

Archives

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The World of Puppets

World over Puppets are used as an effective medium to communicate, especially, with children. And each country, region and province has its own special way of making and presenting puppets that lend them a local flavour.

IGNCA has a substantial collection of puppets from world over. And they are in a variety of material and mode. Among IGNCA's collection of puppets the richest (in numbers) are from Indonesia and Sweden.

Along with puppets, IGNCA also has a good collection of video tapes of puppet shows from various countries. At the Centre, there is a separate unit that works for promoting culture among children. Puppet shows and screening of puppet shows form an important part of the programme under Bal Jagat in the Kala Darshan division. IGNCA also conducts workshops in schools and for children from socially weaker sections to teach them to make puppets. Till now, IGNCA has conducted eight workshops for children.

The Centre has puppets in leather, cloth, wood and drawings (for shadow puppet). Andhra Pradesh has a rich tradition of shadow puppet or Chhaya Puttal. There is a collection 15 puppets in IGNCA mainly characters in Ramayana, made in Andhra Pradesh for shadow puppetry. There is also a detailed report that sketches the tradition of puppets in the region as also the puppet-making.

The Centre's collection has a variety in the forms of puppets. They are: string-controlled, rod-controlled, stick-supported and glove-operated. There are some water-puppets also. In the collections are puppets made of wood, cloth, papier mache, fabric, sponge, nylon, mat, camel hide, buffalo hide and bamboo. While a huge part of the puppet collection was received as gift, some have been bought and even commissioned. The total value of the collection in terms of money would be difficult to assess. For instance, the gift of 54 puppets from 15 countries in 1990 was valued at Rs. 78,400. Indonesia's gift of shadow puppets, mostly characters in Mahabharata was valued at 7000 dollars in 1990.

The countries that have gifted puppets to IGNCA include Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia, Korea, Madagascar, Mali, Romania, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Turkey, USSR and Vietnam.

From within India, there are puppets from all the regions. Some of the most popular are the Tholapavakoothu and those from the Shriram Institute of Shadow Theatre, Orissa.

- Mangalam Swaminathan

PUPPET SHOWS

| S.No | Puppet Show | Type of the Show | Origin of Puppets |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | `BAPU' | Shadow, Togalugombeatta | Karnataka |
| 2. | `BAPU JI KI KAHANI' | Shadow Contemporary | Ahmedabad |
| 3. | `IMAGES OF TRUST' | Contemporary | New Delhi |
| 4. | `DHARMA YUDDHAM' | Shadow Tolubomalattam | Tamil Nadu |
| 5. | `NEEL KE DHABBE' | Contemporary Rod Puppets | Bihar |
| 6. | `SHRI KSHETRA O BAPU' | Shadow Ravan Chaya | Orissa |
| 7. | GANDHI KATHA | Shadow Tolubommalattal | Andhra Pradesh |
| 8. | Nehru Show | Shadow Tolubommalattal | Andhr Pradesh |