



DAY'S DIARY

Cadillac Motor Company

Cadillac was founded from the ruins of Henry Ford's second failed company. Henry Leland's involvement later led to the birth of Cadillac Car Company in 1902

THE LUXURY BUSINESS

On July 29, 1909, the new General Motors Corporation, acquired the Cadillac Automobile Company for \$4.5 million



PRODUCTION

In its first year of production, Cadillac put out nearly 2,500 cars. Even though, the market went down earlier, it still remains as a leader among luxury cars

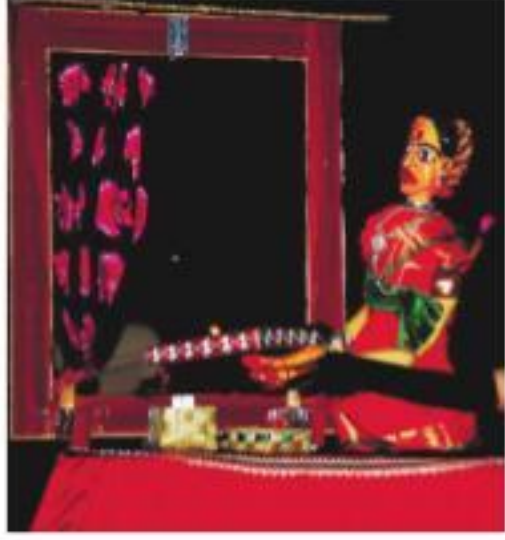


INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Cadillac boasts of achievements like replaceable spare parts (1908), electric self-starter (1912), V8 (1914) and synchromesh transmission (1929) and 'NightVision' (2000)

Tiger Shroff wraps shooting for Ganapath

PG 4



SHRIMANSI KAUSHIK

ON the occasion of World Folklore Day, we asked a few students of Oxford Grammar School, which has incorporated puppetry in its curriculum, to share their experiences of connecting with traditional art forms and the impact it has made on their lives. Students of grade IX, J Ridhima Reddy, Makireddy Bhaumik SVNL Naidu, Sai Smarani Mudhuolkar, S Sai Manvith, Balaji Naik and Jainam Jain were part of the first batch that had an opportunity to learn from folk researcher and storyteller Padmini Rangarajan. They share their learnings with CE.

Breaking into a story they performed as a group, Ridhima narrated 31 dosas in just one breath. "A woman makes 31 dosas for her husband and saves only one for him. She is then asked by her husband where the dosas went, she says she ate them. He asks how. She says, 'Like that' and enacts eating dosas. We learned many things by being part of the puppetry course. The most important of all is teamwork," she said.

While remembering one's roots and traditions associated with one's native place are relived through folk, art forms like puppetry also imbibe a skill set in children that remain with them for lifetime. Being grateful to their school for giving them this opportunity, all 13-year-olds said they thoroughly enjoyed being part of this course. "Of course, a break from the regular classes," said Smarani. "It was a great experience for me. I learned so many things about puppets from our teacher. It was interesting to see how we could handle differ-

FOLK PERSUADES & PERSISTS

World Folklore Day, celebrated on August 22, reminds us of our cultural heritage and the need to preserve and share it with upcoming generations. CE interacted with students of Oxford Grammar School, Himayath Nagar, where puppetry has been added to the curriculum, to explore what they learned from this old folk art



Left to Right: Smarani, Bhaumik, Jainam, Sai, Balaji and Ridhima

ent kinds of puppets by the end of the course, for example, rod puppets, hand puppets, shadow puppets, etc," she added.

Students were also exposed to Dutch puppetry forms when puppeteer Frans Hakkemars visited the school and conducted a workshop. Besides, the children also got the opportunity to perform at the Dhaatu puppet festival in Bengaluru, where storytellers from various parts of the country had come to perform. "I was enchanted by the way some performers from Udaipur handled string puppets. I wanted to learn from them," said Jainam Jain. "How to enact a story with the puppets, how to fix the puppets' faces, how to dress up the puppets and cutouts in the black zone which we were us-

ing in shadow puppets, bending while performing, all these things were unknown to us before we started learning puppetry," he added.

"I had been interested in puppets since grade I," said Bhaumik. I used to see some cartoon shows where they controlled puppets through strings. As part of the course, our teacher told us some techniques to control these puppets. I enjoyed it a lot. The main thing was that we learnt how to coordinate with our teammates. Ours and the upcoming generations will be more focused on gadgets and social media. I would like to spread these traditional folk arts all over the world so that they do not lose their charm," he said.

As we dived deeper into the

impact puppetry as a traditional art form had on the lives of these children, they navigated through their memories and experiences to give us the best of their learnings. "Puppetry helps in character development," said Sai Manvith. On being asked to clarify, he took a small pause to really reflect on what 'character' means. "I think it is our image. It helps us learn new skills that we can use in a totally different environment later," he explained.

As students learned 'manipulation techniques', dealing with the other remained an important concept, specifically, peer learning. "My seven-year-old sister, she is my cousin actually. When we were performing at NTR Gardens, she had come to watch the show. She observed us carefully and learned time management from it," said Sai. "She saw how we used our time on stage to perform and move things around to change the settings simultaneously and then went back and replicated the whole thing in her school play as well," he said.

Sai further added that once the course was done and the final performance watched by all, many of his classmates were curious to learn how to

manage the puppets.

Another aspect of reconnecting with old art forms relevant in the present day and age is its connection with digital media. We asked students how they see this connection. "Social media isn't a synchronous platform. The users can change the content and interact with the content at their own convenience. There is no physical contact. With puppetry and any other art form, the difference is, it's a direct interaction with the audience. The puppeteer would be in direct contact with a live audience, which is a much more enriching experience," said Sai.

Adding to the character development part, Balaji Naik said that storytelling helps in building confidence and public speaking while also working as a perfect stress buster. At this point, almost everyone seemed to agree that studying is stressful and puppetry, a break from it.

"It's like we are immersed in this dif-



ferent world of fantasy and can forget the real world for some time," he added. "My stage fear went away," pitched in Ridhima. "I would be shivering on stage. Now, I am just really good at it and it gives me the confidence I always needed," she said.

The teacher, Padmini Rangarajan, runs 'Sphoorthi', an educational theatre platform and also writes regularly on her blog on topics related to folk art forms of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. "Folk is not a fashion trend that you can follow today and discard another day. The question is what impact do you make on the art and the artist?" she asked.

What have you done to revive the art form and support the live-

hood of the performer? There are many who write endless research papers on various art forms but without giving them due credit," she said.

On being asked how is folk relevant in the era of digital media, she said, "The best thing about social media is global outreach. Recently, the Tamilians in the US got in touch with Tamil Nadu's cultural department and arranged for some artistes to travel to the US and perform there. Can something like this not be done by our government?" she questioned. While there are some which have now come into the limelight, there are many other art forms that need to be documented.

She has faith in the efforts made by different communities to preserve and revive their folk traditions but said that a lot more needs to be done so that folk artistes get more visibility and attention from the audiences. "As far as this course is concerned, I want students to learn and continue sharing these skills with their younger schoolmates. The art form should persist," she concluded.



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- Padmini Rangarajan

ROADMAP TO SALVATION

SHRIMANSI KAUSHIK

PILGRIMAGE is an aspect of faith where physical life comes in contact with the spiritual realm, leading to a sense of fulfilment or attributing finality to the physical life. Unlike the digital age where the experience of going on a pilgrimage can be recorded, captured and shared with a global audience, the documentation of pilgrimages in the past involved artistic expression that needed to be preserved across generations. There are paintings that depict devotees undertaking journeys that we now commonly know as *yatras*. These visual representations of the actual experience not only mark the geographical features but also talk about the more profound philosophies, meetings, and festivals that were celebrated during these journeys. Moreover, they themselves became a symbol of significance for those who could not participate in the *yatra*.

Prshant Lahoti, founder of Kalakriti India and also a map collector, shares some of these pilgrimage maps that can be roughly placed between the 15th to 20th centuries. Speaking at an event called *Bharat Uvaach* recently, he said these maps helped people to do *darshan* (visit the shrine of the deity) without physical travel.

What do pilgrimage maps portray? "Pilgrimage maps have played a significant role in shaping the identity and culture of India. They are not only representative of physical spaces but also



reflect how different religious sects view themselves. They show significant cultural and religious landmarks such as temples, sacred sites, architectural and historical characters as well as how creation is passed down from one generation to another. Pilgrims usually follow specific rituals along the route and they may also receive blessings from religious figures along the way," said Prshant Lahoti.

Bridging the gap between physical and spiritual realms, these maps were based on oral traditions, verbally passed down generations by experienced pilgrims and guides. "The oral transmission of the explanation has ensured that the cultural and historical insights are preserved," Lahoti added.

Not only the meetings and sites but also the festivals associated with them were highlighted through these maps. Also, they served as guides



Map collector Prshant Lahoti talks about 'pilgrimage maps': paintings and drawings depicting religious journeys undertaken by devotees that mark geographical features, religious sites, experiences and more

SACRED CARTOGRAPHY

and provided information regarding certain neighbourhoods, temples, *maths* and *dharamsshalas* to be visited and rituals that needed to be performed.

Darshan without travel

"These maps are frequently embellished with rich artistic representations such as paintings, drawings, symbols, demonstrations of cultural inventiveness and aesthetic expression but the most important use of this map has been liberation through *darshan* without travel," said Lahoti. Allowing a virtual recourse to these *yatras*, for those unable to participate

in the journey, or remember the paths undertaken for a revisit, these maps also served as images of the deities themselves. "The image of the *devta* serves as a means to carry out the voyage by gazing. Just gazing at a deity serves as a means of gaining contact with it. As a result, looking at the map takes on the significance of religious experience," he said.

Sharing a few such maps from the Kalakriti Archives Collection, Lahoti sheds light on different types of *yatras* depicted in these maps.

Adwadeepa pata - cosmology maps "The cosmology maps are parts of the Jain as well as the Hindu tradition. They represent the universe and its various components such as gods, demons

and mortals. They also represent the physical and religious worlds as well as the spiritual journey. The Map serves as a guide for devotees to understand the spiritual merit associated with the pilgrimage to help people attain the goal of *Moksha*. This is why such maps are often called *Adwadeepa pata* or the painting of two and a half continents. In Jain texts, the universe is divided into three worlds. The upper is occupied by the god, the middle by the mortals and the lower by the demons. The most significant is the middle world, the *Manushya Loka*. When liberation from the chain of rebirth is possible, the *jinnas*, the saints and the devotees are born. The world of mortals is abstracted as a diagram of concentric circles. The blue circle represents water while the gulf in between areas represents the land masses. The inner continent is encircled by two oceans and two further continents. The outermost land mass is encircled by a chain of mountains and shrines with sages or *jinnas* at the four quar-



ters," Lahoti explains.

Satrunjaya Pata

Another map portrays the Jain pilgrimage of *Satrunjaya pata*, which is a pilgrimage circuit in Palitana, Gujarat. "The key purpose of these paintings is to provide a panoramic view of the shrines, the pilgrimage route and the significance, features and episodes that occur on a devotee's path. They often serve as a surrogate for aged devotees who were unable to visit the site. They were displayed on the festivals on special occasions and were viewed by a large congregation of priests and devotees. The artist depicts the topographical context of Satrunjaya Hill with its two ridges. The first ridge is dominated by the main temple complex of Adinatha while the other is a setting of nine smaller temple complexes, patroned by the Jain merchants. The site overall comprises 65 temples,

over 300 small shrines and is visited by close to 5000 deities," he said.

Badrinath Yatra

Finally coming to one of the *Char Dham Yatras*, Lahoti shares the map of the Badrinath route. "These are three interlocked pilgrimage route maps, particularly the river Ganga and one of its chief headwaters, the Alaknanda, running from Haridwar up to the shrine of Badrinath in the Garhwal Hills. These maps are read from left to right. The stroll is plentiful, comprising inscriptions, names, sacred places, villages, mountains and trees. The river Ganga is depicted as coming from the right bank and ends where Bhagirathi and Alaknanda meet at Devprayag. The pilgrims are shown bathing and washing their clothes. In the first scroll, the river branches out as it goes around Haridwar. Fortresses are located on both sides of the river. In the second section, it has a lot of temples and villages. The Narasimha temple is also depicted at Joshimath, where the deity is brought down before the temple is closed for six months due to heavy snow. The yellow line through the map depicts a path taken by the pilgrims. To the extreme right of the third map is the Badrinath temple which is the final destination of the pilgrimage," he explains.

Concluding, he says that the maps provide bountiful information on the art and technology of different periods and how innovation took place over centuries.

