

**PUPPETS AND PUPPETRY: A STUDY OF THE
TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ART FORMS IN A
GLOBALIZING WORLD**

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fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of**

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DEBAHUTI BRAHMACHARI



CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI-110067

INDIA

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled "*Puppets & Puppetry- a Study of the Traditional Performing Art Forms in a Globalizing World*" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

Debahuti Brahmachari

CERTIFICATE

Prof. Amita Singh

Supervisor



Dr. Bishnupriya Dutt

Co-Supervisor

Prof. Amita Singh

Chairperson



Prof. Amita Singh
Chairperson
Centre for the Study of
Law and Governance
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

*...dedicated to my family
Specially to my grandmother...*

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Contents

Chapter 1-

INTRODUCTION:	01-14
➤ Problem defined :	01-03
➤ The Demise of a Tradition and a Community:	04-06
➤ An Interwoven Community with an Art based Livelihood:	06-07
➤ Art Forms, Puppetry and the Survival Challenges:	07-13
➤ Conclusion:	13-14

Chapter-2

VULNERABLE ART FORMS AND ARTIST COMMUNITIES: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:	15-30
➤ Changing development patterns of the 19 th century :	17-18
➤ Enroute to collective (Community) identity through Artistic Expressions :	18-21
➤ Cultural constructs in society :	21-27
➤ Cultural imperialism and Counter Cultures :	27-30

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY –	31- 42
➤ Exploring Reinvention strategies from global puppet theatres:	38-41
➤ Conclusion :	42

Chapter 4

INTERPRETING PUPPETRY THROUGH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

DATA :	43-70
➤ The Social hierarchy:	45-49
➤ The journey from being Ecclesiastical to Commercialism:	49-51
➤ Cultural Ambassadors in slums- ' <i>kalakaaro ki basti</i> ' :	52-56
➤ Contemporary support to traditional puppetry :	56-70
➤ Conclusions:	70

Chapter 5

➤ CONCLUSION :	71-76
BIBLIOGRAPHY :	77-81

Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1-

INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM DEFINED:

The advent of growth as an engine and dimension of progress has jostled many inhabitants of earth who are accustomed to different and diverse strategies of livelihood patterns. The Enuits of Alaska or Afro-Brazilians in the South America or the Rabaris and Tharparkars in India are losing grounds because their life dependent resource such as arctic life, forest life and desert inhabitations are all facing transformation towards extinction. The Patuas of West Bengal, nomadic Nats and Banjaras have all been vanishing with the marginalization of their traditional art forms (such as clay toy making, marriage performance instruments making such as Kanjeera, Morchand, Nagada and Naubat). This study undertakes the challenge of studying the tribes dependent on the ancient art form of puppetry and how the global changes in capital market flows has threatened not just the art which is embedded in the cultural resource of India as a nation but also disrupted a self sustaining economy of a community.

Puppetry originated in India well before the Bharatas, the Natyashastras and has continued unabated through out centuries. Ancient India saw puppets as divine traditions. The old folk rituals of the Prakrit language talk about such divine puppets. Puppetry is a special performing art which knows no bounds; puppets are not limited as flesh and blood actors, who are restricted by their bodies. A puppet can reach beyond the possibilities of real world, because of its creative constructions. The puppet genres are still largely 'living folk tradition'¹. The marionettes² have spread, presumably with nomadic gypsies whose ancestral home was in Northwest and in Central India. Dating back to prehistoric civilizations of Harappa site of ancient Indus valley civilization (2500 B.C.), archeological proofs have been provided of the presence of terra cotta dolls.

All puppets have a history that has been handed down from generation to generation often verbally and in most countries, this oral record has added to itself constantly from

¹ Orr C Inge "Puppet Theater in Asia" Asian Folklore Studies, vol #33 no 1(1974) pp 69-84

² A marionette is a puppet controlled from above using wires or strings

vivid imagination and folklore of its region so much so that it is often difficult to separate the logical history from the romantic ideology. India has been influenced by various traditions in the world such as Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and China. We need to locate the routes of migration and trade which link up these areas from where we have derived such knowledge. It could easily be conveyed that our cultural subconscious is connected to time cycles, seasons and festivals.

“The puppets, dolls, and masked figures of many primitive societies were mediums through which the Gods spoke to men, often to cure. That involves the release of an emotion or exorcism of an illness seen as a foreign presence.”³

Rajasthani string puppetry is one of the most vibrant aspects of Indian culture. They are the repository of traditional wisdom, knowledge and social mores. Within them are contained the oral history of the region. The tradition of handmade string puppets of Rajasthan is more than a thousand years old. It is known as ‘Kaathputli’ (‘kaath’ means wood, and ‘putli’ is puppet, i.e. wooden puppet) and mainly practiced by the Bhat community. We have the Kathputlis of Rajasthan, the only string puppets in the world that traditionally do not have control or cross above the strings for manipulation and where the strings are tied to the fingers of the puppeteers and deftly moved around (Dadi Pudumjee)⁴. These assets of the village now suffered, in the absence of state patronage or other modes of supports. Puppets had to be sold of for survival which had religious sanctity. Rituals also demonstrated the liminal status of puppets as they were infused with life despite being objects. (Turner, 1974)⁵ Immense passion was involved with this art. Littlepage⁶ defined puppetry as it served as a metonym for the relationship between mankind and divine. The ontological association between man and puppet however is important in the communication aspects as of the art form because the knowledge that

³ Bruce D. Schwartz, Theodora Skipitares, Julie Taymor, C. Lee Jenner Source: “Interview: Working with Puppets” *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1983), pp. 103-116

⁴ Dutt, Chandana (ed.), *Indian Horizons*, ICCR Publications, Vol. 55, No.2-3

⁵ Littlepage, Eric Lee, *Puppets with a Purpose: Folk Arts, Cultural Communication, and Development in India*, University of Virginia Publications, 2002,

⁶ *Ibid* 56

human life is itself regularly subject to control lends the metonym of the puppets of its peculiar power. (Tellis, 1992)⁷

India has almost twenty living traditions of glove, string, rod and shadow puppetry. The earliest reference to puppetry in India was in the epic Mahabharata around 9 century B.C. *'The puppet has been called a mask through which the nuances of emotions and the mundane realities of life can be suggested'*. Since the 60's the modern movement of puppetry that developed in various cities were the epic style derived from Asian Rod Puppets (Sergei Obratzov) and secondly the vast pool created by late Mehar Contractor. The major question today is the status of the art. The numbers of puppeteers have drastically reduced today. Puppets are lovely blend of magic with realism, which allows us to accept and cogitate on whatever the puppets tells us.

It is fighting a battle being fragile and in need of care from various institutions, audiences and the puppeteers themselves. At the deepest level it does not matter whether the form is traditional or modern, what matters is that it emotes and fights a lonely battle against some of our powerful global cultures along with the internal structures of the state and society. Hence the need is empathy for such living arts, whereby puppetry is an interactive emotional outcome. Puppetry has been threatening with the emergence of homogenized and hybridized global cultures. The struggle of such counter cultures (such as puppetry) against the hegemonic culture is a familiar feature. Culture itself becomes an instrument of inclusion as well as exclusion at times.

But today one can see the departures from tradition along with the search for creative strategies in adaptation to changing patronage forms, audience tastes, and competition with commercial cinema. We see the puppeteers performing advertisements and state-sponsored skits promoting family planning as seen by Peter Manuel⁸,

⁷ Tillis, Steve . "towards an aesthetic of the Puppet theatre : Puppetry as a Theatrical Art" Westport, Greenwood Press 1992

⁸ Manuel Peter "Retooling a Tradition: A Rajasthani Puppet Takes Umbrage at His Stringholders by Nazir Jairazbhoy ; Amy Catlin" Asian Music, Vol. 26, No.2, Musical Narrative Traditions of Asia (Spring - Summer, 1995), pp. 166-167

The Demise of a Tradition and a Community:

The world seems to be limitless, and it is art which helps us to open up the world. To move beyond the visible reality the art is used as a tool. Hence, as Bernard Goratis ^{by definition} ⁹explores that 'a successful work of art expresses a reality beyond actual reality'. Thus when we talk of representation through art, it is something which has not been discernible earlier. As a contraption, art brings forward the veiled experiences. An imitation of the original piece of work of art would never have the unique spirit within it, as its inferior than the original real object. To paraphrase Paul Klee, "art does not express that which is visible, but makes it visible. A work of art is thus the objectivation (representation in the form of an object or an event) of a subjective relationship to the world"¹⁰. It aims to embody reality which would otherwise not have been discernible. Further, Goratis points out that, art is an interface between levels of consciousness in a shifting context eventually making an extension of its relation with the public. 'For the artist, the relation is the production process itself, for the public the relation is the perception process in its context'. Now the three variables here are the – artist, art and public, whereby their relationship gets constructed within the given context.

Goratis¹¹ exemplifies the variables in the following manner:

- i. 'artist' means any person or group of persons who generates a work of art deliberately, whatever the method;
- ii. 'work of art' means any permanent or transitory object or device that enables the artist and/or the public to have an artistic experience;
- iii. 'public' means any person or group of persons who establishes a relation with the work of art;
- iv. 'context' means all the practices, behaviors and knowledge that characterize a society at a given time.

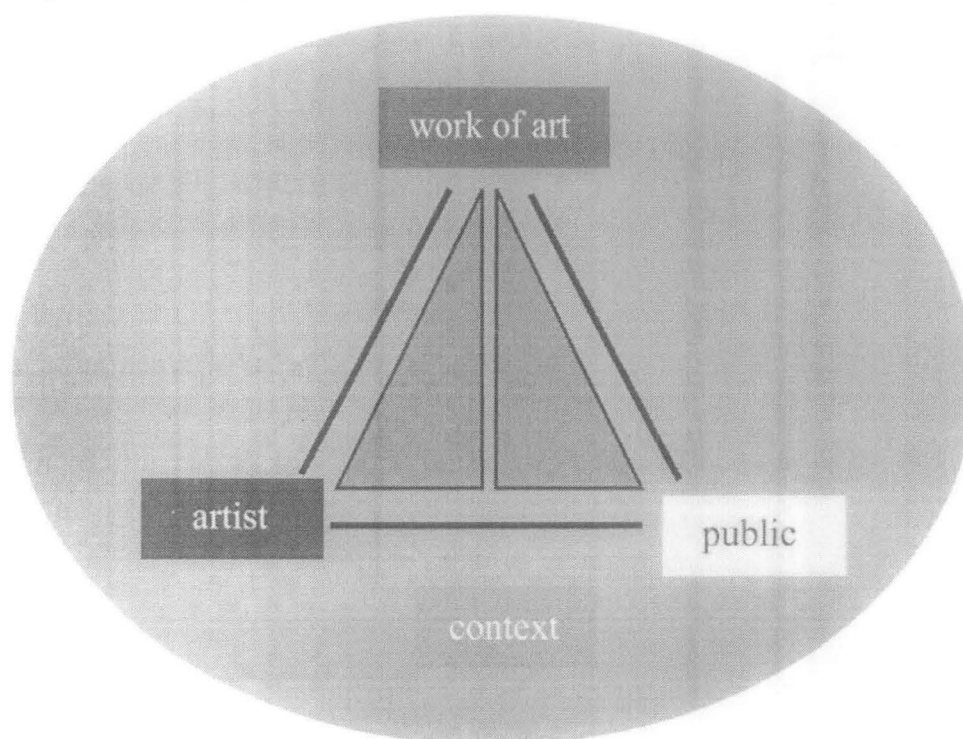
⁹ Bernard, Gortais, "Abstraction and Art Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences", Vol. 358, No. 1435,(2003), pp. 1241-1249

¹⁰ Ibid 1241

¹¹ Ibid 1242

Hence, art helps in bridging across different level of consciousness which would otherwise remain inaccessible. Art functions as a merging agent between a known world and a perceived world.

The dynamics of these variables are illustrated through the three apexes of the triangle (figure 1)¹² located within a context.



'The artist creates and the public recreates'- Goratis

The above illustration has been given by Goratis, explaining the artistic relationship.

Each work of art will reverberate in its own way over the whole range of human emotions and further each single individual will be touched by the vibrations of that piece of art in several different ways. 'The main function of a work of art is to be used as a support for processes creating relations between levels of consciousness that cannot usually'.¹³ Hence, this explicit recognition of the role of art within a community questions the demise of the space for the creation of art. The entire tradition located within a particular

¹² Ibid 1242

¹³ Ibid 1248

genre of artistic creation can be effaced off, while delineating the art from its own creative breathing space

An Interwoven Community with an Art based Livelihood:

An essential hypothesis in the development of the idea of the community is a belief that culture of a period is closely and necessarily related to the generally prevalent 'way of life'. Further, that, in consequence, aesthetic, moral and social judgments which are generated out of that. Thus the purpose of art, according to Ruskin, is to "reveal aspects of the universal beauty' or 'truth'. The artist is one who, in Carlyle's words, "reads the open secret of the universe Art is not 'imitation', in the sense of illusionist representation, or an adherence to the rules of models; but Art is 'imitation, in the older sense of an embodiment of aspects of the universal, 'ideal' truth."¹⁴ Adding to this it was believed by Ruskin, that there was a deep integrated relation between art and morality. Hence, the aesthetics was indefinitely embodied with the integrity of the artist.

Art is embedded into communities hence the street theatre could disseminate messages which the radio or the government department could not do. Yet the importance of art in governance does not occur to most people as people are used to the western idea of administration and Weberian model of bureaucracy. The strict hierarchical lines of control are unable to mingle with the aesthetics of artists. However the disjunction becomes visible in developing countries like India if we try to imagine a world without art that is a world without color, without music, without fantasy and imagination. Such a world would be utterly excruciating, because it would be an inhuman world. The conditions in which we live and work are already sufficiently unbearable. Solace is the essential element within the different genres of art be it , in music and dance ,theatre etc. All this is an expression of art. Whether it is good or bad art is another matter. But that it says something to people, that it strikes a chord that vibrates in their hearts and souls, that it is important to our lives, is beyond all question. Art lubricates the wheels of

¹⁴ Williams Raymond. –“ Culture and society , 1780-1950”, 1960 Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York

governance and makes implementation possible. The Indian identity in fact according to Kapil Kapoor is a continuum from the individual to the collective through '*enlarging circles of belonging*¹⁵'. Thus the community is deeply meandered, with the focal point as the individual. The individual artist is able to reflect the challenges within the society and hence in turn aims at empowering and transforming the community. Social change is driven through the pedagogy of arts and aesthetics. Art acts as one of the most powerful lenses that carve out the way to make discrete voices accessible and palatable to mainstream society.

Art Forms, Puppetry and the Survival Challenges:

To a colorless world, art brings an element of color. To lives without any connotation it leads to a spark of hope. Art in all its forms makes us lift up our eyes, if only for a fleeting moment, above the dreary everyday survival, and makes us feel that there is something more to life than this, that we can be better than we are, that the relations between people can be human, that the world could be a better place than it is. Art is thus the collective dream of humanity, the expression of a deep-seated feeling that our lives are not what they ought to be, and a passionate if unconscious striving for something different.

Art gets further classified into performing arts and non performing arts. Now art is seen as the ability to create along with the expressions of these abilities, leading to concrete results. Similarly, performing arts is defined as the ability to perform the works of art (such as music, dance, drama etc). As Kingsley Price¹⁶ quotes

'A performing art shows itself in performances; an art shows itself in creations'.

It was in 1711 that the word performing arts came into the picture within the English language. It was in Greece in the sixth century BC, where the classical performing art

¹⁵ Kapoor, Kapil; Santhosh K. Sareen (ed.), *The Question of Identity Australia and India- Interconnection, Identity, Representation and Belonging*, Mantra Books, 2006

¹⁶ Kingsley Price "The Performing and the Non-Performing Arts", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Autumn, 1970), pp. 53-62 ,

began with the advent of plays, dance etc., which was largely limited to the religious historical enactments. It was gradually in the 19th century that performing arts became a voice of expression within the different social classes. A theoretical treatise on Indian performing arts came up in the 2nd century BC known as the Natya Shastra of Bharata. Further, religion, myths, philosophy were intrinsic to the Indian performing arts. Traditional performing art forms like any other art form carry the diversities of history, ethnicity and community living. They are different because performing art forms have a different origin than the others as they have grown as a social theatre, a stage for expression and a campaign against and for the rulers. The oldest form of 'Katha Vachaks' in Indian tradition have come from Mahabharata and later the ousting of Kautilya from the kingdom was due to stage and street shows in some of the most unique ways and dresses on the script of *Shantiparva*.

for history ✓

Ancient Hindu philosophers have paid great attribute to one of the most revolutionary forms of traditional expression of performing arts that is puppet theatre. In the Middle East the use of puppetry was seen as early as 2000 B.C. in the form of shadow puppets, marionette productions etc. This living tradition of art till date has been acknowledged at all corners of the world. As Oscar Wilde pointed at the various advantages of a puppet 'they never argue, they have no crude views about art and have no private lives'.¹⁷

Hence being the strongest forms of lexis for all segments of society. Now the struggle to establish this historic art form worthy of recognition and respect has continued since 1920 with the first publication (*A Book Of Marionettes*) regarding the history of puppetry in English by Helen Haiman. Its battle continues till date especially in traditional forms of puppetry. As Bill Baird¹⁸ celebrates the puppet as *a nimble survivor* in every age, bursting with life in various forms be it, Sicilian rod puppets, Rajasthani marionettes, Turkish shadows, the Japanese Bunraku, the hand puppet magic of Kukla and Ollie, and the progressive puppetry of Yves Joly and Georges Lafaye.

¹⁷Lehman Keith Allen. "History of Puppets, Marionettes, and Puppeteering" Lighthouse Journal 2010

¹⁸ Latshaw ,G. "The Art of the Puppet by Bil Baird", Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Mar., 1966), pp. 83-84

It is perhaps the only form of traditional art which is amalgamation of dance, music, craftsmanship, painting, design and much more. It illustrates the essential philosophy of art encapsulated so well in Natya Shastra. "Puppets occupy an ambivalent position in traditional and modern performance cultures around the world. They are intimate and familiar objects and by their nature are material objects that con-fuse materiality and imagination. They can be constructed as oratic and symbolic art subjects with autonomous existence." (Cohen, 2008)¹⁹ Edward Craig recognized puppets as eminently 'artifices of stage'²⁰. The aura of the performance events adhere to puppets in the performance aftermath, potentiating their meaningful display in museums. Gross, calls them 'the ponderable form of spirit'²¹, which can communicate on their own in the absence of direct human mediation. German puppeteer Albercht Roser remarked "the puppet is like a vessel, where for the moment both the audience and the puppeteer play their emotions."²² At the deepest level it does not matter whether the form is traditional or modern, what matters is that it emotes and fights a lonely battle against some of our powerful global cultures along with the internal structures of the state and society. Peter Schumann described 'theatre as basic as bread' and hence coined his company as *The Bread and Puppet Theatre* in 1962. His importance to the traditional forms of puppetry can be seen through an analysis of his work, which always tried to establish new forms of puppetry in its traditional sense as stated by John Towsen.²³ For him all forms of art were extremely important. Similar to the traditions of associating the traditional arts of puppetry in India to divinity, Schuman too saw it as powerful as religion.

Most forms of classical art had managed to survive while under going transformations. They have regenerated and reinforced themselves endlessly. Despite such struggles why then, does the most ancient classical forms of art in India which is puppetry facing the threat of vanquishment. Signs of change and decline of the puppet theatre as a folk art tradition are present everywhere as a result of Western domination and modern forms of

¹⁹ Cohen, Matthew Issac, *Puppetry and the Destruction of the Object*, Routhledge 2008

²⁰ Ibid 124

²¹ Ibid 124

²² Dircks Phyllis.(ed.) " American puppetry: Collections, history and performance: collections, history and Performance" VOL 23 Library Congress USA 2004

²³ Towsen, John *The Bread and Puppet Theatre: The "Stations of the Cross"*, *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 16, No. 3, The "Puppet" Issue (Sep., 1972), pp. 57-70

entertainment, principally movies, television, internet etc. Walter Benjamin's landmark essay in 1933, entitled "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"²⁴ criticized the role of media figures which has led to the estrangement of the living folk tradition. In 1991, the Board of the North American Center for the Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA- USA) chaired by Levenson confronted the threats rising towards puppetry and demanded that, 'Technology must not be used to create the puppetry, only to record it. That means that the performance must be at all times under the control of a live, human puppeteer ...'

explain?

The International Congress on Asian and African Performing Arts held in May 1995, in Leiden, highlighted many aspects of cultural heritage that have been neglected. The performer as (inter)cultural transmitter was the major issue of debate. This theme had particular relevance for contemporary society, which is in greater contact with other cultures and also more susceptible to media attacks and information overflow. As is pointed out by Paul Van Dervelde²⁵, the series editor, the congress dealt with aspects of the performer as (inter)cultural transmitter in Asian and African context.

The illegitimate rip off of these performing identities by the global hybridization as well as the states laid back attitude towards its cultural heritage raises concerns about their survivability. Performing arts have been suffering for their own public space though it has been transforming be it the traditional or the contemporary forms.

The audience is seen as culturally specific. The ability to see a performance is as culturally rooted as the performance itself. The artist may in turn end up being the creator or a mediator within cultures. As James R. Brandon²⁶ sites the example of two Kabuki traditions, and how the changing social and economic conditions have influenced the movement from the Japanese language to the English language tradition. Hence both as a mediator and creator, art come into the realm whereby beliefs, customs, practices are exchanged over nations through the artist; the (inter) cultural transmitter.

²⁴ Tillis, Steve The Art of Puppetry in the Age of Media Production ,TDR (1988-), Vol. 43, No. 3, Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects (Autumn, 1999), pp. 182-195

²⁵Brakel, Clara, "Performing arts of Asia : The Performer as Inter Cultural Transmitter." International Institute For Asian Studies Working paper series 4, Leiden : 1996

²⁶ Brandon R James and Samuel Leiter(Ed) " Kabuki Plays on Stage : Restoration and Reform, 1872-1905" 2003, University of Hawaii, China

The traditional social functions of traditional art such as puppetry as defined by I. C. Orr²⁷ is-

- Magico-religious: that is celebration of life's occasions as well as to ward off superstitions. E.g. - Puppets perform in India on the holy days of the Hindu calendar, at temple or idol inaugurations as well as at weddings.
- Educational: To the illiterate Asian villagers the puppet theatre provides general education such as is contained in the repertoire of ancient tales, legends, myths and historical events too.
- Reaffirming culture and social institutions: to reaffirm values of nationalism etc, puppet shows act as the best tool. Further, reinforcing traditional ethical and moral standards are also carried on.

Hence, the usage of puppet theatre for all types of political, social, commercial, religious ✓ uses etc was very clear. Puppetry is further ahead of performing art forms like dance and theatre again a different form. It represents a mode when people do not have the freedom to express and they create identities in craft or wood or cloth (contemporary forms include rod, shadows, gloves etc) which matches real life forms to say what they have not been able to say. Puppetry has been a folk expression to the whims, fancies, governance and judgments of rulers in times of extreme censorship of the expressions from the poor and underprivileged.

Amartya Sen²⁸ argument regarding the quality of life as the norm of social justice builds in the need to build in the capabilities. Martha Nussbaum²⁹ further opines the *capabilities as an end rather than means*. The utilitarian may run into the average satisfaction leaving behind expressions of the individual. Marx speaks of the human being "in need of a totality of human life activities" hence the capabilities to which citizens are entitled should be given to them. Social justice largely fails in the absence of these capabilities which are human entitlements.

²⁷ Orr I C. "Puppet Theatre in Asia" Asian Folklore Studies, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1974), pp. 69-84

²⁸ Bharucha, Rustom, Politics of Culturalism in an Age of Globalisation: Discrimination, Discontent and Dialogue, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 34, No. 8, Feb. 20-26, 1999 pp 477-489

²⁹ Nussbaum, Martha C., Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership, Oxford University Press, India, 2006

As Neale³⁰ stated that, 'the need is to strengthen the existing institutions leading to strengthening of the community (e.g. puppeteers, handicrafts etc), here endogamous mechanisms of state changes are to be enforced. Gearing mechanisms in order to provide these communities the basic requisites, of capability building becomes crucial at a stage when, today they are facing identity crisis along with threats towards their survival'.

Thus, with the decline of puppetry as a folk tradition, several questions and concerns have risen which have been outlined below and need to be explored-?

- How is 'Puppets and puppetry' used as expressions? How did they become expressions in history? Which class of society took to these expressions?
- Can puppetry survive as a folk tradition?
- Can government imposed changes in repertoire and techniques become genuine folklore?
- What are the threats faced by them and what responses are coming from them?
- Will it survive in a new social context, and if so what are the ideal conditions for its survival? Or will it not simply be preserved as a museum item?
- What are the mechanisms to integrate such large marginalized segments of society into the mainstream and how far has it been successful?
- What innovations and imaginations are needed to build creative spaces for traditional performing art forms?

The attempt of this study or the *objectives* of this research is to capture the outrage of communities who are being marginalized in the spread of global culture of isomorphism and 'one size fits all reforms'. The outrage is on the suppression of their historically evolved mode of expression which even survived the most brutal kings and their policies ✓

³⁰ Brown, William A., Inclusive Governance in Practice: Characteristics and Strategies, ASU College of Public Programs, Non Profit Leadership Management, Artizona, vol.2, issue 2

through their art forms. The outrage which so far has not found expression in protests and rebellions but is suppressed within their hearts and minds affecting governance in livelihood generation policies is likely to provide data from history which has never been documented hence this study may launch an insight into the dark dungeons of policies formulated by rulers.

Conclusion-

This is an attempt to study empirically a very small area of puppetry (the Rajasthani string puppetry) which is a unique performing art form and in many ways linked to the way poor communities have survived through authoritative and undemocratic systems of governance. As the world becomes more globalized, marketized and commercialized many of those who fail to meet the challenges of change and restructuring are marginalized and eliminated. Policies which impact upon the lives of smaller communities which have traditionally grown and evolved with a particular art form should neither intrude into their spaces nor shrink their freedom to express in their unique ways. Policies should encourage and facilitate these traditional performing art forms for various reasons. This art form is likely to have more truths than what one is able to see today as it has seen the wisdom of 'Raja' and 'Prajā' through the ups and downs of Indian history.

The changing nature of the state is posing new threats of survival for them. Government should design policies which allow such communities to flourish rather than be suppressed. Marginalizing them would mean the destruction of a symbolic invention of the poor against a repressive state. The earliest signal about the new paradigms encroaching upon the mind and lives of ordinary people were expressed in the slogan '*think globally and act locally*³¹' formulated by Rene Dubos. He believed that there needed to be a creation of a World Order in which "natural and social units maintain or recapture their identity, yet interplay with each other through a rich system of

³¹ Nanda Nitya. "Expanding frontiers of global trade rules : the political economy dynamic rules of the international trading system" 2008 Routledge New York

communications.”³² Thus the solution was not in destroying your local traditional heritages, but to help them prosper.

Ordinary people lack the centralized power required for global action, hence urging for the reverence for the restrictions of local action. To make a difference, actions should be grandiosely global but humbly local. Ideas of Gandhi, Leopold and others reflect the harmful consequences of ‘thinking big’³³. It pushes all human enterprises beyond the human scale appreciating the genuine limits of human intelligence. The wisdom of thinking small has been greatly celebrated. On the contrary, the globalists are afraid that local thinking weakens and isolates people, localizing them into parochialism; the globalists reject the wisdom of thinking small. The large scale transactions between the nations, restricts the cultural transactions between the local communities or social groups. This cultural hybrid basket tries to squash the local traditions under the garb of promoting a global village. As Appadurai critiqued, “the world we live in now seems rhizomaniac, even schizophrenic, calling calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation and psychological distance between individuals and groups”³⁴. Thus the struggle between the ineffable McDonaldisation of the world and the much subtle play of the indigenous trajectories of desire and fear with global flows is the central eclipsing feature.

³² Ibid 133

³³ Lechner, Frank J. and Boli, John (ed.), *The Globalization Reader*, 2004. Blackwell Publications, UK

³⁴ Appadurai, Arjun, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, Sage Publication, Theory, Culture and Society 1990, Nottingham Trent University

Chapter-2

**VULNERABLE ART FORMS AND ARTISTS
COMMUNITIES: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Chapter-2

Vulnerable Art Forms and Artist Communities: A Theoretical Framework

The epistemological foundation of an impoverished art community lies in the changing state economics and the direction of global progress. The progress being led by multinational market forms, donor agencies, technological firms and banks leaves little space for smaller art forms to sustain themselves without state support even though they tend to carve many intangible support systems to poverty reduction programs in present times. This chapter draws upon the fact that the community-based arts and cultural programs are a valuable way of exploring identity and developing a language of exchange that can be used to foster diversity and harmony within and between cultures. The research aims towards the understanding of the community and its power of expression through the artist, by using his creation in the form of art. Community art is that which is rooted in a shared sense of place, tradition or spirit. It aims to celebrate cultural traditions or provide a space for a community to reflect upon its feelings. The final argument which is generated out of the description of the nature of community art is that the survival of such traditional art forms and art communities is important for the state hence the government should make a sustained effort in their protection and conservation.

Community art is by its nature dialectical. It is an expression of both individual and group identity. All creative expression, no matter how "original," is an expression of both individual and group life. In recognizing this, community art distinguishes itself from more conventional Western approaches in both vocabulary and theoretical approach. Instead of being viewed as an isolated individual genius, the artist (or artists) serves as a cultural catalyst, an integral part of a larger process of social intervention and transformation.

The language of art and culture is used as a platform to establish the community identity and facilitating a shared vision. Being receptive, creative, revolutionizing in nature, various art forms aim towards establishing the community vision against the hegemonic constructs. The heart of the creation is to give expression to the concerns and aspirations of the marginalized, stimulating social creativity and social action and advancing social inclusion. Inherent in this approach is asserting the value of diversity, fostering an appreciation both of difference and of commonality within differences.

Discrete human cultures have survived a plethora of threats to their existence through their ability to interpret, adapt to and resist hegemonic cultures that are more “powerful.” The species endurance to adapt to rapidly changing conditions is the key element for its survival. The human beings adaptation within several unique configurations has been due to the pliantness of culture, which enables groups to access stored wisdom and ways of coping with assorted patterns of subsistence. “Culture is a social construct that is usually understood in and through the contents of its traditions—its feelings, modes of action, forms of language, aspirations, interpersonal relations, images, ideas, and ideals”.¹

To be human is to make meaning of expressing all thoughts and emotions through enabling associations. Within this whole encompassing realm of life , the purest and the densest values are generated through art. Both individual and collective creations of art expressions are driven by the desire to bring about a change and revolution within the social set up. To bring about a consciousness within the community through powerful expressions is the endeavor towards which the human species struggles. “Culture is an effective crucible for social transformation, one that can be less polarizing and create deeper connections than other social-change arenas.”² The artists act as the catalyst and conduit, through which the suppressed voices of the community are put forward. The development of culture itself leads to several changes within the society. At the very centre of a major area of modern thought and practice, is culture which exerts a strong anxiety. Rousseau’s alternative sense of culture – as a process of ‘*inner or spiritual*

¹ JeanetteRodríguez and Ted Fortier, “Cultural memory : resistance, faith, and identity”.1st ed. June 2007
Publisher: University of Texas Press

² Adams Don and Arlene Goldbards “ Community, culture and Globalisation” 2001, Rockefeller Founadtion

development' focuses the importance of the cultural identity. It was seen as the, 'deepest impulse and the deepest resources of the human spirit'.

Changing developmental patterns of the 19th century:

As Raymond Williams begins with the introduction of his work "*Culture and Society*", he outlines the five key words which led to the major changes in the 19th century life. They are *industry, democracy, class, art and culture*. He believed that, changes in their use, "bear witness to a general change in our characteristic ways of thinking about our common life: about our social, political and economic institutions; about the purposes which these institutions are designed to embody; and about the relations to these institutions and purposes of our activities in learning, education and the arts".³

The fourth word '*art*' was initially seen as a human attribute, a 'skill'. An art had formerly been any human skill; but art, now as Williams signified- was the '*imaginative or creative arts*. Most notably, art came to stand for a special kind of truth, '*imaginative truth*, and artist for a special kind of person. The relation and nature of art was quite rightly interpreted. It was seen the creator of consciousness and social reality.

Caudwel further defines the value of art as –"The value of art to society is that by it an emotional adaptation is possible. Man's instincts are pressed in art against the altered mould of reality, and by a specific organization of the emotions thus generated, there is a new attitude, an adaptation"⁴.

With the renaissance, individuals came to draw upon personal inspiration rather than the wisdom of a religious society. The questions that troubled individuals in their quest for salvation now came not from the religious dictates, but from the exceptional objects of the Renaissance artist. The 19th century, saw the self expressive art emerging along with the "Other." Herein, a great division was highlighted within the exclusive elitist creations and the vulnerable community artists. As Gerald Pious analyses further, "Westerners came to believe that their elite culture had produced the only truly inspirational art, an art

³ Williams, Raymond—"Culture and society, 1780-1950", 1960 Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York

⁴Ibid

that gave them insightful visions of humanity (be it the communal vision of medievalism or the fragmented individualism of modernism). Objects of *other* peoples, however, were functional artifacts that were first and foremost utilitarian; it was 'we', in the West, who recognized their aesthetic qualities."⁵ Hence, it was quite evident that the 'other' forms of expressions (the traditional, local forms of artistic creations), were considered to be of low aesthetic value when compared with the elitist creations.

Enroute to Collective (Community) identity through Artistic Expressions :

The key question was how the relationship between society and culture was understood. As Martin Albrow while outlining the significance of community states that, "Communities were part of lived life for a multitude of people."⁶ It was always considered to have talismanic powers which led to the social change within the society. He lays down the importance of community by studying the nineteenth century analysts of social and economic change – De Tocqueville, Comte, Tonnies, Durkheim and Marx who tried to focus on the reasons which were leading to the demise of the community. They generally valued the community positively, and shared a pervading posture of nostalgia of praising the community⁷. The traditional local community was seen as the prior, primordial and hence real. The identity of the collective or the community became the strong point of struggle for all kinds of artistic creations. One's own identity is strongly connected to the liberty of the human being. Individuality is complexly seen to be balanced with the non individualistic social norms and hierarchies within the society. As C B Macpherson argues, that to be 'dependent on someone is to be incomplete as a human being. Thus, to be independent, is to achieve the zenith of civil society and to hold the greatest power'⁸. But such independence may come into conflict when the identity aspect is linked in terms of collective group identity. The irony here is to attain the

⁵ Pious, Gerald; "Art", The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 108, No. 430, (Autumn, 1995), pp. 413-431

⁶ Albrow Martin (et all) [The impact of Globalization on Sociological Concepts: Community, Culture and Milieu*] – Living the Global : Globalization as Local process- Ed . John Eade, Routledge, UK, 1997

⁷ Ibid 21

⁸ Handler, Richard, "Is identity a useful cross cultural concept" ed- John R Gills, The Politics of National Identity (Princeton

independence does not require on ones part to completely isolate oneself but to create particular relationships where ones choices are given equal worth and recognition.

On the contrary, the discourse on modernity is completely trying to erase the universality of collective concerns of identity as analyzed by Handler.⁹ Whereby, the hegemonic and oppressive ideology of homogeneity is fast trying to deconstruct the notions of collective identity largely.

The concept of collective identity has been grounded in classic sociological constructs: Durkheim's "collective conscience", Marx's "class consciousness", Weber's *Verstehen*¹⁰ and Tonnies *Gemeinschaft*¹¹. The collective phenomenon, within the society exists beyond par excellence. Durkheim further talks about the traditional cultures which experience a high level of social and moral integration. The 'we-ness' of a group is accentuated, whereby the similarities, the shared attributes, the common values, beliefs, multiplex ties, interactions etc around which they coalesce gain importance. A sense of self gets created among the community, a single canvas of life demonstrating their needs, desires, values, expressions, which underlines their collective distinctiveness. Melucci sees collective identity as a system of relations and representations, and how these relations are held together¹². The relationship between the ends means and the field of action defines the collective identity.

The struggle towards establishing the identity of such traditional communities is rarely anchored in social structures as they are ecosystems which are used to living together interdependently and not by virtue of an exogenous structures to regulate them. Be it the social constructivists or the post modernists, all such scholars despite vast differences in their approach aim at the ultimate goal of mobilization of the collective and their struggles to self name as concluded by Karen A Cerulo in "Identity Construction"¹³. As Albert Melucci tries to describe the freedom battle carried on by these identities, "the

⁹ Ibid 36

¹⁰ *Verstehen* is a German word, referring to the meaningful understanding of the social phenomena

¹¹ *Gemeinschaft* is a german word referring to community

¹² Melucci,, Alberto "Challenging Codes: Collective action in the Information Age"- (1996) Cambridge Press

¹³ Cerulo , Karen A; Identity Construction :New Issues, New Directions- (1997, vol 23) Annual Review of Sociolgy pp 385-409

freedom to have which characterized ...industrial society has been replaced by the freedom to be. In post material society, there emerges a further type of right, the right to existence, or rather to a more meaningful existence". Such struggles of existence are represented by various genres of creativity. 'Being the *voice of the voiceless* is the major motto of such art forms. Unlike the notion of high art addressed by Raymond Williams, which is basically situated and is at the disposal of the powerful elite.

Responding to controversial public actions in the name of welfare of all, challenging the status quo etc is carried out by such great oeuvres. Such art forms act as a reservoir for the people, the public, such that it is accessible to the all sections of the society. 'All art is located in local'¹⁴ (Murray, 2000). The community artist builds upon the power of artistic creation and expression to spark new ideas and elicit new actions, both from people who participate in the creative process and those who witness its results. Art can catalyze critical thinking, inspire individuals to work together, create visions, heal. This energy, in turn, helps catalyze, inspire and heal the community artist who facilitates its development.

The performing arts (such as puppetry) aimed at informing the head and simultaneously move the heart. It is believed that the puppeteer has his heart linked to his puppet which reflects the feelings within the performer to the outside world. This can be found in the fifteenth-century theatrical treatise formulated by Zeami Motokiyo, one of the founders of the classical Noh theatre of Japan. In this treatise, validated by practice, the Noh actor is instructed to perceive his body as a 'puppet' controlled by his 'heart', which assumes the role of puppeteer.¹⁵ Hence the Noh theatre has been called 'an art tied to the heart by strings.'

In her introduction to a collection of interviews with activists, Claire Peeps defines the performers jobs as "largely the building of social capital — the grassroots networks that enable people to move information and ideas to a broader audience, and ultimately to

¹⁴ Goodman Lizbeth and Jane De Gay,(ed.) " The Routledge Reader- in politics and performance" 2000, Routledge, NY

¹⁵ Plowright S Poh. "the Desacralization of Puppetry: A Case History from Rajasthan" 2003 Cambridge journals pp 273-298

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make change happen."¹⁶ The community artist's work entails the actual shaping of information and ideas, images and feelings. Lizbeth Goodman while writing for the 'Politics of Performance' defines that 'performance urges social change'¹⁷. The cultural dynamics embedded in performance is stipulated by a concern to expose the operations of power and oppressions in society. The performer seeks to resist, challenge or subverts such codes of dominance within the post modernist consciousness. As Elin Diamond routes back to the presence of performance, he outlines performing arts as the core of cultural politics. "As Plato sought to cleanse his Republic of the contamination of historic display from both performers and spectators... performances may be seen as cultural practices that reinscribe or passionately reinvent the ideas, symbols and gestures that shape social life."¹⁸ The arts are an inherent form of human and cultural expression and a powerful means of human connection and the strengthening of community.

Establishing the identity of both the individual and the collective is the pre requisite of an egalitarian society. With such an establishment both respect and recognition is garnered to ones identity. Recognition is entrenched within respect. Thus it is evident that while respecting ones distinctive individuality (collective), uniqueness, proper recognition is too granted. Hence, it firmly establishes the individuality and uniqueness of the community.

Cultural Constructs in Society:

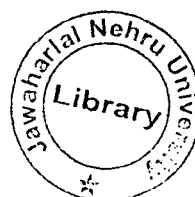
Art forms have been disturbingly placed in a hierarchy by the Western art curators and cultural administrators of new America. While the evolution of 'art' gained importance with the renaissance as discussed above it was implicitly devalued by labels and brands of folk", "aboriginal" or "primitive" art-setting them up as different from the elite creations which they regarded simply as "art" (Glassie 1986:271)¹⁹. For many, western elite products remained the epitome of "culture," the art by which the works of all others

¹⁶ Koppers Peters "Community Performance- an Introduction", Routledge. 2007 pp167-170

¹⁷ Goodman Lizbeth and Jane De Gay,(ed.) "The Routledge Reader- in politics and performance" 2000, Routledge, NY

¹⁸ Diamond Elin, "Performance and Cultural politics" 1996, Routledge, London

¹⁹ Glassie, Henry. 1968. Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press pp 271



were judged (Clifford 1988:235)²⁰. The quality of the other forms of art was all judged by the elitists' vision. Clear cut divisions were apparent within the different worlds and their artistic expressions. Art gets classified under the distinction of high and low culture

One of the twentieth centuries foremost renowned critical theorist, W.T. Adorno, along with Max Horkeimer (both part of the Frankfurt School of Thought) published numerous articles on the nature of 'high' and 'low' culture. They argued that culture industries commodifies culture, that is, culture industry sells a form of culture that they know will sell to the masses. Infact it's the garb created by these cultural monopolists which forces the masses to accept such forms of elite cultural production. Adorno's main concern was that an 'individuals choice was being eliminated in this process, thus making people acquiescent and sponge-like to compromised culture'²¹. Adorno

Exotic forms of art which are accessible to the upper sections of the society gain importance and are further imposed on the traditional communities. Such forms of artistic impositions are very clearly visible within the modernist paradigm of growth and development. Traditional forms of creativity and expression such as puppetry which have long been the only means of communication by the community are now being put to death, under the concept of low art.

'Culture is concentrated in powerful institutional nodes including religions, media, corporations and states'²². These institutions are cultural actors that make continuous use of their resources to order meanings, to attempt to impose certain consistency onto the field of cultural practice. The governing or dominant actors aim to establish *difference* at a large scale. They are constantly engaged in activities to hierarchize, encapsulate, exclude, hegemonize or marginalize the vulnerable communities. Authoritative actors attempt, to impose such coherence and hence bring upon the difference between '**high and low culture or the majority and minority**'. In the school of thought of Culture

²⁰ Feintuch Burt. "Eight words for the study of expressive culture"

²¹ During, Simon The Cultural Studies Reader ed. . (1999) 2nd Routledge p . . .

²² The Concept(s) of Culture, William H. Sewell, JR. 1996

<http://blog.nus.edu.sg/theory4201/2009/10/08/the-concepts-of-culture-william-h-sewell-jr/>

Studies, the prominent theorist Raymond Williams scrutinized the concept of 'high' versus 'low' culture. To be more 'sellable' has become the core virtue. The differentiation between the culture or say the various art forms within the society hence, gets fractioned into different levels on the basis of their market value. Marxists bring up the conflict between institutional governing agents and the cultural bearers. A further concern of neo-Marxist theorist was that this would occur no matter the economic situations of the individuals. All human artifacts consist of materializations, whereby the utility predominates rather than the significance of the artistic expression. Thus the exchange value of such an art depends upon its – utility and the institutional conditions of the market. As Theodor Adorno in his work "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception"²³, believes:

- that the notion of cultural chaos is created , where rubbish gets produced ,
- The universal criterion of merit is the amount of "conspicuous production," of blatant cash investment.
- 'The varying budgets in the culture industry do not bear the slightest relation to factual values, to the meaning of the products themselves'.

Andy Blunden hence concludes "the impoverishment of aesthetic matter so drastically, that by tomorrow the thinly veiled identity of all industrial culture products can come triumphantly out into the open, derisively fulfilling the Wagnerian dream of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* – the fusion of all the arts in one work."²⁴. One can clearly see the threat these traditional art forms are facing as they are not even considered to be a part of this 'popular culture'. Such traditional, primitive forms of knowledge are subsumed within the mainstream cultural pandemonium. The commercial agencies are now in charge of providing value to such artistic expressions. It is the cultural manufacturers (industry) who design the artistic produce, according to their self constructed reality. The whole world is made to permeate through the cultural industry. A stylized barbarism is spread within the artistic creations, whereby the expressions are manipulated. The end

²³ The Cultural Studies Reader – ed. Simon During. (1999) 2nd Routledge

²⁴ *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; by Andy Blunden 1998;
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>

result is a distorted form of culture which has no place for the local vulnerable sections of society

The great artists were never those who embodied the stylized notions of elitism but those who reflected the chaotic expression of sufferings. Genres of traditional puppetry have always expressed the forces of oppression, which were left unheard. The work of art was aimed towards the representation of the truth, expressions of suffering. But the aesthetic barbaric manifestations today take over the mass representation modes. Cultural object is based on the monopolistic rent or, to a subordinate degree, on the object's utility, the value of the cultural object declines as well. As Touqueville²⁵ analyzed that "the private culture monopoly it is a fact that "tyranny leaves the body free and directs its attack at the soul". Thus, the artist faces the threat of estrangement ultimately. Cringing upon the spaces of such performing arts completely destroys the communities' platform for expression. Human emotions are completely negated as the, materialistic concerns of market value becomes the basis of creativity. As Horkheimer and Adorno have put it, "what might be called use value in the reception of cultural commodities is replaced by exchange value."²⁶ Here in the idea of widespread fetishization is seen, whereby value is not based on the qualities of the artistic impressions but on the exchange value, its price. "The culture industry undermines the critical functions of the arts by assimilating them. The use value of art, its mode of being, is treated as a fetish; and the fetish, the work's social rating (misinterpreted as its artistic the status) becomes its use value — the only quality which is enjoyed."²⁷The individual (or the artist) within the culture industry is merely an illusion.

With the cultural and creative poverty of mass-produce luxury goods the character of art itself is coming about to change drastically. What is new is not that it is a commodity, but that today it consciously admits it is one which has to find place in the new markets even at the destruction of its indeneneity. Art renounces its own autonomy and proudly takes

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Adorno, Theodor W. ; Max Horkheimer "Enlightenment as mass deception ,Dialectic of Enlightenment"London: Verso, 1979, 120-167

²⁷ Ibid

its place among consumption goods. The purposelessness of art today completely depends on the obscurity of the market. The commoditization of art further ends up being a species of the commodity itself, marketable and interchangeable like industrial merchandise. One can see the colossal differences that have come about regarding the recognition of the various performance arts. Earlier when concerts were held or performances (be it puppetry, theatre etc) were staged, respect to the performer as well to his art was the key attribute. The scenario is just the reverse with the elimination of such performances spaces within the society. The capitalist commodity production today is in the shape of defining the artists and the art according to the popular culture demands. Thus the surplus value or saleability of the artifact as a mere product completely ruins the embedded social consciousness within the art such a society would be completely inhuman. Art as a commodity is no different to any other commodity.

Mikhail Lifshits underlines the production value –“whereby its value is determined by the amount of socially necessary labour spent on its production (and it is well known that a work of art can take a long time to produce), but its price will be finally determined in the market place on the basis of the laws of supply and demand.”²⁸ Ultimately, the creation of the artist is measured through the demand supply chains rather than its ability to bring about social change. The goal of unprecedented saleability finally saw the shrinking of performing arts, whereby even the primitive societies had to look towards the production of cultural goods that were saleable within the marketplace.

In Marx's words, it “would be pedantic to try to trace the link between art and economics, which, at best, is indirect and convoluted. The chief weakness of bourgeois aesthetics is that it rejects a priori the social influences that shape the development of art. Thus, the development of art is reduced to an essentially personal, i.e., psychological phenomenon. In fact, the idea that somehow art can stand outside or above society is a self-evident incongruity. Art can never endure beyond its social existence. The aim of art in simple terms would be to reflect the inmost feelings, aspirations within the hegemonic society.

²⁸ Hemingway, Andrew(ed) “Marxism and History of Art :From William Morris to the New Left” , 2006 UK

The dialectical law of attraction and repulsion clearly shows within the history of art, although certain kinds of art die out and disappear, yet they simultaneously leave behind a residue and a tradition which in turn conditions later generations of artists. But there can never be repetition or duplication. It would never be the real form of artistic creation. The search would always be towards something new and fresh.

Capital is hostile to art. It brazens out as an alien force which dominates and oppresses it, twisting it into all manner of grotesque expressions. On such barren ground as this, art and artistic expression can never flourish, can never raise itself up to its true (that is, human) stature. Art gets designed to exclude the masses, and relegate them to an impoverished existence. Hence the cultural industry completely alienates the artist or the performer. Simultaneously, traditions are completely ruptured. Reflections and several manifestations of the artistic creation is subsumed. As a result the livelihoods of such artistic communities would be at stake and they would be abjected to deepening poverty.

As cultural objects become more interchangeable, each one declivities^{ns} in its significance, loses its "aura," hence declines in monopolistic rent. As for the purchaser, he or she may be an art expert or a complete ignoramus, may derive great aesthetic pleasure from their possession, or be utterly indifferent to it. This is a matter of complete indifference, since the work of art is possessed not for itself, but only as a piece of merchandise for the purpose of speculation. What is here worshipped is not the work of art, but only abstract value. The spirituality which was possessed by performing arts especially in the case of puppetry sees the complete destruction of such spiritism.

The development of capitalism creates a world market. The crushing domination of the world market is the most important fact of the epoch in which we live. In the present period capitalism has succeeded in uniting the entire world under its domination. Never in the whole history of the world has humanity had before its gaze such a fantastic perspective for development. The achievements of industry, science and technology have provided the material basis for a new and qualitatively higher form of human society based on the planned and harmonious development of the productive forces on a world scale. But at the same time, capitalist/modernist anarchy and the plundering of the planet

by a handful of rapacious monopolies with almost unlimited power is posing a large and threatening question mark over the very future of the human race. Today the culture industry has taken over the civilizing inheritance of the entrepreneurial and frontier democracy.

New political, social, economic and social paradigms are once again in the process of being imposed by a few upon the many. Some of those emblems and paradigms are being transformed into pre suppositions, as the constitutive elements of the myths of the social minorities of the world. Alarms were raised about the new marvels and paradigms that were being imposed. The most hyped being the creation of a global culture. Even the most single minded and ambitious free trade advocates did not fail to recognize the social and human costs of the policies they are promoting. 'More and more voices are raising alarms about there growing sense of powerlessness, tugged and pulled by global forces'.²⁹ The dislocation of identities within the state leads to a counter discourse, very often leading to what Stephen Muecke coins as 'indigenous modern'. Eventually the colour of the small is lost. The traditional forms of identity are shadowed by the big ruling cultural elites. The ruthless appropriation under the universal global heads leads to the control in the hands of a few. Hence, how can the cultural commons of indigenous cultures be democratically recognized and shared in public domains without being ripped off by the plungers of the culture industry.

Cultural Imperialism and Counter cultures:

Globalization from above are a set of forces and legitimating ideas which is seen beyond the reach of territorial authority and that has enlisted most governments as tacit partners as seen by Falk³⁰. This has raised huge opposing cultures rising from the grassroots which he terms as the *globalization from below*. Hence the question raised is whether globalization from below is able to neutralize the detrimental impacts of globalization

²⁹ Robertson ,Roland and Kathleen E . White (ed) "Tomlinson John , The Discourse of Cultural Imperialism" ; Globalisation critical Concepts in Sociology , vol 4 Routeledge 2003 New York

³⁰ Robertson ,Roland ;Kathleen E . White(ed) "Resisting globalization from above through " globalization from below" . Globalisation critical Concepts in Sociology , vol 6 Routeledge 2003 New York

from above? The world witnesses the existence of 'dominant', 'superior' languages, cultures and races, as well as 'subordinate', 'inferior' ones. Domination of some groups over others has been the rule rather than the exception throughout history, racists believe that their language (and most other aspects of their culture) is superior to those of the 'inferior' races. Such an attitude, if supported by political domination, whether overt or covert is used to justify attempts to impose various doctrines on racially subordinate groups. Ironically, these policies are usually offered in the name of 'improving' the plight of less fortunate people. As Bullock and Stallybrass add on "the use of political and economic power to exalt and spread the values and habits of a foreign culture at the expense of a native culture" acts as the bulwark of such forms of domination and suppression. The corporate assault on cultural diversity is part of a larger political, social and economic global watershed transformation. Economic globalization is the creation of a single global economy with universal rules set by big business for big business in which a seamless global consumer market operates on free-market principles, unfettered by domestic or international laws or standards.

It is often argued that cultural imperialism can be critiqued as a critical discourse of modernity. Giddens who saw globalization as "the consequence of modernity and in turn, modernity as inherently globalizing". Thus, the global wave threatens to subsume all forms local expressions. The growth oriented pattern does not build up the capabilities of the local traditional communities.

Trotsky while examining the autonomy of art and artistic expression in the struggle for a socialist society tries to establish points of contact between the artist and the revolutionary movement. To convince the artists and writers that in order to become free, 'art must become revolutionary - must fight for the emancipation of all of humanity'. To think about rational and artistic culture was, for Trotsky, to think about the human inventiveness that a socialist society might activate. To envision that sort of future was to expand people's sense of their capacities in the present. Trotsky says that because "culture feeds on the sap of economics, one can tell a lot about a society from its aesthetic developments. "The development of art," he declared, "is the highest test of the vitality

and significance of each epoch”³¹ Now with the forces of capitalist globalist production, the role of performing arts becomes much more revolutionizing as conceived by Trotsky. Hence, it emerges as new forms of resistance and counter cultures against the new global threat. There have been several events in the past that have illustrated the voices of the people carried by various performing arts. Puppetry has been on a large scale used as a powerful mode to counter the globalist threats. Communities have used such creative expressions to bring forward their voices and to lead to transformation.



A crowd of protesters gathers around the giant peace puppet -- part of the Close-the-SOA procession at the School of the Americas protest at Fort Benning, Ga., the weekend of Nov. 21, 2003. The puppet's message is "A better world is possible." It was escorted by

³¹ Trotsky Leon –“Literature and Revolution” (1924) Haymarket Books

marchers with signs representing such wants and hopes as food for all, universal health care, an end to fear. (Photo by Sue Ellen Kingsley)³²

Inherent within the arts is asserting ones own identity both individual and collective. Enriching ,the lives of the individuals, by providing them a democratic space to voice their opinions. Within the community cultural development field, a parallel has been drawn between community artists' efforts to protect local cultures from unwanted market interventions and developing countries' efforts to resist the economic and social interventions of agencies of globalization such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Globalization of culture inculcates consumerism, substituting mass-produced imported products for indigenous cultural production, and encourages privatization of public cultural-funding apparatus. The result is that market forces determine what aspects of culture will be preserved and supported rather than active participation in community cultural life.

³² http://www.keweenawnow.com/views/kingsley_soa_03_12/kingsley_soa_03_12.htm

Chapter-3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY –

The research methodology has to be interwoven around the great and vastly spread debate on globalization led marginalization of art based communities. The cultural systems which nurture people and generate livelihood for them are under severe threat from the big markets and multi-national companies. The western cultural spell has led to challenges which are drastically affecting the survival of such community based arts. The age old glory of such traditional art forms is on the verge of complete disillusionment. The society is gradually detaching from the traditional base. The struggle here emerges as the globalizing, homogenizing forces are trying to immerse local identities and traditions. Thus, globalization versus localization debate is one of the most heated concerns especially within the developing nations whose traditional bases are under major hazards of complete vanquishment. Instead of empowering the local forces of expressions the global trends behind the garb of multiculturalism tries to suppress such modes of reflections. The economic forces of globalization vis a vis modernization undermine the local foundations of culture. The process of 'denationalization' through such monopolistic drifts wipes out the local dimensions of growth and development. Hence, such traditional forms of origination and creativity are struggling to build their authenticity.

The unprecedented expansion of trade flows across the borders has seeped of the local spaces. The question of identity has been grounded in this new changing nature of the state. "The quest has had a percolating effect within the complex inherently diverse and multicultural eastern communities, having the dual effect of liberating or at least creating a discourse of liberation and rights parts of those communities and concomitantly, through the western oriented concept of singular identity, making them vulnerable to fragmentation."¹The oppression of global forces presents a distorted form of culture for

¹Kapoor, Kapil, Santhosh K. Sareen (ed.), "The Question of Identity Australia and India- Interconnection, Identity, Representation and Belonging, Indian Association for the Study of Australia Conference, Mantra Books, 2006

these local identities. They are submerged within this pan global culturalism. As G. Estva attacks that “no challenge to the proliferating experiences of the people’s powerlessness succeeds when conceived and implemented inside the institutional and intellectual framework which produced it. Hence this global fantasy encroaches upon the local, ethnic, individual identity”². As Appaduri reflects that ‘a fear of cultural absorption by global polities of larger scale is witnessed.’³ The following figure highlights the intermingling relationship shared between the three variables of analysis-

1. *Impact of globalization on these traditional rural communities* who face the threats of complete submergence.
2. *Nature of art* as an expressive medium faces complete disillusionment. Due to the powerful market forces that destroy the innate spiritual nature of such traditional art forms (like puppetry). They are measured in terms of their market demand and saleability.
3. *Livelihood and state practices* are drastically affected. With communities based on such traditional forms of art for their survival, the blow of market forces completely threatens their livelihood means. The state itself fails to regenerate these communities. It has failed to raise the capacities of such impoverished identities within the current banner of growth and development.

Thus the interconnectedness between the above mentioned variables were the key elements within the research methodology framework.

² Ibid

³ Appadurai, Arjun, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, Sage Publication, Theory, Culture and Society. 1990, Nottingham Trent University



FIGURE- *The interconnected relationship of the key variables*

Such traditional performing arts have been submerged within the mainstream. The idea was to listen to the voices close to them, who worked with them or even reaching out to their own voices.

- This study cannot be anything but a *participant observation research*. The data is so much lacking that there are fears of distortion and diversions.
- Further, it has been *historical ethnographic* as communities, art forms, history and puppets are interdependent.
- It is also a study of capacity building of these communities so that they turn the tide of change and transformation for their benefit.
- Under the *qualitative research, the descriptive research* included ethnographic and case studies which were carried out to see social reality. Alongside, analytical, exploratory research designs were also utilized.
- The time line has been given in a tabulated form below

Serial no	Data collection technique/strategy / Method	Duration taken
1	Participant observation at field- puppet shows, festivals, community shows, workshops	2 months
2	Library consultation for govt. department and NGO libraries	1 month
3	Cultural organizations such as Sahitya Natak Academy, Sahitya Kala Kendra, ICCR etc	1 month

The interviews and meetings carried are tabulated below-

Serial number	Persons/ Places visited	Interviews/ meetings/Survey/Secondary data obtained	Duration
1	Dadi Pudumjee (Ishara Puppet Trust)	Interview and informal discussion	November (15 th to 30 th)
2	Anurupa Roy (Katkatha Puppet Trust)	Interview and informal discussion	December (1 st to 15 th)
3	Ranjana Pandey	Interview and informal discussion	November (18 th to 23 rd)
4	Puran Bhat (Aakar Puppet Theatre)	Interview and informal discussion	January (10 th to 20 th)
5	Lala Bhat	Interview and informal discussion	January (10 th to 20 th)
6	Ishara International Puppet Theatre Festival in New Delhi	Interview and informal discussion carried on with the various international groups presented such as- <i>Les Bamboches:</i> SWITZERLAND <i>Amalgama Productions</i> – BRAZIL <i>Pia Fraus</i> – BRAZIL, <i>The Train Theater</i> – ISRAEL <i>Apple tree group</i> –IRAN <i>I TEATRINI</i> – ITALY	27th January to 18 th February 2010
7	Sangeet Natak Akademi, Sahitya Kala Kendra, ICCR	Interviews and Secondary data such as documents, reports, annual journals	March

- Research tools involved primary data in the form of interviews focusing on the key informants such as the puppeteers, government officials, and organizations. Informal interviews with the key informants brought about a plethora of distinct aspirations. Observation method was carried out while the respondents were actively involved.
- Secondary data comprised of journals, internet, interviews focusing on the key informants such as the puppeteers, government officials, and organizations documents, reports, newspapers, periodicals, field notes.
- A trial has been made to apply Eva Schiffer's *net mapping* technique but due to the vagueness and excessive in this community it was only a part success.

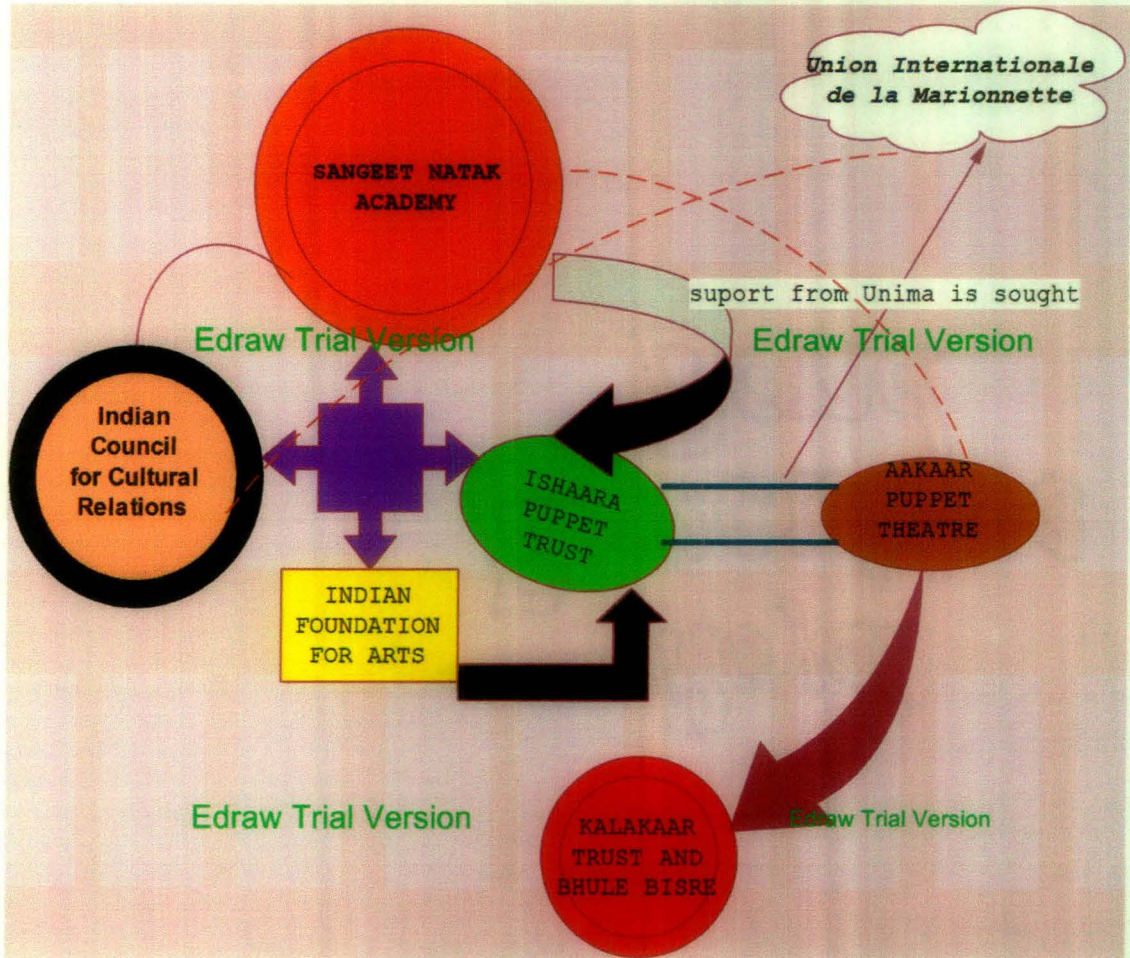
NET MAPPING has been used as a tool for collecting data from a dispersed field. Net Mapping is a social network analysis tool invented by Eva Schiffer a post-doctoral fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington DC. (<http://www.ifpri.org/PUBS/dp/ifpridp00703.asp>) She was working on a project in Ghana with the Challenge Program on Water and Food The White Volta River Basin Board in rural Ghana, responsible for overseeing local water resources, was looking to enhance decision making among its many collaborators.

Net-Mapping helps obtain data from regions where data is otherwise gauged, not accessible through traditional systems of procurements or is otherwise subsidized due to the powerful presence of other structures in governance. It uses interviews and mapping to help people understand, visualize and improve situations in which many different actors influence outcomes. Social network analysis has been used by many scholars such as S.D.Berkowitz, Stephen Borgatti, Stanley Wasserman and Mark Granovetter to understand the position of individuals vis a vis her social and administrative environment.

During the net mapping course the relevant position of the actors was made quiet clear by the respondents. The several actors that were outlined within the study clearly showed the differential impact on the field of puppetry as well as on the promotion of such communities. Initiatives were outlined through various key actors such as the role of the government, role of the non governmental organizations; the support through

international organizations to uphold such traditional forms of human creativity as well as the communities themselves.

Fig: Net Mapping Process in the field study



Exploring Re-invention strategies from global puppet theatres:

Global changes have enabled puppetry across the world as a competitive trade. This has brought several innovative methods to retain this art and sustain its income and earnings. To regenerate and rekindle the spirit of this living performing art form, several initiatives have been pulled across the globe. The process of field work generated quite an exemplary platform where world puppet theaters across the world have come together to celebrate the puppets and the puppeteers. The aim to strengthen such art forms amongst the emerging global threats in the form of media, cinemas etc, and such festivals provide a common ground for the puppets to relive their performances in front of the audiences.

In Prague, the capital of Puppet Art a new association of all world puppeteers – (WAP)⁴ was created. *The World Association of Puppeteers* (WAP) has the purpose to unite all puppeteers in one big family.

Goals of WAP are:

- To bring people of different states, nations, cultures, faiths and races together through the Puppet Art.
- To encourage children and young people to build self-confidence in their selves and the future.
- To promote communication and better relationships between children and parents with puppet plays discussing family values.
- To educate and help puppeteers from developing countries.
- To bring puppet theaters to places around the world where they don't exist.
- To make scholarships for puppet education and workshops in theaters.
- To assist and support other puppet festivals and puppet actions in the world for the good of Puppetry Arts.

Similarly, the Ishara International Puppet Festival (New Delhi) being held annually itself has provided a huge dais for the traditional marionettes of our country. This year at the festival, the opening performances were carried out by the Rajasthani puppeteers of the (Aakar Puppet Theater) and were acknowledged by the audience with great pleasure.

⁴ www.wap-prague.org

Hence, the role of these emerging international puppet theatres to rebond the art of puppetry has now led the search for new innovations.

The traditional genre of string puppetry itself is trying to indulge in newer forms of production of puppet. The idea is to recreate itself in several integral elements involved in performance. 'To give the audience what they love to see is the main motto behind the productions today. Relationships of the puppets with the audience has seen major changes emerging. Puppets are better identified amongst different levels of the community who, try to similarly search for their self expressions through the medium of such marionettes. The sensitivity which is being raised through puppet groups, have been at success pedestal when checked with the communities. People are ready to bond with these recreated forms of visibility. Thus, sensitivity is marketized by these performing art forms that are able to highlight the major hassles within the society. Issues of ecological existence, environmental concerns, women's rights etc are being largely propagated by such performing art forms. The performers have been able to reconnect with the people and the communities to a large extent. 'By giving life to the puppet through movement, the actor creates a dynamic generalized symbol of a human being. Puppet Theater is the most symbolic and figurative of all the spectator arts'.⁵

The debate on the social functioning of puppetry makes it useful for defining several rights. In debates of puppet survival, we see once again how something socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central. 'As puppetry today focuses on several issues be it education, conflict resolution, community health and awareness generation (HIV AIDS etc), it flourishes into a tool that may empower the most inarticulate and disadvantaged to have their own say'.⁶ As one of the contemporary puppeteers, while analyzing the transformative roles played by puppets commented that, "that the power of engagement within puppetry lets an individual be what he is...without the pressure of

⁵ Roy, Ratna "Kathputli. 16-mm (Color Sync Sound) Film. 30 Minutes by Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy ;Smithsonian Institution. Office of Folklife Programs" Asian Theatre Journal, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 189-190

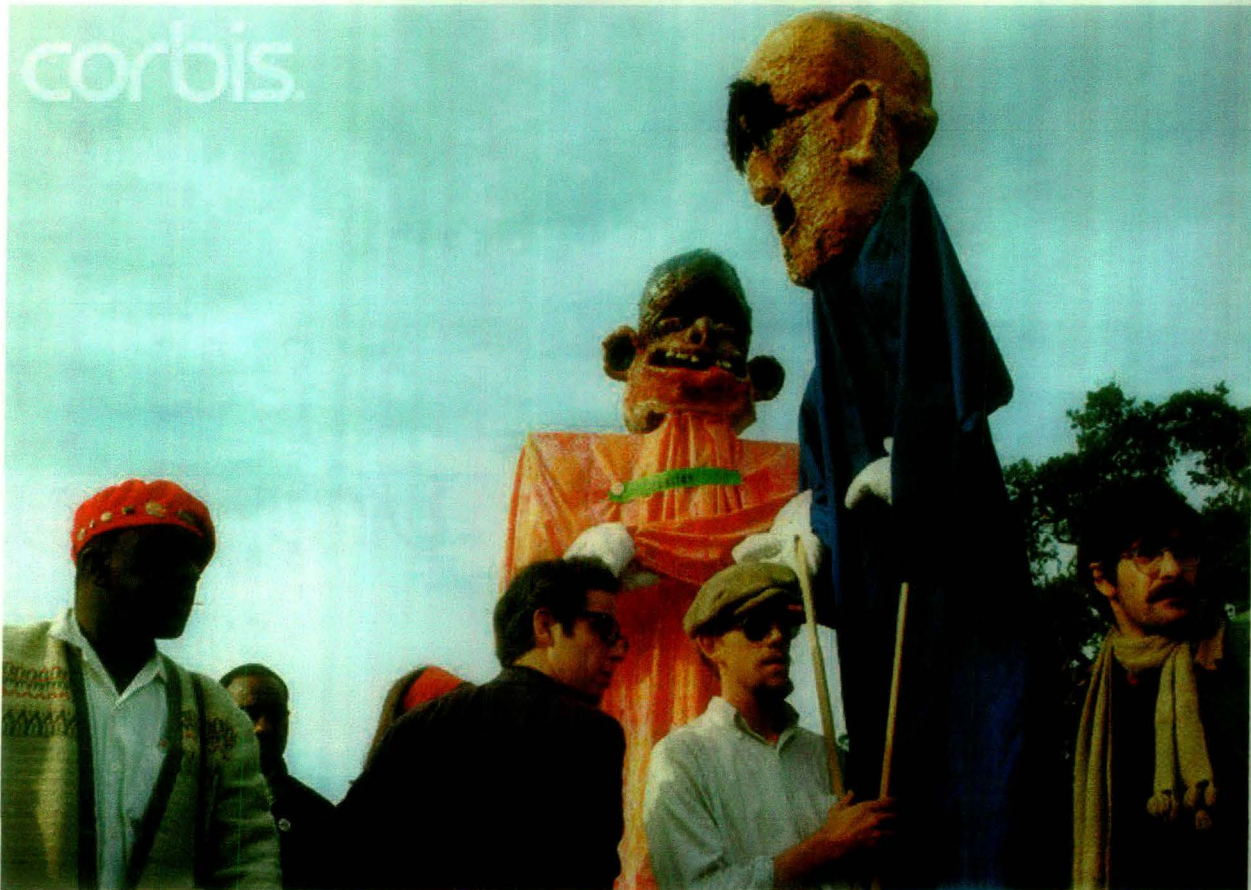
⁶ Dutt, Chandana (ed.), Indian Horizons, ICCR Publications, Vol. 55, No.2-3 200

being judged”⁷. Hence, puppetry has been the major tool since ages to bring about the hidden expressions within the society as well as the individual.

The new faces of resistance which have emerged within the new global paradigm have borrowed largely from the earlier mobilizations of performing art forms. In the war of propaganda by several Asian governments (1940-1945) the Japanese occupants used the various forms of puppet theatre indigenous to the areas under occupation systematically as a means for propaganda in Southeast Asia. The Chinese puppet theatre and its repertoire, traditionally based upon folk tales, were revitalized and reconstructed along communist lines. On the contrary, in North Vietnam the beautiful and unusual form of "puppet theatre on the water" was likewise being exploited to support a communist regime. The discussion of the use of puppet theatre by communist and other governments in Asia remains incomplete without mentioning the fact that the United States Information Service also uses folk theatre to promote the objectives of the United States government, especially in South Vietnam and Laos. Thus such varied examples have clearly illustrated the inevitable powerful role of the puppets world wide. The enlarging role of such puppet theaters all over the world have largely acted as counter cultures simultaneously. The following images clearly outline that the aim of such artistic genres, is to build upon the capabilities of the community by demonstrating and raising their voices against the established hegemonic norms.

⁷ Ibid 132

' The protest march held against the World economic Forum 2002, against the global order. The march was characterized by a festive atmosphere, samba bands, extravagant puppets, cooperation, a diversity of messages, and no violence'



Use of puppets during the Vietnam protests as shown.⁸

8

<http://www.google.co.in/images?hl=en&q=images+of+puppetry+in+vietnam+protest&um=1&ie=UTF8&s>

Conclusion:

The methods used to collect data have been varied depending upon the vastness and the divergence of lifestyles adopted by the marginalizing puppet communities. While they have learnt and adopted intra-regional varieties in their expressions through puppets they have also learnt from global puppet shows being brought close to their reach in Delhi through ICCR and other private art theatres as mentioned above. The major limitation in research methodology is the lack of documentation available in the archives which increased dependence of the researcher on puppet theatre groups and on puppet communities depending upon one or the other such NGO lead to replication of feelings at every level. The great support and truths emerged in the participant observation techniques which allowed communities to share and open up to queries about their life and livelihoods.

[ource=univ&ei=uGdPTOmHForHrAcV0sn1DQ&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&ct=title&resnum=1&ved=0CCcQsAQwAA&biw=1069&bih=296](#)

Chapter-4

INTERPRETING PUPPETRY THROUGH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA

Chapter 4

Interpreting Puppetry through Primary and Secondary data

Puppets tell their tales as ghosts of a vanishing species. Data has been extracted out of history which was insufficiently found in the secondary data and henceforth developed through the primary data collection techniques. As revealed during the participant observation methods applied as an interesting technique for authenticating what has been obtained in scattered notes from the performing art groups the community-art-poverty linkage becomes clearer.

The story concerning these puppets is that they were the King's secret counselors. Whenever he was beleaguered by a dilemma, he would sit on his golden throne and the wooden effigies surrounding it would magically turn into animated puppets to give him advice. Lord Siva himself was the owner of this golden throne and was worshipped as the God of puppets.¹ Moreover the concept of a string puppet being controlled by a puppeteer is particularly noteworthy in a belief system which sees the Creator, Brahma, as the Arch String Puppeteer controlling man through strings. Hence this has given rise to a way of thinking of submission in which man sees himself as a 'puppet' in the control of his Creator/Puppeteer. (See figure 2). Thus it was very clear the divinity that was associated with these puppets.

But puppets were also used as tools of protest against the arbitrary regime. The puppeteers protested and ridiculed the rulers in a way that no one else would dare even think of. After all how could a big mighty king, stop a tiny marionette?

The puppet can express large emotions, display feeling publicly, that would be proscribed in daily life and upsetting in a human actor. Puppets have no egos. They can

¹ Plowright S Poh. "The Desacralisation of Puppetry: a case history from Rajasthan" 2003 Cambridge journals

become emblems of deepened or extreme emotional states: passion, rage, sorrow. With puppets you can laugh about things or behavior that real actors could never get away with. Hence such magical marionettes were the core of human verbalisms since ancient times.

Figure 2- The puppeteer animating his puppets is a God-like figure:



Source- Plowright S Poh. "The Desacralisation of Puppetry: a case history from Rajasthan" 2003 Cambridge journals

The Social hierarchy:

The fifth century BC treatise called *Natasutra* dealt with the aphoristic rules for the *Nata* (usually the performers). Unfortunately the *Natasutra* no longer exists, but the performing groups have been characterized under this treatise, they claim to belong to the community of the *Nat or Nata*. Later, the performers were ascribed within the *Natyashastras*. Now the Vedic literature was intended to reach only the upper sections of the society and therefore *Natya* was never sanctified as a Veda. Further as Jarriazbhoy² goes deep into the Vedic stratification of such performers he outlines the preservation of the Vedic rituals for the sole upper class Brahmins. The performers were considered to be part of the lowest section that is the *Shudras*. String puppetry of India is part of the heritage of performing traditions. Scholars like Gargi, Pani, Helenstein and others states the presence of the sutradhar in *Bharatas Natya* indicates the antiquity of string puppetry in India. Several examples have led to the conclusion that the origins of puppetry can be seen within India. Kathputli puppeteers belong to the community which is generally referred to the *Nat or the Bhat*. They are also known as the *balahi ke nat* (the nats of the Balahi leather workers community)³. They are all well versed in folklores and traditional poetries, though being illiterate. The education directly dealt with the upper scholarly sections of the society. The Kathputli Bhats are the part of these long venerated oral traditions. The legends by the traditional puppeteers themselves showed that the Bhats once had immense power. The caste system stratifies various social units based largely on the concepts of ritual purity and pollution and occupational status. A group's placement in the social hierarchy determines the ways in which the members are supposed to interact.

Large part of the research was carried out through interviews, participant observations, and archival research. The respondents included traditional and contemporary puppeteers who provided great insights to the evolution of this living performing tradition. It was seen as the art which entertained, made social commentary, generated social values, ideals and led to socio cultural critiques. The respondents pointed out a fundamental

² Jarriazbhoy "Kathputli : the art of Rajasthani Puppeteers" 2007, India , Rainbow

³ Ibid 16

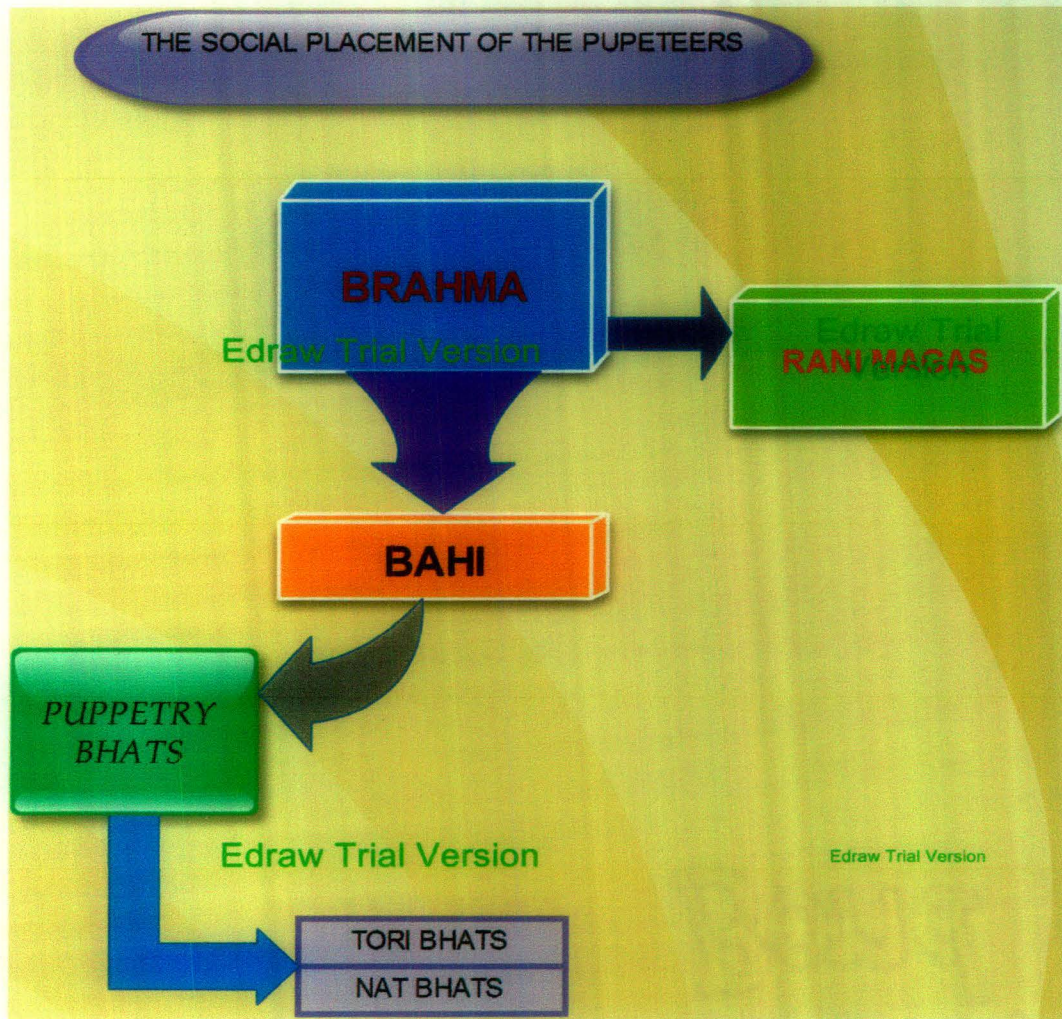
reality that, due to the social hierarchy which placed these performers at lower segments, helped them to express controversial ideas and social critiques in ways that other members of the high clan could never do. Existing on the fringes of the society makes them powerful to evaluate the social order.

Despite the stratification of these performers at the lowest strata of the order, the traditional puppeteers consider themselves to be a part of the Bhat community or the kalakaar (performer). The respondents were completely antithetical to the classification provided by the census of the country, whereby they belonged to the scheduled castes. Hence, the notion of *untouchables* places them outside the Varna system. Littlepage quotes that “these entertainer communities are semi nomadic, and their lineages, dietary customs and marriage habits are unknown to the rest of the society. Consequently, they are seen as impure.”⁴ Puppet traditions of Rajasthan have been attached to caste factors, linked to the Jajmani system. Three primary groups exist these are the Brahma, Bahi and Rani-Mangas. Of these Brahma Bhats are of higher social status as they serve as genealogists for higher caste Rajputs. Now the puppeteer Bhats fall under the lower Bahi group, and are known as the Tori or the Nat Bhats. This is further divided into fourteen sub castes.

The following figure (1) in the next page clarifies the social placement-

⁴ Littlepage, Eric Lee, *Puppets with a Purpose: Folk Arts, Cultural Communication, and Development in India*, University of Virginia Publications, 2002

Figure 1-



“Due to the status differential between the Bhats and the Nats, these low status groups continuously jockey around for an improved position.”⁵

⁵ Snodgrass, Jeffrey G. “Big Words Little people: Cash and Ken in Modern Rajasthan” Diss. U of Ca. San Diego, 1997

According to the divisions, the traditional Bhats are at a higher level when compared to the Nats. While interviewing one of traditional mentors, it was strictly clarified that adhering to the caste regulations was significant. Transgressing family could lead to dire consequences in relation to cachet and status. Even marriages were strictly endogamous, carried out within the stringent caste divisions to maintain the purity of the caste and specially to promote the tradition of the art.

“It is a complete sin, to marry on to another caste or gotras. To preserve our art such conventions are extremely vital. A puppeteer can only marry a puppeteer”⁶.

Now within the Jajmani system, the performing groups survived on the basis of patronage from their jajmans, the kings, and the Rai sahibs. They were considered to be the assets to the village. The shows were about praises of the king Amar Singh Rathore, as they traveled across praising the glory of their kinships. Hereby such power of this performing class is termed as the ‘power of the weak’ against the dominant structures.

In addition, their low position ‘gives them the license to gibe’⁷ at the inequalities through their performances. They become the central focal point of all the audiences comprising of all sects of the society during there performances and hold immense power. High respects were given to such traditional performers unlike today, where the art is struggling. Lack of such patronage and absence of new recruits are the major challenges faced by the mentors of this living tradition. Komal Kothari demanded an investigation within this tradition to check whether it is alive or dead.⁸

Hence, this exploratory case study further demanded a look into several

key questions such as –

1. Lack of patronage amongst this art has been a major threat, then where does the art look towards for support,
2. The current scenario of the puppeteers in their ancestral lands and their current place of survival, that is the reasons of migration,

⁶ Respondents view while interviewing

⁷ Ibid 15

⁸ Dutt, Chandana (ed.), *Indian Horizons*, ICCR Publications, Vol. 55, No.2-3

3. Their social conditions and the situation of the traditional puppetry in the growing commoditization of art,
4. The cultural identity of the artists, their survivability,
5. Encumbrances in front of the traditional genre, can it survive as a folk tradition,
6. Role of the government to preserve its heritage, or service delivery mechanisms,
7. Promotion of puppetry and the role of the resource generation bodies,
8. The future of this traditional performing art,

The historical break through affirmatively placed the innate spirituality within the puppet theatre. Currently, the removal of ritual from the heart of the art, itself, detracts the nature of the art. 'A Book of Marionettes' by Helen H. Joseph, published in 1920, was the first history of puppetry to be written in English. Since that time, the word "puppet" has supplanted "marionette" as the generic term for all figures articulated by human control. 'The terms have changed, but not the struggle to establish puppetry as an ancient art worthy of recognition and respect.'⁹ The quest to regenerate itself with a new spring of life has led this traditional form of expression to do away with its holistic spiritism, the aura of divinity. Plowright while condemning the placement of this art within the current society states, "This is not simply a matter of puppetry being turned into a commercial art, but of something inherently spiritual suffering a sea change"¹⁰

The journey from being Ecclesiastical to Commercialism:

If one goes back to the Nagaur district in Rajasthan-for the *kathputliwallahs*, the chances are that no answers would be received. This had been a region once densely populated with the traditional Rajasthani puppeteers. Most Bhat families owned small tracts of lands specially in the Nagaur, Sikar, Ajmer, Churu districts. These semi nomadic patriarchal families lived in close knit extended families, where puppetry was passed on to the generations as a divine gift. These tracts of lands were given by the *jajmans* for their services. During the monsoon season the families would stay back to cultivate the

⁹ Baird Bill "The Art of the Puppet", Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Mar., 1966), pp. 83-84

¹⁰ Plowright S Poh. "The Desacralization of Puppetry: A Case History from Rajasthan" 2003 Cambridge journals

land and recite genealogy for their jajmans. They would then travel across the country, and perform at the places where they stationed and formed their deras or encampments. As one of the respondents explained that , “ as artists we were eccentric to boot and coveted for more, and hence we traveled to states like Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Madras, Bihar, Nepal, many areas of existing Pakistan too.” But today all the performers have gradually moved apart from their ancestral lands to cities to seek for new sources of employment. Secular entertainment for lucrative returns seems now to be the main objective of puppeteers forced by circumstances to make out a meager living from their art. The art of puppetry has commented on social, political, romantic, religious and mythological subjects in an era when modern tools of communication were not even invented, but the current threat facing this genre is of complete abandonment. Unfortunately, the art is on the verge of extinction and artists are struggling hard to revive the art.

Changes in the traditional village setup, has led to severe financial crisis in the absence of any kind of patronage and support. With great changes in demand for certain commodities, there has been a break-up of the social network in villages which used to support valuable crafts. It is well known that *kathputliwallahs* are among the most impoverished of Rajasthan’s traditional performers and have to supplement their earnings by working as farm laborers.

Kolenda¹¹ argues that following stresses have forced communities to withdraw sponsors and patronage

1. The decline of occupational specialties
2. increase use of money population pressure,
3. subdivision of land agricultural inefficiency and
4. growing factionalism

Today, the artist is no longer a part of the community in these villages. The presence of market value has completely eliminated him within the flow of modernization and has no

¹¹ Littlepage, Eric Lee, *Puppets with a Purpose: Folk Arts, Cultural Communication, and Development in India*, University of Virginia Publications, 2002

bearing on his role within the fabric of his community, and indeed within life itself. “This change is typical of the shift from spirituality to secularity – a trend afflicting valuable arts which are finding it difficult to survive within these new parameters”, this has been termed by Plowright as ‘*desacralisation of puppetry*’.¹² Traditional artists are moving towards cities, even in Rajasthan the shift of puppeteers to Jodhpur, Bikaner is quite evident due to the presence of large scale tourism. These tourists now act as the new paymasters for these puppeteers. These areas have been reduced to mawkish relics and variety acts. The concern for the senior puppeteers is the reduction of this divine art into a mere marketized saleable product on roadside stalls of Bikaner and other tourist places. Performance is completely done away with. Today many Bhat’s have become part of free lance performances though it is quite sporadic for survival. Performances in hotels, creating puppets for handicraft shops etc are some example of employments. The co-modification of puppets has resulted in selling them ‘at the price of garbage’. Puran Bhatt the maestro of string puppetry acknowledged that in “the country we don’t want to associate with any thing traditional. Many of us feel ashamed to be called Bhatt’s...due to lack of resources they had to kill their puppets”.¹³

The answerers showed their apprehension regarding creation of cheap puppets for fast money. Large quantities of despicable nonfunctional kathputlies are manufactured. This was completely rare earlier as Littlepage quotes “for the puppeteers, these figures are imbued with symbolic and metonymical significance as they are manifestations of the divine.”¹⁴

¹² Plowright S Poh. “the Desacralization of Puppetry: A Case History from Rajasthan” 2003 Cambridge journals

¹³ Dutt, Chandana (ed.), *Indian Horizons*, ICCR Publications, Vol. 55, No.2-3

¹⁴ Littlepage, Eric Lee, *Puppets with a Purpose: Folk Arts, Cultural Communication, and Development in India*, University of Virginia Publications, 2002

Cultural Ambassadors in slums- 'kalakaaro ki basti'



Source- - <http://www.sawf.org/newedit/edit03052007/index.asp>

The Bhats have now sprawled in to slums known as the entertainer colonies in the cities. Here in comes the Kathputli colony near the (Shaddipur depot in Delhi) which does not even exist on the map. The entrance to Kathputli Colony, in Delhi's West, is easy to miss. The narrow, dirt track which leads into the colony, is the bastion of Indian culture, where those who were once treated as divine are now trying to survive in these slums. This *artist colony* as the respondents termed it has been at this place for the past forty five years catering to almost three thousand families comprising of both performing and non performing artists. The slum is hence the home for all sorts of performers be it puppeteers, musicians, animal trainers, fire-breathers, craftspeople, knife-swallowers, magicians , acrobats, snake charmers, street side performers and regular pranksters. Living in dismal, pathetic conditions the senior artists still aim at rejuvenating the lost touch of this performing art. The entire colony despite existing for such a long period still remains unauthorized under the Delhi Development Authority. These small mud clusters are now turning into cemented *pucca* dwellings, with many of them being able to earn better through foreign trips as compared to others.



Service delivery on behalf of the government is extremely poor as the colony does not even have the basic amenities such as sewage systems, water and electricity supply. The colony is featured by pigs, stray dogs and the stink from open drains accompanying you wherever you go. Heaps of garbage, flies and mosquitoes buzzing all around are a common sight. The pitiful environment leads one to think about the tenuous life being

lived by these ancient prestigious performers. While interviewing the artists, the outburst was quite evident due to the lack of attention and responsibilities from the government itself. "Over a period of time we have been able to promote our art in distant parts of the world by being a part of several international festivals in France, United States of America etc but the irony is that there is no respect given to us while we return back to our own homelands."¹⁵

For puppeteers, performance and respect are inextricably linked. As important money is the recognition of their skill and artistry is equally required according to them. "Here sometimes we get invited by Indians with a lot of respect," said the older Bhat. "But after the performance we find ourselves being shown out the back door."¹⁶ Due to lack of respect and demand for the performances these artists are now sustaining their lives through alternate sources of employment such as playing the *dholak* at the marriages, singing, performing folk dances or even selling tea as road side vendors. Absence of regular sources of income and large scale pressures to take care of their joint families; the performers turn towards all sought of daily wage employment. Adding further, to this is the high rate of illiteracy amongst the residents of this colony. Within this strict patriarchal set up which has been continuing since the beginning, the females of the house render minimal services such as stitching of the puppets, making the clothes of the puppets, singing within the performances. Hence, the performance on the stage is only carried out by the patriarchs.

The major reasons as sketched by the respondents for the minimal interests amongst puppeteers-

- Immediate cash payment : while playing dholaks etc in marriages
- Absence of regular performances of traditional puppetry: be it the government sponsored shows or private entertainments, the overall shows are extremely low in number and sporadic in nature. Puppetry is turning into part time interests.
- Lack of education : is a major hurdle to move towards better job opportunities

¹⁵ Senior traditional puppeteer, while responding to the position of the art in the country.

¹⁶ <http://www.sawf.org/newedit/edit03052007/index.asp>

- Identity crisis: the major concern for such puppeteers is the lack of identity , despite being displayed by the state as cultural harbingers to other parts of the world. The government has marked them as below poverty line (**BPL**). “But despite that we are not given the respective dues under such a status” as stated by one of the respondents. It is a cultural game of poverty which is being played around.
- Media as the major culprit: the growing popularity of television and cinema has completely snatched away the audiences. Julia Taymor states that the most important dimension missing in media (camera) is – art¹⁷. As a result several puppeteers themselves aim at bagging contracts with the media industry in order to gain faster benefits. The content as well the length of the shows are completely maneuvered by the big television producers. Henceforth, there is complete eradication of the freedom of the puppeteer. “We had to kill our shows” was the comment given by one of the maestro of the art. It is believed that the art in the age of media production, has lost its aura, that’s is as rightly put by W. Benjamin, “ the art has lost its unique existence”¹⁸ Traditionalists such as Mark Levenson of the (UNIMA USA) feared the fate of puppetry in the age of media production, and hence seeked to maintain its ‘exclusivity.’¹⁹
- Need for public space- be it the traditional or the modern forms of puppetry both of them are struggling for their public space, and remains a question on their survivability. The sources from where these traditional arts ricocheted are running parched.
- Generation of continuous funds: such that the new generations and the ones willing to preserve this form are helped with continuous flow of resources in order to learn the skills of this traditional performing art.

The urbanized and modernized communities are getting removed from their rural moorings and the belief systems that nurtured them. The aesthetics of the performance as

¹⁷ Bruce D. Schwartz, Theodora Skipitares, Julie Taymor, C. Lee Jenner “(Interview: Working with Puppets)” *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1983), pp. 103-116

¹⁸ Tillis Steve. “The Art of Puppetry in the Age of Media Production” Source: *TDR* (1988-), Vol. 43, No. 3, *Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects* (Autumn, 1999), pp. 182-195 Published by: The MIT Press

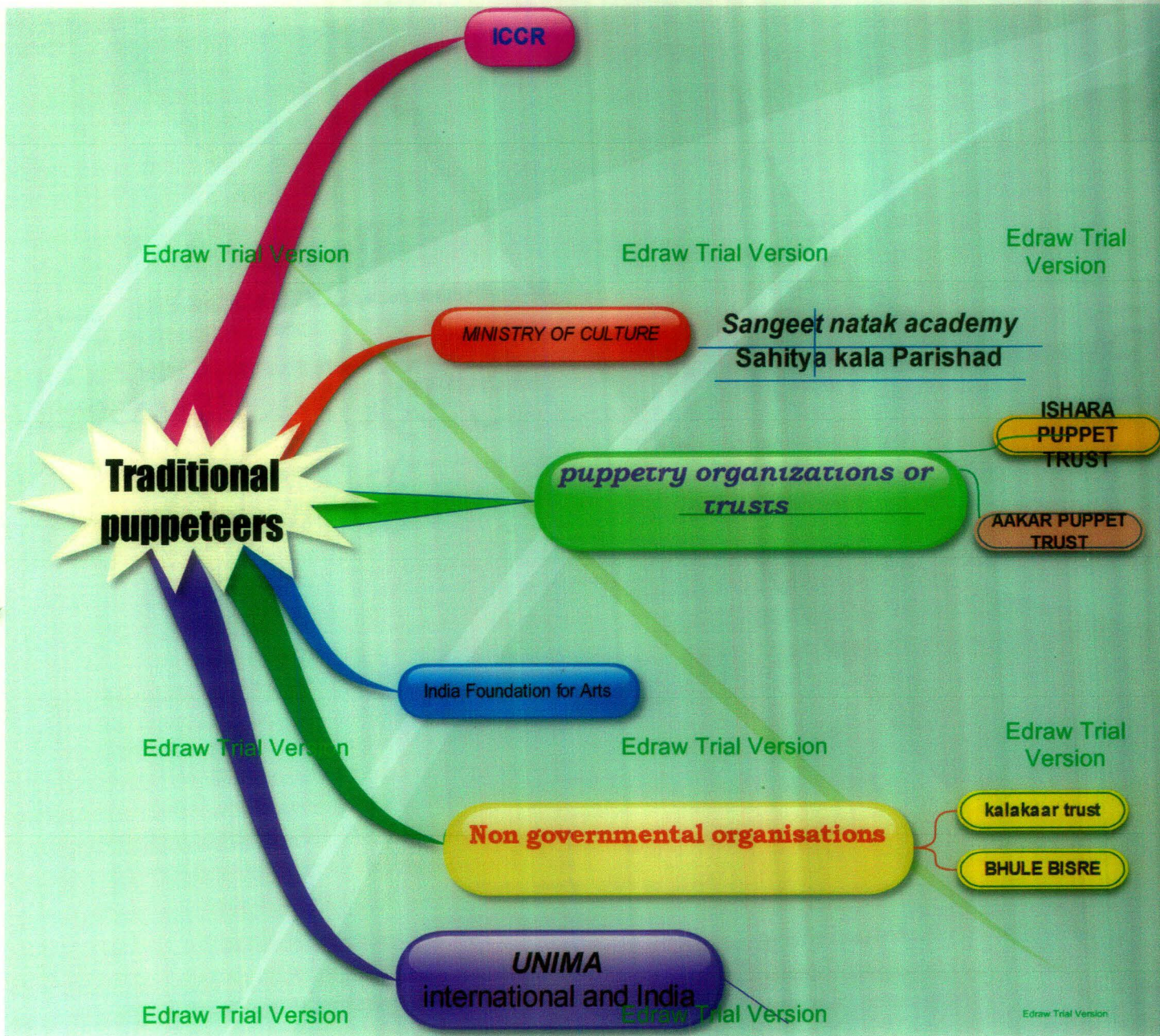
¹⁹ *Ibid* 193

well as the importance of the art within the community is nowhere to be found. A lack of understanding towards such nuances has become a severe threat. The fear of completely loosing out on the traditionality of this genus has led to the search for new patrons by the senior puppeteers. Before the art is completely abandoned, the call for immediate attention is the precondition.

Contemporary Support to Traditional Puppetry:

The new emerging visible supporters of this traditional art ranged from the government bodies, cultural organizations, till the non governmental organizations. An outline has been given below in Figure 3, about the different existing patrons. But the question which still remains is whether the presence of such supporters, has in any way led to to the minimality of the crisis faced by the traditional artists. Why do they still remain anxious within the lanes of the artist colony despite such big names coming into their aid?

Figure 3- The current cohorts of traditional Rajasthani puppetry



With the migration of the puppeteers from their homelands to the cities in search for a new life, they were drawn to seek support from various bodies. Starting with the formation of the '**Bhoole Bisre Kalakar Cooperative Production Society**', registered in 1978 by Rajiv Sethi. The aim of this society was to provide sustainability to the artists, especially to all genres of performing arts. With its initial placement in Lodhi colony , it gradually shifted amongst the artists themselves, and is currently has its office in Shaddipur only. The major training arrangements are made for the children of the performers. *Shilpayan* is a one-room school situated in the same building. Here children are taught to read and write. In this school, free training in art and craft work is given to young girls. (See figure 4)

Similarly, another non governmental organization that came up to provide support was the **Kalakaar Trust** by Sterre Sharma. Similar to the cooperative society, education and training is being provided. Regular workshops are held for the budding artists to learn. As the founder of the trust commented, "Kalakar Trust works exclusively among the low income groups who have been into puppetry for centuries. But the pressure of modern life is forcing them to abandon it. We have given a supporting environment to more than 2,600 families of mostly puppeteers, dancers, musicians, acrobats and magicians. We have given them medical, educational and vocational support. Today, these children perform at weddings, parties as well as at local and international cultural fairs."²⁰ The trust now plans to tie up with heritage hotels in and around Delhi so that tourists can enjoy rustic flavours sitting right in the heart of the city. "This would encourage the artistes as well," commented one of the organizers.

²⁰ www.kalakartrust.org/about.html

Figure 4- Children learning to make puppets.
<http://www.sawf.org/newedit/edit03052007/index.asp>



But despite the role of the Ngo's the residents have not been satisfied as they believe that there are details too much on records be it the government support or such other trusts. In reality the picture is very gloomy and just exists in name. Notwithstanding its enormous pool of talent, the Kathputli Colony is struggling to survive.

Moving ahead on a larger scale when we look towards the generation of funds, and other forms of support, the role of the government comes in. The Government of India (and its State Governments) is the major source of art funding in India is. The Ministry of Culture, currently under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), works towards the promotion of Indian arts and culture. Most of these funds are directed solely towards promoting local and folk artists. On a broader scale the promotion of folklore, and other forms art and culture is supported through the following agencies, trusts, international collaborations:

The following details have all been gathered through the use of secondary data specifically the online government websites, and reports

List of government agencies that promote art and culture:

Name	Weblink
Ministry of Culture	http://india.gov.in/outerwin.php?id=http://india.culture.gov.in/
Indian Council for Cultural Relations	http://www.iccrindia.org/
Lalit Kala Akademi	http://lalitkala.gov.in/
Chitra Kala Parishad	http://www.chitralaparishath.org/home.html
Sangeet Natak Akademi	http://www.sangeetnatak.org/
National School of Drama	http://www.nationalschoolofdrama.org/
Kalakshetra	www.kalakshetra.net/
National Folklore Support Centre	http://www.indianfolklore.org/
Ministry of Information and broadcasting	http://india.gov.in/outerwin.php?id=http://mib.gov.in/

List of funding agencies and trusts that promote art and culture:

Ford Foundation	www.fordfound.org
India Foundation for the Arts,	www.indiaifa.org
Sir Ratan Tata Trust	www.srtt.org
Sir Dorabji Tata Trust	www.drabjitatatrust.org
Hivos	www.hivos.nl

List of international cultural agencies that promote art and culture

Japan Foundation	www.jfindia.org.in
British Council	www.britishcouncil.org
Pro Helvetia- Swiss Arts Council	www.prohelvetia.in
Goethe Institut- Max Muller Bhavan	www.goethe.de
Alliance Française	www.afindia.org
InKo(Indo Korean Centre	www.inkocentre.org

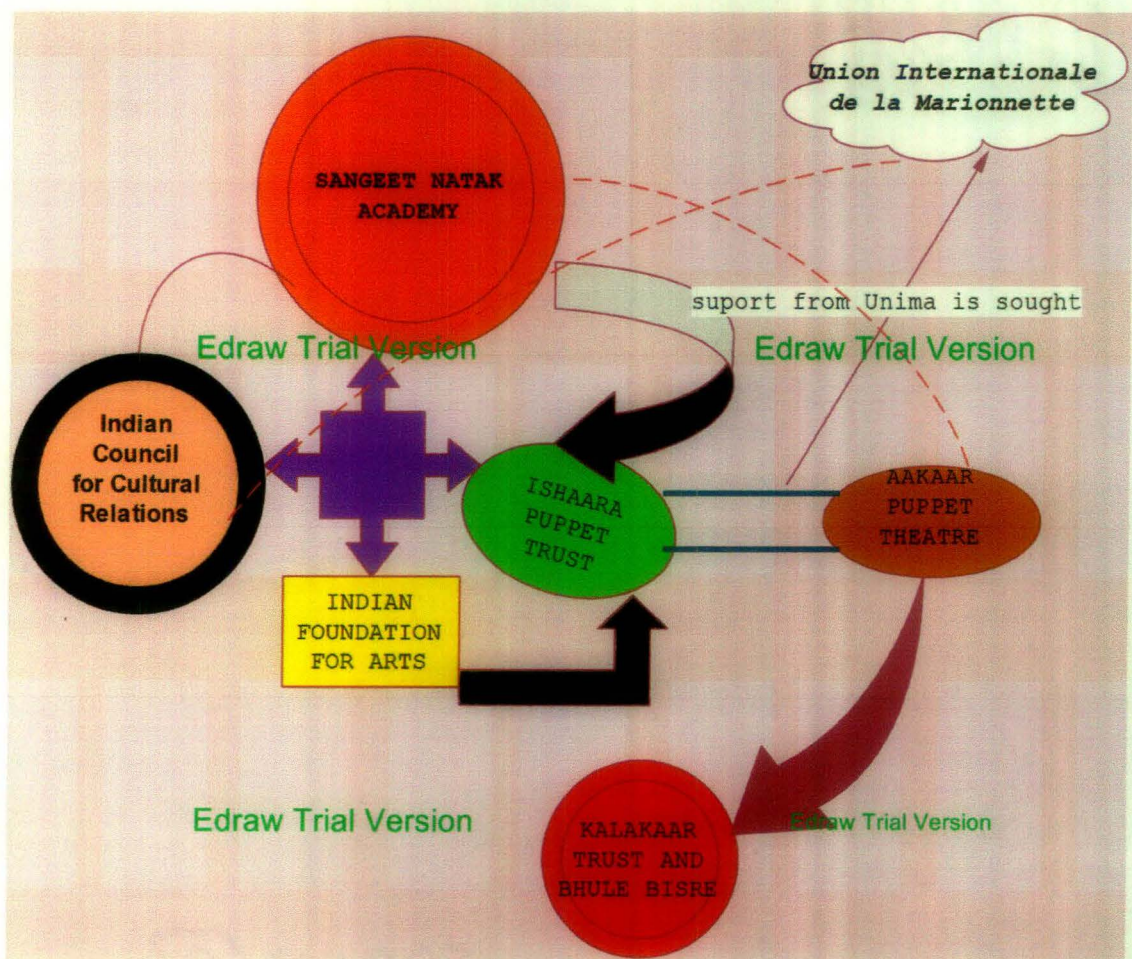
There are very few funding agencies and **trusts** in India that have a mandate for supporting the arts. The key organizations involved in art philanthropy are the Ford Foundation, India Foundation for the Arts, Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and Hivos. It must be noted that these organizations have a programmatic approach towards funding and focus entirely on supporting only local Indian artists.

Bilateral and multilateral cultural organisations such as the European Union, the Japan Foundation, the British Council, Pro Helvetia, Max Muller Bhavan, Alliance Française and Inko (Indo Korean Centre) play a significant role in supporting artists from their countries to visit India, and vice versa. Embassies and Consuls for various countries which have an office in India often support travel and stay for artists from their own countries.

Corporate India does not have an agenda towards supporting the arts; therefore it is almost impossible to identify a specific list of arts friendly sponsors. On reviewing the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives of the top 500 companies in India, it

was learnt that the arts do not feature at all. If at all, most corporates believe in sponsoring an end product as a marketing strategy towards boosting their brand image. This naturally creates a situation where the sponsorship comes with strings attached keeping in mind the Company's target audience, brand profile and the extent of media mileage that can be garnered through this support. Overall, the only corporates who are most amenable to supporting the arts at all are in the services sector like telecom and banking. On a more positive note, the hospitality and airlines sector are always quite open to offering support in kind

While analyzing the role of these organizations, amongst the respondents , an effort has been made to establish the relations between the promoters of puppetry through the tool of *net mapping*. The following figure (5) illustrates the role of these patrons, in the bid to encourage the growth of traditional puppetry.



During the net mapping course the relevant position of the actors was made quiet clear by the respondents. Among the support provided by the ministry of culture, the role of **Sangeet Natak Academy (SNA)** was quiet crucial in the promotion of the art. The reports underlined the following fundamental character of the academy :

1. Financial Assistance to Cultural Institutions²¹

Objectives

Sangeet Natak Akademi aims to offer grants-in-aid to select cultural institutions engaged in the promotion of performing arts, namely, music, dance and drama. The grants-in-aid scheme is to serve primarily two objectives, namely, to provide financial support to institutions engaged in training in the fields of music, dance and drama and to encourage production of new plays and ballets, etc

2. Scope of the Scheme

For the fulfillment of the objectives specified in the abovementioned Para, financial assistance will be provided on an annual basis to meet the expenditure on the salaries and stipends of teachers and students, honorarium and fees to the artists, expenses on new productions which will include rental charges and expenses on publicity, maintaining shows on a regular basis and cost of establishment (including cost of administrative staff up to 15% of the total amount of the grant.) The scheme will also provide for support to the folk performing parties in various regions working in the fields of music, dance and drama so that they are able to sustain their activities in their respective regions. The scheme will also encourage work in other specialized areas in the field of performing arts such as community singing and children's theatre.

The scheme will provide for support to research and survey projects in the field of performing arts and purchase of stage and other technical equipment.

²¹ The reports of Sangeet Natak Academy – www.sangeetnatak.org/sna/grant.htm

The scheme will also provide the specific project of a specialized nature considered useful in the larger interest, for organizing festivals/special events/exhibitions of rare /dying forms of music / dance / theatre to create awareness of such art forms and for advance training, refresher courses, workshop and lecture - demonstrations etc. by eminent Gurus.

Responsibility:

To the extent possible, there will be periodical visits by the officers of the Akademi and members of the Grants Committee, etc. The reports submitted by the officers will be considered by the Grants Committee at the time of consideration of the allocation of grants to various institutions'

Promotion and Preservation of Puppetry²²

Under the scheme of preservation and promotion of puppetry training programmes were organized in string puppets of Orissa, Rod puppets of West Bengal, Shadow puppets of Karnataka and Kerala. The Akademi's Museum over the years has acquired a large number of puppets from different parts of the country. Sponsoring performances by traditional puppeteers is also supported under the scheme.

Sangeet Natak Akademi sponsor shows of traditional puppetry in rural and semi-urban areas. Identified puppet groups in different states may be paid a performance fee per show up to a maximum of five shows a year. The performances may be arranged through State Government agencies or established cultural organizations involved with puppetry. Payment to the puppeteers may be made through state agencies on submission of proof of performance.

a) Production Oriented Puppet Theatre Workshop

In the last few years Sangeet Natak Akademi has organized puppet workshop in different states. These fall into three categories:

²² - www.sangeetnatak.org/sna/grant.html

i) *Experimental Workshop*- Putting contemporary and traditional puppeteers together with a view to making traditional puppetry more presentable.

ii) *Educational Puppetry* -Workshop aimed at training teachers interested in puppetry for its possible educational use.

ii) *Puppetry Workshop with Theatre- Workers* Giving young theatre workers an opportunity to learn contemporary manipulating techniques. This exposure, was hoped would encourage theatre workers to take up puppetry together with theatre.

The workshops for theatre workers have been more fruitful than the others. It is therefore proposed that a few contemporary theatre groups doing regular work may be identified for organizing such puppet workshops and sustained financial support to their puppet wings may be provided at least for five year.

The major **Objective** laid down was “promote and preserve various traditional forms of puppetry and to locate new forms of puppetry that are threatened by socio economic changes. Support is also envisaged to contemporary puppet groups and individuals”.

Artists Aid Fund- artists aid fund created by Akademi in recent years is meant to provide urgent help to artists in indignant circumstances and those requiring medical treatment. The aid fund will be meant for welfare of artists at all levels and would not be limited to those of national eminence. The token provision is kept under plan which proposed to be enhanced with Akademi’s own revenues generated through various activities.

ii) Scope

a) Sponsoring traditional and contemporary puppetry shows in different parts of the country

b) Workshops leading to training and productions

c) Annual Festival of Puppetry, such as the Putul Yatra

- d) Exhibition of puppetry in different parts of the country and abroad
 - e) Subsidy to puppet institutions and performing groups
 - f) Dissemination through audio/video film on puppetry and through publication of books on puppetry
- iii) Major achievements made during Xth five year plan and anticipated achievements for the current financial year.

During the Xth plan period several exhibitions titled 'Putul Yatra' were held within the country and abroad. Workshops on puppetry leading to making of puppets and manipulation techniques were held in the field of traditional puppetry. Major festivals on puppetry were held in Delhi, Mumbai & Lucknow. Subsidies to about 25 groups given every year.

- iv) Projection for XI Plan The scheme is to be continued in expanded form during XI plan period. Apart from other regular activities as envisaged under the scheme, major exhibition on puppetry will be held within the country particularly in the North East region and abroad. Encouragement will be provided to experimental puppet theatre by way of support.

Thus the reports lay down an immense range of goals and objectives followed by the academy for the preservation of traditional art. But despite such elaborations when, checked with the senior puppeteers the picture was not so bright. The respondents condemned that the academy was extremely laid back in its approach to take such initiatives or even responsibly keep a check on the grants so far passed. On the other hand, these artists had to take in all the steps and request sanctions and grants to begin several workshops under the guidance of SNA. "It was a cumbersome process to begin with such workshops as the, all the paper work delayed the entire process." The body alongside played a central dominating role during the period of such workshops, trainings, shows etc too, thus no freedom is given to the artists. But despite all such

hassles, the artists believe that even this little amount of support is extremely important due to the complete ruining of the arts.

ICCR- (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) provides Indian artists with opportunities perform abroad. While they provide financial support (usually only partial funding) to Indian Festivals that invite International Artists, they do not support international collaborations per se. 'It aims to take India to the world and bringing the world to India. ICCR's programmes include foreign cultural festivals in India, Indian festivals abroad, the sending and receiving of cultural troupes, the holding of exhibitions and of conferences and seminars both in India and abroad, inviting distinguished world personalities to India, sponsoring the visits of Indian scholars and artistes abroad, and providing a platform for upcoming artistes to present their talent globally, and then, there are the ICCR publications, international awards, essay competitions and lectures, apart from scholarship schemes and fellowships. ICCR, in all seriousness, does its part to ensure that the dialogue among world cultures continue, because the ICCR believes in a communion of cultures.'²³

Ishara puppet theatre trust²⁴ founded by Dadi Pudumjee an ace puppeterr, has been one of the major contributors to the promotion of traditional puppetry. As outlined below are the objectives of the trust

To strengthen the art of puppetry in India, focusing on the technical, social and aesthetic aspects.

To increase public awareness and appreciation of the various forms of puppetry from India and abroad.

To collaborate with craft and folklore centers in supporting and developing the traditional puppetry of India. Maintaining the traditions of puppetry while encouraging the renewal of the arts of puppetry.

To broaden the aspect and use of puppetry.

²³ <http://www.iccrindia.net/programmes.html>

²⁴ www.isharapuppet.com

To collaborate with other institutions of puppetry/art/theatre, performing arts schools, educational institutes, technical training institutes etc. around the globe for education and dissemination of knowledge related to puppetry .

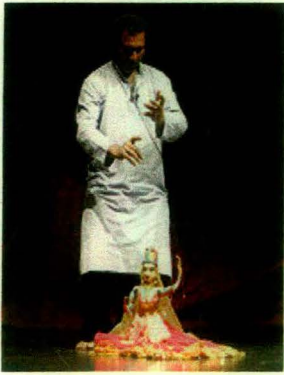
To organize conferences, seminars, and exhibitions to promote and develop the art of puppetry.

To explore strategies for sustaining puppetry and puppeteers, through networking with Indian and foreign puppeteers and compiling a directory of Indian puppeteers.

To create an Ishara scholarship fund for puppeteers to experiment and create new work.

Aakaar puppet theatre (1988)²⁵ has arisen due to the great concern among the traditional Rajasthani maestro Puran Bhat of Kathputli colony, Shadipur Depot New Delhi. The group has performed in a number of schools, at the Literacy Mission, Ministry of Environment and at Pragati Maidan. Using traditional rod, string and shadow puppets, Aakaar puppet presents themes which deal with social awareness such as AIDS, family planning and programs for mentally challenged children through traditional story telling. Aakaar has also presented programs for National School of Drama and on television. Aakaar uses both traditional Rajasthani string and contemporary styles. The company's members are all bhat from the Kathputli Colony located in Shadipur Depot of Delhi. The company is dedicated to the conservation of traditional kathputli puppetry and development of new forms of puppetry in Indian and international cultural contexts. The group grows out of Puran Bhat's collaboration with Dadi D. Pudumjee as a member of the Sutradhar

²⁵ <http://www.aakaarpuppet.com/indexmain.html>



SOURCE- www.aakarpuppet.com

UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette - International Puppetry Association)²⁶- was founded in Prague in 1929. In 1981, Jacques Felix moved UNIMA's headquarters to Charleville-Mézières, France. UNIMA is affiliated to UNESCO and it is a member of the International Theatre Institute. It is an organization in which all those people in the world concerned with the Art of the Puppet Theatre associate voluntarily in order to serve through their art the idea of peace and of mutual understanding without distinction as to race, political ideas or religion.

UNIMA-India²⁷ promotes the voluntary union of puppeteers throughout the world, so that they may share friendship among peoples without distinction of race, politics or religion. UNIMA-India works to support the growth and quality of Indian puppet theatre. It offers information, publications, scholarships, awards, and educational/cultural exchanges and events to enrich the art of puppetry and help ensure its future. Hence the aim of this international association is to foster the bridges of cooperation amongst the nations through puppetry. It has been one of the most powerful actors to bring about growth within all genres of puppetry.

Thus the above analysis has clearly laid down the current actors who are fundamental to the growth of the traditional art form. During the field research the various strengths and weaknesses were laid down by the respondents regarding the promotion of this art by

²⁶ www.unima.org

²⁷ <http://www.katkatha.org/unima/india/?q=node/1>

several actors. But the need is much more than this. This unique art is fading into oblivion. The recent concern for the artists within the kathputli colony is the construction of apartments under the governments rehabilitation scheme for the Capitals Jhuggi-Jhopri (JJ) clusters. The artistes have been promised around 2,800 apartments, but they see their families cooped up in matchbox-shaped rooms. And many are unsure of adjusting in high rises. The slum redevelopment is yet to begin, but the politics of relocation are proving tricky. There is also skepticism among the artists within the colony as they believe that these are false promises made by the government again and again.

Conclusions:

The need of the hour is to understand the aura and prestige of this tradition, It is an art form which has grown over the years and fed these poor communities giving them an expression, a bonding and a sustainable occupation without any outside state support. Thus any policy which shrinks spaces for these communities is likely to be anti-democratic , anti-evolutionary and anti-development. It may not be a lasting decision to the growth oriented development of the state. Within the democratization of political society as Partha Chatterjee argues that it ‘becomes imperative for artists and cultural workers to realign themselves, their atomized constituencies to cultures of struggle’²⁸.

Every community reacts differently to their exclusion. Some pick up arms, some form subversive groups and some transform and reinvent themselves. The third process which ensures smartest mode of survivability requires supportive institutions, which have so far been off-track due to lack of a meaningful focus upon the vulnerability of puppet communities. This study and empirical data obtained from it will help governance policies to formulate focused policies for the art community.

²⁸Brennon Timothy “Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right , Columbia University Press, 2007

CHAPTER-5
CONCLUSION

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Puppetry has long served as a vehicle for culture by transmitting people's history, religious moral lessons and expressing the long established orders of oppression within the society. It has enthralled village folk for long centuries not simply to entertain but to bring about prosperity and well being for the village and the entire communities. Hence, the question that has long been under investigation regarding the death of this art form has come to the forefront through various reinvention strategies. The performing art forms have tried to reinvent themselves within the society through the dedication carried out on part of the art lovers, the puppeteers and several institutions. The contemporary society has largely seen these expressive modes being utilized by the government mechanism themselves to generate consciousnesses among the people. The vulnerability of such traditional art performing communities which are disappearing as is the core concern. Their art form is being subsidized marginalized and allowed to wilt in a continuous impoverishment of these communities.

The study attempts to divide the work in four major chapters:

- ❖ Chapter one tries to analyze the unaccountable growth structure which has been ravaging the diverse livelihood structures of the inhabitants spread all over the world. How the self sustenance of a (once upon a time) privileged artistic section of the society is being desolated by the market forces. One of the most traditional and ancient treasures of marionettes 'the Rajasthani Kathputli' is on the verge of complete vanquishment. These talents and assets of the village in the village have been suffering due to absence of state patronage or other forms of support. This has resulted in the dying out of the immense passion within these stimulating puppets. The powerful global cultures have shaken the basis of these traditional villages by submerging them within the pan global cultural effect. The complete demise of a tradition and the community is being witnessed. The strict hierarchical set ups within the world structure are unable to mingle with these

interwoven art based communities. They are unable to fuse with the artistic creations of the puppeteers and other such art forms. Signs of change and decline of the folk art puppet tradition is visible at every corner of the world.

- ❖ Chapter two outlines the theoretical framework. The epistemological foundation of an impoverished art community lies in the changing state economics and the direction of the global process. Such community based art and cultural programs which are extremely valuable in exploring the identity as well developing unity amongst diverse cultures. The aim has been to understand the community and its power of expression through such spiritual art forms. The artist acts as the catalyst to bring about transformation within the community through its artistic productions. A spiritual upliftment is brought about within the community. The development of art through the spirit of Renaissance brings along with it the hazardous role played by the forces of materialization. High or exotic art forms are reserved for the elitist sections of the society whereas the low forms of such traditional folk arts were considered to be of low aesthetic values. Thus, such low forms of expression are actually the pioneering voices of the voiceless. Such art forms acts as reservoir of the communities to build in their collective as well as their individual identities. Hence the survival of such art forms and such communities it is important that the state should look forward towards sustained efforts in their protection and conservation.
- ❖ Chapter three was regarding the entire research methodology process which was carried on. It was largely interwoven with the ongoing globalization debate which has led to the marginalization of such art based communities. The livelihood patterns which have been under grave threat due to the phantoms of the market. The ethnographic qualitative research method tried to bring forward the current status of these traditional puppeteers who have now shifted to the outskirts of these metropolitan cities. The lack of service delivery, high rate of unemployment, illiteracy and the diminishing status of the string puppetry within the new generations were some of the startling outcomes of the field research. On the contrary, the role of international puppet activists and puppet theaters generated an enriching support towards the reinvention strategies. Alongside the

social functioning of the puppets within the societies enforced the need to strengthen their identities.

- ❖ Chapter four tried to interpret puppetry through primary and secondary data availed through the on going research. The ability of the puppets to mock at the most powerful power structures was amongst the most powerful features of this performing art. Hence, such marginal marionettes were the ore of human verbalisms since ancient times. Their social status within the society helped them to express contentious and notorious critiques. But changes in the traditional village set up and benefaction forced these artists to move in search of new modes of survival. Thus ultimately resulting in the *desacralisation* of puppetry as it entered the commercial chains of market values. The cultural ambassadors now survive in filthy slums of the metropolis. Several threats were outlined by both the traditional and contemporary puppeteers. The current status of the support givers has been outlined but the need of the hour is increased sustained support by all sectors within the society. Governance policies are to be formulated for better survivability of such ancient traditions of art

The investigations about the puppetry based communities started with the *hypothesis*: Puppets and puppetry are a form of expression generated and invented by the poor and marginalized communities. It is the most primary form of expression in governance where those who were not allowed to speak before the ruler invented ways to speak through their puppets translating their expressions. They saw themselves in their puppets. This art form is likely to have more truths than what one is able to see today as it has seen the wisdom of 'Raja' and 'Praia' through the ups and downs of Indian history. The changing nature of the state is posing new threats of survival for them. Government should design policies which allow such communities to flourish rather than be suppressed. Marginalizing them would mean the destruction of a symbolic invention of the poor against a repressive state

The following were the research objectives and research questions:

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

This study would attempt to capture the outrage of communities who are being marginalized in the spread of global culture of isomorphism and 'one size fits all reforms'. The outrage is on the suppression of their historically evolved mode of expression which even survived the most brutal kings and their policies.

The outrage is likely to provide data from history which has never been documented hence this study may launch an insight into the dark dungeons of policies formulated by rulers. This is an attempt to study empirically a very small area of puppetry which is a unique performing art form and in many ways linked to the way poor communities have survived through authoritative and undemocratic systems of governance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- How is 'Puppets and puppetry' used as expressions? How did they become expressions in history? Which class of society took to these expressions?
- Can puppetry survive as a folk tradition?
- Can government imposed changes in repertoire and techniques become genuine folklore?
- What are the threats faced by them and what responses are coming from them?
- Will it survive in a new social context, and if so what are the ideal conditions for its survival? Or will it not simply be preserved as a museum item?
- What are the mechanisms to integrate such large marginalized segments of society into the mainstream and how far has it been successful?
- What innovations and imaginations are needed to build creative spaces for traditional performing art forms?

The philosophical idea at the core of this work which was investigated was the globalization discourse and the diagnoses of the problem was through discourse analysis of contemporary debates on cultural dissipation leading to the marginalization of smaller

and weaker or unprotected and dispersed cultural communities. This monolithic spread of cultural survival is a development process in which progress is led by banks, financial institutions, accounting and auditing firms, multinational capital transfer firms and donor agencies. An analogous has been drawn between the market interventions and the role of community artists to protect the local structures from such market forces. It is the major concede of the corporate globalist that were removing economic controls in nation states, communities or indigenous societies and placing that control into the global giant corporations and bureaucracies. The notion was that all levels of society will benefit. Millions of people are resisting this notion. The modus operandi of globalization is to de-localize all kinds of power controls by the community or the state. Local politics gets redesigned to conform to the rules of distant hegemonic bureaucracies. Communities that were self dependent are converted into indisposed subjects of this larger, autocratic and unfathomable global structure. If democracy is based on the idea of people's participation then where does this global hegemonic structure operate?

“It is therefore necessary to reverse direction and create new rules and structures that consciously favor the local, and follow the principle of subsidiarity, i.e., whatever decisions and activities can be undertaken locally should be. Whatever power can reside at the local level should reside there. Only when additional activity is required that cannot be satisfied locally, should power and activity move to the next higher level: region, nation, and finally the world”¹.

The entire process of data collection generated several startling findings that have generated the immediate concern for formulation of policies that would provide respite to the shrinking spaces of these communities. Applause should be given for the enterprising behaviour on part of the local communities. The role played by the senior puppeteers both traditional and contemporary for the empowerment and betterment of the artists as well as the art itself. Several measures that have been taken by government agencies reflected a negative impact on the traditional genre. For example² the good-hearted, though naive attempt of a UNESCO expert, in the service of the government of India, to

¹ Report on Alternatives to Economic Globalisation- http://www.ifg.org/alt_eng.pdf

² Orr C. Inge, “Puppet Theater in Asia” *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1974), pp. 69-84

change or remove traditional elements from the Rajasthani puppet theatre. Traditionally the Rajasthani puppet does not speak in a human voice, but rather in a kind of whistle to indicate its supernatural origin. Also their faces are painted in an exaggerated, stylized way with overly large eyes and features, again to reveal them as other-worldly beings. The UNESCO expert out of ignorance was surprised at the resistance of the puppeteers to adopting voice parts in place of the traditional squeak. He also disapproved of their evident lack of color harmony and proportion in the manufacture of the puppets. Thus, it was clear that due to lack of profound understanding of the puppet theatre as a folk tradition such drastic initiatives could result in deep contradictions. Thus, essential characteristics of such traditional art forms cannot be maneuvered according to self interested results.

All human beings have a need and capacity to create and recreate as well. They seek outlets for artistic self expression and hence providing to the greater good of the community. More importantly, the natural gift of artistic creativity is inborn within some privileged individuals. Thus, the requirement is to strengthen these individuals rather than forcing them to kill their art themselves for sustenance. Such livelihood patterns should not be isolated within the current demand supply materialistic life styles.

“The ultimate purpose of development is to expand the capabilities of people, to increase their ability to lead long and healthy lives, to enable them to cultivate their talents and interests and to afford them an opportunity to live in dignity and with self-respect”³.

³ Griffin Keith and Azur Rahman Khan , “Globalization and the Developing World: An Essay on the international dimensions of development in the post cold war area.
http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1992/papers/keith_griffin_azur_rahman_khan.pdf

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