

## Puppets with reasons-Part I

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Puppetry is an age old performing art rarely heard in modern days. This performing folk art is played using puppets. Puppet is an object that comes into life with human manipulation. This manipulation of puppets creates fantasy in life. Puppeteers are puppet manipulators. Puppets can be anything from simple dolls with movements to stuffed toys or can also be a plain paper to book or any thing. Humans used hands to form shadow and thus the formation and manipulation of shadow puppets emerged. Shadow puppets are made by drawing finest carving and inch of delicate designs on the processed leather (skin of animals) and painted using vegetable dyes. Perhaps, this long process is followed for longevity in terms of storage of leather material that is used after through processing and cleaning well. Puppetry is the only performing arts that incorporate the finest essence of other performing arts like dance, music, story-telling and one act play and drama. Again this is the only art that enhances the visual art forms like sketching, drawing and painting. Further, this is the only performing art wherein the puppeteer transverses the life into puppets by makes it to reach the audience as the character.

India is the only heavenly land to be blessed with all forms of puppetry. As India stands for land of diversity, similar is with puppetry too. 'Kathputli' is more common and popular, is one form of string puppets of Rajasthan. Some times string puppets are combined with rods to form big marionettes. Marionettes are popular during rallies and campaigns for their huge size. Apart from string, rod and shadow, glove puppets are popularly used. Glove puppets are at their best in class room situation. Traditional puppeteers who are practicing and preserving this art form even today play stories based on 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata'. There are families residing in remote Andhra Pradesh who only play 'Lava-Kusha' story in Shadow puppet form and none other. Similarly, there are families who play one part of the whole epic. Perhaps this modus operandi is followed to allow the families involved in this art form to practice and flourish. It is the mutual understanding that each family or families get a chance to perform. Basically the performance would start in the evening and go up till

late nights. The puppeteers would deliver the dialogue, sing songs, and play musical instruments like harmonium, drums, cymbals and others. Puppet plays are organized and are part of temple festivals, and other village celebrations. Chiefly the puppet plays were used to entertain people and at the same time pass on message in the end. These plays emphasized more on culture, values, ethics which are guiding force for leading a healthy life; and would trigger reasoning.

Puppet plays can easily turn on or influence individual's perception. It is due to the natural responsiveness that puppet plays transmit; that gives scope for self expression and for social discussions on serious issues and means to overcoming obstacles. In modern times Puppets have been used extensively in several countries in education, rehabilitation and in therapeutic programs giving tremendous results. Again for the reason being that this performing art involves both building and handling puppets, which eventually stress upon learning abilities like creativity skills, improves concentration, imagination, promotes social activities and communication skills.

### Puppetry in classroom

'Educate the educated ones' said Swami Vivekananda. There are numerous circumstances and situations that call for periodically for educating the masses. Right from art of parenting, child psychology, addressing peer pressure, aggressive nature, interpersonal relations, sexual education, respect parents, old age and so on. Re-connect to real life through stories from popular tales,



folk tales. This further develops the analytical skills and logic. Puppetry as resource center generates awareness on socio-political, health and environment issues.

This performing art benefits all age group in general and children in particular. It is proved to be an effective tool in teaching children with learning difficulties and slow learners. It has proved to be effective addressing issues of poor, deprived, disadvantage and marginalized group.

Now the question that arises commonly is that can there be some place for puppet in the classroom. Well right from nursery rhymes to Life Science all can be taught effectively using puppets. Most of the nursery rhymes both in English or regional languages are animal and nature surrounded. Making animal puppets and playing that animal puppet using rhymes would enhance the learning skill. This would infact make the learning process easier as every one at one point or the other wants others to learn or join in learning activity.

An animal for instance 'monkey' (monkey that can imitate human and kids love it), with a name given like 'mallu' or 'pallu' is physically present and up with pranks is reciting rhymes. This identifies the relation of co-partner or a friend in the form of an animal doing all that the child does and beyond too. This breaks the boredom and gives space for exploration and makes the child to think from the 'mallu monkey puppet' point of view. This nursery rhyme puppet helps in understanding the complexity of animal kingdom into simplicity. This triggers and enables the child to understand basic animal structures and function of animal structures, its adaptation and dependency in the environment. Learn about not only about monkeys but other animals too. Where do they live? What do they eat? Are they nocturnal or diurnal? Who/what are their natural enemies? How



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can they walk upside down? A scientific explanation and Comparison of different types of monkeys learn how monkeys stay on trees and care fro young ones like human.

Similarly knowing about other desert animals and animals of cold region animals is also possible. One



simple puppet covers knowing about the animal, vegetation, whether condition, nature, narrating a story develops language skills, helps in knowing rhyming words and presentation. More than this makes to learn in a team.

Any learning is aspect can live a lasting impression if the learning is developed in fun way of learning and not learning for learning. Puppets as an teaching tool comes in handy in making this possible. Modern day's puppets can be easily made with available junks at home with no cost. This again develops the creativity of the child and improves imagination, as it creating a puppet is left to the individual with no hard and fast rule. Psychologist suggests that involving a child in art and craft not only develops imagination but also improves concentration and disciplines them. This is what is debated at length while designing curriculum of education.

### Conclusion

Maybe this was the reason for traditional puppet plays successful existence in the past that they could reach the mass in local dialect, talk about various issues of life and quoting answers from epics. They infact guided humanity and helped in following social norms of respecting others and reciprocating the services of others. This art is less heard in traditional form and has adapted a new look in the form of teaching modern subjects. As simple as an old wine in a new bottle.