





**2023.**

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# **Mighty Margins**

**ASSERTING FROM MARGINS TO MOVE MINDSETS**

Bangalore International Centre | November 4, 2022 | 1800 hrs to 2200 hrs



## **Preface** by

**SUBHASHISH PANIGRAHI**

Director, Ashoka Law for All Initiative

Sebastian ter Burg (CC BY 2.0)

**“ ART HAS ALWAYS BEEN A FORM OF RESISTANCE, A TOOL TO FIGHT OPPRESSION ”**

Often the lives of historically marginalised groups are discussed by those from oppressor communities. What if this process was reversed? “Can we have a study of brahminical caste supremacy,” asks Siddhesh Gautam, a renowned artist, to a room full of changemakers.

Siddhesh’s work celebrates the life and social justice contributions of Babasaheb Dr B. R. Ambedkar, chief compiler of the Indian constitution, education reformer couple Savitribai Phule and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, and many others who

have furthered access to justice for millions. The Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi communities of modern India continue to reimagine equality by asserting people’s rights to access education, social justice, healthcare, their own bodies, and every other element of the right to life. Illustrator and artist Shrujana N Shridhar gasps, “our [Bahujan] stories, our histories, and our social life are undocumented,” which pushed her to having co-found the Mavelinadu Collective and the Dalit Panthers movement, both initiatives bringing a feminist and anti-

caste perspective to visual storytelling. Siddhesh, Shrujana, and many others are changemakers — they are questioning the status quo of the normalised oppression and are exposing society to reimagine narratives never told before. In that process, they are transforming mindsets on many levels.

As we turn the pages of this publication, we embark on a journey through the artworks of 18 artist-changemakers. Each of these artists self-identify uniquely by citing their own location in the intersection of gender, caste, and disabilities and how they articulate their social experience in

a creative form. We at Ashoka Law for All Initiative were humbled and honoured to find ourselves in countless stories of law and justice, told by using visual art as a medium.

Art has always been a form of resistance, a tool to fight oppression, but identifying and documenting critical social innovations in lived experiences is obscure. The works displayed at the Mighty Margins exhibition on the 4th of November 2022 at Bangalore International Centre challenged art, as it is perceived and propagated widely.

How are thousands of people, all from

Dalit-Bahujan families, work as manual scavengers where Article 14 of the Constitution of India should provide equality to them? Since queerness is a complex spectrum that only a queer person can best define for themselves, how fair is it to not recognise the utmost power everyone should have over their own body? These are two of the many critical questions these works provoke Mighty Margins every visitor to ask themselves. The creators of these works were mighty enough to help us reimagine how individuals and communities are proclaiming their right to access to tell their own stories. As I remember

going through each artwork now, I'm reminded of a separate conversation with Dr Shahidul Alam, a renowned Bangladeshi photojournalist, "Third World and Developing World not our chosen identity. We can't shift my country's image as a symbol of poverty, as portrayed by white Western photographers, unless storytellers change their stories."



## **Curator's Note** by **MEGHANA PARIK**

Impact Assessment Lead,  
Ashoka Law for All Initiative

**“THESE ARTWORKS NOT ONLY DOCUMENT THE GRIM REALITIES OF SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION BUT OFFER SCOPE INTO THE AGONY OF LIVED EXPERIENCES”**

Candid vulnerabilities, lived experiences, and the sheer strength of the marginalised communities were the key qualities that connect the pieces in ‘Mighty Margins’ exhibition.

Different forms of artistic expression have played a cardinal role in social movements against inequality, oppression, and injustice, throughout history. These art forms have lent social justice movements much-needed traction, thereby promoting,

informing, and shaping social change. Be it the renaissance movement, Women’s Rights Movement, Black Lives Matter Movement, Queer Art Movement, or even the Swadeshi movement.

These artworks not only document the grim realities of systemic oppression but offer scope into the agony of lived experiences. There is beauty in their candid vulnerabilities yet stern defiance against historic systemic oppression that has cost their communities-the right to life,

including the right to live with dignity.

This exhibition attempted to showcase artworks from artists that let us in on these very experiences. These artworks speak to horrors of marginalization based on gender, caste, disability, and identity, and offer an alternative where the future doesn't have to be unjust.

The exhibition saw celebrated works of 18 world-renowned artists and organisations from the social justice field, like Safdar

Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) and international artists like Veer Munshi and Iranian artist Katayoun Karami.

Acclaimed works from artists like Siddhesh Gautam, Ajinkya Dekhane, Shrujana Shridhar, Jose, and Sonaksha, also shed light on different tones of marginalisation in their own unique way shaped by their personal experiences.

The exhibited pieces collectively drove home the grave compounding nature of intersectional marginalisation based on

gender, caste, disability, and history.

The artworks weren't just limited to paintings, projections, there were also exhibits of zines, columns, and featured comics from Pen Pencil Draw, Justicemakers by Agami, Acode by Digital Empowerment Foundation pertaining to the marginalised communities' fight against historic grave injustices.

The exhibition also hosted a session between Siddhesh Gautam who goes by a popular Instagram handle (@bakeryprasad) and Nikita Sonavane, Founder, Criminal Justice, and Police Accountability Project on activism as pertinent social innovations, and how art has surfaced to be a poignant social innovation when it comes to movement building and furthering everyone a changemaker movement.

# Contributing Artists

AJINKYA DEKHANE	01
JOSE	13
KATAYOUN KARAMI	21
MANTIS SHRIMP CREATIVE x JASAN WALDURA	27
PEN PENCIL DRAW	31
SIDDHESH GAUTAM	37
SHRUJANA SHRIDHAR	45
SONAKSHA	53
VEER MUNSHI	69

# Contributing Organisations

AGAMI X THE ALIPORE POST X COPYCAT DESIGN: JUSTICEMAKERS

**77**

DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION- ACODE

**85**

SAFDAR HASHMI MEMORIAL TRUST (SAHMAT)

**91**



# 01

## MIGHTY MARGINS

### **Ajinkya Dekhane**

Ajinkya Dekhane is a Mumbai based architect, artist and writer. Coming from an Ambedkarite Buddhist background, his practice engages with spatial exploration and expression of caste ghettos in the urban space. He uses mediums of Architectural drawings, sketches, fiction, and non-fiction writing to narrate stories of his people and expose the rot of caste that lingers in the very foundation of Indian cities.



## Ramabai Bhimrao Ambedkar

Ramabai Bhimrao Ambedkar was the woman who propelled Babasaheb to the heights of his academic as well as political success. The anecdotes of her unimaginable sacrifice in a lifelong struggle to transform an ordinary Bhima, to Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar also transformed her own identity from Ramabai to the mother of all, Ramai.

Ramai sacrificed her own wants and likes, saving every penny out of sheer love and faith in the mammoth task her partner had undertaken to churn up a revolution, India wasn't ready for. She was content knowing every grumble her empty stomach made, ensured a fellow Dalit woman a life of dignity for decades to come.

Ramai learned to read and write in English early on, a great feat for her time.

Dalit women today face the worst forms of oppression in rural as well as urban areas in personal and professional life one for their caste second for being a woman and third if they're poor. Dalit women today are the marginalized within the marginalized. Upper class Savarna feminists have either denied space for Dalit women to rise or have blatantly appropriated their struggle taking every opportunity to speak on their behalf. Dalit feminism is slowly holding its ground with scholars and activists pointing out caste and gender intersectionalities. Today, all Dalits as well as their allies who have chosen to take up and continue this tedious work of calling out and systematically dismantling Brahminical Patriarchy find their strength and inspiration in the legacy of Ramai!

Ink and Charcoal on Paper  
Size: 76.2 × 76.2 cm  
2019



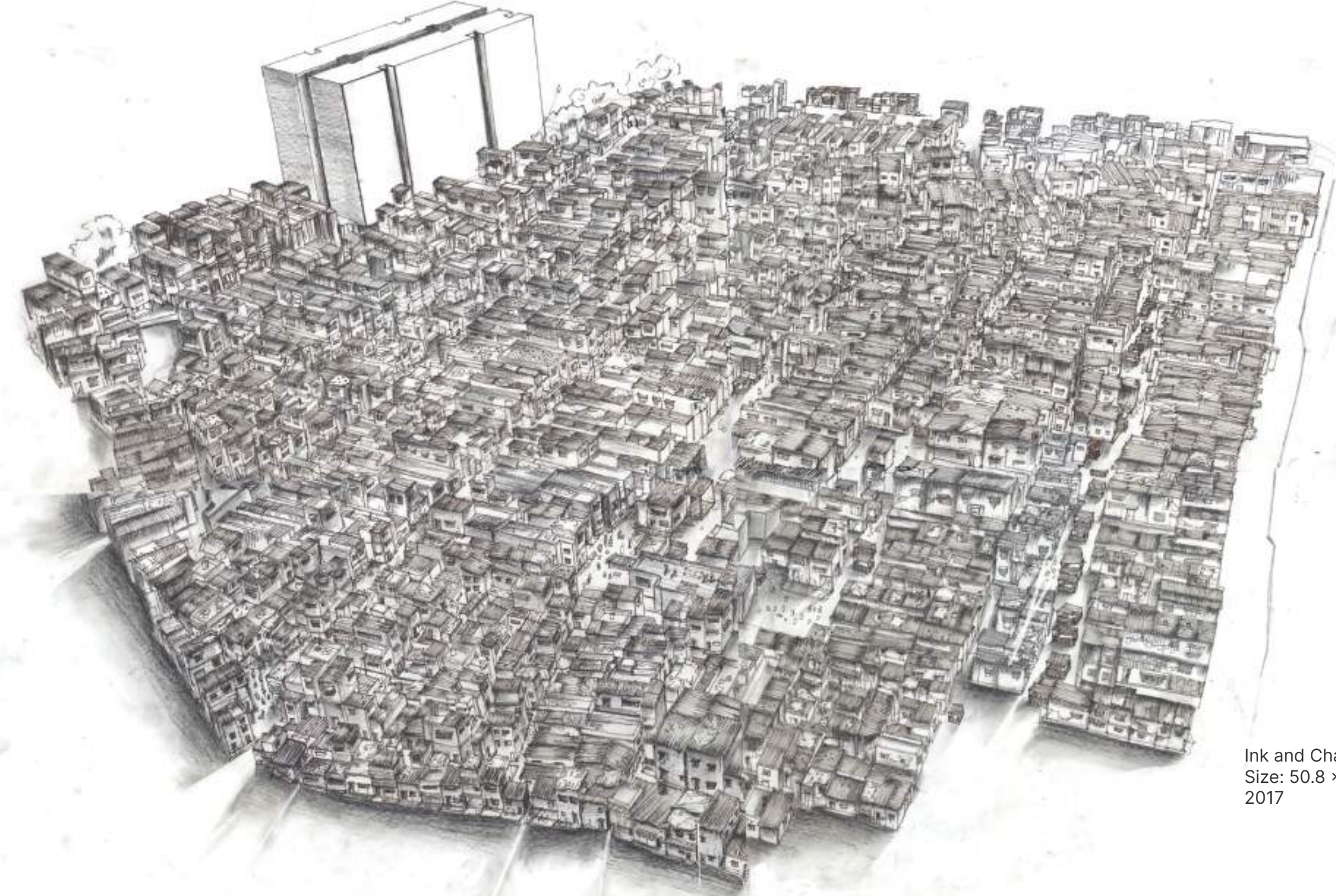
## Dekho Par Pyaar Se

The artwork was first published alongside Shripad Sinnakar's poetry titled 'Love' through Mavelinadu Collective, an anti-caste publication co-founded by the artist himself. The following is an excerpt of the poem, the full piece can be read on Mavelinadu Collective's website.

“At a barber's shop, the radio plays  
‘Zinda rehne ke liye teri kasam,  
ek mulaqaat zaroori hai sanam’  
— lyrics atrocious for their precision.  
They are harmless really,  
only until it takes flesh...”

Ink and Charcoal on Paper  
Size: 50.8 × 50.8 cm  
2022





Ink and Charcoal on Paper  
Size: 50.8 × 50.8 cm  
2017

## **Kumbharwada, Dharavi**

The artwork is an axonometric drawing of 'potters' colony' or "Kumbharwada" located in Dharavi. The place is inhabited by Kumbhars who migrated to Mumbai from Saurashtra, Gujrat over a century ago due to Droughts. The process of the drawing included mapping all the houses, streets, open spaces, Pottery kilns and small lanes which were firstly used to produce an Architectural plan.

The plan was then used to locate and draw every structure accurately to its position and character conjecturing heights through aerial shots.

The Tall SRA building in the middle of this fabric hints at the rapid change the place is undergoing with no sensitivity or concern for the existing life and commerce the place hosts.



Ink and Charcoal on Paper  
Size: 59.4 × 84.1 cm  
2019

## Hindu Code Bill

Dr. Ambedkar worked tirelessly to provide women the legal right to divorce or remarry as well as the freedom to marry outside their caste fold through the Hindu Code Bill. The bill granted women equal rights on property pre marriage, post marriage and in widowhood. Yet he resigned in 1950 owing to deliberate negligence and an adamant opposition in the parliament from the upholders of Hinduism who saw the bill as a threat to the integrity of their religion. It was unbearable for most upper caste men to see a scholar belonging to a caste they considered untouchable to be challenging the core principles of Hinduism inscribed in the scriptures written by Brahmins.

Babasaheb achieved the great feat of

linking caste with gender oppression in India finding their roots in patriarchal structures preserved and nurtured under centuries of Brahminical dominance. While listing feminist icons in India, Ambedkar is often overlooked as he gets reduced to a token identity of the Father of constitution oblivious to the gargantuan body of work he produced beyond the constitution to fetch equal rights for not just lower caste men and women but also upper caste women.

Using the Hindu Code Bill as the bedrock, further improvements and amendments also provided women the right to adopt a child despite marital status. Laws on Dowry, Abortion and Maternity benefits would have been a distant fantasy had the Hindu Code Bill not been drafted by Babasaheb as the first law minister.

## Jose

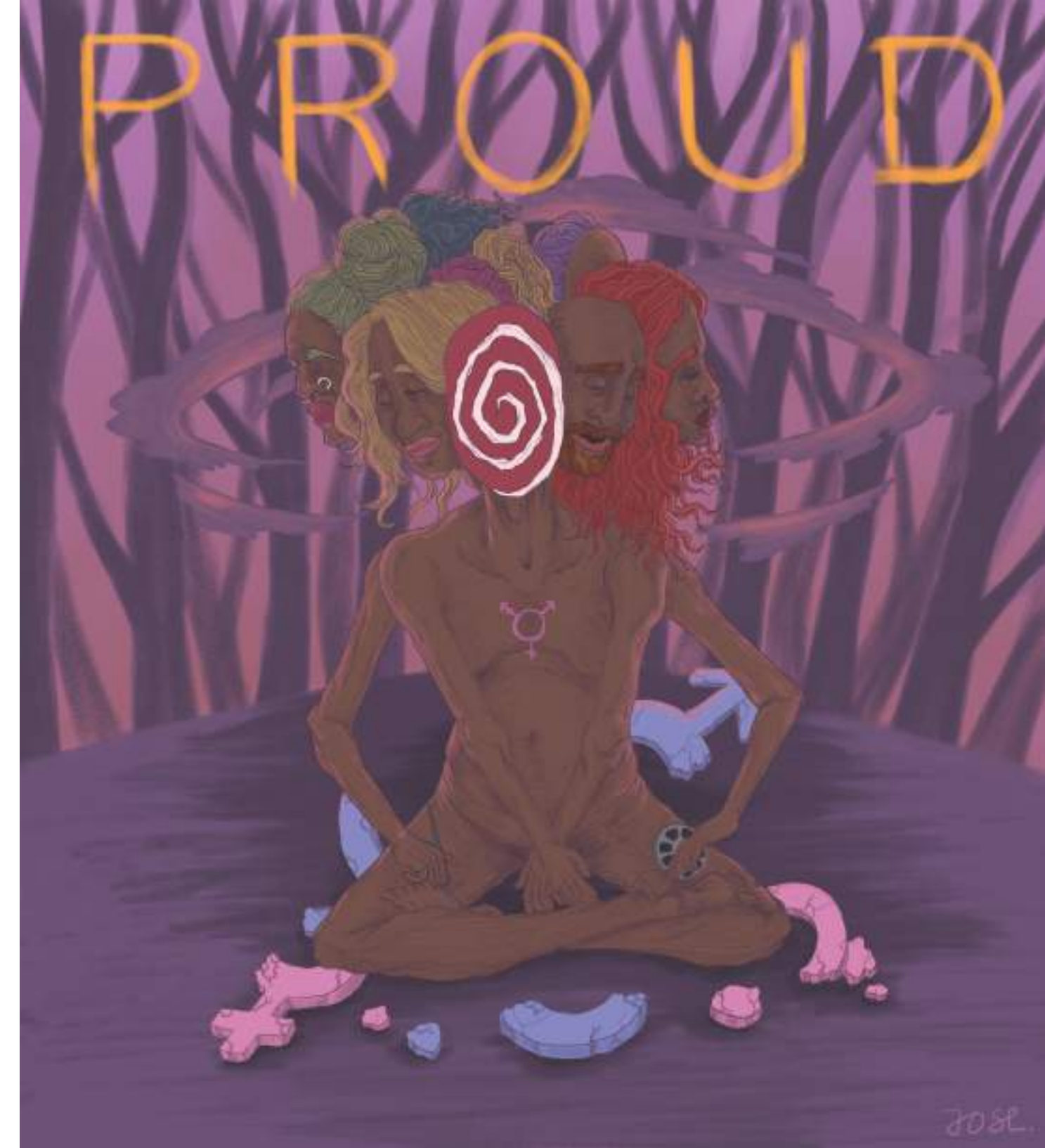
Jose is a genderfluid illustrator from Kerala whose work aims to bring to life experiences often kept out of the mainstream, mainly around the themes of gender and mental health. Employing surreal imagery and drawing from their fascination with the human body, they consider their work successful if they are able to make the viewers question the perspectives, we all have been conditioned into.



## Proud

Conceived in the process of the artist coming into their own identity, this piece questions the boxes we like to put people into, by showing that each of us contain multitudes of queer identities, not limited by our bodies.

Mixed Media  
Size: 20 × 20 cm  
2019

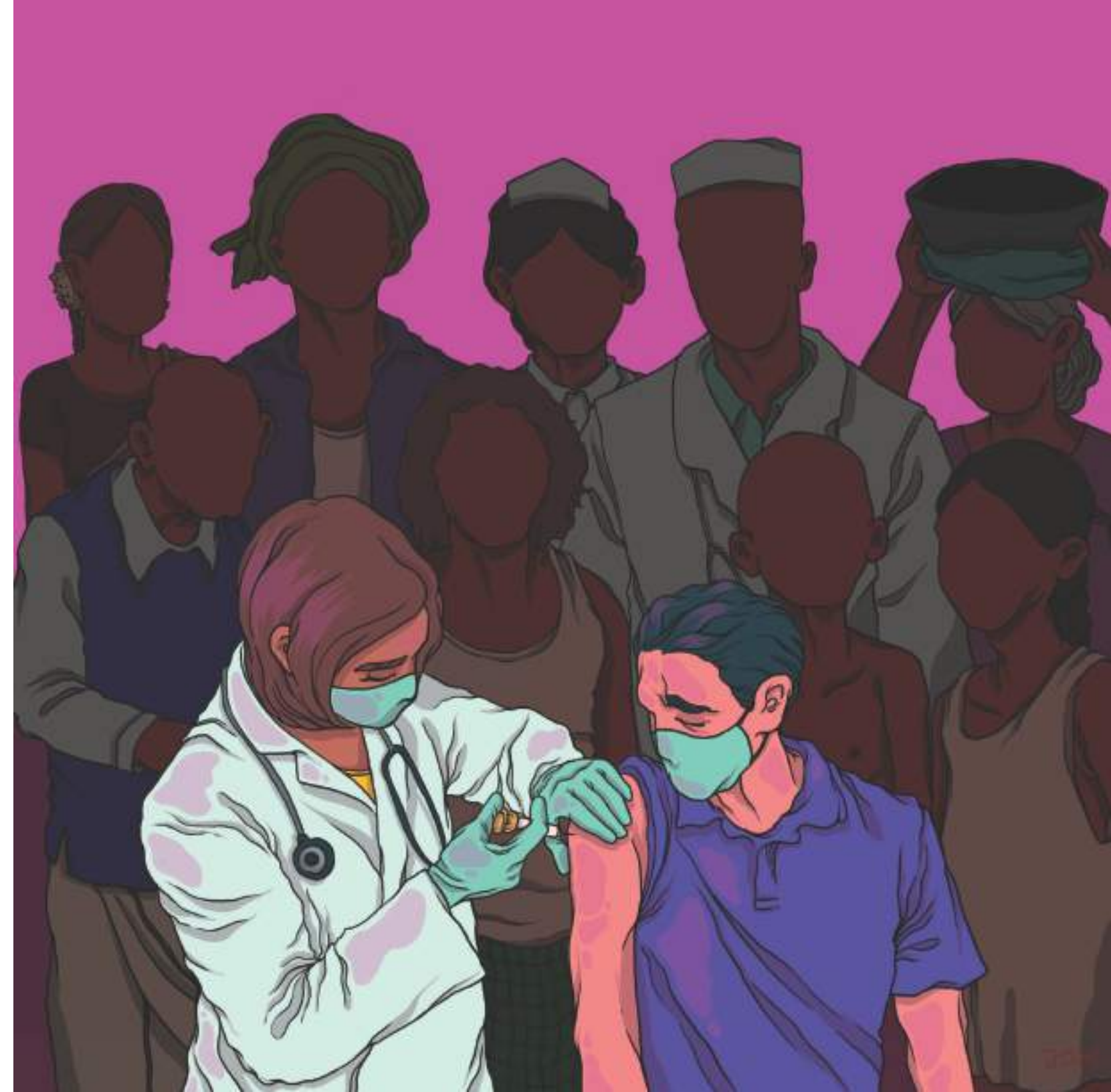




## Ones left behind

Made during the period of hope when vaccines were being rolled out, this piece pushes against the 'return to normal', calling for change in the flawed systems that failed so many in the first and second waves - and continues to.

Digital  
Size: 20 × 20 cm  
2020





Digital  
Size: 20 × 20 cm  
2020

## High Hand

Who passes the laws that govern us all?  
When do they choose to pass them?  
These are the questions posed by this  
piece, as it illustrates the cunning timings  
of draconian legislations being passed or  
overhauled by the state, in the shadow of  
events like the pandemic.

## **Katayoun Karami**

Katayoun Karami is an Iranian artist, whose works explore communal experiences, specifically gender, freedom of expression and systemic oppression. She brings to the front fragments of the residents' daily lives in the war-torn and volatile socio-political environments. Through her works, she captures her expression of self, influenced by the socio-political environment she lived in. She has exhibited her work in more than 30 exhibitions in the last two decades, across the world.





Mixed Media  
Size: 35 × 35 cm  
2010

## The Next Edition

Katayoun always has history on her mind, not just reminiscence but also suffering from curious case of reliving the history. In the contexts around her, in the middle east the history hasn't stopped repeating itself. There have been similar catastrophes time and again which have destroyed people's lives, and hopes. She conceptualized this artwork in remembrance of those war-time contexts where libraries were burnt, and eyes were gouged out.

In 2009, with suffocation, losing hope and increased incidents of inhumane acts around, memories of war-torn states came to her again and the result is the next edition series.





# 27

MIGHTY MARGINS

## **Mantis Shrimp Creative x Jasan Waldura**

Mantis Shrimp is a Creative Technology Studio, focused on creating digital immersion in physical spaces. Using powerful tools like Augmented Reality and Projection Mapping, they conceptualise and create truly bespoke experiences. Jasan Waldura is an interactive designer, a creative coder and multimedia editor who loves to create visuals and graphics. His works have been exhibited in numerous art shows and showcases like the Broke Artist collective, Neo Shibuya 30 seconds museum, London Design Biennale, Midburn Festival and the Holy Art Gallery over at London.



## Justice in Motion

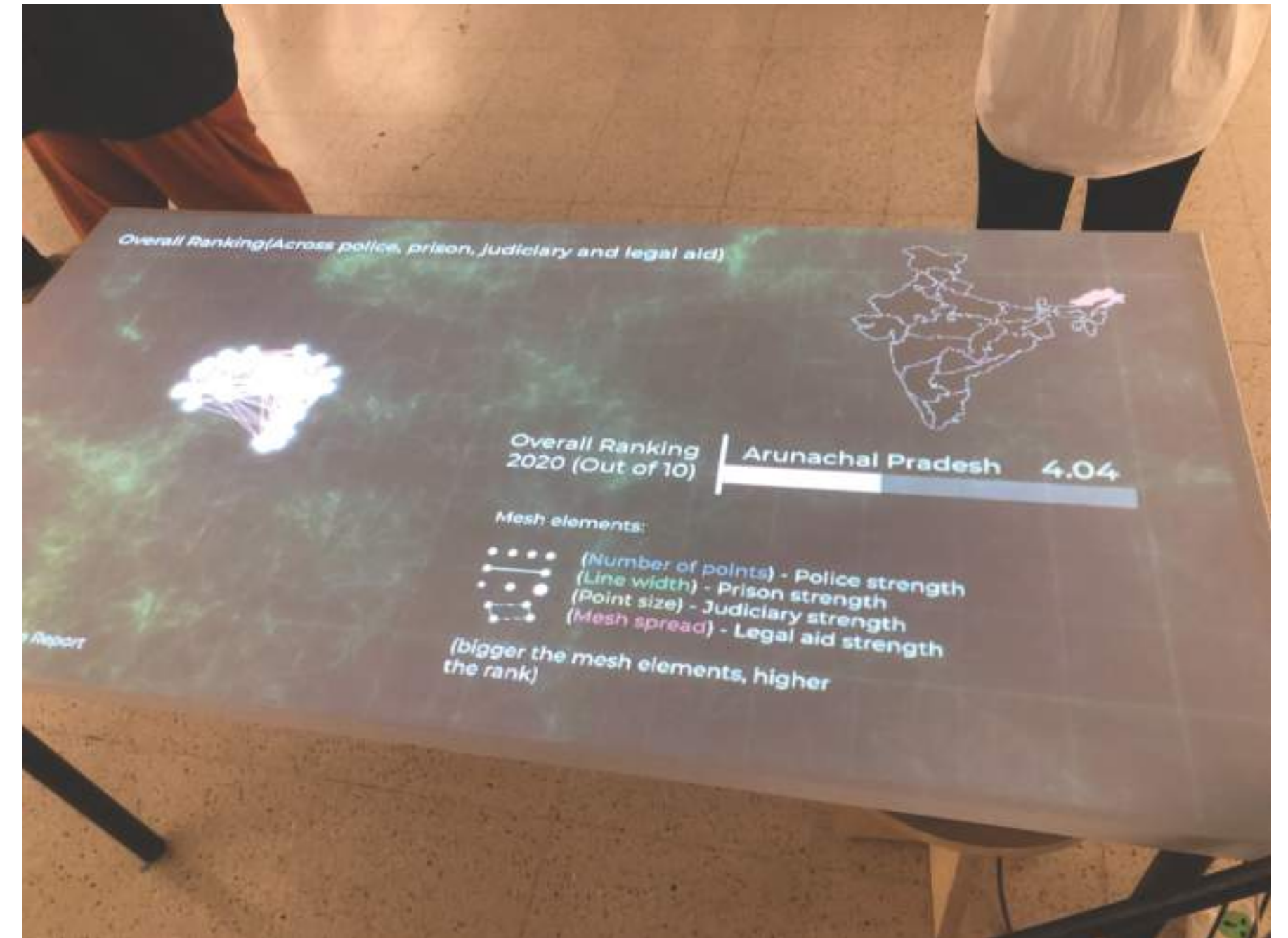
Projection Art around data and statistics around key social justice metrics.

The artwork showcases social justice standings of different Indian states and also India's standing in the world when it comes to rule of law, gender justice, and democracy.

Data and analysis courtesy of India Justice Report 2021, and Oxfam "Who tells our story matters:

Representation of Marginalised Caste Groups in Indian Newsrooms".

2019



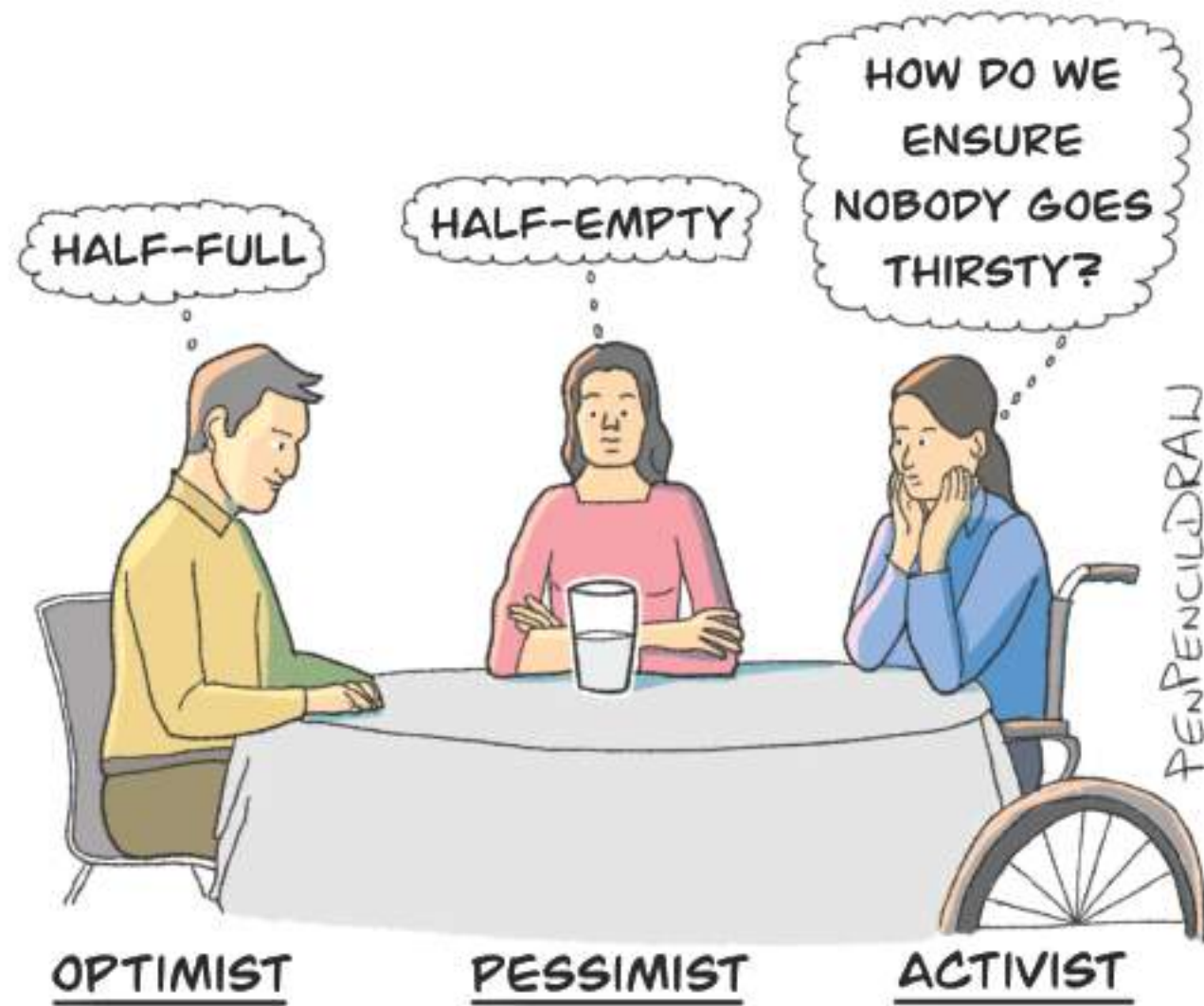
**31**

**MIGHTY MARGINS**

## **Pen Pencil Draw**

Pen Pencil Draw is an anonymous artist.





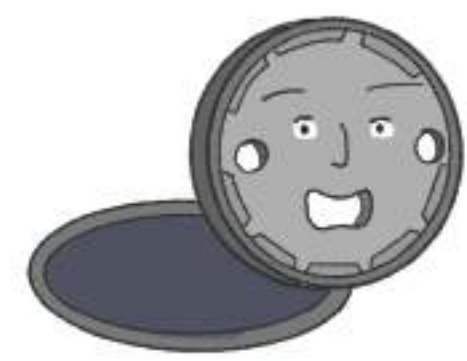
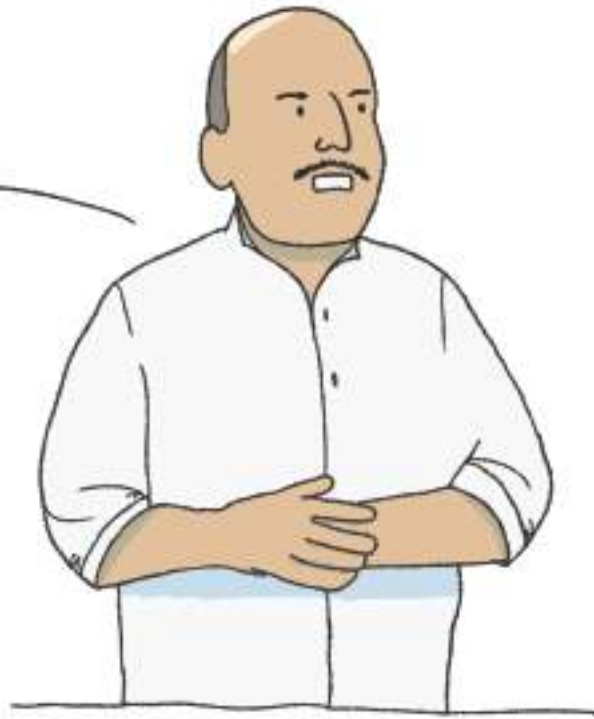
BUT THE MAIN INDIAN LAW THAT PROHIBITS MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA DEFINES IT DIFFERENTLY



BUT YOU ALSO HEAR THE DENIALS

"THERE IS NO REPORT OF DEATHS DUE TO MANUAL SCAVENGING. HOWEVER 161 PERSONS HAVE DIED DUE TO ACCIDENTS WHILE UNDERTAKING HAZARDOUS CLEANING OF SEWER AND SEPTIC TANKS DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS"

VIRENDRA KUMAR,  
SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY, 2022



WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?  
ALLOW ME TO TELL YOU THE  
ABSURD SAGA OF MANUAL  
SCAVENGING IN INDIA

DEATHS FROM SEWER CLEANING ARE WHAT MAKE HEADLINES, BUT MANUAL SCAVENGING IS MORE THAN THAT.



BROADLY, IT'S WHEN A PERSON PHYSICALLY CLEANS, CARRIES OR OTHERWISE HANDLES HUMAN SHIT:



FROM DRY LATRINES & OPEN DRAINS	FROM RAILWAY TRACKS	FROM SEPTIC TANKS	FROM GUTTERS & SEWERS
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OTHER SANITATION WORKERS, SUCH AS THOSE WHO CLEAN PUBLIC TOILETS, ALSO SOMETIMES HAVE TO HANDLE HUMAN EXCRETA

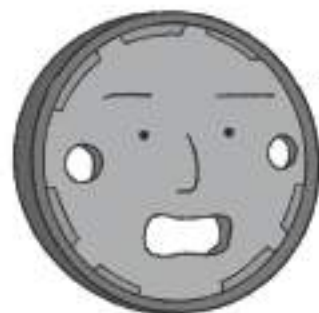


IN 1993, A NEW LAW MADE IT A CRIME TO BUILD A DRY LATRINE OR ENGAGE ANYONE TO MANUALLY CARRY EXCRETA. BUT IT FAILED.

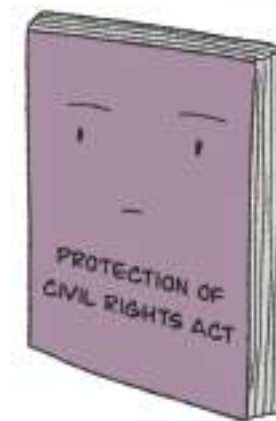


REPORT CARD		
SUBJECT	GRADE	REMARKS
ERADICATION	F	LEFT IMPLEMENTATION TO STATES, WHO DID LITTLE
REHABILITATION	F	MOST FUNDS UNSPENT OR UNDERUSED
PUNISHMENT	F	ZERO CONVICTIONS IN 20 YEARS

MANUAL SCAVENGING HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS AN ASSAULT ON DIGNITY SINCE INDEPENDENCE



A 1955 LAW MADE IT AN OFFENCE TO FORCE ANYONE TO ENGAGE IN MANUAL SCAVENGING

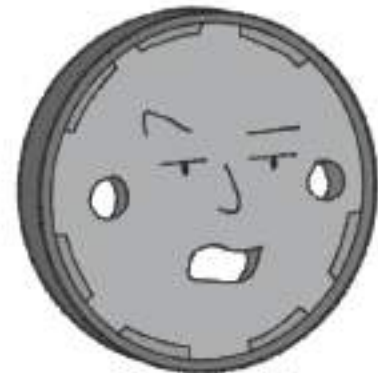


AND THROUGH THE YEARS, MANY COMMITTEES LOOKED INTO THE PRACTICE, MOST OF THEM ONLY SUGGESTING IMPROVEMENTS IN WORKING CONDITIONS



\*NOT LIKENESSES

FRUSTRATED, ACTIVIST GROUPS WENT TO THE SUPREME COURT IN 2003. BUT SOME STATE GOVERNMENTS DENIED THE VERY EXISTENCE OF MANUAL SCAVENGING.



\*COUGH\* CRAP \*COUGH\* IN 2003, THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY HAD SAID THERE WERE NEARLY 68 MILLION INDIANS PRACTISING MANUAL SCAVENGING

IN 2013, FOLLOWING ACTIVIST PRESSURE, INDIA ENACTED THE LAW WE NOW HAVE AGAINST MANUAL SCAVENGING

"THIS DEHUMANISING PRACTICE IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE RIGHT TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY"



KUMARI SELJA, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, 2013

WAIT, SO IF GOVERNMENTS KNOW AND ADMIT THAT MANUAL SCAVENGING IS A PROBLEM, WHY DOES IT STILL EXIST?

HINT: THE ANSWER IS A 5-LETTER WORD THAT STARTS WITH 'C' AND ENDS WITH 'ASTE'



"IN INDIA, A MAN IS NOT A SCAVENGER BECAUSE OF HIS WORK. HE IS A SCAVENGER BECAUSE OF HIS BIRTH IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER HE DOES SCAVENGING OR NOT"

BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

"CASTE IS THE UNDERPINNING FOR MANUAL SCAVENGING, AND IT IS BECAUSE 98% OF THIS WORK IS DONE BY SPECIFIC DALIT COMMUNITIES THAT SOCIETY CAN TAKE IT SO LIGHTLY"

SHAILESHKUMAR PAROKAR,  
TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



# MANY DALIT PEOPLE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO WORK IN MANUAL SCAVENGING

FORCED INTO IT BECAUSE OF THEIR CASTE

"I STUDIED TILL 8TH STANDARD, BUT HERE WE DON'T GET ANY JOB NO MATTER WHERE WE GO"



BABLU

FACING STIGMA AND VIOLENCE FOR DOING IT

"MY CHILDREN ARE MADE TO SIT AT THE SIDE OF THE CLASSROOM"



SHANTI

AND PREVENTED FROM LEAVING

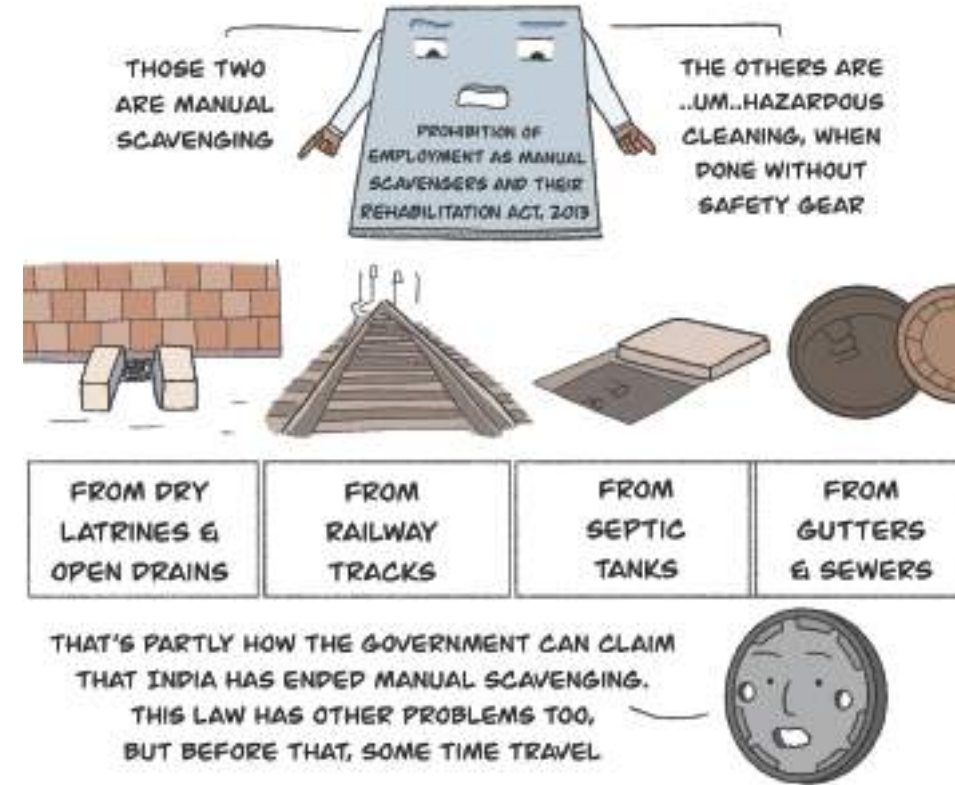
"THEY CALLED OUR MEN AND SAID: 'IF YOU DO NOT START SENDING YOUR WOMEN TO CLEAN OUR TOILETS, WE WILL BEAT THEM UP. WE WILL BEAT YOU UP'"



GANGASHRI

\*NOT LIKENESSES

BUT THE MAIN INDIAN LAW THAT PROHIBITS MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA DEFINES IT DIFFERENTLY



GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE RAILWAYS, OFTEN USE CONTRACTORS WHO EMPLOY PEOPLE TO MANUALLY CLEAN EXCRETA

"THE RAILWAYS HAS ARGUED THAT SINCE THEY HAVE FLUSH LATRINES INSTALLED, WORKERS CLEANING THE WASTE FROM THE TRACKS IS NOT MANUAL SCAVENGING"

SHOMONA KHANNA, SUPREME COURT LAWYER



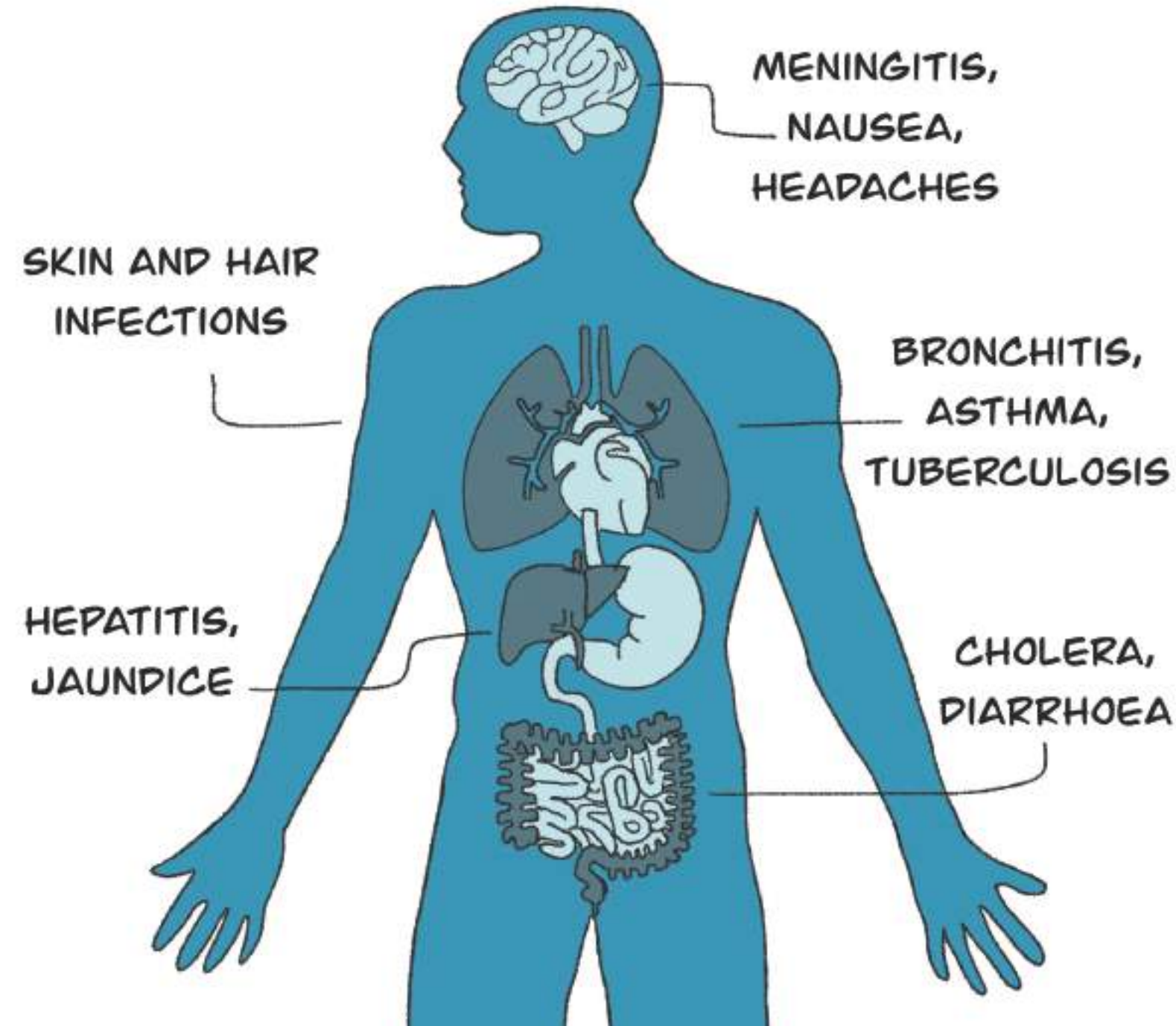
"BECAUSE OF CASTE, THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO INVEST IN ANY MACHINERY. THEY KNOW THAT THERE IS CHEAP MANUAL LABOUR AVAILABLE"

MARTIN MACWAN, NAVSARJAN TRUST



I'M A PIECE OF SHIT AND EVEN I THINK THAT'S DISGUSTING

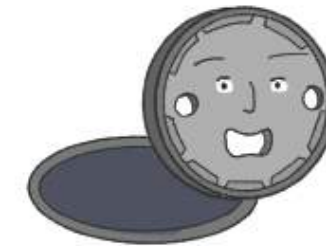
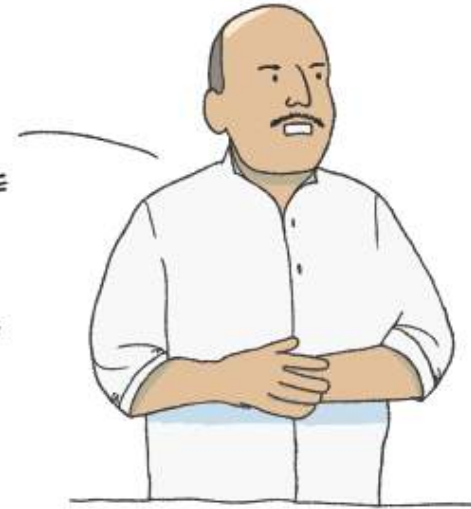
**BECAUSE OF THEIR WORK, THEY OFTEN FACE A RANGE OF HEALTH ISSUES**



**BUT YOU ALSO HEAR THE DENIALS**

"THERE IS NO REPORT OF DEATHS DUE TO MANUAL SCAVENGING. HOWEVER 161 PERSONS HAVE DIED DUE TO ACCIDENTS WHILE UNDERTAKING HAZARDOUS CLEANING OF SEWER AND SEPTIC TANKS DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS"

VIRENDRA KUMAR,  
SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY, 2022



WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?  
ALLOW ME TO TELL YOU THE  
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SCAVENGING IN INDIA

**THE LAW DOESN'T HELP. DESPITE HUNDREDS OF DEATHS FROM MANUAL SCAVENGING, THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SINGLE CONVICTION**

"DEATHS ARE OFTEN NOT RECORDED. IF AN F.I.R. IS FILED, IT IS DONE SO HALF-HARTEDLY, WITH NO MENTION OF THE RELEVANT LAWS. OFTEN, THE AUTHORITIES ARE NOT EVEN READY TO ACCEPT THE DEATH WAS CAUSED BY MANUAL SCAVENGING, BUT INSTEAD BLAME THE LABOURERS"

BEZWADA WILSON,  
SAFAI KARMACHARI ANDOLAN



SINCE 2017, THE NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU DOES NOT SEPARATELY RECORD CASES REGISTERED UNDER THE 2013 LAW



# THE 2013 LAW MANDATES MONETARY COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION, BUT THE GOVERNMENT ADMITS THIS HASN'T HAPPENED

## WHAT IDENTIFIED PEOPLE SHOULD GET:

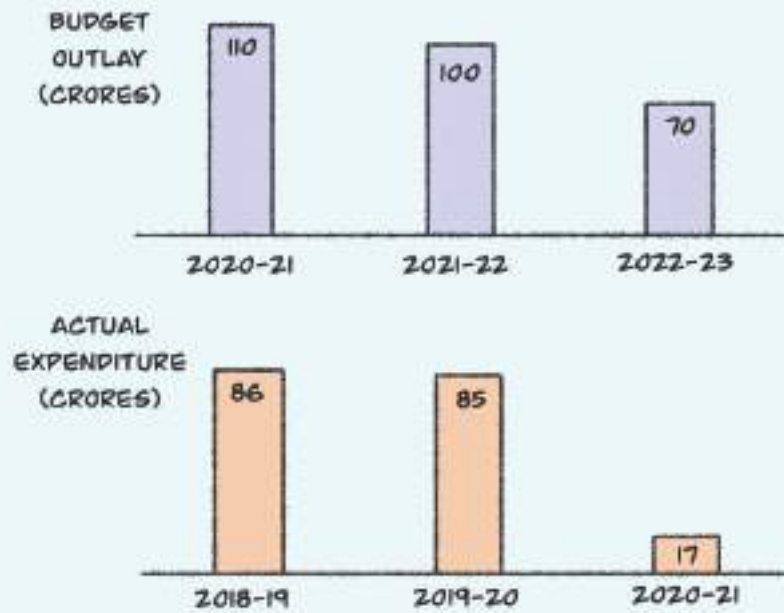
- CASH PAYMENT OF ₹40,000
- SKILLS TRAINING FOR 2 YEARS, WITH ₹3000 PER MONTH;
- CHEAP LOANS FOR UP TO ₹15 LAKHS;
- SUBSIDY OF UP TO ₹5 LAKHS FOR BUYING MECHANISED CLEANING EQUIPMENT/VEHICLES

ONLY 31% HAVE GOT THIS

AND ONLY 3% HAVE GOT THIS



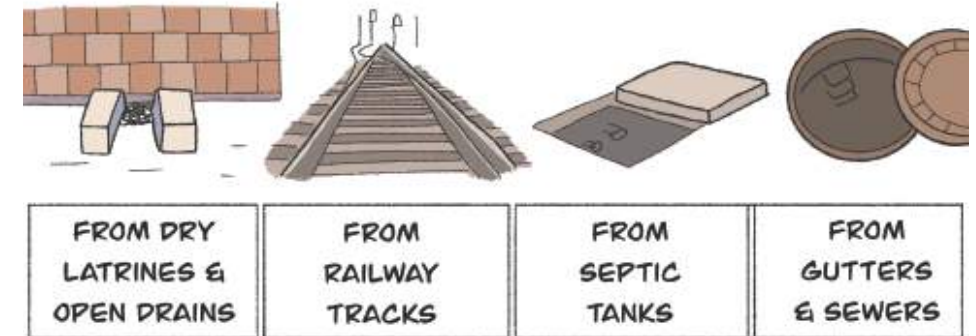
BUDGET ALLOCATIONS FOR THIS SCHEME HAVE FALLEN IN RECENT YEARS, AND EVEN THE MONEY THAT'S THERE IS NOT FULLY SPENT



DEATHS FROM SEWER CLEANING ARE WHAT MAKE HEADLINES, BUT MANUAL SCAVENGING IS MORE THAN THAT.



BROADLY, IT'S WHEN A PERSON PHYSICALLY CLEANS, CARRIES OR OTHERWISE HANDLES HUMAN SHIT:

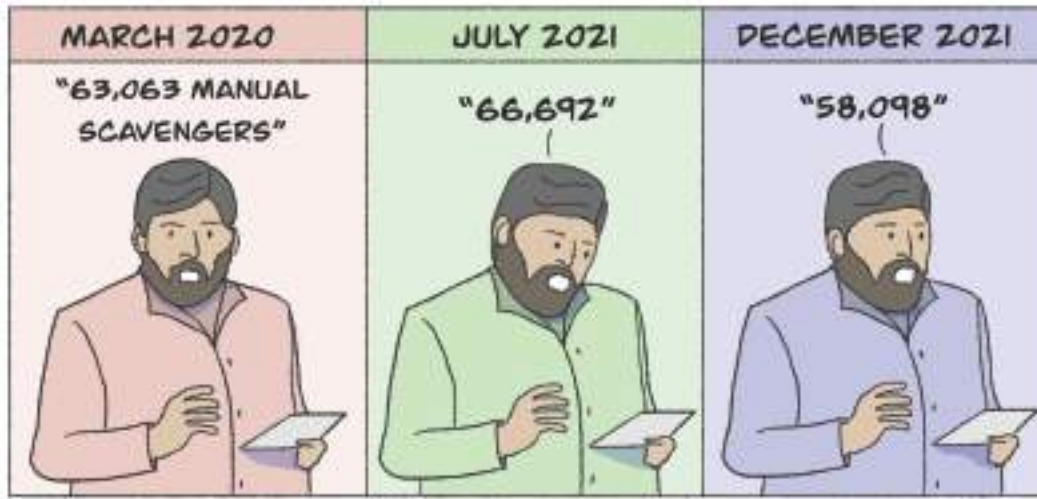


OTHER SANITATION WORKERS, SUCH AS THOSE WHO CLEAN PUBLIC TOILETS, ALSO SOMETIMES HAVE TO HANDLE HUMAN EXCRETA



WORSE, THERE IS NO RELIABLE OFFICIAL ESTIMATE EVEN TODAY OF JUST HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IN MANUAL SCAVENGING

ACTIVISTS SAY THERE ARE MILLIONS INVOLVED. THE CENTRE CARRIED OUT TWO SURVEYS IN SOME DISTRICTS IN 2013 AND 2018. BUT IT'S REPORTED EVEN THOSE NUMBERS INCONSISTENTLY



RAMPAS ATHAWALE, SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

## Siddhesh Gautam

Siddhesh Gautam is an artist and visual designer with a popular Instagram handle “Bakery Prasad.”

His work primarily addresses narratives around hegemony and discrimination, especially the atrocities faced by Dalit-Adivasis community. While minimalism and post-modernist thought are the main influence of his work, his work is based on in-depth research on the subject. Siddhesh describes himself as a multi-discipline, mixed-media artist, designer, treasure hunter, fallen angel, and soul searcher, and his work is a personification of his personal spiritual journey.

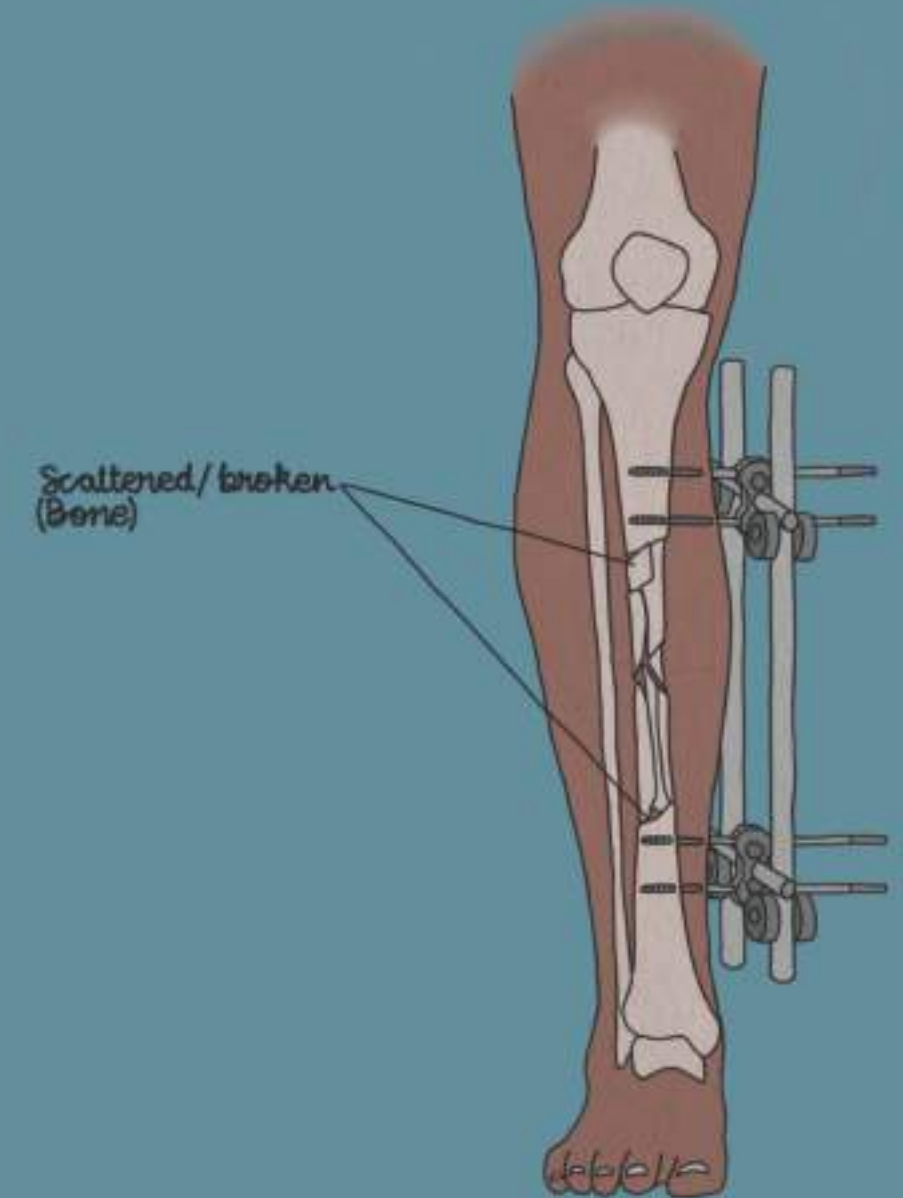


## Oppressed Castes and Affirmative Action

It takes time to heal broken bones, imagine how much time and effort would be required to reattach the foot with the rest of the body. This art comes in the light of much debated need of reservation in a society that has proclaimed abolishment of caste system and the historic inequities that arose from the exclusionary nature of caste system.

Digital  
Size: 42 cm x 59.4 cm  
2021

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION







Digital  
Size: Height 3 ft  
2020

## **Dalit Lives Matter**

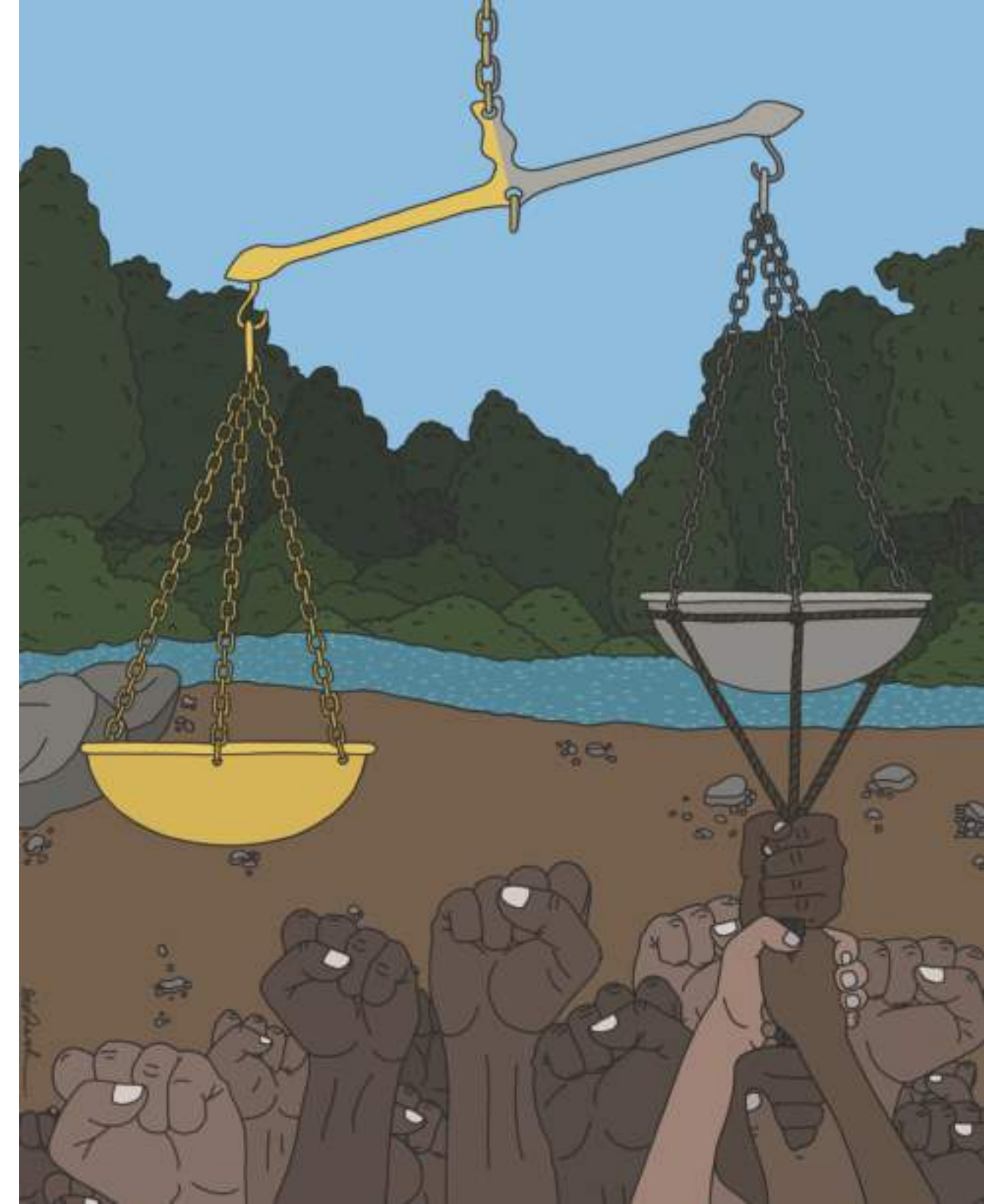
We are still seeking answers for 'race, caste and what it will take to make Dalit Lives Matter.'

The art is divided into two parts: left side for Black Rights Movement and the right side for Dalit Rights Movement.

## Protect The Protest

The only thing peaceful protest disrupts is injustice. A world where everyone can participate in protests equally, without fear of violence or reprisals, is a world where human rights can be upheld for everybody.

Digital  
Size: 41.91 cmx 59.436 cm  
2022



## Shrujana Shridhar

Shrujana N Shridhar is an illustrator and artist based in Mumbai. She works on children's books and editorial illustrations. Her work centers anti-caste expression from an Ambedkarite and feminist perspective. She belongs to the Ambedkarite-Buddhist community, and runs the Dalit Panther Archive, which focuses on digitising and translating Little Magazines and literature published by the members of the Dalit Panther movement.





## Dalit Panthers

A pivotal moment for the movement was when founding member, Raja Dhale wrote 'Kala Svatantra Divas' (Black Independence Day), a provocative essay published in Sadhna magazine on 15 August 1972.

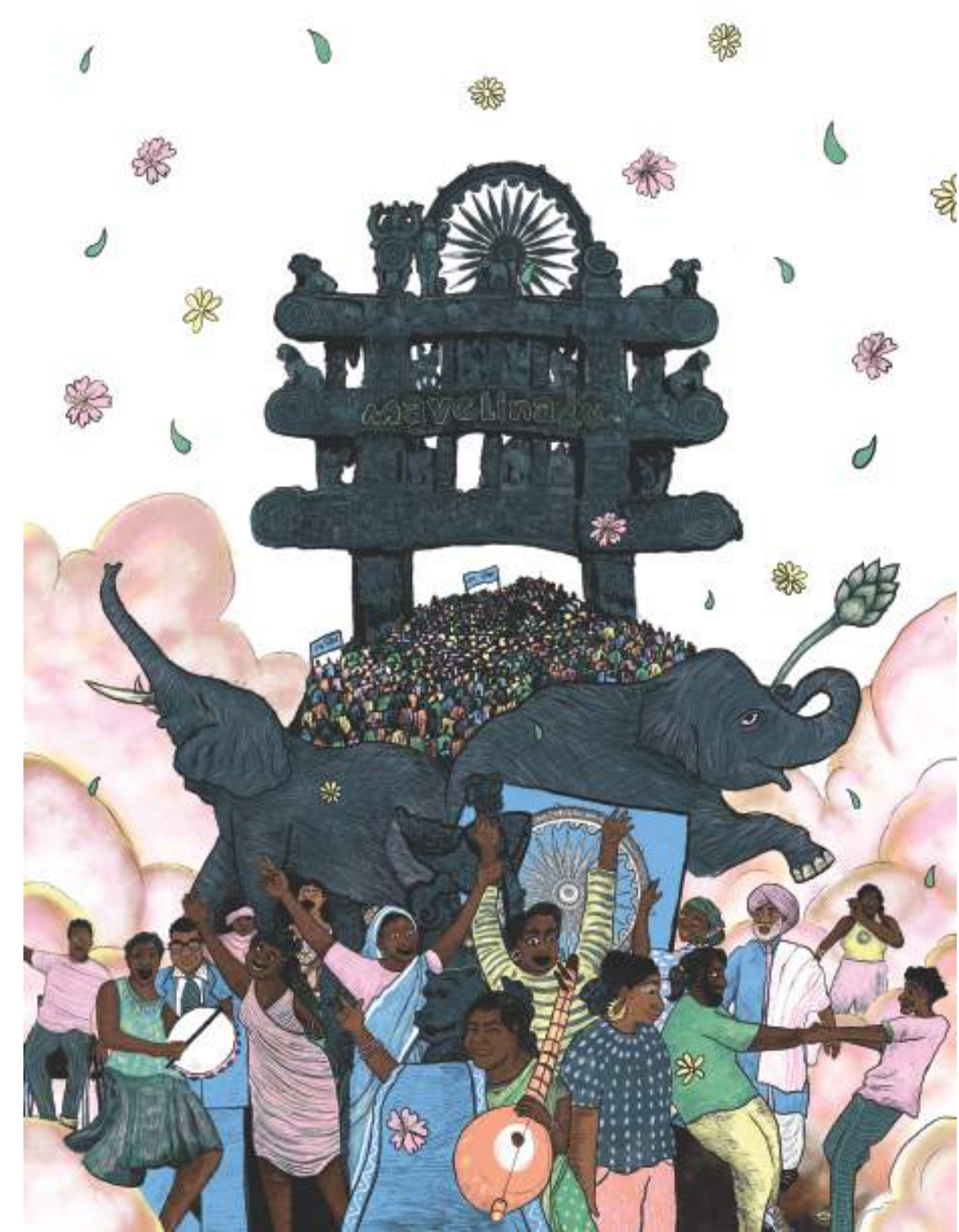
He wrote it to highlight the sexual harassment of a Buddhist woman in Brahamangaon village in Parbhani district. JV Pawar, another founding member, details the aftermath of this essay in his book, Dalit Panthers, An Authoritative History. On 29 August 1972, the Pune Municipal Corporation passed a resolution condemning Sadhana for printing the article.

Digital  
Size: 91.44 cm height

The resolution was to prosecute Raja Dhale, Yadunath Thatte, and Dr. Anil Avchat, the executive editor of Sadhana. Political parties threatened to burn down Sadhana's printing press if the magazine was not shut down. When cadres of the two parties marched to the publication's office, they were countered by the newly formed Panthers, who had arrived in Pune to confront them. The Panthers managed to chase away the protestors and save the printing press. The illustration features Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and JV Pawar.

## Mavelinadu

The illustration features the leaders of the anti-caste movement in India celebrating the dawn of a casteless and genderless world with the community.



Digital  
Size: 41.91 cm x 59.436 cm



Digital  
Size:  
29.71 cm x 29.71 cm

## **Maveli Raju**

The mythical kingdom of Mavelinadu or Balirajya was known to be a casteless and egalitarian kingdom. It was a kingdom known to have democratised agriculture and to have had the best healthcare for its citizens. The Asura King, Mahabali was known to be a just and fair ruler who loved and cared for his people equally. He was demonised and murdered by the Vedic God, Vishnu. This piece attempts to capture texture and movement in an organic sense.

## Sonaksha

Sonaksha (they/them) is an illustrator, graphic recorder, and book designer. Through their queer feminist artistic practice, they examine gender, sexuality, community, care and body image, and address disability justice, mental health and intersectional feminism. They use art, graphic recording, illustration, animation and zine making as tools to contribute to, and participate in social and climate justice movements across the world.

Sonaksha has worked with various organisations to visually highlight and archive the work of activists and human rights defenders, including FRIDA - The Young Feminist Fund, Association for Progressive Communications, CREA, Women's Fund Asia, Oxfam, RESURJ, and Urgent Action Sister Funds among others.





## **Digital Illustration, Publication 2022**

Holding Space is a self-learning manual created by Rising Flame, an India based nonprofit, that seeks to expand on the effects of ableism on disabled people's lives and mental health.

The illustration is part of the cover and draws into reality a world where disabled people can exist freely as our full selves, without worrying about being too much or having to shrink ourselves; a world where we celebrate the ways crip love and wisdom holds us with care.

Digital  
Size:  
52.8 cm x52.8 cm

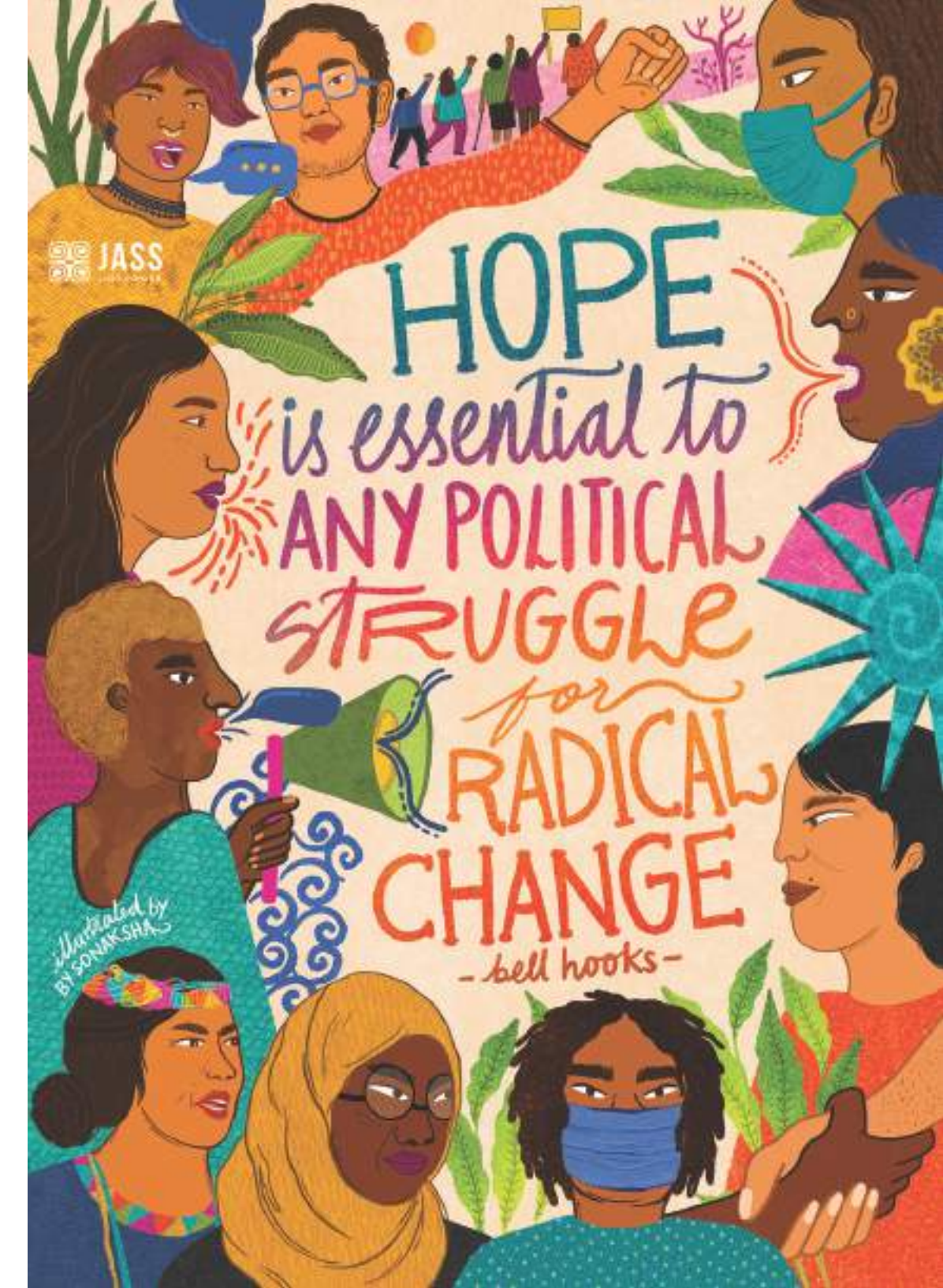


## Digital Illustration, Postcard 2021

Bell hooks' words, thoughts, work and being have been and will always continue to be central to so many of us and our movements.

This artwork was made with JASS as a way to honor bell hooks, and the myriad ways she taught about community, care, how to shift our worlds, love, and to be in movement with each other.

Digital  
Size: 52.8 cm x52.8 cm



## Digital Illustration, Banner 2021

Indigenous communities around the world are at the forefront, leading the fight for the climate crisis, and yet they are consistently left out of decision-making tables despite also being most impacted by its consequences. This illustration highlights the importance of centering, celebrating, listening to, and being led by the work and knowledge of Indigenous communities in addressing climate change.

Digital  
Size: 29.7 cm x 42 cm





Digital  
Size: 29.7 cm x 42 cm

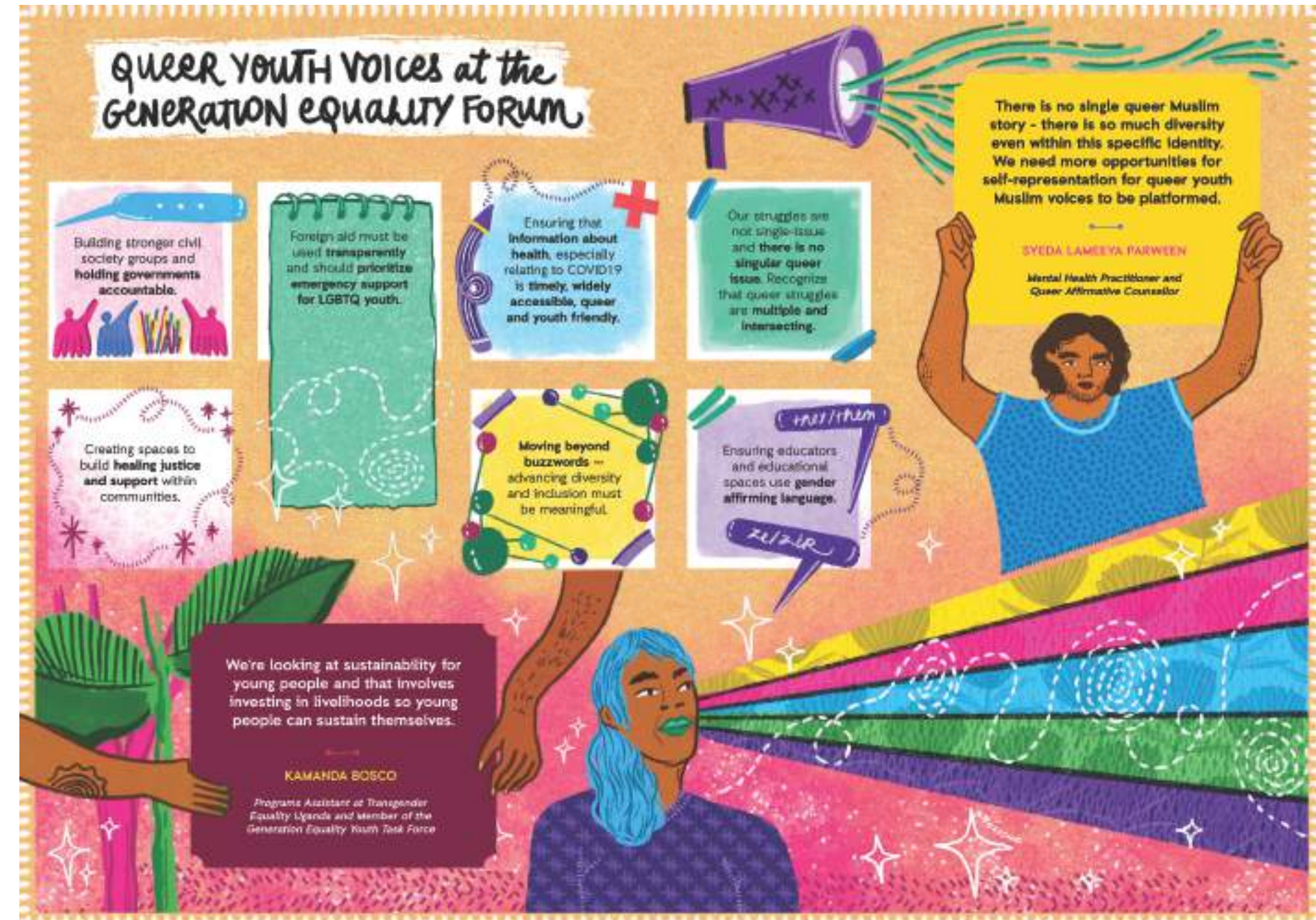
## Digital Illustration, Banner 2021

A glimpse of ways we occupy spaces online towards our feminist and intergenerational dreams for liberation. Made for Restless Development's 'Feminist Action Lab' that collates resources and dialogues to highlight global feminist movements and their impact across the world.

## Graphic Recording, Zine, 2021

An illustrated zine mapping voices from two panels convened for NGO CSW 65 and the Generation Equality Forum to address gaps in the rights of queer, trans and non-binary people. The conversations tabled demands to address increasing rollbacks and threats faced by the LGBTQ+ community over the last few years. The zine was supported by Action Aid.





Digital  
Size: 29.7 cm x 42 cm



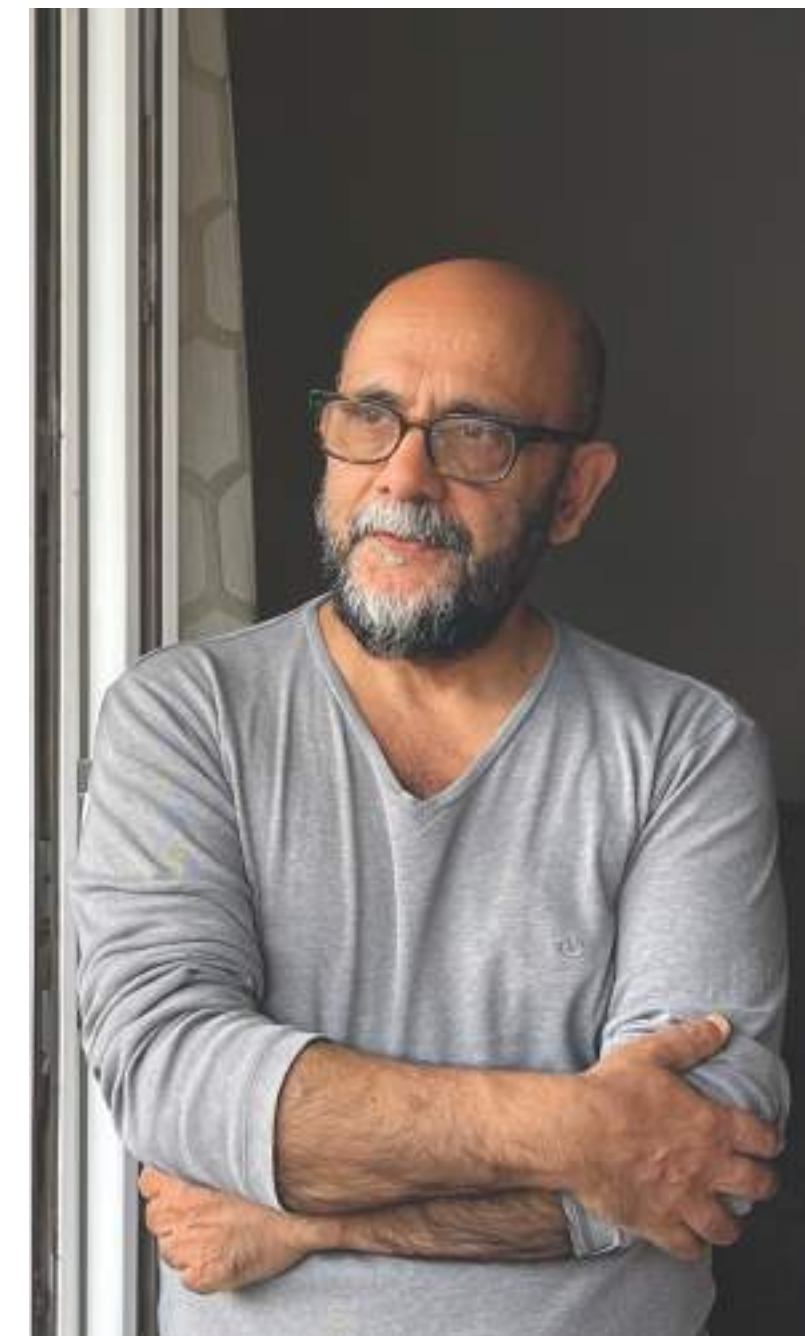
## Veer Munshi

Veer Munshi is an artist born in Srinagar Kashmir, based in Delhi, India.

He has addressed a range of subjects during his artistic career that spans three decades but exile remains his most fundamental condition and preoccupation. Munshi consistently used his art to reflect his anguish at the situation in his home state, his pain and struggle spilling over onto his canvass.

Making a human rights statement rather than a political one, he has constantly sought to highlight the turmoil that comes with his separation from his heritage, and to highlight the increasingly the narrow space that exists for culture and art in his state.

Veer has 17 solo shows to his credit all over the world, through his varied medium of expression such as installations, videos, paintings and photographs.





## Leaves like Hands of Flame

'Leaves like Hands of Flame' (running time 5 min 3 sec) is a two-channel video meditation by Veer Munshi. Its title is taken from a line in a poem by Ranjit Hoskote, which speaks of the chinar.

Through one channel, which remains deceptively static, Munshi runs an animation sequence that tracks the gradual burning-down of a grand old mansion from his 'Pandit Houses' archive.

Through the second channel, the artist records his journey by boat and on foot through an embattled Kashmiri winter landscape of fallen leaves, swirling water and falling snow.

Video stills from video meditation.





# 77

MIGHTY MARGINS

## **Agami x The Alipore Post x Copycat Design:**

### **JUSTICEMAKERS**

Agami is a movement of people and ideas intent on transforming the experience of justice in India. By telling a different story, surfacing innovation, connecting actors and opportunities, and unleashing a new kind of collective leadership in the field.

The Alipore Post is a newsletter that shares weekly art, poetry, and music from hidden corners of the internet. Rohini Kejriwal, curator of The Alipore Post always wanted to run an online journal to allow people to submit their work and create a trustworthy platform to showcase this vibrant creative

community online.

Copycat Design (Mayur Nanda) is a freelance graphic designer and illustrator who loves telling compelling and exciting stories through visuals.

Justicemakers, Stories of young people solving justice issues differently was curated by Agami, in collaboration with The Alipore Post and Copycat Design. Justicemakers is a collaboration between 20 storytellers and over 30 justicemakers to capture an idea of justice that extends far beyond legal disputes and courtrooms.

Today, justice is made by people all around us in creative and thoughtful ways. Through this collection of stories, we offer a visual language for this new way of doing things that brings colour and mood and voice and texture to justice in a way that is both personal and experimental. We invite you to find your nearest playground and try out a seesaw to see what a re-balancing of the scales of justice might feel like for yourself.

## **Justicemakers:** **FIELD NOTES FROM ZENITH**

This is one of the 10 stories in Justicemakers by Agami x The Alipore Post x Copycat Design.

In the early days of Zenith-Society for Socio-Legal Empowerment, Abhay and Swapnil travelled around different villages in parts of Madhya Pradesh to understand the ground realities and issues people faced and make sense of why old methods of solving them weren't working. Art by Rohini Kejriwal, Words and images by Ayera Choudhary and Tammanna Aurora.

# field notes from zenith

WORDS AND IMAGES BY AYERA CHOUDHARY  
& TAMMANNA AURORA - ART BY ROHINI KEJRIWAL



Abhay Jain and Swapnil Shukla, founders of  
Zenith - Society for Socio - Legal Empowerment

Size: Digital  
Size: 29.7 cm x 42 cm  
spread  
Cover Art by Mayur Nanda  
Size: 29.7 cm x 42 cm

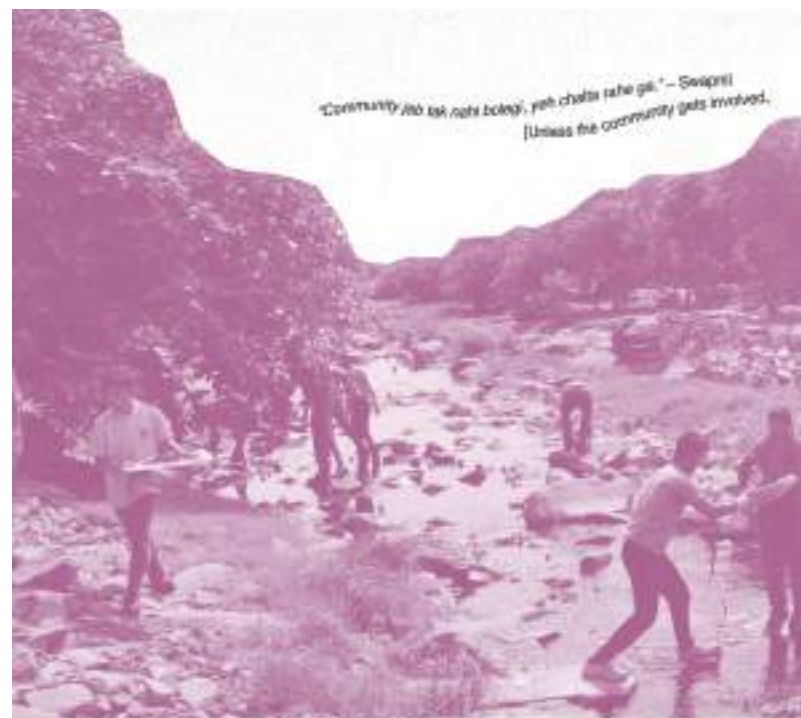


In the early days of Zenith, Abhay and Swapnil travelled around different villages in parts of Madhya Pradesh to understand the ground realities and issues people faced, and make sense of why old methods of solving them were not working.

They arrived at two big learnings:

1. There is a lack of affordable and quality legal services at the grassroots level. People need safe spaces to ask questions, learn about their rights and find solutions to their justice issues.
2. Justice cannot be carried on the shoulders of one person or institution. Multiple stakeholders need to participate in decisions that affect their lives and livelihood, and the youth need to be at the heart of it.

09



"Community ko tak nhi bolegi, yeh chahi rahi ga." - Swapnil  
(Unless the community gets involved.)

It all started in third year of law school after a particularly inspiring class on Public Interest Litigation (PIL). Abhay thought he had found a solution for protecting the *magar* (crocodile) and the lakes in his hometown of Shivpuri, which were covered in a blanket of polythene.

A PIL was filed, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) gave favourable orders, the news was celebrated in the local media and then... nothing happened. Nothing changed! The lakes were not magically cleaned up. It didn't take long to see that court orders don't matter unless they are implemented. So they called for local participation, got together and cleaned the lake themselves!



things will carry on as they are)

Shivpuri Jalansay valvatoora allowing the Baniyar stream, which had turned into a nullah



Dress from Malabar

Zenith's role has never been to tell people how to solve their problems, or to solve it for them. Instead, in places like Shivpuri and Gwalior, they create spaces where Adivasi, Dalit and other marginalised communities feel safe to express themselves without hesitation. Spaces to voice their concerns and share their stories on their own terms. Spaces for them to dream.

11

But what does a space to dream look like for these communities?

By meeting communities in neutral spaces, Zenith encourages people to reach out to them for support and helps them feel a sense of agency in articulating their problems.



Meeting at the village chabutra in Chitauri, India



Sonal Sahariya, a Sahariya Adivasi woman, came to Zenith to get her SC/ST certificate made because she wanted to stand for local elections.



Sameer *bhai*, a Sahariya Adivasi from Dholagarh, waded through the justice system to finally access his land rights in a case that had been pending for 20 years. The fact that he has understood how to access the system on his own and fight for his rights creates a sense of agency within him. It's so strong that it ripples through the other 172 Sahariya Adivasi families struggling with pending land cases, who now know that there is a way out and have found a leader in Sameer *bhai*.

Field notes from Zenith

In Mudkheda, the community has been actively voicing concerns about a check-post proposed by the government that would hinder their community rights to freely access the forests and till their land.



A scene from Mudkheda with community leader Rajendra bhai (far right)

### Documenting life in Shivpuri while interning with

*Ayera:* I can either point and shoot with my camera and simplify peoples complex identities and problems with my direct questions or I can hold space for them to tell their story. I have come to realise that no community owes you access to their issues. We owe them our patience and commitment; and through time, build trust and accountability.

It's hard because we are taught law in the semantics of heavy hardbound books, spun by Latin phrases and *Yes Your Lordships*. Our knowledge systems do not account for the discomfort of holding two opposing truths and just sitting with them.



In Majera, the *khadaan* (quarries) have taken the lives of many members of the community due to silicosis, giving it the name *Randon ka Gaon* (Village of Widows). These waters are the same ones the children jump in, with absolute untethered joy.

When asked why they continue to work there, the locals reply, "*Jab kuch aur kaam hi nahi hai, toh aadmi kya kare? Roti paani toh chahiye na?*" [When there is no other work, what are we to do? We have to earn our livelihood.]

They choose to go back to what kills them because it is the only option they have. How do you sit with a truth like that? Is it even my story to tell?

### Zenith, I have more questions than answers.

As Abhay and Swapnil say, there are no linear solutions and it doesn't help to address problems in binaries with labels like 'oppressor/oppressed'. People from both sides have to be part of the conversation to create new structures and try a new approach to justicemaking. And for that to happen, we need to hold space for these difficult conversations and navigate the politics of space together.



Even though the waters of change will be full of contradictions,

we too can be like the cow in *Sankhya Sagar*, sitting with the *magar* (crocodile) of injustice and let it see us unfettered and unmoved, taking up space.

Field notes from Zenith

# 85

MIGHTY MARGINS

## Digital Empowerment Foundation: A-CODE

Digital Empowerment Foundation is a non-profit organisation that aims to bridge the digital divide among urban and rural communities by empowering people digitally. Art and Collectives for Digital Empowerment (A-CODE) is an endeavour by Digital Empowerment Foundation that believes artistic expression offers effective values and reasonable opportunities for discussion, criticism, knowledge, experience sharing, imagination, hope and healing; all

invaluable tools for individuals and communities to imbibe into the lives they lead. A-CODE aspires to engrain the thought in public mindsets that artistic expressions and activities are an integral part of everything that we do and are effective in addressing social issues.

## Misinformation by ACODE

Compiled posters on misinformation  
by Acode by Digital Empowerment  
Foundation.

Size: A4 (21 cm x 29.7 cm)  
posters spread





*Fake news teen aur aadmi  
140 crore. Badi nainsaafi hai*



**FAKE NEWS DAKAIT**



*Aaj mere paas paisa hai, bangla hai,  
gaadi hai. Tumhare paas kya hai?*



**SCAMMER**



*Picture abhi baaki  
hai mere dost*



**PREDATOR**



# 91

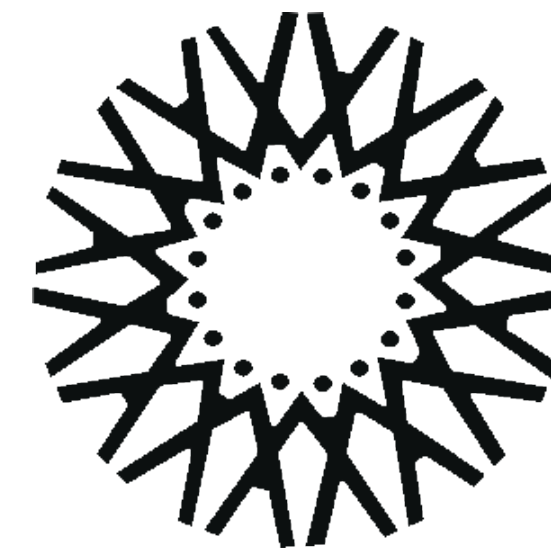
MIGHTY MARGINS

## **Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT)**

The spontaneous anger generated by Safdar Hashmi's murder on January 1, 1989 grew into a resolve to resist the forces threatening the essentially pluralist and democratic spirit of creative expression.

Writers, theatre persons, musicians, painters, scholars, poets, architects, photographers, designers, cultural activists, and media persons formed the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) within weeks of Safdar Hashmi's death.

From its inception SAHMAT has been a platform with a shared perspective and has welcomed the distinctive creativities of those who have been part of its activities.





In defence of our secular tradition



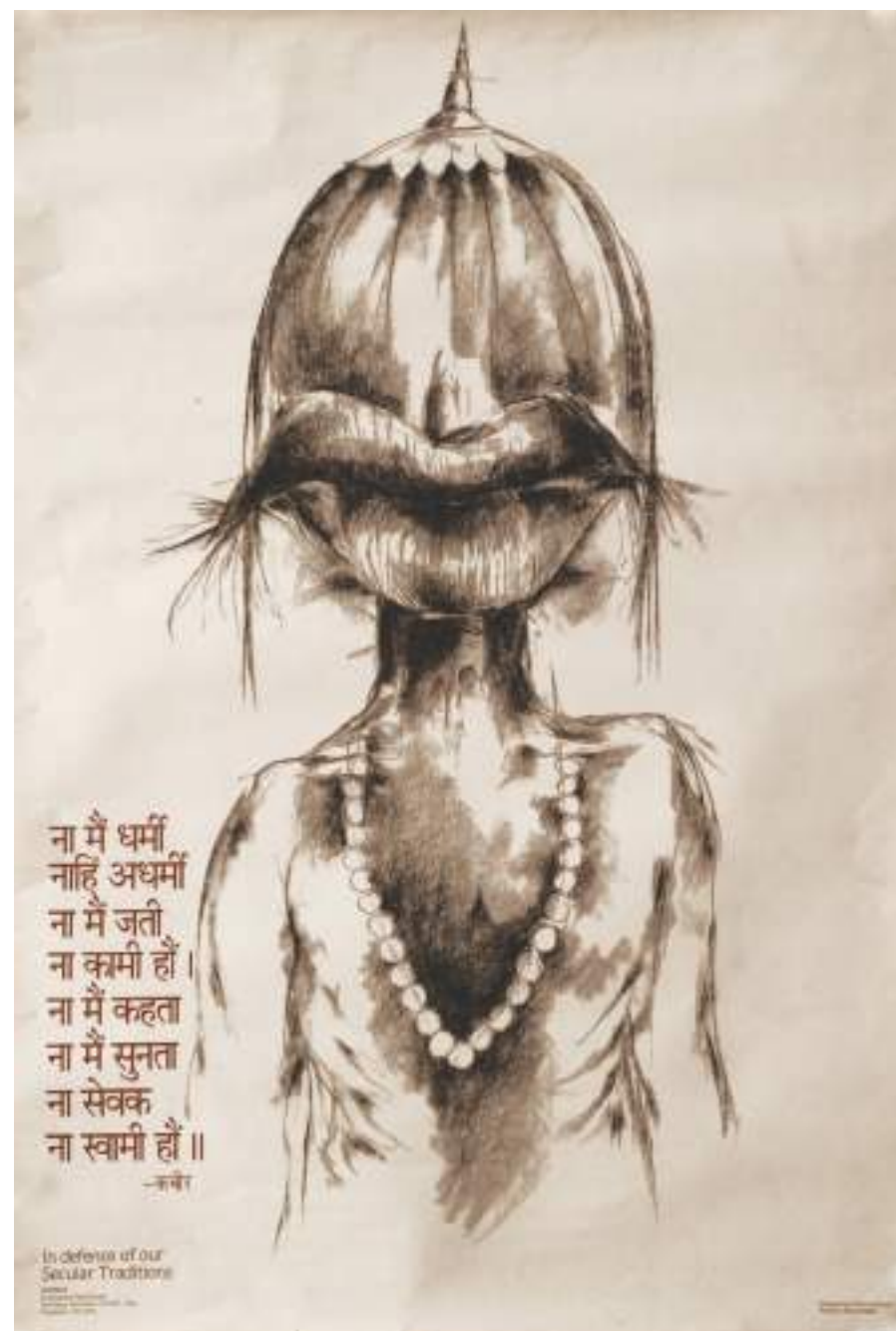
Akbar Padamsee

जाये बंसू खामोश शहर,  
अब वंही तो मुल्क समाना ।

—बुल्ले शाह

20th year of SAHMAT

© SAHMAT  
8 Vigneshwar Park House,  
Post Market, New Delhi 110 021  
Tel: 2311276, 2351424  
E-mail: sahmata@sahmat.com



*In defence of our secular tradition*

I am still in my village  
Amidst the rocks and wet clays

.....  
I am not alone  
my friends and foes are here  
Here the ponds get  
wet and dry  
Harvest reaps and dry  
Rocks shatter and temples rise

.....  
The wild elephants seldom come  
and destroy the harvest  
The Tiger never eats the folks

*Kabir's Ramkrishnan*

**SAHMAT**  
377Maddur Post Office, Ballari  
New Delhi 110 001 Tel: 2711236



क्या जुलमतों के दौर में भी गीत गाये जायेंगे  
हां जुलमतों के दौर के ही गीत गाये जायेंगे



*It is ten years  
since ... ..  
we  
pledged to  
continue our  
struggle*

*for freedom of  
expression*

*to defend our  
secular  
tradition*

*and*

*to create  
alternative  
culture*

**SAHMAT**  
377Maddur Post Office, Ballari  
New Delhi 110 001 Tel: 2711236



Alex Mallouk, Martyr's Dream, 80 x 60 cm; Fibreglass, Acrylic, 1983

*In defence of our secular tradition*

The poor gasp for life  
It's cool breeze to them  
Those who lord ov'r the earth  
From their thrones of sin

Valmiki



**SAHMAT**  
8 VidyaRashmi Datta House, 6th Floor,  
New Delhi-110 011 Tel: 3711278



NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA  
11, BUNGALOW ROAD, NEW DELHI-110 002

# BARBARIANS AT THE GATE

**BURN**

**PUNE**

**AHMEDABAD**

**SURAT**

The mob as censor

!

## ART & CULTURE कला और सस्कृति

UNDER ATTACK

**THREATEN**

**Vitriol & valentine**

**BHOPAL**

**ATTACK**

**BHOPAL**

**UDAIPIUR**

**जनसत्ता**

**A cry of anguish from artists**

प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के भाषणे संस्कृति मंत्री अनूप मिश्र कहते हैं, 'लघुकथित बुद्धिजीवी क्या कहते हैं, मुझे इसकी परवाह नहीं है। उन्होंने रामसेन अकादमी नहीं बनाई है। उन्होंने एक बांग्लादेशी गायक के नाम पर अकादमी का नाम रखा है। वे कितने खुराफात चाहते हैं?' यह 'गायक' विशालता संगीत है लेकिन मिश्र इसको गलत नहीं कहे। यह पूछे जाने पर कि यह कलाकार क्यों है? मिश्र कहते हैं, 'मीडिया को खुद पता करने दीजिए।' उल्लासदीन खां पैहर भवन के संस्थापक हैं और दशरथकर और जली अकबर खां के अध्यक्ष हैं। वे पैहर / राधिका गैलरी में सम्मेलन

# बर्बरता के कगार पर !



**MIGHTY MARGINS**

## **Quick bites from the session**

On marginalisation, and movement building: Conversation between Siddhesh Gautam (@bakeryprasad) and Nikita Sonavane, Founder, Criminal Justice, and Police Accountability Project.

The exhibition also hosted a session between Siddhesh Gautam who goes by a popular Instagram handle (@bakeryprasad) and Nikita Sonavane, Founder, Criminal Justice, and Police Accountability Project on activism as pertinent social innovations, and how art has surfaced to be a poignant social innovation when it comes to movement building and furthering everyone a changemaker movement.

“The society still follows untouchability in other forms, by restricting marginalised communities to their marginalisation status, and not treating them as equals.

There are different nuances even in a particular marginalised community. My community cannot be limited to one blue flag. Our single blue colour can have so many variations, beyond one’s imagination. However, I am very hopeful that a time will come when every human will be treated the same way”

-SIDDHESH GAUTAM  
(@bakeryprasad)



“To see a man who belongs to one of the most oppressed communities (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar) in a suit and tie—wants you to push yourself and do better. That is what justice is. Suffering is not a praxis; idea isn’t that everybody suffers.

The praxis is that everybody can live the life they want to live. Our idea of justice is aspirational. And through your work, Siddhesh I see what those aspirations and possibilities, even in the light of forces that are working against these very aspirations”

-NIKITA SONAVANE  
Founder, Criminal Justice,  
and Police Accountability Project



# About Event Design

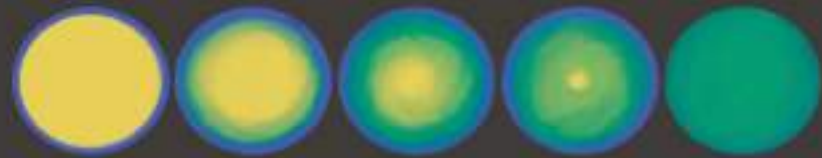
The signage and event design took inspiration from historical incidents and movements around marginalisation. The colours you see take a leaf from colours of protest, expression, and identity globally.

The silhouettes on the signage represent the voices behind social movements—marginalised populations.

The moons for artwork descriptions represented the resilience and persistence of marginalised populations, where the margins were mixing with the rest of the moon to result a new hue.







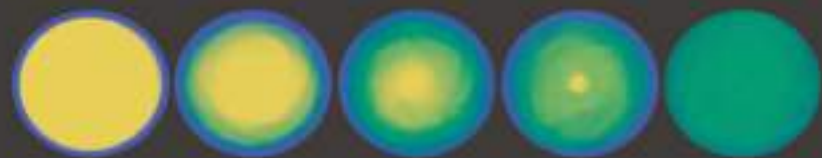
## Ramabai Bhimrao Ambedkar

Ajinkya Dekhane

Ramabai Bhimrao Ambedkar was the woman who propelled Babasaheb to the heights of his academic as well as political success. The anecdotes of her unimaginable sacrifice in a lifelong struggle to transform an ordinary 'Bhina' to Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar also transformed her own identity from Ramabai to the mother of all, 'Rama!'. Rama sacrificed her own wants and likes, saving every penny out of sheer love and faith in the mammoth task her partner had undertaken to churn up a revolution, India wasn't ready for. She was contained knowing every grumble her empty stomach made, ensured a fellow Dalit woman a life of dignity for decades to come. Rama learned to read and write in English early on, a great feat for her time.

Dalit women today face the worst forms of oppression in rural as well as urban areas in personal and professional life one for their caste second for being a woman and third if they're poor. Dalit women today are the marginalized within the marginalized. Upper class Savarna feminists have either denied space for Dalit women to rise or have blatantly appropriated their struggle taking every opportunity to speak on their behalf. Dalit feminism is slowly holding its ground with scholars and activists pointing out caste and gender intersectionalities. Today, all Dalits as well as their allies who have chosen to take up and continue this tedious work of calling out and systematically dismantling Brahminical Patriarchy find their strength and inspiration in the legacy of Rama!

Ink and Charcoal on Paper  
Size: 76.2 x 76.2 cm  
2019



## Something Sketchy

Madhuvanathi Mohan aka Something Sketchy is an illustrator from Bangalore, India, who recently moved to Mount Pleasant, Vancouver with her partner and their ginger rescue cat Thimmi.

She puts her illustrations on products like notebooks, stickers and prints for retail. Each quirky and unique design has a story behind it or a song that inspired it.

She cares very deeply about bringing the indie illustrator community together and runs an illustrators' group called The Sketchup where she has hosted intimate, informal, underground gatherings with established Speakers, across the country. She also curates and organises art shows and festivals.



**LAW  
FOR ALL**  
FOSTERING JUSTICE INNOVATIONS

### ARTISTS

Ajinkya Dekhane,  
Katayoun Karami, Jose,  
Pen Pencil Draw,  
Siddhesh Gautam,  
Shrujana Shridhar,  
Sonaksha Iyengar, Veer Munshi

### ORGANISATIONS

Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust  
(Sahmat),  
Justicemakers by Agami x  
The Alipore Post x Copycat Design,  
Acode by Digital Empowerment  
Foundation

Projection Art by Mantis Shrimp  
Creative

### SESSION

In Conversation with Siddhesh  
Gautam (@bakeryprasad) and Nikita  
Sonavane, Founder, Criminal  
Justice, and Police Accountability  
Project

Poster Art by Something Sketchy

Curated by Meghana Parik

# Mighty Margins

ASSERTING FROM THE MARGINS TO  
MOVE MINDSETS

NOVEMBER 4, 2022 | 1800 TO 2200 HRS  
Bangalore International Centre

## **Pictures from the exhibition**











