



Sphoorthi Theatre for Educational
Puppetry, Art and Craft STEPARC

PUTHALIKA PATRIKA

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India, a land of rich culture, traditional ethos, and values is perceived as land the most dangerous country in the world for women has reignited the country's ongoing debate over women's safety over high incidences of sexual violence, lack of access to justice in rape cases, child marriage, female feticide, and human trafficking. Where are we heading? what are we doing?, are we addressing the issues and generating awareness of respecting women?.... endless questions arise with bleak or no solution. Our folk arts and folklore did address issues relating to women, societal norms, and values.

I wonder, why did the traditional puppeteers performed episodes from Ramayana and Mahabharata? Are the episodes from the epics act as a guiding force? Was it to reinforce the common masses about the essential ethics to be followed for the harmonious living?, or as a community counseling of changing scenario, mindsets of the people?

There must have been a good reasoning for adapting stories from the epics and Puranas-be it Sita Harana (Kidnapping of Sita), Draupadi Manabhangam (disrobing of Draupadi in the court), stories of Satya Harichandra, all acted as a guiding force and stood as a correction centre. Through the puppet performance, the puppeteers connected and compared the scenarios to the present day context.

Through the puppet plays and other folk art forms, common masses were sensitized on the sensitive issues periodically and

Strengthened the morality.

Maybe there is a need to restructure and re-strengthen our arts forms for our own benefits.

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Safe New Year 2020!

Yet another challenging year for all puppet lovers to explore in the field of puppetry enhancing the rich traditional, cultural ethos towards strengthening safe society for all.

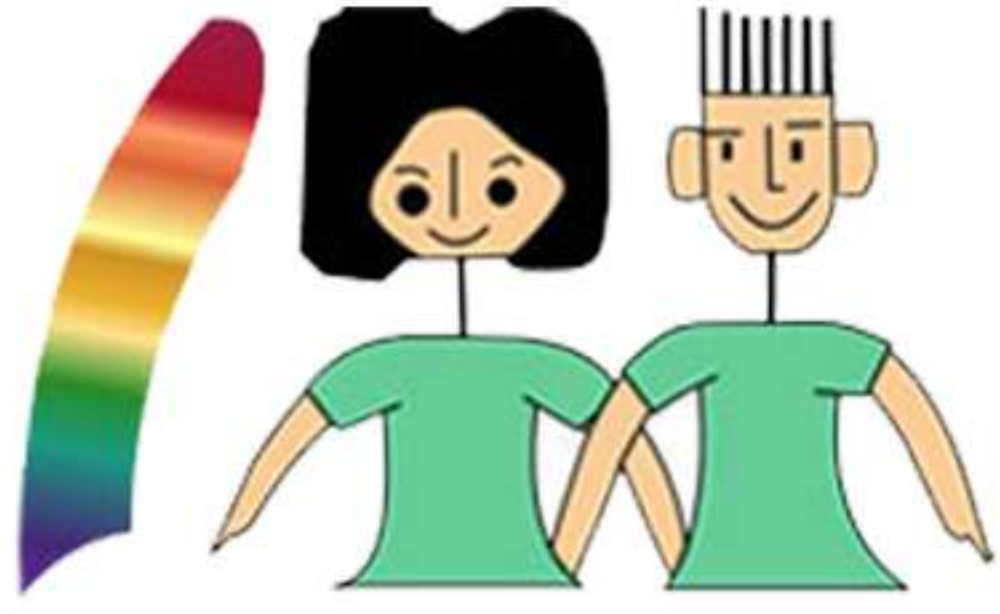
Best

Padmini Rangarajan

Traditional Puppetry of Kerala State, India

Puppetry is an art form in which the performance is carried over by the inanimate objects called puppets, a lot resembling a human or animal figure, that are manipulated by an artist called as puppeteer.

In Kerala puppets are of different kinds, such as '**Nool Pava Koothu**' - String Puppets controlled either by threads or hands. In some areas sticks are also used for



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the same and such puppets are known as Rod Puppets.



'Pava Kathakali'- known as glove or hand puppets. There is one more kind of puppetry known as **'Nokku Vidya Pava Kali'**- the puppets are perched atop a pole that rests vertically on the upper lip of the puppeteer squatting on the floor wherein the small puppet is balanced in between nose and lips and is moved accordingly. A rare kind indeed. Then of course, the most popular puppetry form in Kerala is the shadow puppetry or **'Tholpavakoothu'** or **'Nizhalpaavakoothu'**, in which shadow of puppets is shown through the white curtain placed in front the puppets in earthen lamp lights.

Nool Pava Koothu perhaps this one of the oldest puppet forms prior to Pava Kathakali thrived up to the early 20th century in the region of Ernakulum and around the temple of Tripunithura, where the puppeteer-showmen performed every year during religious festivals. However, these puppets remain under the care and custody of a royal family.

The puppeteers belong to the Nair community. Today Nool Pava Koothu performances have disappeared, but there are still forty-five puppets kept safely in the temple of Tripunithura. Pava Kathakali is the miniature depiction of Kathakali form with puppets. Puppets dressed in Kathkali costume and looks stunning during the performance. Absence of screen and live

fire during a performance mesmerizes the audience. On the other hand, one can watch Pava Kathakali and Thol Pava Koothu performances even today.

Thanks to the brave young generation for shouldering the responsibility of preserving and promoting the art form and keeping it breathing.

With regard to Nokku Vidya Pava Kali it is only performed by the K. S. Ranjini granddaughter of Moorzhikal Pankajakshi. On the other hand, Tholpavakoothu on Kambar Ramayana is performed by Pulavar brothers. It entailed anecdotes from Rama's journey to the forests to his coronation.

Loss of - Thol Pavai Koothu artist Kalaimamani R. Kuppusamy

Puducherry based shadow puppeteer **Kalaimamani R Kuppusamy** passed away after a prolong illness at his hometown in the Union territory. A ninth-generation shadow puppeteer he breathed his last in November 2018. He was 60. He was battling duodenum cancer over the last two years. He managed Rajappa Tholpavai Koothupattarai until his health deteriorated. He is survived by a son and daughter. (Source-Times of India-Puducherry Novemeber 13, 2019).

👤 Announcement:

"Katha Sangraha"-Call for short stories to be featured in Puthalika Patrika. The best Stories will be awarded and adapted for our in-house production.

लोकत्र यविरत्नताक तन्त्रवास्तु
प्रस्तावन प्रतिसमपनसुत्रधरः

--दुतघतोत्वकचं-भास

T. Rangarajan- A Storyteller, Theatre artist and Scholar

नारायण त्रिभुवनैक परायणो व .; पायादु
पायशतयुक्थिकरः सुराणां, लोक त्रायाविरत
नाटक तन्त्रवस्तु , प्रस्थना प्रतिसमापन
सुत्रधारः

--दुतघतोत्वकचं-भास

“Saviour of Gods, vanquisher of evil, One and only last resort of the three worlds. O’ Narayana, the string holder of the perennial drama of life, with the universe as its stage, I humbly bow before you; protect us all! “ O’ Narayana, You are the string holder – Sutradhara-of the perpetual drama of life enacted on the stage of the universe from its beginning to end”—Dutaghatotvakacham Bhasa.

*“योवन्त प्रवेश्य मम वाचं एम्म प्रसुक्तं संजीव यति
अकिल शक्ति दर स्वधामन, अन्नयं च हस्त चरण
श्रवण तवक्क अदीन, प्रनान नमो भगवते पुरुषाय
तुम्भ्यं”*

The above shloka which little Dhruva pronounced after he attained Sri Hari’s vision in the midst of dense forest during - **Shri T. Rangarajan**, began to narrate the story of **“Little Dhruva”**. Within the same same story there was a sudden twist and yet another story. So, one could easily get to learn 4-5 short stories within the main story. Filled with humor, satire, voice modulation to inculcate strong confidence in young children. Just a normal conversation leads to storytelling for Shri. T.Rangarajan. ‘Our own life experiences are



the best stories we can learn from’ –he opines.

Born in an orthodox conservative Iyengar Brahmin family in 1936 Shri. T. Rangarajan was exposed to religious and spiritual readings, Shloka recitation, listening to Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Thiruppavai upanyasam discourses from younger days. His mother Rajammal fondly called by all as ‘Chitti’, use to tell short funny stories with proverbs and Tamil language saying based. So, from the beginning he was open to more of listening skill **“Shravana”**.

As most of the discourses were oral in nature, this helped in developing listening skill. As always, his emphasis on youngsters to listen and develop this skill well. As he grew older, he developed an inclination towards reading rich scripture books, short stories, novels in Hindi, Sanskrit, Kananda, Telugu. Tamil and English languages. High school days participated in Kannada and Sanskrit drams during school day function.

Then it was his high school senior students Shri N. B. Narayana is also known as Drama Narayana and fondly called by all as **Nani**. Then he became makeup Nani. It was Nani the main wire puller towards theatre, dramas and plays.

During his younger days, he was a voracious reader, good information gatherer, study about culture, cultural practice, body language, language usage, diction, pronunciation, and study the script thoroughly. Good command over languages adds for theatre passionate. He is grateful to his theatre passionate colleagues serving in Indian Railways for exposing him to various drama culture present then. He got to learn more about '**Veera Shaivisms**' philosophy and great personalities. Similarly, his inclination towards the spiritual path from younger days also made him open to explore the great philosophy of **Sri Shankararacharya, Sri Ramanujacharya** and **Sri Madhvacharyas**. In 1980, he gave his first Thiruppavai discourse at Hubballi. Here, it was Upanayasam – yet another form of Storytelling. The first emphasis on emotional scene, navarasa, voice modulation, theatrical gestures, pauses and space made the normal discourse filled cinematic effects, therapeutic form, the artist should be aware of **Bhava, Tala** and **Laya**.



Storytelling – be it Harikatha or discourse to make it applied form or Need to know to sing, know the lyrics well, be able to enact with a good voice, should be prepared to answer the queries or the questions related to the stories from the epics, Puranas. So, need to be good scholar all through. 'We should feel the story and make others also feel the same. This is the

effect of the 'storytelling is a therapy' opines T. Rangarajan.

Natyashastra guiding encyclopedia of Indian Traditional Puppetry

'**Natyashastra**' is a *Drama Handbook* of Dance and Drama by Bharatamuni in the 2nd century. According to Shri T. Rangarajan (Storyteller, Theatre artist and Scholar), '**Natya Veda**' is considered as **Panchma Veda**, i.e., the Fifth Veda created towards the recreation of mankind. It is further believed that Bharatamuni gained the Natya Veda Shastra directly from Lord Brahma and recorded it in the form of a written text manual. This is the only comprehensive guiding handbook of classical dance and theatre forms in India.

Natyashastra handbook applies to traditional puppetry of India. The foremost reference is about the 'Sutradhara' who manipulates the doll or Puthali with Sutra-the strings from inside. The Sutradhara literally the holder-'dhara' or manipulator and strings-the sutras: this directs to the play of God who upholds the strings of the destinies of human beings in his hands and he is the chief Sutradhara.

The 6th and the 21st Chapters of Natya Shastra connects with the Indian Traditional Puppet theatre. Natya Shastra guides with regard to Puppet theatre-puppet looks, puppets and colours, costume and ornamentation, speech and emotion part, puppets movements and posture. This is called **Aanghika, Vachika, Aharya, Sattivika** and **Abhinaya**-which can be seen and preserved in traditional Indian Puppet theatre.

Aanghika- Movement of the limbs: Head, hand, breast, sides, waist, feet, eyes, eyebrows, lower lips, jaws and so on.

Aanghika- Movement of the limbs: Head, hand, breast, sides, waist, feet, eyes, eyebrows, lower lips, jaws and so on.

Vachika: the speech connected parts.



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Aahaarya: construction, colour, ornamentation, costume, **Saatvika** : the emotion. **Abhinaya:** the word “Abhinaya” is explained in the Natya Shastra as “Abhi” (towards), and “Naya” (to carry), or to carry the spectator towards the meaning. Abhinaya can therefore be translated as communicating to the audience.

All the above four main components put together before the audience- Here, the emphasis on the ‘**Postures**’-Standing or Reclining Postures, Sitting Postures with the supportive Hasta movements known as the hand gestures.

Nevertheless, the adaptation from the Natyashastra by the traditional puppeteers is within the limitation of puppet form and style.

Role of Puppetry in School Education:

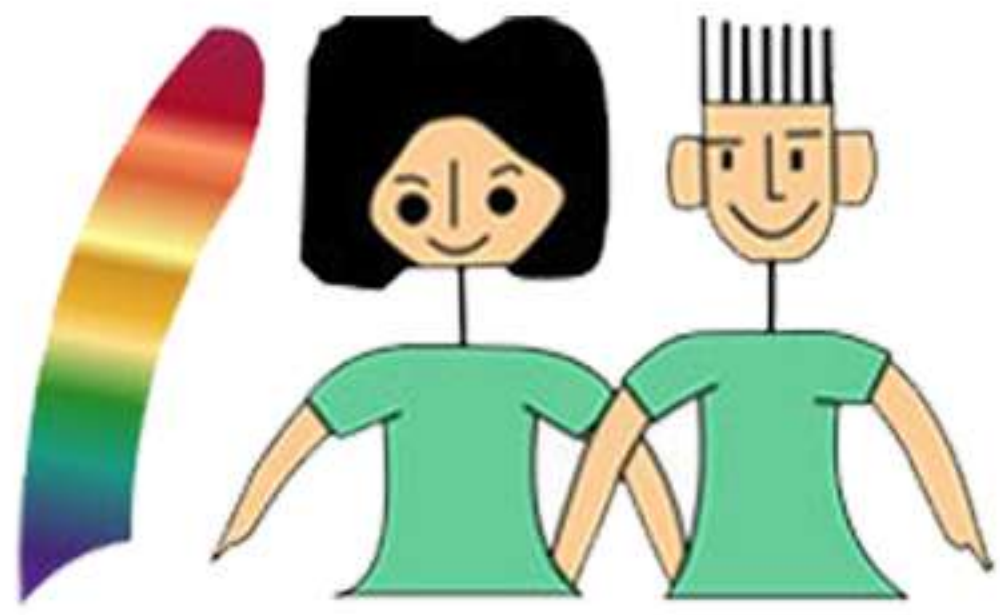
Puppetry as an inexpensive teaching tool provides teachers with one of the most powerful teaching aids in the classroom. The benefits from puppets are numerous. They let children into an imaginary world. This is foremost important brain exercise or activity which developed well to enhance learning skills. Working with puppets helps to check emotional stability. The teacher will know the ‘**real-self**’ student/s and their emotional problems. Children learn to learn from themselves with cooperation when working in a small group to produce their own puppet play. There are many openings for sequencing, organizing, verbalizing, sorting information and gaining self-confidence. In a nutshell, a puppet based learning helps students in thinking, approach, writing, how to work in collectives, and most importantly to express freely and learning without fear.

A good opportunity for teachers to teach subjects and languages effectively using puppets. The Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) provides a comprehensive and an integrated training in the preparation,



manipulation and production of such puppet programmes which may be used in a variety of formal and non formal teaching situations. This training programme is held in all the four centres-Delhi (North), Udaipur (West), Hyderabad (South) and Gowahati (East) all through the year.





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Some of the teachers who get trained put into practice and train other teachers too. Recently, Ms. Pushpa, Mrs Kusuma Nagaraj, Mr. Lakwinder Singh, Mr. Saravanan, Mr. Phunde, Mr. Swaraj Kumar Sen, Ms. Mahamaya Biswas, and many others have applied puppetry in academics and non-academic teaching and received accolades for their work. This pushes the zeal of the trainers too.

Recently, **Mrs Kusuma Nagaraj** School Assistant and CRP Incharge of Padumpanambur Cluster organized for two day workshop on **“Role of Puppetry in School Education”** at UBSC Government School Haleyanagadi, Udipi, Mangaluru, Karnataka State on December 13-14, 2019. First hand experience on making and manipulating of puppets by 30 teachers and students.



Shri. K. Saravanan, Headmaster, Dr. T. Tirugnanam Primary School, Madurai, Tamil Nadu uses Puppets during weekend to create social and educational awareness. Puppet plays on **‘Child Care and protection’**, **‘Good Touch and Bad Touch’** and **‘sex education’** has received good response within the vicinity of the school. Recently, his works were well captured by both print and electronic news media.

Thus, there is an ample scope for the exploration of the use of puppets in the present Nanotechnological stage.



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DIY Puppet making 🍌

Things You'll Need:

1. 14 X 14cms colour chart sheet paper or craft sheet paper of yellow or orange.
2. Black sketch or marker
3. Scissors and White glue
4. Half the 14X14cms, colour chart sheet paper or craft sheet paper of yellow or orange.
5. Black sketch or marker
6. Scissors and White glue



Steps:

1. On the chart sheet draw the face of the character: Tiger for instance. For this draw a small circle.
2. Within the circle draw two small circles for the eyes.
3. In the two small circles now draw two smaller circles and fill with black colour for eyeballs.
4. Draw two leaf like shape for two ears on the either side of the big circle.
5. Draw a numerical '3' upside down for the nose. Mark the center point with a small black circle. Then either side, draw small black dots and draw whiskers.
6. Draw a small 'U' below the nose for mouth.
7. Tigers have black stripes. Now make small stripes with black sketch pen on the forehead. Then on the both the cheeks.
8. Then cut the face of the tiger-cut along the outline well with both the ears intact.
9. For making it into a finger puppet body- we need to make a roll. For this take the remaining yellow colour sheet and measure the size of the one's index finger. This is the length of the finger puppet.

10. Now make a roll of the sheet of one's index finger size. And secure the ends with glue.
11. Glue the tiger cut face of the top of the body. Then mark stripes on the body too.
12. Cut one strip in yellow sheet and draw stripes on it and fix it on the back of the body for tiger's tail.



Ola!! 😊 The Tiger Finger puppet is ready!!



UBSC School students from Haleangadi, Udupi, Mangaluru, Karnataka made these finger puppets from felt fabric material.

Once comfortable to do with chart sheets than can try in felt fabric materials. Can use hot glue or fabric glue. Stitching with a needle and thread is recommended for longer stay. It is a good activity for primary school students of class IIIrd onwards. They get to learn one more skill.

Similarly, try making giraffe, frog, lion or even elephant and have fun. Send us your Finger Puppet pictures to get featured in the Puthalika Patrika magazine.

Announcement:

Artists, Art lovers, Parents, Teachers, anyone passionate towards traditional and folk arts are welcome to contribute articles for ***Puthalika Patrika Puppetry News Magazine***

For enquiries about Storytelling, storytelling with puppets, Puppet shows, puppet making workshop and customized puppet making contact:

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