LEARNING AND TEACHING THROUGH PUPPETS
Learning and Teaching through Puppets
CHETNA means awareness in many Indian languages. For us CHETNA means Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness. It is a non-governmental support organisation based in Ahmedabad - Gujarat State of India. Its mission is to assist in the empowerment of disadvantaged women and children to gain control over their own, their family’s and community’s health.

Founded in 1980, CHETNA began with a single project: To improve the effectiveness of the government implemented supplementary feeding programmes for mothers and children in Gujarat. Over the past decade CHETNA has broadened its activities in the field of health and nutrition education for women and children in rural, tribal and urban slum areas of Gujarat and Rajasthan through different project activities.

At present CHETNA is providing services through two of its Resource Centres. Child Resource Centre (CRC) CHEITAN (initiated in June, 1991) and Women’s Health and Development Resource Centre (WHDR) CHAITANYAA (initiated in October, 1992).

Both the centres address the need of children and women through all the stages of their life. It provides facilities of Capacity Building of NGOs and GOs through conducting Training of Trainers (TOT) on specific issues of women and children. It develops need based training and education material for wider dissemination.

Also it has a facility of Documentation Centre to address the information needs of individuals, NGOs, working on women’s health and development concerns and child health and education concerns.

Child Resource Centre (CRC) is a central exchange of ideas on planning, implementation, evaluating and propagating Child Centred Health Education programmes. Focussing on different age groups as: Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) for 0-6 years. Intervention in formal and non-formal educational programmes through promotion of activity oriented approaches like Child to Child approach for 6-14 years. Health and development of adolescents for 14-18 years. The emphasis is on building capacities of functionaries in the areas of training, providing support for qualitative research, networking and participatory evaluation. Need-based education and training materials is developed and disseminated for effective exposition of ideas.
INTRODUCTION

CHETNA initiated Utsah project for disabled children during August, 1986. During the course of the project, a number of creative activities like puppetry, model-making, drama, art activities, scripting... were conducted in various schools in and around the city of Ahmedabad. Based on this experience, CHETNA developed an activity-guide for creative activities for the persons working with/for children named "Utsah Activity Guide". "Learning and Teaching through Puppets" is a complementary publication to the Utsah activity-guide, with focus on preparation and presentation of simple puppets.

It was observed during the Utsah project (1986-1988) that puppets were a creative medium of enabling disabled children to learn. Children got an opportunity to perform fascinating and interesting activities with the help of puppets. This medium also proved effective to bring about positive changes in their behaviour and to develop their latent capacities.

During the Utsah project, puppets were used not only to impart education to disabled children, but the children were encouraged to make the puppets on their own. This activity gave the children an opportunity to express their feelings, to learn skills like drawing, stitching and to function in a group. As a result of these activities, the level of confidence, skills and happiness of these children was enhanced.

While implementing these activities in schools, a need was expressed by the teachers and facilitators working with children that simple and practicable information on the Art of puppetry was not available. CHETNA developed this guide as a response to this expressed need for individuals working with/for children. 'Learning and Teaching through Puppets' is published to

* The word "creative", as used in this publication, means the capacity of the individual to use her/his imagination and carry out ideas on own responsibility.
facilitate the readers to make and use puppets for entertainment and education. It would also guide the readers on how to teach this art to children as children need guidance, opportunity, honest praise and encouragement to do something creative.

Puppet performance is not exclusively the prerogative of a professional, highly-skilled puppeteers. Each and everyone can prepare and perform puppets.

Puppets have attracted audiences since times immemorial, specially because they give form to people's imagination. We hope this guide would encourage you to create a new, unique world of puppets. Give a free reign to your imagination!

We welcome suggestions for improving this publication. Happy puppet making and performing!!

- CHEITAN Team

WHAT IS A PUPPET?

The art of presenting an inanimate object in the form of a living character is the art of puppetry.

Literally speaking, puppet (kashtha-putli) is an incarnation, made from wood. But, it can also be made by using different material.

Puppets can be of different styles depending upon the way they can be presented. The most common among them are glove/hand puppets, string puppets, rod puppets and shadow puppets. A combination of these is also possible e.g. hand and rod puppets.

Different types of puppets have been used in dramas for centuries. Western India mainly uses string puppets. Rod and shadow puppets are more popular in Southern India. Bengal, situated to the east of India, is famous for its puppet performances. Long, wooden rods are used for puppet performances in Bengal.
Glove/Hand Puppets

Glove/hand puppets are easy to make and manipulate. Their main advantage is that the presenter's hand becomes the puppet's body. Glove/hand puppets can do many things and are effective before a small audience.

String puppets

String puppets are difficult to make and manipulate. The puppet's movements are controlled by the strings attached to different parts of its body i.e. hands, legs, head..... String puppets can do many actions and need special skills to operate them. They are effective before a small audience.

**MYTH**

Puppets are always made from wood and manipulated by tying strings.

Rod puppets

Rod puppets are easy to make and manipulate. The puppet's body is securely tied to the rods or sticks. Rod puppets can do limited things but are effective even before a large audience.

Shadow puppets

Shadow puppets are basically flat puppets which are operated on a screen with a light behind or above the screen so that the audience can see the shadow of the puppet. They are easy to make and are effective even before a large audience.

There is a lot of controversy regarding the history of puppets. Some experts say that they were used for the first time in India and some say in China. But it is a proven fact that they have been in use in India for more than four thousand years.
WHEN AND WHERE CAN WE USE PUPPETS?

Puppets are fascinating. They create a special environment whenever and wherever they are performed. So, they can be used to initiate a talk or a discussion. Puppets are specially effective when sensitive or private issues like sex education, contraception... are discussed with shy or hesitant participants. This medium has proved to be useful in different forums like camps, workshops, meetings, trainings...

Puppets have a physical entity but their performance is guided by the puppeteer's imagination. Due to this characteristic of puppets, the puppeteer achieves more than a stage artist.

Puppets can be effectively used in stories and dramas which have imaginary events, places, and characters. Parables and historical stories depict puppets as their main characters. Active and attractive puppets can turn any topic into an interesting one.

Any story, poem or drama given in the textbooks can be effectively explained to the students through puppets. Puppets can also be used to explain certain scientific principles.

Puppets can be effectively used to discuss any health related issue. Health workers, development workers or others can initiate a discussion on diseases through a puppet show on doctor and patient. Puppets are also used in hospitals for giving education on health and hygiene.

Puppets are strategically used in the field of education and social development. Students are not only encouraged to view the puppet performance but also make the puppets and present them on their own. Children learn quickly through this hands-on-experience (Learning by Doing method). The facilitator can give key words to the children to make a storyline for the puppet play. This would develop their imagination.

MYTH

Only children enjoy learning through puppets
The puppeteer should be very clear as to why puppets are used and what content is to be presented through them.

An outline of the script/story and the whole programme should be thoroughly examined in relation to how many characters are to be included, which will be the main character, what and how they will act and where would the performance take place.

The number of characters in the puppet performance should be minimum, as far as possible. The puppet script/story should be simple and clear. Too many characters and complicated script/story can confuse the audience.

The duration of the programme should be kept short to ensure total attention i.e. not more than 10 to 15 minutes.

All major events should be presented on the stage (performing place). As far as possible, ‘stage’ should not be shifted in between the performance since such changes spoil the continuity of the programme.

Songs, dances and humour are essential for attracting and retaining audiences in puppet plays.

**HOW CAN WE MAKE SIMPLE PUPPETS?**

Puppets can be made of all types of characters i.e. humans, animals, birds, trees, plants and many other things. But, it is necessary to understand the inherent nature and outward appearance of the character in order to decide the material to be used for making and presenting puppets (String, Rod, Glove, Shadow).

Head is the most important part of a puppet's body. It is generally made from strong but light-weight material like paper, balloons, plastic balls, bottles, boxes, baskets. Puppet head is made larger and more attractive than other parts of the body. Suitable make-up on the head helps in making the face more expressive. All puppets do not require movement of eyes and lips because co-ordinating the dialogues and the movements would be very difficult.

Other parts of the body are made according to the method of performing the puppets. The clothes of the puppet should be very colourful.
The glove/hand and rod puppets are generally made from cloth or paper. It is possible to show their feet in both these methods but most of the times they are not shown. An outline of the hand can be drawn by putting the hands on two layers of the cloth.

Cut the outline and stitch both the layers. Keep the upper end open, join the upper end with the neck of the head.

Dress up the puppet. Make hands and feet separately and join them with the puppet’s body.

Animal’s body can be prepared by keeping the hand horizontal.

Professional puppeteers make shadow puppets from leather. But we can draw body, mouth, ears... on a cardboard and cut them. Then, different parts of the puppet’s body can be joined and stitched with needle and thread. To keep the body in a straight position, stitch one thin stick in the centre. To make its face move, join the stick in such a way that the presenter is able to hold one end of the stick and operate it.

MYTH
It is always necessary for an artist to present the puppets from the back of the stage.
Puppets can be made from

- Different types of papers
- Coloured paper
- Old clothes
- Buttons
- Wooden sticks
- Foam
- Old springs
- Lace work
- Feathers
- Paper bags

Things required

- Gum
- Colours
- Needle

- Old newspapers
- Cardboard
- Old boxes
- Wool
- Cotton
- Pearls
- Bits of fur
- Frills
- Rags
- Leaves

HOW CAN WE PRESENT THE PUPPET PLAY?

The art of dancing and the art of puppetry are quite similar. The graceful movement of body makes the dance very appealing. Similarly, the beauty of a puppet performance lies in the active movement of puppets.

Generally, there are few dialogues in a puppet performance. So it is necessary to first make a mute presentation of the script/story. This will automatically develop a perfect presentation style.

Puppet manipulation is an art. To achieve expertise in this art, it is necessary to handle puppets on regular basis and develop skill for the same.

Simple musical instruments like 'dholak*,' 'khanjri**', harmonium... would make the performance more lively. The puppet play becomes more interesting if the audience gets actively involved. Spontaneous remarks from the audience, dialogues and songs make the performance exciting. Hence the use of audio equipments like tape recorder should be avoided, as far as possible.

* Indian musical instrument
** Indian musical instrument
Method of preparing stage

Puppet presentation, even without an audience, is an enriching experience. But, if there is an audience, a "stage" has to be prepared. It is quite easy to prepare a stage for the puppet performance.

Glove/hand puppets or rod puppets are generally held high. Shadow puppets are held in front of the artist. Same stage can be used for all three methods.

String puppets are generally held lower and require a different type of stage construction.

If it is not possible to prepare a stage, a wooden cot or table can be used for the same purpose.

MYTH

It is always necessary to make all the fingers of the puppet's palm.
EXAMPLE 1

Cunning crocodile and clever monkey

Characters - A Monkey and two Crocodiles
Scene - Bank of a river

There lived a monkey on the top of a tree on the banks of a river. A crocodile couple lived in the same river. One day, the crocodile moved around and came near the bank of the river in search of food. Monkey and the crocodile became friends. The monkey plucked rose-apples and threw them down for the crocodile. The crocodile took these sweet rose-apples for his wife every day. One day crocodile's wife asked him, "How sweet that monkey's heart would be who consumes plenty of sweet rose-apples. I want to eat his heart." Then, they both formed a plan of obtaining his sweet heart for supper.

Next day, the crocodile invited the monkey for having meals at their home. The monkey accepted the invitation and sat on the crocodile's back. When they reached the middle of the river, the crocodile disclosed the cunning plan. But the clever monkey immediately told the crocodile to return to the river bank as he had forgotten his heart on the tree. As soon as the crocodile brought him back to the river bank, the monkey jumped and reached his home safely.

Method to make the puppets

The mouth of the crocodile can be made from an old cardboard box.

Make the body of the crocodile from a cloth or sides of a thick paper. Cut it and join it from three sides. Stuff old pieces of cloth, cotton... from the open end and give the shape of a body. Finally, stick this open end and join it with its mouth. Attach a rod to present the puppet.

The box and its cover should be stuck together with a cloth and gum. After making teeth as shown, make a shape of the mouth with the help of cotton.

Lastly, cover the box with jute or any old cloth and colour it.
Method to present the puppets

Erect the tree (made from hard board) on one end of the stage. Spread a blue colour saree or cloth to give the image of a river.

The crocodile moves on the stage. The monkey watches him secretly from the branch of a tree. Sometimes he peeps from the right and sometimes from the left.

Many rose-apples fall on the ground because of the monkey’s movements on the tree. The crocodile gulps them down quickly. Seeing this, the money whistles from the tree top. As soon as the crocodile looks up, monkey asks him if he needed some more rose-apples. The crocodile answers in affirmation. The monkey jumps down and goes near and starts talking.

The crocodile and the monkey both like to play with each other. Some time they throw water on each other, sometimes the monkey throws rose-apples from the tree. Sometimes the crocodile takes the monkey on a ride in the river.

The compere/puppeteer narrates rest of the story. If minute details are shown, the necessity of dialogue reduces to a great extent. Music can be played when the crocodile moves in the river, when crocodile and the monkey are playing, when they are chit-chatting...

EXAMPLE 2

Women’s Health

Characters: Maniben (50 years), Kantibhai (28 years)
Shakriben (22 years)

Scene: A house in Rampur village

Maniben lived in Rampur village with her son Kantibhai, daughter-in-law Shakriben and two grand daughters. Kantibhai worked in the fields. Shakriben worked in the house and later joined her husband in the fields. Shakriben remained very busy at home. Their younger daughter was 2 months old and the older one was 2 years old. Shakriben’s entire day was spent in looking after her daughters, and handling other daily chores. She did not remain healthy because of these reasons. She never consulted a doctor. She, somehow, carried on with all these problems, but one morning she fell down while working.

Method of making the puppets

Face can be made from any light, round object. Pieces of newspapers can be stuck to make it stronger. Old socks, briefs or any other cloth can be used to cover it.

(Make hair, eyes, nose separately and stick them on the face.)
Method of presenting the puppet

Before starting the puppet performance, the presenter must explain the subject and the characters to the audience.

A cock croaks from the back of the stage. Shakriben (coughing) enters the stage. She goes to the corner of the stage and turns her face. The audience can make out from the sound that she is vomiting.

Maniben enters and asks her for a cup of tea. Shakriben puts vessel on the stove. Audience can hear the sound of water boiling.

Maniben starts singing Bhajans. Shakriben picks up cup and saucer with shaking hands. The cup and saucer fell down.

She also falls on the stage. Maniben calls out for Kantibhai.

The puppet performance can be followed by a discussion on why did Shakriben fall down? Also, a few members can be invited on the stage to answer questions like what do you eat in your daily meals, is it sufficient to give you energy throughout the day, do you know the importance of taking a balanced diet?
EXAMPLE 3
At the zoo

Characters - Different animals

A deer at the zoo went jump, jump, jump.
A rubber ball against the wall went bump, bump, bump.

A little frog upon the log went hop, hop, hop.
A racing horse around the course went clop, clop, clop.

A tiny mouse around the house went creep, creep, creep.
A lazy mole down in a hole went fast asleep.

A crowing cock upon a rock went flap, flap, flap.
A lucky girl who bought a carrot went clap, clap, clap.

Method to make the puppet

Shadow puppets can be made of all the characters in the poem i.e. deer, mouse, cock, girl....

If we want to make a mouse, we should cut the shapes of its body, head and ears from a card board or any thick paper.

Then, these parts should be stitched with a needle and thread to make the mouse.

Mouse's tail can be made from wool.
To keep the mouse straight, a thin stick should be attached to its body.

Similarly, other characters can be prepared in a simple way.

**Method to present the puppets**

A stage can be made for presenting these puppets.

The light should be kept at a place which reflects the shadow of the puppet on the screen.

The poem should be sung along with the actions of the puppets.