

METRO PLUS

Puppets take on the cause of sparrows



Prabalika M Borah

MARCH 20, 2017 00:00 IST
UPDATED: MARCH 20, 2017 04:01 IST



A puppet show depicts the touching tale of disappearing sparrows from our lives

Yadigiri and Balamani met each other while chirping and hopping around in a garden. Balamani is beautiful and sprightly. Yadigiri is handsome and peace-loving. The two get married and have many children. But their paradise of love is in danger. With the city in which they live growing in leaps and bounds, Balamani and Yadigiri fear losing their home, their dear friends and the little ones. The tale of sparrows Balamani and Yadigiri and their love and hardship is being narrated in the form of a puppet play by Padmini Rangarajan of Sphoorthi Arts.

A teacher and a resource person for many educational centres in Hyderabad, Padmini began using puppets to make her classes in school more interactive and interesting.

"I learned to work with puppets for my son. When my son was two-years-old, my father a theatre activist suggested that I introduce him to the world of story telling. Even though the boy would not reply, he would learn the words and relate to the language. My father assured me that his interaction with the world would be better," recalls Padmini.

So Padmini made puppets of Mickey and Donald Duck to narrate stories to her son. "My father wasn't happy with me copying characters from somewhere. He reasoned with me on the need to introduce him to more Indian characters and tales. Thus began my journey with puppets," she tells.

As her son grew, so did Padmini's horizon. She gathered the children of her apartment and started narrating stories to them. This in some way, empowered Padmini to begin utilising puppets to teach in the schools.

A recipient of 'Tata Fellowship in folklore' she is instrumental in starting Sphoorthi theatre. With a crusade to narrate stories about real society, Padmini uses puppets to tell the story of the sparrow, the most social birds around us, but sadly on the verge of extinction.

"Many years back a friend gave me a copy of a vernacular newspaper which carried a report on sparrows. Since then, they have become an important part of my narration of stories with puppets," says Padmini.

Padmini staged *Yadigiri and Balamani* at La Makaan on Sunday to mark, 'World Puppet Day' and 'World Sparrow Day.'

The tale of sparrows Balamani and Yadigiri and their love and hardship is being narrated in the form of a puppet play