

metro fare



Decades ago, puppet shows were a major source of entertainment as well as information for people. These puppets are now being used for educating children, writes **Madhuri Dasagrathi**

Strings attached

Puppetry is one of the finest and toughest arts. To narrate a story, one should have creativity, good mimicry skills and also an ability to perform all the movements according to a story.

“Puppetry excites people irrespective of their age,” says Padmini Rangarajan, the founder of Sphoorthi Theatre for Educational Puppetry.

Talking about the inception of this innovative concept, Padmini shares that back in 2003, she used to narrate stories to her son using two puppets. Much to her surprise, he used to listen to the same story for more than ten times without getting bored.

She adds, “Later, indirectly he became my promoter. All his friends used to ask me about the talking monkey and the funny caterpillar, which I had prepared for him. He also took me to his kindergarten school. I was extremely happy with the response I got from the kids. It also motivated me to make more puppets of different types. My journey started with two puppets and one story, but it has now reached up to 100 stories.”

Besides increasing the secretion of creative juices in young minds, it also acts like a compan-

ion for the loners and to prove this, Padmini has got a perfect example. She says, “When I was narrating a story to some children in a school, I saw a boy who was sitting all alone. He was not able to mingle with his other classmates. Observing him, I took an initiation of introducing a puppet as his friend and narrated a story. By the end of

that’s what helps her in connecting with the kids. After meeting a lot of children, she realized that a lot of kids are getting confused because of their demanding curriculum. To ease this pressure, she decided to spread her magic around by using the techniques of puppetry.

Speaking on the same, she says, “To reach all the kids and remove this fear from their minds, I started explaining basic concepts of English language to them through puppetry. Later, I also included Mathematics in my stories. I explained them that a day starts mathematically, we wake up at six o’clock and six is a number. The value of zero is hero. Through puppets, I also try to tell them about various units of measurement.”

Padmini advises that one should think from a child’s perspective and teach them in an interesting way. It helps them connect to what they are studying.

Padmini is quite well-versed in making varieties of puppets like Finger Puppets, Glove or Hand puppets, Rod puppets, String-tied puppets also called *Rajasthani Kathputlis*. She has many awards and rewards to her credit and a

documentary has also been made on her.

Not many people are making efforts to keep this art alive and this really disappoints her. However, she is trying her best to make puppetry popular again, along with her team.



Padmini Rangarajan

Pics: Vinay Madapu

the story, I could see, all his classmates were around him, talking to him with lots of love and affection.”

Padmini has closely studied many teaching methods. She has also studied psychology and