

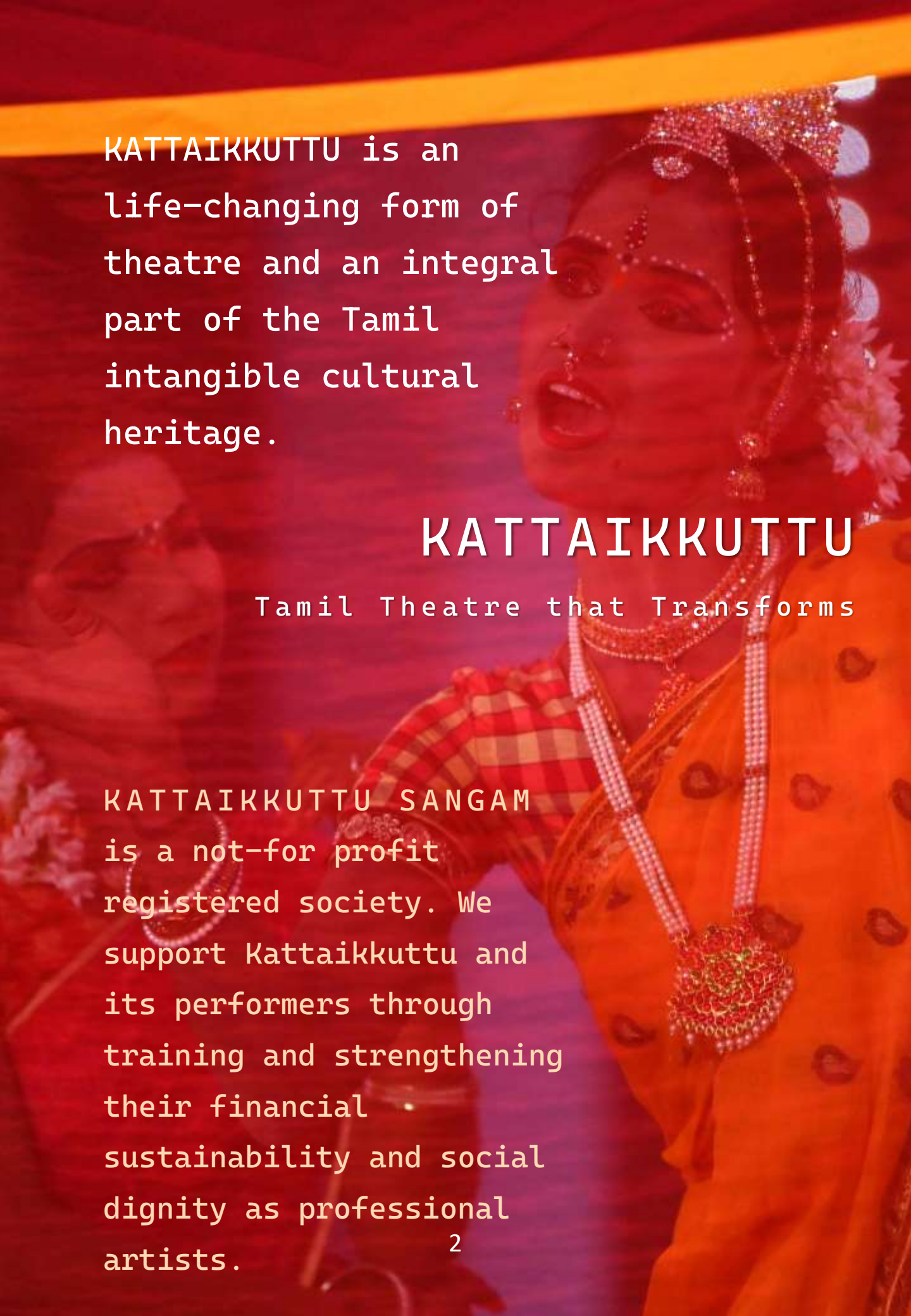
Kattaiikkuttu Sangam

Transforming Culture | Transforming lives



2022-2023
—Annual Report—

1	Contents
2	Kattaikkuttu Sangam
3	Theatre under threat
4	Diploma Course
5	SANGAM IN FIGURES
6	SANGAM IN WORDS
9	Workshop testimony
10	SANGAM IN IMAGES
	Vison meeting Sangam members
11	Mini-rep
12	Women's journeys into the arts
14	Intervention
17	Award P Rajagopal Exhibition
18	Looking ahead 2023-2024
19	Thank you
20	Financial summary
22	Income Acknowledgements
23	Find us Support us



KATTAIKKUTTU is an
life-changing form of
theatre and an integral
part of the Tamil
intangible cultural
heritage.

KATTAIKKUTTU

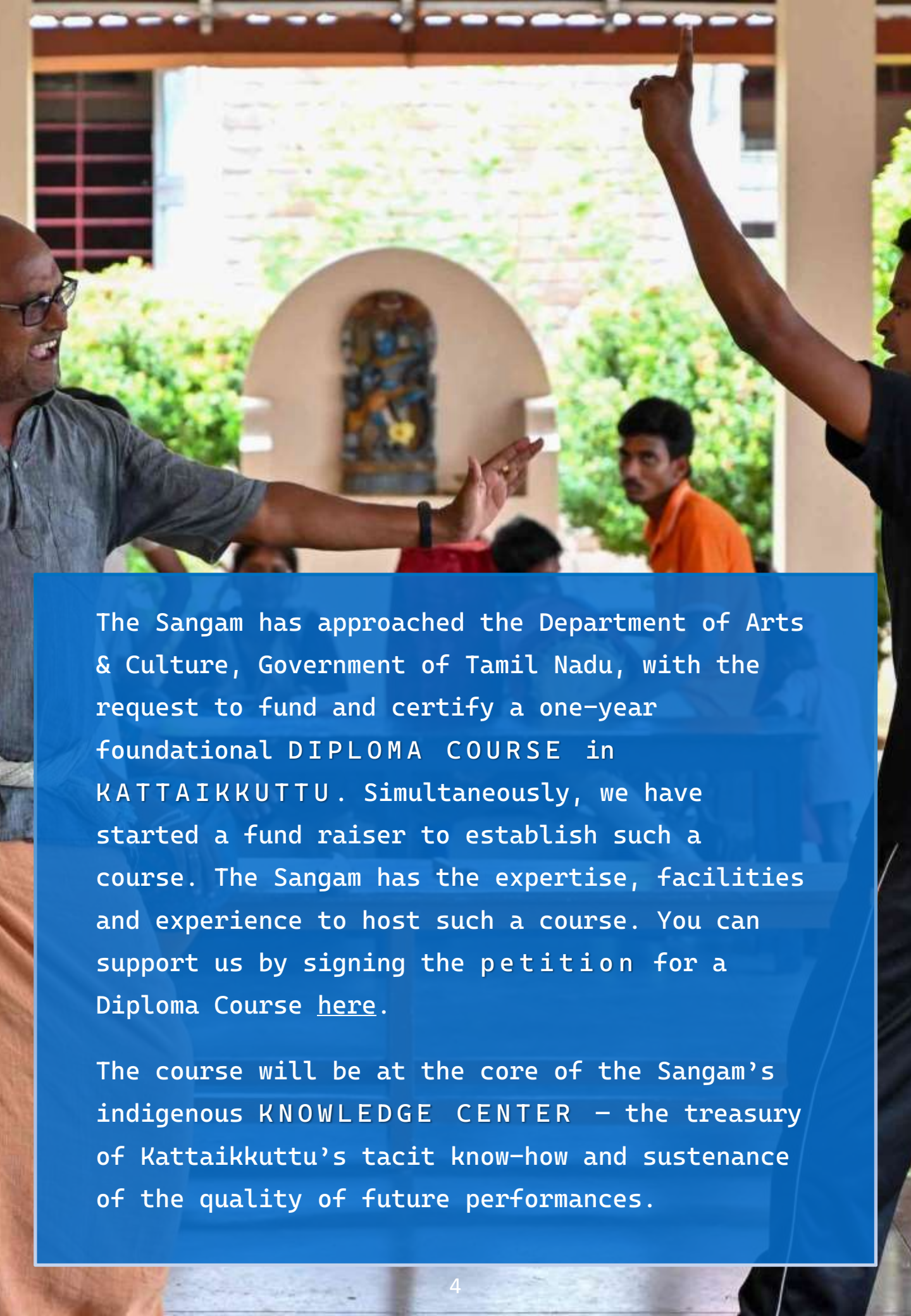
Tamil Theatre that Transforms

KATTAIKKUTTU SANGAM
is a not-for profit
registered society. We
support Kattaikkuttu and
its performers through
training and strengthening
their financial
sustainability and social
dignity as professional
artists.

A Kattaikkuttu performer is shown in a full-body shot, wearing a highly ornate costume. The performer's face is painted with intricate white and red patterns, and they have a large, dark mustache. They are wearing a tall, decorative headdress with red tassels and a large, ornate earring. The costume features a red long-sleeved shirt, a blue shawl, and a purple vest with gold embroidery. The background is dark with vertical strings of blue and green lights.

Today Kattaikkuttu is under threat

The number of senior expert-performers is dwindling quickly. To ensure the sustenance of this riveting theatre form it is pivotal that Kattaikkuttu's complex tacit knowledge is safeguarded and transmitted to future generations.



The Sangam has approached the Department of Arts & Culture, Government of Tamil Nadu, with the request to fund and certify a one-year foundational DIPLOMA COURSE in KATTAIKKUTTU. Simultaneously, we have started a fund raiser to establish such a course. The Sangam has the expertise, facilities and experience to host such a course. You can support us by signing the petition for a Diploma Course [here](#).

The course will be at the core of the Sangam's indigenous KNOWLEDGE CENTER – the treasury of Kattaikkuttu's tacit know-how and sustenance of the quality of future performances.



Kattaiikkuttu Sangam in figures

Members	194 (up↑ 22%)
EB Meetings & member consultations	6
New production	1
Performances & artistic tours	8
Workshops & academic teaching (days of training)	66
Number of people taught	182
Spectators reached	1535
Visitors	67
Social media followers	3206
Social media posts	108 (up↑17%)
Reviews & publications	7



Kattaikkuttu Sangam in words

Slowly but steadily the Sangam is recovering from the disastrous effects of the pandemic and the closure of the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam. Working with a minimal staff to reduce expenditure, the organization has embarked on a process of reinventing and revitalizing itself as an indigenous knowledge centre and a dedicated training space for Kattaikkuttu.

We opened this year with Santippu, a light-hearted experiment for two performers, P. Rajagopal and Jeeva Raghunath, combining Kattaikkuttu and Storytelling. Our 2021-2022 women's production Tavam saw another 4 performances with a slightly modified cast.

Maintenance work on the fence and buildings of the Sangam is ongoing, while we harvested organically grown rice, vegetables and fruits from our fields and fruit-forest garden.

In June we hosted [Birati Samuho](#), a Kolkata-based collective of female-bodied performers. This was a non-funded collaboration through which we got to know each other's work better exploring, among other things, (gendered) constraints and opportunities and marginalization/discrimination because of 'otherness'. We look forward to continue this exciting collaboration across States, languages and genders in the year to come.

August 2022 saw an important consultation with our member-artists about their professional needs, the current state of Kattaikkuttu and the role of the Sangam. Facilitated by an incredible team of external volunteer-cultural managers, the meeting was an overwhelming success. More than 100 members cutting across companies and generations participated. They expressed their ideas through drawings, movement, group discussions and impromptu speeches. We are happy to share the outcomes of this grassroots-level consultation with you in the next pages.

This year was marked by a number of workshops in the run-up of a future Diploma Course experimenting with different timings, durations and target audiences (adults, children, professional performers). The workshops were taught by Rajagopal who was ably assisted by a group of young performers—all alumni of the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam. The Sangam hosts these artists since November 2022 paying them a monthly fellowship. We hope that this fledgling ‘mini-rep’ will become the core of a fully-fledged multiple-gendered Kattaikkuttu Repertory Company. Sourcing sufficient participants for the workshops was quite a challenge, but once on-site those who came were caught in Kattaikkuttu’s artistic web. To get a feel of the fascination such a workshop holds, please read the testimony of one of the workshop participants in this report.

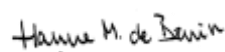
We travelled to Kolkata in December on the invitation of [Pickle Factory](#), where we performed and conducted workshops at [Ek Tara](#), a girls school situated in a Muslim neighborhood, and at the [AMI Festival](#) organized by the Kolkata Centre for Creativity. We also participated in an online Parenting and the Arts discussion with Berlin-based dancer and mother Saskia Oidtmann. In a public [conversation with Rustom Bharucha](#), Rajagopal and Hanne spoke about Kattaikkuttu and their search for new models of equity and democracy in performance and social practice.

Samuho treated us to an amazing exhibition-cum-installation, called [Intervention](#), on the lawns of the Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata. Intervention documents visually and emotionally the entry of the first generation women performers into the male world of professional Kattaikkuttu seen through the lens of Samuho's female (bodied) artists.

In February 2023 Rajagopal received an award from Hyundai Motor India Foundation for his life-time accomplishment of performing and promoting Kattaikkuttu. As part of the award we were able to document the all-night play Karna Moksham. A selection of photos featured in the Foundation's Art for Hope Exhibition at Bikaner House in New Delhi. The photos, shot by Kanchipuram-based photographer Venkatesan Perumal, are now available as postcards.

Rajagopal and Hanne attended a symposium on curriculum development for a proposed undergraduate arts program at Azim Premji University, Bangalore. They taught two performing arts courses at Ashoka University, Sonipat, over the 2023 Spring semester. During their absence Varun Aiyer mentored the inhouse mini-repertory stimulating its members to express their personal needs and artistic vision and take responsibility for the Sangam's publicity and facilities management. We continue to discover and learn how complex capacity building and developing a long-term vision at the grassroots level really are. Personal ambitions, immediate financial needs and gendered constraints are not always in sync with promoting the wider goals and vision of the Sangam, while it takes time for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to acquire analytical thinking, communication and planning skills needed to run an organization.

As always we are extremely thankful for your continued support and love,



P. Rajagopal
Executive director | Artistic leader

Dr Hanne M. de Bruin
Secretariat | Programme director | Productions



The most enriching event of 2022 for me were the weekend Kattaikkuttu workshops conducted by the Kattaikkuttu Sangam in November 2022. The Sangam is headed by P. Rajagopal and Hanne M. de Bruin. Rajagopal is a hereditary Kattaikkuttu performer and teacher, and his partner Hanne is an anthropologist whose pioneering work continues to supply us with shrewd insights on a lesser studied, albeit incredibly nuanced South Asian art form. Kattaikkuttu, otherwise referred to as Terukkuttu, is a form of Tamil theatre popular in the northern parts of Tamil Nadu which re-enacts episodes from epics and regularly incorporates musical modes and content that are representative of and responsive to the contemporary socio-cultural milieu. As Hanne has described in her work, it is a 'flexible' art form.

The workshops were conducted with the support of the Sangam's extremely skilled alumni. We spent 3 intense weekends learning key elements of Kattaikkuttu which allowed us to gain an introductory understanding of the art form. Every session began with us warming up our bodies for what was always a physically demanding-rewarding class. We learnt to make our bodies and voices flexible, we learnt movements, dialogues and songs.

As I got to know the teachers better with the passing of each weekend I was able to observe, often in awe at how each one of them performed every movement, character and song in ways that carried with it the uniqueness of their personalities but also their bodies. Rajagopal sir would demonstrate every element we were scheduled to learn that weekend and he would dedicatedly follow each student's progress and ensure that each one of us were able to fully apply ourselves and understand the movements, dialogues and songs.

Kattaikkuttu Sangam in pictures

M e m b e r s i n a c t i o n

25 Aug 2022

Vision Meeting

I s s u e s / n e e d s

- *Company management – punctuality, financial transparency, collaboration, no advance system, no brokers, combat alcoholism*
- *Training – proper training facilities badly needed*
- *Visibility – need for an annual festival, educate audience about value of Kattaikkuttu, performers should actively contribute to making the theatre visible*
- *Economic and social security/dignity – proper remuneration, also when a performance gets cancelled, pensions, accident insurance, honouring senior artists, proper stage, proper food, proper rest rooms*
- *Equality – Equal opportunities for male and female performers*



Kattaikkuttu Sangam
Transforming Culture | Transforming Lives



F o l l o w - u p

We intend to follow up on these issues at the end of the Kattaikkuttu season in the Fall of 2023 when we plan to organize a series of meetings and trainings for Sangam members.



Mini-REP

Nov 22: Venda | Tamlarasl | Mahalakshmi | Moorthy | Doraisami June 23 Bharathi | Sasikumar

We hope that the mini-REP will become the core of a professional Repertory Company that will be the visible identity of the Kattaikkuttu Sangam and the engine for further performances and training. Such an inclusive, enabling company requires funding not only for its artistic work, but also for professional child-care. You can DONATE [here](#) to support the Company.

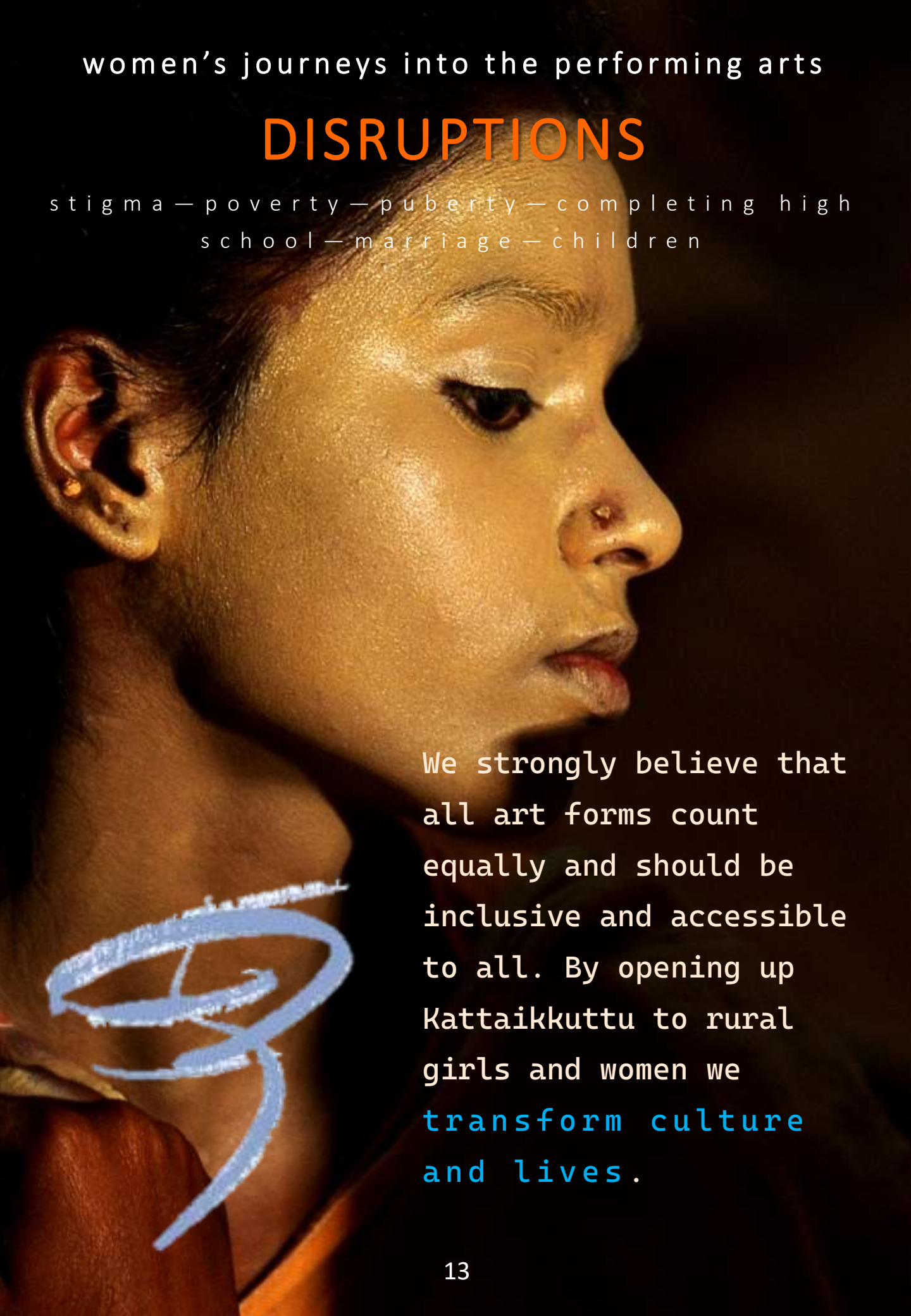


For us, as co-founders of the Sangam, guaranteeing Kattaikkuttu's continuity and artistic quality are important goals. Motivating Gen-NEXT to take responsibility for all aspects of the company, establishing coherence among the members, instilling planning and the drive to 'do it' are tough issues that take time to deal with and be resolved.


women's journeys into the performing arts

DISRUPTIONS

stigma — poverty — puberty — completing high
school — marriage — children



We strongly believe that
all art forms count
equally and should be
inclusive and accessible
to all. By opening up
Kattaikkuttu to rural
girls and women we
transform culture
and lives.



women performers' journeys

INTERVENTION

entering a male-only arts profession

Birati Samuho, a female-bodied performers' collective from Kolkata, chronicled the journeys of 7 women through an exhibition-cum-installation. The exhibition uses interviews, objects, images, make-up and female presence in domestic and public spaces to recount how these young women juggle family obligations, household chorus and parenting with going to all-night performances.

women performers' journeys

Overcoming opposition from family and society 7 female alumni of the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam have successfully entered the field of professional Kattaikkuttu which until then was and exclusively male territory. Yet, their journeys do not end here. They need to negotiate now access to principal roles and equal payment in the male-owned theatre companies they have joined.

ENTRY
প্রবেশ





bodies at work

Birati Samuho and
Kattaikkuttu meet @
the Kuttu Kalai Kudam
in Punjarasantankal

This unique collaboration grew out of discussions between Titas Dutta and Hanne M. de Bruin. It took place without external funding with both sides contributing equally to travel, accommodation and food. This freed us from the pressure of having to report to donors and enabled us to fully engage with each other using our energy to think, feel, sound and move freely and fearlessly — together and alone.

transcending Indian boundaries of language, genre & gender

award for P. Rajagopal & Kattaikkuttu photos at display

Art for Hope Exhibition, Bikaner House, New Delhi



Rajagopal receives the Art for Hope Award from Hyundai India Motor Foundation; on his right side Venkatesan Perumal who took the photos of Karna Moksham

Selection of 12 photos made into postcards as PR material and merchandise



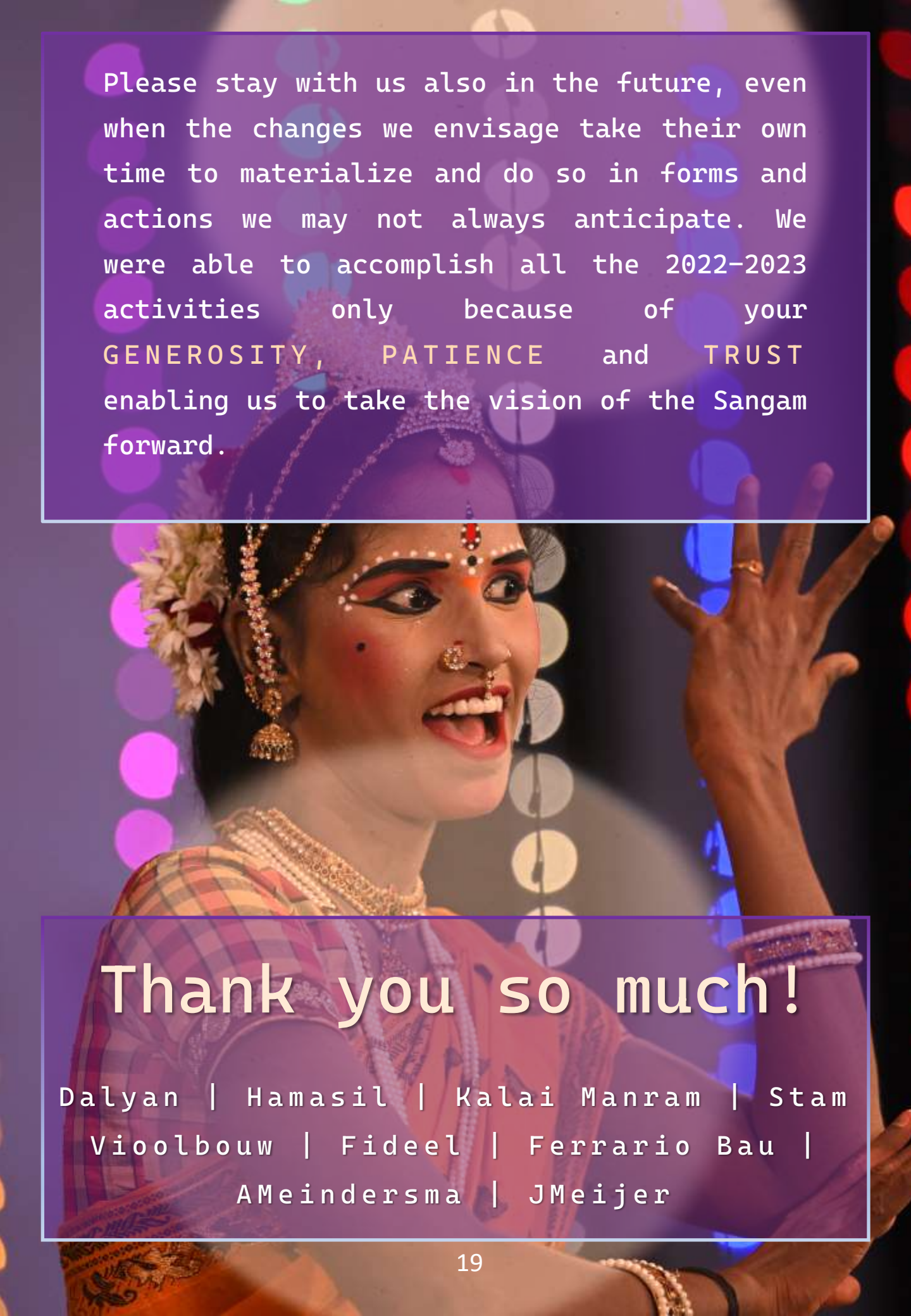
A crown on our work!

Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam alumni Bharathi and Sasikumar graduated from Ashoka University with a degree in English and the Performing Arts. They joined the mini-rep in June 2023.

Our warmest felicitations to both of you!

Looking ahead to 2023–2024

- A new production inspired by the classical Western ballet La Bayadère in an exciting collaboration with the Dutch National Ballet
- Training in local fundraising
- A new borewell and pump on solar energy to solve the electricity and water problems of the garden
- A Repertory Company for the Sangam
- Training in Kattaikkuttu
- Revamping our Visitors Program in collaboration with [Marco Polo Reisen](#)

A woman in traditional Indian attire, including a colorful sari and elaborate jewelry, is performing on stage. She has a joyful expression and her hand is raised in a gesture. The background is dark with colorful bokeh lights. A purple semi-transparent box is overlaid on the top half of the image, containing text.

Please stay with us also in the future, even when the changes we envisage take their own time to materialize and do so in forms and actions we may not always anticipate. We were able to accomplish all the 2022-2023 activities only because of your **GENEROSITY, PATIENCE** and **TRUST** enabling us to take the vision of the Sangam forward.

Thank you so much!

Dalyan | Hamasil | Kalai Manram | Stam
Vioolbouw | Fideel | Ferrario Bau |
AMeindersma | JMeijer

Financial summary

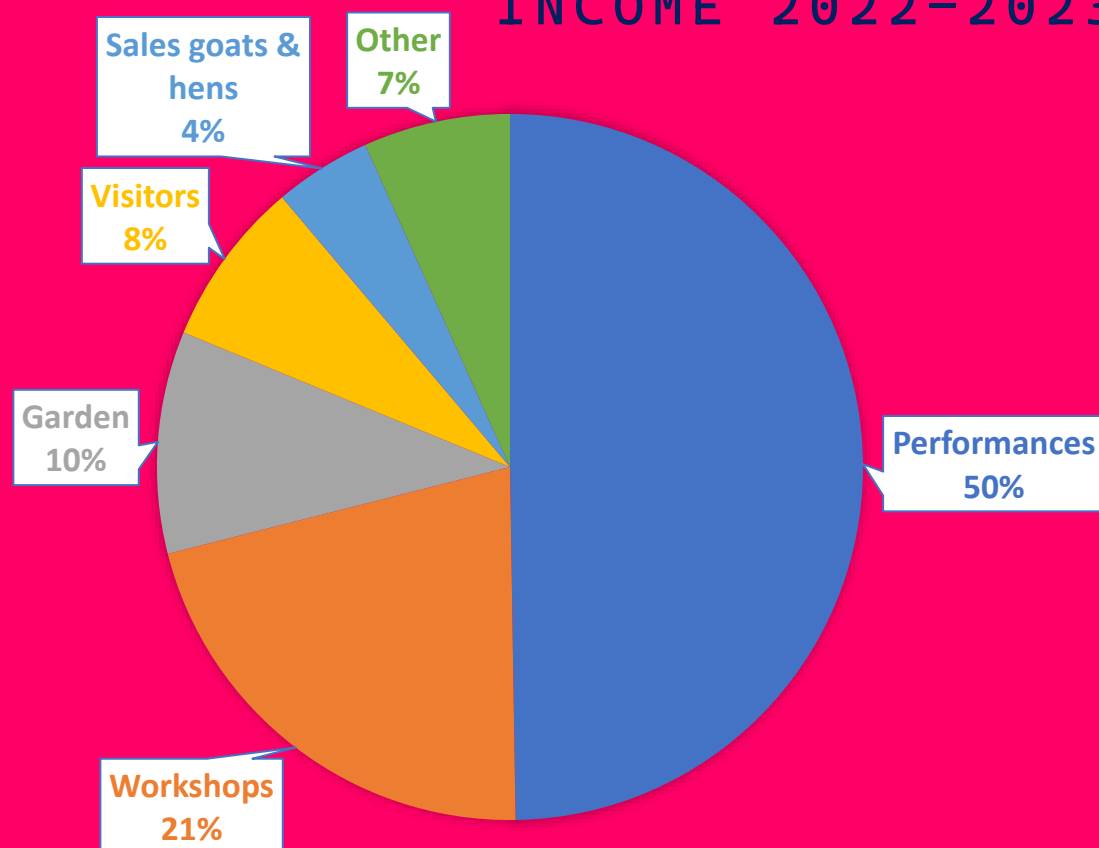
2022–2023

COMPARATIVE INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT (in Indian Rupees)				
Income	Year ended 31 March 2023		Year ended 31 March 2022	
Donor grants				
– Kattaikkuttu Sangam		–		2,541,858
Subscriptions Members		33,700		18,500
Donations				
– General	983,933		1,831,563	
– Promotion of Kattaikkuttu Theatre	288,000		25,000	
– Kattaittkuttu Awareness Program	192,200		139,000	
– Other receipts	145,669	1,609,802	267,085	2,262,648
Art for Hope Grant		100,000		
Interest				
– Kattaikkuttu Sangam	2,907,532		4,983,458	
– Donor grants (FC)	2,362,352	5,269,884	45,274	5,028,732
Grand Total Income (A)		7,013,386		9,851,738
Expenditure				
Program Expenses				
– Kattaikkuttu Sangam (Visibility Equity Sustainability)	3,750,997		5,375,638	
– Repertory Grant & Production Grant, Ministry of Culture, GOI	–	3,750,997	477,760	5,853,398
Administrative Expenses		515,038		296,384
Depreciation		546,855		599,972
Grand Total Expenditure (B)		4,812,890		6,749,754
Excess of Income over Expenditure (A–B)		2,200,496		3,101,983

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS (in Indian Rupees)

	Year ended 31	Year ended 31
Sources of Funds	March 2023	March 2022
Capital Fund	28,260,518	28,542,712
Corpus Fund	58,182,910	56,024,911
Contributions to Corpus Fund	-	-
Donor Fund	1,649,375	1,270,755
Donors' Assets	790,793	846,842
Expenses payable	194,039	1,549,345
Grand Total	89,077,635	88,234,565
Application of Funds		
Sangam's Own Assets	4,188,199	4,555,826
Donors' Assets	790,793	846,842
Receivables; advance to MoC projects	5,310,638	7,040,701
Investments		
Fixed Deposits Corpus Fund	55,506,354	52,171,710
Fixed Deposits Donor Fund	708,964	400,001
Own Fixed Deposits	21,945,705	22,633,935
Current Assets		
Cash	26,532	24,193
Bank	600,450	561,357
Grand Total	89,077,635	88,234,565

INCOME 2022-2023



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are deeply grateful for the institutional support we have received from Dalyan, Hamasil, Hyundai Motor India Foundation, Fideel, Kalai Manram, Ferrario Bau and Stam Vioolbouw. We thank Dr. Janakai Rangarajan, Juut Meijer, Alice Meindersma, Deborah Thiagarajan, Hanne M. de Bruin and P. Rajagopal for their generous donations. Your generosity enables us empower marginalized Kattaikkuttu performers, and women in particular, strengthen local communities and ensure that Kattaikkuttu will be available to generations to come. We thank Adishakti Theatre, Pickle Factory, Ek Tara, AMI festival and GRT Kanchipuram for hosting our performances and workshops and Saloni Goel and Rashmi Sharma for helping out with the Art for Hope Exhibition.

We thank all executive board members, Kattaikkuttu ambassadors, our auditor S. Kalyanaraman and Chennai-based team of KS Aiyar & Co, the staff and artist-fellows of the Kattaikkuttu Sangam, Varun Aiyer for handholding the members of the min-Rep, photographer PeeVee, Rustom Bharucha, Vijay Kumar, Mahalakshmi Kumar and Vandana Nadig Nair for their sound advice, Titas Dutta & members of Birati Samuho for their gendered artistic insights and friendship, Justin McCarthy and Abhinaya Penneswaran for making our teaching at Ashoka University so enjoyable. A special thanks goes to the wonderful team of experts who facilitated the Kattaikkuttu Sangam's Visioning Meeting: Dr Maitri Gopalakrishnan, Valan G. Antony Arul, Sameera Iyengar, Sanjay Viswanathan and Krishnaa Nair.

Find us | Support us

FIND US

- Look behind the scenes
- Have us curate a tailormade program for you, your family and guests
- Organize the birthday party of your child and her/his guests at our beautiful place.
- Explore what Kattaikkuttu is through a workshop

DONATE

- [To our multi-gender Repertory Company](#)
- [To the Diploma Course in Kattaikkuttu](#)

STAY WITH US

- For those who value a quiet retreat in an idyllic environment away from the noise and pollution of the city and the pressure of fast communication.
- Walk along the banks of Palar River and discover hidden monuments not shown on any tourist map
- Work in our organic garden and reconnect with nature and rural life.
- Are you an artist who wants to develop new work or an author who wants to write a book – this is your space and place!

SIGN the Petition

- [Help us establish a Diploma Course in Kattaikkuttu](#)
- Donate [here](#) to support the Course.

BUY

Bags, post cards and organic produce:

CONTACT

KATTAIKKUTTU SANGAM

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Kattaiikkuttu Sangam
celebrating tradition & promoting unity