:
Performing Arts
Space

23
Wednesday

I Don't Want To Sleep Alone
2006
115 Mins

Taiwanese, 6:30 PM
Maraa, Indiranagar

25
Friday

Daastaan from Shah Jo Risalo
Aarab Jat and
Ataullah Jat

6-8 pm
Glass Crafters,
Indiranagar

26
Saturday

Queer Poets Collective & Razai Collective
Poetry on Masculine
Feminine

5-7 PM
Maraa & Online

27
Sunday

Journey of a Voice
Performed by
Rumi Harish

6-8 PM
CIEDS Collective,
Jai Bharath Nagar

30
Wednesday

Pink Narcissus
1971
71 Mins

English, 6:30 PM
Maraa, Indiranagar

1
Friday

Deconstructing Masculinities: A Research Study by Maraa
MIRRORS Showcase

6-8 PM
BIC : Seminar Hall 1

2
Saturday

MIRRORS Showcase

11 AM -8 PM
BIC : Seminar Hall 1

3
Sunday

Launda Naach
A devised performance by Sunil Ram,
Raju Ranjan, Sipahi
Lathor in collaboration with Piyush Kashyap.
In conversation with
Brahm Prakash

7-9 PM
Goethe Institut,
Indiranagar

BEYOND THE FRAME

IN CONVERSATION WITH EKTA

Ekta remembers watching Godard's films in class, wondering what was the big deal about the large jars of beer and flies swarming around it! Since then, cinema has been a difficult friend, whose hand she has not been able to let go of. The curiosity keeps her committed to it.

This October Jam, we are delving into different ways of thinking of the Stone Flowers - it urges us to study the (im)balance of the masculine and feminine, across different kinds of relationships and situations that we embody.

Why was it important for you to have films as a part of this jam?

So in Maraa, we've been screening films for over the last 16 years and somewhere I feel that space has become one of introspection. I feel film allows us to reflect on something which is quite different as an experience from performance or lets say, music. Because in those forms, you see people performing physically present in front of you. But with film, there are 2 things happening.

One is that there's a moment of collective darkness that we all share, and we're engaging in silence. And I feel like because you don't see the people, it has a very different way of percolating an idea within you.

In cinema, masculine and feminine have been explored a lot in different contexts. I felt like it was an important addition to look at film, which allows us to suspend reality in its everyday physical sense. One can also go back in different time contexts. In each of these, there is a different way of grappling with this question of masculine and feminine. So in the case of this October jam, it was a curation of 6 films, which kind of explored the theme of masculine and feminine.

As daring and youthful in Masculine Feminine, as pain and rage in Aakrosh, as playful and restless in Water lilies, as melancholic and wistful in I don't want to sleep alone and sexual and mythological in Pink Narcissus.

Since you've seen all the movies before, was it different for you to watch it in this context and in this time?

Oh, yeah, Absolutely. I think that when you see films in a curated context, you observe how all the films are speaking to the same idea or how maybe those films also disrupt and break away from your notions about those ideas. So the curation allows me to look at masculine feminine now with the consciousness. And therefore, it has a very different effect.

For example, Aakrosh I've seen several times before, but I feel to see it in the context of masculine feminine, makes me meditate a little bit differently, For example, Om Puris mind which is filled with rage, which is what we might assign to the masculine mostly. But he has simultaneously suppressed his masculinity. I am also observing how masculine, feminine are shifting in him across that timeline of the film.

You also had a film which spoke a lot about labour. Why was this important to include?

If you're talking about Tsai Min Liang's film, I think that for me, that is a very, very important intersection between masculinity and labour and class relations. What kind of masculinity do you need to perform for a particular job? And what are the consequences that come with it if you do not perform, say, your worker identity? How do you push the structures at play?

If you resist it, there are certain sets of consequences. If you succumb to it, there are certain consequences. I feel in this film particularly, I think it kind of allows us to look at that time outside of structure and resistance. Even though we know that the characters in Tsai Min Liang's film are a consequence of this very exploitative, oppressive labour system. What exactly happens to the consciousness, subconsciousness of the working class? The way fragilities and violence is at play. And his conscious choice of slow cinema as a way of dwelling deeply in the congestion of space or desperation of workers.

These films do not address masculinity directly. Was this an intentional choice?

The film festival started off with 'masculine feminine' which is a good art film, which I think some people may or may not have watched. But I think it looks at how people in university life existed in the sixties. It looks at how students were thinking through the various political 'isms' of their time.

I think the most interesting aspect is the tension Godard had with the title- how do you place the 2 words even together? Do you hyphenate it? Do you put a comma? Do you put a full stop? Do you put spaces above or below? So what is the design of the 2 words? That in itself is a speculation.

I was trying to curate the films also in relation to the other events that we were organizing in the jam. To provoke something beyond the immediate and the linear. A lot of TV series for example, are filled with masculine content. That is a predictable masculinity. I wanted to find a way to traverse a range of emotions between the masculine and feminine. The hope is that the viewer then begins to see the characters from various films in conversation with each other.

It would be so interesting to have all these characters together in a room to speak about masculinities. Like Godard in conversation with Om Puri, or the wonderful characters from Tsai Min Liang and Water Lillies. Like, you have these women who just come out from this swimming pool in their costumes, its so sensual and vulnerable.

And the absolutely blatantly bizarre mythification in Pink Narcissus, where we are witnessing the fantasies of a young male prostitute. We are thinking about masculinity in the context of a myth. So the films I chose explore different contexts of time, different sexualities, and social moralities. I do think all the films push boundaries of morality. How do you make certain decisions? Where does rebellion lie? Why do you surrender to a system?

We are constantly making moral choices. How does this fluidity play out in different contexts? How do we enable someone who is unsure, still forming, still searching? And I don't think the traditionally dominant characters in these films were ever not vulnerable. They all had moments of vulnerability.

A great example is the swimming coach in Water Lilies. She has this awkwardness within her own sexuality, within her own body. But publicly? That's not how she appears at all. She's this confident, accomplished figure in the pool. And yet, something is stopping her from embracing what she knows she desires.

So, it's complex. And I wonder—are we actually prepared to face each other's vulnerabilities? We like to think we're becoming a more open and free society, embracing fluidity. But a part of me feels that things are actually getting more rigid, more constrained by identity frameworks.

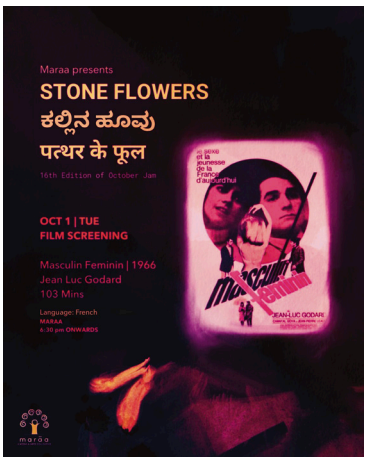
Another aspect that stood out for me in all the films was how care and masculinity were explored very differently. For example, in Akrosh there is a sense of care between the two main characters. I Don't Want to Sleep Alone really explores how we can hold each other in moments that are unknown, almost fantastical. In that congested space, simply letting someone share a mattress with you, or even just getting that mattress with them, becomes a subconscious act—one where you don't know where it might lead, but you do it anyway, without questioning.

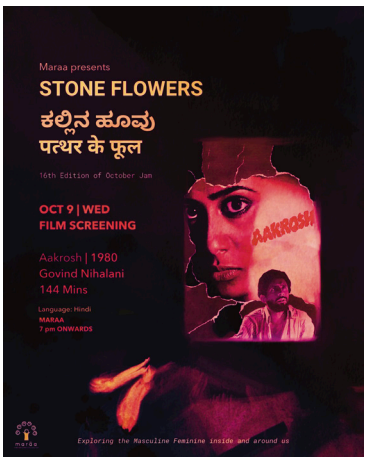
Care can break conventions of etiquette and norm. And it also opposes the identities they are supposed to represent. I feel like we often get caught up in fixing identities, judging how someone is supposed to perform their role. But I've always seen identities as something that break, that shift.

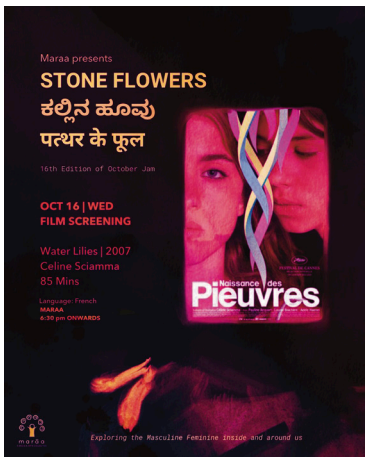
With my friends, with people around me, and in my own films, there are always surprises—nobody fits neatly into an extreme position. Yep. And sometimes, we're the ones who impose these categories. We define A as this and B as that. Of course, there are common behaviors, patterns shaped by routine, but if you keep playing a role simply because society expects it, where does that leave you? Sometimes, it seems like the way we interact is dictated by those identities first—before anything else. Intimacy, too, is mediated by these labels.

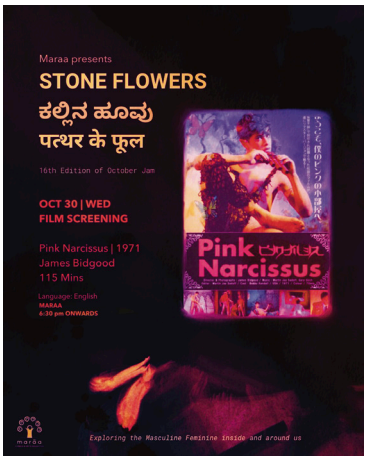
It seems like we've drawn boundaries so tightly. I understand why—it's not about dismissing the reasons these boundaries exist. But when that happens, when we impose rigid categories, we also cancel out other possibilities. Yes, people need to feel safe. I hear that. But my soul? My soul is restless. It's still searching for something else.

For meaning. For an unexpected sense of self. Because honestly, it feels too predictable to simply perform the role expected of me. I feel all the films reveal an unpredictable side of their characters. I think all the films, in some way, push against these roles. They don't conform to the conventional expectations of what a teacher, a father, a prostitute, or a student is supposed to be.I think every character takes risks. And I think the films allow for that risk-taking. It's like—okay, let's go further. Let's see what more is possible.









TEXTURES OF ISOLATION

IN CONVERSATION WITH ANOOP GUPTA[2]

When we first watched Upar Wala Kamra, we were struck by the weight of silence in the performance, as we explore the tense and fragile relationship between father and son. It spoke to us of a suppressed masculinity, which emerges due to the conventions of daily life. We felt it was important to invite the performance again in the context of the jam.

We also hosted Anoop's new play, 'Sattu Sherawali Da', performed by Jai Prakash Kumar. In the play, we sense the angst of the protagonist 'Sattu' who bides his days in a prison cell. With a tragi- comic air, Sattu draws us into a world where each hour of the day is a lesson in conforming. Living and working conditions construct the way we sit, the way we eat and sleep. The prison begins to expand beyond the four walls of a cell, leaving us with the question of whether we choose to remain secure in our own prisons..

2 Anoop is a theatre artist based in New Delhi. He has written, performed and directed 'Upar Wala Kamra' and directed 'Sattu Sherawali Da'

Are your two plays connected to each other?

When I was making the second play (Sattu Sherawali Da) I had no idea that it would be related in some way to the first play as well. Jai and I felt that we were making something new.

When a man is not able to explore his masculinity fully, or is kind of in a state of suppressed masculinity, I guess it will affect him more mentally than physically. Even physically, when you are not assertive about your masculinity, you are treated in a different manner, you are treated as feminine, you are seen as feminine, which is a matter of shame in our country.

It's almost a slur to a man. I think it's also difficult for a man to come to terms with this, or be comfortable with the fact that he hasn't been as 'masculine' or been expressing his masculinity as much as society expects him to. It could result in mental pressure, subconsciously, because it is challenging to navigate life with suppressed masculinity.

When, as a 'typical man' you're trying to explore masculinity, like your protagonists, are there any struggles?

I think there is an absence of the feminine that is common in both the plays. That could be a struggle, the absence of the feminine, to then know masculinity fully, is a challenge.

To be a single man or to be a single man in prison alone. Because femininity also shapes and moulds the masculine in some ways, which is good for masculinity itself, I think. The female presence often changes you, be it your mother, or your daughter, or your sister, or your partner, it changes you in a certain way, maybe it makes you more empathetic towards yourself.

That's quite interesting, because I think, usually, people don't talk much about how the masculine and feminine interact. Whatever shape it is, they're constantly in interaction. A male companionship and a female companionship are two very different things. A female companionship can give to a man what no male friendship or companionship in any other form can. In the way I've been brought up, my nature, I feel this depth is lacking, the female perspective is missing.

The absence of the feminine is a challenge to the protagonists in both the plays. There is a female presence, but they're just enablers, small enablers here and there. But that's also because of my personal nature. I do not connect much with other people. So maybe that is reflected in both plays.

Both your performances explore textures of isolation. What draws you to this?

I have personally been living in a self-imposed isolation for a long time. The kind of isolation that I experience, or I live with, I'm unhappy with, and also comfortable with. It's a struggle. I don't really like to be isolated, but also at the same time, I want to be isolated.

So I don't really know what I want. It is strange that I've become like this. In both my plays, you won't find the characters very informed. They are like floating clouds. No matter how comfortable one feels in one's isolation, one should still find a way to go out and explore what is around. It is difficult for me to accept and be comfortable with my isolation.

So even when it comes to writing, I am unable to make two people talk. There is always only one person talking. But if you ask me to make 2-3 characters talk to each other, I am unable to make them do that.

You also explore themes of settling into discomfort in your plays. Is that conscious?

When I look back, I guess these themes are entering my performances. But again, it is not conscious. Maybe I find myself more creative when talking about isolation.

For example, when I'm in isolation with myself, talking to myself alone, I find myself quite intelli-

gent, saying reasonable things, doing reasonable things, and not finding myself as a misfit in society. But when I start attending to the external world, I find myself as a misfit.

Talking to you, I am left wondering, am I living in isolation, this imaginary world, is it an illusion? An illusion that is telling me I am okay, when I am actually not? I want to live alone but at the same time I want someone to be there in the room downstairs, like the setting of my performance in upar wala kamra. In both my plays, the characters talk as though they know a lot about the outside world- but they don't, I think.

I'm trying to imagine myself writing about isolation and I feel quite vulnerable. So, is there any challenge you faced when you're trying to articulate this vulnerability with the protagonist? Or is it kind of easy for you to put it on paper?

Both the performances are devised, and I think that kind of theatre requires vulnerability. Talking about someone who's in isolation made my job easy, since it is also my experience.

I feel after being in isolation for a long time, a person forgets how to think in a structured way, or becomes incapable of articulating in a structured manner. One has to be careful to not muddle everything up, so I guess that is the struggle- how to communicate the experience of a life in isolation, to an external audience.

FROM THE GUT

IN CONVERSATION WITH GAANA VIMALA AND KINARI[3]

A couple of months ago we went for Kinari's album launch in Bangalore. Kinari is a transgender rapper from Delhi who recently launched her second album, 'Kattar Kinnar' - a sonic trip, with samples from Gaana, old Tamil and Bollywood songs. As she shared with us in a recent interview, she is interested in the notion of the 'feminine plural' (also the name of one of her tracks) and her sharp rap fires up a new imagination of the body in desire and resistance.

In this year's jam she is performing alongside Gaana Vimala. Gaana songs are historically songs of mourning sung by the Dalit community in Tamil Nadu. Vimala has been performing Gaana songs since she was 13, but alongside, she has also been writing her own, original music. Her songs of anguish and protest are, in her words, tools of liberation, which she hopes will open up new pathways for the transgender community to resist and express.

3 Kinari is a transgender rapper who has emerged as one of the foremost voices for the LGBTQ+ community in India's hip-hop scene. She produces her own music and has recently launched her latest album, Kattar Kinnar. Gaana Vimala is a renowned gaana singer from Tamil Nadu who has recently also performed with Coke Studio.

What does the theme of the festival evoke for you?

Vimala: For the flower to come into existence, the stone has to undergo a lot of pain and it is a very long process. Similarly for me to grow and reach this stage, I had to go through a lot of pain. A flower won't be produced immediately or be ready in an instant. There's a process through which it comes to bloom. In my life I have taken a lot of hits. If I were a stone flower then this name reminds me of all the trauma and the pain and setbacks I have had to suffer from, in order to become who I am today.

Kinari: "If you have a lot of pain, it can turn you into a stone. I have a song called Samaaj which means Society. The lyrics go "Seekha Samaaj bangayi patthar, hota mehasoos nahi ab dar. Hota mehasoos nahi samaaj hota mehsoos nah ab ghar". Which means because of society's perceptions, I have learnt how to become a rock. Now I don't feel pain and I don't feel at home. You understand both sides. See, for men they want to become a hero, they want to become unemotional. For someone who is feminine there is an understanding of how much you are losing and what it takes to become a stone. For me, Stone flower means understanding both these sides.

What drew you to your form of music?

Vimala: See, when you sing gaana music, the listener can sense the context. I don't have to say it directly. The genre communicates my struggles and my hunger. Through this form my voice becomes the centre and comes into focus. It's the main element. And through my words, people will understand my meaning. My body becomes the instrument. I rely on my voice to communicate what I want to tell others. It's freeing. That's why gaana as a form is popular, it's easy to communicate feelings.

Kinari: Gaana music and Hip Hop are similar. We have pop which is mainstream and commercial and in my understanding, folk is for normal people who don't have access to the commercial. That is the difference. In America, they don't say folk, they'll say 'country' maybe. In India we say this because we don't have computers or guitars and all these things. With gaana and hip hop music you can use your voice, mouth and drums or percussion, rhythm and body to create music.

Hindustani music has always seemed very snobby to me because they have this belief that their music is better. Because they look at rhythm as stupid. They think we are just doing basic dinka chika dinka chika but they think they are making great music by singing sa re ga ma pa. Hindustani musicians look at item numbers as cheap and as 'less' than forms like Khayal.

Even in the west people who play piano look at hip hop as unsophisticated and stupid. These attitudes are coming in at a basic level from the fact that they have access to things we do not have. That's why gaana and hip hop are different because we make music with whatever we have. Let's say in Tamil Nadu you take away drums, we'll make music with our hands, and if you cut off our hands, we'll make music with our feet. That is the essence of hip hop and gaana.

You've been performing for a long time, has the way you approach your music changed?

Vimala: With experience it has definitely changed. In the beginning, I used to sing mostly at people's funerals. That is where this music (gaana) originated from. But people used to enjoy my melodic voice. Then I began singing folk songs, which are on a different scale. Now, after this festival, I am thinking about rap and how it can mingle with gaana music.

Kinari: For me, changes in my practice happen with audience response. I keep trying something new and you see what works. Artists have to be responsible for their audience. If I only make sad songs and unload all my pain, then the audience will keep crying and probably have enough of it. They also want enjoyment.. This understanding comes with experience. A musician also needs to have love for the audience. They need to respect

the audience. The audience also needs to respect musicians. Some people will talk about sex, drugs and bitches. Nothing wrong with that, sex is great, money is great but you need to know how to be responsible. You have to know that what you're saying needs to be communicated in the right way.

You were saying that talking about masculinity can be quite difficult, complex and irritating because it's difficult to articulate what exactly it is. Can you say more?

Kinari: I think it's like if you ask a man about masculinity they will say some random thing, because they have not thought about it much. It's like asking an average person about what the earth is or what the planets are. If they've gone to school, they'll recite something they've learnt and they won't think so much about it. But if you ask a physicist this question, someone who has spent a lot of time thinking about this subject, it will be harder for them. Same for transgender people, it is difficult to say what masculine feminine is, because it is constantly changing.

If you ask people in 20 years to talk about gender, I bet you won't get the same answer to the question. Maybe 100 years ago, masculine and feminine were seen as two energies or two bodies. Or maybe at another point, it meant hard and soft and now it is stone and flower. There is an understanding that there are more than two genders. So there are more stone, flowers, earth, fire and much more. Merely by existing as trans-genders, in a way we are showing the possibilities and opening up the imagination.


STONE FLOWERS
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पत्थर के फूल
Celebrating the 16th Edition of October Jam
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An arts festival for cultural resistance collaboration with friends, well wishers & collectives

I AM A WOMAN, AND I DO NOT SACRIFICE

IN CONVERSATION WITH SAVITA RANI[4]

Savita Rani's fiery solo 'Notions: In between you and me' where the viewer has to confront the violence within intimacy and the weight of stereotypes that bind us to our gender. With manic, absurd humor, she traces connections between the censorship in our private lives, to larger social structures like living under capitalism. Is it possible to break free?

4 Savita Rani (Dr) is a graduate of National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi (2008), with specialization in acting. She performed her solo play "NOTIONS In Between You and Me" for this October Jam.

How do you interact with the theme "stone flowers"? What comes up for you?

I reflect a lot on the interconnections between two opposites, or binaries. For example, movement and stillness, body and mind. There is movement even in stillness, and you can't separate the body and the mind. So I feel nothing really exists on its own. Similarly, the stone and flower are also like that. If you talk about femininity, you have to speak about feminism, and you can't speak about feminism, without speaking of patriarchy. Everything is interconnected.

Like you said, there's femininity and masculinity in everyone. Do you think you've always embraced the feminine or masculine aspects of yourself?

Yeah, because the way we understand femininity and masculinity or how society defines it—I never thought of it that way. I have always had my own relationship with the feminine and masculine. For example, I enjoy playing, being active, and having dialogues with different people. If I feel something is wrong, I can say it. It's not like, "Oh no, I shouldn't say anything," or "I should just accept it." I feel people think about 'No' as male and 'Yes' as female. I don't think that way. I think it's about being human.

It's about just being. You don't need to carry guilt. Otherwise, what happens is that guilt builds up, and other issues arise, leading to violence. It takes a lot of time, actually, given the kind of society and social constructs we live in. It takes time for an individual to understand. Even now, I am still in this process. Sometimes, I find myself failing. Sometimes, I get very aggressive, and at that moment, I can't help it. Later, I reflect and think, "Okay, maybe I could have handled it differently." For example, one incident happened when I was studying in Pondicherry. One night, I was near an ATM, and a drunk person came up to me and said, "Why are you standing here?" I replied, "I'm standing here because my friend is inside the ATM." Then he said, "No, why are you standing in the middle of the road?" I said, "I'm not standing in the middle of the road." That person tried to take the key from my friend's bike, but the key wasn't there. Then he started saying things like, "You people are coming to the North" and "This is our India. I replied, "But this is my India too." Later, I realised it's not about North versus South. We have conflicts everywhere—within our homes, within the same caste, religion, community, and family. It's so easy to blame it on regional divides like North versus South. It becomes a convenient narrative.

This "self and other" relationship is easily constructed in our minds. Sometimes, even I fail. But with time, I am trying to find better ways to respond.

What do you see as the similarities / differences in the works you have created?

I feel they are extensions of each other. For example, in RIP- I was saying- "Restlessness in Pieces"—it was about inquiring into resting in peace. But it's never-ending. Restlessness is always there. RIP for me was a process of healing and getting to know myself better. But this is an ongoing process.

There is of course, the personal and subjective, like the experience of being a woman, but that is not divorced from other politics. Like the kind of country we live in. The politics of being a woman, for me, includes the projections society places on us. But instead of just accepting those projections, I reflect on them.

My work feels minimalistic- like the way the performances are designed. Perhaps this is because historically, women have been given very little time and space. Even now, women are often left with only a small amount of time and space for themselves. Yet, when we invite others into our small space, it is very welcoming. When people look at art created by women, they encounter something they may not have understood before.

They may think they know women, but there are always deeper layers to discover. This art provides another perspective. It invites people to see and experience something unfamiliar. Because women's time and space are so limited, the work becomes minimalistic. It asks: Can we look at this? Can we listen to this together? We are speaking against patriarchy, but we also want to create spaces of understanding.

Do your personal experiences and transformations reflect on stage?

Yes, I think it does. At the same time, there's always uncertainty. I can't confidently say, "This is me." I'm still in the process of discovering myself. There's so much to learn, and it's a never-ending journey. Healing often involves looking at the past. There were things I couldn't understand at the time, but through dialogue, especially with people close to me, I've found that those moments can affect you for a lifetime. There was a time when I was too scared to even think about certain things. It felt overwhelming, like it would take all my strength just to face it. When I couldn't handle it, I would exhaust myself with distractions.

Writing was the first step toward healing. Writing allowed me to face the darker corners of my thoughts. The first step was simply accepting what had happened—consoling myself and saying, "It's okay."No one else can console you; you have to do it yourself. Many young people today struggle with this. They feel overwhelmed and don't know how to handle things. But the moment you're free of that fear, you start to heal.

For me, this process took time—growing older, learning, and gaining perspective. As a teenager, I didn't know who to talk to. Now, I understand the importance of feeling comfortable and at ease, of being able to talk about love and relationships without fear of judgement. Sometimes, I look back at my younger self, the introverted child within me, and hold space for her. I've had good friendships, and for me, writing has become a beautiful outlet. I understand now why people say books or diaries can be your best friends. It is minimal, yet it feels complete.

THE LANGUAGE OF GENDER

A CONVERSATION OVER LUNCH WITH QPC[5]

At maraa, we have been collaborating with QPC since its inception. Every month, QPC invites a poet to share their work, reflecting on various themes through queering imagination and language. For the Jam, we hosted a collaboration between Razaai Collective, a poetry collective based out of Delhi and US, and QPC, as a way of tracing textures of masculine and feminine across history and geography. After the poetry reading, we all gathered together for lunch and here is some of what we spoke about..

5 Queer Poets Collective is a multi-lingual collective of poets who read, discuss, share and write poetry on the experience of being queer.


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STONE FLOWERS
Featuring independent artists and collectives towards exploring the Masculine and Feminine in and around us
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What image does Stone Flowers conjure for you?

Siddartha: I thought of the saying of kallarali hooviagithuu (the rock that bloomed into a flower) which is famous. There is also a movie based on this. The stone is hard and the flower is soft. When these two elements are combined, it gives new meaning to the word. It is a representation of both the stone and the flower.

It's assumed that that stone is masculine and femininity lies in the flower which is not necessarily the case, so the combination allows for a new meaning. There is another belief that wherever there are rocks and flowers, the environment is healthy and that land and people are good. So, it speaks of both bodily and emotional wellness as well.

Daya: As far as I know, the stone flower is used in masala, here in Karnataka. One side is black and the other side is white and there is a difference as soon as you put it in oil. It is not like the smell you get when you add other masalas, it has a mixed fragrance. I never knew why we added it to food. I recently learnt about its health benefits. It gives a different type of fragrance to biryani.

It is also a rare ingredient to find. Perhaps stone flower could speak to the inner gardens (or workings) of men and women and the pressures they both face. Because both feel pressure and both are struggling.

Rumi: I didn't like the name. This idea of 'stone and flower' and the stereotypical understanding that accompanies it. It disturbs me. In studying masculinity, we must challenge and question these preconceived notions. While femininity is often studied under 'women's studies' without reducing it to simply 'feminine,' masculinity has gone off course in many ways. There is a way to celebrate masculinity without dismissing it, but using the metaphor of stone to represent masculinity might be problematic. Perhaps I would have redefined it, like in the story of Paper Flower. The essence of a 'paper flower' contrasts with that of a real flower. Why should we burden symbols with unnecessary weight? The idea of stone, for instance, suggests rigidity, but I see lightness and flexibility in both stone and flower. Stone is not just heavy, nor is flower exclusively light; each has its unique aesthetic.

When exploring concepts of masculinity and femininity, we see that both can complement each other beautifully, and opposites often create harmony. Yet, it is problematic to label nature as inherently masculine or feminine. Who determines these distinctions?

In classical texts, gender-neutral or universal pronouns were suggested, reflecting an inclusivity often absent in English today, where terms like 'he' are considered universal. Even legally, this influence shows up, asking us to interpret cases based on gender assumptions.

Masculinity, when viewed outside toxic stereotypes, can be tender and inclusive, not rigid like the stone that it is often compared to. In fact, joining masculine and feminine traits can be beautiful. There is beauty in this merging, a concept that has gained acceptance today, though opposites continue to attract and create tension. But still, the idea of masculinity must be free from restrictive definitions, whether grounded in tradition or culture.

Concepts from ancient texts remind us that there's an expansive understanding of gender—fluid and dynamic, not confined to binaries. Even in my paintings, I have recently been drawing male flowers..

Dadapeer: When I look at Kallina Hoovu I remember that first I had suggested Kallu Hoovu as the title. I agree with Rumi about how this perhaps could have changed. For example, I wrote a poem in the course of the (Mirrors) fellowship, about how we could imagine a world where the stone itself is paper. Also, we see that picking the title is interesting because each has a different meaning – 'kalle hoovu versus kallina hoovu or kallu hoovu' all interpret the theme differently. In English it is

Stone Flowers and in Hindi it is Patthar ke Phool, so it allows for our own interpretations. It's like how Godard thought a lot about how to place the words masculin feminin in his film. He wondered if they should be placed together, or if there should be a slash in between them. It reminds me of that. There are so many masculine figures which do not belong to toxic masculine boxes. They cook and clean so this rigid model of rock does not fit them.

Daya: Beauty does not need to be found only through opposites. For example, women with women or men with men, can also have an aesthetic appeal..

Rumi: All these beliefs that opposites attract are very problematic. For example, Man and Nature are often placed as opposites. But which is which? And what is man? These are the questions we should ask.

Daya: Even this Manava (man in kannada) we refer to, who is that? Or even Vyakti. Read anything from history to samajashashtra you will end up using the 'he' pronoun.

Chand: For example in Kannada, we say kavi "barithane" or "barahagaara". We need to change this. People like Nataraj HoLeyar[6] have challenged this suggesting we use"BarithaLe'

Rumi: See we think the problem is solved by putting a slash so instead of "barithane" you get[7] barithane/barithaLe. But there is a simpler way. What about using barithare? Isn't the problem solved then? Language itself is creating exclusions. When the British introduced English, they started using universal pronouns. This is something that can be used for everyone. That has influenced the law- for example- in IPC 9,10 and 11.

Dadapeer: When I was listening Bannanje Govindacharya's Purushasutra, he[8] talks about who a purusha is. We may not agree with his interpretations. But he said that Purushasutra is based on the Manusmriti. In that it says that those who rule Pura (town) are purushas (men). Another interpretation of this is that Pura is internal to the person which means that women are also purushas. Another interesting thing about Purushasutra, there is a mention of ayonija (a male that is yet to be born). Other than this it speaks of caste, class etc.

What was your thought process in selecting these poems?

Daya: Mine was simple. Your tagline Masculine and feminine decided my choice.

Chand: I wanted to pick a poem which talks about male dominance. I am doing my PhD on Gopalkrishna Adiga's poetry. Some people say that Adigas poetry itself is fundamentalist in nature. People complain that his poems have religious fundamentalism and that his poetry is male centric. There are also brahminical viewpoints in his poetry.That's why I selected Bhoomigeetha (one of Adigas poems) because I wanted to point these things out.

Daya: I was very happy you selected that poem because it's from our publication. And there is one poem that talks about wanting to kill men and many people questioned my decision to publish something that blatantly says something like that. But I asked them to come and tell me why we shouldn't kill men?

Dadapeer: Very clear yet naughty tone it has!

Pallavi: I picked this poem on Maha Kaali because it celebrates womanhood. Whatever choices she makes, she faces them head-on with clarity. I think this is important for women. My own poem is about beauty. Usually, there's this idea that only women should care about beauty, bow down, and avoid looking at men. I wanted to challenge this association of beauty with women and question this norm.

Daya: With Kaali, you highlight the fact that women also desire sex, which I really liked.

Siddartha: I chose Mahadeva Shankanapura's poem[9] because, after N.K. Hanumanthaiah[10], he is also someone who speaks deeply about history. His work felt fitting for October Jam as it also touches on gender and caste equality. In the Vachana it says, "Sharana pathi, Linga pathi," and we see that in this poem the man is a woman, and the woman is a woman, with the linga as the leader.

But the issue is, even if men are women and women are women, it's still a man ruling over them. These are traps we should avoid in articulation. The poem I selected points this out. And in my poem about Amasa and Santiago, I explored masculinity. I used to believe in the beauty of opposites coming together—black and white, for instance—but after what Rumi shared, I am questioning this idea of contrasts/contradictions now.

6 A famous Kannada writer and critic.

7 This conversation revolves around the function of honorifics and their effect on pronouns. This is difficult to translate into English since the honorifics in English are tied to gender (for example, Mr or Mrs) whereas in Kannada it is not

8 Purushashtra refers to the key concept of Hinduism that talks about the four goals of human life. Bannanje Govindacharya is an Indian philosopher and Sanskrit scholar.

9 Mahadev Shankanapura, a poet and writer from Chamarajanagar district, has been awarded the Rajyotsava Award

10 An extremely well known Ambedkarite poet and playwright


STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
Featuring independent artists
FILMS | MUSIC | THEATRE | POETRY


October Jam presents

SIX IMAGINATIONS OF "STONE FLOWERS" FROM TENE THEATRE[11]

Earlier this year, we were invited to work as theatre facilitators with a group of students from across the city. As we became familiar with each other, a space of trust emerged, where the group was able to share experiences of fear, desire, violence and suppression, across caste, religion and gender. 'Kappeya Kanasu/Frog's Dream' by Tene Theatre, is a performance which has emerged as a fragmented, non-linear narrative, it explores a journey from childhood, which slowly gets marked by age. The performance is based on collective dreams, forbidden acts and the private desires between young people and the social structures they find themselves within.

11 Tene Theatre formed through a theatre making process hosted by Samvada and facilitated by maraa. Kappeya Kanasu is their debut performance.

01

I picture the stone as hard and the flower as soft. The second you combine them, they both lose their individual meaning and create something new.

02

I feel like we try to create our lives, as beautiful flowers, but the flower becomes as rigid as a rock as we go through life. We become stones because of issues like caste, language, and other societal problems. So now, we are in the process of searching for a flower.

03

It is a range of emotions we experience from stone to flower. This includes everyone and everybody. Just like in Kallina Hoovu, where you have to dig into the stone to find the flower inside, every one of our stories is like that. It's only when we look back and reflect that we can discover something meaningful.

04

I didn't picture a stone and a flower. I thought of the heart as a stone which always has a soft corner. Similarly, however hard a rock might be, there will be a part of it that's like a petal, a flower.

05

I started thinking of myself and how my parents and society have raised me like a rock but they're not able to see the flower. Meaning, if you are a boy, people keep assuming you are just a rock but they don't understand that a flower can be in there too. Inside the rock there is a flower, there is love but people have decided this is not the case.

06

I saw an image of a stone emerging from lava which has become hard. And through our play (Kappeya Kanasu) we are powdering this rock and the powdered rock is spraying everyone and that is kallina hoovu to me. In our stories we can see our lives are beautiful but like rocks have rigidities, and fear. I felt our feelings come out and in the final scene (of the play) when we reach our dreams, the portrayal felt like a flower.


October Jam presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल

BODY SONG

IN CONVERSATION WITH RUMI[12]

Rumi Harish has been a dear friend and guide, collaborating with maraa in several processes. He has played a tremendous role in sharpening our views on gender and sexuality. October Jam has always been our excuse to ensure he continues to express himself artistically. It was our pleasure to see him in new avatars across the jam, as a painter, singer and poet.

12 Rumi Harish is a musician, gender based activist, painter and poet based in Bangalore.

Rumi, will you start by introducing yourself?

I'm Rumi Harish and I'm a trans man. I was born female and for like 40 years I couldn't explain myself. Most people are able to talk about their gender, I could not. I mostly managed to speak about sexuality. So I had to, in that context, live as a woman trying to escape marriage.

My identity in terms of gender is queer, trans, man or not, I don't know. It's been changing. I'm gay and probably gender-queer even after surgery. Now, you are asking about other identities. I'm from a Brahmin caste. I was born in a very privileged family in terms of cultural capital. But economically middle class, rather lower middle class. And so, I could not afford a certain education. I did my MA in journalism.

I discontinued it in the second year. I began working and encountered many feminists. But working with them, I felt there were personal and political issues that were very questionable. Did I want to live like them? It's a very comfortable feminism. I wanted to move into an uncomfortable feminism. That's when I became homeless. I met Du Saraswathi, who gave me a home.

So I stayed with her for more than half a year. And then she took me out into the realm of the working class. I actually hadn't seen the lives of the working class until then. I had to gather myself. And then I realized that that is where I have to work. And from there, I started working with pourakarmikas, sex workers, and women.

So when I got introduced to trans women, I kind of felt there's some hope for me. Initially I had said I'm bisexual. Then I said, much prior to that, I'm lesbian. And then I said, gender-queer and sexually queer. Then I don't know what all I said! And then I kept saying, but never gained the courage to be what I am. Finally, I was put into a situation where I had to face myself. And that was at the age of 40. Because of my, you know, my reputation as a singer, artist, I had to maintain a certain decorum around me. And as a woman, that stopped me.

Now I am just living. I'm still very confused. I did my surgery, thinking I'd become like every other man. And now as my beard is growing very slowly, I am now getting more and more confused about whether I want to be like a man, because politically I'm beginning to see that masculinity is such a hoax. It's all about the ego and the body, both of which I don't have. So, then what am I?

That's when the Journey of Voice started. In that context, I feel that, you know, my voice is physically changing. So, in that context, I have enjoyed all the phases of extremity. For a person who has sung for 40 years, not being able to see yourself sing the smallest line is heart-wrenching. I went into a very bad depression and I wanted to end myself.

And one such day, 6- 8 months ago there were three episodes of attempt to suicide, which of course I didn't tell anybody. Sunil saved me once. And there were two other times, it was the calls or the messages from Ekta that saved me. So for a person like me, vulnerability is one more identity I feel. And people say, feeling vulnerable is wrong.I feel that it is extremely important to recognize it.

So do you think the journey of a voice came from some place of vulnerability? Or was it more of an artistic expression?

Definitely not an artistic expression. Art can be extremely elite. Art is sometimes very violent. But I did try and write. And that was also the time my mother passed away. She passed away and I had no issues with that. In fact, I also felt that she was tired. The only thing I was very angry with her is that she left my father with me.

She should have done something about that. It was my idea to live in a house without a man. I ended up being a man in the house. But I am not even the man in the house, I ended up becoming a housewife.

Now am I struggling to validate myself as a man in public? Is it because my ego is threatened?

People treat me as a woman. I am assigned all the women's work at home.

Am I getting disturbed with that? Or is it something that is happening within myself? So that's when I felt that I would rather assert gender queer identity even after surgery. Because I think, I still cannot accept that I can be very fluid.

In the festival, you also launched a collection of your paintings Body Song. I was wondering if Journey of a Voice and Body Song connect to each other?

Body Song went through several avatars because of Raag Yaman. The raaga is like that, the person creeps into several colors. Creeps into the textures of the canvas. So for me, when I lost my voice, I began exploring the sounds through paintings. And I think one of the explorations of voice was Body Song. Because when you went to the extent of not being able to even hold one note. I used to go touch the canvas. Or touch jeans or pants. I used to touch rough textures.I used to say " Please come into my voice".

I didn't know what to do but my therapist asked me to paint as therapy. She asked me to just scratch and go wild on the canvas. I couldn't do that. Also the moment I told Sunil about this, he went and bought professional painting, canvases, oil, everything. All this overnight. I was crying that day. I was saying " I don't understand why the therapist can't understand this" and " Why should I look into painting?" and all that. I also said "See because I have no eyesight I only have ears."

He listened to me but the next morning, when I woke up, there was canvas, there was paint, there was everything. But for some days I didn't touch it. I also have some kind of aversion to visual arts. Because of my mother probably. That selfishness that she showed right through my childhood till her death..

One is that I have always felt that parents are horribly irresponsible. Bloody, they want to have sex, they want to have children. But they want everything to be done in the manner that society does. Why? That is the question. If they want that, then have machines. Why humans right? Anyway, one night I woke up crying, I couldn't sing.

First thing I did was to go buy a new tanpura for my voice. At the time I was not squeaking anymore. My speaking voice did not change. So, I went and bought a very nice Meeraj Ka Tanpura and started enjoying the tanpura sound. And my orgasm is tuning a Tanpura. And after all that, I'm still crying. Nothing is working out.

So, one night, I went into the room where this easel and board was kept readily. And I put it on. And then, I took a pencil first. I didn't want the lights on. She had asked me to scratch so I went to scratch. At first, I wasn't interested in drawing. But one thing suddenly hit me. The sound of the pencil on canvas was striking. I don't know what happened. Then I put on the lights and continued. And then I started thinking "What if I had a voice like this" with every scratch. After that, I did some images. The first image I did was a blurred image. Because my mother's teacher, he had trained me a little in line drawing. So, I did that. For several hours.

So then I started practising. But everytime I practised I would cough so much it felt like my insides were coming out. And people offer you water when you cough but that was not what was happening to my throat. It wasn't going dry. It was irritating me because my vocal chords are changing. So, that's how it started.

So Body Song also came to being through music in a way?

Yeah my desperation for music. I used to say I hate music. Once I banned music at home. I questioned myself then. "Is my entire existence music?". Do I Have nothing else? No, I have written etc but it never gave me peace. And the depression kind of extended because in therapy I had to recount everything that has happened in my life. And then when I was done with that

Dadapeer Jayman came around and wanted to write my autobiography. And his questions are very difficult to answer and he wrote very differently. And at that point I started to rediscover my relationship with my voice.

One night we were talking about how it would be if your loved one actually died. We were all crying and I realised that I had no time to grieve the death of my girlfriend. That baggage I still carry with me. Maybe because I was young I somehow crossed this hurdle, but the baggage is there. So that night we mourned our lovers together.

Dadu and Sunil really helped me in this situation. I also realised that we keep searching for something new. That never leaves us. If it did, then we wouldn't be here. But this waiting for something new, that's the worst thing in life. I know if I feel like I want to end my life, then it will end. That is my politics. It's also love politics that you cannot stretch anything beyond its limit. So, it's in this context that I painted. Many big artists have told me that they don't like my painting but they don't mind my singing. I get a lot of these comments. But I feel like telling them to get lost because I am doing it for myself.

Also, once my autobiography was done my evenings were empty without Dada. And so I picked up painting again. Then I would have 4 bottles of beer. And would paint one painting per day. From 5 - 11. Then at 11 I would see if I was sleepy, if I wasn't I would continue.

I have painted in dim light post 11. I would have two torchlights. I was painting in the room I was sleeping in. I couldn't go to the room because it was very dirty. And because I was using a torch the shadows from hand would always be there. So I had figure out how to draw in places I could not see. Every single one was related to music.

For example, if you have to draw a nose you have to see all sides but everywhere I go there is a shadow. That itself is a crazy idea. Line, shadow and light. Is my voice coming in as the shadow? Also because I couldn't see, I made my paintings colourful. People ask me why so much colour, but its what I needed at the time. I felt like the little amount of light represented how much luck I had in life.

My Guru used to say something interesting. He said that I can sing till I die. And he said that even if you can't sing you can sing in your head. So I started doing that and it became an addiction.

The same thing happens when you have to paint without light. And who will have this experience? How do I explain it to people? I remember my Guru asked me do you want to sing well or do you want to sing? I said I wanted to sing. He said my voice is good enough, and that I could sing till I die.

Once I was talking to Ekta and she asked me why I think everything is premised on the body. Why can't it be aesthetics or something else? I think the body is like the sea to me. It allows me to see colours and makes me see palettes and various shapes. Body is a wonder, so why can't we use it? So that's how we titled it "Body Song".

RUNH KI AZAADI

WITH AARAB JAAT, ABDUL JAAT & ASIF RAYAMA

We have had the pleasure of learning about the everlasting spiritual strength and solace of Bhitai's poetry through our friends in Kutch, who are researchers, musicians and archivists. Over the years, we have had a chance to engage with the immense rich tapestry of music that exists across Kutch and discover new vocabularies of cultural and political resilience and faith. The following is excerpted from a longer interview with our friends, Asif Rayama, Abdul Jaat and Ataullah Jaat, about their journey with Bhitai's poetry..


STONE FLOWERS

In Bhitai's poetry, he speaks of the 'Runh' which we can loosely understand as the spirit. The runh desires freedom but finds itself captive. This is the metaphor embodied by the 7 'Surmakalis' in Bhitai's poetry. All of them are women. One can wonder, why did Bhitai choose women as his characters? There are many speculations.. Like the ability of women to resist and challenge their circumstances.

Take for example, Marui, a girl from a pastoral community, who is taken captive by Umar, the king of Umarkot. Umar tries his best to persuade Marui to live as his queen- tempting her with food, jewels, gardens and the comforts of palace life. But Marui remains resolute. For each flower that Umar shows her, she remembers a flower back home. She prefers the salty fish eaten by her people, than any of the rich palace foods.

Every evening, she stands on the terrace of his palace, looking into the horizon at her beloved Maru, waiting for the day she will go back home again. Marui represents the 'Runh' the spirit that longs for liberation..perhaps one of the reasons why Bhitai chose women as his central protagonists is because at the time he was writing (12th century) the lives of women were difficult. There were cases of female infanticide.

Perhaps Bhitai was responding to this through his poetry.. by showing people the resilience and creativity of a woman's spirit.

The central aspect of Bhitai's poetry is not the jism (body) but the runh spirit… like in the story of Sohini. She likens her body to a vessel in the middle of a stormy river. If the pot breaks, she will die. But she doesn't lose hope when she confronts death.

She says, if my body is split into parts, it will be scattered by the currents of the river. My head might be eaten by an alligator. But I hope one small part of my body remains. That can be buried.. And from there, my runh can escape and be free.. So his poetry goes beyond the male and female body.. It speaks of an 'insaniyat' a collective humanity that is embodied by the runh.

We (Ataullah ji and Aarab ji are brothers) were introduced to Bhitai's poetry at a wedding that took place in our village. When we heard the musician recite his bhet's, we were transfixed.

Our father banned us from singing his poetry, he was trying to train us to be classical musicians instead. But hume mohabbat ho gayi thi' we were in love with his poetry. We used to be on opposite ends of the field and start walking toward each other from a vast distance, singing these bhets, until we were face to face.

Our father would hear us and give us the beating of our lives but nothing could stop us.. We were intoxicated by his poetry. When we perform the story of Marui or Sohini, Sassui, Noorie, we embody them. We are captive in umarkot, walking across the desert with noorie, crossing the stormy river with Sohini. Sometimes when we finish the performance, it takes us time to return to the present.

And each time we sing the bhets, something new reveals itself. Once you begin to understand Bhitai's poetry, you realise it is like medicine for our emotional state.. It is our guiding light through which we can navigate the troubled waters of life.. Like, we cannot say, even though we have been singing for 20 years, that we have grasped the essence of his poetry.

For example, right now we are journeying with Marui. We are with her. Perhaps in our lifetime, we will have a chance to meet the remaining 6 suramkalis…inshallah.

THE MAKING OF 'LATTAR'

IN CONVERSATION WITH RAJU RANJAN[13]

Having been in conversation for a few years, we were happy to commission Lattar for October Jam, after several conversations with Raju and Piyush[14] (zeropowercut). The performance sought to foreground the experiences of Launda Naach performers and the possibility of folk artists authoring original work.

The performance created new propositions for anti-caste expression from Bihar where the performers dramatised or fictionalised some parts of their own lived experiences, as a way of investigating gender and identity as launda naach performers.

13 Raju Ranjan is a jangayek, a singer-performer and theatre artist, who performs amidst us people, about our common struggles of equality and justice. He comes from a family of landless agricultural labourers from Ara, Bihar. He has a diploma in Theatre from the Bhopal School of Drama, and he has been active as a theatre artist and cultural activist since a very young age.

14 Piyush Kashyap is an artist who founded zeropowercut. Set in Bihar, zeropowercut is a research-and-development lab for collective productions that investigate the role of art, aesthetics and language in how caste is coded in the real.


ONE FLOWERS

What does pathar ke phool evoke for you?

The relationship between Pathar and Phool is very different. One is rigid, the other is soft. But if you bring them together, it is the birth of a new thought. This can be very challenging. Let's say for example, there is a performance being organized for folk artists and classical artists. You will notice the difference.

The classical artists will always be put up in a fancy hotel. The folk artists will be made to stay in some cheap place. Their worlds are as extreme as the pathar and the phool. The extremity between rich and poor. Between what is considered 'culture' and what is not. Folk artists are rarely given the respect they deserve. So when I heard pathar ke phool, I thought of the difference between the worlds of the rich and the poor.

Can you tell us a little bit about the making of lattar? How did you relate to the theme of masculine feminine?

Because of the society we live in, when we say 'mardangi', the usual definitions come to mind.. The everyday incidents we see around us. But Piyush kept pushing us to think beyond. When he asked us for suggestions of what to name the performance, I suggested 'Lattar' / Vine because for me it is an apt metaphor for Launda Naach.

Like a creeper that grows in all directions. It droops, it curls around, sometimes it grows too much and people want to cut and throw it away. But still, it grows. For the performance, we did a lot of workshops on our ideas of masculine and feminine. In Launda Naach, there is a specific context of masculinity. The kind of violence the performers face on a day to day basis.

When we asked Sunaina Ji about mardangi, he said simply, it is man. Like when we go to perform and the men make us sit on their thighs and put 100,200 rs in our mouth and tell us to dance.

That is mardangi. To be a 'mard'. To project yourself in this way. With Sipahi, he remembered all the experiences of physical violence. This is what it meant for them. In conversation with Piyush, he tried to push us, to think of the masculinities inside men, inside women.

We tried.. But at one point I also told him, I can only think this much for now, let's start from here, it will keep evolving!

There is already an interesting interplay of masculine and feminine in Launda Naach. The boundaries are blurred. How do you perceive the form?

We have to go back to the start of Launda Naach in Bihar. At that time there was a lot of caste discrimination in Bihar. SC/ST people didn't even have the right to sit on a khatiya (cot) in front of the upper castes. And the position of women- across castes actually- was really terrible.

They couldn't even speak openly in public. Even now, if a woman is in the presence of a man, she has to wear the ghunghat. Now during this time, Bhikhari Thakur was dreaming of a revolution. He was wondering, what would be an apt form for this revolution, what kind of cultural weapon should be used? He had studied the forms of Ram Leela and had traveled to different parts like Bengal and studied the folk forms.

He knew that if it was only men speaking about these issues, no-one would listen. It needed to grab attention. He was looking at the silence imposed on Dalit men and the silence imposed on women. So I feel like he combined the two- and created this form- that could open up a new imagination.

What do you feel happens to the performers body (largely men) when they perform Launda Naach?

This is interesting because it's changing. During Bikhari Thakur's time, men used to dress up as women. During the show, when they were in costume, they were always in character. But outside the performance space, they publicly

identified as men. Now I feel more artists identify themselves as transgender. They live as women, outside the performance space also. I don't know if its because it's more open or acceptable now? Many of the performers do end up feeling like they were born in the wrong body. And of course, they love to dance.

Any way right now in the market, there is more demand for women dancers, no one wants to watch male dancers anymore.

You told us it begins from mazboori (forced circumstance) and then becomes shauk (fondness/preference).. Is this what you meant?

Yes, this is what I meant. We have to understand that. It is 'mazboori' because 99% of the artists are largely from the Dalit Community. They are not from OBC or General category. There are very few livelihood opportunities, and that is also why Launda Naach becomes a generational practice. Like Sipahi's grandfather, father, brothers, now him. He doesn't want it to continue for his children.. Sunaina Ji is the last in his family. The point is that the form is also covered in a lot of shame.

Like when we were working on this performance, I didn't go home the entire duration. Already there were rumours in my village that Raju has started a 'naach party'. It is embarrassing..and in that how do we explain to people what we are trying to do differently?

There is an intrinsic connection then, between cultural practice, labour and caste identity..

Yes, absolutely. Each caste actually has its own form. Launda Naach is very popular, people would travel long distances to watch their favourite performers. If they didn't like the performance, they would complain the next day! Many of the performers are also addicted to alcohol and weed, which creates a stereotype about them, but then how else do you dance all night?

The performers are mostly from SC backgrounds, but the audience is mixed caste. The point is that there is a double standard.. Who decides what is vulgar and obscene? The upper castes. You can trace it back further.. Why did the caste system emerge in the first place? To divide people and to divide work. How do you create divides?
For feeling superior, you need to make someone else inferior. Same with arts and culture. Some forms have become pure and classical, other forms are vulgar and obscene.. But here is the hypocrisy..The upper castes say one thing but are doing something else.

A Dalit woman is considered untouchable, but not when upper caste men want to do something right? Nowadays, even Brahmin girls are dancing on stage, on insta reels, but the thing is, it doesn't define their identity. They can keep re-fashioning their identity. They have that mobility. But if you're a launda, that identity will never leave you, and that is because of the caste connotation it carries.

I remember in the post performance discussion that there was a debate about reclaiming Launda Naach in a different context. Some of the performers felt it should not continue. What do you feel?

We must remember the intent with which Launda Naach began. Bikhari Thakur's goal of non discrimination and equality has still not been met. So there is still a need for this form. After his death, why has there not been another Bikhari Thakur? We need to find ways to represent his work in a new context because it's necessary. Launda Naach plays a very important role in this. For example, if you go for a Lavani performance in Maharashtra, hundreds of people will show up. Because these forms are connected to the people. The same power is not there if you're going to give a political speech..

How has the experience of October Jam been for you?

I always return with a very positive energy. There is a culture maraa has built- in the way you work, the way you make time to sit and discuss different topics. I wish that culture was there in Bihar, because its very important for different kinds of people to come together and talk.
Like with men, they will generally speak about politics or the state of the country.. They won't sit and talk about masculinity. Which is so necessary because they are also victims of the same thing..I like coming to the festival because my mind also opens up and we are motivated to learn more.

The temple behind you seems to have begun its evening aarti!

Arey, we are speaking of culture no, this is the problem! There is not a single village you can go to in Bihar now, where you won't find at least ten new temples. Earlier we used to all worship nature, now its Gayatri vandana this, Ganesh vandana, at the start of any small event. This is what has become the culture. This is what we need to fight. Let me tell you straight. This will not change in our lifetime.. Maybe not even in the next generation. Maybe after that.. But the work needs to start now.. And for that we need to present new cultural forms.. That is the work ahead of us.

NOTES FROM THE LIFE OF LAUNDA PERFORMERS

Lattar means Creeper or Vine.

Launda Naach is a folk dance of the Bhojpuri speaking Community of India, Nepal, Mauritius and the Caribbean Islands. It is performed by males who dress as women to become 'Launda'— a term which can mean: female impersonator, feminine man, queer man, and/or-alternatively a 'folk' artist-performer who practices this art-form. The term 'Naach' literally means dance, but in folk traditions can mean a mix of dance, drama, theatre, performance, and storytelling.

Story of Lattar - Zeropowercut - By Piyush

Based on real-life incidents, this story follows the lives of oppressed-caste folk performers and their struggles against caste and patriarchy. It explores artists' love and dedication to their craft, their search for expression and self-realization, and idioms from the folk and colloquial traditions of Bhojpur, Bihar. It also examines the practices of Nirgun and Launda.

Lattar comes from ongoing collaborations between Raju and Piyush, later joined by Sunaina and Sipahi. Raju and Piyush started working together in 2022 to create anti-caste expression and knowledge in their local languages and colloquial forms.

2022: Piyush's installation BucketSpeak featured the voices and writings of Raju.

2023: Piyush, Raju, and Deepmala created Anumanlok, an IVR-based dissemination of unfinished poems in Bhojpuri.

2023: Raju performed jangayek.txt, an anti-caste song segment co-written by Raju and Piyush, presented as an online performance followed by discussion.

2024: Raju and Piyush interviewed Sipahi for a project on migration, where Sipahi shared how his wife appreciated his work and performance as a Naach and Launda artist.

LATTAR: THE PERFORMANCE

Lattar consists of five scenes. Two are based on Raju's research on the lives and struggles of folk artists and public performers, while one is directly inspired by Sipahi's interview.

Scene 1 – A Reflection on Masculinity
A person searches for a place for himself inside the house he built. The scene explores Nirgun as a way to recognize the ungraspable world through real-life imaginaries. It examines how people are bound by gender and caste taboos, leading to self-abjection.

Scene 2 – The Show Must Go On
A Launda artist is forced to continue performing even after receiving the news of his spouse's death. The performance incorporates elements of Naach, including teasing, upper-caste masculinity, and gunfire, creating a crisis that resounds through the play.

"Is Chilgozra shackled to the stage or committed to Naach?"

Scene 3 – Dreams of Love
A person dreams of receiving a love letter from their lover. The song in this scene remains unchanged from traditional lyrics, highlighting struggles with beauty standards, populism, and artistic integrity.

Scene 4 – Violence and Harassment
A Launda artist recalls barely escaping an attempt of sexual harassment by dominant-caste men. More artists shared similar experiences, and the scene incorporates elements from two incidents. Here, the dancing stops, and Sipahi tells the story.

Scene 5 – "My Wife Loves Me Like a Launda"
Despite the tension between praise and humiliation in the crowd, the play ends on a hopeful note, showing how love and acceptance can emerge through performance and self-expression.

IN CONVERSATION WITH BRAHMA PRAKASH[15]

Brahm Prakash (BP): How did you come into this performance tradition?

Sunaina Ji: As a child, I used to watch my father and grandfather dance. It was just part of life. Then one day, a performer—someone my mother knew—asked her, 'Your son isn't doing anything, why don't you let him come with us?' She agreed. That's how I started. I was very young, but from then on, I would walk kilometres to the riverside for rehearsals. It was never a formal training—there was no guru, there is no school for this. You learn by dancing, by being part of the troupe."

Sipahi: I migrate every year to Pune to prune and collect roses. But my father and grandfather, both of them were also dancers. To become a Launda dancer you have to have a sense of music, rhythm, dance. I began performing because there was no other way out. There was no work, no money at home. What else could I do? And once you start, it becomes your life. You see other performers, you pick up movements, you listen to the rhythms and you get better. It becomes part of your body.

BP: This reminds me, I once asked a launda dancer if he knows dancing? I guess this wasn't even a valid question because you need to know how to dance to be a Launda! He then told me how one time, a sand mafia in Bihar forced him to dance. He was drunk, and while he was performing, one of the men started touching him.

I tried to step away, but he got angry. He took out his gun and fired it in the air. I ran. These things happen to us all the time. If we refuse to dance in a certain way, if they get tired, if they don't do what the audience demands, they are beaten, insulted, or worse. We keep hearing how dancers have been shot on stage as well. They also have a feudal audience which harasses performers.

Moving on, there is a belief that classical dance has rigour and launda dance doesn't. What do you have to say about this? What do you feel is special about Launda Naach?

Sipahi: People think it's just about dressing up and dancing, but that's not true. A Launda dancer has to be many things—an actor, a singer, a dancer, a musician, all in one. You can't just stand there and move your hands. You have to know how to control the stage. You have to feel the music, to understand rhythm. You have to be able to sing while dancing. And it's not just simple steps—you have to master movements like 'murki'—a kind of sharp, controlled motion of the body. Without that, you are not a real Launda. There are dancers who can balance on a thali (metal plate) while performing, some who can create patterns on the ground with their feet, some who change five sarees one after the other, on stage!

BP: There is a lot of stigma attached. So the challenge is how can we reclaim this art form that is coming from a context of cultural labour. The other aspect is the relation between the social and performance domain. For example, Jaishankar Sunadari, a performer, he became an embodiment of women and women themselves used to wear a saree like him. So this question is tricky because we are mixing two different realms, the realm of performance and expression. We also generate another kind of complexity. Before people danced till they were 50, now the age cut-off is 20-30. Before dancers could also have moustaches, and that was fine. In Launda, it was difficult to fix an identity.

Sunaina Ji: For me, the moment I start applying makeup, I feel the change. My body, my movements, my voice—everything shifts. There is a process and a transformation. When I step on stage, I don't feel like 'just me' anymore. I enter the character fully. The performance takes me

15 Brahma Prakash is a writer, cultural theorist and assistant professor at JNU, New Delhi.

somewhere else. It's not just about dressing up, it's about living in that space, in that moment. And when the audience reacts, when they cheer, when they sing along, I feel it even more."

Sipahi: But in-spite of this, I don't want my children to enter this profession. It comes with too much humiliation. People will praise you while you perform, but off-stage, they look down on you. They call us names. They make jokes. They say, 'Oh, you're just a Nachnewaala (dancer). They don't see the skill, the effort, the struggle. They only see what they want to see. I have three daughters. I won't let them go through this life. I won't let them face what I have faced.

Raju: This stigma comes from upper caste but it is also popular in lowered caste groups..

BP: Launda dancers have always been part of a tradition that exists at the margins, both culturally and socially. They are celebrated on stage and humiliated off it. The contradiction is sharp. Many dancers speak of the transformation they feel while performing, a sense of losing themselves in the art. Yet, once the performance is over, they are forced back into a society that refuses to accept them with dignity.

BP: That is the biggest question. Launda Naach is disappearing. Not because people don't love it, but because the artists themselves don't want to continue because of this stigma. They have been pushed out—by violence, by stigma, by lack of recognition. Bollywood and elite musicians take our songs, remix them, perform them in air-conditioned halls, and don't even credit us.

This art is stolen, erased, rewritten. So what does 'future' mean? What does 'reclaiming' this tradition mean? The decline of this tradition is not just about the performers choosing to leave—it is about society making it harder for them to stay. With fewer performance opportunities, increasing stigma, and economic instability, many artists have no choice but to migrate for labour work. If this continues, we may reach a time where Launda Naach exists only in memory, erased from the cultural landscape.

Raju: The only way forward is through action—through resistance, through movements, through people standing up and saying, 'This is ours, and we will not let it die. Reclamation cannot happen in isolation. It requires collective acknowledgment, support, and structural change. If Launda Naach is to survive, it must be valued not just as entertainment, but as a cultural and artistic practice that deserves dignity and recognition."

WHERE WE BEGIN AND WHERE WE END

A NOTE FROM DU SARASWATHI[16]

In Love Purana and Pakshi Purana, Du Saraswathi takes us into the life-world of Santhimmi, a woman from Rural Karnataka, who has a mischievous way of interrogating the world she finds herself within. She explores the fictitious relationship between mind and body against the backdrop of passing seasons.

In Pakshi Purana, Santhimmi observes the behaviour of male birds, their ability to nurture, care and express love. What happened to the lost birds in our hearts, before we sent them into exile? Santhimmi wonders aloud, opening up a passage of speculation amongst all of us about the parts of ourselves that we hide away, the parts of ourselves we censor.

16 Du Saraswathi, is a playwright, activist and dancer, who has been engaged in several working class and anti caste movements across Karnataka.

My name is Du Saraswathi. I am a dancer and playwright. I have been working closely with Powrakarmikas, Manual Scavengers, sex workers and other working class communities for several years. During these years, we have worked to create pieces that explore deep and transformative themes.

For me, stone flower has a beautiful shape, with no shadow over the earth. There is no darkness in this creation, only clarity. The stone is hard and enduring; it doesn't wither. Stone, in a way, represents the mind. We say the mind is like stone. A flower, by contrast, is soft, fleeting, and beautiful, but in nature, everything exists in a cycle of creation.

What is masculinity? What is femininity? Are they two opposing forces, or are they intertwined? Can we portray that connection? Love, after all, comes from the heart; it doesn't have boundaries, nor is it black and white. Whether stone or flower, each moment is part of a process of transformation.

The principle of nature is cyclical. As Buddha taught, constant transformation is the ultimate truth. When all beings are part of a process of constant change, distinctions like "black" and "white" become meaningless. Every moment, countless cells grow and die.
So who am I, Saraswathi?

STILLNESS IN MOTION

IN CONVERSATION WITH DEEPAK AND MIRRA[17]

In 'Maatu', dancers Deepak and Mirra explore the antagonistic yet symbiotic relationship between the masculine and feminine, through a non verbal exploration of being still and fluid, of being in motion and becoming solid through movement and music.

17 Deepak is a dancer choreographer and teacher based in Bangalore. Mirra is yoga teacher, choreographer and dancer. Both of them have been practitioners for over 20 years.

What led you to develop Maatu?

Deepak: Sometimes when we discuss these subjects, it becomes text heavy and the words can bog you down. So, I took a stand, to create a piece that dwells in silence. But of course I feel there was a lot more to the piece, than just being silent.

Mirra: Initially, we thought it should be called 'Maatu' (conversation) but it'll be silent. Conversation doesn't always require voice. One thing I observed was that a lot more women participated in the last 15 minutes of our performance (the performance ends with an invitation to the audience to draw what they experienced during the show).

It struck me that somehow it is easier for women to be vulnerable in public spaces than men. For me that was interesting. In the end it was only women, even Deepak left! I was wondering why that happened. I don't have an answer.

Deepak: There was one point in the decision making where we decided to not have applause. In my understanding the applause is the end of something. We thought this would allow people to carry the piece outside the performance. How do we 'end' something that can continue, beyond the stage, beyond the room?

Deepak: The point of the performance was also about breaking the usual contemporary dance form and to do something unpredictable. The idea of de-construction is key for me, even in contemporary dance that is becoming fixed, whereas the origin of contemporary dance was to break away from the classical.

The intention was to alienate audiences through form to also see how they respond to an abstract form, to push people to be provoked and start a conversation. Why should an audience member get what he or she expects? Art is not consumerism. If something unpredictable is seen, how do audiences respond? So, in a way the piece is a disruption to provoke missing conversation between audiences and performers.

This disruption of form also adds to a conversation around masculinity. Similarly, people don't seem to have the patience to sit with something new, with curiosity and to just slow down. I thought it would be interesting to have people be curious about this topic instead of just having a lot of intellectual conversations around it. Isn't it intimidating?

What has been your journey from being a dancer to choreographer?

Deepak: So just as quick context, most choreographers start their journey as dancers. From the time of me engaging in contemporary dance in India in the beginning of 2000s until now, my journey has been a huge transition in a few realms.

The first one is access to training which is a lot more diverse right now than when we were training. So just to give context, it was just Satyakadadi and STEM and few people in the north and few people in Chennai working like this.

Now we have a lot of information, like people are teaching the Cunningham Technique here in India. Earlier, you'd have to go to the US if you wanted to learn that technique. The journey has been long and fulfilling. Of course, there remains a huge gap in resources for choreographers because by default our education system doesn't allow us to be creative.

So, dancers who turn into choreographers just follow the same habits and skills, it is sort of a template. But there is very little space to truly explore what might be 'contemporary'. So that is where we are right now in India- good training for dancers but not too many opportunities to be creative choreographers.

The other aspect dancers are taught is this notion of being neutral. For me, I remember my first solo, I told myself I am going to try and be neutral. But then I discovered, nothing is neutral.

The minute my body is on stage, there are already 15 labels for me everything from being a man to being a man of colour and so on. The only beauty in trying to find neutrality is to actually figure out ways to confuse people, but that isn't neutral either. It's another way of manipulating information from the knowledge you have around you. I feel neutrality carries the baggage of the colonial past, and I don't understand what can be neutral, because the moment I come on stage, there are labels which are inevitable.

Does audience energy influence you the way you perform?

Deepak: Yes, definitely the audience energy does change something in the way we work and in this modern world, that's the only thing that the online platform can't give you. So yes, the way the audience sits in the space does affect us but our work is also to really figure out a way to give an experience to the audience who have given us the time. So it's interconnected.

Even if the audience is cold, we have the skill to change that attitude in the room and a lot of times that's the beauty of performing arts because you never know what will work with different kinds of audiences. So yes, when we do any kind of performance, we work towards changing the attitude that the audience came in with to the show. Something has to change in their experience.

What were you trying to communicate in Maatu?

As the name says it's Mathu, a silent conversation. One of the core ideas of the work was, is it even possible to communicate without words? Because although it is liberating to use language and be sophisticated in trying to translate an emotion.

But at the same time, is it possible to not use that aspect of our brain and just communicate with silence and through body and space? Is it possible to request the audience to sit with us and experience some other kind of communication which may not always end up in 'understanding' something, but it might, it might definitely give you an experience which will fulfill the need of a non-brain entity in your body.

That might be just you picking up the chalk and scribbling something on the floor. That can be also just you looking at someone balancing with something on their head. That might be just the smell that we create with the incense sticks. It might also be the feeling of water coming onto their skin, you know? So, those are the things we were thinking of when we were creating Mathu.

There's something we've been curious about- why do contemporary dancers not make eye contact with audience?

I go back to what I was saying earlier about our training and the journey of contemporary dance. I think this is an aesthetic choice, because in classical dance there is a lot of emphasis on the eyes and expressing through the eyes.

So contemporary dancers were trying to move away from this. It also connects with breaking everything down to the so-called 'neutral'.
This is something I used to do as well. But over time, I don't think a blank face is possible. I do look at the audience and I also make the decision of putting the light on the audience, so that I can see them.

CAN YOU PLANT A SEED IN A ROCK?

IN CONVERSATION WITH BIG BANG[18]

Every year at October Jam, we occupy the Samsa amphitheatre, as a way of claiming space for young people's expression and cultural assertions. This year, this took the form of a celebration and protest through tamate and parai, rap and oppari. This includes Big Bang (Koramangala Slum Cluster), Minchu Arts Collective (Anekal), Buguri Children's Library (Bangalore) and Adavi Arts Collective (Hosur).

18 Sathya is an expert Parai player and one of the founders of Big Bang collective.


October Jam presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल

What do you think of the name Stone Flowers?

Sathya: The name 'Kallina Hoovu' sounded very weird to me in the beginning. Kallu is strong and can't be powdered and Hoovu is something soft which might break. How do these two connect? How does a flower come from a stone? Can you plant a seed in a rock? Will it grow? I am left with these questions…

But the name does connect with our community. The community is viewed like a stone. For example, if you ask someone what they can do with a stone, they will say they can throw it, hit someone, use it in a fight or chuck it to the side.

We live in Koramangala Slum Cluster. When anyone hears the word 'slums' they think it's a local place with goondas and drug addicts. We wanted to break this stereotype. Because for us it is home, a place where we live, play and laugh. We don't live only with sorrows. We have talent, we are educated, our women are empowered.

There are people who earn lakhs and people who earn 1k a day. So, this to me is the flower. I invite people to come see the petals at a more micro level. We want to show all these realities through our performance. We have been engaging with youth in our area, because for example, with the girls, there are a lot of restrictions about going out, being around boys and mingling with other kinds of people. Through arts, we can break these boundaries, we can empower the girls and they are then ready to perform in any space.

How did Big Bang start?

So, this started during Covid when everyone was depressed, even the staff at Maarga (an NGO working on education in Koramangala Slum Cluster). We started Big Bang as a way to dance and engage in fun activities. We discovered a lot of fresh talent, like dancers, musicians, percussionists. So we made a team.

Initially it was just six members. After a month, on January 1st we launched our team as a part of an event for Bhima Koregaon at Freedom Park. Because of lack of funds, three people out of the six left. Three of us stayed back and with Margaa's support we collaborated with Maraa. Through our collaboration with maraa, we applied for funding, which helped us build our work further.

What is your relationship with the parai and has it changed over time?

Naren (from Adavi) taught us the parai. In the beginning when I touched it, it was heavy but I immediately felt like we were related. We know the history of the instrument and at a time when privileged people are avoiding beef, we are holding the parai in our hands. Naren told us that the parai is made from the skin of a cow or buffalo. He was trying to connect us to the parai emotionally, at a time when there was a beef ban! See, beef is my personal thing!

When the beef ban was implemented, I felt like I had lost something. But knowing the history and the struggle of the parai, I felt like something came back to me. Just like how they considered the parai an untouchable instrument, we, as Dalits, have also been kept aside like that.

Around 10 years ago the parai would only be used during funerals and after that, it slowly started entering performance stages and representing our community. Forms like Bharatanatyam and Classical music have always had a stage. Parai belongs to a particular community so it's important that it gets a stage. Now everyone is talking about the parai, they all want to touch it and play it ! So somewhere we feel recognised. You can find the political and personal in our relationship with the parai.

For every October Jam, we create our performance in response to the theme. So for Kallina Hoovu, we felt the flower is related to women as well. So we gave a lot more space for women in the performance. Usually in the oppari (songs of mourning) usually the boys play the Djembe but

for this performance the girls played the Djembe.

We are committed to ensure the growth of Big Bang. See because if only one person goes and screams versus a group goes and scream, there's a difference right? If it's just an individual person, people might not bother listening. They are more likely to listen if it's a group. That is our aim.

A MAN WITH A FLOWER BLOOMING INSIDE

MINCHU COLLECTIVE[19]

19 Mithun is one of the founders of Minchu arts collective, a tamate group comprising primarily of women and girls, from Anekal.


STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल

What does the name Kallina Hoovu evoke for you?

Yashas: When I think of Kallina Hoovu, a masculine man with a feminine part comes to mind. An unemotional man who has a flower blooming from inside him. I'm new to this and not very experienced. In the beginning I used to believe that social change used to only happen through the law or through protest (horaata).

After viewing the past few October Jams I started to realise that cultural places can also bring social change. So, when it comes to playing the tamate, we see that through the instrument, there is a lot to say about caste and its history. The instrument itself is associated with a particular caste. I feel the idea is to question this. And one way to do that, is through cultural means. Now I have belief that there can be a cultural revolution. In any art form, it takes time, it can't be forced, but there is a possibility of change and transformation.

Mithun: To me it felt like the flower could be a metaphor for feminism!

How do you think the your performance relates to this theme?

Mithun: I think it's significant that it's an all female group. My parents are both activists who worked in NGO's and the cultural aspect of resistance has always intrigued me. In Tamil Nadu there are a lot of women led collectives. In Karnataka, there are fewer spaces for women. Plus when it comes to beats and rhythm, we can see the tabla and the mridangam here, but not other instruments so much. So Minchu focuses on the Tamate and people have a lot of false beliefs about the instrument which must be shaken.

For example, people think only one gender and people from one caste should play it. These myths must be busted. We need to question these associations to break the violence of gender and caste.

Has the context of Anekal influenced you to set up a group like Minchu?

In Anekal, there are a lot of domestic violence cases. We felt playing the Tamate could be a force of change. There is also a strong right wing hold. The assumption is that women should not play the tamate or touch it. There was an incident the other day when we were organising an event.

We were practising in a residential area. Around 30-40 people gathered and said it was too much of a disturbance. After the program a few family members who watched it didn't want their child working with us. People assume that women should only play soft instruments like the Veena or the piano but nothing with beats or something people can dance to.

But we are continuing with our performance and taking it to colleges, where girls have started showing interest. We have started training and performing with them. This is how we hope to bring about change.

PARAI AS CELEBRATION AND PROTEST

IN CONVERSATION WITH NAREN[20]

20 Naren is the founder of Adavi Arts Collective and is a well known expert parai player.


October Jam presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
ADAVI

What are stone flowers for you?

When I heard it first I felt like the word was like an image. Stone flower felt like it was cushioning masculinity and femininity. We began discussing the theme in Adavi. Like how the Parai is usually played only by men and how Oppari is usually sung only by men- in the time of mourning, the entire village only hears the male voice. For the performance, we subverted these cultural expectations.

That leads nicely into my next question- Can you tell me what kind of ideation and preparation went behind this performance?

So we told the artists in our collective that we have been invited to perform in October Jam. Every October Jam feels like a celebration for us. Here all the parai artists in Bangalore gather and collaborate. Each year, it is nice to see the number of artists increasing.

I remember my introduction to October Jam was when I went to watch Pasha Bhai in Goethe, and happened to be carrying my parai. I went onto stage and asked if I could jam with him, and we played together live.

October Jam really has the spirit of a festival. Usually, we regularly perform parai and we mostly speak about caste in our performances.
For this year's jam, we also looked at gender. Usually we show ourselves in a uniform dress regardless of gender.

A t - shirt and some pants/dhoti but this time, all the female artists were wearing dhotis and a few of us were wearing skirts. Everyone put on kajal and eye liner and every artist painted their eyes. This is not just for females. We want to break these binaries. It felt very colourful.

This was the first time I watched an Adavi performance and I was wondering about how Adavi formed?

It's quite a long story. Few of us in the collective were in a theatre group in Tamil Nadu and due to many reasons such as sexual harassment and lack of money, a few of us left that group. Everyone split up then. We have been doing art all our lives and we had given up everything to art and theatre.

We had given our youth to theatre, we couldn't suddenly go and work regular jobs in IT. We were stuck. We had no voice because no one was listening to us. I wanted to gather myself and do my art again. I began conducting theatre and parai workshops and Adavi formed in May 2023.

How would you describe Adavi?

We have one ultimate goal that is like Begumpura[21] where there are no prejudices based on caste, gender or sex. To create a better society and live together. It is a small nest and our aim is to create a community without judgement which aims to break caste, race and gender.

I also know you've spent a lot of time playing the parai. Has your relationship with the instrument changed over time?

When I was playing at school and college it was more like….I used to go and play wherever. There was no choice when it came to stage or location. I used to play for marriage and death ceremonies. After a point we thought we shouldn't play for death ceremonies or god. We shouldn't play in any places where we don't get respect or adequate wages.

21 Begumpura is a concept articulated by Babasaheb Ambedkar that refers to a classless, casteless and tax free utopian society

You've also been a part of many October Jams. So what does this festival mean to you?

It's personal. It feels like home and like my native. There is always space for Adavi in October Jam. Every year maraa explores different topics and gathers artists across India. I hope this collaboration continues and there are more opportunities.

I also know that you have performed at various venues in Bangalore. Are there any similarities or differences between these venues?

I never expected we could be performing at all these places. The problem remains with payment. People will take two months to give us money. But we also play the Parai in some places as a protest, and there we don't expect money. It is because parai is the instrument of liberation.

It unites people and even if we don't talk,the parai will speak. In some places, it might seem like a celebration. So when we performed recently at BIC and Blr Hubba we called it a celebration as a protest. We want to take the Parai to places like NGMA and Rangashankara, where all other forms have travelled. Now it is time for the parai.

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

THE MAKING OF LIFAFIYA[22]

Lifafiya is a solo performance, co-devised by ekta and Anushi, and performed by Anushi. It is a solo journey of a woman seeking a room of her own. The protagonist imagines and remembers conversations and questions asked by several women she has encountered in life.

It delves deep into silences to unravel the subtle violence and suppressed desires as an inter-generational between women. Based on her lived experiences, she shares what it feels to be tied down to tradition and moral codes of an upper caste family structure. She explores the precarity of choosing her own path, a risk that comes with its own cost.

22 Ekta is one of the co - founders of Maraa collective, writer, filmmaker and has been working at Maraa since 2008. Anushi is an actor, writer and researcher who has been working in maraa since 2014.

Can you start by introducing yourselves?

Anushi: I'm Anushi and I work with a media and arts collective called Maraa, which organised this October Jam called Stone Flowers. As a part of this jam I performed Lifafiya which was co devised by Ekta and I.

Ekta: Hi I work at Maraa and I have been working there for the last 16 years. I strongly believe in theater. And the three of us, Anushi, Angarika and I got together to co- facilitate the process of setting us a theatre group in Madhya Pradesh. This group is made of survivors of caste and and sexual violence and we do look at theatre as a process of healing and catharsis.

We strongly believe the women have found a voice and justice through the stage. So the idea is to build this theatre group so they have more space and so we can move beyond this identity of just being a survivor. And that process has been very inspiring because we could see the transformation in the actors as well as in ourselves. We could see the transformation in the theatre making process. Which is also one of the reasons that inspired us to work on Lifafiya.

How do you perceive the theme of stone flowers?

Anushi: It's called Pathar Ke Phool in Hindi. Honestly, I'm very into popular culture and I was instantly reminded of this Hindi film called Pathar Ke Phool with Salman Khan and Raveena Tandon. For me, I think it represents something that's both nazuk and mazboot which is pathar and phool.

I do see them as really part of the whole, not as binaries because I feel if we look at the pathar ka phool also which is an actual phool, it contains both the pathar and the phool and I feel there is a relationship between the both. Similarly with Nazuk and mazboot, I think both exist simultaneously and not as two different points of reference. So I feel it's the simultaneity of it that we experience in everyday life. That is how I look at it.

Ekta: For me, Stone Flowers allows us to explore all kinds of meanings around "stone" and "flower," and what emerges when we look at them together. It invites us to examine these ideas in their extremes: the stone and the flower as metaphors for the masculine and feminine—not to say that stone is masculine and flower is feminine, but rather to explore the degree of the "stone" and "flower" within us. It's a metaphor for the interplay between softness and hardness, between the yielding and the unyielding—just the materiality of stone and flower themselves.

There is something about this duality that allows us to hold both contradictions and continuities to co-exist within us. They exist on different sides of life, not at the same point, but still in relation to each other.

I think we all carry these features within us. In every relationship, these identities keep shifting. Stone Flowers feels like a way to meditate on these selves within us—our ever-changing nature. The self is not static or fixed; it changes constantly—with age, with people, with circumstances. I find myself wondering: is there even a singular "self"? How do we measure it? Does the masculine and feminine within us oscillate, shift, and take turns emerging? What becomes more grounded, and what fades into the background over time? That's what I'm reflecting on.

Is it possible to explore a topic like masculinities without looking at the binaries? What was the thought process behind this?

Ekta: I think that we can't do away with the binaries, they exist. And I think it's only because they exist that we're even able to think about what to do and what we need to do in order to break those extreme points. Maybe sometimes when you break a binary, another set of binaries are formed and the minute you break it and something else forms and then you break it and then another something forms.

I do feel like most of the work in the jam just focuses on this kind of breaking- forming pattern because all of the performances actually have this

texture in it. So that's one way of looking at it. So I think the binaries are sometimes also impossible to break. And I think we'll have to live with some of that because how do people arrive at generalizations? They arrive at generalizations because the binaries are so strongly standing in front of you. You can have an anti-something sentiment or a pro-something sentiment.

These are all binary frameworks and that's really what capitalism also in a way constructs. It pushes us to look at the world in a particular way. So I guess the whole idea of trying to break the binary, so to speak, is a very sort of utopian start. But it's nice that we could keep that as a wishful thinking.

It's wishful thinking and hopefully that, you know, by presenting different ideas and ways of thinking, then... maybe there can be some shifts. I don't really think that we have broken the binary or we can ever do away with extreme positions.

Anushi: This question also came up while we were writing the masculinities study, which kind of forms the basis of this entire jam as well. And I remember Niveditha Menon, who was helping us edit the study, spoke a lot about the role binaries have to play. And I think we spoke a lot about it at that time also.

About how sometimes binaries are also a reference point and help us make meanings of what we're trying to question. Structures also have a role to play. I think it also explores what exists within the structure itself. But of course, the curiosity to push beyond what the structure dictates is also very important.

How do you think Lifafiya as a performance relates to this theme?

Anushi: To begin, I'll refer back to what Ekta mentioned in the introduction about our involvement in the theatre-making process with Freeda Theatre[23]. While creating that play, there were many learnings for us as co-travellers, facilitating the process. Often, discussions around violence arose. These stories, frequently told from marginalized contexts, have become so normalized that they create certain perceptions.

One of the actors, who is also a dear friend, asked, "Does this not happen in your circles? Why don't we hear stories from within?" That question struck me deeply. When they shared their experiences, I was reminded of similar incidents in my own family—extended family, women in my life—and how those experiences were shrouded in silence.

No one spoke about them. Her question hit the nail on the head: Why aren't we talking about this? Because the silence perpetuates perceptions—"it happens there; they are like that; we are respectable people." But why are we respectable? What constructs this idea of respectability?These questions have lingered for a long time. For me, theatre-making brought these silences to the surface. Ekta, Angarika, and I have been in conversation about these stories for a while.

Last year, Ekta and I sat down to explore this further and decided to take it to the stage. I began writing after a workshop and later we decided to bring it onto the floor.

I feel the play interrogates silence—rather than masculinity per se—examining what happens within traditions, especially in structured, household spaces. It reflects the weight of patriarchy passed down through generations in the name of tradition. What happens when you question it? Women, who experience patriarchy first-hand, often pass it on to future generations. Why does this happen? How does it get passed? What transforms, and what remains?This passing down occurs in a very unsaid way.

No one explicitly instructs us, but we internalize: This is the right way; questioning it will cause trouble. I find this unsaid transmission fascinating—the weight of experiences, traditions, and silences. It's something mundane, embedded in everyday life, not an extraordinary event.

This connects to the concept of the stone flower: the coexistence of fragility (naazuk) and strength

23 Freeda Theatre is an inter-generational collective of SC/ST women from Madhya Pradesh.

(masboot). In negotiating life's daily struggles, this duality exists within us simultaneously. I don't want to repeat what's already been said, but if you consider scenes from Lifafiya, there's a strong metaphor of desire. A woman might yearn to escape a situation but ultimately succumbs to societal pressures.

What would happen if a woman truly pursued her desires? The play raises this as an essential question, deeply linked to stone flowers.

Ekta: A stone flower is an unexpected combination—stones and flowers don't belong together. Yet the play forces us to confront the duality within us: the masculine and feminine, the strength and vulnerability. What holds us back? What happens when we assert ourselves?When a woman asserts herself—choosing independence, for instance—it disrupts societal norms and comes with consequences. The play comments on traditions, leaving home, and the unimaginable choice of a woman to remain single.

In many societies, survival depends on fitting into conventional moulds: marriage, relationships, and sexual orientation. But what happens when a woman rejects these? Do we, as a society, have space for her? How is she viewed?

This "single woman" question is significant even within feminist discourse. It's as if her existence mirrors a stone flower: embodying freedom and strength but constrained by societal rigidity, which prevents her from fully blooming.

Lifafiya also explores why certain stories remain censored, unspoken, or buried within our own communities. The minute such stories emerge, they're met with defensiveness or seen as damaging to social constructs. This refusal to confront internal silences perpetuates them, and in questioning these silences, the play opens up deeply uncomfortable yet necessary conversations.

Because it's something that you don't do, something that you don't talk about, and something that you're not supposed to ever imagine. And yet, that desire to not succumb exists. So, I guess it is an invitation for people to look at this in the context of challenging, questioning, but also saying, I'm not becoming that; I stand apart. That's what I think.

In the play, there's this sacred space that's established. To me, it was a space of protest and resistance—through the generations. That was my interpretation. I wanted to know yours?

Anushi: I think, to begin with, the idea came from one of my family stories. It started with my grandmother—exactly like the scene in the play—she was running the household, and no one was allowed inside her sacred space. Nobody really knew what happened. That story was part of one of the responses I was writing for a report.

From there, the conversation began. When we got to the floor and started discussing this particular story, we began asking, What did it signify? What else could it have been? Because even I have never been inside that room. I don't know.

But through the play, I think we see how women find sacred spaces in different shapes and forms throughout their lives. It can be fleeting—it comes and goes. For example, for me, dance is such a space. When I dance, I'm not conscious of who's looking at me. That's my sacred space, where no one is allowed, and whatever is happening is happening to me alone. Through the play, Ekta and I designed it so we keep going back to that space but also come out of it. It's there, and we access it at certain points.

As Ekta said earlier, this play is also about a woman's desire. And in the course of life, in structured life, many desires are suppressed—for reasons like duty, shame, or societal assertions. But what happens if one day all those desires surface and call out to this woman? What happens if she decides to answer?

Ekta: I think the sacred space is a crucial marker in the play. It's true to Anushi's grandmother's experience but also a space of curiosity for Anushi

as a granddaughter. For her mother, though, maybe it transforms into something different. Modernity might have replaced it for her mother with other forms of space—like the yoga scene in the play. I feel that scene is her finding and claiming space for herself, whatever that space may mean.

The sacred space is a form of resistance: I want my time. I want my space. Historically, women have been fighting for this space in every context. That scene, for me, resonates with every woman, regardless of their background.

All women, at some point, have been denied that space. It's often regulated—how much time we can spend there, what we can do there. Women are rarely allowed to keep secrets; we're always expected to be fully transparent. But women do hold mysteries.

They hold themselves together in their own private ways. I love the resistance in that—it's playful. It says, You don't know what's happening here. And that sacred space isn't fixed.

It can appear anywhere, anytime—whenever there's tension or withdrawal. By the end of the play, we see the sacred space is not just one place but many. It could be everywhere.

For example, when the character goes into a room to cry after an embarrassing moment, that space becomes a sacred space. It's safe; no one will see her there. It comforts her. I love the idea of breaking this notion of a fixed sacred space.

Does it have to be something we return to, like a pilgrimage? What if we can't access it? Does that mean we're no longer resisting? Or do we start finding these spaces wherever we are? I think we do. For me, it could be a tree I visit. I draw strength from that tree.

But that doesn't mean it's the only place that gives me strength. I think the question we must ask is, What happens when a person enters that space, and how do you come out? It can't be the same.

What effect does space have on the body? Is it a place of recovery, transformation, or holding yourself together?

In a world where caste, sexuality, and identity intersect, what role does a play like this have? Why performance? Why this story?

Anushi: Truthfully, it's about what kinds of stories need space and platforms. This play addresses oppression within a community that is historically oppressive. It's interconnected with larger caste structures and practices—it's not isolated.
So why performance? I think theatre allows us to confront ourselves honestly.

The form lets you ask difficult questions of yourself and your body. During the process and performance, I noticed changes in myself—how my body responded in ways I hadn't anticipated.

Theatre allows us to say things we cannot say in words. Much of this story is beyond words—it's in the performance itself. Through this play, I embody different women—women in my family, women I've met through my work at Maraa, and elsewhere. On stage, I feel as if all those women are with me.

I don't feel alone. I don't know... it's weird, but it's also very special. As I embody each of these stories, I feel like Ekta and Angarika are present in them, and so are all other women. There's something there—I haven't yet found the words for it—but it is doing something for sure.

Ekta: I think performance, especially theatre, is one of the most inclusive forms of expression. At least for me, that was how I was introduced to it: anyone can take to it. And I feel we should never lose sight of that core value—to nurture and hone performance as a means of creating meaningful work. Performance can help us heal, broaden our perspectives, and allow us to process our lives. It can expand our individual stories and connect them to others.

Now, the question of who should perform be-

comes tricky. Who should perform, and who should watch? Personally, I don't agree with the idea that just because someone is privileged and has access to cultural or social capital, they should now remain silent or step back.

The real question is: what are we doing with that privilege? How are we challenging it, checking it, and sharing it? This is important. For us, as part of Freeda, this process has been significant. They are women from SC/ST backgrounds, and that matters. But we also find people curious about our lives: "Why don't these things happen in your family?" "Why is your skin like this and ours like that?" These are valid questions, all connected to caste. "Why is your hair like this?" "What about ours?" Often, it's as simple as the water we use—just a material reality.

But these questions lead to important conversations, especially for women from different castes. The reason I emphasize women is that historically, women have been denied these conversations and opportunities for reflection. Within the group, we often find extreme positions: Of course, a woman should live alone! But can she? What will people say? This question cuts across caste boundaries, but the answers vary.

What happens when a woman leaves home? When a queer person leaves home? When an upper-caste woman leaves home versus a lower-caste woman? We need all these perspectives. Performance, at its core, is experiential. It offers moments of empathy. Take, for instance, a scene depicting someone leaving home—how do we understand that moment? Is it just a reckless act?

No. It's an opportunity for the audience to feel and reflect on that experience. It allows us to ask: What is going on here? It helps us see the emotional complexity, the tension, and the societal weight of leaving home. It offers so many ways of thinking about what it means to leave—something that has been incredibly difficult for many women and queer individuals.

That's why performance is so important. If we get caught up in dismissing certain narratives—How long am I going to listen to this upper-caste woman talk about her problems?—then we miss the point. It's a form of social censorship that limits our ability to see things from multiple perspectives.

This isn't to reduce the importance of lower-caste narratives. Those stories are crucial. They've been systematically suppressed, and they need to be heard, shown, repeated, and preserved. But if there's no space for pauses—commas—in our narratives, we'll be stuck in a room full of full stops. It shrinks the imagination of performance, and that worries me.

As I pointed out, this work goes beyond the Jam. It's part of a longer process we're calling Theatre for Resilience. It wasn't made just for the Jam or for the Mirrors fellowship. This performance began as a desire—Anushi's desire—and we wanted her desire to be realized, to be heard, seen, and lived. We hope to take this performance to colleges and spaces where resistance and imagination are shrinking—where people don't have constant access to progressive politics. For those students, whose parents might be telling them to get married, a performance like this could activate dead relationships, create spaces for dialogue, and reflection.

Of course, there are other audiences too—middle-class women, for example, who are stuck in fixed structures, in marriages that bring no happiness, even for the men involved. Why are we still participating in this institution? What is going on? These are the questions we hope to raise.

GHAR KA RASTA BHOOL GAYA

KETAN JAIN[24]

A dispatch from distant lands from our dear friend Ketan. Ketan collaborated on the poetry event with QPC for Stone Flowers. He writes to us with reflections and residues.

24 Ketan is the founder of Razaai Arts Collective. He collaborated with the Queer Poets Collective for.a poetry reading as part of Stone Flowers.

When I think of stone flowers, my mind imagines an impossible image: of fragile petals carved of stone, falling flat by the force of a wind, landing without breaking apart. Of the hardness of stone keeping the flower safe, while the fragility of the flower allows the stone to move.

Is it possible to maintain strength in fragility?
To hold vulnerability without letting your mind
and body
and
spirit
fall
by the wayside?

I think of strength in movement, of finding a sense of protection in what's fleeting. I think of how I move.

I think of home.

I have returned home once every year since the past eight years. Like a religious pilgrimage, the weight of a duty carries me in a direction that I don't even realize. And the more I return, the more I realize how much of a stranger I have always been to the small town.

Agra does not hold the promise of a home to me, despite the fact that I grew up and lived there until I was seventeen. I don't think the city and whatever it gave me ever left me, even though I think, in some ways, I left the city the minute I started perceiving it.

The painful memories of the place became such a constant presence in the landscape of my mind that it would simply blend into the backdrop, like the sounds of the azaan from the mosque next to my house that I never stopped hearing.

The scars of the violence, the phobia, the bullying still remain marked on me. But so does the muscle memory of movements that allowed me to shake away the pain, even if only momentarily. The voices in my head are continuous chidings from Agra – insistences on not being man enough, not being the son I was supposed to be, not being the person I should be. These sounds mix with the music to which I danced to when I was alone in my room, shedding off, briefly, my angst and irritations, to travel in my mind wherever I wanted to go to.

In fact, I think, movement was the home I carried with me. I found a comfort in cruising, in slipping away, in trailing off. In hiding from the bullies, from judgments, and pressures, and finding strangers and outcasts to befriend or love in short-lived sweet nothings. Anyone queer from a small knows the map-to-nowhere that we sketch to traverse and find the life around.

So much of my energy went in drawing this map as a way to survive in the city. And still, Agra is like a distant destination I never arrive at. The city feels like a stranger always eyeing, and judging me, from a distance. Despite its proximity, it will always remains distant. Even the name of the city seems unfamiliar to me – A-ga-ra – the syllables are all alien to my tongue.

As I spell it out, I can feel my mouth open and close and open and close and open and close. The experience of the city feels just as jagged: it has never opened itself up to me, or me to it, and yet I repeatedly return and leave and return and leave and return and leave.

Whenever I return, I spend a lot of time walking. Even if I have work to attend to, duties to fulfill, people to talk to, it's the sweltering North Indian heat, the air of nothing around me, that keeps on attracting me to move outdoors. I drift and move, from one plant to another, like a pebble kicked in motion that never stops, hoping to ignore the heavy weights of family.

Maybe it is because I never found a home in the city, that I kept on moving, looking for a place to find residence in. In and outside the country, I took every opportunity I could to leave. I never found a sense of love that stayed, and something I think it is because I never learnt how to stay.

Many of us with troubled homes, I think, carry a hollowness that is hard to make a home with. We learn to make love with strangers, finding comfort in danger, moving with a penchant for what allows us to let go of the memories we hold tight. When it seems like such a life is not worth it, it helps to remember how many people have travelled the path of an exile from home and made that journey something to remember. Like the strangers I made love with, I found another fleeting comfort in Miraji.

I found a reference to his work while doing research for my PhD and started reading up his ghazals thereon. This (Muslim) man took on a (Hindu) woman's name and moved, living a vagabond life in early 1900s India. Who was this strange man, crossing borders that he wasn't supposed to, at a time when even the nation wasn't ours?

He was friends with the Progressive Writers of North India, but never fit in with them. His politics and his personality both took him to different places than the customary path of the anti-colonial writer of that time. There's a startling image of him online which depicts his hair dishevelled, a body adorned with jewellery, and a gaze that remains piercing. I was immediately attracted to this figure.

What's more, he wrote in a rhythm that also moved the body, and sung of a continuous migration to nowhere:

nagri nagri phira musafir ghar ka rasta bhul gaya
kya hai tera kya hai mera apna paraya bhul gaya

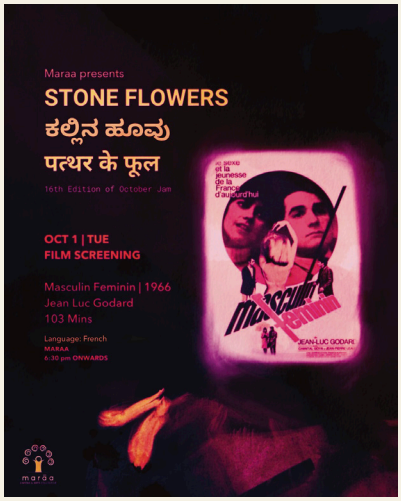
From town to town drifted the wanderer,
The way to home, he forgot,
What is yours, what is mine,
Ours, Theirs, he forgot.

Miraji's song is not comforting, but it is a home with discomfort. It allows me to find the home in the empty streets that I have learnt to love. It makes me move, to let go, and to reach home. Like a guide I never had, he pushes those who feel out-of-place to find a home to nowhere. When I cry, he breathes into my ear a discomforting love song. An absent lover who is always

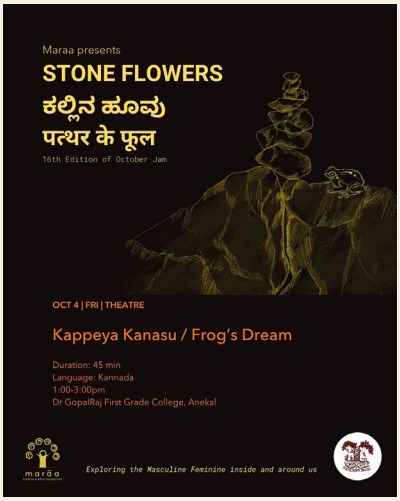
going to embrace me like the emptiness around.
And as he wanders, I too come back.
I continue to leave and return,
I forget where I came from and where I will go to.
Agra becomes Delhi and Boston and Bangalore,
These cities blur into a map that never stops drawing itself.

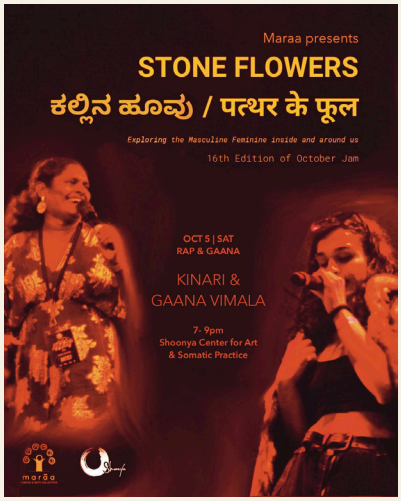
Ah I try to find a place, a person,
a home to call mine,
I forget what's mine and what's yours.

Often people who fear the unknown ask me,
with anger in their voice:
Where are you off to?
Don't you want to settle?
What about home?
What of family?
What of duty?
Do you remember your purpose,
your reason,
your being?
To them, I simply smile, and say,
I forgot, what are you going to do?


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 1 | TUE
FILM SCREENING
Masculin Feminin | 1966
Jean Luc Godard
103 Mins
Language: French
MARAA
6:30 pm ONWARDS
JEAN-LUC GODARD
marāa


SATTU SHERAWAALI DA
Supported by Karkhana
(www.karkhana.org)
AS PART OF MARAA'S OCTOBER JAM
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲು ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
DATE: OCT 2 | WED
TIME: 7 - 8:30 PM
VENUE:
OUR THEATRE STUDIO,
KORAMANGALA
DESIGN
ANUJ CHOPRA
PERFORMANCE
JAI PRAKASH KUMAR
WRITING & DIRECTION
ANOOP GUPTA


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 4 | FRI | THEATRE
Kappeya Kanasu / Frog's Dream
Duration: 45 min
Language: Kannada
1:00-3:00pm
Dr GopalRaj First Grade College, Anekal
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
marāa


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 5 | SAT
RAP & GAANA
KINARI &
GAANA VIMALA
7- 9pm
Shoonya Center for Art
& Somatic Practice
marāa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Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 6 | SUN | MUSIC
BEAT IT!
Adavi Arts Collective
Bengaluru 47 Gana Brothers
Big Bang
Buddideepa
Minchu Art Collective
5 - 7pm
Samsa Bayalu Rangamandira
Ravindra Kalakshetra


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ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 6 | SUN | MUSIC
Music Production 101
with Kinari
Learn basics of digital music
production, from recording/mixing
vocals to beatmaking.
Open to all, no experience required
11am Onwards
Maraa
Rs. 2000/-
Students concession applicable
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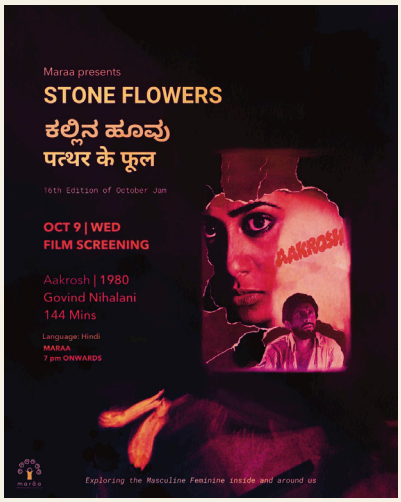
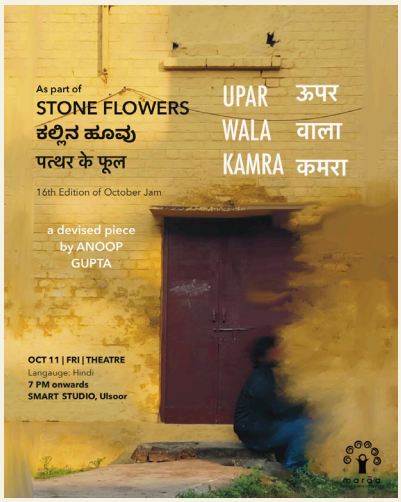

Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 9 | WED
FILM SCREENING
Aakrosh | 1980
Govind Nihalani
144 Mins
Language: Hindi
MARAA
7 pm ONWARDS
AAKROSH
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
marāa


As part of
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
16th Edition of October Jam
a devised piece
by ANOOP
GUPTA
UPAR ऊपर
WALA वाला
KAMRA कमरा
OCT 11 | FRI | THEATRE
Language: Hindi
7 PM onwards
SMART STUDIO, Ulsoor
marāa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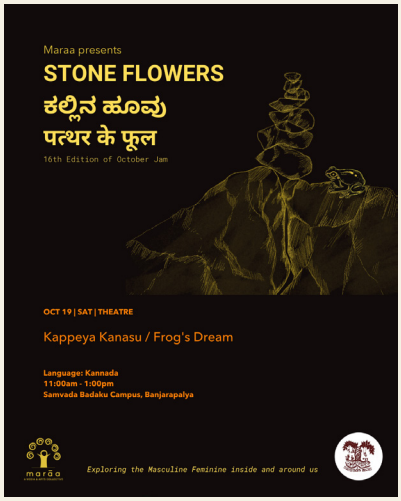
Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 12 | SAT | THEATRE
NOTION(S):
In Between You & Me
Performed & Directed by
Savita Rani
Language: English
7:00-9:00 pm
Nirali Collective,
Jayanagar

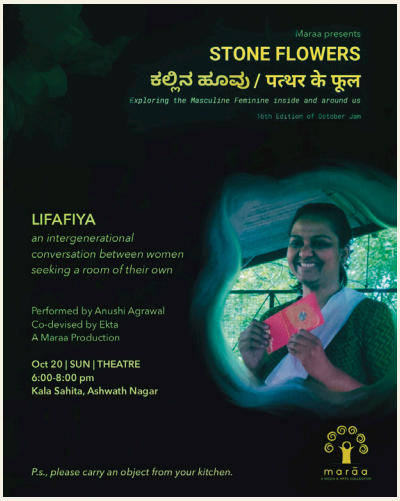

Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 13 | SUN | DANCE
Maatu: A silent
conversation
Performed and devised by
Deepak Kurki & Mirra
7:00-9:00 pm
Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan
GOETHE INSTITUT
MAX MUELLER BHAVAN
marāa


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 23 | WED
FILM SCREENING
I Don't Want To Sleep Alone
2007
Tsai Ming Liang
115 Mins
Language: Taiwanese
MARAA
6:30 pm ONWARDS
I don't want to SLEEP ALONE
TSAI MING-LIANG
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
marāa

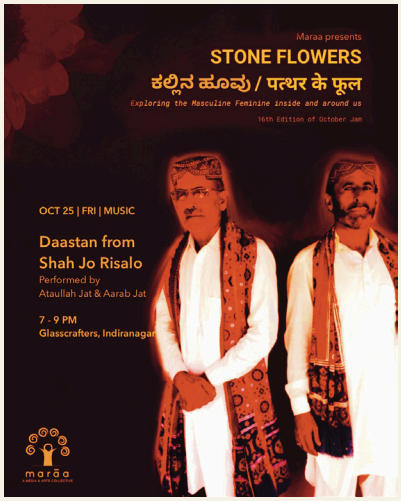

STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 18-22 | SUN
EXHIBITION
Paintings by
Rumi Harish
In conversation
with NS Harsha
6:00 pm onwards
1 Shanthi Road
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
marāa

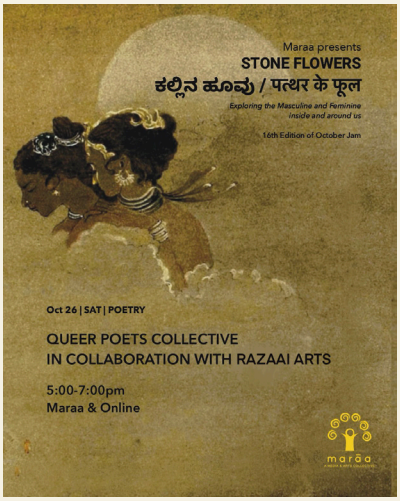

Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 19 | SAT | THEATRE
Kappeya Kanasu / Frog's Dream
Language: Kannada
11:00am - 1:00pm
Samvada Badaku Campus, Banjarapalya
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us

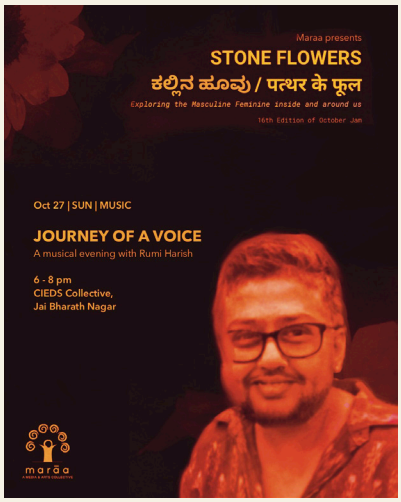

Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 19 | SAT | THEATRE
Love Purana & Pakshi Purana
Performed & Written by Du Saraswati
Performance Design by Deepak Srinivasan
Language: Kannada
5:00-7:00 pm
Samvada Badaku
Campus, Banjarapalya

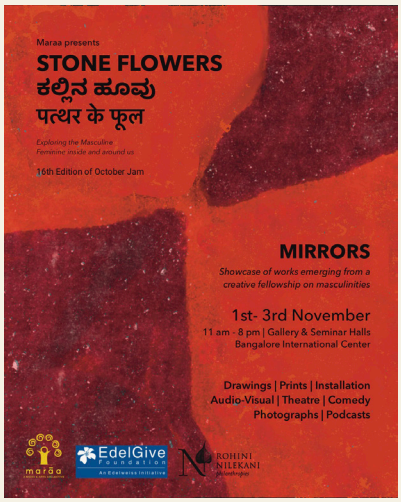

Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
LIFAFIYA
an intergenerational
conversation between women
seeking a room of their own
Performed by Anushi Agrawal
Co-devised by Ekta
A Maraa Production
Oct 20 | SUN | THEATRE
6:00-8:00 pm
Kala Sahita, Ashwath Nagar
P.s., please carry an object from your kitchen.


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು
पत्थर के फूल
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 23 | WED
FILM SCREENING
I Don't Want To Sleep Alone
2007
Tsai Ming Liang
115 Mins
Language: Taiwanese
MARAA
6:30 pm Onwards
I don't want to SLEEP ALONE
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
OCT 25 | FRI | MUSIC
Daastan from
Shah Jo Risalo
Performed by
Ataullah Jat & Aarab Jat
7 - 9 PM
Glasscrafters, Indiranagar


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine and Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
Oct 26 | SAT | POETRY
QUEER POETS COLLECTIVE
IN COLLABORATION WITH RAZAAI ARTS
5:00-7:00pm
Maraa & Online


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
ಕಲ್ಲಿನ ಹೂವು / पत्थर के फूल
Exploring the Masculine Feminine inside and around us
16th Edition of October Jam
Oct 27 | SUN | MUSIC
JOURNEY OF A VOICE
A musical evening with Rumi Harish
6 - 8 pm
CIEDS Collective,
Jai Bharath Nagar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MIRRORS
Showcase of works emerging from a creative fellowship on masculinities
1st- 3rd November
11 am - 8 pm | Gallery & Seminar Halls
Bangalore International Center
Drawings | Prints | Installation
Audio-Visual | Theatre | Comedy
Photographs | Podcasts
EdelGive Foundation
ROHINI NILEKANI


MIRRORS
A creative fellowship on Masculinities
VISUAL EXHIBIT AND INSTALLATION
Quilt is Fragile | Kevin Fernandes
Mangalore / Bangalore, Karnataka
TAALIM | Vaibhav Jadhav
Pune, Maharashtra
Drawing Troubles, Fluid Times | Aryakrishnan R
Cochin, Kerala
In Between Folds: A Collective Reflection | Aarya Pathak & Smriti Girish
Pune, Maharashtra/Bangalore, Karnataka


MIRRORS
A creative fellowship on Masculinities
VISUAL EXHIBIT AND INSTALLATION
NegoSations | Mia Jose
New Delhi
Jhakri | Ashram Mangat
Gangtok, Sikkim
Fathers & Figures | Sumit Sute
Aurangabad, Maharashtra/Bangalore, Karnataka
Part of a whole, Yet apart | Ektha Harthi
Hiriyur, Karnataka


MIRRORS
A creative fellowship on Masculinities
PERFORMANCES
1st Nov | 8 pm | Seminar Hall 1
2nd Nov | 11:00 am | Gallery
2nd Nov | 4pm | Gallery
Akkachishastram | Aryakrishnan R
Cochin, Kerala
2nd Nov | 6pm | Seminar Hall I
Lifafiya | Anushi Agrawal
Bangalore, Karnataka
3rd Nov | 7pm | Goethe Institut
Bihar


Maraa presents
STONE FLOWERS
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NOV 3 | SUN | PERFORMANCE
लत्तर / Lattar (Creeper)
A devised performance on Launda Naach
By Sunil Ram, Raju Ranjan & Sipahi Lathor
In collaboration zero powercut
Performance followed by a conversation with Brahm Prakash
Writer, Cultural theorist and Professor
7-9pm
Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan

marāa

A MEDIA & ARTS COLLECTIVE