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PUTHALIKA PATRIKA

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Are you happy meeting us?

Earth is Great Place to be



PUTHALIKA PATRIKA

Editors

Padmini Rangarajan

Subhasis Neogi

Arun Bansal

Proof Reading Team

S k Rangarajan

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For Subscription please contact at
puthalikapatrika@gmail.com

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'Putala Bhaona, The Puppet Tradition of Assam, India' corrected

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Editorial Column

'Siddhantha' and 'Samskaras' were governing force of education system of ancient India. I was actually taken-a-back while learning about our rich cultural heritage traditions from a Westerner, who adapted the ancient teachings and was practicing it. The quest further brought me to quotes of many scholars and philosophers. I was perplexed after going through the quote of Aristotle - "Educating the Mind without educating the heart is no education at all"....how true the saying is. On 1st September 1947, the Indian Standard Time (IST) was adapted as the official time for the whole country. However, the 4th or 5th century CE astronomy treatise by our ancient Rishi Varahamihira the "Surya Siddhantha" gives the reference of Indian Standard Time corresponding to World Time. Educating the heart comes from appreciating the artfulness and bountifulness of Mother Nature with reverence and gratitude that transforms human life in Toto. All the noble qualities come from learning, appreciating, sharing and teaching the 'Samskaras' which uplifts the spirits and promote mutual reciprocation. Irony is, all the modern education systems over-looks the same and trains more towards selfishness and self isolation. All the forms of art that emerged in this land was appreciated, allowed space for growth by honouring the artists and nurturing their families...today we are in a stage of not only losing the artists but also the art-forms itself. Well, on the other hand, some Good Samaritans are thriving in connecting the mankind back to the cultural roots.

Padmini Rangarajan

The Puppet Tradition of Assam- Part 1

Putala Bhaona

Introduction

Puppetry in Assam is an age old tradition but it still holds an insignificant position in the arena of performing arts. Many scholars marginalize its importance by terming puppetry as a "child's play"(Dutta, 1986), when we



Rubi Puppet Theatre ,Dakhala, Bijoynagar

refer Puppetry with other performing art forms. In his book entitled Folk Toys of Assam, Dr. Birendranath Dutta has made a systematic survey on the various folk toys available in Assam and commented on Puppetry as "...a small scale figure of human or other living beings could legitimately be included in a study of toys." Dr. Dutta also talks about how the puppet shows which were once a very popular entertainment medium in rural Assam have lost its charm with the advent of the new media as the cinema, the modern looking theatrical shows etc.

STRING PUPPETS OF ASSAM:

It is believed that the string puppetry of Assam is even older than the 500 years old Vaishnava culture. The accounts and validation collected from all sources make it clear that apart from string-puppet no other forms of puppetry like shadow-puppets, rod-puppets, hand or glove-puppets ever existed in Assam. Some experts however believe that water puppetry existed

The Puppet Tradition of Assam- Part 1

Putala Bhaona

in Assam long before Mahapurush Sankardeva's birth but it got its due recognition only during his time. He in a way was the pioneer in developing the tradition which is now the national heritage of countries like Vietnam and Cambodia.

The String Puppets of Assam are known as Putula-Naach, Putula-Bhaona and PutulaBhaoriya. However some contemporary troupes also use the term Putula-Theatre- which is a popular folk entertainment medium in the plains of Assam. The

oldest known troupe of lower Assam is perhaps that of ShriHarikanta Barman, the octogenarian veteran of Mohkuli village near Nalbari, whose father is said to have started showing puppets in 1885. A first hand account collected from sources of NatunKamalabariSattrra of Majuli reveals that the art was first learnt by bhakats(monks) a little over 50 years back from troupe



of puppeteers visiting the Sattrra. For whatever may be the reasons puppet-theatre has been more vigorously active in lower Assam, particularly in

The Puppet Tradition of Assam- Part 1

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Kamrup and Magaldai areas where we can not only find the biggest number of practicing troupes but also the strongest popular links of the art. (Dutta 1990)

BELIEF NARRATIVES AND PUPPETRY:

In The Journal of SrimantaSankardeva Research Institute, Dr. BirendranathDutta has highlighted a very significant reference from Katha-guru-carita(early 18th century biography of Vaishnava saints of Assam) that shadow puppet was performed at the residence of Sankardeva's father on the twenty-second day of the birth of the saint:



“And on the twenty second day tatakiyabajikarstarted manipulating shadow puppets”

(Arubais dinar dinatatakiyabajikarechayaPutulanocabadhoilehi).

After this practice a myth started evolving in the village and soon it became a trend to practice puppetry in each of the house where a baby boy was born in the hope that the new born would also grow up in the footsteps of the saint Sankardeva. The beliefs and legends associated with this art form travelled till they were told. But now because of the effect of globalization the art form itself has undergone many changes thereby losing its rustic touch along with its contents.

The Puppet Tradition of Assam- Part 1

Putala Bhaona

NOVELTY AND THEATRICALITY:

Traditional PutalaNaachperformances begin with a Ganesh Bandana song to Lord Ganesha - the Vignaharta and thus the events are ritually framed so that they command the attention of the audience (Narayan Deka 2012). However there are exceptions to this practice also as we have puppeteers like Sri BaniKanta Barman and Sri AbaniKantaSarma

who begin their performances with Saraswati Bandana and Nataraj Bandana respectively. Then the show begins with the story's central character being a historical figure, but his life has become somewhat embellished and taken on numerous mythical and political themes throughout the years. Despite the complexity of the stories, the puppet play's actual plot is rendered secondary so that it "provides" a "frame" for numerous stock scenes that involve a variety of characters like musicians depicting different flavours of Assam, dancers representing our seven states and magical performers (Kothari 1985:2).

--- Article and Photos Submission by Dr. Moushumi Bhattacharjee

Senior Consultant, Dr. Anamika Roy Memorial Trust.

----To be Continued



Assam Puppet Theatre
Makhibaha, Nalbari

Photos from Assam Puppet Theatre
Makhibaha, Nalbari



THE HISTORY OF PUPPETRY IN ALGERIA

Algeria or The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (Arabic ,Berber), is a country in North Africa on the Mediterranean coast. It has hosted many prehistoric cultures and is known for a millennium of empires and dynasties.

The existence of the puppet is proven in Algeria before the 16th century, but it is confused, in the testimonies, with other kinds of representations. Under the Ottoman Empire (1533) the shadow theater is identified. Two characters gradually emerged: King Urtilla, symbol of Ottoman domination, and karakoz, inspired by the famous Turkish Karagoz. In Algeria, the expression "Karakoz Theater" moreover refers most of the time to the puppet theater in general.

French colonization (1830-1962) popularized the technique of the hand puppet. Guignol entered Algeria and the country experienced a "guignolization" of the art of puppetry to counter the influence of the karagoz.

THE HISTORY OF PUPPETRY IN ALGERIA

on the one hand, and that of Ghendja on the other. Ghandja was a winning puppet considered a fetish to bring back the rain and ensure fertility for women, and a key figure of Algerians. The French hero opposed to him by the authorities was quickly turned away and one could attend small spectacles of Guignol militant in an indirect way against the French presence. in Constantine(1862),in kabylia ,in oranie,(1880) in biskra ,the first troops of puppeteers appeared, modest but fairly well structured.



This period was hardly favorable to shadow theater since the French authorities banned its performances in 1843 after realizing its role in opposition to colonization and impact on public opinion.

The changes that Algeria went through with independence in 1962 greatly affected the art of puppetry. this was put at the service of a certain postcolonial pedagogy .Avery popular television program(El Hadika Sahira ,with means the enchanted forest) will give the art of puppetry a national footing. Problems of priority ,mentality ,politics, spirituality have meant that this art has barely begun to emerge from the rut since the beginning of the 2000s.A certain thrill is due to companies geared towards young audiences .they all most all practice as amateurs...

The Aladdin Company of Sidi-Bel-Abebes city which also houses the Ghandja puppet Museum which contains more than 500 puppets from





THE HISTORY OF PUPPETRY IN ALGERIA

around the world and the headquarters of UNIMA Algeria is professional. Nouredine Douila and Kada Benchemissa are noted directors. They run training workshops, produce shows and participate in festivals in the world. Thus, there is only one festival which takes place in Ain temouchent each year and all participate in this festival.

----Article and Photos by Khadidja Ben-redouane Algeriers





Obituary- Shraddhanjali

Late Mothe family

Pandemic has hit hard on the traditional art performers all across the globe. Our deepest condolence to all the noble departed souls connected with puppetry and allied arts. It is indeed sad to know the depart of the best traditional puppeteers, the contemporary performers, research scholars and good will promoters of the traditional art form across the globe. The year



2021 has hard hit on The traditional 'Mothe' family troupe of Ammapuram, Nerametta Mandal, present Jangoan District, Telangana State known for 'Chekka Bommallatta or Koyya Bomalatta' –wooden string puppet play and 'Vedhi Bhagavatham' or 'Yakshganam' –folk theatre play is in a paralyzed state. Mothe families toured all over India and have performed with their heavy string puppets and folk theatre play. Very sad to share the senior most traditional puppeteers Mothe Ramaswamy age 80 years passed away at Burugupeta, followed by Mothe Narasaiah 75 years, Mothe Narasaiah 67 years and another family member Mothe Chandraiagh 63 years left us behind with wonderful memories of puppet plays and folk theatre plays.

Obituary- Shraddhanjali

Ms. Sampa Ghosh-Puppeteer and Author

Ms. Sampa Ghosh, fondly called by all as Sampa 'Didi' (elder sister). She was in fact an elder sister to many of the puppeteers. It was the time of a great interaction with her during her visit to Hyderabad in 2003-2004, that she gave a very broad outlook about the Puppetry art and encouraged me too to take up qualitative research work in Educational Puppetry. Pleasant interactions, morale support and timely encouragement have shaped me as an Educational Puppeteer. She breathe her last on September 1st, 2021. She served at Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), New Delhi. She was a disciple of Shri Suresh Dutta –a renowned puppeteer of India and Padmashree Shri Dadi



Padumjee- President of UNIMA World. A recipient of Ministry of Culture's Young Scholarship in 1980 and a Ministry of Culture's Senior Fellowship in 2001 and had started a website named Indian Puppetry –a directory. However, this website is no more in fuction. Her contribution to Indian Puppetry is invaluable and highly appreciable. She authored books on puppetry and puppet making namely: -'Make your own Puppet' 2005 for beginners in 2005, 'Indian Puppets' in 2006 and 'Puppet Stories' in 2007.

On behalf of Puppeteers family all across the world, we pray for a peaceful journey to the eternal world and bless us to be connected and work towards the preservation of tangible and intangible arts forms selflessly. OM! SHANTHI!!

Obituary- Shraddhanjali

GURU KOLHA CHARAN SAHOO

Born in 1936 in Odash in the state of Odisha Guru Kolha charan Sahoo started his career as a government servant and entered the field of shadow puppetry under the guidance of the late Guru Kathi Nanda Das, a master practitioner of Ravan Chhaya who bagged Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1978.

He had excelled in this art form of puppet theatre belonging to Odisha and had performed with his puppets all over India and countries like South Korea and Malayasia. He was an active participant in the National Puppet theatre Festivals organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1978, 1995, 2000 and 2003 and the puppet theatre workshops in 1988, 1991, 1997 and 1998. He had been the president



and Guru of Ravan Chhaya Natya Sansada since 1986 and had been imparting Ravan Chhaya training to the youngsters. He had also published a book on Ravan Chhaya titled "Ravan Chhaya : Its creation , existence and development".

He had received many awards including Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1998), The Bhanja Kala Parishada Award in 1997 and Utkal Yuva Parishada Award in 1997.

For his lifelong contribution to Ravan Chhaya he was also bestowed with the prestigious Central Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 1998.



Creative Corner:



Use the given symbol/ figure as a reference
and complete a meaningful picture

This is open for kids between the age group of 5 to 14 years.

Use the symbol/ figure as a reference and complete a meaningful picture.

(Free to use colour pencils, crayons or paints)

Post the completed pictures and give full details:

Name, Parent/s name, Age of the child, Class, School

Contact number to puthalikapatrika@gmail.com

The best three winners will be awarded and best six will be issued e-Certificate.

Shri Ajit Jha –Folklore Singer and Actor

Artist of the Month

In ancient and classical India, the area that is now present Bihar State of India was once considered a centre of power, learning, and culture. Bihar is culturally divided into three sub regions- Maghadh, Bhojpur and Mithila. Mithila , also known as Tirhut and



Tirabhukti, is bounded by the Mahananda River in the east, the Ganges in the south, the Gandaki River in the west and by the foothills of the Himalayas in the north. It comprises certain parts of Bihar and Jharkhand of India and adjoining districts of the eastern Terai of Nepal. Shri Ajit Jha belongs to Bhatsimar Village of Madhubhani district of Mithila region. Ajit Jha says with pride that 'It is the land of Janak Maharaj and Mother Sita. It was the sweet words 'Madur bani' (vani) that she spoke with all became to be known as 'Maddhubhani'. Mithila is well known for music, dance and folk plays known as 'Lok Natak' from ages. 'One can find the folklore and folk music compositions signifying the nature's connectivity with the mankind right from the birth to death'- opines Ajit.

As a child, Ajit was attracted towards the folk instruments that his uncle Shri Narsingh Jha who was a good singer and a musician. He uses to play like Dolak, Tabla and harmonium. He gave the initial training of vocal music to Ajit at the age of 4 years. Shri Narayana Paswan an folk artist initiated Ajit about the folk music at the age 8 years at his place. At the age of 13-14 years he

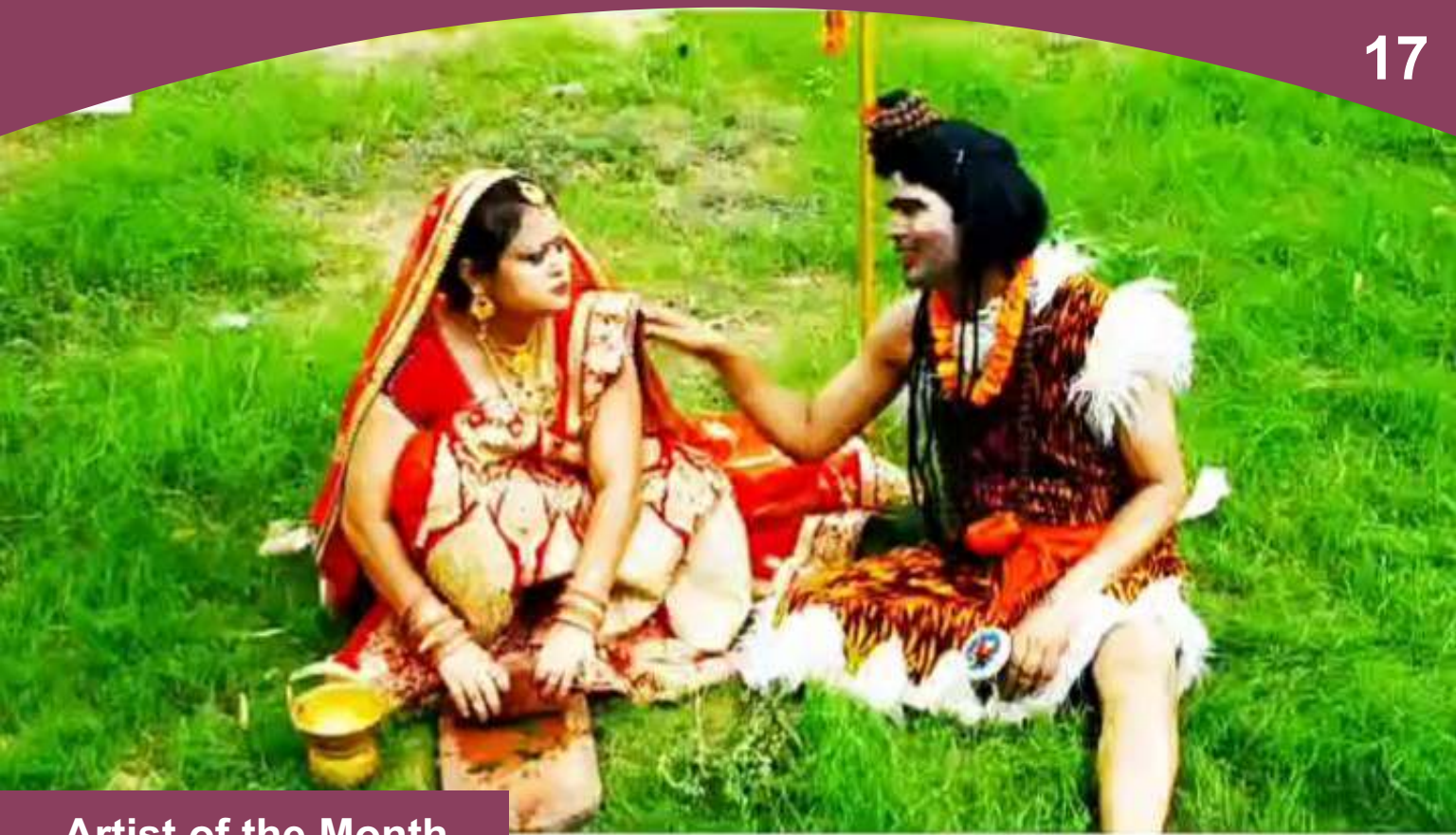


Artist of the Month

then got trained under Shri Mahendra Malangiya a well known for Lok Natya and internationally known Mithili Natak for 5-6 years. After completing his B.A in Hindi Honors, he moved towards reviving 'Mithila' Folklore and Folk music. Then he was fortunate to get national scholarship under Ministry of Culture received training under Shri Suman Kumar Dy secretary of Sangeet Natak Academy, India 'Kalamandali' troupe. He has attended around 15 or more workshops organized by Sangeet Natak Academy in music, dance, theatre, folk and so on. 2014-2015-Diploma in Theatre from Mithila University. 2016-2018 he learnt Hindusthani classical of 'Garbhanga Gharana' from Sangeet Vidwan Pandit Vinay Shastry.

In 2014, Ajit started his group named 'Maryada Sanskriti Sansthan' in New Delhi to promote Mithila culture among youth. Today, the troupe has regular members of 8 women and 10 men. They trained youth in Delhi, Bihar and other places in theatre, folk music, folk dance, Along with the 'Maryada Sanskriti Sansthan' Ajit has performed at various places in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Bihar, Haryana, Punjab and other. 'Most of the folk music and songs are forgotten due to filmy geet. Now I am documenting the same through constant travelling so that we could preserve at least the rest of them' - cries Ajit.

Mithila Folk Music comprises of 'Sohar geet'- the songs sung during



Artist of the Month

auspicious moments of celebrations, 'Samudoun geet' or 'Bidhaai geet'-sung during wedding and when the bride leaves her parental house after wedding, 'Bhada Masa'- one very elaborative song describing about all the 12 months known as 'Bharon Mahine ka varnan', 'Chaitravar geet'- song about Chaitra masa, the first month and is the harvesting time, 'Sanja-Parathi'- dawn to dusk songs for every event of celebrations. 'We also sing many songs written and composed by the great poet Shri Vidya Pathi. They are known as Vidya Pathi's songs that are sung and included in daily prayers too'-reveals Ajit.

Under Folk Dance known as Lok Nrutya-'Jijiya Jarani' is very famous. It is a dance performed to keep the spell of evil eyes effecting the children as they grow and this performance protects them from spell of evil eyes effects which is our belief'-exclaims Ajit. 'Sama Chakeba'- A bamboo baskets is carried with a pair of clay idols, representing birds-traditionally known as Sama and Chakeba or Chekeva in folklore and representing the start of nine-days of festivity celebrated in Mithilanchal, which is dedicated to the affectionate brother-sister relationship. The celebrations also mark the arrival of colourful birds on the plains during winter from the Himalayas. "We used to listen to



Artist of the Month

folk songs, which were sung in every nook and corner of the streets at dusk in our locality. As of now, it's not quite common"-says Ajit. There is a character known as 'Chugla' known as Jester or so. This is also made out of clay and additional hay is added as feature like long bread kind. After the ritualistic ceremony, the Chugla-Chuguli statues are set fire and the sama chekeva are immersed in the river water or in the farming field

Folk Theatre known as Lok Natya-'Raja Salhes'- is very famous that exhibits 'veer rasa'. It is the the story of the local deities. It is performed for 6 days for 5 hours every day. It starts in the late night around 11 pm and goes till early morning 5 am. 'Hirani-Bhirani' story of twin sisters is also famous folk theatre play. 'Ram Leela'- for one month. Performance done from Birth of Sri Ram to Sita's last stage'. 'Alaha Udal'- a 'veer rasa' performance and 'Virapat'- krishna and Radha-Rasya Natya by 13-14 performances on stage performing, It is mix of dialogues and song compositions. Ajit knows to play Tabla, Dolak, Manjeera and Harmonium insttuments. Now he directs both folk theatrical and other kinds of plays in Hindi and Mithili languages. He also does corporate events too to earn his livelihood. 'I am making efforts that I can to save my region's culture and tradition' -concludes Ajit Jha.

**Nishi Menon****Geetha Ananth****Anitha Ranjit****Smitha Nair****Sangeetha****Racika Raman****Ninoj Abraham**

Kadalakkadas-The Story of the Story-tellers from Kerala

Kadala or kappalandi - meaning roasted peanuts in Malayalam. Roasted peanuts the perfect snack to munch on when friends and family come together to exchange gossips and stories. What happens to those paper cones when emptied of peanuts? Some crumple them up and throw away. A few unfurl them to discover interesting stories within, old and new, from far and near. That is what we at Kadalakkadas do – tell stories. Interestingly, 'kadas' also referred to a piece of paper. Thus, we the storytellers from Kerala identified this as our group name Kadalakkadas. We go with the same page name on Facebook, we tell stories in Malayalam to children and adults, about Kerala's culture, myths, and people.

Kadalakkadals-The Story of the Story-tellers from Kerala

Kadalakkadals was born during the lockdown last year. We – Racika, an academic trainer, Nishi and Sangeetha, both teachers, Smitha, an educator, Geetha Ananth, a bank professional, Ninoj Abraham, a software



engineer, and Anitha, a homemaker – had come together to attend a beginner's workshop for story-telling, just before the pandemic started. While sitting confined to our homes during the first lock down, we thought of ways to nourish and nurture this newly picked up skill, and thus this Face book page was born on July 2020.

Besides the seven of us, so far more than 50 story enthusiasts have come to our platform with their stories, including children. Today, one year and more than 130 stories old, we can see that the past year has helped us become more aware of our own state's rich culture and literature. We've had a series of stories based on Kerala's folklore, followed by stories of selected poems by popular poets. The enthusiastic response to this segment prompted us to conduct a Kavitha Sandhya – an evening of poetry – on our first anniversary, where a few of us recited poems. Next, we graduated to conducting our first live event a week ago – a recital of selected portions from Adhyatma Ramayanam, written by Thunchath Ezhuthachan, the father of Malayalam language.

The growth of Kadalakkadals has brought each of us an unforeseen chance to learn a new skill and to hone the latent talents, besides story-telling.

Kadalakkadalas-The Story of the Story-tellers from Kerala

Smitha manages the page, responding promptly to the newsworthy events in the Malayalam literary and cultural world, by creating posters with write ups. Racika is the brain behind the scenes, constantly coming up with new ideas to keep us going. Ninoj Abraham has evolved as a visual story teller. Besides designing the logo,



he comes up with apt titles and illustrations suited to each theme. Geetha, a trained classical singer, gives music to our title songs and poems. The artist in Nishi gave life to a painting which shines as the profile picture of our page. Anitha and Sangeetha edit/trim the videos. The exposure through Kadalakkadalas brought in another bonus to Anitha – she is now a story/script writer and translator for Tiger Comics.

An interesting question often crosses our minds – would all this have happened if there was no pandemic? It is doubtful. Though the virus had kept us confined to



our homes, Kadalakkadalas turned out to be a silver line that emerged from that dark cloud to our lives.

Hoping for much more connectivity with other storytellers over Kadala Kadala-Roasted peanuts

Nature's Lap



Clicking photographs is not mere a hobby or time pass nowadays. It is full length profession with much implications in research and scientific studies. Smart phones with cameras have become handy and people have started recognizing their utility. I am one of those. I keep on walking and searching earth & sky to satisfy my inner core.

Clockwise pics: 1. Rains are opportunity and I click the reflections. 2. The baby squirrel fell from above, possibly under attack by some predator 3. Damselflies mating 4. Lemon Emigrant Butterfly, mud puddling 5. A moth with beautiful pattern 6. Budgerigar, the beautiful prisoner

I wish you will cherish the above and share more with us at
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/naturalbiodiversity>

Dr. Arun Bansal

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