

News monitored for: Emami Group

Conversations with the self

DANCE

KATHAKALI JANA

An interesting talking point emerging from the long periods of confinement in the past one year has been about how little we explore our own selves. At a time when all humanity teetered on the edge of uncertainty, loss and gloom, even while experiencing mind-numbing alienation and loneliness, the self became at once relevant and accessible. A solo dance piece choreographed and presented by Ankita Duttagupta at the Kolkata Centre for Creativity recently,

titled *I Am*, negotiated a complex, non-linear conversation with the self. In doing so, it stirred universal emotions.

Ankita, a fine practitioner of the contemporary form, delved into the private and the public self in this piece, which is her first solo work. She explored the issues and expectations surrounding an individual, in both life and art, and interrogated certain fraught ideas about identity, appearance, perceptions, social behaviour and the intimate self.

The dancer's movements, sometimes low-key and often

gaining technical amplitude and decorative grace, created a compellingly varied compositional exercise. The focus kept shifting moodily between the public and private, playful and serious, anguished and composed. She used a wooden frame cleverly to divide the

space visually by designing doors and windows through which one might look in or out. In a searing physical embodiment of the argument with one's private demons, locked inside one's own mind, the centre of gravity of the dancer's body seemed to be located, thrillingly, in different

parts of her torso and limbs as she moved with power and refinement.

Using lines from the poem, and taking off into a personal soliloquy of fragmented expressions, Ankita created a narrative of self-portraiture with movement, words and images. Expressions varied between narcissism, doubt and loneliness to coming to terms with the inner self through layers of uncertainty into a well-earned confidence.

The work had a cathartic intensity as it navigated a depth of universal lived experiences. Ankita's emotionally charged solo revealed a thinking dancer who is capable of conjuring convincing physical imagery and psychological depth.

