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A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

ART LIFE & Peace

PaxLumina
A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

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Art is a human activity having for its purpose the transmission to others of the highest and best feelings to which men have risen.

- Leo Tolstoy

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A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

Pax Lumina

An Initiative of Peace and Reconciliation Network

Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA)

Vision

Promotion of Peace and Reconciliation

The Nodal Platform for Peace and Reconciliation Network of JCSA aims at fostering peace with a multi-pronged approach.

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ART AND PEACE

Editorial

In June 1992, the City of Sarajevo came under siege during the Bosnian War. In the deadly crossfire of weaponry and sniper fire, amidst death and destruction, the cellist Vedran Smailovic would play Adagio in G minor. Here is a man who defiantly played his Cello in the midst of a war, though did not immediately quell the violence. But, it did something so profound: It turned the attention of his people from despair to the music of hope. It moved the people from the walls of ethnic hatred to the tranquility of fraternal reconciliation. It lifted them from the ruins of violent destruction to the healing power of beauty.

Art is not a luxury. It is an organ of the common life: a way we name what we have lost and what we can be. Even nature—birdsong, lilies, a rain-silvered leaf— teaches us the grammar of beauty. In the founding document of Indian republic, the original manuscript of the Constitution of India was itself painted and calligraphed by artists who believed that law and culture belong together; the visual adornments of the Constitution signal that art was meant to mediate India's highest ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

Art is often deemed as a moral force to reckon with. Art can ennoble or degrade a people depending on how it frames reality. In our own moment, one of our modern day prophets, Pope Francis called artists to help "not to lose our way" — to ask existential questions and reveal the truth and goodness hidden in history. "Art," he said, "is needed to distinguish seductive falsehood from what is solid and life-giving." Thus, in essence, the double imperative of beauty that forms conscience is the heartbeat of any peace-oriented aesthetics.

India often bequeaths living examples of such practices of aesthetics stemming from the well of its rich regional cultural diversity. An overview of the cultural landscape of Kerala shows how Christian, Hindu and Muslim neighbours participate in one another's calendars, foodways, and public art — processions, decorated plantain trunks, lamp-lit streets — practices that stitch communities together rather than rip them apart. These public arts are small instances of peacebuilding: embodied, ordinary, and formative.

But beauty can be hollowed out. When art is reduced to provocation for its own sake, when it becomes spectacle without truth, it drains empathy rather than grows it. When aesthetics are weaponized — whether by crude propaganda

or by carefully tailored digital forgeries — the result is social corrosion. The rise of photorealistic forgeries and AI-generated "deepfakes" shows how easily artistic creativity can turn into instruments of distrust. We must resist a culture that mistakes circulation for truth.

Social media and the internet are double-edged: they amplify both grace and grievance. Responsible artists and cultural institutions must insist on basic guardrails — fact, context, consent — and cultivate media literacy among audiences. The call is not to banish controversy from art but to refuse instruments that deliberately invent false narratives for political or commercial gain. There are contemporary examples of cultural products that manufacture false impressions and inflame communal fear; responsible criticism must name and resist such deceptions without resorting to censorship of genuine dissent.

In this part of the globe, art has long been a lever of social change: street theatre (nukkad natak) and folk music that cross caste and communal boundaries; documentary films that tell uncomfortable truths; craft cooperatives that rebuild livelihoods after conflict. Cinema — perhaps our most persuasive popular art — can expose, educate and humanise. When filmmakers insist on complexity, when songs and scripts invite empathy, cinema becomes a catechesis of compassion: it can place the Gospel vision of love before millions without forcing doctrine but by telling honest human stories.

Practical responsibilities follow these convictions. Schools, parishes, universities and civic platforms should teach arts-based methods for dialogue and nonviolent communication; festivals and public commissions should favour projects that dignify marginalised artisans rather than exploit them; platforms should develop clear rules and rapid remedies for manipulated media. Artists, producers and curators must safeguard the dignity of performers and communities so that market and tourism do not become instruments of dispossession.

Let us create art that enlarges the capacity to love. Refuse art that excuses cruelty. Let us also harness our digital tools — cameras, code, networks — to assemble, not to atomize, the social imagination. The contributors to this volume of Pax Lumina, drawn from across the globe, bear witness to the profound power of art to transform individuals, societies, and structures. We invite our readers to read and reflect on these articles.

Justice Kurian Joseph
Honorary Editor

ROUBLE NAGI / Binoy Jacob

Pax Lumina 7(2)/2026/08-13

THE CANVAS OF PEACE

CONVERSATION WITH ROUBLE NAGI

> Art speaks a language that needs no translation. When we paint walls in slums and villages, the images carry messages of education, hygiene, environmental responsibility, dignity, and hope. **These are values that cut across religion, caste, class, and political identity.**

Rouble Nagi is an acclaimed Indian contemporary artist, social activist, and the founder of the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation. Known for her vibrant visual language and deep commitment to social transformation, she has carved a unique space where art meets community engagement. Over the years, her work has moved beyond galleries into public spaces, reflecting her belief that art should be accessible, participatory, and socially meaningful.

Her artistic practice spans painting, public art installations, and large-scale community art projects. Through her foundation, she has led numerous initiatives that empower marginalized communities—especially women and children—by using art as a tool for education, healing, and social inclusion. One of her widely recognized initiatives involves transforming urban slums through colorful murals and creative engagement, bringing dignity and renewed identity to neglected spaces.

Rouble Nagi's work has been exhibited internationally and has received several recognitions for both artistic excellence and social impact. She represents a generation of artists who see creativity not merely as aesthetic expression but as a catalyst for dialogue, empowerment, and positive change.

In this conversation, the readers will hear from an artist whose journey beautifully blends creativity with compassion, and whose work continues to inspire communities across India and beyond.

1 There's often a defining moment when an artist realizes their canvas must extend beyond the gallery. What was that pivotal experience that transformed you from a studio artist into a social change maker with a paintbrush?

My early life, shaped by constant movement across India as an army officer's daughter, taught me that every place carries stories of resilience and struggle. But the real turning

point came when I began working in slums and villages and saw children dropping out of school not because they lacked ability, but because learning felt distant, intimidating, and disconnected from their reality.

I realised that art could do what textbooks alone could not – it could invite children into learning without fear. The moment I saw a neglected wall become a classroom, and a child's confidence change because they could finally "see" their lessons, I understood that my canvas had to move beyond galleries and into the streets. From that day, my brush became a tool for social change.

2 You have often said that art transcends boundaries. In a world increasingly divided by borders and ideologies, how do you use the visual medium as a 'silent diplomat' to foster peace?

Art speaks a language that needs no translation. When we paint walls in slums and villages, the images carry messages of education, hygiene, environmental responsibility, dignity, and hope. These are values that cut across religion, caste, class, and political identity.

A mural does not argue – it invites. It opens conversations in lanes where words often fail. Parents, children, and elders gather around a wall, discuss what it shows, and in that shared moment, differences soften. The visual medium becomes a 'silent diplomat,' reminding communities of what unites them rather than what divides them.

3 Most artists seek solitude to create, but your work thrives in the heart of crowded, marginalized communities. How does the act of "collective painting" serve as a tool for conflict resolution within those neighbourhoods?

In crowded communities, conflict often arises from neglect, scarcity, and lack of ownership. When people come together to paint their own walls, something powerful happens – they stop being passive recipients of change and become co-creators of it.

Painted walls become "living textbooks" and points of pride. Children feel proud of their lanes, parents feel seen, and communities begin to care for their surroundings. **Pride in one's environment builds respect – for the space, for neighbours, and for oneself.**

Collective painting builds dialogue. Neighbours who may not speak to each other begin working side by side. Children, parents, volunteers, and elders contribute to a shared vision. As hands move together across a wall, so do perspectives. The act of creating something beautiful in a neglected space transforms tension into cooperation and restores a sense of shared responsibility.

4 Through Misaal India, you've transformed thousands of homes. Beyond the paint, what have you observed about how a renewed sense of pride in one's surroundings reduces social friction and builds a sense of belonging?

When people live in spaces that reflect neglect, that neglect often turns inward – into hopelessness, frustration, and social friction. But when a home or a lane is cleaned, repaired, and painted, dignity returns to the space, and with it, dignity returns to the people.

Painted walls become "living textbooks" and points of pride. Children feel proud of their lanes, parents feel seen, and communities begin to care for their surroundings. Pride in one's environment builds respect – for the space, for neighbours, and for oneself.

5 Peace often stems from a sense of identity and belonging. How does your Foundation's work with Indigenous artists foster a sense of pride in their roots, and how do you see the act of 'creating'+++ as a tool for social inclusion for these often-marginalized voices?

When local artisans and rural communities create using their own skills, materials, and cultural expressions, dignity is restored to identity. Supporting local craftsmanship allows traditions to be seen not as remnants of the past, but as sources of pride and livelihood.

The act of creating is deeply inclusive. It says: your story matters, your culture matters, your hands matter. When marginalised voices are given platforms to create and contribute, they move from the margins to the centre of their own narratives.

6 Beyond transforming physical spaces with colour and art, what are the deeper systemic issues you believe India must address to build a truly harmonious and self-reliant society?

While beautification restores dignity, lasting harmony depends on addressing education, livelihoods, women's empowerment, sanitation, and access to opportunity. Children cannot learn if hunger, child labour, or early marriage shape their realities. Communities cannot thrive without skills that lead to economic independence.

Harmony grows when dignity is paired with opportunity.

7 In your workshops with children from diverse backgrounds, how do you use the creative process to help them see 'the other' not as a stranger, but as a fellow artist/collaborator?

When children paint the same wall, they stop seeing each other as 'different' and begin seeing each other as teammates. A brush in a child's hand makes everyone equal – each child becomes a creator.

Through shared creativity, children learn empathy, collaboration, and respect.

8 You have worked in various sensitive regions across India. Is there a specific mural or project that stands out as a 'monument to peace' because of the way the local community rallied around it?

Some of the most meaningful projects have been in communities that had experienced neglect or social tension.

When entire neighbourhoods come together to transform broken walls into classrooms and messages of hope, the mural itself becomes secondary to the unity created around it.

Some of the most meaningful projects have been in communities that had experienced neglect or social tension. When entire neighbourhoods come together to transform broken walls into classrooms and messages of hope, the mural itself becomes secondary to the unity created around it.

The mural becomes a quiet monument to peace – built not in stone, but in shared effort.

9 If you were to paint a 'Map of Peace' for India today, what colours and symbols would be essential to that canvas?

It would be painted in many colours to reflect diversity. There would be symbols of education in every corner, women at the centre of the canvas, children painting their own future, and green symbols of environmental care.

It would show people from different backgrounds painting together – because peace is something we create.

10 Finally, your days are spent equally between murals and mentorship, between colours and community building. Do you still see these as different vocations, or have they merged into a singular purpose?

They have merged into one purpose: to restore dignity, inspire hope, and create pathways for change.

A mural without mentorship is just colour. Mentorship without creativity can feel distant.

Together, they become transformation.

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MURALS AND GRAFFITIES IN NONVIOLENCE CAMPAIGNS

Participants working on the Mural in Satyagraha Institute at La Verdad, Monterrey, Mexico.

Art sends new messages from the deepest part of the artist to the deepest part of the receiver. **Therefore, art can be the central axis of all social transformation, because it carries within and generate the seed of change. In deed it is a powerhouse of a new creativity action.**

Violence in Mexico began to escalate in 2009 and continued to be worse in an uncontrolled way until 2012, in my city, Monterrey, Nuevo Leon state, Mexico. At night, you could hear the sound of machineguns fire, you couldn't go out at night because you would be assaulted and your car would be taken. In the mornings, corpses would appear hanging from pedestrian bridges, and gunfire could cross your path at any moment. My city had become a hostage of the mafias, the cartels, which we called then organized crime, or simply the bad people. In reality it was a war between criminals, the police, and innocent people.

In 2008, a group of young activists formed an organisation called Uno Uno Paz - 1 @ 1 Paz (One to One for Peace), accepting Mahatma Gandhi's ideology of Nonviolence and SWADESHI and decided to meet young gang members engaged in drug cartelling and to persuade them nonviolently to give up that anti-social activity and return to a positive and creative life free of drugs and violence. 1 @ 1 Paz deliberately avoided organising mass campaigns. Instead, it used the Gandhian principle of Swadeshi of serving one's immediate neighbour by one person talking to one person, which we believed will have greater and deeper impact than any mass propaganda and would lead to a transformation of consciousness and conscience.

Fortunately, in this group of young people, there were urban artists, particularly very talented and internationally renowned graffiti artists, like Jesus Rios (Kolly), Luis Antonio Vazquez (Fossil), Eliud Zavala (Burner), who have traveled to many parts of the world to do murals. One day, when one mafia killed an innocent person and hanged his body on the rails of an overbridge, we met to think about how to respond nonviolently and in a novel way to the situation. We decided to putting up banners, not denouncing any body, but inviting people to accept peace and seek nonviolence.

Using fabric and spray paint we made banners five by two meters, carrying positive nonviolence and peace messages like : "Kill me, but with love" "If you shoot me, I will still love you" " I use guns, with bullets of forgiveness", "If you leave violence, I will hug you with peace" "Remember that there could also be victims in your family because of your actions" "In peace there is life, in violence there is death." We stood, holding and exhibiting those banners in public places, including the very bridge from where the dead body was hanged. The banners caught the attention of thousands of people who passed by every day. Generally, we did it between 6 pm and 9 pm as the day was getting dark. I confess that we were indeed afraid at night, even of the police, since we could be mistaken for gang members or organized crime. More than 25 such banners where painted and hung in different parts of the city. Of course, we all felt proud to contribute to the search for peace; we all were full spiritually and entered into the awareness of non-violence.

Experience and Learnings

Art is the greatest creative expression that we as people, can achieve, where such creativity results in changes of the past status to a present and more peaceful one. One cannot be creative without seeking to change the inner or outer aspects of people, cultures, and worlds. Art sends new messages from the deepest part of the artist to the deepest part of the receiver. Therefore, art can be the central axis of all social transformation, because it carries within and generate the seed of change. In deed it is a powerhouse of a new creativity action.

For this reason, the actions we undertook should have touched the minds and consciousness of thousands of people, though we could not measure it quantitatively, but the qualitative impact was certain.

Carl Kline, M.P. Mathai and Fernando - nicknamed 'Three Brothers of Nonviolence ' seated in front of the painting.

Mural artist Marilu Ríos Guerrero, painting the traditional corn and palm.

My brothers Carl Kline from S. Dakota, U.S.A., and M.P. Mathai, from Kerala, India, in their Nonviolence classes had told us art has immense communicative power and should be used to spread the massage of nonviolence and peace. Nonviolence through art was one of their favourite formulations. It has been our experience through several such experiments that art has immense transformative power.

If we had to choose paths of change from violence to non-violence, painting, music, sculpture, cinema, poetry, and literature could be one of the most creative instruments in changing the culture of violence and creating a culture of peace.

Let "Nonviolence and Peace through art" be one of our guiding principles.

Fernando Ferrara Rivero is a peacebuilder from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

Evolutionary Murals to Raise Awareness

Explanation of the The Murals

In the struggle for a world of transformative nonviolent action in the north of our country, Mexico, we have some great examples. Not only the urban banners against violence, but also others.

- Satyagraha Institute non-violence courses:

In 2017 and 2018, 7-day courses were held on the theme of non-violence, and students were asked to work with a mural artist to create a mural in each course. In 2017, a mural of life was created, featuring the image of Mahatma Gandhi as a person of universal thought and the father of non-violence. Hand of God giving corn to people with love. Painted in General Teran Mexico

In 2018, the symbols of all religions were painted inside a chapel, conveying the message that God was present in all of them and that even atheists had a place as part of universal creeds. Painted in General Teran Mexico.

- Fight against the exploitation of nature and community rejection of ecological deterioration in indigenous territory.

Five murals were created to raise awareness in the indigenous community of Chapultenángo, Chiapas, and thus prevent mining and oil exploitation within their territory.

Murals

1) Jaguar that is a prehepatic God, destroying oilfields to save nature.

2) Hummingbird (Truth symbol) in the center o nature making oilfields collapse.

3) Hands of God with Hummingbirds and corn in nature surviving mans oilfields destruction.

- Mural in a clinic for health services in the indigenous com the oil extraction fields munity of the Huasteco region, 2024.

A mural was created to express that doctors, shamans, and healers use natures gifts to heal people. That herbal extracts are used in several medicines. Painted in Tampamolón Corona SLP Mexico.

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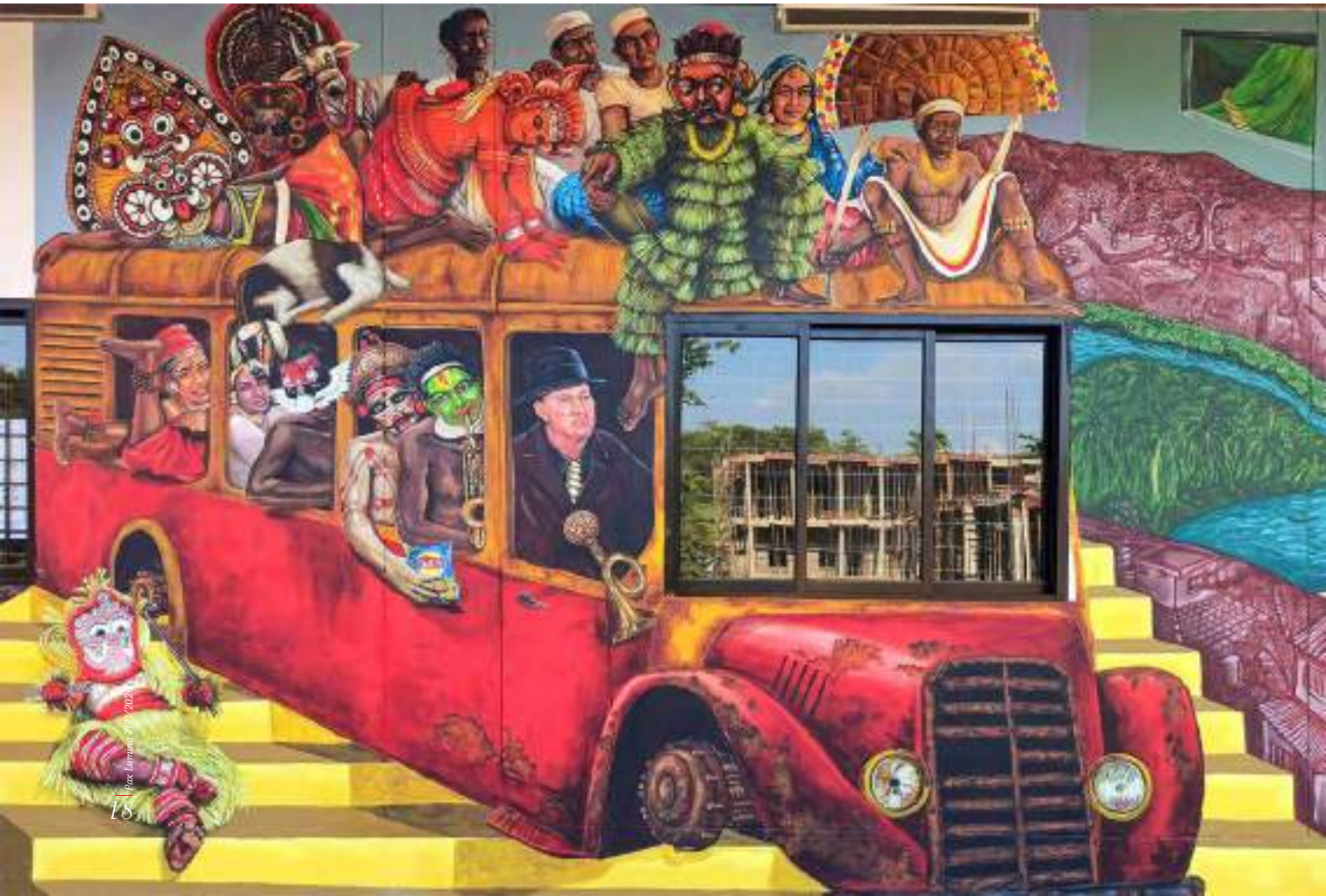
THE **ART** OF **TRESPASSING**

HOW A **KERALA COLLECTIVE** IS **REWRITING** THE **RULES** OF **PUBLIC ART**



In this nine-member collective, individual styles are not suppressed; they are harmonized. **There is no master sketch, no pre-determined blueprint projected onto a wall. Instead, the process is akin to a jazz improvisation. They arrive at a composition not through rigid planning, but through collective intuition.**

Vishnupriyan, Ambadi kannan, Bashar U. K, Jinil Manikandan, Pranav Prabhakaran, Arjun Gopi, Sreerag P, Jatin Shaji.

By democratizing the canvas, the 'Trespassers' collective is turning public walls into living, breathing conversations. In the cultural landscape of Kerala, parallel to the revered traditions of mural art, a new visual habit is forming. It is an effort to democratize art, stripping it of its elitist veneer and taking it to the streets. At the helm of this movement is 'Trespassers', a collective of friends and alumni from the Kalady Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit.

Since their inception in 2019, this group of artists has been on a mission that spans India. Their goal is simple yet profound: to liberate art from the alienated, air-conditioned silence of galleries and weave it into the chaotic fabric of public life. While modern art discourses often unintentionally deepen the divide between the creator and the community, 'Trespassers' seeks a parallel possibility. They don't just paint on walls; they engage in a visual discourse with the public, turning the act of viewing art into a democratic right.

The Practice: A Canvas Without A Blueprint

To date, 'Trespassers' has completed over 90 murals across Kerala and various Indian States. But to understand their work, one must understand their method—or rather, their deliberate lack of one.

In this nine-member collective, individual styles are not suppressed; they are harmonized. There is no master sketch, no pre-determined blueprint projected onto a wall. Instead, the process is akin to a jazz improvisation. They arrive at a composition not through rigid planning, but through collective intuition.

One artist begins, and another responds. It is a non-linear, non-systematic dialogue of images. They read the space, create forms, and paint metaphors. One member may not know what the other is drawing, yet they interact, layer over layer, until a cohesive narrative emerges from the chaos. It is an approach devoid of prejudice. The artists themselves only discover the final image when the work is done. This unpredictability is the fuel that sustains their energy—a constant revelation that the art, like the artists, is alive in the moment.

It is a collective narrative with a unique rhythm. There is no captain of the ship; voices rise, clash, blend, and sometimes fall silent. Images may be painted over or transformed. It is an explosion of creativity where the only rule is to embrace the mix.

The Surface: The Wall as a Collaborator

In academic studio practice, the medium—usually a blank canvas—is treated as a passive object waiting to be conquered. It is inanimate, devoid of history until the brush touches it. Public art, however, demands a different philosophy.

For 'Trespassers', the wall is not a dead surface; it is an entity with agency. It carries the weight of memory, history, and function. A school's perimeter wall offers a different reality than the exterior of a police station or a public toilet. The surface is not absolute; it is intertwined with time and space.

The collective believes that one cannot simply impose an image onto a place without listening to it first. The cracks, the stains, the peeling paint, and the very architecture—beams, windows, doors—are not obstacles. They are prompts. In projects like those in Ukkadam or at the Kalady campus, the physical features of the wall dictate the flow of the painting. The art becomes a continuation of its surroundings, blurring the line between the painted illusion and the gritty reality of the street.

The Spectator: Art in Transit

Who is the audience for this art? In a gallery, the viewer arrives with intent, standing static before a framed work. In public spaces, the audience is accidental. They are commuters, travellers, and locals whose gaze is caught in transit.

'Trespassers' creates for the viewer who is constantly moving. For the traveller, the artwork becomes a fleeting visual memory, something that breaks the monotony of a journey. For the local, it becomes a backdrop to daily life, seeping into their consciousness and unconsciousness, perhaps even inhabiting their dreams.

Crucially, the viewer is not just a passive consumer, but often a participant. The act of painting itself becomes a performance—a temporary theatre of bodies, colours, and shapes. In places like the Kozhikode Copra Bazaar or Valanchery Irumpilliam, locals have picked up brushes and joined in.

Ultimately, public art does not exist in a vacuum. It lives only when combined with the people, animals, weather, and time passing in front of it. In the Kozhikode Copra Bazaar mural, the workers hauling loads are not just spectators; they are the subject, the audience, and the continuation of the artwork itself.

By destabilizing the concept of permanence and embracing the ephemeral, 'Trespassers' is finding harmony in the noise. They remind us that art doesn't just belong to the public; it happens with them.

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WHERE ART BREATHES

Ghost Ballad

The experience of this dialogue often begins at Aspinwall House, a sprawling, sea-facing compound that once served as the headquarters of a British trading company. Here, the architecture is a participant in the work. **In the high-ceilinged rooms where clerks once tallied ledger books, the Panjeri Artists' Union, a collective from the fluid borderlands of eastern India, has staged a dense, chaotic intervention. Their work responds to the realities of a region defined by the partition of the subcontinent—a place of surveillance, restricted movement, and river disputes.**

The Quiet Weight of Shadows, an installation by Assamese artist Dhiraj Rabha

The air in Kochi is thick, carrying the weight of the Arabian Sea and the scent of drying spices. In this ancient port city on India's south-western coast, history does not sit behind glass; it is etched into the peeling lime plaster of colonial bungalows and embedded in the rotting timber of wharf-side godowns. It is a landscape of humidity and decay, where the boundaries between the land and the water, the past and the present, remain perpetually porous.

It is here, amidst the saline dampness and the clamour of a working harbour, that the sixth edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale has taken root. Titled For the Time Being, and running until the spring of 2026, the exhibition eschews the sterile, climate-controlled perfection of the Western "white cube." Instead, it embraces the grit of its environment. Curated by the artist Nikhil Chopra and the collective HH Art Spaces, the Biennale proposes that art, like the city itself, is a living, breathing ecosystem—a messy, ephemeral thing that exists in the distance between heartbeats.

Since its 2012 debut, the Biennale has carved out a singular niche within the global art circuit. More than just an exhibition, it was conceived as a cultural intervention, reimagining the historic corridors of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry as vibrant arenas for civic dialogue and aesthetic discovery. By invoking the legend of Muziris—a fabled port of antiquity that vanished in a 14th-century flood—the event has always concerned itself with what is lost and what remains. This year, however, the gaze has turned inward. If previous editions surveyed the geopolitical landscape, this edition surveys the landscape of the body: the physical vessel through which we experience history, trauma, and time.

Nityan Unnikrishnan

Shiraz Bayjoo, installation view of Sa Sime Lamer, 2025 at KMB 2025-26

"Our bodies are not entirely ours," the curators write in their statement of intent. "They are inherited, cultivated like landscapes." This sentiment anchors the exhibition, and the curatorial approach rejects the frenetic jet-setting that often characterizes the modern art world. Chopra, rather than circling the globe in search of the new, turned his attention to the subcontinent and its neighbours, revisiting long-standing relationships and seeking out practices that require patience.

Consequently, the artists list reads less like a predictable roll call of the festival circuit and more like a deliberate gathering of interlocutors. The roster collapses hierarchies, spanning major international figures—Marina Abramović, Adrian Villar Rojas, Otobong Nkanga, and Nari Ward—alongside rising voices such as Sandra Mujinga, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Maria Hassabi, and Shiraz Bayjoo. Yet, crucially, these global perspectives are anchored by a rigorous engagement with the subcontinent itself.

The exhibition creates a space where the quiet rigour of established Indian modernists, such as Gieve Patel and the textile artist Monika Correa, can converse with the contemporary inquiries

Pallavi Paul

Yet, the Biennale is not solely concerned with the material. It also navigates the spectral. The late Vivan Sundaram, one of India's most significant modernists, is represented by his final work, Six Stations of a Life Pursued. **It is a meditation on mortality, structured as a journey through pain, mourning, and eventual dispersal. Seeing it installed here, in a building that has weathered centuries of monsoons, feels like an act of spiritual closure.**

of diaspora talents like Bhasha Chakrabarti, Arti Kadam, and Mathew Krishanu. It is a levelling of the playing field, where the celebrity of the artist matters less than the resonance of the work within these weathered walls.

The experience of this dialogue often begins at Aspinwall House, a sprawling, sea-facing compound that once served as the headquarters of a British trading company. Here, the architecture is a participant in the work. In the high-ceilinged rooms where clerks once tallied ledger books, the Panjeri Artists' Union, a collective from the fluid borderlands of eastern India, has staged a dense, chaotic intervention. Their work responds to the realities of a region defined by the partition of the subcontinent—a place of surveillance, restricted movement, and river disputes. The installation is a room of paper and charcoal, filled with protest posters and drawings of bodies bent under injustice. It captures the tension of the periphery, bringing the anxieties of a border zone into the heart of a maritime hub.

People gathered to watch a live performance

Ibrahim Mahama, Parliament of Ghosts, 2017–present

At Aspinwall House, translucent muslin panels hang like ghosts of sails, each one cradling the spectral forms of plants once carried across oceans by colonisers—nutmeg, banana, clove. Terracotta vessels rest on stone plinths, tracing a botanical diaspora back toward origins half-remembered, half-erased. It is here, amid this quiet archaeology of displacement, that London-based Mauritian artist Shiraz Bayjoo speaks of roots as vessels of time.

At first glance, the installation is a quiet study in archival beauty: muslin panels swaying with botanical illustrations and terracotta forms of nutmeg and banana resting on minimalist plinths. But look closer, and the "path back home" becomes a map of displacement.

'Elsewhere or Otherwise' by artist Sujith S.N.

Bayjoo's work, Sa Sime Lamer ("the path to the sea"), functions less as a title and more as a whispered incantation for the forgotten. For Bayjoo, plants are the ultimate time-travellers, carrying the weight of centuries in their roots. The space itself feels complicit in the narrative. Sifting through 1750s Dutch commissions and the jagged history of spice routes, the installation bridges the gap between the archive and the visceral.

This emphasis on labour—the physical exertion of the body—threads through the exhibition. In a cavernous warehouse in Mattancherry, the Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama has installed Parliament of Ghosts. The walls are draped in jute sacks, materials that carry the forensic evidence of global trade: sweat, dust, and the residue of commodities like cocoa and charcoal. These sacks, stitched together by local labourers, transform the colonial godown into a monument to the invisible workforce that powers the global economy. It is a tactile, olfactory experience; the smell of the jute mingles with the damp stone of the warehouse, collapsing the distance between West Africa and South Asia, two regions bound by the history of extraction.

Yet, the Biennale is not solely concerned with the material. It also navigates the spectral. The late Vivan Sundaram, one of India's most

Chopra has described his curatorial strategy as placing "a drop of poison in a cup of wine." It is a metaphor for the Biennale's political engagement. **As a government-supported entity in a polarized time, the event navigates censorship and oversight with subtlety. The politics are not shouted; they are woven into the aesthetics, revealed slowly to those willing to look.**

significant modernists, is represented by his final work, Six Stations of a Life Pursued. It is a meditation on mortality, structured as a journey through pain, mourning, and eventual dispersal. Seeing it installed here, in a building that has weathered centuries of monsoons, feels like an act of spiritual closure.

Similarly, the London-based artist Dima Srouji connects the fragility of breath to the fragility of geopolitical existence. Her installation suspends hand-blown glass baubles—crafted in collaboration with artisans from India and Palestine—as delicate extensions of survival. In the context of ongoing violence in Gaza and the West Bank, these fragile vessels, hanging in the heavy air of a Kerala warehouse, serve as a quiet, devastating critique of complicity and silence.

Birender Yadav

Installation view of Panjeri Artists' Union at Aspinwall House at KMB 2025-26.

Adrián Villar Rojas- Rinascimento

Kulpreet Singh, installation view of Indelible Black Marks, 2022–present a at KMB 2025-26

Chopra has described his curatorial strategy as placing "a drop of poison in a cup of wine." It is a metaphor for the Biennale's political engagement. As a government-supported entity in a polarized time, the event navigates censorship and oversight with subtlety. The politics are not shouted; they are woven into the aesthetics, revealed slowly to those willing to look.

This subtlety extends to the exhibition's pacing. The title, For the Time Being, is an invitation to slow down. In an era defined by the digital and the instantaneous, the Biennale insists on presence. It asks visitors to acknowledge that they are contemporaries, sharing a specific moment in time. This is perhaps best exemplified by The Canteen Project, a participatory work by Pakistani artist Bani Abidi and Indian architect Anupama. In a region where geopolitical borders often sever human connection, this project brings people together over food, served by a local women's collective. It is art as nourishment, a simple, radical act of sharing space.

Ultimately, the power of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale lies in its refusal to mimic the polished veneer of its European counterparts. It does not try to hide the cracks in the walls or the humidity in the air. It accepts that the artwork, like the viewer, is temporary.

Walking out of the cool, dim venues and back into the blinding tropical sun, one is struck by the continuity of life outside the gates. Fishermen repair their Chinese dip nets; ferries churn the muddy water of the backwaters; the city continues its ancient, chaotic rhythm. The art inside is not separate from this reality; it is merely a pause, a breath taken to examine the world before diving back into it. In Kochi, art is not a destination. It is, for the time being, a way of being.

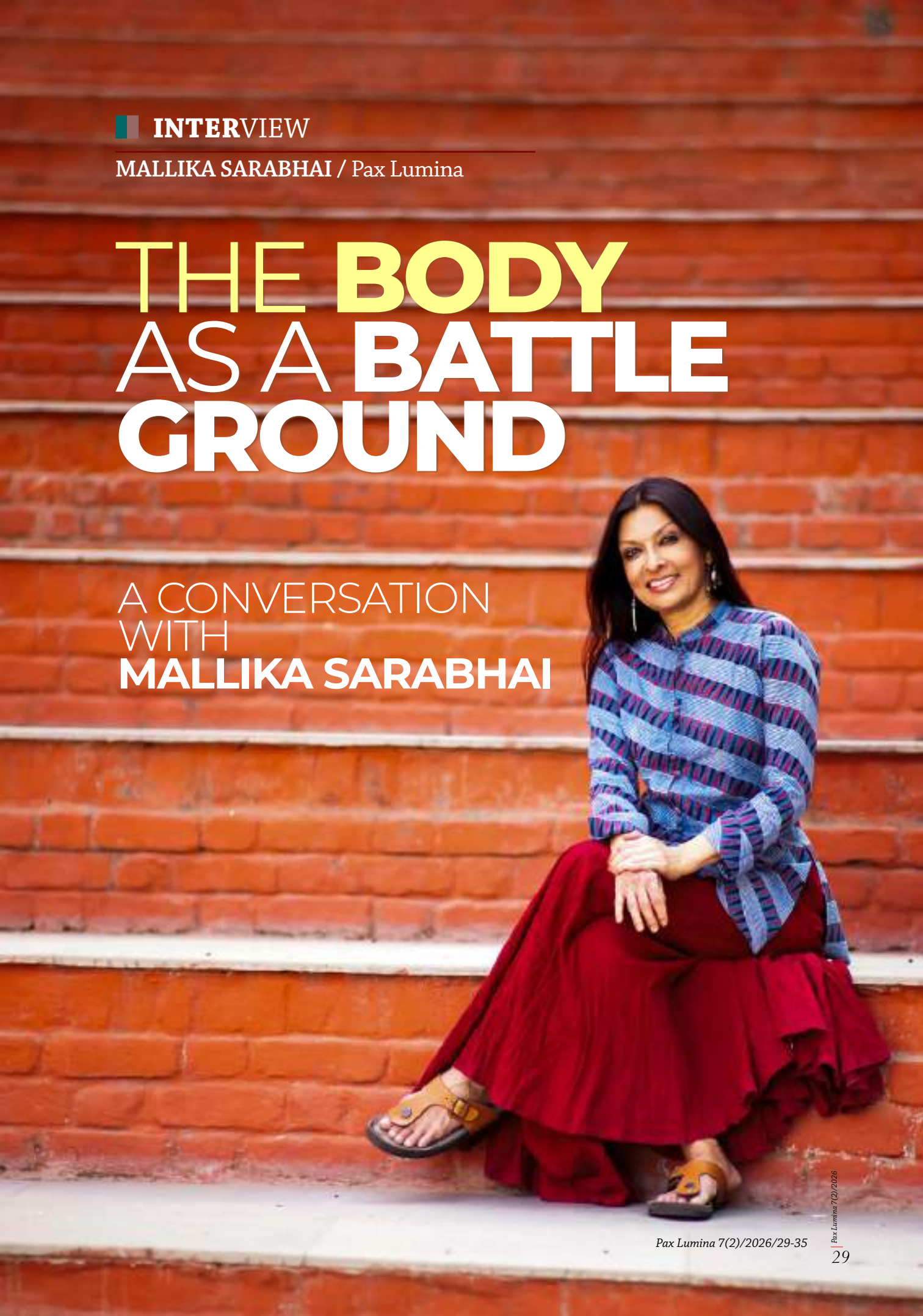
Manoj A.R. is the Senior Subeditor of Ezhuthu Magazine.

INTERVIEW

MALLIKA SARABHAI / Pax Lumina

THE BODY AS A BATTLE GROUND

A CONVERSATION WITH **MALLIKA SARABHAI**



And I thought, Oh my Goddess, I am an activist and I am a performer, and the two have to marry, and this is my greatest language. **So for the last forty-odd years, that is what I have been doing, and the fact that I am still dancing and still performing and still in demand means that it actually works.**

Mallika Sarabhai—celebrated Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi exponent, and daughter of the legendary Mrinalini Sarabhai and space pioneer Vikram Sarabhai—has never treated the stage as a place of mere aesthetic repose. Across a career spanning five decades, she has dismantled the idea of the "ivory tower" artist. From her electrifying portrayal of Draupadi in Peter Brook's nine-hour epic The Mahabharata to searing solo works on gender violence and communal harmony, Sarabhai has used performance as a space for radical inquiry. In an era shaped by digital echo chambers and rising authoritarianism, she remains a formidable public voice, deploying the ancient grammar of Indian classical dance to confront the urgent crises of the twenty-first century. Pax Lumina catches up with Dr. Sarabhai to discuss the evolution of her craft, the "subliminal" force of performance, and the personal cost of dissent in a changing India.

1 Many see art and activism as separate worlds, yet you have spent your career proving they are inseparable. What inspired you to choose this unique path and profession?

I grew up watching my mother create dance pieces about dowry deaths and violence against women, and I just assumed that all artists did this. Imagine my surprise when I actually joined the profession to discover that my mother was one of, I don't know, ten or fifteen, and that actually nobody else was doing this. Then I spent five years doing the Mahabharata with Peter Brook in the international production, and I saw the effect that my interpretation of Draupadi had on people—different kinds of people: young women from the Sorbonne in Paris, big Black mamas from Harlem, and Aboriginal women from Australia. And I thought, Oh my Goddess, I am an activist and I am a performer, and the two have to marry, and this is my greatest language. So for the last forty-odd years, that is what I have been doing, and the fact that I am still dancing and still performing and still in demand means that it actually works.

For many years at Darpana, we had a Centre for Nonviolence Through the Arts, where we hosted artists from across the world, gave them residencies, and let them interact with young artists to create work that specifically addresses nonviolence. Recently, we had a project called Sulah, where we presented our new performance, Meanwhile, Elsewhere, directed by Darpana's Artistic Director, Yadavan Chandran. It is inspired by an Italian book called Invisible Cities and addresses all the issues we face today—from loneliness to crumbling cities to power-hungry leaders to people who destroy relationships. We did nine performances in Ahmedabad, where we invited college audiences and held question-and-answer sessions and discussions led by psychologists, sociologists, or educators. The response from young people was extraordinary.

So, I feel that in a world bombarded by WhatsApp University, and where millions of children have never seen the live arts, both the live arts and cinema—and work like one sometimes sees on OTT platforms—is perhaps the most potent and cogent language for bringing about an alternative worldview where peace and compassion prevail.

2 You've often described your work as "using dance to ask questions rather than provide answers." How has this interrogative approach to classical and contemporary dance allowed you to address conflict, violence, and social fracture in ways that purely verbal discourse cannot?

When one goes into a classroom or a lecture hall, most often in today's world, one goes in with a wall—a wall that says, "I know this person is not going to tell me anything that will change my perspective." When you go to a performance, you don't go with that same wall—or not usually. And then, if the performance is a brilliant performance, whether or not you agree with the philosophy or the political subtext of that performance, you will sit through it, and it will somehow wash over you.

I know many people who may not agree with my work—like Sita's Daughters, a performance I did over six hundred times across many countries—but who will never be able to gloss over a news item on rape without thinking of, or without something tugging at their heartstrings or their

So I think, whether you take it in consciously or subliminally, there is something that music and performance and film changes in you. **The experience of it leaves behind subliminal messages, even when you try to fight against them. And I think that is the power of the arts.**

minds or their thoughts about, my scene on rape and a rape victim's plight. So I think, whether you take it in consciously or subliminally, there is something that music and performance and film changes in you. The experience of it leaves behind subliminal messages, even when you try to fight against them. And I think that is the power of the arts.

3 Across your decades of practice—from *Sita's Daughters* (1990) to *Unsuni* (2006) to *Colours of Her Heart* (2019) to *Meanwhile Elsewhere* (2025)—you've worked at the intersection of Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, and contemporary activism. When did you first recognise that the body itself could be a site of peacebuilding, not just artistic expression?

As I said, I grew up watching the body as a site of expression, as a site for change. In many senses, I was convinced about the power of the arts long before a eureka moment which made me into an artist. I had always learned, and I always admired and exulted in work that talked about issues. As you know, I come from a family where issues are a part of my daily bread and butter. People didn't talk about which sari to buy or which diamond jeweller to go to—they talked about what was happening in the Dalit movement, what was happening with women's issues, what was happening in the world. I mean, this was on both sides of my family, so that was my bread and butter, and it just translated into what I consider my most powerful language, which is dance.

4 In contexts of deep social polarisation—such as communal violence, caste-based oppression, and gendered injustice—how can performance engender what you describe as "radical empathy" among audiences who may have internalised dehumanising narratives?

We are brought up with fear, insecurity, and prejudice. Politics, media, and social media divide us with these. There are no conversations, because over the last thirty or forty years, these have been systematically dulled and reduced. Fear is a potent fuel for violence. Human nature

is still Neanderthal, and the feast-or-famine response is hardwired. The general levels of daily frustration in our country are flammable. Anger levels are very high. We need to channelise these. Playing sports or dancing transforms these energies into dopamine and oxytocin and so forth. The poison gets its sting removed.

Young people need outlets that are as heady as mob violence can be, and hard and fun physical activity is one sure way. Role play is another. And of course meditation—but getting people there is hard. And conversations, always conversations.

5 Many of your works—particularly around the Gujarat riots and Partition—engage with traumatic memories. How do you navigate the tension between artistic remembrance and the risk of re-traumatisation? What does "honest memory" look like in embodied performance?

Victims turn into violators. The daughter-in-law/mother-in-law dynamic is a classic example. Nonviolent Communication is a proven technique for both the oppressed and the oppressor to alleviate pain and change perspectives. I am a great believer in NVC and have used it on myself to overcome trauma.

6 As a practitioner from a privileged artistic lineage, you've consistently centred marginalised voices in your work. How do you protect the dignity and agency of the communities whose stories you tell—especially Dalit, Adivasi, and Muslim voices—within an art economy that often extracts from and aestheticises suffering?

Two things I decided on when I started this work. First, I will make my own life naked and not be afraid of vulnerability. And second, I will never truly understand the actual situation of an acid attack victim or a survivor of violence, but I can tell their story in a way that is dramatic and interesting and will keep "bums on seats,"

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so that their story is heard. In Colours of Her Heart, director Yadavan Chandran and I worked with the real traumas of the six women involved - some incidents that not even those closest to them knew- and made that the script. The process was traumatising but also cathartic and audiences poured out their stories of horror and violence. They felt emboldened by the honesty they watched and were immersed in, on stage.

7 Short-form video, memes, and viral performances now shape political consciousness. Do you see possibilities for classical or folk-rooted dance to intervene meaningfully in digital spaces, or does the medium inherently flatten the nuance required for peacebuilding?

How we market the good is our biggest challenge. Meanwhile Elsewhere has just completed a sold-out national tour, with Gen Z audience members sobbing in my arms because they felt we had articulated what they had been unable to express. I believe in making the packaging of my work change with the times and with the audience—not the core of what I am saying.

8 You've collaborated with musicians, poets, and visual artists across religious and linguistic boundaries. How does collaborative artistic practice itself become a rehearsal for coexistence? What breaks down—and what becomes possible—when artists from antagonistic communities create together?

We need to constantly remember that we are people, not labels. Human first, then artist. One has to constantly battle with one's own hidden prejudices and biases. It can be very hard work, and sometimes you grit your teeth and make the project happen. But most of the time, the joy of birthing something together takes over.

9 Artists working for peace often face censorship, threats, funding withdrawal, or accusations of sedition. You've experienced this directly. What institutional or communal protections are necessary for artists to do peace work without personal or professional annihilation?

Darpana lost most of its support when I took a stand against the then Chief Minister after the Gujarat genocide. After Mr Modi became Prime Minister, we became pariahs. We have lost people and all funding. My performance fees supported Darpana for well over thirty-five years. After 2014, I went from about sixty paid performances a year down to three or four. We barely survived—and are still standing.

My early work was confrontational, but we lived in an India that has ceased to exist. Now our strategy is subtle, more nuanced. But it is tough.

10 For readers unfamiliar with the Indian socio-political landscape, could you explain how classical dance—once dismissed as elitist or devotional—has been reclaimed by artists like yourself as a public, activist language? What does it mean to make Bharatanatyam speak to communal violence, environmental justice, or women's autonomy?

All the arts in India were originally meant to educate the public on issues of right and wrong. They were framed in religious terms to make them more acceptable. Most of them—whether painting, sculpture, or dance—were patronised and witnessed in temples.

By living in today's world, we have shifted the focus to what is of paramount urgency now. And really, each of these issues—hatred, violence, the destruction of the planet—boils down to what is right and what is wrong. The ultimate question remains truth, equity, and justice, rolled into humaneness. The scenarios have changed, and so have we. Once Shiva was the ultimate destroyer. Today, we are.

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KALAHRDAYA
AN OASIS OF ART, LIFE AND PEACE

What was once a dingy, swampy, and seemingly "god-forsaken" piece of land—defined by waterlogged fields, deep ditches, and thick swarms of mosquitoes—is being reborn. **Originally a site teeming with poisonous snakes and wild creatures, surrounded by marginalized villages on the fringes of Kolkata along the road to the Bay of Bengal, it is now being transformed into a vibrant oasis of art, culture, and community building.**

Art: The Creative Necessity

Art, in its broadest sense, embraces every human creative activity that serves the pursuit of beauty. Art, life, and peace are integrally interconnected and mutually enriching; art serves humanity by fostering reconciliation and promoting life.

Oscar Wilde once famously wrote, "All art is quite useless." In this context, it simply means that art is "quite" something else—a fundamental necessity for everyone, everywhere. A world without the arts is unimaginable; it would be a dull existence, devoid of imagination and creativity. It is our artistic faculty that truly distinguishes us from all other species.

Kalahrdaya (The Heart of Art)—the Universal Home of Art and Culture—was established to promote a world immersed in the arts. It serves as an oasis where artists can experience complete creative freedom, building peace and harmony in and through their work.

Life: From A Swamp to A Sanctuary

My upbringing in the rich artistic and cultural traditions of Jorasanko Thakurbari (Rabindra Bharati University) and the Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, provided a deep well of inspiration. Over fifteen years, the vision for a center of art and culture slowly matured, eventually taking root at the present location of Kalahrdaya.

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This arduous task has taken a heavy toll on me. While I sit back and reminiscence the days passed by, with a hip implant and other heavy health issues, I say to myself, 'God has indeed done a miracle.'

The subtle agony of building up Kalahrdaya over a decade—both mental and emotional—has brought untold pain. Initially, the foundational philosophy of Kalahrdaya as a centre of art and culture for the underprivileged was not widely accepted, resulting in disappointingly slow progress. Placing oneself at the service of the marginalized through a non-profit venture is by no means a bed of roses.

The mental, intellectual, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and financial labour invested in building Kalahrdaya is almost unimaginable. Conceiving and finally bringing it to life has not been a labour of ten months, but a yajna—a sacrifice of nearly thirty years, to be precise.

I recount these obstacles only to highlight the profound ignorance and the hurdles an artist must overcome to serve art, life, and peace. **To put it mildly, living among those who do not respect or support art is a pathetic struggle. I am, however, immensely grateful to the handful of enlightened souls who continue to support this vision.**

In the beginning, some neighbours even threatened to chase me away, as most disbelieved the good intentions behind the project. Kalahrdaya was the first of its kind in this area. I recount these obstacles only to highlight the profound ignorance and the hurdles an artist must overcome to serve art, life, and peace. To put it mildly, living among those who do not respect or support art is a pathetic struggle. I am, however, immensely grateful to the handful of enlightened souls who continue to support this vision.

Since my middle school days, I have believed that the arts are life-enhancing. They possess an inherent ability to celebrate existence and express life in its most profound forms. To be an artist is a journey of both sheer joy and, at times, great frustration. Yet, it is difficult to imagine a single day without being enlivened by music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture, cinema, or poetry. To be an artist is a calling—a true vocation—just as being a connoisseur of the arts is a life-enchanting pursuit. Both must be diligently cultivated and nurtured.

Peace: The Architecture of Reconciliation

The Art Peace Foundation serves as a sister concern and the "main artery" of Kalahrdaya. Our mission is to create a serene environment for children, parents, and all who visit us. Almost everyone who enters this campus shares the same first impressions: "It is such a peaceful place," and "This is an ideal setting for nurturing art and culture." To me, these comments are my greatest laurels.

Art and peace initiatives foster dialogue, empathy, and healing, particularly in conflict zones. By utilizing theatre, poetry, and audio-visual arts, we build bridges and dissolve divisions. These mediums heal trauma, amplify marginalized voices, and transform conflicting communities into coexisting ones. They instill a fresh energy that can influence decisionmakers to prioritize peace over war and harmony over conflict. Ultimately, the fundamental role of art is building reconciliation.

Artistic and cultural diplomacy is essential for any society seeking to improve its quality of life and foster international understanding. Through creative imagination, empathy, and daring action, we can smooth human encounters and soothe long-standing tensions. Art has the power to transform health, inspire quality education, and spark innovative thinking. By bridging cultures and promoting dialogue within conflicting societies, we can truly revive a weary world.

Peace is not an abstract idea; it is something we actively create to ensure quality living in a healthy environment. Throughout history, courage, imagination, and creativity have joined hands to turn artistic expression into a force for peacebuilding and the transformation of societies torn by conflict. Today, peace is the rarest and most sought-after commodity in the world.

The arts serve as powerful, non-violent tools—bridging divides, facilitating dialogue, and healing trauma. Various artistic mediums have long been integrated into reconciliation strategies to transform conflict into "peace blocks." Artists, peacemakers, and policy experts inspire communities to equip themselves with these essential skills. There is a "magic spell" in every sound, an enchantment in every movement, and an allurement in every line drawn that can soothe hearts and tune minds to become ambassadors of reconciliation.

However, simply dancing, singing, or painting a piece a thousand times will not bring peace on its own. These actions must become building blocks within the hearts of both participants and spectators, moving them toward proactive change. Peace does not emerge spontaneously like mushrooms; it must be created and preserved.

The Harmony of the Orchestra

When artists collaborate—whether in an orchestra, a choreography, a play, or a mural—they are actively bringing peace into existence. In an orchestra, musicians must be perfectly tuned to create harmony, melody, or symphony. Without this alignment, there is only dissonance, chaos, and conflict. Creating peace is much like tuning a musical instrument; in reality, "tuning" is empathy—the ability to understand and share the feelings of one another.

Kalahrdaya endeavours to harmonise art, life, and peace by employing the principle: 'catch them young.' Our students begin their journey at three and a half years old, blossoming into adulthood within this environment.

Arts as Agents of Transformation

The arts possess a unique power of transmission, sending a fundamental message of peace to the world through words, pictures, movements, and forms. To be effective, peace education requires a refreshed methodology—one that is interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. Art does not merely transmit values; it acts as an agent of transformation, turning conflict into calm.

Numerous artists use their craft to create alternative spaces for discovering inner peace, reimagining relationships, rebuilding communities, and healing the wounds of war. Art is meant for dialogue and for reconciling us to one another.

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The Journey of Kalahrdaya

There was a time when dance was considered a taboo in many communities, remaining out of reach for those who longed to learn. This atmosphere prevailed around Kalahrdaya when I began teaching dance to three Dalit girls, aged four, six, and nine. It took fifteen years of dedication to eventually attract more than 300 students to this home of arts and culture.

Those original three students have since travelled through Europe twice. To date, about fifteen women and six men from our programme have performed with me across India and abroad. They have been exposed to the best of the world—an opportunity they could not have imagined without the arts. Today, many of them are teachers at Kalahrdaya and elsewhere.

Life has changed for these village men and women. By stepping beyond their borders, they have learned to reimagine their perspectives, set higher goals, and deepen their motivation to be promoters of life. They have become leaders in their families and communities.

Yet, even after a quarter-century of dancing across 35 countries and well over 2,000 stages, the response from those in positions of responsibility remains painfully cold. At times, I am misunderstood or silenced, which slows the progress of creating a wider space for art and peace. Today's trends favour financial security and institutionalization, often sidelining the service of the poor and the marginalized. In building a centre like Kalahrdaya, a certain 'apostolic aggressivity' is essential. The 'magis'—the drive for the "more" and the "greater"—is demanded of everyone involved in this mission.

I am often left alone to find resources to continue this initiative. A fear has crept in me whether I would be silenced and even stopped to move ahead, like a number of my fellow artists in India are facing because the art and culture initiatives are non-profit making, non-prestigious as well as non-glamorous. Unfortunately, "Money is the measure of all things," still rules even the religious world.

A Call for 'Apostolic Aggressivity'

The arts are the heart and soul of any society. They are both the preservers and the preservatives of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty—the three most vital aspects of the Divine. Satyam vada, dharmam chara—"Speak the truth and live righteously"—is the motto of Kalahrdaya. The arts are centered on these enduring values; they are born of, and advocate for, the power of creativity and imagination.

"No great artist sees things as they really are; if he did, he would cease to be an artist," wrote Oscar Wilde. This serves as a reminder that we need only keep our hearts and minds open to welcome the surprises of the creative spirit. To sum up: the arts are the outward expressions of an inward seeking, designed to create peace and delight in all hearts, at all times, and in all places.

Dr. Saju George is a Jesuit of Kolkata Province. He is a professional Indian Classical Dancer, and the Founder Director of Kalahrdaya.

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VIGNETTES OF TRANQUILLITY

THE DIGI-ART OF KAORU YAMADA AND XUAN LOC XUAN

Design by Xuan Loc Xuan

It is the New Media Art that is creating ripples in the cosmopolitan culture of the contemporary world. AI seems to replace the painting skill of the artists who have laboured to achieve the finer nuances of light and shade, colour and shape.

In the history of human civilization, the artist's skill of replicating reality through application of chiaroscuro has amazed viewers through the ages across the world. In the history of evolution among all living creatures, human beings are the only entity endowed with the ability to connect the tip of the index finger with the tip of the thumb, which enabled humans to hold a pen, a pencil or a brush and create.

From the murals of Ajanta to the lyrical finesse of the Pre-Raphaelites, the steady journey of the brush remains unparalleled as the two-dimensional world of visual arts becomes animated through the long-trained skill of creating chiaroscuro. Of late, the skill of the brush has taken a backstage with the emergence of AI tools for generating digital art (Digi Art). The hand of the painter who created magic is now replaced by AI software. From this perspective, it becomes really debatable whether the Tokiyo-based artist-illustrator Kaoru Yamada's AI-generated landscapes and gentle domestic scenes could at all be called paintings.

Design by Kaoru Yamada

Digi art, which is a nickname for Digital Art, applies digital technology as the prerequisite of the creative process. Any representation on a digital screen, including pixel art, 3D computer graphics, photo enhancing and generative art, comes under the rubric of Digi Art. It is the New Media Art that is creating ripples in the cosmopolitan culture of the contemporary world. AI seems to replace the painting skill of the artists who have laboured to achieve the finer nuances of light and shade, colour and shape.

Kaoru Yamada, a Japanese freelance illustrator and copywriter, applies generative AI tools with the help of digital software to create her artworks. She began her career as an editorial and advertising illustrator and subsequently moved on to the digital and AI-based expressions from 2023 onwards.

Popular AI-generated art tools for artists, such as Midjourney, Canva AI Generator, OpenArt, Night Cafe Creator, or Adobe Firefly, can transform ideas into stunning visuals by means of text-to-image prompts. Other digital tools for a professional-grade digital painting, such as Infinite Painter or Adobe Photoshop, use customizable digital brushes, layers and perspective guides, which are basically user-driven. In both cases, the ideas seem to generate

Design by Xuan Loc Xuan

in a human brain and are sometimes guided by human intelligence as well (in the case of digital painting software).

Kaoru Yamada calls herself a creator because the designs are formulated within the artist's mind. It is the artist who provides appropriate prompts for AI through imagination. Only the desired effect is achieved with the help of Digital/ AI tools. That is how she seems to achieve the stature of a painter.

She digitally creates the effect of transparent watercolour that makes her landscapes and the domestic scenes flooded with light. The empty porches with trellis of wild roses, glass windows overlooking gardens, rocky slopes with cherry trees, cozy bedroom corners are solitary, calm and bathed in warm sunbeams. Light filtering through the window panes and leaves of trees is the source of peace and positive vibes in Yamada's works.

Yamada finds peace in nature: "As an illustrator, I enjoy drawing seasonal landscapes and illustrations of everyday life" (Yamada). Incidentally, all the lyrical depictions of quiet domestic corners, windows, gardens and porches are without human figures, though the presence of a single cat often animates the scenes. There is often a feeling that somebody has just left the scene, as slightly turned empty chairs on the porch, open books with fluttering leaves on the table, steaming teacups and empty bottles on the windows will create the sense of human presence. The human presence in absentia helps to breed an ambiance of serenity within the viewer.

The present scenario of the world demands pace, skill and prompt response from persons in every step of life. Preoccupation with the digital world has made us restless and unmindful with torrents of news updates. Continuous demand for response both in professional and personal levels through the digital circuit has made people stressed, intolerant, and as a result, quite reactive. Looking at these peaceful, mundane scenes created by Kaoru Yamada, the hectic pace of the mind slows down to a calming rhythm, giving way to a sense of peace and tranquility.

Her work could be popularly characterized as 'ghiblification', the method of achieving a soft, dreamy and picturesque style to represent everyday life: "the quiet beauty hidden in everyday life. Silent street corners, the changing seasons, and the light that warms the heart. These are the moments I gently chase through my work" (Yamada). She believes that people find something beautiful when they are at peace and when they have the space to feel compassion (The Art Portal).

Incidentally, the Vietnamese artist Xuan Loc Xuan's digital paintings similarly create a soothing and dreamy space for comforting the weary humans in a digital world crammed with information. She was born and raised in a small town in South Vietnam, and her peaceful childhood is expressed through mellow pastel tones, gentle light and floral scenes.

Her digital paintings situate solitary figures of humans and animals that embrace silence and exhale peace. Her choice of cool tones helps to build up a sense of calm and a safe haven for both humans and animals in a harmonious coexistence. Many of her scenes depict an animal resting among flowers, which breathe out tranquility to express the idea that "solitude can be gentle – and sometimes necessary – for growth and creativity. … Her art feels like that moment when the world slows down, and you remember how good it feels to simply be" (Prakash 2026).

Preoccupation with the digital world has made us restless and unmindful with torrents of news updates. Continuous demand for response both in professional and personal levels through the digital circuit has made people stressed, intolerant, and as a result, quite reactive. Looking at these peaceful, mundane scenes created by Kaoru Yamada, the hectic pace of the mind slows down to a calming rhythm, giving way to a sense of peace and tranquility.

Design by Kaoru Yamada

The significance of any artefact is determined by the effect it generates on the viewer. Works of Kaoru Yamada and Xuan Loc Xuan spread a calming effect on the minds of viewers. The domestic scenes, and peaceful landscapes with solitary on no figure at all, if framed and hung on the wall of a sitting room, bedroom, or even kitchen, breed vignettes of tranquility in the general ambiance of the room.

In the digitally interconnected globalized contemporary world, human beings feel technology-driven and suffocated, while regarding the power of AI with much apprehension. In this situation, the creative AI tools for generating artistic images are providing a brief moment of simulated reality where the mind can rest in peace, looking at a peaceful visual.

Both Yamada and Xuan seem to guide AI tools with their innate humane desire for solitude, peace, and tranquility. This idea of capturing moments and stories hidden in simple everyday objects connects their work to the idea of Zen, which focuses on living fully in the present moment and finding peace through cultivating mindfulness in everyday action. Kaoru Yamada's tranquil domestic scenes with restful sunny landscapes and Xuan Loc Xuan's solitary figures relaxing among nature are signs of giving minute attention to everyday mundane activities, which gradually lead the mind to the realization of peace and help the viewer to calm down in a restless world.

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ART, IMAGINATION, AND HOPE IN SCHOOLS TODAY

But what struck me most was that alongside the routes they knew, the fields, the roads, the shelters, some also drew places they had never been: **towns where they might stay, schools they might attend, lives with a different shape. They were not only mapping reality. They were imagining otherwise.**

I have worked with teachers, students, and communities in very different contexts across Mexico. One experience has stayed with me. Working with children of migrant farmworkers—jornaleros who moved with their families between harvests, between states, between lives that had no fixed centre—we asked them to draw their trajectory. Instead of a single place, they drew routes: lines connecting fields, towns, temporary shelters. What emerged was not a map of belonging but a map of movement itself.

Children of migrant farmworkers drawing their places of origin. Mexico, 2009.

Those drawings held something that no curriculum had ever asked them to express. But what struck me most was that alongside the routes they knew, the fields, the roads, the shelters, some also drew places they had never been: towns where they might stay, schools they might attend, lives with a different shape. They were not only mapping reality. They were imagining otherwise. They point, I think, to something essential about what art can do in schools, and why that question has become especially urgent today.

Schools across Mexico and beyond are navigating a profound transformation. The expansion of digital technologies, the automation of multiple tasks, and the growing presence of artificial intelligence tools have changed not only the way we think about education, but also how we write, read, produce images, and organize much of our daily experience. One question becomes especially urgent: what human capacities do we still need to cultivate when so many answers seem immediately available?

Yet, education has never been only about transmitting content. It also means forming the capacity to interpret, to ask questions, to connect experiences, to make sense of the world, and to imagine possibilities beyond what is already given. In this context, it matters to distinguish between producing and creating. Producing means responding quickly, assembling available elements, reproducing recognizable patterns. Creating requires a different temporality, a different kind of care: a slower process in which experience, doubt, and imagination all play a role, and in which something not entirely foreseen may appear.

Art, then, matters more than ever in schools. For a long time, artistic practices have been treated as complementary to the areas considered central to academic achievement. Yet drawing, observing, narrating, or creating offer something that is very hard to replace: a space where thought can unfold without being reduced to single answers.

Creating, however, is not simply about obtaining a visible result. It also involves passing through an experience in which thought, emotion, and perception are reorganized. When we draw, narrate, or imagine, we do not only produce something external; we also transform the way we understand ourselves and relate to the world. Sometimes art makes it possible to name what words alone still struggle to express.

There is a beautiful idea, developed by the philosopher of education Maxine Greene, that to imagine is not to escape reality but to recognize that no social reality is ever completely closed—to perceive that the world might be different from how it appears. This capacity becomes especially important in contexts like Mexico, where everyday life is often shaped by normalized forms of inequality and exclusion. Long before conflict becomes visible, many of these tensions are already present in subtle assumptions about who belongs, who deserves to be heard, and who remains at the margins.

Maxine Greene

For this reason, educating for peace is not only about speaking of abstract values, but about creating experiences that allow us to think and look differently. Art can open precisely this kind of experience. An image, a story, or a shared act of creation allows us to approach the human dimension from places where normative language often falls short.

Martha Nussbaum has argued that the arts strengthen the capacities essential for democratic life precisely because they help us imagine the experience of others and expand our ethical sensitivity. When education is oriented exclusively toward productivity, those capacities begin to weaken. In shared creative processes, children and young people learn to listen, to accept differences, and to build something in common. Often, what matters most is not the result but the process itself: the conversation, the experimentation, and the possibility of sustaining different perspectives within a shared experience.

New tools can generate images, texts, and responses with remarkable speed, and they certainly open valuable possibilities. Yet for that very reason, distinguishing between obtaining results and sustaining processes of creation becomes even more necessary. **Schools still need to strengthen what remains deeply human: the capacity to give meaning, to form one's own questions, and to imagine shared futures.**

Artistic practices are, in this sense, pedagogies of hope, in the way Paulo Freire meant that word: not as naïve optimism, but as an active openness toward what does not yet fully exist. In an age marked by speed, art also offers a pedagogy of pause. It asks us to observe, to try, to make mistakes, and to return to what has been done. It introduces another kind of time, less governed by immediacy and closer to inner elaboration.

The growing presence of artificial intelligence makes this distinction even clearer. New tools can generate images, texts, and responses with remarkable speed, and they certainly open valuable possibilities. Yet for that very reason, distinguishing between obtaining results and sustaining processes of creation becomes even more necessary. Schools still need to strengthen what remains deeply human: the capacity to give meaning, to form one's own questions, and to imagine shared futures.

Art does not oppose technology. Rather, it reminds us that not all learning can be reduced to speed or efficiency. While many tools accelerate results, artistic experiences sustain processes in which search, presence, and interpretation still matter. Perhaps that is why defending the place of art in schools is not a secondary issue. It may be one of the most concrete ways of continuing to cultivate hope. Because before a society can build peace, it must first be able to imagine it.

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THE SIERRA LEONNE PEACE MUSEUM

Artwork depicting a real-life event during the civil war in Sierra Leonne. A mother testified before the truth and reconciliation commission that she pleaded with the fighters to spare her son. The boy was eventually killed. On the ground, symbolic grave with white tombstones representing the 16 tribes of Sierra Leonne are depicted in the garden each with a cross and crescent at the top depicting Christians and Muslims. The wall in the background has names of the war dead and carvings showing various atrocities that happened.

The Sierra Leonne peace museum was established to serve as a memorial, research and historical site for both Sierra Leoneans and non-Sierra Leoneans and to give information about **the history of civil war that took place in Sierra Leonne, as well as the justice systems that followed thereafter. In particular, the truth and reconciliation commission (restorative justice) and the special court of Sierra Leonne (retributive justice).**

The Sierra Leonne civil war started on 23 March 1991 and ended on 8 Jan 2002. Neighbours fought against neighbours, towns against towns and there was a need for reconciliation. The atrocities that were committed included rape, torture, forced marriage, murder, forced displacement, sexual slavery and recruitment of child soldiers.

Sierra Leonne Peace Museum

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It contains significant historical documents such as the Special Court Public Archives and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) records. Many groups including schools, churches, universities, international guests, civil society and more visit the museum to learn about the civil war.

For the school children, they had not even been born during the civil war. Showing them what happened and explaining the story behind some of the preservations in the museums is a way of fostering peace education.

An act of parliament was enacted in the year 2000 leading to the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2002. The TRC modelled South Africa and had both local and international commissioners. The TRC completed its work in 2004

One wall inside the museum is titled 'The human face of interpretation in transitional justice settings.' The stories displayed include one from Edward Foday. He was recruited as an interpreter in April 2004 by the Special Court of Sierra Leonne in the first cohort of interpreters. He says he listened to many disheartening stories. One that broke him down was when the mother to an amputee child testified that a few weeks after her daughter's arms were amputated, she kept asking her mother, "Mama, when will my arms grow again?"

Attire worn by the fighters is also on display in a section of the museum. One is a half gown dyed with kola nuts and red wood (Gbeni). Worn by a CDF (Kapra) fighter. It is believed to ward off bullets and was found in Kambia district.

Another is traditional attire made from cotton and herbs with charms talisman (sebeh) used for protection from bullet and sword wounds. It was found in Koinadugu district.

Hats and weapons used by the fighters and believed to offer protection are also on display.

Art from Court Evidence

At the back of the Sierra Leone Peace Museum, there is a memorial garden designed to honor victims of the civil conflict. A Sierra Leonean artist, Maku, worked with others to create artwork for this space, which was inspired by evidence heard by the Special Court of Sierra Leone. Some of the artworks on the wall depict a woman that was burned alive, the 500 United Nations peace keepers that were held hostage, names of the war dead and slogans of both despair and hope narrated by members of the community.

Public Engagement

The museum's information has been digitalized on a website to reach a broader audience and spread knowledge by providing easy access. The museum also hires out its hall at a subsidized rate to schools, civil society, and special groups such as amputees. At the end of each year, school children that visit the museum are engaged in a quiz about what they learnt during their visit. The winners are given prizes as a way of motivating them to stay interested in this history and to promote peace.

The presence of the museum has psychological consequences and visits to the peace museum bring divergent reactions from individuals. For some, there is renewed trauma when they see and read about the atrocities that happened during the civil war. They shed tears and say they want to see no more. Some appreciate the learning aspect to know what went wrong.

The importance of having preservation like this is the knowledge shared through the minds of those who visit or hear about it. Communities can know what happened and forgive one another through the reconciliation process.

Artwork depicting the cry of the community

Artwork depicting a child soldier on display in the museum.

Charles Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison

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Records from the special court for Sierra Leonne have been stored in the archive room of the Peace Museum of Sierra Leonne

They stay on their toes to ensure they never allow the repetition of such an ugly situation.

Even though in 2023, there was an attempt to overthrow the government of Sierra Leonne, nobody supported it since citizens did not want a non-democratic system of government. They believe that if that is allowed it can degenerate into another civil war.

About 8,000 written statements taken by TRC have been stored in the archive room of the Sierra Leonne peace museum. The basement of the museums hosts the Sierra Leonne law school, and it is managed by the council of legal education.

Artwork on the wall of the memorial garden showing arms disarmament.

Artwork detailing the war process till arrest and reconciliation.

The writer of this article visited the Sierra Leonne peace museum and was given a guided tour by Benjamin Tengbeh, a barrister and solicitor of the high court of Sierra Leonne.

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RHYTHMS OF DIGNITY

DALIT ART AS SOCIAL REPAIR IN UNDIVIDED ANDHRA PRADESH

When Dalit communities asserted dignity, demanding equal access to water, land, education, and public space, they frequently faced brutal retaliation. **Yet alongside this history of violence ran another current—a steady rhythm of cultural assertion through which communities mourned, remembered, and reorganised themselves.**

Peace in caste society cannot be defined merely as the absence of violence. In the landscapes of the then undivided Andhra Pradesh, silence often masked humiliation and exclusion. When Dalit communities asserted dignity, demanding equal access to water, land, education, and public space, they frequently faced brutal retaliation. Yet, alongside this history of violence ran another current—a steady rhythm of cultural assertion through which communities mourned, remembered, and reorganised themselves. In songs, drums, stories, and performance, Dalit art became not only an expression of resistance but a practice of social repair.

This article reflects on four emblematic caste atrocity incidents, Karamchedu (1985), Tsundur (1991), Neerukonda, and Padirikuppam, which occurred in the then undivided Andhra Pradesh, in a region that today forms the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

This creates immediate coherence with:

- Rhythms
- Dignity
- Social Repair

In 1985, in Karamchedu village of present-day Andhra Pradesh, dominant caste landlords attacked Dalits following a dispute over access to water, resulting in multiple deaths and widespread displacement. In 1991, in Tsundur, eight Dalit men were chased and murdered after escalating tensions rooted in caste discrimination. Neerukonda and Padirikuppam similarly witnessed organised attacks and intimidation aimed at disciplining Dalit assertion.

These were not isolated eruptions; they reflected structural caste hierarchies resisting social change. They marked moments when everyday discrimination escalated into collective punishment for Dalit assertion. What followed, however, was not only legal struggle but cultural resurgence.

Mourning as Moral Witness

In the immediate aftermath of Karamchedu and Tsundur, grief could easily have turned into despair or revenge. Instead, memorial gatherings

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became spaces of disciplined mourning. Songs invoking the emancipatory vision of B. R. Ambedkar echoed across districts. Poetry named the dead. Drums resounded not in submission but in assertion.

These cultural acts performed crucial peace functions. First, they transformed private grief into collective memory. Trauma isolated families. Art reassembled community. Second, they demanded moral recognition from the wider public. Cultural troupes travelled from village to village narrating what had happened, ensuring that the massacres could not be erased from social consciousness.

Importantly, these gatherings channelled anger into organised struggle, legal advocacy, fact-finding missions, solidarity networks rather than retaliatory violence. Art became a container for pain, preventing its distortion into vengeance.

Drumming: Reclaiming Public Space

In many Dalit communities of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, drumming has historically been linked to caste-assigned duties. After the massacres, this instrument was reclaimed as a symbol of resistance. Public rallies and Ambedkar commemorations featured coordinated drumming that asserted presence in spaces once marked by exclusion.

Sound became spatial justice. Streets that had echoed with humiliation now resonated with collective rhythm. The embodied synchrony of drumming fostered courage, especially among youth. Fear, though real, was shared and therefore diminished.

At the same time, such assertion occasionally provoked backlash, with dominant groups framing it as disturbance rather than democratic expression. The right to cultural expression thus emerged as integral to peacebuilding. Without protecting artistic freedom, reconciliation remains superficial. Cultural assertion, especially in tense rural contexts, often exposed performers and organisers to intimidation and economic vulnerability, reminding us that aesthetic resistance carries material risk.

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Storytelling and Civic Education

In Neerukonda and Padirikuppam, as in Karamchedu and Tsundur, oral storytelling played a decisive role in sustaining morale. Elders narrated not only the violent incidents but the longer history of caste oppression and resistance. These narratives connected local struggles to broader Dalit movements across the state.

Storytelling served as civic education. It explained legal protections, constitutional rights, and strategies for collective action. It also restored dignity by affirming that suffering was not the result of individual failure but of systemic injustice.

From a peace perspective, storytelling fosters moral clarity. It resists both denial and demonisation. By situating violence within structural realities, it invites transformation rather than blind retaliation.

Participatory Theatre: Rehearsing Courage

Over time, activists in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana incorporated participatory theatre methods such as Playback Theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed, associated with Augusto Boal. These forms created structured spaces where individuals could share experiences of discrimination and see them enacted respectfully.

In Playback Theatre, the simple act of seeing one's story performed by others affirms that one's voice matters. In Theatre of the Oppressed, participants intervene in scenes of injustice, rehearsing alternative, nonviolent responses. The stage becomes a laboratory for civic courage.

In contexts scarred by violence, such methods allow communities to process trauma without suppressing it. They nurture agency while avoiding retributive impulses. However, these practices demand careful ethical facilitation and long-term accompaniment. Without sensitivity, re-enactment can retraumatise participants or reduce complex struggles to performative exercises.

Grief, Resilience, and Social Repair

Why restrict reflection to these four incidents? Because they reveal a pattern, when confronted with organised caste violence, Dalit communities

in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana repeatedly turned to culture as a stabilising force. Art did not replace legal struggle; it sustained it emotionally and morally. It prevented fragmentation. It nurtured long-term resilience.

Peace, understood as social repair, requires more than verdicts in court. It demands restored dignity, collective memory, and renewed trust within communities. Dalit art forms contributed to each of these dimensions:

- Truth-telling through song and narrative.
- Moral recognition through public commemoration.
- Collective agency through participatory performance.
- Emotional healing through shared aesthetic experience.

These practices also challenged the wider society. They confronted dominant castes with uncomfortable truths while modelling disciplined, organised resistance. They demonstrated that strength need not express itself through violence.

Toward a Peace Pedagogy

For educational institutions, churches, and civic platforms in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, these histories offer guidance. Dalit art forms should not be treated as cultural decoration but as pedagogies of peace. Supporting artists materially, protecting their autonomy, and creating sustained spaces for dialogue are essential steps toward genuine reconciliation.

The experiences of Karamchedu, Tsundur, Neerukonda, and Padirikuppam remind us that aesthetics is not peripheral to justice. It is central to how communities survive trauma and imagine futures. In their rhythms, stories, and performances, Dalit communities have crafted a disciplined nonviolent imagination, one that refuses erasure, honours the dead, and strengthens the living.

Such art does not sentimentalise peace. It understands peace as disciplined work, the patient labour of memory, solidarity, and dignity carried forward in rhythm and voice.

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ART AS A TRANSFORMATIVE FORCE FOR PEACE

Artistic expression often becomes both a witness to suffering and a call toward reconciliation. A notable example is Guernica by Pablo Picasso, which powerfully depicts the horrors of war. **Though the painting portrays anguish and destruction, its underlying message urges humanity to confront violence and seek peace.**

Introduction

Art has long functioned as a profound mode of human expression capable of transcending linguistic, cultural, and religious boundaries. In times marked by war, fragmentation, and psychological unrest, the relationship between art and peace becomes especially significant. This article explores art as a language of peace, a therapeutic medium, and an educational foundation. It further examines the vision and activities of the Company of Artists for Radiance of Peace (CARP), a collective dedicated to fostering harmony through creative collaboration. Finally, it reflects on the author's artistic practice and analyses two paintings—Echoes of Compassion and The Restless Peace—as visual meditations on the dynamic tension between conflict and harmony.

Art and Peace: A Transformative Journey

Art has always been one of humanity's most powerful forms of expression. It communicates beyond the limitations of spoken language and engages directly with the emotional and spiritual dimensions of human experience. Peace, similarly, is a universal aspiration—an enduring longing intensified in times of social unrest and war.

When art and peace intersect, they generate a transformative force capable of healing individuals and reconciling communities. Artistic expression often becomes both a witness to suffering and a call toward reconciliation. A notable example is Guernica by Pablo Picasso, which powerfully depicts the horrors of war. Though the painting portrays anguish and destruction, its underlying message urges humanity to confront violence and seek peace. Through such works, art becomes a silent protest against injustice and a compelling appeal for harmony

Art, Healing, and Inner Peace

Peace cannot be reduced to the mere absence of war; it begins within the individual. Emotional wounds, fear, anger, and anxiety often prevent the emergence of inner harmony. In therapeutic contexts, artistic processes enable individuals to externalize trauma and rediscover hope. Creative expression provides a safe space for emotional articulation when words fail.

Artists frequently function as the conscience of society. Through imagery, rhythm, and symbolism, they remind communities of human dignity and shared vulnerability. Historically, movements seeking justice and nonviolent transformation have often been accompanied by artistic expression, as art nurtures hope and strengthens collective courage. Thus, art not only reflects reality but also reshapes it. It transforms crisis into a site of possibility and reorients perception toward interconnectedness.

My artistic practice is an inward journey engaging both external socio-political realities and the inner landscapes of the self. **It responds to human suffering and the enduring search for peace while acknowledging the complexity of lived experience.**

The Company of Artists for Radiance of Peace (CARP)

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The Company of Artists for Radiance of Peace (CARP) is a collective grounded in the conviction that art can serve as a catalyst for unity and healing. It is not a commercial entity but a fellowship of artists and peace-oriented individuals united by a shared vision of fostering harmony through creativity.

CARP organizes both virtual and in-person art camps that encourage non-competitive creative expression. These gatherings culminate in exhibitions centred on themes such as compassion, unity, and reconciliation. The collective emphasises collaboration rather than competition, believing that artistic dialogue can bridge divisions and cultivate mutual understanding.

CARP also advances the initiative 'Students' Art for Peace' (SAP), conducting workshops and art-therapy-based programmes in schools and educational centres. These programmes recognize that education must extend beyond intellectual training to include emotional literacy and self-awareness.

Art as the Foundation of Education

Academic instruction alone does not fully prepare individuals for life. Emotional awareness, empathy, imagination, and resilience are equally vital. Art provides a structured yet open environment in which learners can explore inner experiences that may resist verbal articulation.

Through drawing, movement, music, and storytelling, students cultivate self-understanding and confidence. Such processes nurture mental

well-being and creative problem-solving abilities. An education system that values art does not merely produce professionals; it forms imaginative thinkers, sensitive leaders, and peaceful citizens.

This perspective resonates with the philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, who regarded art not as ornamental but as the emotional and spiritual core of authentic education. For Tagore, artistic engagement cultivated harmony with nature, cultural rootedness, and universal human values.

Personal Artistic Practice: Creation and Dissolution

My artistic practice is an inward journey engaging both external socio-political realities and the inner landscapes of the self. It responds to human suffering and the enduring search for peace while acknowledging the complexity of lived experience.

Art-making unfolds within a cyclical tension between creation and dissolution. In this process, crisis becomes generative. As articulated by Donald Kuspit, artistic creation may involve the rebirth of authentic selfhood alongside the relinquishing of self-falsification. The studio thus becomes a theatre of the soul—an indeterminate space where meaning remains fluid and provisional.

This practice is not linear, but iterative: a continual movement between fragmentation and coherence, unrest and reconciliation.

Echoes of Compassion

The painting 'Echoes of Compassion' synthesizes individual and collective existence within a unified visual field. Expressive forms rendered in earthy tones create an atmosphere of introspection and interconnectedness.

The figures appear to look inward toward one another or upward in contemplation. Positioned at the top centre, a serene, almost Buddha– or Christ-like face serves as the anchor. It radiates inner peace, around which the other figures revolve. The heavy, sweeping dark outlines function like veins, connecting the central figure to those below and symbolizing the unity of the human spirit.

Echoes of Compassion

The Restless Peace

Warm yellows and golds suggest divine or enlightened light filtering through the composition. These colours represent the dual nature of life—the calm and the passion, sorrow and vitality. The visible brushstrokes and scratched textures give the painting a raw, tactile quality, reminding us that life, though weathered and worn, remains beautiful.

Avian forms emerge from the shoulders and heads of the figures. Traditionally, birds symbolize the soul and peace. Here, they are integrated into the silhouettes, suggesting that peace is not something external but something that takes flight from within when we live in harmony with others.

This painting becomes a visual meditation on art, life, and peace. It suggests that although individual lives are distinct and complex, we are all woven into a larger rhythmic pattern. The painting ultimately proposes that peace emerges through relational interconnectedness. Art becomes the medium through which fragmented identities are woven into rhythmic unity.

The Restless Peace

The Restless Peace is a vibrant, chaotic, and deeply expressive painting. It uses a frenetic visual language to explore the tension between inner turmoil and the outward search for harmony.

Swirling, rhythmic lines suggest constant motion—nothing is static—reflecting the sense of unrest. Fragmented figurative elements—face, eyes, and limbs—emerge from abstraction. These ghost-like presences evoke a collective human experience, a crowd of voices striving to be heard.

The composition feels like a battlefield. Jagged lines and overlapping forms represent the friction of human conflict, both social and psychological. Yet, at the centre, a bright yellow core may symbolize the inner light of the self that remains luminous despite surrounding darkness.

Despite its chaotic appearance, the painting possesses rhythm. Colours recur, and lines flow into one another, suggesting that beneath fragmentation lies interconnectedness. Peace here is not passive stillness but the courageous recognition that we are part of one energetic fabric.

This is not a peaceful image in the traditional sense of calm landscapes. Rather, it portrays the human struggle for peace—the loud, colourful, and sometimes messy process of seeking balance in a restless world.

Conclusion

Art and peace are intrinsically intertwined. Art bears witness to suffering, cultivates empathy, and opens pathways toward reconciliation. Through collective initiatives such as CARP and through individual artistic practice, creative expression becomes a vehicle for emotional healing, educational transformation, and social dialogue.

In a world marked by division and unrest, art remains a gentle, yet potent messenger. It reminds humanity that peace does not arise from silence or suppression, but from creative engagement, inner transformation, and shared imagination.

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PERUMKALIYATTAM

GLIMPSES OF GOD ON HUMAN FACES

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In northern Kerala, art and protest are inseparable, serving as a struggle for restoration rather than destruction. **These creative expressions made visible the suffering of marginalized communities while asserting their right to equality, survival, and dignity.**

Art and culture are inseparable. Culture is life itself—shaped by the trajectories of human existence: production, trade, agriculture. These pursuits demand beauty, and artistic forms—dance, music, theatre—deliver it. Yet, in North Malabar, such forms have long served another purpose that is of resistance.

This region carries a deep history of agrarian activism. When upper castes seized control of production, the oppressed—lacking modern ideologies—forged weapons from art: paintings, music, and storytelling. In northern Kerala, art and protest are inseparable, serving as a struggle for restoration rather than destruction. These creative expressions made visible the suffering of marginalized communities while asserting their right to equality, survival, and dignity.

Songs, folk tales, and proverbs form the lifeblood of this heritage, reflecting a community's aspirations and psychological truths. In a society dominated by caste hierarchy, lower castes were forbidden from worshipping upper-caste deities and instead deified everyday heroes. These figures emerged as Upasanamoorthys (regionally revered gods) and Dharmadaivams (protective deities), creating a spiritual framework rooted in the lived experience of the marginalized.

These deities reside in sacred spaces like Kavu (sacred groves) and Kottam (unions of households). Over time, the term Daivam evolved into Theyyam, with each deity possessing a mythological origin story called Thottam. During Kaliyattam (the ceremonial dance), a performer known as the Koladhari dons the ritual attire (Kolam) to manifest the god. Originating in historic Kolathunadu, this tradition remains a powerful intersection of ancient theatre and ritualized devotion.

Theyyam as Traditional Art Form

Theyyam is a ritual dance embodying the spiritual essence of North Malabar—an indigenous mode of worship rooted in the ancient Sangha cult. The region boasts approximately 835 distinct varieties, each featuring subtle differences in makeup, costume, and origin myths. While many manifest as Hindu mother goddesses, others embody heroic masculine avatars venerated as deities.

Beyond the borders of Kolathunadu, stylistic diversity flourishes through regional variations. To the south of the Korappuzha river, the tradition takes the form of Thira, while north of the Chandragiri, it is known as Bhoothakkolam. These forms maintain their own distinct rites and conventions, reflecting the unique cultural landscape of each territory.

The Koladharis (performers) primarily belong to marginalized communities—such as the Malaya, Vannan, and Pulayan—who were historically deemed untouchable. Yet, during the performance, even upper-caste members prostrate before them to receive divine blessings. These rituals, or Kaliyattams, are deeply tied to the agricultural calendar, typically occurring during the post-harvest seasons to honour tribal legends and local history.

The Aesthetics and Creativity Behind Theyyam

Theatre legend Peter Brook noted that Theyyam encompasses nearly every historical theatrical element, echoing the depth of Greek tradition. This ritual art survives in a globalized world by fulfilling a primal psychological need to revive the past, merging the aesthetic with the devotional. By uniting artistic beauty with a "chemistry of faith," Theyyam bridges the gap between internal mental space and external sacred experience.

The performance's devotional impact relies on Mukhathezhuthu (facial makeup) and Mudi (towering headdresses). Using natural pigments, artisans create a coded visual language: red for intensity, yellow for success, black for mystery,

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and white for the demonic. As the Koladhari dons these ornaments, their everyday identity vanishes, allowing a ritual self to emerge that channels the specific emotional essence of the deity.

The Mudi provides the essential sculptural form, blending Dravidian, Aryan, and tribal influences through indigenous materials like palm and coconut leaves. These headdresses reflect the ancient craftsmanship of Kolathunadu, harmonizing perfectly with the Theyyam's conceptual roots. When the deity rises in natural firelight to the rhythm of ritual drums, the audience experiences an otherworldly sensation—a potent, lingering fusion of terror and bhakthi (devotion).

Perumkaliyattam: Festival of Renown

Kaliyattams typically occur between the second week of the Malayalam month of Thulam (Libra) and the second week of Edavam (Taurus). Most kaliyattams occur annually. However, certain places without fixed schedules celebrate with extraordinary fervour at minimum fourteen-year intervals. This is Perumkaliyattam—"grand or intensive performances." Perumkaliyattam typically takes place in kazhakams (caste-specific chapters) and kavus (goddess sacred groves). No precise guidelines govern timing; only the socio-economic capacity of the koymas (custodians of kavus, kazhakams, or thanams) determines feasibility.

Ritual Preparations

Perumkaliyattam commences with Nilampani (land preparation). Central to these preparations is annadanam—the meal offering feeding thousands of devotees simultaneously throughout festival days. Thousands of seats must be arranged for the Annadanappanthal. Invitees from neighbouring kavus occupy the Nalillappanthal, a designated area symbolising four significant families of that caste. The Kannikkalavara (southwest corner storeroom), kitchen, and makeup rooms require preparation through Palaykku Kuriyidal—a ritual recognising and marking the Pala tree whose timber will serve as pillars.

The day of panthal preparation is called Varachuveckal (marking of locations). Through Prasnam (an occult predictive practice), the names of koladharis who will perform main and sub-deities are revealed. The Peruvannans (master performers) cover the chosen koladhari of the main deity's head with fabric. The Komaram—the deity's official representative—presents Kuri and Vaal (the sword and order). The koladhari is then led to a Kuchil (palm-leaf enclosure) where, with designated assistance, he observes strict fasting, hygiene, prayers, and meditation for a prescribed period.

Social Significance

Collective cooperation defines perumkaliyattam. It functions as an instrument of social engineering and equalisation. Ritualistic significance necessitates multi-community participation: the Veluthedan brings lamp and thread from the temple; the Asaari (carpenter) identifies, marks, and cuts the Naalmaram (pillar tree); other Viswakarmas work metals; the Kaniyaan speculates; Koymakkar organise; the Tantri determines devotional matters; the Anthithiriyan lights the kavu lamp daily; the Komaram represents the deity officially; the Pulayan brings specially knitted organic mats. More than twenty-five distinct communities collaborate fundamentally.

This ensures necessary communal cohesion. Numerous committees oversee smooth operation, with hundreds participating across all societal sectors in an integrated, unified effort. The entire village unites for success regardless of caste, religion, colour, or political affiliation. Overseas workers return, rekindling nostalgic longing for village life. Social media extends theyyam's reach globally, attracting external visitors—particularly foreigners—to perumkaliyattam.

Interfaith Dimensions

Theyyam practices connect across religious boundaries. Certain theyyams recite the Quran, or mappilavedam, for Muslims. Muslim community manifestations appear within theyyakkolam diversity. Examples of interreligious cooperation common among lower castes include Aalitheyyam in Kasaragod district, Bappiri Theyyam in Andallurkkavu, and Mappilatheyyam in Kambathurkotta. The Muslim community contributes salt and sugar for annadanam at specific Payyanur perumkaliyattams in Kannur district.

Theyyam practices connect across religious boundaries. **Certain theyyams recite the Quran, or mappilavedam, for Muslims. Muslim community manifestations appear within theyyakkolam diversity.**

The Curtain Falls

Agriculture was once the cornerstone of Kaliyattam, but that foundational culture has nearly vanished in contemporary Kerala. Historically, Theyyams served as expressions of lower-caste resistance against Brahmanical exploitation, their myths encoding a clear protest against social oppression. However, recent shifts have seen these legends rewritten as "avatar stories" of Brahmanical gods—an appropriation that threatens to disarm the original spirit of lower-class resistance within a democratic society.

Despite these pressures, the world of Theyyam remains a singular realm of golden sunshine, rhythmic drumming, and haunting Thottam music. While the loss of an art form's original language risks severing ancestral roots, the core of this tradition persists through bhakthi (devotion). From the Kavus (sacred groves), Theyyams continue to govern the inner pulse of village life, offering blessings of health to a society perpetually dreaming of a world free from illness and stress.

Beyond entrenched interests, the Perumkaliyattam serves as a vital reminder of human virtue and social integration. By distilling the vitality of sociocultural life, these festivals fulfill a profound purpose: promoting the collective good and the basic right to survival.

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AHIMSAISM
A NEW MOVEMENT IN VISUAL ART
PROPAGATING PEACE THROUGH ART & GRASSROOTS COMICS

Ignatius Xavier Joseph

Art in its visual form speaks a universal language that transcends national boundaries, literacy levels, and cultural or regional differences. As an "Eye Opener," art plays a vital role in peace-building; the eye acts as the organ that convinces the brain of the visual effects it perceives on the horizon—whether good, bad, or found within an object, a painting, or a contemporary peace-building skit.

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The eye is essential in cultivating peace through splendid and glamorous imitations that convince the eye can also communicate the distress signals it observes. I have addressed this through the name of my organization, "i trust." Here, "i" represents "you, me, and others" regardless of gender, while also symbolizing the "Eye." Though not a registered NGO, I have personally funded peace programmes for 44 years, delivering messages of peace without outside support until recently, when transportation assistance was provided at the age of 62.

Origins of the Mission: From Saudi Arabia to Peace Propagation

While working as a Company Secretary for a German firm in Saudi Arabia, I wanted to send Christmas cards to my friends and family. To my surprise, I discovered that Christmas cards were not available in the country due to its Islamic traditions. Drawing on the skills I learned in school, I decided to create my own. I hand drew cards featuring Biblical narratives—the angels, the crib, the manger, and the cattle—to share messages of peace: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace and goodwill among men." This experience first inspired me to propagate peace through art.

The Transformation: A Meeting with Jain Philosophy

Previously, I had practised painting in a conventional manner using traditional brushes. However, twenty-four years ago, I had a transformative meeting with a Jain Sadhvi,



Pratibha ji Maharajsa. During our discussions, I learned about her monastic rules and a lifestyle defined by renouncing worldly comforts to adopt the five principles of a devoted Jain monk. When our conversation turned to our lives, I confessed to being a non-vegetarian; she, in turn, shared her commitment to vegetarianism.

I used to encounter Jain monks on my way to school in the early morning. I observed them with keen interest, noting the white cloth bundles they carried—bags fashioned from fabric to hold their essentials. One day, I asked a Sadhvi what she carried on her journey. She showed me her wooden utensils and explained, "We do not cook; we only accept food from Sevaks." This answered my curiosity about how they travelled without possessing worldly goods.

When I asked to see her wooden bowl, she allowed me to hold it. As an artist, I was immediately struck by its golden texture and fine lines. Suddenly, I was overcome with a sense of shock: What have I done, lifting this Sadhvi's bowl? The bowl seemed to dictate a new path to me. In that moment, I realized the gravity of my actions—she was a vegetarian and a holy woman, while I was a non-vegetarian. I felt that if I became a vegetarian right then, I might honour her spirit and the sanctity of the vessel. Before I even set the bowl down, I committed to a vegetarian life. That same night, I developed Ahimsaism: a new art style rooted in Jain philosophy and the practice of non-violence.

The Five Principles of Ahimsaism

1. No Brushes: I use only cotton cloth to apply paint.

2. Harmonious Pigments: I use both Oil and Acrylic (water-based) together. If two different mediums can coexist to create beauty on a canvas, why can't Hindus and Muslims live together in peace? Live and let live.

3. The Role of White: White pigment is compulsory in every painting to highlight messages of peace.

4. Defined Texture: Scratches are used as a technique to emphasize the core idea.

5. Narrative Foundation: Every work must be based on a true story, a poem, or a contemporary social action.

My Project: Art as a Bridge for Peace

Beyond the canvas, my artistic journey has been a yajna—a sacrifice of nearly forty four years dedicated to building a world where peace is not just a concept, but a lived reality. This mission has taken me from quiet deliberations with Jain monastics to international stages where the language of art transcends national boundaries and literacy levels. Whether training children in a "Culture of Ahimsa" or presenting to the scientific community on how to repurpose missile technology for weather communication rather than war, the goal remains the same: to turn the observer into a proactive ambassador of reconciliation.

This vision has manifested in profound cross-border projects, such as "Peace Among Nations," where I visualize the melodious vibrations of Mirabai's Veena crossing the Indian Ocean to link India and Sri Lanka in a shared resonance of harmony. Similarly, my work addresses the shadows within our own societies. Through my tribute paintings for victims of student ragging—unveiled alongside great environmentalists like Sunderlal Bahuguna—I argue that true peace requires us to cultivate and harvest a new generation of activists who stand against violence in all its forms.

My efforts extend into the very environments where we live and pray, rooted in the belief that "Cleanliness is Godliness". Through Ahimsaism workshops at pilgrimage centers like Srirangam, I teach students that protecting our surroundings—from water harvesting to reforestation—is a fundamental act of non-violence. This same spirit of devotion is captured in my tributes to St. Mother Teresa, where the use of white pigment and flame-like patterns represents the "oneness" of a family that stays together through prayer and service to the poorest of the poor. My book, "Ahimsaism: New Invented Art Style," stands as a testament to this journey, offering a new aesthetic for a weary world. I invite you to open your hearts to the "surprises" of the creative spirit and help build a sanctuary where art, life, and peace are harmonized for the generations to come.

Whether training children in a "Culture of Ahimsa" or presenting to the scientific community on **how to repurpose missile technology for weather communication rather than war, the goal remains the same: to turn the observer into a proactive ambassador of reconciliation.**

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SPEAKING WITH MIND, HEART, AND HANDS

A CALL TO COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION IN THE UNIVERSITY

We can imagine our classrooms and meetings not as battlefields, but as playful spaces. For in a true conversation, no one wins by defeating the other. **Both win because, by letting themselves be carried away by the dynamics of question and answer, something new emerges among everyone.**

We often walk through the halls of our university thinking that words are mere tools. We imagine language as if it were a hammer or a microscope. However, we can awaken from this techno-scientific illusion to recognize a deeper and more urgent truth: we do not possess language, but rather we are language.

Just as fish live in water, we live in that language which is discourse, dialogue, image, body. It is the air we breathe and the horizon that allows us to see. If we grasp this reality, we will understand that the way we speak and listen is not an accessory act, but the very condition of our human and social reality.

Dialogue: A Shared Game

In academia, we sometimes fall into the temptation of using words as weapons. We turn debate into a duel where the goal is to disarm the other person, impose our truth, and emerge victorious. But true conversation has the structure of a game.

When we play for real, we are not the ones controlling the game; it is the game that envelops us and carries us along. We participate in this game, even if we do not do so consciously or voluntarily, and the fascination of the game lies in the fact that it takes possession of the players. In the same way, an authentic conversation is not one that we rigidly steer in the direction we want, but one in which we enter and allow ourselves to be carried away by mutual truth.

We can imagine our classrooms and meetings not as battlefields, but as playful spaces. For in a true conversation, no one wins by defeating the other. Both win because, by letting themselves be carried away by the dynamics of question and answer, something new emerges among everyone. Agreement is not imposing my opinion on yours, but a transformation of a search into something common. Language becomes compassionate when we give up control of the dialogue and accept the risk of being transformed by the voice of the other.

Listening As Acceptance

We live in a culture that privileges sight and control. We want to see clearly, objectify, analyze. However, every human being begins life and consciousness by listening: our ears already pick up sounds and voices at 18 months of age. In the biblical account, humanity begins by listening to the word. We do not have something like an eyelid in our body that closes our ears.

Listening is the most radical form of welcoming. It is not a passive act, but rather allowing ourselves to be told something by nature, by the other. Listening is not just a strategic reaction: knowledge that seeks to predict and calculate. It is welcoming the other in their voice, in their presence in acoustic or graphic form.

Solidarity-based dialogue requires us to recognize the other not as an object of study, but as someone who has something to say to us, something that may challenge our own prejudices. The openness necessary for dialogue, agreement, alliance, and compromise implies recognizing that I do not need to have everything in my favour in order to relate to others. This is the essence of academic and human humility: knowing that our own vision is finite and that we need the perspective of others to approach the truth.

Building Bridges, Not Moats

Each of us walks with our own horizon, and we believe that our horizons are fixed walls or moats that separate us. We believe that in order to understand others, we must abandon our own history and jump into their minds. Even social media, due to its ubiquity and immediacy, can lead us to believe that such a thing is possible.

But the lesson of compassionate language is more hopeful. Horizons are not closed cages; they are mobile, they walk with us. Understanding is not forgetting who we are, but realizing the possibility of frank and respectful dialogue. Let us imagine the encounter with the other not as an invasion, but as the expansion of our own landscape, a combination of horizons.

In dialogue, our points of view touch and expand in the common horizon created in regular conversation. In this fusion, we do not lose our identity, but rather elevate it to a vanishing point where difference and our own history are reconciled. Language is the universal medium where this fusion occurs. Therefore, committing ourselves to a language of solidarity means committing ourselves to building constant bridges between different horizons, rejecting isolation and fragmentation.

The Harmony of Mind, Heart, and Hands

The university is, par excellence, a community of interpreters. If, as Pope Francis affirms, in educating "it is necessary that three languages come into play: the language of the mind, the language of the heart, and the language of the

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hands, so that one thinks in harmony with what one feels and does; feels in harmony with what one thinks and does; and does in harmony with what one feels and thinks. A general harmony, not separated from the whole" (4, 11, 2019). Our fundamental task, then, is to take care of that language.

Let us not fall into "lazy reasoning" that clings to its own opinions and refuses to ask questions. Let us cultivate the art of questioning, which is the art of open and supportive thinking. An authentic question opens, suspends, and allows the new to enter.

In every class, in every hallway, and in every debate, let us remember that we do not use language, but rather inhabit it. May our words not be walls that enclose, but windows that merge horizons. May our listening not be a tactic, but a real openness that allows the truth of the other to reach us. Only in this way, by transforming our relationship with words, will we transform our coexistence, making our university a true home for mutual understanding and the strengthening of humanity.

Let us make our conversation an infinite game where we all emerge transformed!

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WHEN WORDS HURT BEFORE MARKETS DO

LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC SURVIVAL

A venture represents income, stability, and the capacity to provide for a family. **Consequently, the language used to evaluate, support, or dismiss entrepreneurial initiatives does not affect only technical decisions; it directly impacts personal dignity, emotional well-being, and family relationships that depend on that source of livelihood.**

In entrepreneurial ecosystems, discourse is commonly framed around innovation, opportunity, growth, and resilience. Less attention, however, is paid to the role of language as a form of symbolic power capable not only of fostering development but also of exercising violence. Words do not merely describe projects; they classify, rank, legitimize, and exclude them.

Through these acts of naming and evaluation, language shapes realities, constructs identities, and establishes boundaries of belonging. Long before financial rejection, institutional exclusion, or business failure occurred, there is often a linguistic experience that has already eroded confidence, dignity, and the sense of legitimacy of those who attempt to create and sustain a venture.

This dimension becomes especially significant when entrepreneurship is understood not only as a growth-oriented business activity but as a strategy for economic survival. For many individuals, particularly in contexts of unemployment, informality, and structural inequality, entrepreneurship is not an aspirational choice but a necessity.

A venture represents income, stability, and the capacity to provide for a family. Consequently, the language used to evaluate, support, or dismiss entrepreneurial initiatives does not affect only technical decisions; it directly impacts personal dignity, emotional well-being, and family relationships that depend on that source of livelihood.

From the perspective of symbolic violence, dominant entrepreneurial discourse constructs an idealized image of the "successful entrepreneur": competitive, scalable, permanently available, and able to endure extreme pressure. This model, reinforced by accelerators, investment funds, training programs, and specialized media, establishes implicit standards that often ignore contextual diversity, territorial realities, and heterogeneous motivations.

Expressions such as "not scalable," "no traction," "not innovative enough," or "not investor-ready" function as technical categories, yet they carry powerful symbolic effects. They can delegitimize efforts, silence alternative forms of value creation, and produce a sense of non-belonging within the ecosystem.

The violence of language lies not only in its explicit content but in its performative power. To label a project as "weak," "unattractive," or "non-viable" is not simply to offer an analytical judgment; it is to construct a symbolic identity for the person behind the initiative.

The entrepreneur is no longer perceived as a learner navigating uncertainty, but as someone lacking competence, vision, or potential. In environments where personal identity is deeply intertwined with the venture, such discursive acts transcend the professional sphere and penetrate the emotional and relational domains.

These dynamics become particularly visible in spaces of evaluation and presentation: investment rounds, public calls, pitch competitions, selection committees, and incubation programmes. In such settings, language acquires decisive power, as access to funding, mentoring, or institutional support depends largely on discursive interactions.

Feedback delivered through irony, contempt, or decontextualized technical jargon may constitute experiences of symbolic violence that mark entrepreneurial trajectories in lasting ways. For those whose projects sustain household economies, a dismissive comment may threaten not only business continuity but also family stability and self-worth as providers.

The narrative of extreme meritocracy further reinforces this symbolic violence. Widely circulated statements such as "if the idea is good, the market will respond," "those who persist always succeed," or "failure is simply lack of effort" are often framed as motivational. Yet they obscure profound inequalities in access to capital, education, networks, technology, and institutional support. By individualizing responsibility for outcomes shaped by structural conditions, such discourse imposes a moral burden on entrepreneurs. Guilt, emotional exhaustion, and the internalization of failure emerge, frequently extending to family dynamics where economic expectations and responsibilities are at stake.

Exclusion is also reproduced through highly technical and Anglicized vocabularies that operate as symbolic gatekeeping mechanisms. **Financial terminology and startup jargon become markers of legitimacy, positioning some forms of entrepreneurship as "sophisticated" and others as marginal.**

Exclusion is also reproduced through highly technical and Anglicized vocabularies that operate as symbolic gatekeeping mechanisms. Financial terminology and startup jargon become markers of legitimacy, positioning some forms of entrepreneurship as "sophisticated" and others as marginal. Community-based, rural, cultural, or subsistence ventures are often undervalued not because of their lack of social relevance, but because they do not conform to dominant linguistic and evaluative frameworks. Language thus defines which ways of earning a living are recognized as worthy of investment and which remain invisible.

Moreover, the romanticization of sacrifice and suffering intensifies these processes. Phrases such as "entrepreneurship is for the tough," "there is no room for weakness," or "the market has no mercy" normalize chronic stress, debt, and emotional strain as inevitable signs of commitment. When entrepreneurship functions as economic survival, such narratives legitimize precarious conditions and silence vulnerability. Expressing fear, uncertainty, or exhaustion becomes socially unacceptable, reinforcing a culture in which emotional costs are hidden and support is rarely sought.

Yet, language also holds transformative potential. In educational, mentoring, and support context, conscious and ethical use of discourse can reshape entrepreneurial experiences. A language that distinguishes between project viability and personal dignity, that contextualizes performance, and that frames error as learning rather than deficiency, contributes to more inclusive and sustainable ecosystems. Speaking of risk without humiliation, of limitations without stigmatization, and of failure without moral judgment requires recognizing that language is never neutral. Every word configures power relations, expectations, and identities.

In conclusion, examining the relationship between language and violence in entrepreneurial ecosystems reveals a frequently overlooked dimension: words function as devices that can open or close opportunities, strengthen or fracture subjectivities, and include or exclude forms of economic participation. When entrepreneurship is lived as a means of survival rather than merely as a growth strategy, the impact of language is amplified. What is at stake is not only the success of an idea, but the stability, dignity, and relational fabric of individuals and families who depend on it. Acknowledging the ambivalent power of language is, therefore, essential for building cultures of innovation that are not only efficient, but also ethically responsible and profoundly human.

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REVIEW

Pax Lumina 7(2)/2026/83-85

TED PETERS

The American Scientist-Theologian, on Pax Lumina January 2026 issue on *Language, Violence and Peace*

Pax Lumina, which, in my opinion, is the leading international voice of public theology, has just published its January 2026 issue. Get it! It's free! More importantly, it's invaluable! While you're at it, read M.P. Mathai's Pax Lumina article republished by the Vatican's Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat, "Yes, Miracles are Possible through Nonviolent/Compassionate Communication."

The January 2026 issue of Pax Lumina deals with language. Specifically, "Language of Violence and Peace." I notice here that K.P. Shankaran has discovered something about human nature that I discovered as well. In his article, "When Language Harms," the former professor of philosophy at St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, points out that violent language precedes violent action.

We in India know very well that large-scale physical violence is typically preceded by linguistic practices that dehumanise the target population. Dehumanisation operates initially by categorising victims in ways that simplify their moral worth, often by linking them with something commonly perceived as cheap, impure,

or objectionable. Language is used in such a way that physical assault comes to appear less objectionable, even justified. KP Shankaran, "When Language Harms," Pax Lumina 7:1.2026.36-38).

When performing the prophetic task, the public theologian oppugns dehumanizing rhetoric to discern who might get scapegoated. Discourse clarification is the analytical method of public conversation.

Cursing Precedes Killing

I refer to this rhetoric as cursing. When researching what would eventually become my book, Sin—Radical Evil in Soul and Society (Eerdmans 1992), criminal psychiatrists observed that murderers typically curse their victims before killing them. The would-be killer condemns the victim with language that dehumanizes. In the curse, the victim is described as immoral, weak, discardable, and such. Frequently, the victim is described as excrement or garbage that can legitimately be flushed away. Following the curse, the knife is thrust or the trigger is pulled.

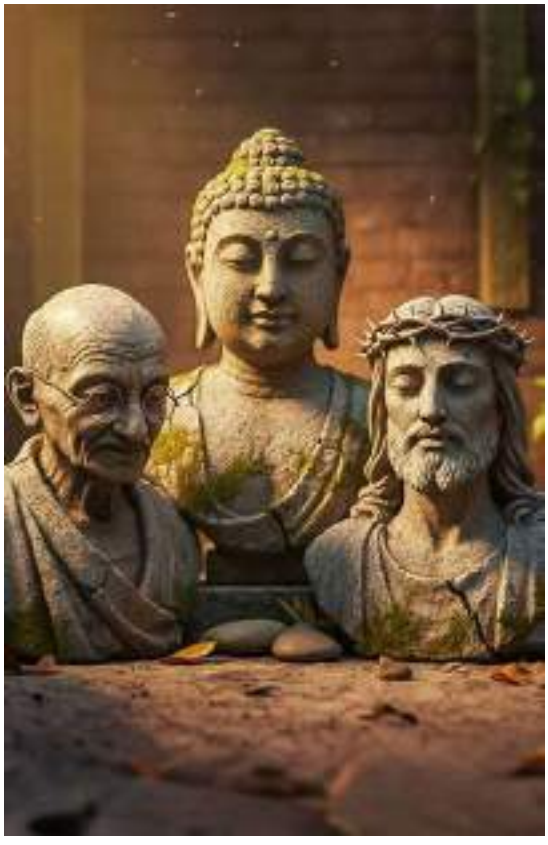
Such calumnious dehumanization through language is rife in American politics today. During the fall of 2025, the president of the United States described Venezuelans in outboard motorboats as foreign terrorists, unlawful combatants, ISIS of the Western Hemisphere, and such. This justified military action. The motorboats were bombed by US drones, deliberately killing, in some cases, every person on board. Perhaps 105 boaters lost their lives without arrest or due process.

More recently, the president of the United States described Somali immigrants in Minnesota as "garbage." This pronouncement was followed by paramilitary action. As of this writing, 3,000 federal agents are now in Minnesota, wreaking havoc by arresting people on the streets and, on some occasions, shooting protestors. Legal resident credentials and even naturalization documents for Somali immigrants and citizens are being revoked.

The Minnesota ICE actions include the shooting of Renee Nicole Good. Just before Federal Agent Jonathan Ross fired the kill shot into Renee Good's head, he hollered that she is a "f***in' bitch." That's the curse that justifies the killing.

The point of cursing is that it justifies violence. We are justified when we put to death someone who is declared to be a bitch, a domestic terrorist, or garbage.

Language of Love



Words can wound or heal. Two Sri Lankan authors, Francesca Flosi and MilRoy Fernando, pave the path toward linguistic therapy. "Words can stitch together broken trust, speak dignity back into lives erased by violence, and invite communities into a deeper humanity." (Francesca Flosi and MilRoy Fernando, "The Power of Words to Harm, Heal, or Transform: a Sri Lankan Reflection, Pax Lumina 7:1.2026.20-25). If this is the case, might a language of love inspire acts of kindness and love? Might we dub this linguistic therapy?

When the mayor of Minneapolis, Jacob Frey, reacted to the devastating chaos created in his city by federal agents, he invoked the language of love. I reported this in a previous post, "Love Melts ICE."

They want an excuse to come in and show the kind of force that will create more chaos and more despair. Let's not let them. Let's rise to this occasion. Let's show them something far more beautiful than the kind of division that they're trying to stoke. Let's show them unity of purpose, of love, and the courage of our conviction. Our conviction, to be clear, is rock solid, and it is for our neighbors, all of our neighbors. It's for people who have lived here for 80 years. It is for new immigrants who have made this city a better place. That's the kind of love that we're going to show up with right now. If you're angry, I get it. I am too.

Try James Talarico. Talarico is running for the US Congress in Texas. He believes the language of love could rescue American democracy. The voice of love, though soft, does get heard.

Conclusion

If we are to redeem America and save democracy, our public language must change. Public cursing must cease. In its place, we must retrieve the once inspiring language of justice, equality, dignity, compassion, care, and, yes, even love.

Blog: Substack PT 4017 Countering the Cursing in American Language. Redeeming America's Future 9

If art is to nourish
the roots of our culture,
society must set the artist free
to follow his vision
wherever it takes him.

- John F. Kennedy

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