



India
Foundation
for the Arts



I F A

Over 30 Years
of Celebrating
the Arts

A Southern Indian Conference

Arts Education
**Responding to
Changing Landscapes**
HYDERABAD

February 21-23, 2025

DAY 1: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM | Welcome Address

10:30 AM - 11:15 AM | Opening Keynote by Dr KN Ganeshaiah

11:30 AM - 01:00 PM | Creative Classrooms: Origami/kirigami with Muralidhar; Puppet-making & Theatre with Madhukar & Syed Sadiq S (Riyaz); Model Making with Gundappa Goudgol

11:30 AM - 01:30 PM | Panel I: *Arts Education and Its Sustainability: Demands of the 21st Century*

Shivananda Hombal | Gayatri Nair | Lina Vincent | R Srinivasan

Moderator: Sameen Almas

02:30 PM - 04:00 PM | Creative Classrooms: Origami/kirigami with Muralidhar; Puppet-making & Theatre with Madhukar & Syed Sadiq S (Riyaz); Model Making with Gundappa Goudgol

02:30 PM - 05:30 PM | Workshop: *Journaling with Nature* with Sangeetha Kadur

06:00 PM - 06:15 PM | Spotlight - Interactive Project Showcase: Sahana Pinjara

06:20 PM - 07:15 PM | Performance: *Kolata*, a performance by Tingala Sanje Yuva Vedike, Kalaburagi, Karnataka

DAY 2: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2025

10:15 AM - 10:30 AM | Spotlight - Interactive Project Showcase: Kotresh B

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM | Spotlight - Interactive Project Showcase: Chandrahas Y Jalihal

11:00 AM - 01:00 PM | Creative Classrooms: Origami/kirigami with Syed Fakruddin Huseni; Puppet-Making & Theatre with Siddappa Biradar & Shantamani; Model Making with Aruna BT

11:30 AM - 01:30 PM | Panel II: *Enhancing Arts Education beyond the Curriculum*

Revathi R | Blaise Joseph | Anant Maringanti | Abhisheka Krishnagopal

Moderator: B Padma Reddy

02:30 PM - 04:00 PM | Creative Classrooms: Origami/kirigami with Syed Fakruddin Huseni; Puppet-making & Theatre with Siddappa Biradar & Shantamani; Model Making with Aruna BT; *Sacred Spaces, Creative Minds: Empowering Art Educators to Co-Design Heritage Sites* with Nitin Ranveer Sinha

02:30 PM - 05:30 PM | Workshop: *I Have My Thoughts*: Zine-making with Sreya Saraswatula

06:00 PM - 06:15 PM | Spotlight - Interactive Project Showcase: Baby Biradar

06:30 PM - 07:30 PM | Performance: *Hazaaron Khwahishein*, a play by Sifar Theatre, Hyderabad, Telangana



RESPONDING TO
CHANGING LANDSCAPES

Southern Indian Conference on Arts Education
Hyderabad — February 2025

INDIA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS
Kali Kalisu — Arts Education Programme

Publication Information

In February 2025, India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) organised a three-day conference in Hyderabad titled Arts Education: Responding to Changing Landscapes. It brought together various stakeholders such as teachers, artists, educators, school administrators, researchers in arts and culture, government representatives, parents, and students, public and private cultural institutions such as galleries, museums, and libraries, to foster dialogue around discourse and exchanges in Arts Education. Through the Conference, IFA aimed to create a platform for national level discussions on arts education.

Background

Over the past decade, IFA under its Arts Education programme Kali Kalisu ('learn and teach' in Kannada) has organised training programmes for government school teachers across Karnataka, highlighting aspects of arts-integrated teaching methods and practices. This has resulted in the implementation of teacher- and artist-led projects that have made classroom teaching and learning a joyful experience through diverse artistic engagements. To understand the various facets of arts integration and its impact on education within Karnataka and across India, IFA organised two regional conferences at Kalaburagi and Mangalore in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Both conferences emphasised the integration of art by teachers, artists, and art educators, through keynote addresses, panel discussions, performances, workshops, and site visits, by infusing different art forms and cultural resources to explore regionality in the curriculum.

Concept Note

Arts education in India holds tremendous potential for growth, fostering creativity and vibrant learning. However, this potential can only be realised through a clear and visionary approach. There is a significant gap between current art education policies, curriculum frameworks, and teaching strategies, many of which still reflect outdated models that prioritise imitation and rote learning over creativity. The Southern Indian Conference on Arts Education explored questions around three key themes:

- sustainability of arts education
- policies impacting arts education
- the role of integrated arts education in our social and cultural landscape

The select essays and articles in this publication detail the presentations made at the conference.



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Foreword

The Evolving Landscape of Arts Education

Krishnamurthy TN | Senior Programme Officer: Arts Education, IFA

Arts education has experienced a profound transformation in recent years, shaped by technological advancements, evolving educational philosophies, and a growing recognition of creativity as an essential skill in an increasingly complex world. These shifts are redefining how art is taught, experienced, and valued within educational settings, blending tradition and innovation to create a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

Technology and the Expanding Horizons of Artistic Expression

One of the most significant changes in arts education is the integration of digital tools and technologies. From digital drawing tablets and creative software to virtual reality applications and online collaborative platforms, technology is expanding artistic possibilities while making arts education more accessible. Students can now engage in cross-border collaborations, access vast online resources, and experiment with new forms of digital artistry.

Moreover, artificial intelligence and machine learning are beginning to play a role in creative processes, assisting artists in generating unique compositions and refining their techniques. Online art courses, interactive tutorials, and virtual galleries provide unprecedented opportunities for learners to explore artistic disciplines beyond the limitations of traditional classrooms. This fusion of technology and conventional art forms is not only enhancing existing practices but also paving the way for entirely new avenues of creativity and expression.

Cultural Perspectives and the Reclamation of Artistic Narratives

Amid these technological advancements, subaltern cultures are making profound contributions to arts education, challenging dominant narratives and reshaping the way art is understood and practiced. Two parallel schools of thought currently shape discussions on arts education: one focuses on student-centric experimentation within schools, while the other critically examines the enduring presence of colonial influences in artistic pedagogy.

Historically, colonial-era educational models emphasized Western artistic traditions at the expense of indigenous and folk art forms. However, a growing movement seeks to reclaim and integrate these suppressed traditions into contemporary arts education. Initiatives such as Kali Kalisu, which emphasise grassroots engagement, highlight the importance of nurturing local artistic practices while embracing modern methodologies. These efforts aim to restore balance and ensure that students develop a deep connection with their cultural heritage while gaining exposure to global artistic trends.

Inclusivity and Cultural Relevance in Arts Education

There is an increasing focus on inclusivity and cultural relevance in arts education. Organisations like the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) are actively supporting programmes that integrate diverse cultural perspectives and local resources into curricula. By ensuring that students see their identities and heritage reflected in their learning experiences, educators foster a deeper sense of belonging and encourage artistic exploration rooted in personal and communal narratives.

This approach not only preserves cultural diversity but also empowers students to contribute to the evolving artistic landscape. For example, community art projects that involve storytelling, traditional crafts, and indigenous performance arts allow students to bridge historical knowledge with contemporary interpretations, reinforcing their role as active contributors to cultural continuity.

Lessons from History: Anubhava Mantapa and Democratic Artistic Dialogue

A significant historical precedent for inclusive discourse in arts education is Anubhava Mantapa, established by Allama Prabhu, Akka Mahadevi, and Channabasavanna. This pioneering forum embraced democratic ideals, welcoming individuals from all castes, creeds, and genders to engage in open dialogue. It became a melting pot for thinkers, saints, and common citizens, fostering discussions on spirituality, social justice, and the reformation of societal norms.

The legacy of Anubhava Mantapa continues to resonate, underscoring the power of collective learning and discourse. In many ways, contemporary

arts education mirrors its principles, promoting open dialogue and cross-cultural exchanges that enrich artistic exploration.

The Conference: Bridging Global and Local Perspectives

In this spirit of inclusivity and innovation, this conference aims to recognise and celebrate synergies with global discussions on arts education priorities. Remaining committed to the momentum of Kali Kalisu, the conference seeks to provide a space for articulating multiple visions of arts education. It will highlight interventions that have creatively harnessed partnerships among stakeholders, showcasing grassroots efforts that have successfully integrated diverse artistic traditions into educational frameworks.

Additionally, the Conference will serve as a platform to engage with broader Indian and international arts education activist communities, contributing to ongoing dialogues about global and local realities, ideas, theories, and practices. By encouraging conversations between local and national perspectives, classroom learning and lived experiences, and textbook theories and practical applications, the conference aspires to shape the future of arts education.

Ultimately, these evolving trends signal a paradigm shift in arts education—one that values inclusivity, embraces technological advancements, and fosters interdisciplinary learning. By reimagining how art is taught and experienced, educators and institutions are equipping students with the tools to navigate an interconnected world while ensuring that artistic traditions remain vibrant and relevant for generations to come.

Keynote Address

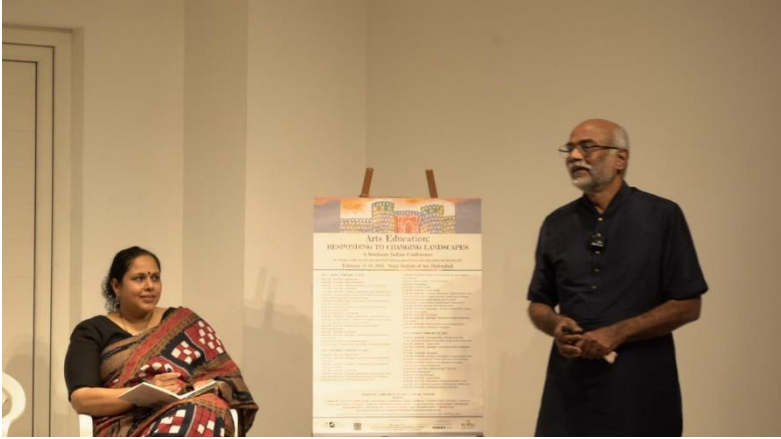
Marrying Arts and Science: The need for a bridging language

Ganeshiah KN | INSA Sr Scientist, University of Agricultural Sciences GKVK Bengaluru

The knowledge landscape is unfortunately fissured, and heavily so ever since arts and science were separated into discrete domains of human wisdom. This distinction was created not as much due to the discreteness of the domains but because of our limitations in dealing with the fast pace of growth of knowledge in disparate directions. While one part of the knowledge landscape grew out rapidly into mountainous terrain that came to be called 'Science', the other part extended in a different direction as a colourful terrain called 'Arts'. In due course, we began to consider them as two isolated ranges of human endeavour with a deep valley between them, one that is ever deepening.

Such a process of demarcating the knowledge base into different domains sadly continued as an epidemic practice; we created subsets

within each domain and fragments within each subset resulting in a complex and highly fissured landscape of knowledge (Fig1). For example, we further fissured arts into ‘modern’, ‘classical’, ‘abstract’ etc., and similarly science into Physics, Chemistry, and Biology; these in turn were further fragmented as for example in biology into Botany, Zoology, Biotechnology etc. This tendency to create repeatedly (and hierarchically) bounded enclosures within the knowledge landscape has become an eternal habit owing to the false respectability earned by the resultant fragments as ‘specialised’ areas. There have been hardly any attempts to stitch together the broken fragments and domains into one grand interconnected matrix of human wisdom.



Evolution of Discrete Languages

The most significant consequence of such separation of arts and science has been the evolution of distinct languages of their own: language of arts and the language of science. Since the two domains remained discrete and highly isolated for long, they developed their own internal dialects that gradually differentiated into highly specialised languages that could be understood only

by the practitioners of the respective areas. These languages prevented easy communication with the ‘outsiders’ further deepening the valley between the domains. As a result, today arts and science have become two non-communicable phyletic groups of knowledge that do not (and can not) exchange their developments and excitements. To borrow from evolutionary terminology, the two domains are ‘reproductively isolated’ and hence have completely speciated into different knowledge trees that can not be married with each other.

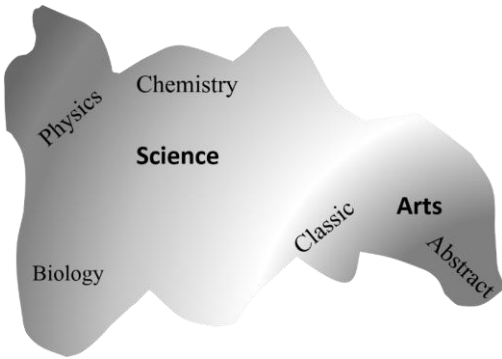


Fig1: Fissured landscape of knowledge

Is Art different from Science? (and vice versa?)

Aristotle once said, “Art not only imitates nature, but it also completes its deficiencies.” In other words, art is a process of ‘creating new ways in which to see it (Nature) in another light’. Art is the missing voice of what nature lacks to speak. Surprisingly, this same view can also be used to describe science. The very purpose of science is to understand the secrets of nature that are not spoken by nature. In fact, both the artists and the scientists derive their

inspirations from a common source: the awareness about the beauty of nature. And their efforts are driven by the same spirit—understanding the secret behind it. So, the ultimate goal of both arts and science is to unravel nature; to decode the processes and factors underlying its beauty. Once decoded in their own way, artists and scientists express their version of nature in the most simple and attractive way using their own languages. Sadly, owing to the language barriers, these expressions remain unappreciated by members outside the group.

In fact, giants like Aristotle did hesitate to treat arts and science as separate entities. For Aristotle “all science (dianoia) is either practical, poetical or theoretical”. While practical science included ethics and politics, the poetical science covered the study of fine arts such as poetry; the theoretical science covered physics, mathematics and metaphysics.

It is a common cliché (but not a fact) that arts and science differ on

- a) objectivity,
- b) emphasis for personal opinion, and
- c) the extent of reliance on logic, proof and faith.

Relative to science, art is described to be more subjective, more personal, relying more on faith and less on logic and proof. But this is merely a perception rather than a reality. Science believes in some of the most fundamental faiths that can never be falsified. For example, science believes that everything can be explained by science, a belief that can never be tested and hence remains an eternal faith of science. The new hypotheses and concepts proposed by a scientist stem purely as personal opinion just as an artist expresses his personal feel of nature in a painting or a poem. Similarly, the belief that logic and proof are demanded only in science and not in arts is also baseless. A novel or a

poem can never survive if they lack logic and ‘bites’. Thus, arts and science are merely two approaches to quench our thirst to unravel nature—just as a text and a figure are two ways of presenting the same data.

Marrying Arts and Science

Clearly, arts and science have common goals and interests and the barriers between them are purely artificial. Bridging a strong collaboration and communication between them would help not only in accelerating the growth of these domains but may also contribute to expanding our knowledge matrix. As a matter of fact, the benefits from, and hence the need for, this collaboration is evident in several ways:

- **Giants knew no borders:** Exceptional individuals have demonstrated that these borders between arts and science are merely artificial and they can not barricade the free minds travelling across the landscape. Leonardo Da Vinci from the field of arts (in Europe) and Dr BGL Swamy from the field of science (in India) are just two such examples who indulged in both arts and science equally efficiently. In fact, they also demonstrated that both the areas would gain by breaking these barriers. Attempts by Dr BGL Swamy to copy the patterns found in the stained cross sections of the plant roots and stems as designs in textile printing is one such example. Similarly some recent efforts to use the art of Crochet for teaching hypergeometry and creating mandala designs also illustrate the advantages of bringing arts and science together for teaching. Such examples are umpteen.

- **Migration of domains:** There have been continued efforts to marry arts and science in several areas. These have eventually resulted in the migration of some subdomains that were once considered as ‘arts’ into the domain of ‘sciences’. History, Archaeology, Political Sciences, Musicology, are some of the developments. Such migration has considerably helped to enhance the information repertoire of the respective domains and also to walk along the untreaded paths. For example, through Musicology the functioning of human mind is being understood from a different perspective. The fact that some of these domains continue to remain connected with their roots despite adopting the tools, techniques and language of science suggests the possibilities that strong bridges can be built between them.
- **Gains from Symbiosis:** Mutualism between science and arts has the potential to offer unexpected gains. A recent effort by a botanist looking into the historical and cultural aspects of certain trees across India perhaps serves as an unique example of what can be harvested by such marriage between arts and science. It may be contextual to state that I have also gained by indulging in such symbiosis. I have attempted to analyse certain popular myths from the perspective of a scientist and in the process have learnt that the so called myths (and ‘pavadas’) could in fact be the historical realities telescoped into the future. They encapsulate within them the complexity of events and elements in an abstract sense. The secrets can be decoded only when we analyse the myth from a scientific lens. One particular example is the “Alamelamma myth” or ಅಲಮೇಲಮ್ಮನ ಪವಾಡ. Dissecting this myth or miracle suggested that the entire event

refers to an ecological disaster. Thus, there is a lot we could learn from the symbiosis between arts and science.

Conclusion

Artists and scientists chase the same goal and hence gain by conversing with each other. Such conversations demand developing a common language to bridge their domains. There is a lot that both could gain from such a collaboration.

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⁷ Natesh S, 2024, *Iconic trees of India: 75 Natural Wonders*. Roli Publications New Delhi

⁸ I have difficulty in translating the term Kannada ಪವಾಡ (pavaada) to English. Though we use the term myth and miracle as its synonyms, they may not always reflect the exact meaning of ಪವಾಡ. For example ಅಲಮೇಲಮ್ಮನ ಪವಾಡ.

⁹ Ganeshaiah KN, 2007, The Thalakaadu phenomenon: A miracle or an ecological disaster? *Curr Sci.*, 93(11):1495-1500

You can view the complete presentation at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFfxacjJ_U0

Panel I

Arts Education and Its Sustainability: Demands of the 21st Century

Objective: To explore the crises in arts and arts education and ensure its sustainability amidst contemporary challenges and demands.

Background: The 21st century has brought significant changes in our society, politics and culture owing to rapid transformations in economy, technology across the globe, all of which have impacted education. As we navigate through these changes, it is crucial to examine how arts education can adapt and thrive. This panel aimed to address the continued significance and relevance of arts education by addressing current challenges, identifying opportunities for growth and exploring innovative approaches.

You can view the complete presentation at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4dOYRSjkLU>

Key Questions for the Panel

- a. How can arts education remain relevant and engaging in a rapidly changing world?
- b. What role can teachers play in enhancing arts education?
- c. How arts education programmes can secure funding and resources for long-term sustainability?
- d. What are some of the best practices in integrating arts education that leverage value and impact?



1.1: Art in Language Education: My Journey with Kannada as a Second and Third Language

by Shivanand Hombal | *Dhwani Trust, Dharwad, Karnataka*

Over the years, I have come to believe that language teaching is not just about grammar rules or vocabulary lists—it is about building bridges between minds, cultures, and imaginations. As a language educator working with students who learn Kannada as a second or third language, I realized early on that traditional methods alone were not enough. That's when I began to experiment with art-based approaches—using stories, songs, drama, proverbs, and visual arts and what followed was a deeply rewarding journey, both for me and my students.

Why Art Matters in Language Education

Incorporating art in language education was not something I found in standard teacher training manuals. It emerged from my classroom reality—I saw students struggling with unfamiliar sounds, script, and sentence structures. But I also saw their eyes light up during a folk song, their laughter erupt during a role-play, and their engagement deepened while drawing scenes from a Kannada story.

Art, I realised, touches something deeper in us—it brings language alive. My experiments aligned with international research. UNESCO's report on arts education (2006) highlighted how the arts enhance communication skills and cognitive development. The National Education Policy 2020 also supported a holistic and interdisciplinary approach. I felt proud that my methods were not only intuitive but also research-backed.

My Context: Teaching Kannada as a Second or Third Language

In Karnataka, many students come from Kannada as well as non-Kannada-speaking backgrounds. Their mother tongues were Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi etc. Kannada was often a second or third language for them. In this setting, rote methods don't work. So, I began looking at Kannada's rich cultural and literary heritage as a teaching resource.

Through trial and error, I developed strategies that were rooted in art and culture, yet flexible and student-centered. Over time, these efforts not only helped me and my students enjoy the language more, but also led to visible improvement in their fluency and confidence.

Stories that Captivate, Language that Stays

One of the first changes I introduced was the use of folk stories. I began with simple Kannada stories like Punyakoti, Tenali Rama, Panchatantra, world class folktales, and local legends from North Karnataka. I didn't just read them aloud. I turned them into interactive storytelling sessions, complete with puppets, role-play, and drawing activities.

The results were immediate. Students who barely spoke Kannada began using full sentences. They could retell stories in their own words, add endings, or even mimic characters. The language was no longer abstract — it was alive in a character's fear, a mother's lullaby, or a cow's promise.

Singing Our Way into Kannada

Another turning point came when I introduced Kannada Children songs written by eminent writers like Laxmi Narayana Bhatta, BR Laxmana Rao, Bendre, Kuvempu and folk songs, Vachanas, Kirtanas etc. I still remember the first time we sang a Babal olleyaru nammissu in class, a popular song that touched everyone, regardless of their language

background. Over time, I collected Kolata songs, Janapada geethagalu, and even film songs with meaningful lyrics. We clapped, sang, and enacted them together.

These sessions improved pronunciation, rhythm, and above all, created joy. Language anxiety dropped significantly. Many of my quieter students became more expressive - often singing songs to their parents and siblings. For me, this was proof that language learning happens best when it's joyful.

Proverbs and Playful Wisdom

Kannada gadegalu (proverbs) are full of wit and wisdom. I designed a series of games where students had to match proverbs with meanings, use them in dialogues, or translate them into their first language. Proverbs like "Kiviya mele buli baa" sparked laughter and curiosity. Through them, students learned not only phrases but also Kannada's cultural worldview.

We even created short skits using proverbs as themes. This helped build vocabulary, syntax, and storytelling skills—all while having fun. It amazed me how deeply students connected with these tiny capsules of language and life.

Theatre as Language Laboratory

Drama became a core part of my teaching. I started with simple improvisations, where students pretended to be shopkeepers, neighbors, or festival goers. Eventually, we moved to performing short Kannada plays in the classroom and school assemblies.

One of the most powerful experiences was when we enacted the story of Kindara Jogi. Students wrote their own dialogues, designed costumes, and even composed background songs. For many of them, it was their first time performing in Kannada—and yet, they did it with confidence and passion. These sessions were like language labs, but filled with laughter, movement, and meaning.

Drawing, Writing, and Seeing Kannada

I also integrated visual art into language learning. For example, students would draw scenes from a folk tale and label them in Kannada. Others created comic strips using Kannada dialogues. These activities built a strong connection between words and images.

I encouraged creative writing too—short poems, imaginary stories, even diary entries in Kannada. When students shared their work with peers, it fostered not only pride but also a sense of ownership of the language.

Recognition and Gratitude

As I continued on this journey, I began to notice something unexpected: my classroom was becoming a space of energy, creativity, and mutual respect. Students started coming in early, staying back to rehearse songs, or asking for storybooks in Kannada. Parents shared how their children began speaking bits of Kannada at home. Word began to spread, and over time, I was invited to conduct workshops and training sessions for other teachers. I was humbled to be seen as one of the most popular and effective Kannada language educators in my circle.

Much of this growth was possible with the meaningful support of The Valley School, Bengaluru, during 1990-2000. Their encouragement in experimental pedagogy gave me both resources and confidence. I am deeply grateful for their faith in my vision.

What Research Tells Us, and What I Saw

Many studies now validate what I experienced in my classroom. A 2017 study by Prof R Ganesh showed how Kannada folk narratives improved vocabulary and grammatical usage among second-language learners. Howard

Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences gave me the language to understand my approach—when we use music, movement, visual arts, and stories, we are reaching different kinds of learners in different ways. And that, I believe, is the real strength of arts in education.

Looking Ahead

My journey has taught me that art is not an extra, it is at the heart of effective, inclusive, and joyful language education. For those of us teaching Kannada as a first, second or third language, it offers a path filled with meaning, connection, and pride. I thank the India Foundation for the Arts, who gave me an opportunity to participate in the National conference on Art in education, to share my experiments, experiences and insights I gained through this transformative path.

1.2: Concept, Context and Criticality in Arts Education – A decade of Experimentation

by Lina Vincent | *Independent art historian and curator*

As a cultural practitioner with two decades of experience, I have continually found spaces to participate in, and contribute to in the long-term. These spaces are oftentimes formed through a web of interconnected knowledge-streams and transdisciplinary approaches. There is a constant intersecting, branching, overlapping of ideas and action, and each area gains from learnings in the other. When I write or teach, when I am recording oral histories or displaying artwork in a gallery, I am conscious of being a thread (whether crucial or subsidiary) in the larger weave of our times, wherein creative responses play a significant role. I am motivated to use my position as a mediator and facilitator to advance on existing structures, and this is particularly significant in the area of pedagogy.



Sunaparanta Art Initiator Lab (SAIL) participants in a theatre workshop with Arundhati Chattopadhyaya – 2023

Having trained in printmaking and art history (2001), I turned organically towards research and curation as a career. I continued to connect with students of fine arts and young graduates as I understood the dearth of spaces for conversation and discussion, as well as the disadvantages many of them faced due to language, accessibility of learning tools, and platforms, professional guidance, among other things. Mentoring informally for several years – for artists in both rural and urban settings – this became something I wished to formalise, and that is when I began to structure a program that would address the gaps and grey areas in institutional creative education.

Mentorship

Seen against a fractured and obsolete educational system, a polarized market and a deep urban rural divide, the very process of developing a mentoring programme is challenging. My aim, and those of others working in this field, has been as much to define the broader grey areas and gaps in our evolving creative-art history, as to study the effects of continued structured support on the art practices of individuals.

There are nuances to a creative practice influenced by general conditions as well as individual situations. Each person differs in needs and desires, methodologies and processes, as well as socio-cultural conditioning. In building programmes like this we are continually utilising yardsticks and standards built through research and experience in the Indian art context. We are also striving to customize specific modules based on the practitioner's orientation and ability. It is not, and never can be, a 'one size fits all' formula.

The plans to develop an alternative yet sustainable system of mentorship were crystallised during my time at the Kochi Muziris Students Biennale of 2014-15, when I had an opportunity to join a group of researchers in coordinating with fine arts institutions across India, in order to explore the suitability of arts curriculum, and to ascertain students' preparedness and capability in terms of curatorial positioning and direction within professional spaces. The Students Biennale continued to be a feature in the upcoming decade, however it became difficult to study the feedback, if any, that went back to the institutions from the engagement of different batches of participants.



Panel discussion with Kochi Muziris Students Biennale curators cohort, 2014

Having designed a mentorship curriculum for fine arts students and young artists, I approached a couple of agencies and was given a go-ahead by

the Piramal Artist Residency that was keen on expanding the mentorship offered within their existing program; here I began the Artist Incubator Program-AEP (2019-20). Planned as an annual program covering intensive workshops and online engagements with expert mentors over a period of 11 months, it was extremely successful in its first, and unfortunately only run. The arrival of the pandemic in March 2020 put a stop to AEP just when the first batch of 5 artists proudly opened their exhibition.

Having taken into consideration the many learnings that came with the experience, it was possible to design a more complex yet open-ended curriculum, that resulted in SAIL - Sunaparanta Art Initiator Lab (2021-ongoing). Sustainability, support and funding, feedback systems and enhancements, developing a local community – all this and more have been possible with the current program now in its fourth year (aligned with the Sunaparanta Centre for the Arts, Goa). One hopes that it will serve as a model for other similar initiatives in different states. Bringing a diverse group of creative persons together, of varied experiences and ages, creates a wonderful setting for shared learning and exchange. Many of the practitioners have gone on to collaborate, receive fellowships, awards and selections that in turn contribute to the strengthening of the cultural ecosystem.

The act of unlearning rigid frameworks and shattering myths around artistic relevance — mostly absorbed during academic training — as well as shifting positions (of identity, conceptual constructs, style) and reframing new questions provides opportunities to the participants to work afresh. Building a sense of community among the artists and enabling them to work together goes a long way in producing maturity in their decisions.

Through these mentorship programs, I have built valuable relationships with many artists and practitioners; this continues to play a mutually enriching role in spaces of (our) professional practice.

As a visiting lecturer in certain art and design institutions, I maintain the use of similar transdisciplinary methodologies as in the mentorship program, following the broad framework of the prescribed syllabus but allowing the classroom to come alive through out-of-the-box exercises, discussion, and field trips. Here it is deeply important to introduce ideas that students can take and make their own, and to work alongside the awareness of tools like chatgpt and others. However, visiting positions can be positively disruptive but also short-lived, with no guarantee of a sustained engagement, and continued application of newer methodologies is often dependent on openness of management as well as budget and resources.

Curriculum Development

Arts education doesn't hold an important space within a vast majority of school curriculums under the Indian boards of education. Dedicated art teachers are rare, and very often, the syllabus advocates simplistic and conventional approaches to drawing and painting rather than encouraging the use of art as an expressive medium. Heritage museum or gallery visits are not a regular part of school days; most students grow into adulthood with minimum interest in culture or visual representation, despite the fact that India has an abundant history of craft and artisanal traditions. With the application of the new National Education Policy and the inclusion of art and craft there will perhaps be a positive move towards cultural education.

The arts play a crucial role and can act as an empowering and inclusive tool that enhances an individual's self-understanding and that of the world. A multi-pronged arts curriculum can channelize the inherent creativity in every child, whatever the age or ability. Arts curriculums need to respond to contemporary times – with a combination of experimentation and research on various established modes of pedagogy, identifying key elements and customising them to local contexts and requirements. Children need art as a life skill, in order to express, communicate and think critically. Driving the understanding of culture, history and heritage encourages notions of identity, ownership and belonging, and therefore supports future conservation.

Between 2016-2018, the Prestige Foundation supported the development of Sublime ArtEd, an integrated arts curriculum program that included visual arts and design, theatre, music and dance. Through intensive and reciprocal development of methodologies, and brain storming with varied stakeholders, the curriculum content came together under the guidance of domain experts, followed by pilot teacher training events.

Capacity building and regular workshops for teachers is a significant part of any curriculum implementation, as they understand ground realities of time-tables and academic requirements, as well as student engagement. All artists need not make good art teachers, on the other hand, those with basic skills but no training in teaching the arts face other challenges. There is a clear relationship between the introduction of art and culture in primary and secondary schooling, with university arts education, and the quality of arts professionals in the industry; this makes arts teaching within schools a crucial area for development.

While ArtEd was created as a comprehensive package, there were limited takers and therefore the program was shelved. However, my experience with the program allowed me to extend a similar curriculum development service for Tata ClassEdge (2020-21) in collaboration with several colleagues engaged within the same field of study. The pandemic period forced the expansion of online education, and made possible many innovative systems for teaching, inclusive of virtual resources that were accessible to both teachers and students. While certain platforms create exclusive teaching materials that are then invested in by institutions with monetary resources, it is important to develop more open-source and free material banks, and in multiple languages in order to generate a wider impact across the country.

Curatorial Outreach: Interactions in Museums and Galleries

Art objects and artefacts, whether historical or contemporary, are rich sources for learning and knowledge sharing on varied subjects. While museums are more public spaces, the lack of interactive material, guidance, and language options in a country like India, prevent an enjoyable cultural experience for many. Most people also feel inhibited and uncomfortable entering contemporary gallery spaces, the lack of 'knowledge' about art becoming a deterrent in engagements. Art is often made out to be elitist and intellectualized, and it becomes the responsibility of museums, galleries, curators and independent arts professionals to bridge the gaps and create modules with information that is accessible.

Whenever I curate an exhibition or cultural project, I attempt to build in varied educational programming that has the capacity to be inclusive and open. This opens up the possibility of mediating concepts that sometimes

might be difficult to grasp or beyond reach because of other circumstances. Crucial dialogues including those connected with environmental urgencies and heritage conservation can become part of such interactions. Through meaningful discourse, it is also possible to break down the dichotomies between fine art and folk art, traditional and contemporary expressions. Art is for everyone, and making it accessible allows for newer, wider audiences to enter into the space and become stakeholders. Unless institutions create a sustainable system for such programming however, it can turn into one-off events that remain dependent on individuals' interest.

One of my largest learnings in recent years is the importance of collaboration, as well as building and sustaining communities. The knowledge I am surrounded by, whether scholarly or mundane, when working with a diversity of people creates a productive tension that in turn allows the emergence of new ideas and perspectives, much needed in today's world for both makers and consumers. Having a meeting point and network to share experiences, document case studies, and seek support is valuable in our current arts education ecosystem. I look forward to these as I continue to explore the applications of art history and research methodologies within the interconnected spaces of exhibition making, design, archiving and pedagogy.



Children with grinding stone; GOOD FOOD INDIA, Hyderabad Literature Festival January 2018, outreach program through ARTPORT_Making Waves



Fabric installation and viewers; Travelling Plants transdisciplinary project, June 2024 Goethe-Institut Chennai and Alliance Francaise Madras, young audience engagement

1.3: Creating Art Education Policy for Schools

by R Srinivasan | *Member, State Planning Commission, Government of Tamil Nadu*

Learning art is good in itself and art is education. We need to consider two separate roles of art in school education. Learning through art in schools is the most common pedagogy. Learning art as a subject is rare in school education. These two aspects of art education should be included in the art education policy.

There is a lack of clarity on the role of art in school education. Though there is no conclusive evidence that learning art improves the overall educational outcomes, the importance of art education in schools is recognised. Art as a pedagogical tool is not understated in any education policy.

Art as education is problematic because standardised curriculum design, pedagogy, resources, and assessment processes comparable to those of other subjects have not been developed for art education. There are also issues in recruitment of teachers and teacher training in art education. These issues have to be simultaneously addressed if art has to find a place in education policy.

Art for Education

Arts have intrinsic educational value. Learning art is an active process engaging with the world and to reflect on those experiences. Art helps in engaging with the community, improves interpersonal skills, develops cultural and social capital and ultimately develops the emotional and social well-being of students. It helps to understand others' cultures and history. Visits to

museums and cultural institutions are important sources of learning about one's own cultural heritage as well as those of other cultures.

The nature of art is to reflect on acquired knowledge and thus the process of critical thinking needed for other academic subjects is also developed here. School engagement improves with regularity of work learnt in art classes. Specific art forms like instrumental music are seen to have positive effects on students' self-control behaviour, executive functions and learning math.

Improving discipline and rigour in learning and compassion for others are seen as the important outcomes of art education in schools. Art gives individual autonomy to explore knowledge and to create. Creativity in art helps to interpret the knowledge received from other disciplines.

Art as a pedagogical tool is also in practice in elementary school. Learning languages and social studies through singing and dancing is a pedagogical technique. Imaginative use of arts in mathematics is also experimented by individual teachers. Developing oratorical and creative writing skills in students finds a place in middle and high school. Self-expression through arts is conceived as an add-on educational outcome. All these contribute to well-rounded learning in schools.

Art is an effective way to enhance cognitive abilities which may foster critical thinking skills, improve academic achievement.

Education in Art

Education in art is mostly accessible to the children from privileged families. Education in art is resource intensive. Physical and Human Resources per child for providing education in art is very high compared to general education. Children from poor families rely on schools to learn art. Such

children have little facilities to continue art education and practice art at home or in society.

In addition to this, the high-stakes testing culture during transition from school to higher education also puts-off the children from low and middle income families to take up general education at the cost of neglecting the education in art. The high-cost education in art and the low-cost substitute in general education have been the reasons for marginalisation of education in art in high schools. School Boards have not created curriculum for education in art in general or for any specific art form.

Art in Education Policy

Holistic education requires art as an integral part of the school curriculum. Relegating it as a co-curricular activity will only lead to its marginalisation.

Education policy should recognise

- art as a discipline and that it is as important as language, math and science,
- use art as an important pedagogical method,
- contextual education requires exposure to local arts and others' arts,
- experiential learning in art is important, and
- inclusive education requires understanding and appreciating all forms of arts and artists.

The objective of an education policy that is inclusive of art education is to integrate arts across all subjects and give experiential learning opportunities in arts.

This should translate into a curriculum that gives arts a prominent place at every level of school education from primary through middle school and to high school. Developing motor skills through art activities and exposition to colours, shapes and patterns and art forms shall be at the primary level. Writing, geometric patterns, natural colours and story telling give enough scope to integrate arts in learning of different disciplines. In middle school, the students should be trained to develop technical skills in various mediums, understand history of arts and culture, artistic expressions, and analyse artworks. Teaching drawing fundamentals, colour theory and application, folk art traditions, contemporary arts, etc in the middle school and encouraging students to explore arts through other subjects and vice versa. In the high school, students shall be trained to master advanced techniques in specific arts, create personal artistic works, understand art criticism, and explore society through arts and career in arts.

Just like investments in laboratories for sciences, sports and libraries for general education, investment in infrastructure for art education in schools is a pre-requisite. The resource intensive arts education requires art rooms, storage facilities, display areas and art supplies.

Teacher recruitment and training is a difficult process for art education. We have not developed a nationally accepted educational system to train art educators. Minimum qualification and teacher training diplomas have to be evolved and implemented. Recruitment rules for art teachers have to be framed and implemented. Teachers of other subjects should be trained to use art as a pedagogical technique in collaboration with art teachers in schools.

Assessments of students in art education also should be designed. Subjective assessment is inevitable and that requires integrity and transparency in the assessment process. Coding the assessment process should be evolved.

A separate line of education for students specialising in arts should be evolved. Special coaching and tutoring students of arts in other subjects should be facilitated. Combining credits in arts with credits in scholastic subjects should be used for certifying students in art education on par with other students by the school boards and thus facilitate seamless progression to higher education in arts.

Implementing a well-designed education policy inclusive of art education, will provide holistic education, foster creativity and cultural awareness among students, empower them to think critically and contribute positively to society.



Moderator's Reflection

1.4: Reflections of a Moderator (Panel I)

by Sameen Almas | *Director, NalandaWay Foundation*

As a representative from NalandaWay Foundation, I was invited as a moderator for a panel on day one of the Conference on Arts Education, in Hyderabad. The session on Arts Education and Sustainability: Demands of the 21st Century offered a dialogue to discuss the adaptability of arts, its relevance and significance.

As a moderator for a panel composed of Artists, Educators, Policy Planners to those who lead Arts Organisations, I led a discussion on the relevance of arts in an increasingly and ever-changing paced world. It allowed a discussion on approaches that we can adopt to make arts engaging to young people, and ensuring that it finds a place in mainstream.

The panel deliberated on the possibility of introducing arts into classrooms by offering the teaching of language(s) artistically and creatively. Subjects such as History in school can be explained in a highly engaging way, once the medium of theatre, music and plays are introduced. Arts integration in classroom teaching not only benefits learners, but also facilitators in developing content which is more realistic and relatable. And when we begin with art integrated approaches from the early years, it translates to better retention (memory).

Similarly, the first panelist stated teachers need to bring in lively ways of introducing arts – by incorporating teaching-learning materials (TLMs) in the classroom pedagogy. Multidisciplinary and meaningful TLMs can be a smart way of addressing many learning gaps that teachers state they face in schools. By using these creative means, teachers can be the game changers in enhancing and widening the scope of arts education.

The second panelist, with her experience of leading an Arts' organisation, offered that empowering children through the use of camera and media arts, improves children's visual and critical thinking skills which are useful for dealing with today's world. It also makes them keen observers. Art classes can be made experiential by offering tools and resources to teachers, and to help them think of activities beyond the use of paper, pen and pencils. It is also important for teachers to reiterate to students as well as parents that arts hold a future too, there are creative pursuits- professionals and those equipped with critical and creative skills.

Towards ensuring sustainability of the Arts, the 3rd panelist presented forth the possibilities of mentorship programmes which can inherently build on a long-term relationship with artists and practitioners. She also reflected on the importance of training and reflection, expanding the scope of art educators with heritage field visits and curatorial outreach, where museums become accessible outside their physical boundaries.

The last panelist being a State Planning Commission member, added his views on the policy and funding gaps in art education. The sheer strength of children in schools – plus the complexities of variability in their backgrounds, make it a very complex schooling system. And it is owing to this variability, that the experience of children cannot be the same. The solution lies in education being flexible, which allows for experimentation and innovation. There needs to be a balance between standardized processes while also offering individual experience, even if a policy on Arts Education has never existed in the 20th nor the 21st century.

The silver lining is that the government can provide funding support, even if bureaucratic structures make the process complex for genuine players to get into it. Arts education programmes can secure funding and resources

for long- term sustainability through lobbying and advocacy. This is why there needs to be a lot more advocacy for the arts.

Some of the key takeaways that the panel left to ponder for the audience were:

- Art education is considered to be more expensive than science labs, and is viewed to lack an objective assessment methodology. Arts education assessments require subjective enquiry and skill and integrity of teachers.
- Arts allow children to take risks. It also opens up doors to critical and creative freedom and perspective-taking skills. Arts has its own intrinsic value in improving learning of other subjects.
- Arts integration is possible through the involvement of theatre, arts and role play, allowing for multi- disciplinarity. Training of teachers and for artists to be educators is henceforth essential.

You can view the complete presentation at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG60w_ggktY

Panel II

Enhancing Arts Education beyond the Curriculum

Objective: To investigate the sociological aspects of arts and arts education, examine their impact on society, culture, and individuals, and to discuss how arts education can be leveraged to understand the nuances of different cultural contexts, address social issues and promote cultural understanding.

Background: The sociology of arts explores how art influences and is influenced by social structures, relationships, and cultural norms. Arts education is not only about imparting skills and knowledge but also about fostering critical thinking, empathy, and social awareness. This panel aims to delve into the interplay between arts, social and cultural landscapes and how arts education can be a powerful tool for social change and cultural enrichment.

Key Questions for the Panel

- a. How do social and cultural contexts shape the creation and reception of art?
- b. What role does arts education play in promoting social cohesion and cultural diversity?
- c. How can arts education address social inequalities and provide opportunities for marginalised communities?
- d. What are the sociological impacts of integrating arts into the education system?
- e. How can educators and artists collaborate to use arts as a means of social change?



You can view the complete presentation at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG60w_ggktY

2.1 Contextualising Community Arts Practice And Arts Education

by Blaise Joseph | *Visual Artist and Art Educator*

It is my pleasure to share my practices as an artist-educator, and a community based art practitioner. To be invited here to share my views on enhancing arts education beyond the curriculum.

I trained as a sculptor from MSU Baroda. But I also had a formation as a Jesuit for sixteen years in Patna Province where I worked extensively with the Musahar community, the lowest in the caste ladder in India, especially the children.

I grew up in a village in Kerala in close proximity to an abundance of nature in a large family of 10 children, myself being the youngest. As a child, I experienced the freedom to explore my artistic talents along with my other siblings. The walls of the living rooms in our house were filled with drawings and paintings done by three of us brothers and one sister. During every summer vacation these artworks would change. Perhaps these fundamental experiences of close proximity to nature, freedom of expression in a non-competitive and non-judgmental atmosphere in the house have laid a foundation for my understanding of creative expressions as the fundamental right and need of every child. Every child is creative and therefore, an artist too. We experience the absence of this fundamental right in our formative years, especially in schools, in a discriminatory manner.

When I am talking about Arts in education, it starts with schools as learning spaces. However, it can not be limited to schools, as the learning process can never be confined to schools. Learning is a process of understanding oneself, others and the entire ecosystem in which one lives.



Given natural freedom and a sense of fearlessness, children spontaneously interact with their natural surroundings for fun and creative expressions. It is important that children go through nature-based exposure. Nature Deficiency Syndrome is caused by a lack of interaction with the natural environment. Nature, living things and human society are part of a web; a realization that reveals the fact to us that “I am because we are”- the Ubuntu experience. In this experience I co-exist with everything around us.

Art is the basis of learning as the great art educator Devi Prasad would say. It's the creative energy in us rooted in the ubuntu experience that makes us curious and observant about ourselves as well as life around us. The primary objective of learning is to evolve individuals as empathic beings. The importance of the arts for developing empathy and sensitivity, and the necessity for an intimate relationship with one's cultural and natural environment.

Children are fundamentally collaborative and not competitive until they are instilled with the idea of competitiveness. The idea of becoming number one among others. I think it is the most uncreative idea that is perpetuated in modern society.

Art in education is not an extracurricular activity. It should not be reduced to being a creative tool to teach maths and science. Art as a subject is equally important as any other subject. In fact arts is the process which embraces all the other subjects.



Close Encounter with Natural Surroundings



I think it is important for schools to recognise their surroundings as extensions of the learning processes. The community members, such as parents and other elders, other like-minded organisations, other living beings, the biodiversity, and natural resources need to be recognised as extensions of schools, its curriculum and as its learning community. Thus learning can

become a shared process. In fact a child's life is not limited to school. A major portion of a child's learning process happens outside the school in this larger ecosystem.

“Tagore’s vision of culture was not a static one, but one that advocated new cultural fusions, and he fought for a world where multiple voices were encouraged to interact with one another and to reconcile differences within an overriding commitment to peace and mutual interconnectedness”. The multiple voices include nature and bio-diversity with its diverse creatures.

Some art in education projects of mine were conducted with an approach moulded in these perspectives. Anandshala in Kalaunjar, Samastipur district of Bihar was conducted as a consultant to Quest alliance, Kali-kalisku project in Vijayanagar, Belgaum, supported by IFA and the Art Room Project of the ABC Programme of Kochi Biennale Foundation in nine government schools in Ernakulam and Thrissur districts. The art in education programme started within these schools and gradually evolved and expanded beyond the schools to engage with their local contexts. All children from classes 5-8 were part of these projects without discrimination.

- Most children naturally like to engage in groups in natural contexts rather than as individuals. In the conventional school system, there is always an emphasis on “discipline”.
- When children are forced to sit within a meticulously measured classroom they tend to be restless and anxious. On the contrary, children become more focussed and centered in the vastness of space. There is a sense of freedom with responsibility.
- Children with learning disabilities are often considered as unequal in classrooms. Art is the basis that can create an inclusive space. Art

enables us to break down all layers of barriers within us and embrace multiculturalism that exists within each of us.

- Home And Village/Community As Sources of Knowledge: Our education system does not recognise the significance of the multi-disciplinary nature of the context of its learners. Particularly in the Indian rural context the abundance of craft and skills give access to workplaces as extended learning spaces/resources beyond the classroom. Most of such crafts are vanishing in absence of the recognition they deserve. Can some of these crafts and skills be introduced devoid of the caste burden they carry in learning spaces?. Such integrated methods of learning will curb the forced migration that rural India is plagued with and it may even enhance the local economy.
- An integrated curriculum provides a holistic approach to learning in theory and practice. Transdisciplinary learning, encouraging practical, experimental work, collaboration and learning in authentic manufacturing settings as well as school encourages innovation among learners.
- Examples of workshops with basket weaver, potter, carpenter, tailor, biscuit factory.

I also would like to illustrate one project where all these skills and knowledge resources were brought together in one place. Village Visual Store House was a project that evolved out of several art in education workshops conducted for a Delhi based funding organisation, NEG-FIRE among Baiga and Bhil tribes in Chhattisgarh and MP. This was meant to train the field workers of 3 NGOs supported by NEG-fire in community building. But how can someone learn about community

building without being a part of the community without engaging in the dual processes of co-learning and co-creation?

In this context, the villagers and the field workers of the NGOs along with me engaged as co-learners and co-creators and a way of bringing everyone from the NGOs and the village together. The Village head granted land, and most of the village members, including children and elders joined the construction work from Day 1. Digging, carrying mud and water, gathering timber from the forest, unbaked bricks from the local factory, and cooking meals, masonry, carpentry, etc.. All of us lived together and shared everything in 15 days each. When the walls were completed, everyone from the village, children and adults alike, created clay murals with precision and craft. A minimal form of a helicopter, a crocodile, an owl, and a large tree, etc.

We also developed 40 kitchen gardens to compensate for the timber taken from the forest. 500 saplings were distributed at the end of the project. They are an extension of the Village Visual Store House. The children, their teachers, and our field workers had also created artifacts through a series of workshops that too were displayed at the Store House. These artifacts were used in the government school as Teaching Learning Materials.

- Children generally do not have democratic spaces to tell their own stories in classrooms.
- By sharing, listening, writing, and reading aloud their life stories, negative perceptions of self-image, lack of confidence, inability to express emotions or thoughts in an unfriendly atmosphere in homes and classrooms should be addressed.
- Encountering issues related to adolescence, gender, uncertainty with regard to their future, and the long-term inevitability of not being able

to get answers. Storytelling and image making of stories have immense potential.

- Stories and songs passed down through generations are a medium through which local contexts can be understood. We can write our own histories.

For example, the Musahar girls from Prerana Hostel in Danapur, Patna, run by the NGO, Narigunjan, were the first generation of women from the community to be enrolled in school education. It is one of the most oppressed and discriminated communities in the country. The Hostel is situated in the local government school premises. As a result of my artistic engagement with these girls, we developed a specially designed Multi-utility Bus project called Rikhiyasab Rath. The Musahar mythological stories documented from their oral traditions, were narrated to the girls and they visualised and painted the main mythical characters on the Bus which travelled to village communities as a mobile clinic and library.



Ramkali, a middle-aged woman from the community, worked as the cook at the hostel and played an important role in this. She would go back to her childhood memories recollecting the songs and narrate each story to us through these songs. She would also recollect the songs related to each mythological character. The drawings in preparation for the paintings and the recordings of Ramkali's memories and narrations become part of the art gallery and exhibition inside the bus. The entire project was a process of co-designing art-curriculum as parallel learning tools for the school as well as the NGO.

- The Purpose of education is to attain liberation from the structures that dehumanizes both the oppressed as well as the oppressor. Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire is a counter cultural movement to fight the banking model education that aligns with oppressors to create a dialogue that helps the oppressed regain his/her humanity. Dialogue is an understanding between different people and it is an act of love, humility, and faith.
- As children transcend classrooms through multi-disciplinary learning practices, diverse perspectives, interpersonal-interactions inter-cultural interactions, the environment become a continuum of the classroom.
- By interacting with different kinds of spaces, different surfaces, and media, children develop a greater sense of the evolution of forms and imagination in their practice. They become evolved designers and planners. They develop problem solving skills. This evolution is not taught, but rather achieved only through practice and understanding.
- The village becomes an open gallery where children could display their art works, prompting the entire village to view the exhibition. School goes to the community rather than waiting for the community to come to the school.

I continue to engage with these projects as a process that is evolving constantly. Every project is different in its nature as the projects are not a package rather they are creative and collective responses to the realities of specific contexts. I as a practitioner also evolve in this process. In these collective engagements the products are the outcome of genuine processes. In a time where there is disproportionate emphasis on products, visibility, funds, size, it is equally important to have parallel perspectives of slowing down, respecting processes that are appropriate to the contexts. These processes can not be replicated everywhere.



2.2: Art for Nature Education and Awareness

by Abhisheka Krishnagopal | *Artist, Ecologist and Educator, Nature Conservation Foundation*

When I began working with rural schools in Karnataka back in 2008, one of the biggest challenges I faced was the lack of child-friendly nature education materials in regional languages that reflected local biodiversity. This gap led me to start creating bilingual, illustrated resources on topics that were otherwise unavailable to students in these communities.

Over time, I began to explore activity-based methods that could help children truly connect with their natural surroundings. Through years of experimentation and countless workshops, I developed a range of games and art-based activities designed to spark curiosity and engagement. Many of these have now been compiled into a Handbook for Bird Educators (Fig1).

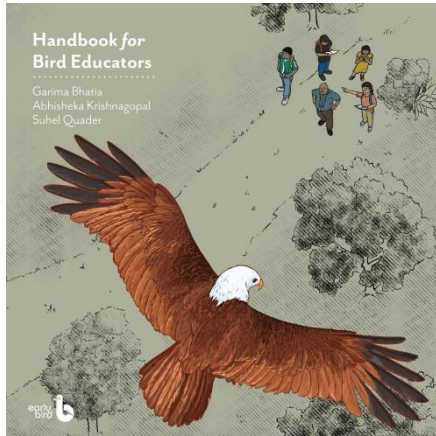


Fig1: Handbook for Bird educators

At Early Bird (www.early-bird.in) we work closely with teachers, librarians, and other educators, training them in innovative ways to introduce children to nature. One of our most impactful initiatives has brought nature education to nearly 6,000 Gram Panchayat libraries across Karnataka. Every librarian was trained in sketching birds—both realistically and in folk art styles—and in using nature journaling as a way to help children express their observations. Today, many of these librarians are using origami and other creative forms to teach about birds and local ecosystems.

"Art, through engaging the senses, can be a unique catalyst in developing a 'sense of wonder' about nature." — Jan van Boeckel

Art as a Gateway to Nature

Art quickly became central to my approach. It served as a powerful tool to help children observe, identify, and remember birds and animals around them. For example, students could learn to sketch a bird in a few simple steps and begin documenting their local species. Or they could creatively reinterpret familiar birds using folk art styles rooted in their own culture. In regions with limited access to traditional art materials, we encouraged the use of natural and discarded materials, allowing children to explore not just nature, but also the possibilities of creativity through resourcefulness (Fig2).



Fig2: Use of discarded materials to create nature art

One particularly engaging activity involved creating imaginary animals by combining features of 2–3 local species (Fig3). Through this exercise, children not only learn to recognize these species but also think about their diets, habitats, and survival strategies. These activities can take many forms—sketching, collage, puppetry—and always aim to deepen the child’s understanding and imagination (Fig4).

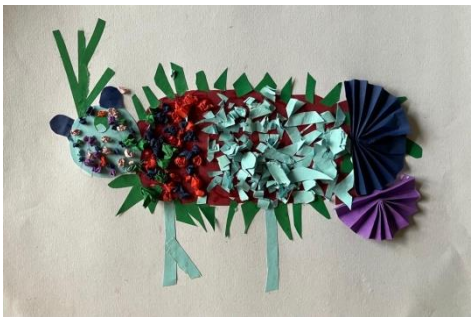


Fig3: Creating imaginary animals by combining 2–3 animals

Fig4: Imaginary animal

Taking Learning Outside the Classroom

Traditional education often confines children to the four walls of a classroom. But to truly connect with nature, children must be allowed to explore it firsthand (Fig5). Activities like sketching or painting outdoors contribute significantly to both physical and mental well-being.



Fig5: Learning outside the classroom

Bridging Art and Science

*“Art has the ability to carry forward a torch that science cannot carry any further.”—
Susannah Saylor & Edward Morris*

One of the most fulfilling aspects of this journey has been bridging the worlds of art and science. I have got children to document biodiversity by sketching, and transformed scientific concepts into

visual narratives. The Sustainability and Biodiversity booklet (Fig6) includes art-based activities that introduce ecological principles and conservation issues in an accessible and engaging way.

*I've also explored performing arts to communicate scientific ideas. One such effort, *How to Be a Fig*, used movement and dance to illustrate the ecological significance of fig trees (Fig7). In this piece, performers used their bodies to tell the story of the fig and its vital role in the ecosystem—bringing science to life through performance.*



Fig6: The Sustainability and Biodiversity booklet

Fig7: How to Be a Fig dance to communicate ecological concepts

Collaborations and Community Art

Collaborations have been key to expanding our reach. One notable partnership, the Birdsong exhibit with the Indian Music Experience Museum, attracted nearly 50,000 visitors in just four months.

Community art projects, like wall murals, have also played a powerful role. They bring people together to think, create, and engage around shared themes (Fig8). For example, inviting community members to paint animals they fear has helped reduce fear through familiarity. Painting vanished crops has sparked intergenerational conversations about reviving traditional agriculture. These murals have become starting points for meaningful community dialogue.

Through art, we nurture not just creativity, but a deep, lasting connection with the natural world—one child, one community, one bird at a time.



Fig8: Community wall murals bring people together to think, create, and engage around shared themes

Moderator's Reflection

2.5: Reflections of a Moderator (Panel II)

by B.Padma Reddy | *Artist and Art Educator, Hyderabad*

Considering the eclectic audience, the participants and the stakeholders, the three day conference Responding to Changing Landscapes can be considered an 'eye opener' of sorts for many. Planned with precision, well coordinated and conducted, it was an exposure to a panoramic view of the expansive world of art education and the diverse possibilities it could offer.

As an art educator myself, I strongly believe there is a dire need for change in the education system—its learning methods, pedagogy, and approaches. But with our numerous responsibilities and the 'necessity' to adhere to the 'old' among other things, it's easy to miss out on innovative possibilities that can happen and that are happening around the country. This is where conferences like this help bridge the gap. They bring like-minded individuals under one roof and offer a chance to re-explore prospects. Engaging with experts, professionals, and purpose-driven individuals through structured panels, discussions, and group activities was a key highlight. Informal conversations over lunch and snacks, and even post-conference heritage walks, opened up opportunities to learn beyond the formal schedule.

As educators, our primary role is not just to teach, but also to continuously learn and evolve—refining our methods and deepening our commitment. Many educators and facilitators have developed their own unique teaching approaches—whether through nature-based activities, mobile libraries, interactive books, zines, magazines, and more. First step to being a good teacher is to be an eager learner, and it was heartening that this three-day

conference provided a safe and encouraging space for just that.

As a panel moderator, I found it a valuable opportunity to delve into the processes and journeys of the panelists. Events like these offer the younger generation a chance to meet inspiring individuals whose journeys are filled with purpose, meaning, and joy. I still have a number of questions jotted down in my notebook, hoping for future conversations. It was an absolute pleasure to both participate in and moderate sessions. Beyond personal takeaways, the conference served as a rich learning space for young minds. The participation of numerous schools and the enthusiastic involvement of diverse students was a testament to the conference's success. The inclusion of varied activities, exhibitions, and performances clearly stemmed from a deeply thought-out intention—to spread awareness and introduce young learners to alternative approaches to teaching and learning.

Opportunities for children to be part of alternative learning processes are still rare in today's system, which is largely focused on achievement, competition, and measurable success. In this pursuit, we often lose sight of the joy found in the process itself—the joy of interaction, communication, values, and purpose. As art educators and practitioners, we seldom know exactly what our final painting or print will look like—not due to a lack of skill, but because we find success in the joy of creating. Introducing children to this process from a young age can help shape not only purposeful individuals but also joyful, mindful ones who value the journey of learning.

Education is perhaps the most powerful means to create the kind of world we all aspire to live in. I don't need to elaborate on what is currently flawed or what needs to change—education is the tool, the space, the temple

pillar for a better future. But just as a hammer can build or destroy, education used the wrong way can have devastating consequences, leading children to forget the joy of learning and lose their intrinsic values. Let's focus on changing the methods, and the future will follow. This conference is a small but meaningful step toward that greater goal.

One point of reflection is the venue itself. It seemed that most attendees were already aligned with the conference's philosophy and values. But true progress can be measured by how we reach those who are unfamiliar with or unaware of these concepts. Just as a successful product inspires new users, such an event should strive to attract a broader audience. Perhaps the art gallery setting creates an impression of exclusivity. How can we make such events more inviting and accessible to those outside the existing circle? How can we encourage more parents to attend alongside educators?

In continuation and as an outcome of the conference our rural art center 'Sanskriti' a part of our organization—Young Envoys International, established in 1992 organised a two-week mural camp for children. The camp focused on design thinking, leadership, critical thinking, creative freedom, and self-reflection. Led by A Shree Tej, an alumni of the center and a participant at the conference, the mural was co-created with young minds in Hyderguda village, Ranga Reddy District. This engagement helped the children not only develop new skills but also gain new perspectives on self-expression. Alongside the mural work, we hosted screenings, reflection sessions, group discussions and other enriching activities.

Panel III

Arts Education and Society: Understanding Cultural Perspectives

Objective: To investigate the sociological aspects of arts and arts education, examine their impact on society, culture, and individuals, and to discuss how arts education can be leveraged to understand the nuances of different cultural contexts, address social issues and promote cultural understanding.

Background: The sociology of arts explores how art influences and is influenced by social structures, relationships, and cultural norms. Arts education is not only about imparting skills and knowledge but also about fostering critical thinking, empathy, and social awareness. This panel aimed to delve into the interplay between arts, social and cultural landscapes and how arts education can be a powerful tool for social change and cultural enrichment.

Key Questions for the Panel

- a. How do social and cultural contexts shape the creation and reception of art?
- b. What role does arts education play in promoting social cohesion and cultural diversity?
- c. How can arts education address social inequalities and provide opportunities for marginalised communities?
- d. What are the sociological impacts of integrating arts into the education system?
- e. How can educators and artists collaborate to use arts as a means of social change?



You can view the complete presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Db2B28W2IeM>

3.1 Empowering Minds and Cultures: The Role of Arts and Gender Responsive Education in Shaping Inclusive Societies

by Muththamizh Kalai Vizhi | *Art and Holistic Development Educator*

Education as Intervention

Education, at its most honest, is an act of intervention. It disrupts inherited assumptions, unsettles comfortable silences, and equips individuals to participate in the world as critical, conscious agents. Arts education and gender-responsive pedagogy have been systematically undervalued—treated as supplementary rather than structural. That positioning must be challenged. These are not enrichment tools. They are instruments of epistemic and social transformation.

Art as Ideology and Inheritance

The arts do not decorate culture. They constitute it. Every folk tradition and community performance practice is a living archive carrying memory, resistance, and identity across generations. When arts education draws on these deliberately, it disrupts the colonial logic that determines which knowledge systems are considered legitimate. A student who encounters her own cultural inheritance as serious intellectual inquiry begins to understand that knowledge production is not the exclusive domain of textbooks—and that artistic practice is one of the oldest forms of civic participation.

The Structural Failure of Gender Equity

India's policy commitments to gender equality in education are well documented. So is their failure in practice. Curriculum content remains

saturated with normative gender representations. Classroom behaviour reinforces hierarchies of expectation. The institutional architecture of schooling sustains patriarchal conditioning long before students can name what is happening.

The critical intervention point is early adolescence, around eleven years. This is when gender identities crystallise, hierarchies are internalised as natural, and behavioural scripts begin their long rehearsal. Arts-integrated, gender-responsive pedagogy at this stage is not remedial. It is preventive, structural, and politically necessary.

Tamil Nadu: Evidence of What Is Possible

Tamil Nadu's model schools represent one of the most substantive attempts in India to operationalise gender-responsive education systemically. Here, equity is not a timetable module. It is a design principle governing how environments are structured, how facilitators are trained, and how arts are mobilised to surface and interrogate gender assumptions. Documented case studies reveal measurable attitudinal shifts among students and, over time, in communities. Challenges entrenched resistance, examination pressure, inadequate teacher training are real. But the strategies developed constitute a replicable, scalable framework.

The Demand of the Moment

UNESCO's advocacy reflects comparative evidence: systems integrating arts and gender equity produce students better equipped for democratic participation and economic agency. What international comparisons make clear is that progress requires structural reform — curriculum redesign,

mandatory facilitator training, sustained community engagement — not awareness campaigns.

Policymakers must move from rhetorical endorsement to budgetary commitment. Educators need preparation, not just permission, to teach differently. The cost of not acting is measured in generations of students whose potential was constrained before they knew they had it.

3.2 The Arts & Cultural Education in a World of Diversity

By Radha Gomaty | *Writer, Illustrator and Poet*

Diversity inheres in Nature. It is everything that makes up Life.

A word's meaning lies in its use and the contextual changes of its usage can alter meanings, subtly or otherwise. It is probably because Words are, in a sense, also sculpted sounds, that they have the power to evoke/trigger Sensations that physical situations & things with their sensory impact can evoke. This in essence constitutes the affective power of all poetic utterance.

The etymological root of the word 'Diverse' is 'turned away', the sensation implied by this is, in terms of organisational structure, a collection or aggregation of sorts where the constituent elements stand separated or turned away from one another.

A community that implies linkages between elements that go way beyond strict linearity of function, however, cannot be formed by the turning away of multiple elements from one another. Linking together diverse elements, or rather, the primary quality of the energy of intent that could link them together can only be one that has EQUITY, that embraces diverse elements as 'same' without reductively attempting at 'making same', as its core value. For EQUITY itself is about the acceptance & admission of Difference.

It is this that allows Diversity to become a possibility, a portal so to speak, for the experience of the endless permutations & combinations of

various elements that in relationship, qualitatively influence one another but without subsuming, dominating, reducing or "putting down" the other.

Thinking about diversity along these lines, it is in increasing evidence that we are living in times where the very foundation of the meaning of Diversity is breaking down irrevocably.

What is taking its place is 'Polarisation', that works with its energy of Repulsion where differences are accentuated and magnified at the cost of all extant linkages to the extent that the possibilities & potential for the same are discounted, brushed aside, glossed over, falsified and as the screws tighten, traits of difference are also demonized in avenues of social discourse where Cultural forms like Films, Serials, Ads, Fashion, Visual Artforms all play a great part.

The result of this dangerous game of any form of Majoritarian Identity Politics, (including one based on Religion that has been carefully engineered to alienate, break, violate, alter, regroup people's sense of communal interrelationship in current times), results in a society weighed down by the highly divisive 'Us & Them' mindset triggering violence & hubris on one side, fear & hatred on the other.

As we live in times where children have begun to ask each other their religion and caste, memories of my own school days in the fourth & part of the fifth decade after India's Independence in the Central Govt-run school chain [the KVS with textbooks supplied by the NCERT] comes back to haunt. We grew up hearing ditties on Family Planning on Radio, were taught that for the welfare & progress of this Country/Watan we must need see it as 'a Unity

in Diversity’, a value that was given to us constantly from the pledge we took daily in the morning assembly to the greetings to teachers as they entered (“Jai Hind,Madam!”) to most of the songs that we were taught in music class (for example: “Hind desh ke nivasi/sabhi Jan ek hain/rang Roop vesh bhasha /chahe anek Hai” or “Hindu Musleem Christyaan hain/lekin pehle insaan hain!/Sikh yahi Parsi yahi jo hain/Millat ki shaan hain/ rang bhari lo yeh Tiranga sabka ek Nishan hain/Yeh mera Hindustan hain”).

In the light (or rather, the ‘dark’) of where we are today, the 78th year of our political independence from British Rule, the identity of an overarching Nationalism that we were raised upon has not proved sufficient or transformative enough to relegate the identities of birth and bloodlines that determine what sadly still are the cornerstones of our primary identity-caste & religion, to mere vestiges in the rising light of a powerful and primary civic identity as a ‘Citizen-Human’.**

The critical intersection of economic class and its consciousness across caste & religious identities, necessary for transforming the self -identity of citizens into a truly civic one with Equity as its Core Value, just did not happen.

With the growth of capital, industry & urbanisation and the working class it spawned, economic classes in the modern sense, became a reality . But despite its intersection with the older ones of caste and religion, for whatever reason, class consciousness failed to reach the critical limit required to become an identity strong enough to subsume/ replace the deeply entrenched older identities to enable the transition to a more Equitable society post our political independence. The process of altering the self identity of citizens into

a truly civic one with Equity as its Core Value could move only in hiccups, constantly sabotaged by regressive elements who have today taken over the driver's seat. Today we are back on reverse gear, regressing into a society fractured by age-old malaises that we falsely guild with high flown names, like sanaatan sanskaar.

Depressing and demoralising? Indeed!

Cultural practitioners and educators like us assembled who are for plurality, who find themselves appalled by the hubris & violence that has been systematically fanned to flame, are certainly going to need to pick up parkouring skills so as to scale these massive walls that loom before us with their expressionless monolithic blood-stained greyness staring intimidatingly down at us.

Though I taught in school as an Art teacher in a very different era about three decades earlier before—smartphones became common and there was no Google pay, Instagram, Threads and even Facebook was sparse, the human elements that underlay my practices back then continue to be just as relevant they were then and open to some reworkings and readaptations.

My Sutra # ONE upon which this thread of thought is based is this:

Art thrives on the age-old living insight that only the 'Affective is Effective'. That is how and why it needs to become the medium, so to speak, in which to think one's thoughts & design one's actions.

As a matrix for education, it organically fosters wholesomeness through informed, self-reflexive, self-regulation considerate of both Self and /or the Other.

Art can become a matrix for 'Learning by Doing' in schools only when its affective power is creatively connected with a well informed, well developed critical faculty for raising questions and formulating answers for those that can be answered while respecting those that cannot.

Looking back from where I am today as I deal with the fresh experience of my new practise as an actor, these are what I would add from my recent insights:

- Interspersing theatre exercises throughout school schedules could naturally promote the Democratic values of Equity, Trust, Teamwork by turning these into deeply seated somatic memories that helps internalise & integrate democratic values with Life. This needs to start from the way we organise our school assemblies.
- That our school assembling systems are mostly based on military standards of mechanical conformity & obedience to outer command rather than organic self regulation and spatial positioning in non-competitive relationships with one's neighbours is an insight that hit me hard recently when I attended a theatre workshop.
- While participating in basic exercises that trained us in maintaining an organic equidistance with each other in movement & stillness ,I experienced first-hand that it evokes naturally & effortlessly the tremendously democratic values of mindfulness of self vis a vis all of one's neighbours & community.

It hit me hard once more, as Blaise Joseph, my artist colleague here succinctly summed up his presentation that children are by nature mostly collaborative, not competitive. It is we, already deeply conditioned otherwise, to see and treat everything as a war by the status quo who drill them to become recipients of this unfortunate legacy.

Various exercises in trust from a young age allow for deeply felt experiences of security and collective mutual responsibility that then becomes a way of Life.

Art Teachers need to realise that they, occupants of what often is the most sidelined teaching posts in school, are actually Powerful Guardians of possibly the only non-judgemental, non- competitive common space in Schools that can truly foster the best Democratic Values: The Art Room.

It is to seize this invaluable opportunity that the usually most neglected & underpaid of all teachers ,the Art Teacher, needs to be specially empowered by the clear understanding that what lies at the Heart of Art is the Power of Creative Thinking, the courage to think laterally & differently, the stubbornness to persist and protect this mode of ‘non- intellectual’ thinking by recognition of one, the empowering critical value of discernment; two, the vested interests & values that underlie its opposition.

What the Art Teacher needs to understand is that “Craft” is only ONE small component of Art. Lumping these together in a single breath & phrase

is to lose the opportunity to extract the specific pedagogic potentials of either / both.

Craft activities have not only possibilities to improve dexterity, accuracy, hand-brain coordination, it also has the potential to open a window to them contextually when explored with a 360° approach. Enquiring into the evolution of crafts promotes awareness of Cultural History, Anthropology and Ecology as well while enquiring into raw materials & their procurement. The last category with its specific problems can, in case of crafts that are dying out, actually imaginatively foster Design Thinking, in general & specifically, as to putting forward alternate raw materials and repurposing traditional skill in terms of application & functionality.

If art is not fundamentally about skilling then what could it be about?

While the ability to paint, dance, sing, sculpt, etc. exceptionally at its core is to a good extent an inborn gift, the capability to think things differently is something most children have naturally before its narrowing by social conditioning from multiple quarters.

The thing is to keep devising exercises that spark this capability & warmly rewarding it. It might mean starting discussions, class debates, teamwork activities that are eminently suited to the tribe-bonding stage of mid-adolescents.

This might mean inviting resource persons or a film screening. Whatever the planned stimulus, what matters is the discussion, debate, dialogue and sharing afterwards following the best democratic principles.

Findings could culminate in a session of poster making, a play, a wall in school dedicated to public murals that keep changing, a booklet/ a catchy insta-reel creation with novel content that is then shared / presented in the community.

Cinema for Education

This is one medium whose appeal has remained unchanged and will in all likelihood, continue to remain so. Well curated cinema screenings, followed by a circle sit - in 'no-holds-barred discussion', are a powerful tool for fostering reflection & critical thinking.

Film Clubs and societies have become largely defunct on the false understanding that these bodies existed only to bring cinema, a scarcity when they were founded, to people and that OTT platforms have taken over that function today. The real community building function of Public Film Societies, when dedicated to democratic, civic, aesthetic and secular values, has been forgotten in this narrow understanding.

That cinema, created without the aforementioned value commitments, turns into a dangerous propaganda tool completely disruptive of a wholesome civic life, is a fact that we are all grappling with today.

The power of community screenings in schools can be leveraged to maximum effectiveness by the brief introduction that precedes the screening and sensibly moderating the intensive discussion afterwards.

Without this, the watching of a movie will continue to mostly amount to only to just another mode of habitual unreflective, uncritical consumption. This needs to be remedied in school itself to really know the power of Cinema/Film in shaping our perceptions and creating ethical film professionals for the morrow.

Epilogue

There is still a certain self defeating sadness that I realise is choking me as I write these thoughts of mine whose relevance I'm convinced of through experience & practice.

For the fact is we have devolved to the level where the easiest identity in the present climate is Religion, a plastic entity constantly tweaked to maintain its top heavy, prescriptive authority based on surrender/obey/ fear/ shame /isolate/ discipline & punish that is fuelled by a fiercely competitive spirit of revival visually branded with conspicuous outward physical markings as well.

These are all signs of shrinkage and the attrition of a wholesome civic identity - the burn marks of this regressive polarisation, so to speak.

It is not going to be easy to stand up for what in our childhood were pretty obviously civic values of equity and humanity that needs to prevail over

any other in a democratic society. But that is precisely what we need to endeavor towards, no matter what...

The need of the hour is to safekeep spaces that are committed to creatively stitching together elements into the kind of diversity that has Equity & Compassion at its core., that augments and buoys the spirit of enlivenment and opens the heart to the spirit of Robi Thakur's lines:

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.”

****The term ‘Citizen-Human’ implies that the denizens of the category ‘Non-Human’, under the expanded concept of Equity have equal, inviolable and inalienable rights as the ‘Citizen- Human’.**

All changes discussed in such fora can be effective ONLY if it is instilled by creative interventions in B.Ed/ college level where admission needs to be based on scientifically designed rigorous tests for human qualities & civic values over above academic excellence. Changes suggested here need to be a

compulsory part in frequent orientation programs for Fresher Teachers & in refresher courses for Senior Teachers.

Additionally, without quality payment and quality status for School Teachers, how can we hope to attract the very best and the most compassionate people who can actually make or mar a human being forever?



3.3 Am I a truth-teller ? Contemplations on the Ethics of Art-Writing for Children

by Likla Lall | *Writer and Storyteller*

Am I a liar ? Am I a truth-teller ? Am I a creator? Am I an explorer ?

Am I just human ?

Having been asked to contemplate the ethics in art education, I found myself confronting the ethics of my own practice. The inner-world of a writer is tumultuous: rapid conversations with oneself, quickly morphing iterations of tenses and voices, and of course, that treacherous inner-voice arguing a strong case of imposter syndrome.

In a content-excessive post-truth world, there is a constant inversion of ‘the death of the author’. An author finds themselves under the unyielding scrutiny of context. Your biodata presents a preface to any work you produce, allowing your reader the prerequisite comparison with a biodata of their own.

*Heavily aware of my own inescapable context, I worked through the edits of my book *Eye Spy Indigenous Art* (Fig1). The very title of the book seemed contentious as various interviews presented alternate valid words ‘tribal and folk’, ‘traditional’, ‘vernacular’ and so on. Could I do justice to the art forms in the book ? Could I find a clear perspective to represent?*



Fig1: A spread from *Eye Spy Indigenous Art*

Hold on! I reminded myself that I was writing for middle-grade students who are perfectly capable of comprehending a complexity. The questions that kept me up became the guide posts in my narrative. I decided to be as honest as possible: about what inspired awe and what confounded me. And most importantly, to trust my readers to use the tools provided and navigate this beautiful tangle of perspectives.

Which artist is popular? Which artists are being silenced? Which artist has the most economic value?

Which artist do you relate to? Which artist moves you? Which artist offends you?

The Art1st books celebrate a diverse collection of artworks by Indian artists offering their readers a chance to answer these questions for themselves. First, as a symptomatic expression of the contemporary world

they emerge from, and secondly, more relevantly, a reflection of the personal when presented with the same works.

Meera Devidayal's Situations Vacant invites a young eye to a flock of journeying flamingos, while serenely presenting the overwhelming urbanity of Mumbai. Mahalaxmi's series reflects on the role of a woman as artist and mother, a current theme drawing created in the ancient Madhubani form. Anwar Chitrakar's COVID-19 series finds the cows on the streets enjoying a bike ride on streets emptied of humans.

Art has a deep and changing relationship with beauty, law and ethics. Presenting a diversity of paintings not only cultivates visual literacy, but also provides opportunities for young readers to find faces, colours, contexts, homes, themes and imaginations that resonate with their own. This sense of a personal and rooted aesthetics is especially valuable when we are all bombarded with media that presents an airbrushed and commercially directed representation of beauty, cleanliness and virtue.

To an artist, each piece of work offers a chance to question one's own biases, presumptions and prejudices. My process includes playing with story structures, contemplating etymologies and looking curiously at art and history. I wrote a dystopian story called Forcing Spring, illustrated into a comic by my sister and illustrator Keya Lall. The text took the form of a terrorist's manifesto, stating 'The only law is that of germination. The only duty is to Devrais, the Sacred Grove.', a reflection on the role of law in a society that is negotiating its relationship with nature.

My dear friend and colleague, Kripa's book Art is a Voice is a poem to the passionate history of art activism (Fig2). The book is taking the world by storm, reaching out to the

voice within that calls for a just and kind world, that urges you to move, to take action! One is left with the question: is art within, above or outside the law?

ObserveContemplate OrganiseCreateCollaborate

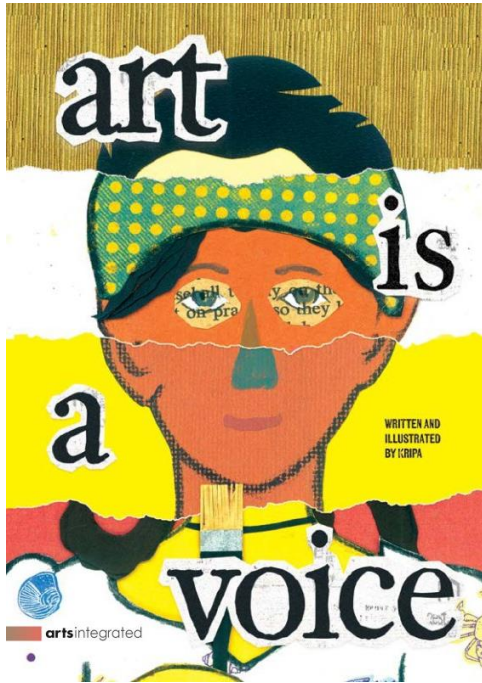


Fig2: Cover of Art is a Voice

Could you ever imagine falling in love with a theory? That's how I felt when I first learnt about MoMA's Visual Thinking Strategies. It was 2019, and I started traveling with my first book Art is a Verb (Fig3). These three simple questions were like a magic spell:

What's going on in this painting? What makes you say that? What more can you find?

And voila! Each tongue was unlocked, each mind emboldened. A group of children looked upon a piece of art and built an architecture of dimensions with their words, each child unique and responsive, thriving in this opportunity for critical thinking.

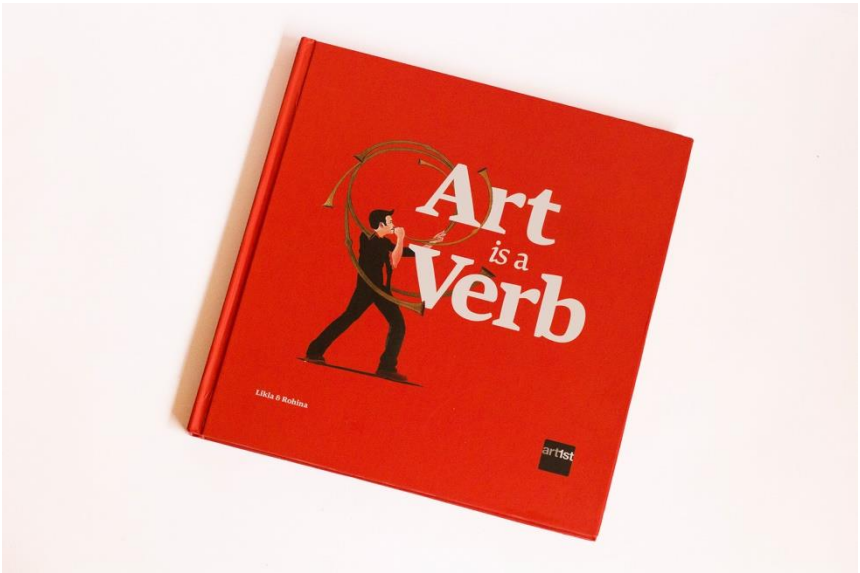


Fig3: Cover of Art is a Verb

When Somnath Hore: Wounds (Fig4) was published, Kripa and I had the opportunity to travel once more, conducting workshops, presentations and installations around the artist's work. To our surprise, this book, so full of pain and wounds, became an invitation to a collective sharing of grief. Children and adults alike added to our 'Wall of Healing', collaboratively contributing their words of pain and messages of healing. We were

overwhelmed by the community of empathy that gathered around the basic human idea of getting hurt.



Fig4: Cover of Somnath Hore: Wounds

We built a workshop that asked young participants to destroy to create. Inspired by Somnath Hore, we ripped, tore, stomped and crushed paper, canvas and fabric. We paused and reviewed and sought the artistic process in our actions. Through this catharsis, we facilitated emotions into expression through art. For educators, therein lies the crux of working with children: it is their emotions, their journey, their imagination, their art and their ethics!

I often reflect on my own childhood. Born to two artists who whisked us away to the beautiful Nilgiris, my childhood was one of art. In my experience, fathers took walks each morning and created sculptures of dried twigs. And mothers had art studios with four kilns where they created fused glass

wonders. And those walls were bookshelves lined with the most wonderful books about art and design. I was a little wild spark who read voraciously and ran barefooted through forests. This is who I was allowed to be. Perhaps this forms the bedrock of my worldview and belief systems, especially when it comes to beliefs on art and education.

As the ecosystem that supports children’s learning, it is important that we are hopeful! We are all writers and designers, whether we create a book, lesson plan, experience or policy. To use an ethical word, our duty is to create spaces where children thrive, learn and grow into capable, confident humans.

We are all humans first, be it children, teachers or authors. Let’s build systems that believe this.

3.4 Inclusion and Connection through Arts

by Swathi Vellal | *Founder, Director: Ishanya India Foundation, Bangalore*

Abstract

This article explores the intersection of disability, emotional expression, and the creative arts, drawing upon case studies from direct practice and other initiatives in India. Using qualitative evidence, it demonstrates how engagement in artistic activities such as music, drawing, and performance assists with emotional regulation, fosters communication, and promotes inclusion among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Additionally, the article critiques the pervasive medicalisation of artistic engagement as ‘therapy’, arguing for a rights-based, social model that values art as a form of identity and connection. The findings emphasize the need to recognize arts not merely as treatment tools, but as avenues for participation, joy, and self-expression.



Introduction

Disability is almost always an after-thought even though disability is just one birth or one accident away. As the Founder and Director of Ishanya India Foundation, a non-profit organisation working across education, livelihood, and capacity-building in Karnataka, I have witnessed firsthand how people with disabilities are marginalized, not just socially but emotionally, creatively, and professionally. It was thus a privilege to present these reflections at a forum where disability could take centre stage.

This article puts together personal stories from my clinical work, educational practice, and community engagement to demonstrate how the arts serve as a tool for emotional expression, inclusion, and advocacy. It also critiques the default framing of art as therapy for disabled individuals, arguing instead for a social model that recognizes their autonomy, talent, and rightful place in the cultural sphere.

The Transformative Power of Creative Expression

In my early career as a trainee psychologist in a hospital, I met a young boy initially diagnosed with seizures. All tests returned normal. Over time, and with the aid of art-based play therapy, the real story emerged. His drawings and recurrent depictions of family conflict helped us uncover the emotional distress manifesting as pseudo-seizures. Art became the medium through which his unspoken trauma found a voice. At Ishanya India Foundation, we've seen similar stories unfold. One of our students, Ram (name changed), a young boy with autism and communication challenges, finds solace and connection through music. Despite involuntary vocal tics that interfere with

his singing, music remains his sanctuary. Another student Tanvi (name changed) with autism has found colouring to be an effective form of self-regulation. Initially she was drawn to it during increased anxiety especially when she was dealing with allergies and gut related issues, she gradually began using it as a calming tool. Over time, this simple practice evolved into a deeper engagement with the arts, she has since begun exploring other creative mediums such as painting, offering her new ways to express herself and navigate her emotions.

The Problem with Over-Medicalising Creativity

These cases illustrate that the arts are not just as therapeutic tools, but act as vital forms of expression and connection. Yet, we must also understand a problematic narrative, the tendency to label every creative activity by disabled individuals as ‘therapy’. When activities like singing or painting are only viewed through a medical lens, we risk reinforcing the idea that disabled people are perpetual patients, not artists, musicians, or athletes.

Therapy has its place, it is structured, goal-oriented, and led by professionals to address specific needs. But when an individual engages in music for joy or pursues art as a skill or profession, that deserves to be recognized on its own terms. Language matters as it shapes perceptions and possibilities.

Barriers to Access

Access, too, remains a key issue. While ramps and elevators are vital, they are only part of the puzzle. Access must also include sensory-friendly

environments, inclusive teaching methods, and the dismantling of attitudinal barriers. Projects like Access for All, founded by Siddhant Shah, are working to address this gap by making art institutions physically and intellectually accessible, exemplified by initiatives like India's first tactile gallery at the National Museum in New Delhi.

The Role of Advocacy

Globally and locally, we are enriched by the contributions of artists with disabilities, whether it is Frida Kahlo's deeply personal canvases, Ali Stroker's Broadway performances, or the evocative works of Indian artist Gauri Gupta, who paints while living with multiple sclerosis.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the arts are not a luxury for the disability community, they are a necessity. They bridge isolation and expression, therapy and autonomy. As we work towards a more inclusive world, let's support both access to the arts and recognition in them. Art can heal, connect, and empower but only if we allow space for every story to be told.

Moderator's Reflection

3.5: Reflections of a Moderator (Panel III)

by Menaka Rodriguez | *Executive Director, India Foundation for the Arts*

The conversation in this panel on diverse cultural perspectives in education is grounded in three essential impulses: *the right to quality education for all*, the *need for inclusion and representation*, and the *importance of creating environments that nurture critical thinking, empathy, and social awareness* in children. As articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, these impulses are fundamental to building a just, vibrant, and equitable knowledge society—one that empowers children within the education system. And this panel demonstrated the ways in which each of their work strengthens efforts to address and bridge gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes that exist in our schools.

Conference speakers Muththamizh Kalai Vizhi, Likla Lall, Radha Gomaty, and Swathi Vellal Raghunandan shared insights from their own practice and the possibility that arts interventions in education can make - challenging dominant narratives, creating space for dialogue, inclusion and representation, and pushing for shifts in conventional norms. Muththamizh Kalai Vizhi spoke from her experience of creating gender-responsive spaces through a model school in Tamil Nadu. Likla Lall reflected on her practice as a children's writer, sharing the ethical questions that arise in the process of storytelling. Swathi Vellal illustrated how the arts can serve as a bridge between isolation and expression, therapy and autonomy, particularly for children with disabilities. Radha Gomaty offered a powerful provocation and a call to action - to preserve and protect spaces for diversity in today's increasingly fraught and divided world.

The panel shared how the introduction of arts, crafts, humanities, languages, play and lived cultural and artistic experiences, can transform how children relate to one another and to the world around them. Exposure to diverse artistic and cultural expressions fosters cultural understanding, encourages representation, and supports the inclusion of all voices within the classroom—helping children transcend social and cultural barriers. As a transformative tool, they demonstrated that Arts Education challenges stereotypes, expands perspectives and encourages children to think differently. They offered us possibilities and points of reflection on the kind of spaces we are creating for children. An inclusive approach makes way for all forms of diversity, responding to the unique needs of every child, sparking curiosity, amplifying their lived experiences and offering a voice to them. The speakers highlighted some of the best practices as well as the persistent gaps that continue to plague our education systems.

One of the key takeaways from this panel and the conference was that meaningful, lasting change must be rooted in the practices of teachers, art educators and schools. At IFA, the *Kali-Kalisu* programme creates such a space - building capacity among teachers, artists, and schools to integrate these values into everyday classroom practice. Through a wide range of artistic interventions - painting, poetry, storytelling, music, dance, theatre, writing, and more—these projects reimagine the space of education, reinforcing IFA’s deep commitment to nurturing lifelong learning. The aim for all us, we agreed is not only to foster joyful learning environments but also to create spaces where cultural diversity is acknowledged, celebrated, and meaningfully woven into the fabric of education.

As the saying goes, “*It takes a village to raise a child,*” and the same holds true for driving social change. A multitude of efforts—working across different spaces, examining unique needs and context must come together to build a more inclusive, empathetic, and equitable society that ensures better opportunities and access for all children. The panelists have shown us that as educators and institutions working in the field, we will need to address these gaps through sustained efforts - with children, art and hope at the forefront.

Workshop

Journaling with Nature

Sangeetha Kadur | *Wildlife Artist*



In February 2025, I was delighted to collaborate with India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) to facilitate a Nature Journaling workshop at their Southern Conference - Arts Education: Responding to Changing Landscapes. Hosted at the State gallery of Arts in Hyderabad, the conference brought together educators, artists, and community practitioners to explore the evolving role of the arts in education. This was my first association with the IFA organisation and it was heartening to be part of the conference and watch the events unfold. By highlighting art-based training and other capacity building for teachers, the conference enabled some wonderful conversations about various art practices that can be used in schools and in our communities.

The workshop I facilitated focused on introducing participants to the practice of nature journaling — a way of observing, recording, and connecting with the natural world through drawing and writing. With about 50 - 60 attendees, the workshop included art teachers from government and private schools from across Hyderabad and Karnataka, art and nature enthusiasts and other conference delegates. Many participants had not heard of ‘nature journaling’ and were trying it for the first time. The first part of the workshop began with a presentation that introduced the concept of nature journaling. While showcasing pages from my journal, I spoke about my own journaling experience, how it can be an excellent tool for deep observation, a way to slow down, and a method to cultivate curiosity. I dwelled into how incredible and diverse the natural world is. Enamoured by my own fascination with the natural world, I spoke about the behaviours I had observed while sketching, and the many chance encounters in the wilderness that keeps me inspired everyday!

Followed by the short presentation, we dived into a hands-on practice of nature journaling. We started with a blind contour sketching activity using leaves – a playful exercise that helps participants let go of their expectations and focus on the art of seeing. This is a simple yet very effective activity that helps us look more intently, take notice of the little details and most importantly, helps with our hand-eye co-ordination. There were laughs, some surprise at the squiggly results, and a general sense of relief that without even looking at the book, they were able to capture the general essence of leaves. The main idea here wasn't to produce a 'perfect drawing', but to observe carefully, record in sketches and notes, make personal reflections, cherish the time in nature and enjoy the process of journaling. We explored ways to take field notes and tried quick gesture sketches. We even attempted to create a journal page while watching a video of a pond heron, on loop. This added an extra challenge and lots of fun to the exercise!

We then stepped outdoors, walking slowly through the small green campus, observing plants and textures around us. Participants were divided into groups to journal specific plants. I was amazed with the immersed concentration with which the participants observed and recorded. I moved around, guiding, answering questions, and witnessing how participants were engaging. Journal pages got filled with leaves, tree forms, creepers, seedpods, flowers, notes, Kannada and English reflections, beautiful long form essays and even a poem! For many, it was a new way of looking at the familiar. Despite being a brief introduction to nature journaling, the workshop seemed to have resonated deeply with some of the participants.

For me, the workshop was all worthwhile and reaffirmed the quiet power of nature journaling. The process of journaling can enable a wonderful connection - with a place and with oneself. It can make us observant

naturalists too. I strongly believe that nature journaling can be an effective tool to introduce in every school. Workshops like this open a small but significant doorway — into noticing more, caring more, and perhaps, seeing the world a little differently.



Other Programme Elements

The event was structured around four distinct but interconnected programme elements, each designed to engage its audience differently while converging on a shared argument: that the arts, when embedded in education with intention, produce something more than skilled students – they produce thinking, feeling, participating citizens.

The Spotlights placed practitioners at the centre. Teachers and artists who have worked as IFA grantees and project coordinators shared their projects directly with an audience of peers and visitors – not as finished reports but as living accounts of what it means to teach differently. What emerged across these sessions was a picture of classrooms transformed not by resources but by a shift in how knowledge is approached: through the hands, through community memory, through making.

The Performances extended this argument into experience. A Kolata by students from Jakanapalli and the theatrical production *Hazaaron Khwaishein* by Sifar Theatre were not incidental to the programme – they demonstrated what arts education looks like when it reaches full expression. One was rooted in folk tradition and collective precision; the other in intimate storytelling and audience participation. Together they asked the gathering to feel what the Spotlights had described.

The Creative Classrooms, facilitated across three days by nine IFA-associated educators and artists, brought students and teachers from four schools into direct contact with arts-integrated methods. Through origami, puppet-making, theatre exercises, and paper craft, participants moved between doing and

reflecting a methodology that mirrored exactly what the programme sought to advocate. The energy in these sessions, by many accounts, outlasted the sessions themselves.

The Exhibition held all of this together visually. Displaying outcomes from 20 educators and artists across Karnataka, it offered visitors a material record of what arts-integrated education produces not as spectacle but as evidence.

The heritage walks around the Charminar lead by department of tourism, Andhra Pradesh and Ganesh Malthukar weaved together history, lived experience and reflection on heritage, education and identity.

Conference Report

“.....The three-day conference brought together artists, educators, researchers, and community members to think seriously about what education can look like when the arts are at its centre. Structured as an "unconference," it prioritised open dialogue over formal presentations, creating room for honest exchange across a wide range of perspectives. Session after session made visible what years of classroom practice had quietly established that when students learn through making, performing, and reflecting, something shifts in how they understand both subject and self. Projects and performances did not illustrate this argument so much as embody it, turning the gathering itself into a demonstration of what arts-integrated education feels like from the inside. Creative Classrooms, Spotlights, Performances, and the Exhibition each worked differently, but together they built a cumulative case through experience rather than assertion. Participants from policy thinkers to grassroots teachers found both recognition of their daily work and practical strategies to carry back into their contexts. The IFA network emerged as a testimony to what long-term, practitioner-led commitment can produce. The conference also looked ahead toward joint projects, research collaborations, and cross-institutional partnerships that could root this work more firmly in mainstream education. It closed with everyone in a circle, sharing what they were taking away. Participants left not with neat conclusions but with renewed energy, unfinished questions, and a stronger sense of the community they belong to.” *Sanjana Rangan*

Read the report from the conference : chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://indiaifa.org/sites/indiaifa/website/programme/studies_reports/arts-education-responding-to-changing-landscapes-2025.pdf











Biographies

Abhisheka Krishnagopal A Bangalore-based artist, ecologist and educator currently working with Nature Conservation Foundation, Bangalore. With an educational background in Fine Arts, Ecology and Environment, and Social Sciences, Abhisheka has more than a decade of experience in urban wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, wildlife research, nature education, and communication. She has a keen interest in exploring the intersection between art and ecological sciences, and in finding new ways to make conversations around nature conservation engaging.

Anant Maringanti The director of the Hyderabad Urban Lab, a non-profit multi-disciplinary urban research organisation. A graduate of the University of Minnesota with a PhD in Geography, Environment, and Society, Anant has taught graduate courses at the National University of Singapore and University of Hyderabad. His academic and professional career has centered on interdisciplinary approaches to critical global challenges, with a particular focus on South Asia.

Arpitha RG A visual artist trained at Bangalore University, with an interest and commitment to arts education projects. As a practicing artist, she has showcased her work at numerous art shows.

Aruna BT A trained theatre person and an active practitioner from Channagiri, Davanagere. He has been conducting arts integrated workshops for children across Karnataka. His training at NSD Bangalore has opened new ways for him to engage in the field of Theatre in Education.

Ashok Totnalli A drama teacher from Sedam, Kalaburagi, and has been working in the field since 2008. He studied at Gulbarga University and trained at Ninasam. He has been part of the Kali Kalisu teacher training programme. His students have staged multiple plays across Karnataka over the years.

Baby Biradar A Visual Arts teacher at the Ramalingeshwara Government High School, Muchalamba, Bidar. Having been exposed to various forms of visual arts, Baby has developed a 3D book titled *Vismaya Rekhaloka* (Amazing world of lines) on geometrical figures.

B Padma Reddy A practicing painter and printmaker based in Hyderabad. Two of her central passions have been art and children. She has been involved as a pedagogue for more than 30 years at Kendriya Vidyalaya and other voluntary organisations. She has conducted and participated in numerous workshops, exhibitions and competitions at the national and international levels as an artist and art teacher. She continues to work with rural and economically disadvantaged children and young adults through the Sanskriti Rural Art Center in Hyderguda village, Hyderabad.

Blaise Joseph As a visual artist and art educator, has been involved in community based art projects as an art consultant and facilitator to several research based funding

organisations. In his art practice he engages with socio-economic, political, and ecological relationships with people and places. The community based Art education projects and workshops that he undertakes address children, parents, teachers, youth, college students, rural communities, educational policy makers, prisoners, programme managers of NGOs, art educators, and families across India. Since 2018, he has been the Programme Director of the Art By Children (ABC) Programme at the Kochi Biennale Foundation and the curator of its Art Room Project.

Chandrasah Y Jalihal A practicing artist with more than two decades of teaching experience in visual arts at MMK College of Fine Arts, Kalaburagi. He has a post-graduate diploma in printmaking from Santiniketan.

Feroze MNA A theatre practitioner and an alumni of National School of Drama, New Delhi, specialising in Theatre In Education (TIE). He has acted in, directed and produced more than 30 theatre productions in different languages with more than 300 performances across the country.

Ganesh Kumar Malthurkar (Gannu) A PhD scholar in Art Education, IIT Hyderabad (Department of Design) and an accomplished sculptor, and a passionate educator. With four innovation patents under his name, he currently serves as the Vice President of the Telangana Sculptors and Artists Association (TSAA).

Ganganna An Assistant Teacher and is enthusiastically involved in various Kannada literary activities in Raichur district. He is also passionate about documenting different folk genres found around his native town, Karatagi, Koppal.

Gayatri Nair A photographer, arts manager and educator from Chennai. She co-founded the Chennai Photo Biennale Foundation and heads CPB Prism, the foundation's educational division, where she integrates arts-based learning in education through curriculum development, teacher training, children's literature publishing, and workshops.

Gundappa Goudgol A retired government school visual arts teacher from Kamalapur, Kalaburagi. His science, language, and mathematics models have been permanently featured in several educational institutions throughout Karnataka. He is renowned for crafting models using waste materials.

Gundurao Desai An Assistant Teacher at the Government Higher Primary School at Medakinala, Maski, Raichur. He is also known in the Kannada literary world. At a personal level, he has kept himself updated on the developments in literature and theatre in the region. He regularly contributes on various topics to many popular Kannada magazines.

Gururaj L A special teacher of drama at Government Pre-University College, High School Section, Koppal. He has vast experience in documenting a range of folk traditions that stretch from a relatively unknown repertoire of domestic work songs of women to the more established theatre and dance forms available within the community around the Koppal district in Karnataka.

Jahanara An Assistant Teacher at the Government Higher Primary School, Gandhinagar, Kustagi, Koppal. She comes from the pool of trained facilitators who underwent the Kali

Kalisu orientation workshop that was conducted in Pavagada in 2018. Having been exposed to various forms of literary arts, she uses her skills to aid the learning process of her students.

Kishan Rao Kulkarni A social science teacher at the High School section of the Government Pre-University College, Hanumasagara, Koppal. He has been a columnist for various Kannada newspapers and magazines.

Kotresh B A high school teacher in Hagaribommanahalli, Hospet. He is known for publishing the students' newspaper Pencil in Sindhanur, Raichur. He was selected for the Youth Icon Felicitation Programme 2020 by Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, a first for a primary school teacher from Karnataka.

Dr KN Ganeshiah An agricultural scientist and Professor Emeritus of University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore. Throughout his career, he has delved into a diverse array of research domains, including Evolutionary Ecology of Plants, Insect-Plant Interactions, Insect Behavior, Biodiversity Mapping, Documentation, and Conservation. He has published over 180 research papers and 11 scientific books. Beyond his contributions to science, Dr Ganeshiah is also a prolific writer in Kannada. He has authored numerous novels and short stories.

Likla Lall Has a Master's in English literature from University of Mumbai and is an award-winning children's book writer. She has published *Art is a Verb*, *Somnath Hore: Wounds* and *Abanindranath's House of Stories* with Art1st Books. She writes comics about nature with her sister and illustrator Keya Lall and is a part of *PanicNot!*, a storytelling collective. Likla reads voraciously and is curious about art, history, dance, and unconventional story formats.

Lina Vincent An independent art historian and curator with two decades of experience in arts management. She is committed to socially engaged practices that reflect in the multi-disciplinary projects she has developed and participated in. Her research areas include arts education, printmaking history and practice, the documentation of living traditions, and environmental consciousness in the arts. Since 2021, she heads the Sunaparanta Art Initiator Lab (SAIL) mentorship programme, Goa. She regularly curates exhibitions and contributes to publications on art history and contemporary cultural practices.

Madhukar A drama teacher at the Adarsha School, Mellahalli, Chamarajanagar. He is known for his innovative approach to teaching where he incorporates various art forms like puppetry, origami and theatre into his pedagogies. He has facilitated Theatre-in-Education workshops for students across Mysore.

Mallikarjun Veeranna Karoli A visual arts teacher from Kalaburagi. He has a Master's in Visual Arts from Kalaburagi University. His engaging projects and collaborative exhibitions have earned him recognition within the school and the broader community.

Muralidhar A retired government school Headmaster known for his innovative approaches to teaching through the art of origami. He actively participates in activities with Science and Math Clubs in Mysore.

Muththamizh Kalai Vizhi A leader in social engineering, education, and advocacy for marginalised communities. As the Founder and CEO of Neelam Trust, Muththamizh has empowered over 15,000 first-generation learners through 25 academies that use folk arts, theater, and creative expression to build confidence and cultural pride among Dalit and tribal children. Currently, as the State Lead for Holistic Development and Progressive Education in Tamil Nadu Model Schools Society, she designs programmes integrating Social Labs, arts, gender-responsive education, and community empowerment. A passionate theater artist, director, and documentary filmmaker, Muththamizh uses performance as a medium for children to explore societal themes and foster self-expression.

R Srinivasan Retired as Professor, Department of Econometrics, University of Madras in 2023. He was the Registrar of University of Madras from 2017-2020. He has been a member of the State Planning Commission, Government of Tamil Nadu since 2021 and a member of a few committees and commissions in the Government of Tamil Nadu since 2003.

Radha Gomaty Has studied Design at NID, Ahmedabad, Painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda and History of Art at Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. Radha is also a published poet who works with a range of media including video, painting, and sculpture. Two of her works are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Sacred Art in Brussels, Belgium.

Ramgiri Police Patil A visual arts practitioner trained at The Ideal Fine Art Institute, Kalaburagi. He has showcased his works at numerous art galleries and exhibitions. He has been recognised for his work by institutions like Gumbaz Art Association, Tasmiya Art Society, Karnataka Lalithakala Academy, Manav Sanket Akademy, and Gulbarga Akademi of Fine Arts.

Revathi R A filmmaker and journalist, started the Vanavil Trust in 2004. Vanavil School is an alternative residential school run by the Trust in Keezhakaraiyiruppu village near Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu. She has been living and working closely with Nomadic Tribes in Tamil Nadu.

Sahana Pinjara Has studied at the National School of Drama, New Delhi, Ninasam, and received a PhD in Performing Arts from Bangalore University. She grew up in Azad Nagar, near Hospet, and witnessed many social issues which adversely impacted people and families. Deeply motivated to address these, she conducts free drama camps for underprivileged children, and stages plays about social issues.

Sameen Almas The Director – Projects at NalandaWay Foundation. She currently oversees projects across North India, partners with government stakeholders and donors, and leads the adolescent girls' programme (Sakhi) of the Foundation. With a work experience spanning over 15 years in the development sector, her expertise has been in research and programme management for projects related to child rights and education, human rights, social exclusion and livelihoods. Sameen is also a visual artist, with a keen interest in urban sketching and calligraphy.

Sangeetha Kadur A wildlife artist passionate about showcasing India's natural heritage through her artwork. With nearly two decades of experience, she has illustrated for

renowned publications and collaborated with leading wildlife organisations on art-ecology projects. She co-founded Greenscraps, an initiative that promotes nature journaling workshops across India, inspiring people to connect with nature through art. Expanding her impact, Sangeetha has taken on a curatorial role, leading teams to design interactive exhibits, visual panels, and installations that raise conservation awareness. Through her art and outreach, she continues to bridge the gap between science and creativity to deepen the appreciation for biodiversity in India.

Sanjana Rangan The Communications Manager at Prayoga. She has completed her Master's in Museology from the National Museum Institute, New Delhi. She engages with historical collections and educational initiatives at museums, combining her passion for education with her expertise in communications. Her strengths lie in facilitating dialogues at the museum between people, spaces and times. She has worked with institutions such as the RBF Sanganakallu Museum and the ASI Hampi Circle.

Shantamani A special teacher of drama at Karnataka Public School, Koppal. She holds a Diploma in Theatre, and has inspired her students to explore their creative potential through acting, directing, and stage production. Known for her innovative teaching methods, Shantamani seamlessly integrates drama with other academic subjects, fostering a holistic learning environment.

Shekhawat Chandra (CS Shekhawat) An IT professional, and a passionate theatre enthusiast, who began practicing theatre with Sifar in 2012. Since then he has worked as an actor and production support for a number of plays that include both originals as well as adaptations.

Shivananda Hombal (Shihom) Passionate about Kannada literature, language, history, and education. He has studied Kannada literature and language and has taught students from 1990 to 2000. He has also created curriculum-supportive resource materials for history and Kannada language teaching through Dhvani Trust. Shivananda has published work books, language activity books, and edited numerous others. His areas of interest include history, art, story reading and telling, spiritualism, and translation.

Shivanayak Dhore An active theatre practitioner and special teacher of drama from Kudligi. Trained at Ninasam, he has received state awards for his creative productions.

Siddappa Biradar An Assistant Teacher at the Government High School, Chibbalageri, Uttara Kannada district. He has engaged with the community at an individual level to build relationships to ensure that the children attend school regularly. He has also employed activity-based learning in the school, giving him statewide recognition. He has participated in training programmes by IFA and Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT).

Sreya Saraswatula A designer and zine maker based in Hyderabad and Delhi. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Social Design at Ambedkar University. She works at the intersections of art and design - from publication design, furniture sourcing to exhibition design. Her most recent projects include Listening Room, a student project exhibiting and archiving subaltern feminist songs.

Suryakanth Nandur Has a Master's in Visual Arts and is also a practicing artist from Kalaburagi. He is currently working as a visual arts teacher and has showcased his art works at various prestigious galleries and arts events across India.

Swathi Vellal Raghunandan The Founder Director of Ishanya India Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation working with Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in Bangalore. She holds Master's degrees in Special Educational Needs and Inclusion from University of Northampton, UK and in Clinical Psychology from Christ University, Bangalore. A keen researcher, she has presented papers at national and international seminars, publishing a paper in the Good Autism Practice Journal of the British Institute of Learning Disabilities.

Syed Fakruddin Huseni A Sanjhi artist and a matchbox collector (of over 30,000 matchboxes) from Bangalore. He is trained in the art of paper stenciling practiced across Mathura and Vrindavan. He has conducted workshops for children across Karnataka.

Syed Sadiq S (Riyaz) A graduate of Ninasam and an active theatre practitioner from Hospet. He has served as a director, an artist and light designer with theatre groups at Hospet, Dharwad, Shivamogga, and Mysore. He has also worked as a drama teacher at Kautilya Vidyalaya, Mysore and has been conducting theatre workshops for children for years.

Tajuddin Azad A photojournalist working with the Prajavani newspaper. He has a Diploma in Theatre Arts from Ninasam. Tajuddin has worked on several theatre productions and conducted theatre and language workshops for children. He is passionate about photographing the city and landscapes, and has attended various workshops on these subjects.

Vinay Abhishekh Vemu A communications professional with 15 years of experience in writing and producing content for the web, print and creative sector. His theatre journey started with Sifar in 2012 and he continues to learn, practice, write, act, and help with production.

DAY 3: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2025

06:30 AM - 08:30 AM | Heritage Walk: *Pathways of the Past* - Charminar to Chowmahalla Palace with Ganesh Kumar Malthurkar

10:45 AM - 11:00 AM | Spotlight - Interactive Project Showcase: Jahanara

11:30 AM - 01:00 PM | Creative Classrooms: Origami/kirigami with Muralidhar; Puppet-making & Theatre with Aruna BT & Gururaj L

11:30 AM - 01:30 PM | Panel III: Arts Education and Society: Understanding Cultural Perspectives

Muththamizh Kalai Vizhi | Radha Gomaty | Likla Lall | Swathi Vellal Raghunandan
Moderator: Menaka Rodriguez

02:45 PM - 03:15 PM | Workshop: *Empowering Teachers in Arts Education: Voices from the Ground* with Ganesh Kumar Malthurkar

03:30 PM - 04:45 PM | Closing Keynote by Vidya Rao

EXHIBITION | FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025 | 11:00 AM - 07:00 PM

WORKS BY:

Arpitha RG | Aruna BT | Ashok Totnalli | Baby Biradar | Chandrahas Y Jalihal
Ganganna | Gundurao Desai | Gururaj L | Jahanara | Kishan Rao Kulkarni
Kotresh B | Madhukar | Mallikarjun Veeranna Karoli | Ramgiri Police Patil
Sahana Pinjara | Shantamani | Shivanayak Dhore | Siddappa Biradar
Suryakanth Nandur | Syed Fakruddin Huseni | Tajuddin Azad
and a Special Exhibition
by Students of Tamil Nadu Government Model School

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INDIA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS (IFA)

IFA is an independent, nationwide, not-for-profit, organisation that makes grants and implements projects since 1995, under five key programmes—Arts Research, Arts Practice, Arts Education, Archives and Museums, and Project 560, especially encouraging work in Indian languages other than English.

We believe that the arts and culture are essential to our individual and community lives, and for a more equitable and just world. As a facilitator, catalyst and provocateur in the field, we embark on and enable investigations, explorations, and experiments that push the boundaries of knowledge and practice, and challenge dominant narratives.

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