OCTOBER 2026

DURGA DARES

in every woman there
DURGA



ART FOR RESISTANCE

From the Editor's Desk

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(Dudi: Stories of Life in Its Rhythm)

Durga Recommends

To run or not to run?

FROM THE EDITORS DESK

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ART FOR RESISTANCE

Art has always been the resort when words fall short. Can creative expression be the counter-voice against violence and serve as a tool for resistance, healing, and reclamation?

This edition of Durga's newsletter explores how art becomes a powerful opposition against gender-based violence and how Durga has engaged (and engages) with art. When we incorporate art into struggle and use it as a reflection of our reality, it doesn't just dismantle violence, it moves towards transforming it.

Can community-led creative spaces act as safe harbours for collective healing? Through immersive interventions like Theatre of the Oppressed, zine- making workshops, and the powerful Clothesline Project, we try to enable this.

We also have lovely contributions from folks who've penned their thoughts on the issue, highlighted art forms used to challenge the status quo and shared their experiences. We also have some great recommendations for our readers!

This newsletter was curated with the intention to spark intentional and meaningful dialogue. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Newsletter team

WE HAVE A NEW LOGO!

A logo is literally a symbolic representation of what a brand or piece of work represents. I feel while this is a universal reality for all institutions and organisations, it's particularly critical for social impact organisations. It conveys the essence, purpose and ideology that the organisation stands for. Some logos are abstract permitting us to imagine what the organisation conveys, others are to the point - exactly what they want to say. There are a few logos that are a series of alphabets which quite literally spell the name of the organisation and yet others painstakingly convey their core - artistically, aesthically!

So why am I talking about logos here? Do I have any expertise on this subject - none at all! Durga has just had a new logo uplift. We have huge love for our old logo - those powerful eyes mesmerise! That was the time to grab attention, speak about our focus on reclaiming rights, awareness etc. Now we want to depict the core of our work - public spaces, streets and mobility.

The story of how our logo came up is very close to my heart. Sarah, one of the earliest participants of Durga's workshops helped design this logo for us! One full circle! The logo depicts our work on streets through "d", the intermittent road shows flexibility to use the path. We are proud to bring the name of our Trust "I'm Every Woman" into the logo too. Our logo is secular, simple with an ode to the nosering from the old logo, carelessly dangling on the curve - emphatically representing the collective, stating that public spaces belong to everyone!

~ Priya Varadarajan

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

A Feminist Tool Against Gender-Based Violence

Durga itself emerged from the principles of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Priya, the founder of I'm Every Woman Trust, had long worked with TO and recognised its transformative potential for community engagement and gender justice. Her experience with theatre and particularly TO, shaped how Durga came to see prevention not as awareness-raising alone, but as collective action.

To end GBV, it was imperative that we used a simple and effective tool that was preventive rather than punitive, one that encouraged people to take responsibility for building safer communities rather than relying on enforcement systems that reproduce the same hierarchies and violence we seek to dismantle. We were looking for a way to involve people directly, to move beyond the comfort of commenting from the sidelines, "she could've done this" and "they could've done that", and instead create spaces where people could rehearse what action and solidarity might look like. TO offered precisely that: an embodied, participatory method that enables people to imagine and practice interventions before harm occurs.

Developed by Augusto Boal in the 1970s, TO was designed as a tool for liberation, rooted in the belief that education and art could transform rather than reproduce systems of domination. It challenges the idea of a passive learner or audience, proposing instead the spect-actor, someone who both observes and acts, capable of transforming the reality before them. Through exercises, image theatre, and forum theatre, participants identify and interrogate real-life oppressions, experiment with alternative responses, and rehearse the possibilities of change. The body becomes a site of knowledge production, an "alternative language" through which people express and reshape lived experiences of power (Clark, 2009),







This approach resonates deeply with feminist pedagogy, which values relationality, critical reflection, and the co-creation of knowledge (hooks, 1994). As Donna Haraway (1988) argues, all knowledge is situated, emerging through lived, affective, and discursive practices. By foregrounding the expressive body and personal experience, TO validates the partial and embodied nature of feminist knowing. It helps participants see how systems of power are reproduced not only externally, but also internally, in the stories we tell, the gestures we repeat, and the silences we inhabit.

At Durga, this theory becomes practice. Our sessions invite participants to explore how gender, power, and safety are felt and enacted in everyday life. Using different tools of theatre, they revisit real situations of tension or violence and collectively experiment with alternative responses. These exercises surface internalised norms and reveal how fear, silence, and complicity can live in the body but they also allow participants to rehearse courage, to test what intervention and care could look like. In this way, Durga transforms the abstract idea of "bystander intervention" into a lived, embodied practice of solidarity. By engaging communities in participatory, reflective, and action-oriented processes, Durga realises TO's feminist promise: that through collective embodiment and dialogue, people can unlearn internalised hierarchies, reclaim agency, and co-create safer, more just spaces.

Just between **July and October of 2026, we've conducted 313 TO sessions** for our various participants.



The recent occurrence at Delhi's Aastha Kunj Park brings a disturbing dimension of community responsibility into question. Reports on the case suggest that the perpetrators were frequent visitors to the park and had been harassing people even before the incident occurred (Sinha, 2026). This raises questions about how early signs of gender-based violence could have been recognised, reported and stopped. It reminds us that violence does not happen as an isolated event but takes inattention and priming to occur. When we decide to let it go unaddressed the systems that are meant to protect us will fail.

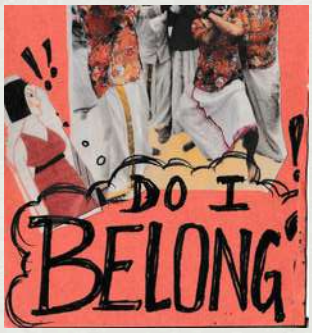
Theatre of the Oppressed is used exactly for this purpose: to prompt collective action by actively engaging the community in much needed intervention. What if the earlier incidents that happened weren't ignored and were met with a strong opposing response? What would the response have looked like? Who could have been involved and how could they have gone about this? The theatre helps us explore this by recreating situations that demand for the audience's intervention.

This is not to say that the incident could have been avoided by just one bystander or to shift the responsibility from the perpetrators or institutions. But, acknowledging the responsibility we have as a community and being able to react appropriately. Art allows us to imagine and recreate and rehearse initiatives that can be taken when faced with gender based violence.

ZINES FOR REIMAGINATION!



On 8th July 2026, at the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), Bangalore, we organised a **feminist zine-making workshop**, **DARE to CARE,** with Think Collective and facilitated by *Letters of Interruption*.





The workshop aimed to ask: How can we bend the rules, take the risk, and interrupt structural violence? With 50 participants in total, we explored what safety, belonging and collective care in public spaces could look like.



Zines are a self-published booklet/magazine made by people through creative and fun methods. This is a grassroots practice that intersects creativity and activism to producing knowledge. Zines combine joy and resistance!





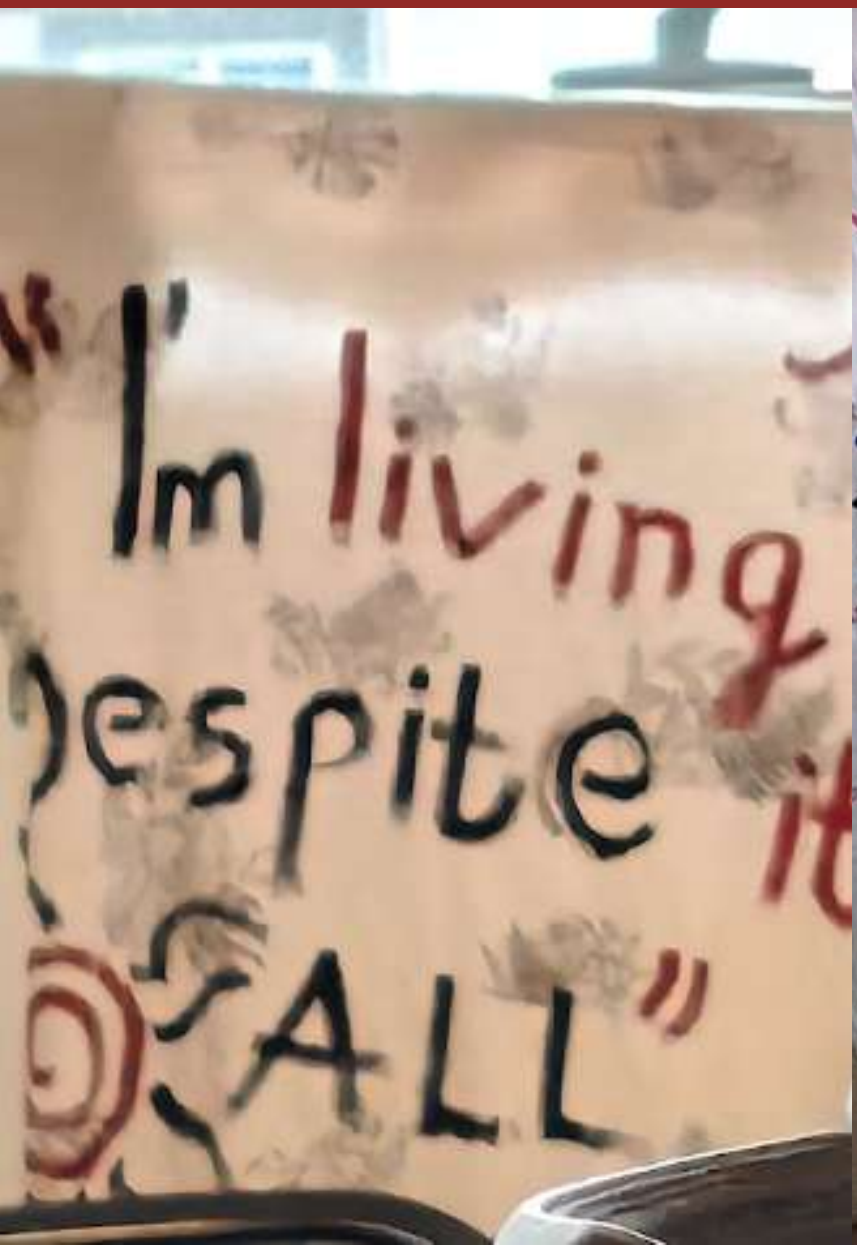
Here's a glimpse into reimagined feminist public spaces!

CLOTHESLINE PROJECT

In the **first week of July**, we organised the **Clothesline Campaign** in our office to hold space for survivors to express their experiences with gender-based violence.

This project is a visual form of activism where participants use art to paint on or express their experiences and feelings with gender-based violence.

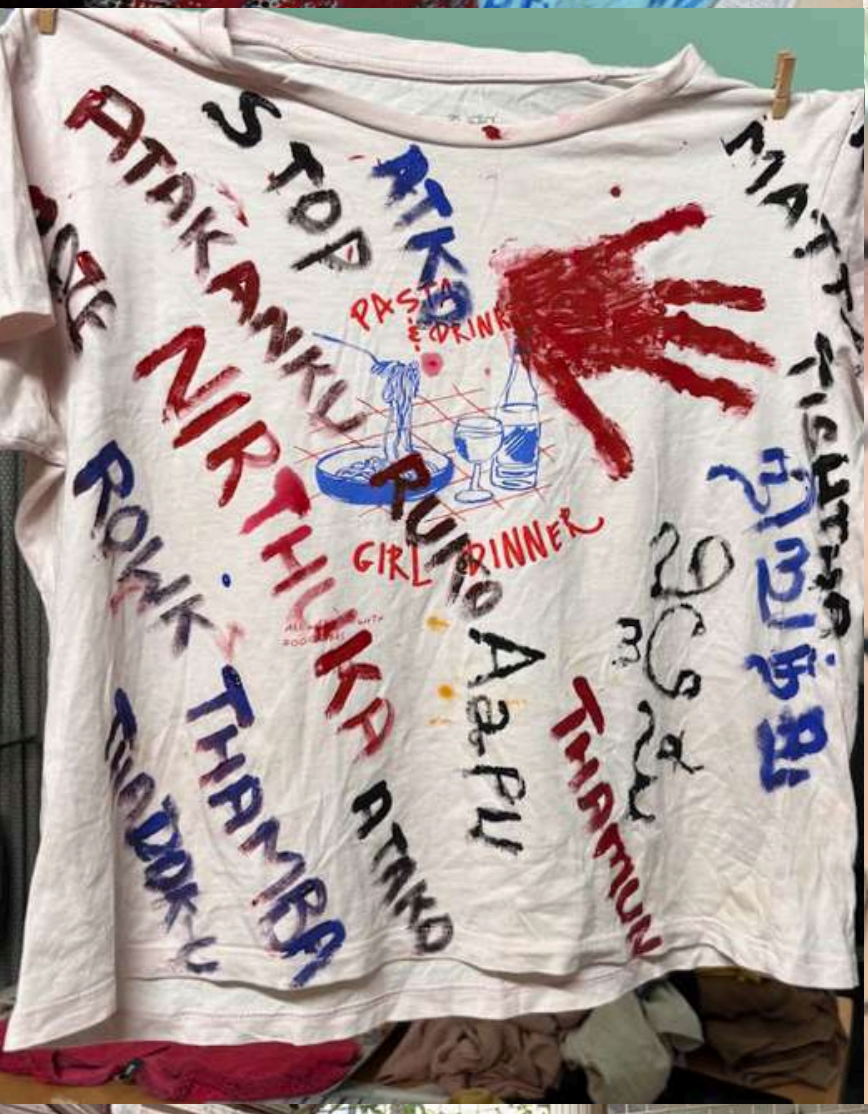
The clothes were then hung along a clothesline at our Dare to Care event on 8th July to initiate a conversation on the mind and body experience of structural violence.

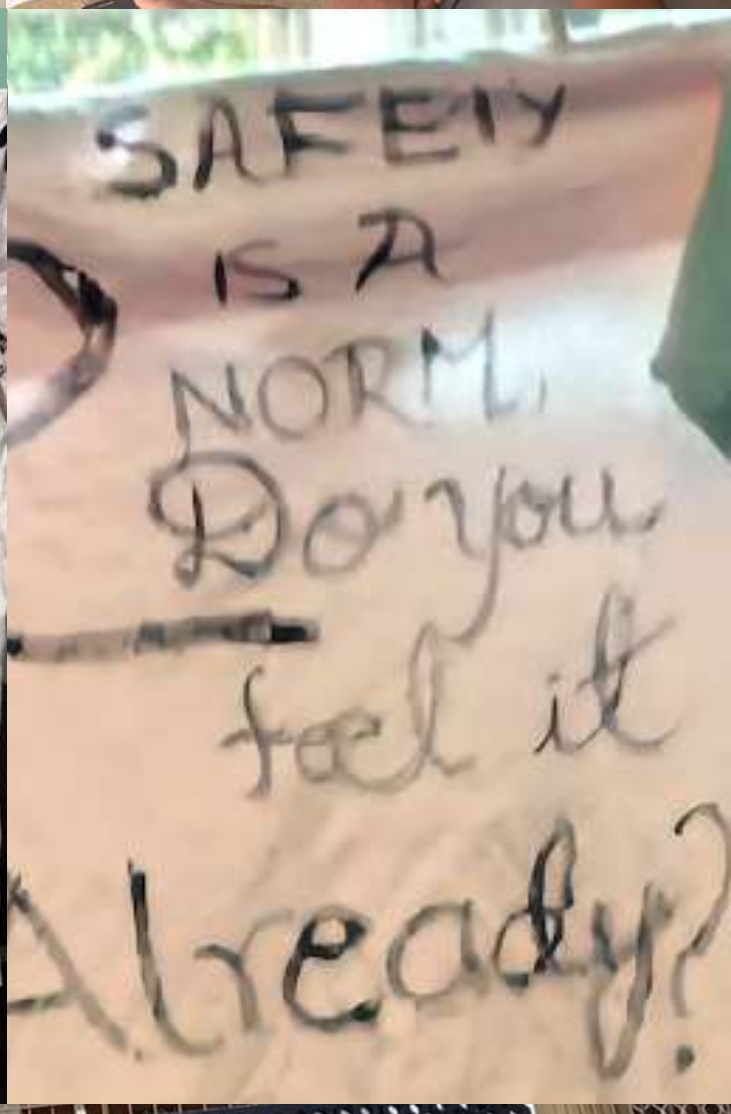





*ನನ್ನ ಉಡುಗೆ,
ನನ್ನ ಒಪ್ಪಗಳಲ್ಲ....
STOP




STOP
ATAKANKU
NIRTHUKA
ROKK
THAMBA
ATAKU
PASTA & DRINK
GIRL DRINNER
Aa Pu
THAMUN


SAFETY
IS A
NORM.
Do you
feel it
Already?


NO
MEANS
NO
WOMEN



LEARNING HUDDLE: AI IS EVERYWHERE? WHAT DO WE DO?

This August, we engaged in a conversation around the usage of AI since it seems to be everywhere and everyone seems to want us to use it.

The learning huddle questioned why this is being forced on us, how this impacts us but more importantly what is AI doing to us: our resources, our minds, our creativity, our opportunities.

We explored who controls Big Tech, why that matters and how AI affects local communities and ecosystems.

A big point of discussion was around how we're all becoming so dependent on it that we find it hard to figure out what's original work!

At a time when our minds, bodies and movement are under control, we discussed the need to defy AI and use our imagination and creativity to challenge this control.





VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE MISSING CONVERSATION ABOUT MASCULINITY

~ Dr. Srinivas Raghavendra
J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics
University of Galway, Ireland

India's emergence as the world's fourth-largest economy is a remarkable achievement. Yet the persistence of violence against women compels us to ask what development truly means. Recent incidents in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, states often celebrated for their economic and social progress, suggest that material advancement can coexist with unfreedom rooted in patriarchal social relations.

From Nirbhaya to RG Kar, each incident has sparked calls for punitive measures, tougher laws, faster courts, and stricter punishment. India has responded with significant legal reforms. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, the POCSO Act, amendments to criminal law following the Nirbhaya case, fast-track courts, and a range of state-level initiatives have strengthened the legal framework available to women.

Yet violence persists. The question today is not whether India has enough laws. The question is why violence persists despite them. The dominant policy response has been to strengthen punishment, but punishment addresses the consequences of violence, not its causes.

We have become adept at debating punishments but reluctant to confront causes. Why do our social institutions continue to produce and legitimise violence? What kind of social environment teaches boys that controlling women is acceptable and that gender inequality is normal? These are uncomfortable questions, but they are essential. Violence against women is not merely about individual criminal acts. It is rooted in patriarchal social relations that reproduce unequal power between men and women.

Patriarchy is not just a collection of outdated beliefs. It is a system of social relations that shapes how people understand power, authority, entitlement, and gender roles. Boys are not born believing that controlling women is natural or desirable. People learn and reinforce such beliefs through schools, peer groups, media, cinema, politics, and everyday social interactions. Notions of masculinity that equate manhood with dominance, aggression, and control are socially produced and reinforced.

Therefore, violence is not an accidental deviation from patriarchy. It is one of the mechanisms by which patriarchal power reproduces itself.

This helps explain why violence persists even in some of India's most prosperous and educated states. Economic development does not automatically transform social norms, and growth can coexist with deeply entrenched gender hierarchies.

If development is freedom, as Amartya Sen argued, we cannot achieve it without addressing one of the most fundamental constraints on freedom: patriarchal norms. These norms shape masculine identities, legitimise unequal power relations and create the conditions in which violence becomes possible.

Prevention therefore requires more than harsher punishments. It demands direct engagement with how boys and men learn about power, entitlement, and manhood. Schools, colleges, sports organisations, media institutions, and community groups all play a role in shaping these attitudes.

Evidence suggests that such interventions can be effective. Programs that engage adolescent boys and young men in discussions about gender equality have been shown to reduce acceptance of violence and promote more equitable attitudes. Such initiatives deserve the same policy attention that governments devote to policing and criminal justice.

The challenge before us is not merely to punish violence after it occurs, but to transform the conditions that produce it. Until public debate confronts the patriarchal norms and forms of masculinity that normalise control, entitlement, and violence, we will continue treating the symptoms while leaving the disease untouched.

ದುಡಿಯ ತಾಳದಲ್ಲಿ ಬದುಕಿನ ಕಥೆ

~ ಲಿಖಿತಾ ಆರ್. ಶೆಟ್ಟಿ

ದುಡಿ ಎಂಬುದು ತುಳು ಜನರ ಆಚರಣೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಅಂಗವಾಗಿರುವ ಒಂದು ವಾದ್ಯ. ದುಡಿಯ ಸದ್ದು ಕೇವಲ ಸಂಗೀತ, ನೃತ್ಯ, ಭೂತಾರಾಧನೆಗೆ ಮಾತ್ರ ಸೀಮಿತವಾಗಿಲ್ಲ; ಇದು ಬುಡಕಟ್ಟು ಸಮುದಾಯಗಳಾದ ಮುಗೇರ, ನಲಿಕೆ ಮುಂತಾದ ಸಮುದಾಯಗಳ ಬದುಕು, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿ, ಆಚರಣೆಗಳು, ದುಡಿಮೆ ಮತ್ತು ಭಾವನೆಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ ಬೆಸೆದುಕೊಂಡಿದೆ. ಈ ಸಮುದಾಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ದುಡಿಯ ನಾದವು ಜನರನ್ನು ಒಂದೆಡೆ ಸೇರಿಸುವ, ತಮ್ಮ ಅನುಭವಗಳನ್ನು ಹಂಚಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ಮತ್ತು ತಮ್ಮ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯನ್ನು ಮುಂದಿನ ಪೀಳಿಗೆಗೆ ಕೊಂಡೊಯ್ಯುವ ಒಂದು ಮಾಧ್ಯಮವೂ ಕೂಡ.

ದುಡಿ ನಲಿಕೆ ದುಡಿಯ ನಾದದೊಂದಿಗೆ ನಡೆಯುವ ಸಾಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಕ ಅಭಿವ್ಯಕ್ತಿ. ದುಡಿಯ ತಾಳಕ್ಕೆ ತಕ್ಕಂತೆ ದೇಹದ ಚಲನೆ, ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ, ಹಾಡು ಮತ್ತು ಸಮುದಾಯದ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸುವಿಕೆ ಇದರ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಅಂಶಗಳು. ಇದು ಕೇವಲ ನೃತ್ಯವಲ್ಲ; ಜನರ ಜೀವನಾನುಭವ, ಸಂತೋಷ, ನೋವು, ಆಚರಣೆ ಮತ್ತು ಒಗ್ಗಟ್ಟನ್ನು ವ್ಯಕ್ತಪಡಿಸುವ ಕಲೆ. ದುಡಿ ನಲಿಕೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಕ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಸಮುದಾಯದ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸುವಿಕೆ ಮತ್ತು ಒಟ್ಟುಗೂಡುವಿಕೆ ಮುಖ್ಯ.

“ಚೋಮನ ದುಡಿ” ಕನ್ನಡದ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಕಾದಂಬರಿಗಳಲ್ಲೊಂದು. ಶಿವರಾಮ ಕಾರಂತರ ಈ ಕೃತಿ ದಲಿತ ಜೀವನ, ಜಾತಿ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ, ಭೂಮಿಯ ಮೇಲಿನ ಹಕ್ಕು ಮತ್ತು ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಅಸಮಾನತೆಯ ಪ್ರಶ್ನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಚೋಮನ ಜೀವನದ ಮೂಲಕ ಚಿತ್ರಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಚೋಮ ತನ್ನದೇ ಆದ ಭೂಮಿಯನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿ ಸ್ವತಂತ್ರವಾಗಿ ಬದುಕಬೇಕೆಂಬ ಕನಸು ಇರುವ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿ. ಆದರೆ ಜಾತಿ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಮತ್ತು ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಗಳು ಆತನ ಆ ಕನಸಿಗೆ ಪದೇಪದೇ ಅಡ್ಡಿಯಾಗುತ್ತವೆ.

ಕಾದಂಬರಿಯ ಶೀರ್ಷಿಕೆಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ “ದುಡಿ” ಕೇವಲ ಒಂದು ವಾದ್ಯವನ್ನು ಸೂಚಿಸುವುದಿಲ್ಲ. ಅದು ಚೋಮನ ಬದುಕಿನೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಅವನ ಸಮುದಾಯದ ಗುರುತು ಮತ್ತು ಅವನೊಳಗಿನ ನೋವು-ಕೋಪಗಳನ್ನು ಎತ್ತಿ ತೋರಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಚೋಮನು ದುಡಿ ಬಾರಿಸುವಾಗ ಅವನ ಮನಸ್ಸಿನಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಅಳಲು ನಾದದ ಮೂಲಕ ಹೊರಹೊಮ್ಮುವಂತೆ ಕಾಣುತ್ತದೆ. ಅವನಿಗೆ ಮಾತಿನ ಮೂಲಕ ಹೇಳಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗದ ಅನೇಕ ಸಂಗತಿಗಳು ದುಡಿಯ ಸದ್ದಿನಲ್ಲಿ ವ್ಯಕ್ತವಾಗುತ್ತವೆ.

ದುಡಿಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ತಾಳ ಮತ್ತು ಚಲನೆ, ಚೋಮನ ಬದುಕಿನಲ್ಲಿರುವ ದುಡಿಮೆ ಮತ್ತು ಹೋರಾಟವನ್ನು ಸೂಚಿಸುತ್ತದೆ. ಒಂದು ಕಡೆ ದುಡಿ ಸಮುದಾಯವನ್ನು ಒಗ್ಗೂಡಿಸುವ ನಾದವಾದರೆ, ಚೋಮನ ಕಥೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ದುಡಿ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಗಳಿಂದ ನೊಂದ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಕೂಗು.

ಹೀಗಾಗಿ ದುಡಿ, ಮತ್ತು ದುಡಿ ನಲಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕೇವಲ ಸಂಗೀತ, ನೃತ್ಯಗಳಾಗಿ ನೋಡಬೇಕಾಗಿಲ್ಲ. ಇವುಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ನಾವು ಸಮುದಾಯದ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿ, ಗುರುತು, ದುಡಿಮೆ, ಅಸಮಾನತೆ, ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಹಕ್ಕು ಮತ್ತು ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ನ್ಯಾಯದಂತಹ ಹಲವು ಪ್ರಶ್ನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಅರ್ಥಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬಹುದು. ದುಡಿಯ ನಾದವು ಒಂದು ಕಡೆ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ನೆನಪನ್ನು ಉಳಿಸಿಕೊಂಡರೆ, ಅದೇ ನಾದವು ಸಮಾಜದ ಅಸಮಾನತೆಯ ವಿರುದ್ಧದ ಮೌನ ಪ್ರತಿಭಟನೆಯಾಗಿ ಮೂಡುತ್ತದೆ.

ಆದ್ದರಿಂದ ದುಡಿ ಕೇವಲ ಒಂದು ವಾದ್ಯ ಅಲ್ಲ. ಅದು, ಅಂಚಿಗೆ ತಳ್ಳಲ್ಪಟ್ಟ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಬದುಕು, ಬಡತನ, ಮತ್ತು ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ನ್ಯಾಯದ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯದ ಹಂಬಲದ ಧ್ವನಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.



Photo Source: Wikimedia Commons

Dudi
Stories of Life in Its Rhythm
(*Dudi Ṭaḷadalli badukina kathe*)

~ Likhitha R. Shetty

This piece explores ದುಡಿ (*Dudi*) not merely as a musical instrument or folk performance, but as a carrier of community, culture, labour, identity and resistance among Tulu-speaking and marginalised communities such as the Muguera and Nalike.

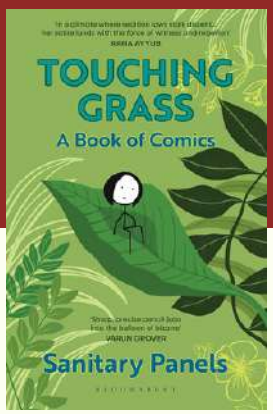
It connects the tradition of *Dudi Nalike* (ದುಡಿ ನಲಿಕೆ) with Shivaram Karanth's *Chomana Dudi* (ಚೋಮನ ದುಡಿ), showing how the sound of the dudi can represent Choma's labour, caste oppression, pain, anger and desire for land and freedom.

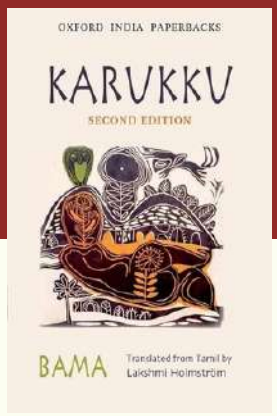
At its core, the piece argues that the *dudi* is both a cultural memory and a voice of marginalised people for collective expression of belonging, struggle and the demand for social justice.

DURGA RECOMMENDS

YOUR NEXT READ









ADD TO YOUR PLAYLIST

Bekhauf-Song by Sona Mohapatra.

Preetiya Gaali Beesuthide written by Janardhan Kesargadde

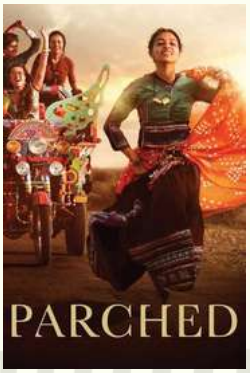
Meri Maa-Song by KK.

Aazaadiyan-Amit Trivedi, Amitabh Bhattacharya, Ronit Roy.

Patakha guddi - Song by Nooran Sisters.

YOUR NEXT WATCH













TO RUN OR NOT TO RUN?

~ S Gopikarani



I love running. The physical act itself, not as a way of running away from my problems.

I remember the first time I ran. It was at university, alongside a friend, and we were both training for our first-ever 3k. The whole experience was enriching. For the first time in my life, I felt the air of freedom hit my face. Bound by restrictions, both of time and of life, even the simplest act of putting one foot ahead of the other felt like a game-changer. There was nobody to stop me, and nobody to police the clothes I chose to wear or where on campus I decided to run.

But don't be fooled. I still felt the stares, from men and women alike. Okay, but that didn't matter much compared to all the other atrocities women face every day, and so I let it go, every time. Things changed for the worse when I started running on the road just outside campus, because early mornings inside campus were reserved for being chased by dogs.

What appalled me most were the sneers and looks from men passing by on bikes. This one time, I was a few centimetres away from being groped by someone who found it entertaining to harass women. This got me wondering, "Why does even the sight of a woman running make men uncomfortable?" And mind you, I have run in track pants as much as I have in shorts. It doesn't improve the experience by much.

Now that I'm back home, the only place I can run is in the park nearby. It has a walking track of about 3 km, and I see plenty of people using it throughout the day for exercise or relaxation. But when I go out for my morning run, I hardly see other women running, apart from me, of course. The park is laid out so that some roads diverge into smaller tracks for running and walking. Covering those would help me complete my running goal for the day, but I avoid them out of fear of harassment. I don't see many women going there either, which is one more reason I stay away.

I've always wanted to do more activities solo. Running is a start, but it's no fun to run afraid, scared, and constantly checking behind my back (literally). If that's the case, one does wonder, where do women run? MARATHONS! This is not to declare every marathon a safe space for women, but it's all relative. First, I am running with so many other runners, many of them serious about the pursuit, and that gives me the enthusiasm I need to cover the distance. Then there is the feeling of better official oversight, something a local park can never provide. If it is well organised, my pace at a marathon is always better than on a regular day at the park. Added to this, I always have the option to listen to music and run, without fearing stalker men behind my back.

My friend is about to do a 23 km long run on her 23rd birthday. It is sad that she has to check so many boxes while fixing her running route. It isn't only about potholes and trenches on the road. She also has to carry out a sexual-harassment safety audit of the route in order to plan her birthday run.

The perception of a space as unsafe is enough to discourage a person from doing something they want to do, and women runners are no exception. We see ourselves as women first and runners only later, which makes the experience so much harder. The situation is a little different when we run with a run club. Seeing other women runners, and being around people who take running seriously and haven't come just to ogle, makes the space far safer.

But this is not to say that even such a space is always safe, as also a wealthy neighbourhood is not immune to it. Even at a well-known and popular lake like Agara in Bangalore, the problems women face are manifold. So we may ask: what exactly is safety, and where can we really find it?

In an ideal world, parks would be the perfect third places, as Ray Oldenburg imagined: spaces where anybody could come together and enjoy a place apart from home or work. That remains a distant reality today. We often travel miles just to find a café safe enough to sit and talk with friends. It is tiring to think that when it comes to safety, we always pay extra, be it in cash, or in the energy we spend in staying alert.

I've never gone running past 6pm in the evenings. In this summer heat, being able to run in late evenings would be a relief. But what to do, when the simplest act of claiming ownership to our spaces become so difficult? I can only ponder over these questions, and hope for a better tomorrow. For now, I run while the sun is up, with the hope that someday the evenings feel as bright and (relatively) safe as the mornings do.



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