



TALASH

Society for Inner Strength, Peace & Equality



MANY MIRRORS MANY MASCULINITIES

A Conclave by The YP Foundation and Talash
13 – 14 February, 2025 | Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi

The Context

Mirrors have ways of showing and telling stories that may be the most truthful or the most deceitful. Images reflected, distorted, twisted even, look back at us and shape the way we look at ourselves and the world around us. What we seek in them is not always what we get. And when we don't, we turn to others for there is no dearth of mirrors in the world. There also comes a time - by accident or intent - that mirrors shatter and fragment the very reality that we either assumed to be the only real or were at least forced to believe in.

Some mirrors have for long created images that are used to dominate people's expressions into neat and tight boxes. These mirrors of masculinities have not only propagated these hegemonic images, but also concealed the possibilities of freedom to love, to care, to be. Society has been mirroring the concept of 'being a *mard*', or '*mardangi*', with the paradigm of 'being macho' at the centre. These masculinities have established dynamics of power that are embedded in the intersectionality of gender, caste, class, religion, sexuality, disabilities, and so on. The resulting norms create a framework of hierarchies among men themselves thus creating a complex matrix of privileges and vulnerabilities. The mirrors therefore are tools used to reproduce these hierarchies that perpetuate further violence and discrimination.

While masculinities are evolving rapidly, decades of social developmental efforts have strived to engage with the realities they create in several ways. Interventions shaped around gender roles, shared responsibilities within the household, violence prevention, consent, sexual and reproductive health, mental health and more, have been the larger thematic areas that civil society organisations have been working upon. This work has been focused on flipping these mirrors, and shattering them to reveal what lies beyond the patriarchal, and embracing the mirrors that speak our truths to power. These efforts have made some great strides in engaging men and boys in gender-focused programming, and expanded towards understanding their own realities of privileges and vulnerabilities. Better still, they've also thrown some deeper questions at us: Is the Masculinities conversation only about men and boys? Which men and boys are we referring to? Who is the real 'beneficiary' of this conversation? What really works for ensuring long-term sustainable change? What is the endgame of working on masculinities?

The Conclave

The YP Foundation and Talash Society welcome you to a space which is aimed at putting our heads together to see if we can help each other answer some of these questions, or even arrive at newer questions. We present to you **Many Mirrors Many Masculinities!** Whether you are a civil society organization, development practitioner, researcher, artist, writer, leader or anyone who wants to learn, share and reflect with others on these issues, we welcome you.

Together, we will navigate the domains of sex and sexuality, violence, mental health, legality, public spaces, the online world, media, and some more. The in-depth conversations around these thematic could help us all think, explore, and create actionable ways in which we can engage with the communities we work with. The space will not only hold conversations, but also see experimentations and installations to inspire us. While we gaze into these mirrors, we will talk, eat, laugh, play games, make art, and sing songs with each other. And we will crack how to make these mirrors our own, even if they do not fall within the 'traditional' realm of masculinities.

The Two Days

The first day of this conclave will focus on the several intersecting identities, spaces and issues that masculinities permeate. Through panel discussions, workshops, and installations, we will deep dive into issues of violence, sexuality, pleasure, social media, laws and identities. Beyond dialogues, we will co-create songs, posters, and stories around the masculinities that bring us pleasure. From a programming perspective, there will also be dialogues on the very existential questions of how we define and measure change.

The second day will be all about how we do this work with communities, what works and what doesn't, and what we look forward to doing in future. We will get to play games and try out tools that practitioners implement in communities. We will close the conclave by co-creating an agenda for future work on masculinities, highlighting key areas of concern, and the next baby steps that we all need to take to leap forward.

We hope to see you there!

