



Glimpses from the Delhi Pride March 2024.  
Source: Indian Express



Firodiya Centre for Inspiration / Studio A dvaita.  
Source: Rasika Badave

## DECODING INCLUSIVITY THROUGH THE LENS OF THE CITY

*Srivatsa Koduri*

Architecture is a vast universe of ideas and explorations, much more than simply constructing structures and making endless drawings. History speaks of Viswakarma – the God of Architecture and his vast craftsmanship of Dwaraka and Sri Lanka whose grandeur and attention to detail can still be seen today. This means that architecture is more than simply construction structures, it's also about developing areas that foster fairness, diversity and the social well-being of the society. As a result, architects have a big social duty to the commodities they work in. This responsibility goes beyond just creating visually splendid facilities and includes designing built environments and urban interventions that are secure, eco-friendly, and inclusive. Architects can design environments that enhance and promote social interaction and participation in change and advance a better community for everyone.

Inclusivity refers to creating an environment, culture, or society that actively values and respects the diversity of individuals and ensures their equal participation, representation, and access to opportunities. It goes beyond tolerance and aims to embrace and celebrate all people's unique characteristics, perspectives, and identities, regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, or any other factor.

In the context of queer culture in India, inclusivity is crucial to promoting equality and ensuring the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals. It involves acknowledging and embracing the diverse identities within the queer community and providing them with a safe and supportive environment to express themselves freely.



The 'Trans Lives Matter' mural at Lodhi Art District.  
Source: The Hindu Bureau



To foster inclusivity, it is essential to challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory practices that marginalize queer individuals. This can be done through various means, including education, awareness campaigns, policy reforms, and legal protections. Promoting inclusivity also involves actively engaging with and listening to the voices and experiences of queer individuals, amplifying their stories, and addressing their unique needs and concerns.

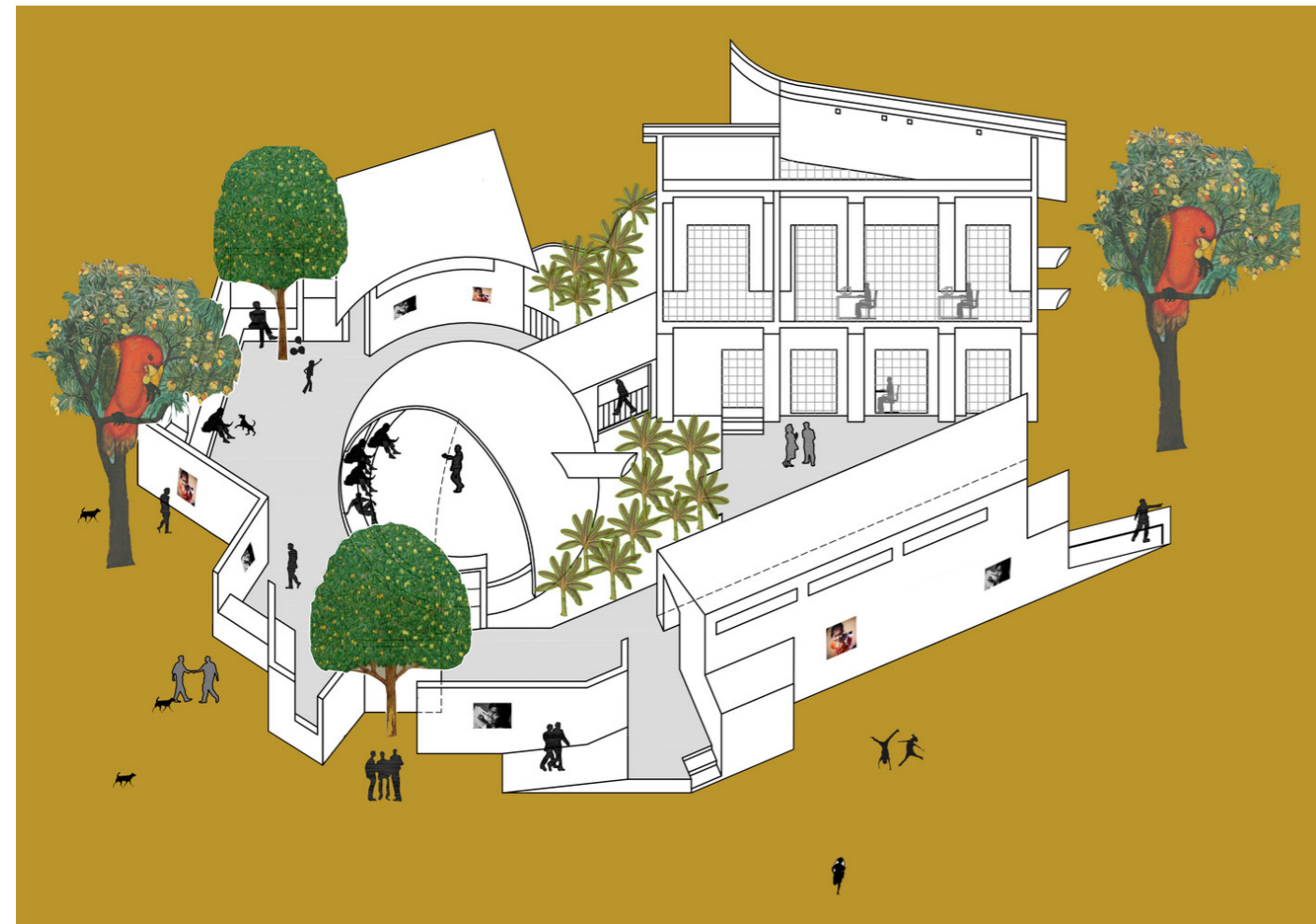
As designers, what can one do to tackle this notion of isolation and the necessity of belongingness in an urban fabric which is sturdy and rigid? Do we start questioning the gender and sexuality of the city's architecture? With masculine and feminine elements of architecture often referred to as handsome and beautiful, what if one has to tackle the queerness of a space?

There are numerous cases of basic human rights and discrimination against the queer community. Yet, Hyderabad demographics state that it houses an ample amount of queer people. It also has a lot of NGOs, Social Welfare Groups and Legal Institutions which work in favour of the queer community. This gives a great potential to exercise the idea of inclusiveness in a city which has quite a lot to offer – from underground drag shows to freedom of expression in the streets of Charminar. When we think about queer spaces or let's say spaces in general, we may first be drawn to the architectural metaphors long intertwined with non-heterosexual identity: the closet and the washroom.

The very idea of the closet is rife with contrasts, invoking both interior and exterior, storage and room, pride and repression, homo- and heterosexuality. The pride revolution itself started with a sole goal of claiming the basic human right to have designated toilets for transgenders.

*Firodiya Centre for Inspiration / Studio A dvaita. Source: Rasika Badave*

160 Being queer in a conservative city like Hyderabad comes with a lot of challenges.



Let's say, in metro stations where does a transgender person go for a security check? Or even to just use a restroom? And can queer people openly use public transport in the city which is a major stakeholder to the ergonomics of the city?

Thinking beyond the closet and the washroom, nightclubs, bars and dance floors have also been key environments through which queer folks have found safety, community and belonging.

Rather than merely actions or occupancy, queerness might also be regarded as a way to think beyond the very binaries inherent in building. Much of this exploration has – and continues to be – investigated within the context of exhibitions and galleries.

From closets to washrooms, nightclubs to exhibitions, parks to homes, these spaces are laboratories for political futures, central to understanding new ways of thinking, living, loving, meeting and belonging.

*How India continues to deny its queer citizens access to toilets. Source: Illustration by Jose*

A graduate of R.V. College of Architecture in Bangalore, **Srivatsa Koduri** is a passionate architect driven by a desire to use design to tell stories. With a keen eye for detail and a deep appreciation for the art of architecture, he delves into the intricacies of buildings, uncovering their hidden narratives. Fascinated by the symbolism and metaphors embedded within architectural forms, Srivatsa explores their historical significance and cultural impact, particularly from a metaphysical perspective. His architectural perceptions are significantly influenced by a diverse range of interests, including literature, various art forms, and a love for travel. Srivatsa is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Interior Design at Middlesex University, London. He enjoys exploring his creative side through singing, doodling, and journaling.