

# Touching a chord with puppets

**Padmini Rangarajan** not only shares folklore tales and imparts cultural knowledge but also makes perplexing subjects like Math easy for children

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**M**oving her hands through children's hearts and luring them into a joyous state of mind, using marionettes to parade and enlighten life's very essence, Padmini Rangarajan targets to reach out to every discrete personality in Hyderabad city. Her serendipitous expedition with puppetry began over a decade ago. Apart from being an educational puppeteer, she shares folklore tales with strong enthusiasm striving to bring in a radical change to divulge traditional knowledge and cultural practices to young novices.

What started off as a bustle to entice her child went through a range of events — reciting stories in order to gain one's attention while beguiling them into learning perplexing subjects. "Where do I even start, the trajectory is as beautiful as it sounds. From teaching 'parts of speech' using hand puppets to cracking tough math problems and instilling backward classes into raising their voice for a good cause, I've effectively done my bit."

Talking about encouraging kids to learn fast, she says, "I always try and find striking ways to keep children glued to studying. Hand puppetry is really astonishing when it comes to rehearsing a story. Moving hands flawlessly into charming characters with



enthusiastic roars about a boring story works wonders."

Visualise the whole scenario: kids love listening to tales of mystical lands and mighty kings. So, why not make it easier for them to actually fall in love with something as boring and difficult as math? When you pop their most challenging problems using artistic ways, it not only has transient benefits but also improves their grasping powers.

Her work struck a chord as she was imprinting over the tribes of 'Adilabad Gond'. The tribal youth talked with fervour as they bellowed with puppets, illuminating about health awareness. In an attempt to persuade the tribe, the play *Mava Jiva Mava Asti* emphasises on the medical benefits provided by the government. To eradicate superstitious practices, it accentuated on taking ownership by the community.

Padmini has also been a part of an Urdu play, about girl child empower-

ment named *Pankh Mile Mere Khwaab Ko*. The play reinforces the soul into salvation, to always grow and bequeath to those who are in need.

As a part of her very first workshop, she aimed to educate housekeepers, and staged a play on issues ranging from sexual abuse to other kinds of ill-treatment. As she started sharing her revelations in the form of a domestic maid reaching out for help, the crowd shrieked to show their dismay at her dreadful treatment. This was indeed one of the biggest achievements for the puppeteer.

"Ever wonder what these wonderful puppets do in the nights? Do they sleep, or play or plan for next day? Or scheme how to escape from their master? Well, such questions push me to explore my horizons into the world of puppetry. Keeping all of it in mind, I started an e-news magazine named *Puthalika Patrika* that talks about puppetry and varied traditional art forms," she concludes.

