

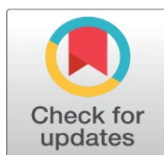
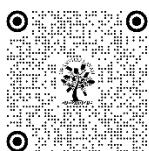
TRENDS OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IN KATHPUTLI ART FORM

Shubhi Awasthi¹, Dr. Gunja Soni², Dr. Rena Mehta³

¹Research scholar, at Poornima University

²Associate professor, at Poornima University

³Associate Professor and Research Head in Design at the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design in Jaipur



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ABSTRACT

The puppetry art form is inherently tied to the lives and traditions of India. One such art form Rajasthan Kathputli ensures cultural heritage is preserved, identity is fostered, and community pride is promoted for practitioners and audiences. In recent years social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook have helped this art form to connect to new audiences and cultural exchange has opened new avenues for performances. In the last few years with the evolution of digital technology Kathputli art form has evolved, On the other side technological interventions like projection, animations, and sound effects have also resulted in changing the methodology and storytelling narratives of this art form. This paper looks into recent emerging trends of Technological advancement in the traditional puppetry art form of Rajasthan. The interviews of artisans and observation of various tourist places in Rajasthan have been to understand the change better. In addition, research papers were used to comprehend the scenario.

Keywords: Social, Media, Puppetry, Technological interventions, Rajasthan, Folk.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last 15 years, technological advancement has drastically affected our everyday lives and work. Social media advertising, adopted by various brands like Zomato, Swiggy, Paytm, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc, has transformed the advertising industry by creating buzz, prioritizing customer support, and fostering trust, leading to increased creativity. (Khan and Priya #) Advertisements and promotional activities often encourage individuals to purchase items or avail services.

Digital applications like Zomato, Blinkit, Amazon, and Flipkart have made life easier, Zoom and WhatsApp have eliminated the feeling of distance to a great extent, these are just a few of many examples. Folk art is the art of people and reflects changing lives. It adapts itself to changing times, whereas classical art is static. One such folk art is the puppetry art form of Rajasthan, which is also known as Kathputli art. Through the example of the puppetry art form in this paper, we explore how folk arts adapt to changing times and technology.



Figure no. 1.1 Traditional Marionettes of Rajasthan

Kathputli, a traditional puppetry style from Rajasthan, India, has been adapting to the modern age and maintaining its cultural essence through technological advancements in recent years. Augmented Reality, Animation, Mobile Applications for Learning and Promotion, and interactive puppets have helped this art form smoothly for the people of different countries. The intervention of technology like projection, animations, and sound effects has also transformed the methodology and storytelling narratives of the Kathputli art form.

2. OBJECTIVES- The present study focuses on the following objectives:

- To understand the emerging trends of technological advancement in the field of the Kathputli art form.
- To understand how technological advancement transforms the Kathputli art form.
- To document design interventions carried out with artisans after understanding the recent trends.

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study was to understand the recent change due to the technological advancement in the field of Kathputli art form. The interviews of artisans and observation of various tourist places in Rajasthan have been conducted to understand the recent changes in art form due to technological advancement. Research papers were used to understand the scenario.

4. SAMPLE SELECTION

A stratified sampling method was used for the field study. Unstructured interviews were conducted with different stakeholders. Jyoti Nagar in Jaipur was identified as a settlement of a traditional community that has been the custodian of this art form for generations. Souvenir shops are other stakeholders of this art form. I visited shops near the tourist places to understand the current trends in the market. This study aimed to understand how technological advancement transformed the Kathputli art form, which was possible through data collection from the grassroots level.

5. DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected from various stakeholders associated with this craft. Secondary data was collected through online media and literary material, which helped in understanding the journey of the art form. Sourced information from books and research papers was considered.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Kathputli, a traditional form of puppetry performed and flourished by the Bhat community from Rajasthan, India, is GI tagged handicraft, some technological advancements were observed recently to adapt the Kathputli art form in the modern era while preserving its cultural essence. Here are some technological advancements described briefly happened in the Kathputli art form:

1. INNOVATIONS IN MAKING- We can see the changes in wooden dolls as per the requirements of consumers. Now decorative puppets are purchased by tourists as a



Figure no. 1.2 Puppets for hanging purpose

memory of a Rajasthan visit because they give the flavor of the colorful culture and tradition of Rajasthan. If you carefully observe you get to know the puppets sold in the market are for hanging purposes and puppets used by puppeteers for performance are different. Dileep Bhat, a puppet maker of the Kathputli colony of Jyoti Nagar Jaipur, is one of the finest puppet makers of Jaipur, he learned puppet-making skills from elders in Delhi, but he settled



Figure no. 1.3 Traditional Marionettes maker Mr. Dileep Bhat of Jyoti Nagar cluster

in Kathputli colony after his marriage, and has been making puppets for puppeteers for the last thirty years. He made only marionettes and tried contemporary forms of puppets, carved the faces of Sikh, actor Hema Malini, and many other role models, and dressed them in contemporary attire.



Figure no. 1.4 Contemporary puppet faces carved by Mr. Dileep Bhat of Jyoti Nagar cluster

We can easily observe the fusion of puppets or we can say the trend of new forms of puppets in the market. Kathputli means wooden puppets are transforming into the form of statues and even in sets of musicians. Pencil puppets and keychains are also trendy.



Figure no. 1.5 Contemporary puppet statues



Figure no 1.6 Puppet pencils



Figure No 1.7 Key Chains

2. USE OF PROJECTIONS TO SHOWCASE THE ART- During the discussion with Chauthmal Bhat and Nautaria Bhat Nagauri a puppet- maker, and performers, I came to know that these days customers call puppeteers to showcase their art at weddings, government programs, fairs, etc. They project the live recording, or sometimes they record the events, and later they add backdrops, sound effects, etc. The visuals and effects used in traditional Kathputli puppet shows can be thrilling and dynamic. In colleges or private events, puppeteers prepare the script and perform the puppet show, sometimes customers do the video recording of the performance and project later with effects as event storytelling by projecting scenes onto the puppets or enhancing the visual experience.

Folk performing arts, including music, dance, and film, have historically been used for communication and cultural awareness. However, with modern media, these arts have expanded to diverse audiences. They have also been adapted for developmental purposes, such as promoting cultural awareness and preserving heritage. (Suman)Paheli, Dil hai Tumhara, Gulabo Sitabo, and Lamhe are good examples of movies that combine traditional stories themes, and puppets.



Figure no. 1.8 Movie poster of Dil hai tumhara

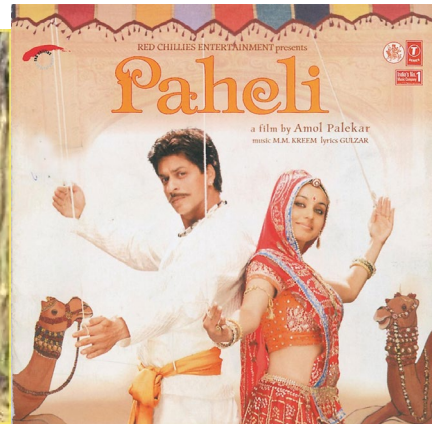


Figure no. 1.9 Movie poster of Paheli

3. INTERACTIVE PUPPETS- Billu Ram Bhat, a puppet performer informed me that in Delhi, puppeteers are trying to explore new mediums to transform traditional puppets for better interaction with the audience. Also, they are making huge puppets using different materials to attract new audiences. We were called into schools to conduct a workshop on puppet making, Even use puppets to teach good food habits, different forms of shapes, storytelling skills, etc.

Application-based learning is increasingly being used to boost children's self-confidence and abilities. Monica Rikić's interactive workshop for 8-11-year-olds involved creating interactive puppets using socks, and electronic and non-electronic items. The children learned basic electronic techniques. (Rikic)

Recently a study by Wang, C.M & Tseng S.M proposes an interactive role-play system as a potential solution to traditional glove puppetry decline, offering an engaging, educational experience and flexibility for different troupes, preserving and passing on the art to future generations. (Wang)

4. USE OF AUGMENTED REALITY (AR) IN PUPPETRY- Last time when I visited Bhartiya Lok Kala Museum, there was a 10-minute free puppet show for the museum visitors. I have seen many puppet shows in Jaipur but it was my first time in Udaipur. I was very excited as was my first experience of puppet show at Udaipur. it was interesting and also different in many ways, they were using pre-recorded music for the show, they were manipulating the strings of puppets with a block, and the strings were tied in that block. I also observed that puppet dresses have more influence on the Rajputana style, as puppet faces are more circular.

5.

Saptarshi Kolay examines currently available research on digital cultural heritage that promotes a better user-driven strategy for information transmission through new media. The study intended to preserve knowledge, including methods, materials, and the essential components of visual art. (Kolay #)

Kathputli performances can effortlessly integrate virtual elements with the physical puppets and stage by using AR technology. In one more interesting paper I read about AR the authors Roy Chakraborty, and Krishnokoli discuss the use of animated documentaries on folk artifact packaging to promote handcrafted objects, aiming to revive vanishing practices and encourage informed consumer choices. The project works on traditional Blue Potteries, Tie Dyed & Ajrakh Printed Textiles, and Lac Jewelleries. (Chakraborty #)

Steve Tillis's purpose of the research was to find the creative future possibilities between animatronic figures and hand puppets by analyzing the differences between animatronic tangible figures and hand puppets, the artists saw some opportunities in new media. (Tillis #)

6. IN ANIMATION- Doordarshan, an Indian television channel, aired a children's puppet series called Potli Baba Ki in 1991, featuring fairy tales, moral messages, folk cultures, and Indian handicrafts.



Figure no. 1.10 Image clip of Potli Baba ki from YouTube

Galli Galli Sim Sim, a Hindi adaptation of Sesame Street, is a popular television series that premiered in 2006.



Figure no. 1.11 Image of serial Galli Galli Sim Sim poster

Traditionally handcrafted puppets can be scanned and digitized, allowing for the creation of digital storyboards and animations.

7. REMOTE PERFORMANCE CAPABILITIES- A few puppeteers in the cluster such as Prakash Bhat and Nautiyal Bhat Nagauri told me that during the COVID-19 pandemic, how they learned online meetings and video recordings etc. Now we are giving online workshops on puppet-making in schools. Prakash Bhat's wife added how she also conducted an online workshop for puppet-making in school.

With the developments in telepresence technology, Kathputli puppeteers may now play for audiences anywhere in the globe virtually. The real-time engagement between performers and viewers is made possible by interactive features paired with high-quality video streaming. But still, it has a long way to go.

8. MOBILE APPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING AND PROMOTION- Social media is a powerful source of communication and promotions, Aspiring puppeteers might benefit from educational materials, tutorials, and virtual workshops offered by mobile applications devoted to Kathputli art. Even modern technology presents new opportunities for artistic expression, cross-cultural interaction, and audience participation in addition to revitalizing the Kathputli art form.

When talking to puppeteers in the cluster or working for the hospitality industry, ask how the people contact you for shows. People contact us through mobile phones. We give our contact numbers to hotels, resorts, and colleges. Even upload the glimpses of the shows on WhatsApp as a status or Facebook to promote or showcase the shows, and people who see our work contact us for shows.

These apps also function as venues for showcasing Kathputli performances, facilitating the connection between artists and a broader public, and safeguarding the legacy of this age-old art form in the digital era. I observed in the cluster, the young generation is exploring this media, It's a good sign, they are creating their YouTube channel and uploading their videos but very few of them can explore social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Website, etc. to showcase their art because of lack of education.

7. CONCLUSION

Above mentioned technological advancements are helping to uplift the puppetry art form and to support the community by opening new doors of opportunities. However, it is also important to strike a balance between the advantages and preserving the traditions while integrating technological advancements. Additionally, folk art is carried on by local communities and it must be remembered that technological advancements shouldn't shift the ownership away from them. Artisans and businesses must handle these challenges carefully to make sure that technology enriches rather than lessens the distinctive traits, cultural relevance, and spirit of the puppetry art form. Awareness is important to

understand and to avail the opportunities, this calls for a methodical strategy that upholds tradition while leveraging technology's capabilities for innovation and sustainability.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

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