

RAMDAS PADHYE AND HIS ARTISTIC PURSUITS

For the last three decades, **Ramdas Padhye** has been pursuing with devotion, the almost extinct ancient art of ventriloquism and allied arts. The art of ventriloquism popularly known as “ **Bolkya Bahulya** ” or “ **Talking Dolls** ” or “ **Shabdabhram** ” or “ **Voice Illusion** ” is little known in our country. He has given the traditional Indian Puppets and Ventriloquial dolls the technological edge by upgrading them to International Standards without losing their Indian identity and universal appeal. Ramdas Padhye has performed more than 9000 shows in India and abroad and contributed for the spread of this art of ventriloquism and for its acceptance as an effective medium for the propagation of various social messages.

Ramdas Padhye received the formal training in the art of ventriloquism and the use of talking puppets from his father late Prof. Y. K. Padhye. **Late Prof. Y. K. Padhye was the pioneer** exponent of the art of ventriloquism who introduced India to this art around 1920 in its modern format.

Ramdas Padhye profusely garnered the traditional art with the modern techniques and self made puppets of different hues and characters. He dispelled the western influence on this art by indianising the puppets and the themes, which found ready acceptance among masses. **Ramdas Padhye who is Science Graduate and a Mechanical Engineer from India’s reputed educational Institute V. J. T. I., Mumbai,** has successfully experimented with this performing art to resurrect the art and widen its horizon and acceptance among the masses.

In 1968, **at the age of 23, he performed before the Prime Minister of India Late Smt. Indira Gandhi in New Delhi.** Spurred by her advice to give distinct Indian touch to the art, Ramdas Padhye introduced several Indian puppets/dolls with whom the Indian masses could readily identify themselves. He then selected several themes of national importance such as “ Family Planning “, “ Small Savings “, “ Child Education “, and "Grow more Food" etc. for his shows and presented them with the help of his witty and entertaining puppets. He regularly visited the hospitals and brought cheers to the lives of Cancer patients and mentally retarded children.

His significant contribution to the art of ventriloquism and puppetry received international recognition when **he was invited in 1979 to represent his country “India” at International Ventriloquists Convention in Cincinnati, U.S.A.** Thus he became the first and the only Indian ventriloquist to be so honored. He has also represented INDIA internationally at the **World Festival of Puppet Arts in Prague in 2006** where he won the **BEST TRADITIONAL PUPPETRY Award** for the show of 150 Years Old Indian Puppets which he resurrected after a research of 20 years. He also went to China in 2012 to represent INDIA at the **UNIMA World Puppetry Festival** where puppeteers from 78 countries displayed their talent.

In the year 1992, he established **Ramdas Padhye Foundation, a public Charitable Trust, for the resurgence and propagation of art of ventriloquism and allied arts such as puppetry. Under the auspices of this foundation** Ramdas Padhye has also conducted **several workshops to hunt the new and upcoming talents**. He has also established these arts as not meant only for entertainment but also the means of earning livelihood by pursuing an off-beat and exciting profession of Ventriloquist and a Puppeteer with all the modern techniques and developments. Under the auspices of Ramdas Padhye Foundation, Ramdas established **Indian Centre for Ventriloquism & Puppetry (ICVP) in 2010, a training centre where people from all age groups can learn this art**. ICVP conducts workshops regularly to promote young talent.

He has also authored two books in regional language " Marathi " on the subject of ventriloquism and allied arts. His new book on ventriloquism written in English called "Inner Voice" was inaugurated at the Vent Haven Convention, 2002 at Cincinnati, U.S.A. He has also to his credit two full-length Marathi plays and English play for children predominantly using puppets of all descriptions.

With a view to depict the International acceptability of these art forms and then take them **way beyond the language barriers**, he in 1997 produced second full-fledged play titled " **HATS OFF** ". In this play, he entertains the audience by the use of entirely indigenously developed puppets using composite materials and some of the techniques not even used at the international level. This hugely different and expensive play **won accolade from Indian Press and Indian art-lovers**. Infact this play was readily recognised as the exquisite blend of modern techniques and the technologically upgraded traditional Indian puppets and ventriloquial presentations. He infact once again reinforced his reputation as the artiste who constantly innovates and strives for the betterment of these art forms.

This puppet medium is effectively used in the current trend of Music Video. Very few people know that the puppets in **Falguni Pathak's latest Indi-pop album "Maine Payal Hai..."** produced **Universal** are designed, made & operated by **Ramdas Padhye** to the exacting specifications of the director to achieve the perfect blend of the traditional & modern puppets. This puppet medium has also been effectively used in films as well.

Ramdas Padhye & his team has brought to life the **150 Years old Puppets of Pioneer Dramatist Late Vishnudas Bhave** by staging this **historic event** at the Nehru Centre auditorium. 15 years ago when Ramdas Padhye was handed over this treasure of puppets they were all in shambles & nothing more than a neglected heap of wooden parts. **Ramdas** set upon with singular devotion to restore this treasure to its original glory & splendor. These puppets are basically operated by string & rod techniques which are superbly complemented by mechanical pulleys & specially crafted puppet theatre with inter-changeable wooden tracks.

In keeping pace with the fast changing entertainment scenario in the post liberalisation India, he established his own **website www.vpuppets.com** for the world to access and watch the achievements of Indian artiste and his efforts to popularise and develop the art of ventriloquism and puppetry which are found complementary to each other.

Ramdas Padhye has his own "**Puppet Studio**" where he creates puppets as per the requirements of each & every project. He specializes in custom made puppets. Each puppet is designed keeping in mind the target audience. Mr. Padhye hires a dress designer to design the costumes of the puppets which makes his puppets unique. Each puppet of his is unique & high quality & standard. He also exports puppets to different countries. His puppets are used by leading ventriloquists & puppeteers around the world. Thus Mr. Padhye has created his own niche in the international market.

ref: Ramreport.doc