

Sangeeta Isvaran



Profile



First recipient of the national award '**Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar**' Creator of the Katradi Method of Empathy Based Social Transformation Founder and Managing Trustee of Wind Dancers Trust

Honorary Associate, Nature Conservation Foundation, India

Fellow of the International Institute of Conciliation, Boston, USA

Empaneled with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations

Creator of: Lorry Lolakku - mobile social-justice theatre for marginalized communities; She Matters. – Radical Immersion Leadership Camps for Women

Public speaker: Healing Arts Scotland and Scottish Parliament, Itau Cultural (Brazil), Universidad Veracruzana

TEDx speaker: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr4iBABzwcg>

Recipient of the COVID Warrior Award (Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind),

Rotary Peace Builder Award for COVID relief work

Born in 1975 at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Sangeeta has inherited a Bharatanatyam (classical dance/theatre form from Tamil Nadu, India) practice from the pioneering maestra, Padmabhushan Kalanidhi Narayanan and Smt. Savithri Jagannatha Rao.

A highly skilled performer, she has performed in more than 40 countries over 5 continents, where she has also

collaborated with several governmental and non-governmental organisations using the arts

in education, empowerment and conflict resolution. She spent years researching various performing art

forms from South Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe and West Africa, creating her own unique style of choreography in

many international collaborations as well as studying the pedagogies of empathetic communication, creative

improvisation, experiential problem solving, and non-transactional learning methods embedded in these

traditions. From this research and application in community work, she developed the Katradi Method of Empathy

Based Social Transformation and designed many curricula around gender equity, reproductive health, sexual

violence, caste/religious/ethnic conflict and more. She has also received several other national and

international fellowships – International Leaders Program, Australia Council for the Arts, Arts Network Asia, Asia

Europe Foundation, Asian Scholarship Foundation, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst [German

Academic Exchange Programme] – and awards – Kala Rathna, Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival; Prix de la

Creation, Centre Culturel d'Enghien-les-bains, France; Vasantalakshmi Young Dancer award, India.

Studied over 50 dance forms covering classical, ethnic and contemporary styles from across the world

Taught in over 20 universities and international organizations

Performed in over 40 countries across 5 continents

Speaks 8 international languages

Katradi- Empathy based social transformation



In an era marked by polarisation and overlapping crises - gender, caste, conflict, climate, and more – the arts have powerful strategies for social transformation. Sangeeta has worked using these strategies in education, empowerment and conflict resolution with many marginalized communities across the world, such as sex workers, street children, indigenous communities, landmine victims, people with disabilities, refugees, victims of caste and religious conflict and so on. Her 'Katradi Method' is a dynamic technique working on a grid of five levels of communication and understanding: physical, emotional, sensory, intellectual and intuitive. This is not just a theoretical construct; each module of Katradi design is a blend of activities that work through these five levels of understanding. A passionate advocate for using the arts in social change, the Katradi method has evolved to create powerful and joyous spaces of transformation.

Sangeeta founded the Wind Dancers Trust to develop the Katradi initiative. Please do visit www.katradi.org. Since its inception in 2014, their programs on taboo and toxic issues of gender, sexual abuse, menstruation, religious/caste conflict, livelihood development, environmental conservation, refugee dialogues have reached over 1,000,000 people via workshops, camps, teacher trainings, curriculum design, and performances.

She has created seminal programs like

- Bridging the Gaps Youth Camps – battling patriarchy, caste and poverty using sports and arts
- Lorry Lolakku - mobile performances for social justice in marginalised communities
- Besharam (Be Shameless) – Women's empowerment initiative fighting generational oppression
- She Matters. - Radical Immersion Leadership Camps for women
- Manvasanai (Scent of the Earth) – Modules for Children on Climate change and sustainable food practices
- Disaster Response - Sangeeta and Katradi were at the fore-front of COVID relief work. Working across several collectives, we have helped 11,000+ migrants reach home, distributed over 5,683 ration kits, 30,400 food kits on Shramik trains, 1,02,580 meals, 77,000 litres of water, opened our houses to shelter women fleeing domestic/sexual abuse, started a free kitchen, initiated education relief programs for children of government schools, created powerful modules to destigmatize COVID-19 and Vaccine Awareness programs. Since the pandemic Katradi has established a disaster response programme to help communities in conflict like in Manipur and post natural disasters like floods.

The Katradi Method has been used across the world, in more than 30 countries, with organisations such as UNESCO, World Vision, Emmaus Solidarité, Handicap International, Angkor Association for the Disabled, Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children, Deepam Educational Society for Health, Aseema Trust, Snow Leopard Trust, and Oxfam.

TeachingExperience

Sangeeta Isvaran is invited as visiting professor to teach courses, conduct seminars and lead workshops in Universities, NGOs, public and private institutions around the world – **Museu de Arte Moderna**, Department of Education, Sao Paulo, Brazil; **Fabricas Culturales**, Govt. Sao Paulo, Brazil; **Ecole international de Danse Irène Tassembédo**, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; **Hochschule für Musik und Tanz**, Köln, Germany; **Escuela Superior de Artes de Yucatán**, Mexico; **Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques**, Paris, France; **Institute Seni Indonesia**, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; **Royal University of Fine Arts**, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; **Chulalongkorn University**, Bangkok, Thailand.

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- 2025** Co-facilitator for the Artist Retreat with visiting artists/activists from over 7 countries at La Treignac, France
- 2024** Invited to speak and lead workshops at Healing Arts Scotland along with the Edinburgh International Festival and Festival of Politics at the Scottish Parliament
- 2023-2024** Visiting Lecturer for the MA Dance programme at the London Contemporary Dance School, The Place
- 2021-2022** Selected by the Australia Council for the Arts, for their International Leadership Programme; Visiting Scholar at several community and culture Initiatives in Sydney and Melbourne
- 2020-2021** Creation of Chennai Migrant Taskforce, **Katradi COVID-19 relief across India**
- 2019-2020** B-Motion Festival, Bassano del Grappa, Italy; **Compassion Quotient in Education**, ServiceSpace, Surat, India
- 2018-2019** Migrant Bodies, Moving Borders - Paris, France, Bassano del Grappa, Italy; **Gender and Reproductive Health**, CHUM Refugee camps, Emmaus Solidarité, Paris, France.
- 2018** Nyolo Tuki - performance for hornbill conservation with the Nishi tribe, Pakke Paga Festival, India
- 2017** The Tipping Point of Transformation, VI Coloquio Internacional sobre las Artes Escénicas, Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico; **Teatro en Cárcel - Theatre in prison**, Xalapa, Mexico ; Crear, Quemar, Cambiar: The Tipping Point of Transformation - International Teaching Artists Conference ITAC4, Carnegie Hall, New York, USA; **Opening Keynote Speaker, Workshop on Katradi Method**, Foundation for Community Dance, UK
- 2016-17** 'Abhaya – Be Without Fear', Indian Centre, Moscow, Russia; Villa Cinque, Torino, Italy
- 2016** Using the arts in environment - education, Snow Leopard Trust, Kyrgyzstan; **Community Dance**, Kalakshetra, India; Living Gender, Nature Conservation Foundation, India
- 2015** Cyber Rikshaw, Les Poussieres, France; **Empathy Based Transformation - the Mundane and Divine**, Compagnia Nad, Italy; Lorry Lolakku - Stories of Madras Kuppams, Madras Day, Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children
- 2014** Wind Dancers - Creating Change', Foundation of Community Dance, UK; **'Wind Dancers'**, Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, Mexico; 'Dust and Ashes', Antananarivo, Madagascar, Ouaga dougou, Burkina Faso, Torino, Italy
- 2012** 'DeadSpace, LivingSpace' - Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo, Brazil
- 2010** 'When the body is all eyes' - Hibridaciones trans-escénicas, Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, Mexico; **'Body signs and Semiotics'** - International Seminar on Art, Politics and Education, Bienal do Brasil, São Paulo, Brazil; 'Social stigma - Negative perception of the female body on stage'; University Of Hyderabad, India; **'Art Attack – Creative Approaches to Community Change'** - Pakistan and India: Shifting identities in culture, history and justice; Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2009** 'Peace-Building through the Arts' - South Asia – China Cultural Forum, New Delhi; **International Seminar on Cultural Languages: Challenges of Non-formal Education**, Instituto Itau Cultural, Sao Paulo, Brasil
- 2008** Creative Movement in Education, Hochschule für Musik, Cologne, Germany
- 2007** Using Art to heal for Mediation History, Making Peace: The Henry Everett Workshop for Professionals working with issues of Conflict, Peace and Justice, The International Institute of Conciliation, Boston, USA; **Migration of Peoples, Cultural Flows and the Surrounding Political Debate for Open Dialogue XI: Global Connections to Cultural Democracy**, The Association of American Cultures [TAAC], Denver, Colorado, USA; Physical Theatre, Escuela Superior de Artes de Yucatán, Merida, Mexico
- 2004** Rasa - a Lifeskill, 10th Annual Conference of Performance Studies International 'Perform - State - Interrogate', Singapore; **Creative ways of justifying creativity in the regular school curriculum**, UNESCO conference on Art and Education, Hong Kong; The aesthetics of Rasa across Southeast Asia and its varied implications in the contemporary social context, 3rd International Convention of Asia Scholars, Bangkok, Thailand
- 2003** Art in Education, European Arts in Education Congress, UNESCO, IDEA et FIDEA, Helsinki, Finland
- 2001** Development of techniques from traditional art forms to combat contemporary social problems, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Centre d'études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Paris, France; **Indian and Southeast Asian Dance-theatre traditions**, Institute Seni Indonesia [Indonesian National Institute of the Arts], Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Bharatanatyam and Cambodian Classical dance, Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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