

## upcoming events

# An art form that embraces yet *empowers a woman's soul!*

A soul tattered, pulled and stretched to its very depths, pained by the atrocities around it. A soul of a woman brought to life through an art form, embracing each and every curve of its existence. Brace yourself for Bwitch 2016 is here!

TEXT: SOLANDRA D'SOUZA

PICS: ALL INDIA BWITCHS INTERNATIONAL BELLYDANCE FESTIVAL

**I**N India, the number of rapes and atrocities against women are appalling. Woman empowerment should be the nation's priority, but often gets stacked into a corner and conveniently forgotten. The 2<sup>nd</sup> all India Bwitchs International Bellydance Festival is all set to take Goa by storm, combining the love for an art form with a social cause of women empowerment at the forefront. The event will not only showcase an intricate art that embraces the female body, but also empowers their soul.

Set to take place during the women's day week in March this year, the event aims to create a sense of community through a common love for dance with celebrity belly dancers from all over the world. The festival also provides for a discussion of what we need to do to empower women and further feminism in India. Curated by Leena Vee, this four day festival intertwines art and activism shattering the myths that surround the art form a swivel at a time. Leena Viie, the curator, is a fusion

artist who has created, taught and performed varied belly dance fusions such as Flamenco, Tango, and Kathak to name a few.

Often shadowed by the preconception that Belly dance is but a form of 'femme fatale', the event looks to dissolve these notions, one at a time. What is interesting to note is that, unlike common perception most of the women practising the art have left behind lucrative careers to follow their passion and love for the dance form.

The event will be hosted at the Tito's Courtyard from the 11<sup>th</sup> of March to the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 and will be an epitome of firsts as it is said to be the only Belly dance Festival in Bombay and Goa, and the only international belly dance festival in the country to combine art and activism.

Belly dance enables women to express themselves regardless of age, body type, or years of expertise. The amazing line-up for



Essa Duhaime, an international master teacher with more than 12 years of teaching experience

the festival includes Classical Egyptian, Fantasy Fusion, Dramatic Oriental, American Cabaret, Indian Bellydance Fusion, Veil bellydance, Folkloric bellydance, Burlesque bellydance among many others.

Bwitch 2016 aims to provide a growing platform for women to express themselves fully, as a Bellydance collective, in a country where women still struggle for freedom of expression as well as provide and grow a safe channel of expression through the art of Belly dance.

The 2016 Bellydance festival will provide workshops and performances involving the fusion of Bellydance with other dance art forms. You can follow their page on Facebook, 'Bwitchs International Bellydance Fusion Festival' for updates, information on the competitions, workshops, tickets and other details.

If you want to experience something unique and empowering, here is your chance! 📍



Natalie Nazario, a Puerto Rican born belly dancer based out of New York City



Leena Vee, curator of Bwitchs International Bellydance Fusion festival



Nika Mlakar, an Award Winning internationally acclaimed dancer, choreographer and teacher

Colleena Shakti, an artist of great subtlety and depth