

DEC 7<sup>TH</sup> TO 17<sup>TH</sup> 2017 ,

# Women's Empowerment



Arcs-of-a-Circle  
ARTISTS' RESIDENCY MUMBAI



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The purpose of the Arcs-of-a-Circle Artists' Residency Mumbai was to provide a 10-day crucible for artists across art forms to converge and converse around women's empowerment.

The co-founders of this program were: The US Consulate General Mumbai helmed by James B Fennell, Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO); Almitra Kika, Public Affairs/Public Diplomacy Specialist; Nandita Shah and Nandita Gandhi, Co-directors - Akshara Centre - a women's rights organization; and fictionist and poet Rochelle Potkar.

Akshara Centre works towards changing mindsets of the youth, on one hand, and systems-change on the other. It has striven to build public-private partnerships leading to institutionalized initiatives with the police, local municipalities, and transport authorities in creating safer cities for women. Having worked to further the cause of gender justice, and fight gender-based violence locally, nationally, and internationally, it saw this residency as an act of breaking silos between art and activism.

Rochelle Potkar has dwelled on the body of a woman in a feminist spectrum from erotica fiction to resistance poetry. Once back from Iowa's International Writing Program in the Fall 2015, she based the outlines of the residency on her experiences at Iowa. She too hoped to break competitive silos that formed in one type of art form with a collaborative spirit that infuses itself across art forms to an ekphrastic harmonization.

These earlier ideas and outlines of the program were, however, enriched with broader and deeper strokes in regular brainstorming meetings between James, Almitra, Nandita, and Rochelle at the US Consulate Mumbai.

For this year 2017, the program received 269 submissions, of which 12 participants were selected through the criteria of:

1. Innovation in content in idiom, metaphor, language, and/or imagery.
2. Performative element gleaned from the audio/video recordings in terms of vocal voice.
3. Strength and structure of content portraying authorial voice (Point-of-view/world view).
4. Promise of performance seen/heard through the video/audio for the future as an artist-of-the-world.
5. Their biography that gave a glimpse of their art-footprint, and thematic focuses.

These participants came from across India to showcase their work and share their views. Poets, a translator, dancers (in three styles: modern, Kathak, and Bharatanatyam), a filmmaker, a singer-song writer, a multi-disciplinary artist (working with moving image, soundscapes and installation art), a stand-up comedian, and a few storytellers attended the program to piece together one arc of the whole narrative around women's empowerment.

The emphasis was on individual work and collaborative work formed during the residency, that with surprising alchemy could lead to a symbiosis and synthesis of single art-forms.



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ARTISTS' RESIDENCY MUMBAI



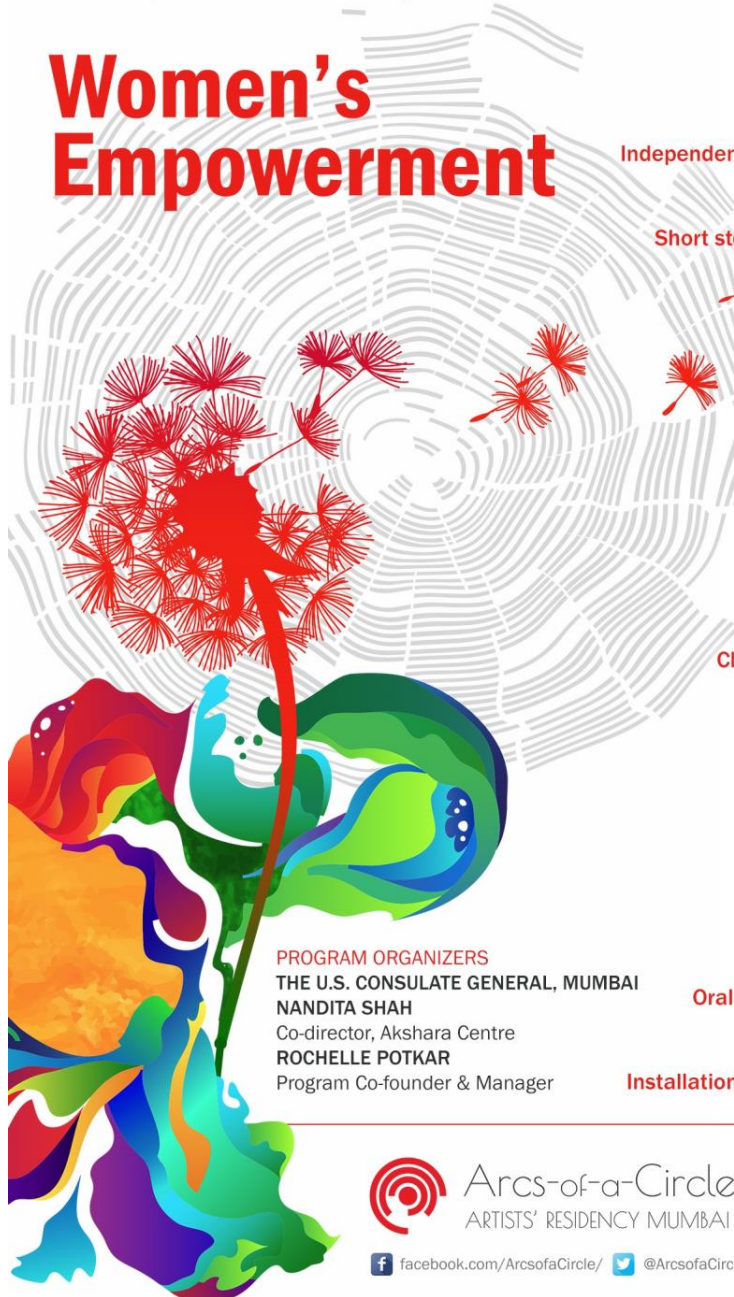
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Out of the 15 participants chosen, two dropped out at the last minute due to prior commitments and one – singer-songwriter Sanjeeta Bhattacharya could only attend the last day of the program.

The U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai in partnership with Akshara Centre invite the following 15 performers to a 10-day artists' residency in Mumbai to share your work around

# Women's Empowerment



PROGRAM ORGANIZERS  
THE U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL, MUMBAI  
NANDITA SHAH  
Co-director, Akshara Centre  
ROCHELLE POTKAR  
Program Co-founder & Manager

Anjali Khurana  
Dance (Contemporary), Mumbai

Apeksha Ghatkar  
Classical dance, Mumbai

Chandramohan S  
Poetry, Kerala

Deepika Sharma  
Independent documentary filmmaker, Delhi

Jayita Sengupta  
Short story with classical music, Kolkata

Kajal Srinivasan  
Standup comedian, Mumbai

Karthik Shankar  
Short story, Chennai

Mohit Mukhi  
Music (Guitar), Mumbai

Poornima Laxmeshwar  
Spoken word, Bangalore

Prajakta Sathe  
Classical dance (Kathak), Mumbai

Sanjeeta Bhattacharya  
Singer-songwriter, Delhi

Somrita Urni Ganguly  
Poetry, Kolkata

Sudipta Dhruva  
Short story, Mumbai

Vikram Sridhar  
Oral Classical storytelling, Bangalore

Vishal Kumaraswamy  
Installation art & moving image, Bangalore



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**Anjali Khurana**  
Contemporary Dancer,  
Theatre Artist, Actor

Anjali Khurana is an actor, dancer, choreographer, voice artist, activist, and entrepreneur. Born and raised in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Anjali pursued her passion for dance and theatre from a young age. She is trained in neuroscience at Harvard and a Master in Public Administration at Columbia. Both in India and abroad, she has accumulated a vast body of work that spans regular live performances with an Improv Comedy troupe (Improv Comedy Mumbai), several plays, short films, commercial and indie feature films, music videos, and several commercials.

**Chandramohan S.**  
Poet and Social Activist

Chandramohan S. is an Indian English Dalit poet and literary critic based in Kerala. His poems were shortlisted for Srinivas Rayaprol Poetry Prize 2016. His second collection of poems is titled, 'Letters to Namdeo Dhasal' is just published. A few of his poems have been used at many protest in addition to being anthologized in LAND: An Anthology of Indo-Australian Poetry, and 40 poets under 40. In year 2016, OUTLOOK magazine had profiled him as one of the high achievers from the Dalit community. In addition to being an aspiring rapper, he is currently collaborating with a musician to make a rap album of Dalit poetry.

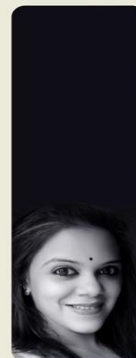


**Vikram Sridhar**  
Storyteller and Theatre Artist

Vikram Sridhar is an Oral Performance storyteller, story researcher, and theatre practitioner based in Bangalore, India who believes in the power of oral traditions and stories, in particular, in a technology-filled world that has to be adapted to today's times. He is the co-founder of Tahatto, a Bangalore-based award-winning theatre group. He has volunteered and worked with different organizations in the animal welfare and conservation space from his childhood days. He also consults and works with organizations in the social sector.

**Prajakta Sathe**  
Kathak Dancer

Prajakta Sathe was awarded the prestigious Maharashtra Bhushan Award by Maharashtra Kala Niketan for her work in the field of dance. She received the prestigious Kalindi Jaykar Sangeet Bhushan by Shikshan. She has performed at the inaugural function of the Asian Film Festival, in the serial Raja Shiv Chatrapati, The Maharashtra Gaurav Sahyadri Puraskar, on ETV Marathi, at Dinanath Natyamandir and Yeshwantrao Chavan Auditorium and Ruia College.



**Apeksha Ghatkar**  
Indian Classical Dancer and  
Performing Artist

Apeksha Ghatkar has done her Masters of Performing Arts, Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai. She is a graded artist by Doordarshan, Mumbai, and has been awarded the Nritya Nipuna 2016. She has performed at the Kala Ghoda Art Festival, Delhi International Art Festival, Raindrop Dance Festival, Shakti Mahotsav by Govt. of Maharashtra, Kalabharathi Festival, Yuva Rang Mahotsav, Maharashtra Kala Academy and many such places of repute.

**Somrita Ganguly**  
Poet and Translator

Somrita Umi Ganguly is a professor, researcher, and translator, soon to complete her PhD from the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She teaches British Literature to undergraduate students, and translates from Bengali and Hindi to English. She was selected by the Writers' Centre Norwich as an emerging translator in 2016 and invited as translator-in-residence at Cove Park, Scotland, in October 2017. She will be in Mumbai, in December 2017, as poet-in-residence at the Arcs-of-a-Circle Artists' Residency. Her work has been showcased at the 2017 London Book Fair and she has been published in Asymptote, In Other Words, and Muse India, among others. She also has twelve academic publications to her credit and is a recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund Award (2013) and Sarojini Dutta Memorial Prize (2011).



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### **Kajal Srinivasan** Stand-up comedian

She's half Tamilian, half Bengali, like 2 Chetan Bhagat novels in 1. She's 39, and a graphic designer in my day job. She's working on a set about women's body issues and how they waste time on fad diets to get validation. It's titled (tentatively) '10 ways to look the hottest at your own funeral'. She also has a lot to say on marital rape.



### **Jayita Sengupta** Academic, Creative artist and Writer

Jayita Sengupta is an academic, creative artist and writer. She was a British Council Fellow in 2000, a Senior Fulbright visiting faculty at Stanford University and in Taiwan universities in 2013. She is the Managing and Chief Editor of *Caesurae: Poetics of Cultural Translation*. "Shivelight" is the title story of the volume, which she is attempting to present as a visual artist along with musical renditions.



### **Sudipta Dhruva** Storyteller

Sudipta Dhruva through Biscotti Media and Ideas Box uses different ways to tell stories, whether in television shows like *OMG, Yeh Mera India* or through events like the Flying Elephant Story Markets in malls. As an educationist, she has used stories for learning and impacting change in schools across India. As a storyteller and poet, she has worked with dancers and created multimedia presentations.

### **Karthik Shankar** Writer and Social Activist

Karthik Shankar is an editor at Karadi Tales, an award-winning children's publishing house, and an independent journalist. He also works with The Red Elephant Foundation, a gender-equality driven peacebuilding initiative. Karthik graduated as a Young India Fellow from Ashoka University in 2016. In 2016, he was the recipient of the DNA - Out of Print short story competition. He was also the recipient of a young writer's grant by the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation for Take on Art's New Writing Workshop. Karthik was part of a panel by the Takshashila Institution, a public policy think tank to discuss his essay in the context of India's increasing threats against liberal values. In 2015, Karthik was among a hundred youth leaders from around the world selected for The Third Hague Peace Conference on the basis of his essay 'Redefining the meaning of war, combatants and civilians'.



### **Deepika Sharma** Documentary Filmmaker and Creative Producer

Deepika Sharma films include 'Dream Girls,' 'So Long Sam...' and 'From the Frontline.' 'Dream Girls' was made as response to the December 16, 2012 Delhi gangrape and the year that followed it. She has worked as a producer on international non-fiction series for Channel 4, BBC and Netflix. She has also worked as an Associate on cutting Indian television series, 'Connected Hum-Tum' and multimedia web project on love, sex and desire, 'Agents of Ishq.' She is currently working on a multimedia project on community libraries and how reading culture is evolving a new form.



### **Vishal Kumaraswamy** Multi-disciplinary Artist (Art installation, moving images)

Vishal is a multi-disciplinary artist working with moving image, constructed soundscapes and installation art. Having recently graduated with an MA in Photography from Central Saint Martins, his work explores notions of failure and non-representational photography by using disintegrated cinema to create immersive experiences.



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### The 10-day Program

7th December, *In Search of Goya*, poet and slam champion Eloise Stevens conducted a storytelling workshop for the participants at Dosti House, American Library.

The morning began with introductory speeches by James B Fennell, Nandita Shah, Rochelle Potkar, and Almitra Kika.

Eloise Stevens initiated the workshop by asking participants to introduce themselves by performing their names. Next, she urged them to tell a story in one sentence each standing in a circle, followed by creating a one-word story, and then by weaving a story using only movement.

The purpose of this was to make the participants realize how syntax works and enables them to let go.

Next, was on why stories are important and the feedback given by the participants was on themes like sublimation, documentation, memories, translation, and transcreation.

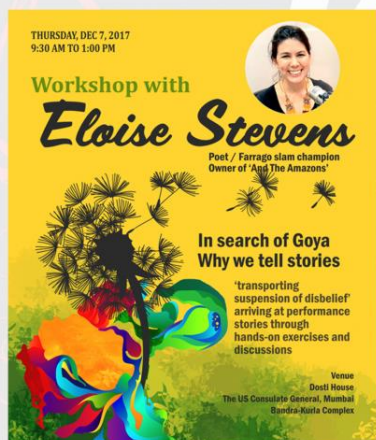
The other thought-provoking question she asked was, "Why do we tell stories?" This received varied responses: to feel alive, seek relief, a means to an end, a means in itself, for sharing, and also for selfish reasons of expressions.

Eloise imparted some storytelling theories - exposition, action, climax, and resolution, then divided participants into four teams with a performance artist in each team, asking them to strike out lines from the newspaper and make a creative based on words and performance.

With an outstanding use of words in poetry or news snippets, we saw collaborative performances of a kathak dance, puppet dance, and a mime.

The groups first performed individually and then collectively creating a greater impact, and showing the difference.

The entire exercise enabled participants to open up from within to new story and collaborative possibilities, thus emphasizing the spirit of ekphrasis.



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**8th December**, Day 2 was quieter, spent in-house.

After the morning's breakfast at West End Hotel, Nandita Gandhi conducted a riveting and thought-provoking talk on activism. Her talk, in a way, set the tone of what was to come, also giving artists a preview into activism. A recce was planned for the dancers at Essar House.

Vikram Sridhar gave a talk at St. Xavier's college on behalf of the residency on oral storytelling, and Kajol Srinivasan spoke at KC college on women in stand-up comedy in India.

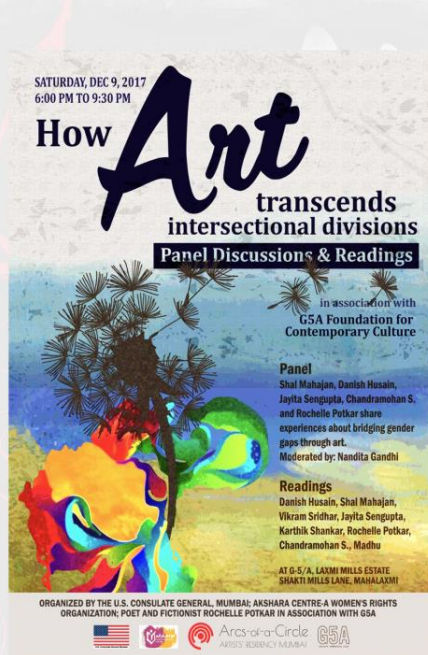
In the afternoon, Jayita Sengupta and Deepika Sharma presented their life's work over a 40-minute presentation each.

In the evening, many participants headed to Juhu's Novotel to partake of the Short film festival finale, hosted by the US Consulate General, Mumbai.

**9th December** was a busy day with poetry readings by Chandramohan S. and Somrita Ganguly as featured poets of the Words Tell Stories open mic (WTS) alongside noted Tibetan poet Tenzin Tsundue and 20 open mic poets at the Independence Brewing Company, Andheri.

This evening also saw Panel discussions and Readings on the G5A terrace. How **Art Transcends Intersectional Divisions**.

The panelists were Shals Mahajan, Danish Husain, Jayita Sengupta, Chandramohan S. and Rochelle Potkar who shared experiences about bridging gender gaps through art in a session moderated by Nandita Gandhi.



Anjali Khurana rehearsing a dance move



Panel discussion



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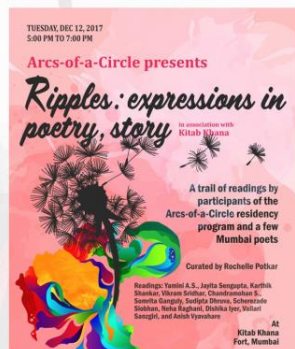
**10th December** being Sunday was spent relaxing, reflecting and contemplating in quietude.

In the afternoon, Kajol Srinivasan and Vishal Kumaraswamy presented their life's work over a 40-minute presentation each.

On **11th December** morning Shobhna S. Kumar, founder and editor of Queer Ink presented a talk on LGBTQ and gay literature. It was an enriching and enlightening session.

In the afternoon, Sudipta Dhruva and Anjali Khurana presented their life's work over a 40-minute presentation each. **12th December** was scheduled for Kitab Khana.

Presentations by participants of the program in conjunction with Mumbai poets. All performers for 10 minutes each adding voice to the electrifying conversation on empowerment.



Sudipta Dhruva regaling with a story



An evening at Kitab Khana



Vikram Sridhar telling a tale

In the afternoon, Vikram Sridhar and Prajakta S. presented their life's work over a 40-minute presentation each. Post-lunch, the artistic director Vinay S. rehearsed with participants for the grand finale of 17th December.

**13th December** morning saw Professor Utkarsh Patel make a presentation on mythology and feminism. The participants found the session very riveting.

In the afternoon, Somrita G. and Karthik Shankar presented their life's work over a 40-minute presentation each.



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**14th December**, Lavanya Shanbhogue, author and academician, was the invited speaker for the morning. She spoke on feminist vocabulary, also breaking the group into pairs to conduct games that explored group-think and group dynamism.

In the afternoon, Apeksha Ghatkar and Chandramohan S. presented their life's work over a 40-minute presentation each.

The evening unfurled at the Canvas Laugh Club for the event titled in partnership with WE-Empowered India.

The participants featured there were: Apeksha Ghatkar, Anjali Khurana, Kajal Srinivasan, Prajakta Sathe, and Vikram Sridhar.



Rochelle Potkar sets the evening's tone



Apeksha Ghatkar performs

## Arcs-of-a-Circle in partnership with Women Empowered-India present

# Empowered circles of resilience

An evening of poetry, dance, story, comedy

CANVAS LAUGH CLUB  
PALLADIUM  
462, SENAPATI BAPAT MARG,  
LOWER PAREL, MUMBAI 400013

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017  
4:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

Awards:  
Mahabano Mody Kotwal  
Menka Shivdasani  
Priya Sarukkai Chabria

Invocation:  
Vinita Agarwal, Rochelle Potkar  
Gayatri Chawla, Smita Sahay  
Sneetha Bhosmik, Priyal Panchal  
Minisilini Harchandral

Performances:  
Bharatnatyam: Apeksha Ghatkar  
Poetry (Marathi): Jayashree Harji Joshi  
Kathak: Prajakta Sathe  
Poetry (Marathi): Sanket Mhatre  
Modern Dance: Anjali Khurana  
Poetry: Madhu  
Story-teller: Vikram Sridhar  
Stand-up Comedy: Kajal Srinivasan

Compered by: Shuchi Mehta

ARCS-OF-A-CIRCLE IS AN ARTISTS' RESIDENCY PROGRAM, CO-ORGANIZED BY THE U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL, MUMBAI; AKSHARA CENTRE - A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATION; AND POET AND FICTION WRITER ROCHELLE POTKAR



Anjali Khurana dances



Three senior women poets are felicitated.



## Arcs-of-a-Circle

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**15th December** morning academican Gita Chadha from Mumbai University gave a lecture to the participants on feminist theories.

Vikram Sridhar and Prajakta S. - participants, presented their life's work over a 40-minute presentation each.

Post-lunch: The artistic director Vinay S. rehearsed with the participants for the grand finale.

In the evening, at Avid Learning all 12 participants showcased their works-in-progress for 12 minutes each.

Menka Shivdasani, Senior poet from Mumbai was invited to read a few poems and set the tone of creative showcasing.



James B Fennell attends the event

**12 12 12**

12 Artists + 12 Minutes + 12 Performances

**Nandita Shah**  
Co-Director, Akshara Centre

Date : Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
Time : 5:30pm - 6:00pm - Registration |  
6:00pm - 8:00pm - Program  
Venue : Essar House, K. K. Marg, Mahalaxmi,  
Mumbai - 400014  
RSVP : [www.avidelearning.com/](http://www.avidelearning.com/)  
[avidelearning@essarservices.co.in](mailto:avidelearning@essarservices.co.in) /  
+919169937710



After the performances



**Arcs-of-a-Circle**  
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Art and Activism: where do the lines blur? Joining ends of a spectrum. What does it mean to be an artist in today's times? The panelists for the evening were Brinda Miller, Jhelum Paranjpe, C S Lakshmi, Manaswini Lata Ravindra. The session was moderated by Dr. Nandita Shah.



Paresh Tiwari  
reading

[illegible]

Arcs-of-a-Circle  
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## Our Comprehensive Event Outline (7th - 17th December 2017)



**17<sup>th</sup>  
DEC '17**

In association with The Poetry Club, and Poetry College, Arcs-of-a-Circle Mumbai Poetry Slam in English, Marathi, and Hindi

Finale Performance of artists-in-residence and a few Mumbai artists  
7:00 PM TO 9:00 PM  
Artistic Director: Vinay Subramanian

GSA  
Lami Mills Compound, Shakti Mills Lane,  
Off Dr. E. Moses Road, Mumbai 400 011

Black box, GSA  
Lami Mills Compound, Shakti Mills Lane,  
Off Dr. E. Moses Road, Mumbai 400 011

The U.S. Consulate, Mumbai  
in partnership with Akshara Centre

# Women's Empowerment

7<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>  
December 2017

ARCS-OF-A-CIRCLE IS AN ARTISTS' RESIDENCY PROGRAM. CO-ORGANIZED BY THE US CONSULATE GENERAL, MUMBAI; AKSHARA CENTRE - A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATION; AND POET AND FICTION WRITER ROCHELLE POTKAR



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### Organizers

The U.S. Consulate General  
Mumbai  
Nandita Shah, Nandita Gandhi  
Akshara Centre  
Rochelle Potkar  
Poet & Fictionist

**7<sup>th</sup>  
DEC '17**

In Search of Goya  
9:30 PM TO 1:00 PM  
Storytelling workshop by Elaine Stevens  
(Only for Participants)

Dosti House  
C - 49, G-Block, Bandra Kurla Complex,  
Mumbai 400 051

**9<sup>th</sup>  
DEC '17**

In association with  
Words Tell Stories  
4:00 PM TO 7:00 PM  
Poetry readings by Chandramohan S. &  
Somrita Ganguly with the WTS feature  
Tendin Tsoudu, and 20 open mic poets

How Art transcends intersectional  
divisions  
6:00 PM TO 9:30 PM

Panel discussions & Readings  
Panel: Shal Mahajan, Danish Husain,  
Jayita Sengupta, Chandramohan S. and  
Rochelle Potkar  
Moderated by: Nandita Gandhi.  
Readings: Danish Husain, Shal Mahajan,  
Vikram Sridhar, Jayita Sengupta,  
Karthik Shankar, Rochelle Potkar,  
Chandramohan S., Madhu

Independence Brewing Company  
Boonani Estate, B-41, Unit 001 and 101, New Link Road,  
Andheri West, Mumbai 400 053

GSA  
Lami Mills Compound, Shakti Mills Lane,  
Off Dr. E. Moses Road, Mumbai 400 011

**12<sup>th</sup>  
DEC '17**

Arcs-of-a-Circle  
Ripples of expression in poetry, story  
5:00 PM TO 7:00 PM

Presentation trail by participants of the  
Arcs-of-a-Circle residency program and  
Mumbai poets  
Readings: Tamiel A.S., Jayita Sengupta,  
Karthik Shankar, Vikram Sridhar,  
Chandramohan S., Somrita Ganguly,  
Sudipta Dhruva, Scherezade Siobhan,  
Neelha Raghani, Disha Iyer, Vallari Sangati,  
and Anish Vyavahare

Kitab Khana  
45-47, M. G. Road, Semaya Bhavan, Flora Fountain,  
Fort, Mumbai 400 001

**14<sup>th</sup>  
DEC '17**

In partnership with WE-Empowered  
and Smeetha Bhoomik  
4:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

Empowered Circles of Creativity: An evening of  
poetry, dance, story, comedy

Awards: Mahabano Mody Khatol,  
Menka Shivdasani, Piya Sursakal Chabria.  
Invocation: Vinita Agrawal, Rochelle Potkar,  
Gayatri Chandra, Smita Sahay, Smeetha Bhoomik,  
Priyal Panchal.

Performances:  
Bharatnayam: Apaksha Ghatkar  
Poetry (Marathi): Jayashree Hari Joshi  
Kathak: Pranjana Sathie  
Poetry (Marathi): Samket Mhatre  
Modern Dance: Anjali Khurana  
Poetry: Madhu  
Story-teller: Vikram Sridhar  
Stand-up Comedy: Kajal Srinivasan  
Compered by: Shuchi Mehta

Canvas Laugh Club  
Palladium, 462, Senapati Bapat Marg,  
Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013

**15<sup>th</sup>  
DEC '17**

In association with Avid Learning  
Arcs-of-a-Circle  
6:00 PM TO 8:00 PM

12 Artists + 12 Minutes + 12 performances,  
curated by Rochelle Potkar and Nandita Shah  
Special guest: Menka Shivdasani

Essar House  
11, Keshavnagar Khadye Marg, Mahalaxmi,  
Opp. Mahatma racocourse, Mumbai 400034

**16<sup>th</sup>  
DEC '17**

Art and Activism: where do the lines  
blur? Joining ends of a spectrum.  
What does it mean to be an artist  
in today's times?

4:00 PM TO 6:00 PM  
Panelists: Brinda Miller, Ambai (C S Lakshmi),  
Manazwini Lata Ravindra, Jhesum Paranjpe.  
Moderated by: Nandita Shah.  
Readings: Manazwini Lata Ravindra,  
Rochelle Potkar, Deepika Sharma, Pooresh Tiwari,  
Vishal Kumaraswamy.

Bhau Daji Lad Museum  
S1 A, Rani Bang, Veer Mata Jijabai Bhonsle Udyan,  
Dr Bhaba Saheb Ambedkar Marg,  
Bryulla East, Mumbai 400027





**17th December** saw the grand finale of the residency, a culmination of all the incubation and spirited alliance.

The participants visited G5A's Black box for rehearsing in the afternoon with the artistic director, Vinay S. At 4:00 p.m., at the G5A terrace a Poetry Slam in English, Marathi, and Hindi, in association with The Poetry Club, and Poetry College was conducted to bring in young poets from the city of Mumbai. It saw three winning participants recite their poems alongside the participants of the residency in the Black box, at the main show.

The grand finale was a mega-event in the levels of performance each of the 12 artists-in-residence presented. The show was inaugurated with James B. Fennell's overviewing the work of US Consulate General, Mumbai, emphasizing the urgent and important need to focus on women's empowerment - a key area of work.

Nandita Shah spoke on activism and Rochelle Potkar about the alchemy artists brought together in this crucible. The event ended on an effective note with appreciation from all quarters: audience, event partners, and Mumbai-based artists' and activists. The feedback received was that this was one of the most egalitarian program that was most inclusive and welcoming to everyone.



The whole team takes a bow after the stellar performance on a riveting night that was 17th December 2018.



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SUNDAY, DEC 17, 2017  
4:00 PM TO 6:30 PM





**The Arcs-of-a-Circle Mumbai  
Poetry Slam**

3 separate slams in  
English, Marathi and  
Hindi

10 finalists in each  
language compete for  
the top spot to perform  
at the Arcs-of-a-Circle  
multi-disciplinary Finale  
Performance.

Hosted by  
The Poetry Club and Poetry College  
At  
G5A, Mahalaxmi

ORGANIZED BY THE U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL, MUMBAI; AKSHARA CENTRE-A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATION; POET AND  
FICTIONIST ROCHELLE POTKAR IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE POETRY CLUB AND POETRY COLLEGE.

**Arcs-of-a-Circle  
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In association with  
G5A Foundation for  
Contemporary Culture

Sun, Dec 17, 2017  
7:00 PM to 9:00 PM  
AT G5A  
MAHALAXMI

Poetry readings  
Storytelling  
Screenings  
Standup comedy  
Dance  
Installation art  
Music performances

Artistic Director  
**Vinay Subramanian**  
Free passes  
available at G5A

ORGANIZED BY THE U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL, MUMBAI; AKSHARA CENTRE-A WOMEN'S RIGHTS  
ORGANIZATION; POET AND FICTIONIST ROCHELLE POTKAR IN ASSOCIATION WITH G5A



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A sample poem from work by Chandramohan S and Somrita, where they intersperse two poems to form one:

#### Portrait of the Poet as a Young woman

Her hair  
Freshly harvested dreadlocks  
Unedited gospel of love  
Off limits to combs.

Tresses like streams  
Of eternal fire  
From the arsenal of her body.

Poems conceived in a celestial tongue  
When stars align with cesarean precision.  
It is our own language.

Her verses  
Are neither left nor right aligned  
Time zones hinge at every line break  
Like sunflowers UN-aligned to the scorching heat.

Every evening, on her terrace,  
she lets her hair down and flies kite,  
Her verses tell vivid stories  
Stitched together in myriad colors.

Her verses gurgle like rivers let loose.  
She never braids them  
With her bare hands  
Before a poetry reading.

When her poems are read  
No boyfriend or pimp is allowed  
Inside the reading hall.

Her kite, untethered to her surname,  
Soars high, till it gets entangled with the stars.

Attempting to translate her poems  
Is like making love to a capricious mistress.

Her curly, kinky stream of verses  
Sway to the rhythm of her gait  
Untamed by the clanging of her anklets.

Her book of poems,  
a treatise on disheveled hair  
and tresses on fire.

DEC 7<sup>TH</sup> TO 17<sup>TH</sup> 2017

# Women's Empowerment



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An poem by Somrita Urni Ganguly (excerpt)/ individual work:

#### **A Prescription On How To Not Get Raped**

Do not go to GB Road at night,  
Do not talk to boys at night,  
Do not wear short clothes at night,  
Do not let those risky, explosive bra straps show at night,  
Do not smile, do not invite.  
Always carry your rape alarm and a bottle of pepper spray,  
And if someone tries to rape you, then call them your bhaiyya,  
Oh, bhaiyya, bhaiyya, oh dear, sweet, big brother of mine -- and pray,  
And do not ever talk about it, if you want the pain and the shame and the blame to go away,  
Make a habit of listening to your mother and your father and brother and your sister and your  
neighbor and your cat and your horse and god and your dog -- oh, you must conform, you must obey,  
Never drive your car of rented, dented dreams down that dark, hell hole of a highway  
Come on, now learn to behave yourself today.  
Aurat toh khuli tijori ki tarah hoti hai,  
So do not spread your legs and let them see the gold-dust between your thighs,  
Do not tempt men, never look them straight in the eye.  
Who do you think you are? How dare you question why?  
Cut your roots, cut your leaves, cut your branches, cut out your dreams and live your life  
Like a fucking frustrated shunted bonsai.  
You cannot light up the roads at night, you are no firefly,  
So stay in your room and rot and rust and wither and cry.  
And no, no one on that crowded bus will support you when called in to testify,  
So why don't you just lock yourself up and hide  
Your self and your fears and your hopes and your tears?  
Order, order, we're done with you, good bye!  
Do not tell your mamma if your uncle gives you a kiss,  
Do not accept candies from the big bad wolf, miss,  
You were born to be a block of wood, expect no kinesis,  
Made from one out of 24 of Adam's ribs, you Eve, were conceived  
As someone that can be easily, too easily dismissed.

You got pregnant from a rape? You must have enjoyed it then!  
What were you wearing that night, tell me once again?  
What time did you go out of the house that night -- oh do say when?  
Were you all alone or were you accompanied by your entourage of brethren?  
But I -- oh -- no, no, there is no I -- do not try to explain!  
Just go and ask your good god for mercy, and say a loud, resounding amen.

Yap yap yap yap yap  
Prescriptions  
Restrictions  
Recommendations  
Condemnation  
Reduction  
Over simplification  
Misconstruction  
Reconstruction  
Assumptions  
Instructions



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#### Feedback from Sudipta Dhruva, residency participant:

"...it was a great concept to get artists from different spaces to collaborate on one issue. It challenged us to think of different ways, and the inputs we received through the different sessions with activists and experts was very helpful. I will always cherish this experience and be grateful to all of you for giving us this amazing opportunity, which I am sure will spawn some exciting work from all of us.

For the future, I hope to work with Vikram on creating a longer dramatic piece based on my presentation done at the 17th December finale. Also, we intend to create more storytelling opportunities together and for each other. I plan to create a piece for Women's day with Prajakta which we have discussed using poetry and dance. We are both very excited about that. I, also, plan to collaborate with Deepika and Anjali on a presentation that we can make on women and mental health issues and get a grant for it from Universities in the US. Maybe even collaborate with artists in San Marcos on it."

#### Plans for the future - the next one year...

The participants have gone on to collaborate in their own cities.

Somrita G. and Apeksha G. performed recently at Pune IIFT, while Chandramohan S. and Vishal Kumaraswamy are implementing a visual media installation of two poems that examine islamophobia from a cubist perspective.

Karthik Shankar plans to create a literary journal (published annually) which would contain prose, poetry, photography from the residency based on its themes and ideas; and hold writing workshops on prose or poetry.

Kajol Srinivasan plans to collaborate with Vikram S., where she envisages presenting of similar topics on feminism but in two different ways at colleges or forums. She says, "We both communicate in a light fashion. It would be fun to hear a story first and then hear humor on current issues. Also, I feel we can both connect with children."

Kajol also hopes to do an improv jam event with Somrita and Prajakta, where they take relevant suggestions from the audience and interpret it live in three different forms. She hopes to also partner with Somrita to do stand-up performances in English and Hindi or Bangla with her performing the same set in different languages, also partnering with Sudipta to formulate a storytelling and humor show for corporates.

"I personally am going to look at conducting comedy workshops in colleges where I'm going to introduce it as a tool to promote feminist dialogue. I'm going to try to do male female interactive discussions through comedy in shows."

Most participants have collaborative ideas up their sleeves that they hope to execute in their cities to amplify the message of women's empowerment that began in December 2017 at the Arcs-of-a-Circle artists' residency Mumbai.



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The participants did not forget to share camaraderie and a few laughs as they go on to discuss, brainstorm and collaborate on newer ideas. Women's empowerment is a long arduous journey that cannot be executed without lightness in one's step, promise in one's heart, a strong twinkle in one's eyes, and the knowledge that we are not alone in this quest for justice, equality, and anti-discremination no matter how unyielding or impossible the challenges might seem, it is one day going to be made possible. One step at a time, each moment.



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## Biographies



Dr. Nandita Shah



Rochelle Potkar

Feminist scholar and activist with over 25 years of experience, **Dr. Nandita Shah** is active in the women's rights movement for more than two decades, as activist, researcher, gender trainer, and writer. She has co-authored several books, such as: *Contingent Workers: Women in Two Industries in Mumbai*, and *Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women's Movement in India* with Nandita Gandhi. In 1995, she co-founded Akshara Centre, a women's rights organization based in Mumbai. Akshara Centre works towards mindset change of youth, on one hand, and systems change on the other. Her expertise in building different public-private partnerships have led to institutionalized initiatives with the police and local municipalities, transport authorities for creating safer cities for women. Akshara Centre works with different stakeholders to further the cause of gender justice, and fight gender-based violence locally, nationally, and internationally.

She has been on many expert committees including with the Planning Commission on Gender Rights, for drafting women's policy in Maharashtra. She has represented Akshara on International platforms like UNWomen - Commission of Status of Women, AWID, Feminist Dialogues, Women Deliver, Post Beijing platforms, Habitat III among others.

She is on the Civil Society Advisory Group of UNWomen.

Author of *The Arithmetic of Breasts and other stories* and *Four Degrees of Separation*, **Rochelle Potkar** is the alumna of Iowa's International Writing Program, and Charles Wallace Writer's fellowship, Stirling.

She was the winner of the 2016 Open Road Review story contest for *The leaves of the deodar*. Her story *Chit Mahal (The Enclave)* appears in *The Best of Asian Short Stories*, Kitaab International. Her poem, *The girl from Lal Bazaar* was shortlisted for the Gregory O' Donoghue International Poetry Prize, 2018.

Her latest book of prose poems is *Paper Asylum* (Copper Coin Publishing, May 2018). Her poem, *Skirt* has been adapted into a poetry film by Philippa Cousins (UK) for the Visible Poetry Project 2018, USA.

(<https://rochellepotkar.com>)



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#### Appendix I – Shortlisted participants

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Vikram Sridhar, Oral Classical storytelling, Bangalore, [vikram@tahatto.com](mailto:vikram@tahatto.com)  
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Sanjeeta Bhattacharya, Singing-songwriting, Delhi, [sanjeetamusic@gmail.com](mailto:sanjeetamusic@gmail.com)  
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#### Appendix II – Longlisted participants

Mohit Mukhi, Music (Guitar), Mumbai, mohitmukhi@gmail.com

Shinie Anthony, Short story, Bangalore, shinieantony@gmail.com

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Nadeem Raj, Poetry, Mumbai, nadeem548@gmail.com

Shruti Sareen, Short story, Delhi, shrutanne@gmail.com

Arghadeep Barua, Singing, Assam, arghadeep69@gmail.com

Jahnvi Dave, RAP/ Spoken word, Mumbai, jahnvi.dave@gmail.com

Saurabh Chowdhury, True-life storytelling, Delhi, g3sauri@gmail.com

Anurag Meshram, Short filmmaking, Bhilai Nagar, anuragmeshram2008@gmail.com

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Aastha Singh Spoken word poetry, Delhi, Email: aastha.singh\_ug18@ashoka.edu.in

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Archana Ramanathan Storytelling, Mumbai, Email: archana.archie19@gmail.com



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Gratitude by:

**Co-Founders:**

**U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai:**

James B. Fennell, Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO)  
Almitra Kika, Public Affairs/Public Diplomacy Specialist

**Akshara Centre**

Nandita Gandhi  
Nandita Shah

**Fictionist & Poet**

Rochelle Potkar

**Toward our TEAM and PARTNERS:**

**Arcs-of-a-Circle team:**

**Core:**

Madhu, Poet & Founder - Poetry Couture;  
Neha Raghani, Spoken word poet;  
Dishika Iyer, Poet & Classical dancer

**Day Managers:**

Priyal Panchal, Poet;  
Khushbu K., Artist;  
Vallari Sanzgiri, Poet;  
Paresh Tiwari, Haibuner & Poet;  
Yamini A.S., Author & Academician;  
Anish Vyavahare, Poet & Founder - Poetry College;  
Mrinalini Harchandrai, Poet & Author

**Akshara Centre team:**

Sakina Bahora  
Sumita Bohra  
Kimaya Vartak

**Project art partners:**

Eloise Stevens, Poet & Slam champion  
Rochelle D'silva and Words Tell Stories (WTS)  
Smeetha Bhoomik, Women Empowered (WE)  
Kitab Khana  
Canvas Laugh Club  
Asad Lalji & Team, Avid Learning & Essar House  
Bhau Daji Lad Museum  
Anuradha Parikh, Ankita Shah & Team, G5A  
The Poetry Club (TPC), Mumbai  
Poetry College, Thane

**A special thanks:** Sanjeeta Bhattacharya, singer-songwriter, Delhi.

**Resource persons & panelists:**

Eloise Stevens, Poet & Slam champion  
Nandita Gandhi, Co-director, Akshara Centre  
Shals Mahajan, Indian queer feminist & Writer  
Danish Husain, Actor, Poet, Storyteller & Theatre director  
Shobhna S. Kumar, Publisher, Producer (LGBTHQIA+ India)  
Utkarsh Patel, Mythologist & Author  
Lavanya Shanbhogue, Research scholar & Novelist  
Gita Chadha, Academician  
Menka Shivdasani, Poet & Editor  
Brinda Miller, Artist & Curator  
CS Lakshmi, Writer & Independent researcher  
Manaswini Lata Ravindra, Playwright & Filmmaker  
Jhelum Paranjpe, Classical Dancer

Artistic Director - Vinay Subramanian;

Graphic Designer - Subodh Roche;

Film & Media partner: Leading Lines Digital

Standeers: Siddhi Graphics

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