

Taj ke Saat Rang

2026 Edition

In collaboration with Kala Kutir



In June 2025 a bunch of friends from Delhi and Agra wondered what would happen if they did a drag show in Taj Mahal. A dramatic inquiry like that made them weave this festival. This document complies what Dhriti, Saloni, Arhaan, Dharmesh and Kaleem co-created in the summer of 2025. The image is of participants, artists and organisers at Taj mahal East Gate after the executing the very idea.

Taj ke Saat Rang

is an **annual queer cultural festival** held every June in Agra, at Kala Kutir.

The festival provides a **space for queerness to inhabit the city**— from its monuments to its people. Queer bodies and lives are often invisibilized, erased, silenced and neglected in history and present. **The festival is a refusal to these acts of violence.** The presence is asserted not for visibility but to build liberatory spaces of existence. **For queerness to be as basic part of the city's life as its monuments.**

The festival has two major components:



Queering the Monument

A cinematic inquiry in and around heritage sites of Agra, queer persons do the simple act of existing. We perform, sing, recite poetry, walk, and learn about the city and its inhabitants. We do this in earnest, in assertion, in love, in being our true selves that break social barriers. We do not do this to mark “queer visibility” but embody the city within ourselves.

What does it mean for us as our own beings to be in the city without hiding?

Space as Queer

We gather at **Kala Kutir**, rest, talk, argue, challenge, learn, perform and be. Here we understand our embodied experiences through conversations, celebrations, discussions and learn what it is to hold rage, intimacy, fear, love, blessing, gratitude, healing with our community and allies.

Through music, dance, food, fashion and reflection we build memory and mark our territory of existence with pride and joy.

Last year's film emerged from a central question: **Why are heritage spaces imagined only through heteronormative love?** By placing queer bodies within a monument like the Taj Mahal, the festival **reimagined these spaces as sites of multiple desires, histories, and presence.** It asked how might queer people have occupied such spaces in the past? and what traces of queerness have been **erased, hidden, or unspoken?**

Queering the Monument



Dusky Dee inside Taj Mahal



Hiten, Dusky and Naina Taj Mahal [Link to Video](#)



Hiten raising eyes at the Taj!



Festival film

[Link to Video](#)



Performances



Heritage Walks



Drag Shows



Panel Discussion

Space as Queer

“We could never imagine being part of a festival like this in our lifetime.”
~ *an attendant of TKSR 2025*

Kala Kutir: Venue Partner

Kala Kutir, a creative centre being shaped under **UNESCO's Intangible Heritage framework**.

Kala Kutir is an art-led residency and cultural farm stay nestled in a serene village just 4 km from the Taj Mahal. It serves as a living, breathing space where art, community, and nature come together to inspire creativity, dialogue, and healing.

The space has hosted landmark events such as **Taj Ke Saat Rang**, a queer arts festival featured in an established magazine, and the **Agra Arts Festival**, bringing together artists, performers, and thinkers from across India. From intimate music circles and storytelling evenings to theatre workshops, film screenings, and artisanal residencies, Kala Kutir offers a canvas for all who wish to express, learn, and collaborate.



TKSR 2025 in the News

Tejaswi Subramanian wrote about Taj ke saat rang in *The Established and Gaysi* in July 2025. Both the platforms have a high queer readership.



[Link to the article](#)

the.estd and gaysifamily

the.estd For years together, many in the queer community left smaller towns for cities that offered safety and solidarity. Now, they are reclaiming spaces that had once pushed queerness into silence.

In June 2025, 40 queer artists staged Agra's first community-led queer event: a drag walk at the Taj Mahal, guided walks, and performances in one of India's most surveilled cities.

In Coimbatore, Pride first took place in 2009, but conservative backlash and limited community networks kept it away for a decade. When it returned in 2019, newer queer collectives joined in, and by 2022 it had grown into a coalition organising around queer rights, caste violence, and conversion therapy.

These are not just celebrations—they mark a shift. Because in places that never claimed queerness, mere presence itself becomes protest.

More on the link in bio.
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📷 : Dhriti (@tiloooooo)

#LGBTQIndia #QueerIndia #queercommunity

Edited - 37w

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Tejaswi Subramanian | Published on Jul 21, 2025

SMALL CITIES, BIG SHIFTS: HOW THE QUEER COMMUNITY IN SMALL-TOWN INDIA IS CLAIMING SPACE

From a drag performance at the Taj Mahal to a Pride march in a local market, queer collectives are gaining visibility while nurturing community

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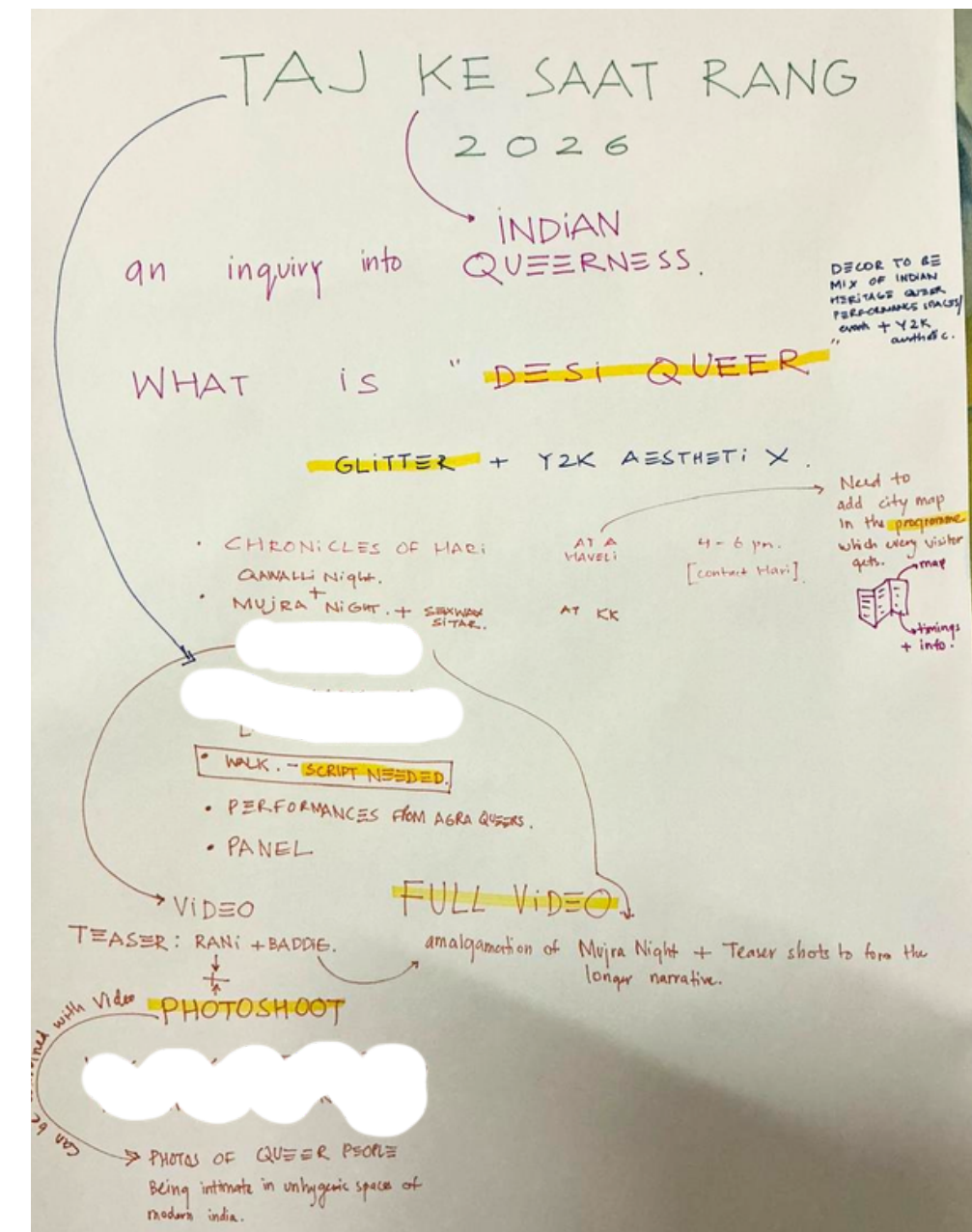
Taj ke Saat Rang 2026

In its **second iteration** of Taj Ke Saat Rang, we go beyond Taj Mahal to explore what it means for **queerness to occupy space in history**. As we asked in 2025 why monuments like Taj become sites of heterosexual romance while queerness is relegated to the sidelines, so we ask this year, **what does it mean to be on the sidelines itself i.e.**

what does it mean to be a *Desi Queer*?

As the festival explores the heritage and culture of India from a queer lens, it also **creates and holds space for stories of queerness from non-cosmo, 2-tier spaces**. History and culture become queer in our festival not simply because we interpret it so but because it **defies the normative ways of learning and being**.

In these trying times a festival like this embodies resistance through joy and celebration.



Behind the scenes of Taj Ke Saat Rang 2026

Space as Queer

Film Screening: Chronicles of Hari: What does queerness as performance mean? **What happens when the performance becomes identity?** When the actor and act become one in a divine space, is the binary between humanity and divinity solidified or is the veil finally lifted?

Mujra Night: Queer and vulgar breathe the same air, walk the same landscape, perform the same social function. To question what it means to break from the heteronormativity of desire. Mujra is a dance form associated with lower class/ caste sex workers, appropriated by mainstream Hindi cinema. **The night reclaims it with queer performers who disrupt the binary of dance as 'professional' vs 'vulgar'.**

Drag Performance: The simple act of **existing as extravagance**, as opulence, as elevation, as deconstruction of gender in a historical space.

Queer Heritage Walk: The city is seen anew, **marking the spaces and sites where queers before us have existed**, loved, rebelled, built community, and found friendships.

Panel Discussion: What does it mean for queerness to challenge the barrage of attacks coming from socio-political spaces? How do **queers resist through joy?** How do we build solidarity among ourselves and with others who need us?

Open Mic: To queer a space is to open it for expressions **uncomfortable, different, oppositional**. Here we hold each other, even with our discomfort.

What's happening this time ?

Queering the monument

This year we want to create a **visual language** where we blur time and embodiment with archaic and contemporary queer imaginaries

Reclamation of the monument happens through queer voices such as individuals connected to **Agra's gharanas**, who carry queer legacy and present-day queer artists whose work is rooted in **rebellion and defiance**.

This juxtaposition would shed light on **societal morality** which is being contested. This is central to the fabric of Indian queerness, to which the film aims to be the witness.



Dhriti (she/her)

is a filmmaker, curator, and multidisciplinary artist working across performance, film, and community-led interventions. She is the founder of the Ziarat project, a public art initiative. Her practice, rooted in lived experience and improvisation, interrogates queerness, expression, and the aesthetics of refusal in everyday life.



Arhaan-ur-Rehman (he/him)

a law graduate from Aligarh Muslim University, is a heritage walk leader, storyteller, and passionate advocate of heritage. This deep-rooted connection shapes his love for history, architecture, performing arts, visual expression, and the culinary traditions that define local culture.



Kaleem Ahmed Qureshi (he/him)

is a cultural curator, storyteller, and founder of Kala Kutir, a creative centre being shaped under UNESCO's Intangible Heritage framework. He curates Agra Art Festival and Taj Ke Saat Rang experiences rooted in music, food, history, and community.



Saloni (she/her)

is a multidisciplinary designer, visual artist and founder of Queerocity, USK Agra and Bargad Studio. Her practice spans spatial design, contemporary object-making with artisan collaborations, and community-driven art, with a focus on queerness, craft, and storytelling.



Dharmesh (he/they)

is a queer poet, facilitator, researcher and developmental professional. His work is rooted in community building—working with rather than for people. Their work has been published on national and international platforms. They had cofounded RAQS, an Allahabad based queer support group.

Meet the Team!



Join us in shaping
Taj ke Saat Rang
as a
Queer phenomenon!

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[Reach out to us on Instagram!](#)