

LAAL PAAR



RED & BEYOND



A shifting gaze from outside to inside, a telling of stories from inside out,

A celebration of the feminal universe, a retelling of ancient stories

Of the historical silencing and erasure of women.

It is the honouring of feminine voices over centuries.

The magic of regeneration and life that both come from women.

Powerful Goddess avatars... The importance of slow... The journey within...

The magical pelvic space which clears energies every month and is renewed for new life

The churning to shed what is not required, to separate the light from the heavy, the nectar from the poison and to move towards the light

Sisterhood, the coming together of female energies to heal and nurture

To delve into the knowledge of women

To honour the connectedness of all things.

To discover :

Where my masculine meets my feminine

To know that each of us have both within us -

Male is of logic, cognition, spirit and penetration

Woman is intuition, emotion, receptivity and body

To move towards an emotional, healing, nurturing self,

That really is the need of the world.

'Lal paar is a sari from Bengal, a land where the goddess is everything!'

Simple cotton handwoven sari as the essence of womanhood, it is adorned during the 'Pujo', a time celebrating the goddess while also celebrating 'sisterhood', the energies of the feminine! It is a time of festivity and joy and the abundance it brings with it! It is a salutation to our Goddess from Bengal!

'The red and white combination saree is supposed to signify the mother goddess. In Bengal, women, young, old, married, un-married are referred to as Maa. In the traditional "athpoure" drape, the red border of the saree coupled with the red pola bangle and sindoor is all a part of a deliberate technique. The red border twirls around the body in such a way that it leads your eye to travel to the red sindoor on the forehead of the woman, focussing on her eyes. And the eyes are the most iconic representation of the goddess. The idea that there is a goddess in every woman'.

- Jasleen Dhamija, textile historian.

DESI GULAB

36 x 30 x 4 INCHES

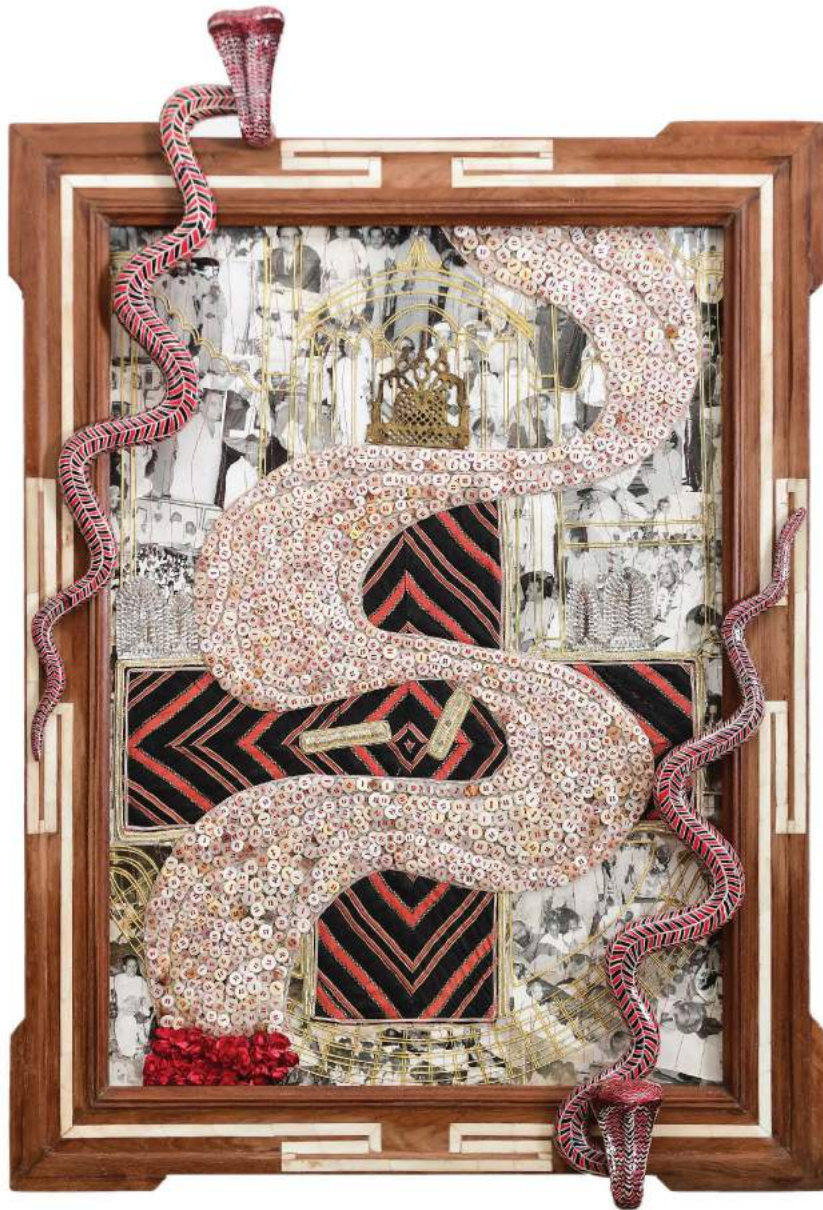
In some ways, speaking about your period translates into an unbreakable vow of silence. Why is it that you are not allowed to state that you are bleeding heavy or light between your legs at least once a month? Why is this monthly guest looked at as gross or disgusting instead of honouring it and regarding it as magical? Menstruation is not a curse. Period!

There are many euphemisms for the bleeding and for the organ but the rose has been regarded specially so. The rose is also a symbol of entirety, or the higher spiritual world order. Classic sacred geometry, the study of spiritual meaning of various shapes is at the heart of this story. The almond shape is seen as the place of birth from where life begins, a magical sacred form. Symbols have power. Sacred geometry correlates to something deeper within our universal consciousness. It reflects and speaks to the language of our soul.

Black buttons fill up the work, representing plastic bags in which "secret" things are sold : meat, alcohol and sanitary pads. The endometrium lining that drops every month is visualised through the buttons and the red stamen. Red, black and white for colours of the feminine, they represent menstrual and reproductive cycles. The buttons connect through the show and speak of 'collective consciousness' : the ability to be able to tap into a universal thought and reflect on what needs to be shed.

Medium/ Materials: Everything handmade to further hand make-beautiful craft tit-bits to add to our stories where all craft is celebrated. The old black and white photos have been collected over the years.





THE MALE GAZE

40 x 28.5 x 5 INCHES

This is our retelling of ancient texts and to derive new narratives for them that empower everyone. We have grown up watching/ listening to these stories and never once questioned how a Queen was molested in front of a Durbar and no one raised a voice/ eyebrow/ finger let alone stop the monstrosity. Draupadi was menstruating when she was dragged into the court – a clear breach of every social norm that had women in protected isolation at this time. Yet, everyone simply looked on. Everyone, all male.

Why is Krishna considered her Saviour – and he wasn't even there?
Why couldn't it be Draupadi's own Shakti that saved her?

White buttons stitched in red show Draupadi's garment being pulled off her body but they also represent her own connected consciousness. Why couldn't this consciousness have saved her, why does she need a man to save her?

The seating plan at the bottom is from an invitation received by our family for the coronation of the King and Queen of England, the Delhi Durbar, in 1911. It is also theatre style seating, watching the sexualised drama unfurl in more ways than one!

An energy gateway on the frame, inlaid with bone which represents the indestructible life force. The Chaupad board worked from an antique tent fabric with a square zoning in/ falling in for the space that sucked in the Pandavs.

Medium/ Materials: Antique wooden frame, bone inlay, the snakes have come from a friend's carpentry unit, old black and white photographs collected over the years, antique tent borders have become the Chaupad board, architecture details using mica sheets, the 'singhasan' is a discarded seating for small idols in personal temples, paint details using acrylic paints, flowers from a craft shop, embroidery.

MANNAT

28 DIAMETER x 7 INCH

The legends of the Black Madonna live on in many parts in Europe (the ones in Poland and Italy are especially revered) and the world because she is the wish granting, merciful, protecting Goddess who has no written history.

How does a black woman become the saviour of men ? Unacceptable! Some went as far to say that it was the soot from candles that made her black – and so refused to acknowledge her roots. There are no written records for her - because who was doing all the writing and for whom.

But believe in Her powers they all do, and so Her legend lives on till today with hundreds of followers who still ask for their wishes to be granted through 'Milagros', an object offered to state the wish being asked for. The glow behind her comes through an antique sieve, an object used mostly by women, and more importantly an object used to separate the fine from the heavy.

Sharing this story helps us change the way history is told. They speak of the other histories that have been neglected in favour of male centric narratives we've become so used to. The erasure of womens' narratives is undergoing a reversal in the wake of this feminine awakening. Women's stories are emerging everywhere, whether it is in the form of women leading in various fields or the release of years of trauma through movements like 'Me Too'. The voice is getting stronger and writings and rewritings from a woman's perspective are abound. The typewrite crown and nibs halo represent this change.

Medium/ Materials: The round base is discarded table top, scrap brass jewellery, old nibs, carved wooden pieces, antique sieve, the hands which were probably used to hold up a table since they are quite heavy, baby Jesus- all these came from the Kabaadi market. The golden flowers from the craft shop, the shola flower in her hand is from Baro market and the Milagros are from a trip to Greece.





MISS TREE

28 DIAMETER x 4 INCHES

Forests are feminine!

One tree does not a forest make so the collective of the hair clips; an object of the feminine, spiralling in towards the radiance of the Forest protectress, dressed in her armour. Since the Goddess of the forests are never seen, only heard, the ghungroos line her camouflaged breastplate.

The Solar Plexus, Manipura refers to the third chakra. Meaning "lustrous gem" in Sanskrit, the Manipura chakra provides a source of personal power and relates to self-esteem, warrior energy, and the power of transformation. It spins in the area around the abdomen above the belly button, up to the breastbone.

The Ouroboros at the rim of the story is an ancient symbol often interpreted as a symbol for eternal cyclic renewal or a cycle of life, death, and rebirth, a constant ongoing within a forest.

Medium/ Materials: A large wooden tray sourced from an export surplus unit, hair clips that came to us many years ago were probably waiting to become a forest! The ghungroos and buttons are from the kabaadi market, the breast plate is an antique and the work has been lined using gold 'varakh', a fine foil sheet of pure metal, usually silver and used to decorate sweets.



FARMERETTE

30 DIAMETER x 11 INCHES

The Varahi, one of 8 Matrikas (Divine Mothers), is boar headed and comes holding a 'hal'(plough) and 'musal'(pestle). She represents the new moon, a time to set new intentions.

Earth is feminine and Varahi is the Goddess of Earth, all that is under and grows on top of the earth belongs to her. Honouring the food that gets put on our tables by trying to understand where it comes from. We live on a farm and last year the one aspect that moved us from suspension was growing the vegetable garden. We used the 'hal' and ground our own selves with the 'musal'. The joy was unparalleled and emerged in the form of our 'Farmerette'.

Matrikas can also be thought of as Mother Goddess that is the oldest known form of worship in India and in many other parts of the world. Varaha and Varahi are both boar headed manifestations but the Vishnu avatar stories are far more prevalent with more circulation than its female version.

Here we celebrate the female avatar of this benevolent manifestation.

Medium/ Materials: 2 wooden table tops, an antique Varahi head (acquired as a Varaha mask used in performances of Varaha mythology), scrap knives and spoons.

A STITCH IN TIME

18 DIAMETER x 11 INCHS

The Blue Varahi head, surrounded by a ruff, probably the item of clothing that is associated most with Elizabethan England.

Why was this era named after a woman, during an absolute patriarchal time? Was it only because she came to rule? Named after a woman nonetheless...! Her reign was a time of flowering of arts, music and literature and during this era England experienced peace and prosperity. Her long reign created stability. During the Elizabethan period, "the general opinion at the time was that governing was an art accessible only to men; a female head of state was an offense against nature" (Kirkland and Papp). Queen Elizabeth was entirely against this mindset and because she didn't want to be under a man's authority, she instead ruled for 45 years unmarried and independently.

The 'cloth' used for the ruff is woven metal. It speaks of the hardships endured to put forth 'her' ideas. 16th-century sumptuary laws (sumptuous and consumption sum up the intent of most sumptuary laws) dictated the clothes, colors, materials associated with each societal rank—and often prohibited "unnecessary" foreign goods ("Proclamation against Excess of Apparel by Queen Elizabeth I"), is something that needs to be thought about in today's times wherein clothes are bought to dress online avatars!

Blue ruffs were banned by the Queen because blue was the colour of Scotland's flag and she saw Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland as a threat to her. Here, we are drifting towards the blues to stand up and break the rules which pit woman against woman. Buttons to symbolise the connectedness of all things and her necklace of cogs from watches, an analogy of her 'golden period'.

Medium/ Materials: A wooden table top, an antique Varahi head (acquired as a Varaha mask used in performances of Varaha mythology), fine metal mesh scrap, embroidery using glass beads, buttons from the Kabaadi market, cogs from discarded wall clocks, motorcycle chains



YAARA

61 x 70 x 7 INCHES



We need Sisterhood!! The heart has been a symbol of the soul, seat of emotions, our inner self. The bottom ends of churning sticks, an object used only by women, representing all the different women. The black one at the base for when the bleeding stops and Wisdom is said to remain within: the greatest value of womankind has been beauty and youth, wisdom has no value for women...

A Milagro at the centre as a symbol for healing and gratitude. The wings of the Milagro have bones, offerings brought to us on our farm in Jaipur by our beloved dogs! They add the indestructible life force to our sisterhood story! Classic sacred symbolism in the centre with the mirrors : Energy moving upwards with the 3 petal flower with the central petal positioned upwards, like the third eye. The needles at the top speak of women centric sewing practices, decorative meditative needlework that narrates personal stories through Kantha, to simply the idea of repair and recycle which is so intrinsic to the needle and thread and Wolf ideology.

Connected here are also ancient communal menstrual houses which kept getting pushed deeper and deeper into absolute horridness by patriarchy. Originally safe spaces for women to be with themselves. The one place it still exists in its glory is Pakistan's Kalasha valley where it is a celebration of womanhood!

We need to heal our broken bonds amidst a scrolling culture of reality TV that broadcasts a disheartening imbalance of the feminine - filled with comparison, competition and gossip. We need Sisterhood!

Medium/ Materials: Iron heart shaped frame with a metal grid filling it, needles, brass pipes, the bottom part of butter churners, scrap bits of embroidered fabric and gold trimmings, 2 butter churner parts worked with mirror work by national award winning craftsman Avaz Mohammad from Jaipur, scrap mirrors fitted to create the 3 petal flower, the spiral within the petals are scrap from clocks, the wings are made from bone, rubbing matting in vehicles and small screws, reflective sheet behind the butter churners, scrap buttons from the kabaadi market, scrap jewellery, ropes made from waste fabric.

THREE DAYS OFF

55.5 x 55.5 x 3 INCHES

Our persistent plea for a Slow Life and further encouraging women to honour their moon cycles and take time off to go within during their period.

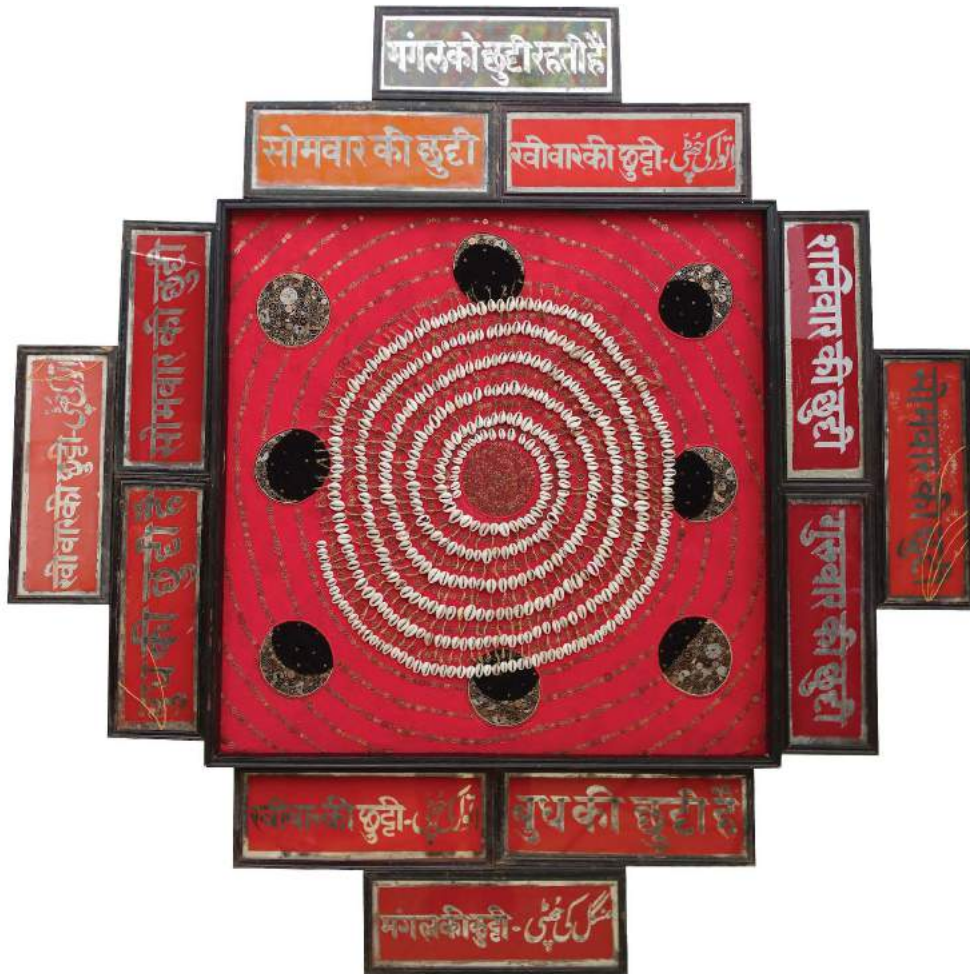
A woman has an average of 450 periods in a lifetime, 450 possibilities to tap in to a universal consciousness. 450 cowries have been stitched on with the possibility of golden growth coming out of it.

Kantha, the quilted embroidery of stories, and a world only of women. The red fabric at the base is a detailed red on red kantha; to speak of the 'subtle'. The journey within is about tuning in into your subtle body.

The moons and a continuing spiral have been made using bits from scrapped watches: Time Of The Month' and well as time of the feminine awakening. During the time of the month we can connect our bodies to the universe- which is the intent of magic- periods are Magic!

The fertility of earth is akin to that of a woman. Earth is given rest too : Keddasa- a festival when the field gets three days of rest; at the Kamakhya temple, the goddess gets three days off in the year when she bleeds.

MAGIC : "Kantha" refers to both the style of running stitch, as well as the finished cloth. It was a craft that was practiced by women of all rural classes, "the rich landlord's wife making her own elaborate embroidered quilt in her leisure time and the tenant farmer's wife making her own thrifty coverlet, equal in beauty and skill." It was never commissioned by kings, nor ordered by landed gentry, but passed down in learning and dowry from mother to daughter.





RISE!

15 x 27.5 x 1 INCH

All the men were standing, all the women were bending...

Across the world we see women toil away in the fields. The land does not belong to them, they simply have to work it.

Even within this situation there is a difference in attitude and behaviour based on the crops being grown. Cultivating rice requires farmers to pool their resources and cooperate with each other to improvise irrigation channels, making people from the rice growing regions less individualistic and self centred.

The status of women is better in rice growing regions too.

Wheat, on the other hand, is a muscle powered, self centred male crop!

The rice sacks here came from a flea market in Japan, a land known for its rice culture. The patterns on the sacks are 'sigils', patterns used in magic!

Inverted triangles are for woman at the top of the sigils, incorporating their greatest strength : the moon.

Medium/ Materials: Rice sacks, antique tent border fabric, rice grains, grain cleaner, gravel, red wheat from the craft shop.



SLITHER

70 x 70 x 16 INCHES

The journey within causes churning : many thoughts will rise and fall, and finally the separation for what needs to stay and what should be 'let go'.

Butter churning sticks, again an object held only by women, used to speak of the travails of the inward journey.

Tessellations - repetitive patterns like that of chanting mantras and jaaps, rhythmic breathing patterns - moving up till a certain "zoning in" begins, where the subtle becomes obvious, the centre space starts to clear while the kundalini energy rises...

...finally moving towards absolute Clarity.

The seven sticks are for the seven chakras, and the lotus on top for the opening of each of those chakras.

The large keys have been placed to emphasise the fact that this truly is the key - the journey within!

If we have not travelled within, we have not travelled at all...

Medium/ Materials: The base is a plank from an ancient construction, waste conveyer belt forms the snake, antique butter churning sticks, lotus made from scrap metal sheets.



PERIOD

70 x 70 x 16 INCHES

Inspired by the 64 yogini, manifestations of the goddesses in Tantra. Tantra's journey on the spiritual path was genderless, anti caste and considered menstrual blood as sacred.

64 yogini temples were prevalent in 11th/ 12th century and were constructed in circular forms without a roof because the energies of the Yoginis was considered too strong to be contained within. The snake features in many forms and manifestations and is the symbol for the latent energy, the kundalini shakti present in each one of us. Each of us can awaken this shakti!

64 parts make up the snake, a symbol of renewal, regeneration, fertility, protection as well as a creative life force.

There are 64 discs, one for each goddess, holding both : the power of beautiful creation and absolute destruction. The 'bindu', a sacred symbol of the cosmos, placed in a knead utensil to iterate the importance of daily practice to centre yourself.

A period of meditation...

A period of thoughtlessness

A period to honour natural cycles.

Medium/ Materials: Semi circular wooden discs found in an export surplus unit, discarded cutter discs, mirror, knead utensil, scales of the snake using cogs from scrap watches



LUNA

30 DIAMETER x 1.5 INCHES

Diving into our world of the feminine,
honouring moon cycles,
slowing making our way into our own selves
and finally letting go of all that does not serve us...

Reclaiming this language, and the ways of the feminine, done over ancient papers that belong to our family and are over a 100 years old : papers that did not have any women anywhere close, papers held only by men, written by men, read by men...

Taking these male centric narratives, we are infusing them with the feminine.

Writing over, with stories that will inspire an environment of healing and nurturing and letting go...

Medium/ Materials: Old papers, old nibs, parts from inside of scrap watches, a shed snake skin, round table top

SPELLBOUND

27.5 DIAMETER x 2.5 INCH

We celebrate the ancient women too!

In a world dominated by male voices whose view of life, the universe and everything was the loudest and most respected, Sappho's songs were regarded as extraordinary! So revered was she that the ancient Greeks called her the Tenth Muse, and her songs were passed down over centuries, inspiring generations of poets. She was born late 7th century BC on the Greek island of Lesbos. The term 'lesbian' comes from her controversial life.

Regarded by ancient commentators as the equal of Homer, the ancient Greek poet Sappho expressed human emotions with honesty, courage and skill. Most of her work has been lost over the centuries or destroyed. It is clear from the existing verses, however, that she deserved her reputation, and her work warrants continued study and appreciation. From the 10,000 lines that she wrote only about 650 remain, mostly in fragments found on papyrus on mummies in Egypt, remembered orally because they are still sung or found mention in male counterpart writings.

We have used these fragments as 'golden words' spread across many moons as they are remembered, even today! Sappho committed suicide, a woman of such genius and recognition (she finds mention in many Greek texts) - falling to her death.

The use of the semi-colon in this artwork to speak of a 'pause', in life, to speak of its imperativeness in poetry and in life and to speak of mental illness and suicide - which the symbol represents today.

Medium/ Materials: Round table top with brass sheet found at export surplus, brass wire for all the words, moon shapes from kabaadi market, scrap watches, old papers, resin, discarded etched mirror, coaster of glass beads





RABBITHOLE

22 DIAMETER x 3 INCH

Alice grew up!

And tumbling down the rabbit hole found the spirals that led her back to herself.

Spirals represents a positive life path and are really the key to everything.

The past year and a half has had all of us spend time with our own selves.

We must cherish this and use it to centre ourselves.

Medium/ Materials: waste brass sheet, spirals are from discarded clocks, rags tied together to make the rope, old door latch, buttons, metal insects, paper flowers sprayed with metallic paint, old Kantha stole, discarded round table top, bolts, jewellery scrap.



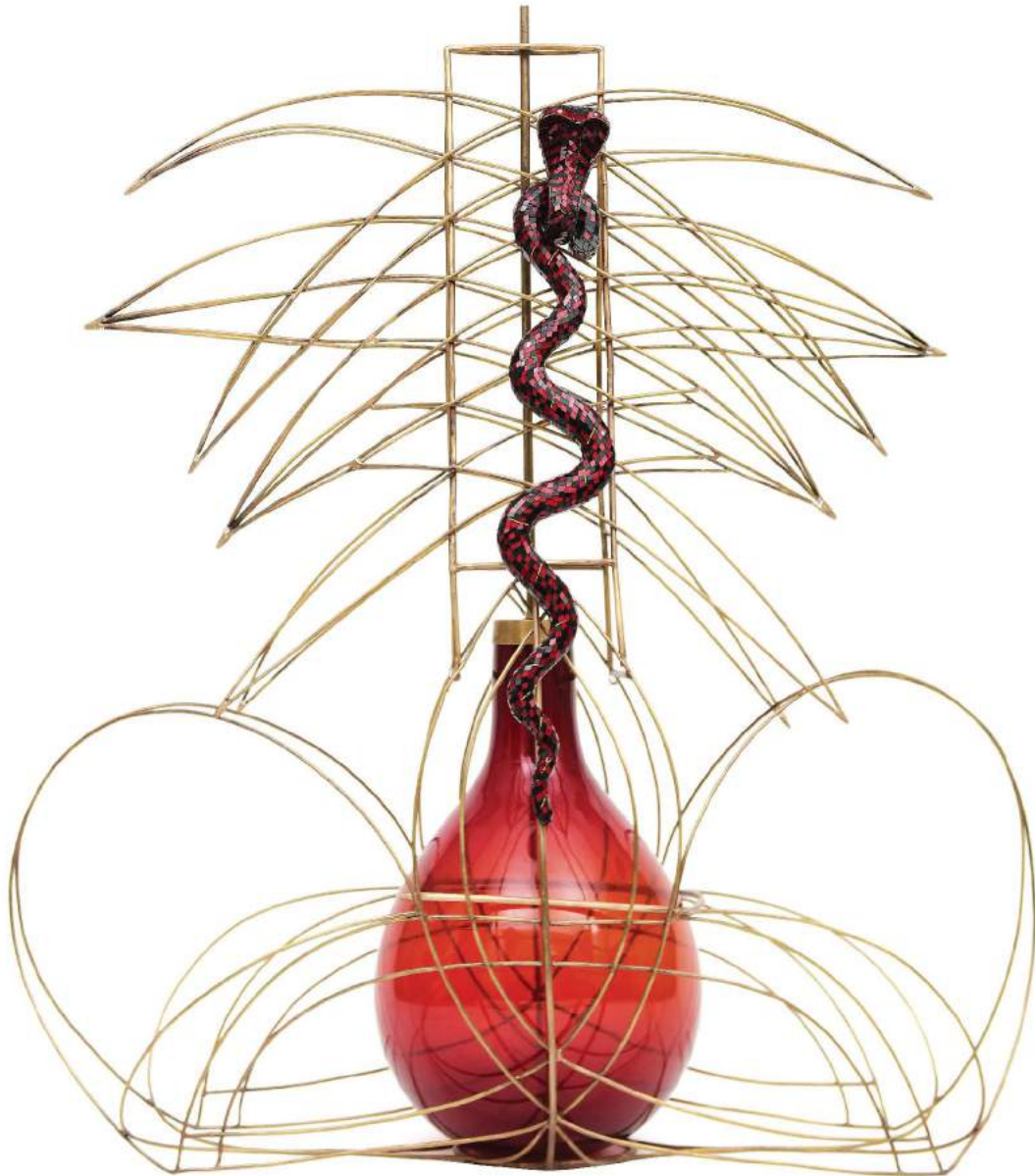
SHED

30 DIAMETER x 6 INCHES

The Rainbow Serpent, integral to menstruation stories of the Aboriginals, wound up in a classic manner as depicted in many temple carvings. This is also a Kolam formation (Kolam is traditional geometric line drawings done in rice paste at the entrance to homes; native to Tamil Nadu, very significantly it has always been done by women...). The Rainbow Serpent to also speak for communities that are shunned and that attitude needs to be shed!

The keys to realise what needs to be shed and to let it go!

Medium/ Materials: metal bottle caps, discarded round table top, bolts, keys, flowers and leaves of mica sheets, metal key hole plate, paper flowers painted with metallic colour, metal frame for snake hood, waste wires, copper wires, discard from inside old ship phones.



CANTADORA

35 x 11 x 42 INCHES

It is said, "When you are in need of answers, go to the Old Woman who lives in the pelvis, she is the keeper of all the old stories; the Cantadora!"

Created with the idea of the pelvic bone and the spinal cord through which our energy flows, with a drop of red at the seat.

The light in the red drop is to magnify the magic that each drop of blood holds and the snake for the awakened kundalini power.

Sacred geometry visualisation continues.

Medium/ Materials: brass framework, waste metal mesh, mirror work on the snake done by award winning craftsperson Avaz Mohammad, blown glass bauble.





GATECRASHER

22 x 11 x 10 INCHES

The Raven, keeping a tab on all of our doings.

The All Knowing One from various cultures - specially significant for the Tantric Goddesses.

Looked upon both as good or evil; depending on which culture, which god and what time. They are also symbolic of rebirth, recovery, recycling, renewal, reflection and healing, smoothly moving through transitions by casting light into darkness.

Medium/ Materials: discarded clock box, old family papers, bits from inside scrap watches, metal crow from our clutter collection.



MAHAMAYA

30 DIAMETER x 3 INCHES

The Goddess appears, Mahamaya! Mahamaya is that power who has encompassed the entire universe with her sense of maya, or the sense of attachment, and who according to her choices ends the sense of attachment at times and evolves as the universal mother, Maya is that power which detaches a person from his/her search for truth or God and keeps us attached to worldly and practical life. She is the Goddess who presides over time itself! Painted on a found old wall clock. We have a NFT version of this artwork.

Medium/ Materials: Old wall clock, paint



ENERGY GATEWAYS

11.8 x 16 INCHES EACH (FRAMED)

A series of 12 pages that are the last for this story: a culmination of the journey, a precis of all the stories and experiences and the telling of tales, each a single page reminder of the Power and the Responsibility of the Female Spirit...

Medium/ Materials: old family papers which are over a 100 years, the insides of scrap watches, rice grains, paint, gold varakh, embroidery.

* CONTACT US TO VIEW INDIVIDUAL IMAGES

ARTIST'S NOTE:

LAAL PAAR : RED AND BEYOND

Beyond the red;, beyond the physical, exploring the feminal universe in all of us.

Our own experiences during these troutled times made us explore forests, gardens and nature to understand that our healing came from them, the release from the entropy of the times came from growth in nature.

And calm came from traveling within, believing in the Shakti inside each one of us. Nature and Shakti, feminine forces, healing us, guiding us down our own capricious minds to emerge with experiences to share.

We take inspiration from Tantra, the original abstract, minimalistic style and symbolism.
As a path to awakening, it is genderless, honours natural cycles and conveys that each of us has both masculine and feminine within us, Shiva and Shakti.

Releasing the masculine in women is important, as important as releasing the feminine in men.

This is a time for the world to embrace its complexity and move towards healing and nurturing inside out.

The mixed media approach weaves disparate threads of historical argument, pain and frailty into an expression of shared experience and offers solace and a way forward.

A path to sharing and dignity.

WOLF
October 2021