

Ghoda Naach





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The *Ghoda Naach* was at one time an integral part of the life and philosophy of the rural farmers. Besides Bengal, the dance is also seen in Jharkhand and Odisha in eastern India. In the Bengali month of *Aghrayan*, after the harvesting of the paddy, the farmers would express their joy and happiness by presenting the *Ghoda Naach*. The dancers would adorn the horse puppet and imitate the movements of the horse. The two legs of the dancer could be seen below the puppet – the other two legs of the horse would have to be imagined by the

audience by watching the movements of the dancers inside their horses

EZCC held a workshop to make the *Ghoda* puppets that are used in the *Ghoda Naach*. Puppets have for a very long time been the primary form of traditional entertainment. The origin of puppets is a mystery and some historians believe that puppets were first made on the banks of the river Ganges in India. Traditional kinds of puppetry found in West Bengal, are rod (*Dang*), glove (*Beniputul*), and string (*Taar* or *Shuto*) puppets. The rod and glove puppets are





indigenous to Bengal, but string puppetry has been an import. Shadow puppetry does not exist in Bengal. The *Santhal* communities of Bengal practice a very rare

kind of puppetry called *Chadar Badar* or *Chadar Bandni*.

Puppets are regularly seen at rural fairs and festivals. The frame of the puppet is made





from wood and bamboo – which is then layered with clay and glazed with colour. The puppet makers then use their artistic skills to breathe life into the puppets.

Puppets are not just mere bits of wood, clay and rags. In the hands of a good puppeteer, they are endowed with an extraordinary life of their own. Sometimes puppets can do better than what humans can do to educate rural masses and spread awareness among common people. Several government agencies regularly take the help of puppeteers to convey important messages.

Over time, tastes of the audience have changed and the rural puppeteers have not been able to keep up with technological advances. At one time, mythology and age old



legends were the only themes of the puppeteers. Now the puppeteers present contemporary themes, but the popularity of the *Putul Naach* continues to be on the decline.

The *Ghoda* puppets are hardly seen in rural Bengal anymore. What once used to be an integral part of celebrating a good harvest,

is now unknown to the younger generations of farmers. To revive this vanishing art form EZCC organized a fortnight long workshop in which these puppets were made and this was followed by a dance performance with the puppets. The *Ghodas* are now a part of the ambience of Srijani Shilpagram, welcoming visitors to the premises.

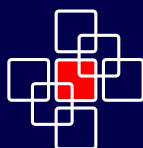






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