

Kapil Paharia

Kapil Paharia is a multidisciplinary performance art and theatre practitioner based in Faridabad, Haryana, India. He gained his master at the Ambedkar University in Delhi.

Title: Body and Language design performing in puppet

Topic:

“Backstage visitors at a puppet show are notorious pinchers and feelers. They rap on heads to test construction materials: they squeeze bodies to find out what is inside: and they lift skirts to see how the legs are attached to the marionette’s body”(Latshaw, 1978) by this I think George Latshaw means that after the performance, the puppet always treated as an object. And, the puppeteer’s gender is always included with the object in performance. Also, this made me look at the gender in puppet, and sex too because both the terms are interrelated to each other.

The research will be dealing with the question of body and language in puppetry. It will try to discuss the various functions of the body of a puppet made of different kinds of material. How the material helps in also representing the sex and gender of a puppet, which also comes not from the material which the puppet is made, but the puppet artist. How is the puppet body responding to these norms and terms, and how language works in puppets? Do puppets have their own language?

Key question - How do we analyse the different ways in which the body and language perform in the practice and design of puppet?

This research will look to study how puppets develop social relations with the manipulator and the spectator. I will look at how caste, sex and gender play a role in analyzing the puppets as objects. The manipulator’s or puppet artist’s caste, class and gender also transfer to the puppets and create a new kind of political aura through these norms. Manipulators actions come from these categories through which the manipulator manipulates these puppets and transfer their experiences to the puppets or express through the gestures of these categories by repeating those actions by puppet and develops the language. The language of the puppet works through the sound, dialogue and the scripts, and the body language works through gesture, posture and movement.

I will look at the importance of puppet maker, puppet manipulator, and the voice behind the puppet and puppeteer in these separate categories and the togetherness of these questionable categories.

Puppet has a very unique existence in the world. The existence interplays between being a living and a non-living entity. Puppets do not live or exist until it is animated. In a puppet, the existence cannot be recognized, without

the body. This can be assumed because it is in collaboration between the two bodies; one of a puppet and the other of a puppeteer. Both bodies work with a series of manipulation that translates between each other so that they can create a language. This language is often created by the audience. The bodies of the puppets are constantly interplaying with the presence of the bodies of the human. Puppets exist because somebody creates them. They interact with the object. The objects look like they have a life. They are figures or bodies mostly consisting of the humanly looking limbs. When anyone makes puppets, they make the parts of the puppets in different pieces, and every piece represents a different part of the body. That part is a projection which resembles a human limb and used for locomotion in puppet. Limbs of puppet or puppet itself have to look like humans, because they are created for humans by humans, for telling or showing their histories.

Keeping all these concerns of the puppet and its practice, which is in constant negotiation between the puppeteer, puppet and the audience. These ideas do not have a fixed function within these practices. There are multiple bodies involved. Gender performs very differently and the language is always evolving. It is these functions of puppetry that makes it very interesting. This research will try to elucidate a few ideas that can help in unravelling the different problems that exist and also open a different understanding to look at the practice of puppetry.

Methodology:

The methodology I am going to use in the study of my research comes mainly from my lived experiences, practically evolved and self-reflective methods. It is an attempt at practice-based research, based on prior knowledge of the experiences. I have to adapt my research according to the material which I have found in the period of research.

I am going to look at puppet objects through the lens of my experiences as a practitioner of puppetry. I will be looking at the definitions created by the word and the meaning. I am going to use readings in this research to relate to the theory of these forms and also other theories which can relate and affect the practitioner.

I will also look at other practitioner work from the respective field. I will also talk to the artists from the puppet field at an international level, do interviews and use their experiences from their practice in this research. I would use puppet films and use of puppets in popular mediums and the representation of sex and gender and its language in animation with research on stage and street puppetry.

I want to read puppets as I understand them and relate to them as a practitioner, as an audience and as a researcher.