

Exploring identities



A scene from the play 'Beyond Binary' that was performed as part of *The Hindu MetroPlus Theatre Fest-2014* at Chowdiah Memorial Hall in Bangalore on Friday. — PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: "What are you, a man or a woman? Are you sure you are a man/woman?" These questions were thrown at the audience even before the opening of the play 'Beyond Binary', preparing them for the emotional journey that the remainder turned out to be. The Indo-Korean collaboration marked the unveiling of this year's edition of *The Hindu MetroPlus Theatre Fest* here on Friday.

'Beyond Binary' intersperses biographical accounts (of actor Angel Gladly, who earned thunderous applause when

she declared "I am a woman") with stories drawn from the troupe Performance Group Tuida's intensive research. Director Yosup Bae's play explores various identities: of transgenders, homosexuals and those who simply don't "fit in".

Ably supported by haunting live music and lighting, multiple stories were told through dialogues in Korean, English and Tamil languages, dramatic choreography and minimal props.

Mr. Bae said that he read about the 'Bahuchara Mata' and the transgender festival in Tamil Nadu. "There are many Gods in India who look similar but are very different.

Can we not consider gender issues in a similar manner? Can these be defined not as dichotomous viewpoints but as various spectrums?" he asked the audience, speaking about the preparations that went into shaping the play.

Some scenes in the 90-minute play drew special attention.

The brain trying to offer a biological explanation to sexual identity and orientation, the role of the family and society in shaping them, and the inner conflict that is faced by its discovery, were among them.

'Beyond Binary' turned out to be a bold effort that helped bring the issue "out of the closet."