



Pudiyador Times

Issue 20 Jan 2015

Unconventional Education Through Art At Pudiyaador

*Hush my darling, don't cry my darling
The lion sleeps tonight
Ee-e-e-oh-mum-a-weh
Ee-e-e-oh-mum-a-weh...*



As the hippo yells from the music player, our children stretch their little hands upwards as high as they can. With background music, any exercise is fun.

When they dance for 'Waka Waka' they rock the floor. The 'Swaing Swaing Dosai' song makes them giddy with joy. Our children find much joy in dancing with their friends and always look forward to these sessions. Their warm-up dances as a performing art acts as the alternative form of doing exercise. By introducing performing art forms, children are now doing physical exercise in a more meaningful, fun way. Let's dance and warm up!

Kattai Kuthu & Villu Paatu

Villu Paattu is an ancient folk art form of musical story-telling where narration is interspersed with music. Simple tunes and simple verses allow the story to be followed easily. The villu, a bow, the age-old weapon of warriors - paradoxically lends itself to be used as the primary musical instrument for the Villu Paattu artists. In Tamil villages, performers narrate stories ranging from mythological to social. The main storyteller narrates the story while rhythmically striking the bowstring. The bow rests on a mud pot kept facing downwards. A co-performer beats the pot while singing. Typically another co-singer acts as active listener to the narration, uttering appropriate oral responses. The local government sometimes utilizes this as a vehicle for social messages and propaganda. At Pudiador we use this art as the tool to help our teenage girls understand socio-economic issues. For example, how global development plays an important role in poverty and hunger in developing countries. The complicated theories can be made into interesting stories using lively examples piled into Villu Paattu script. These scripts can be practiced and performed in front of the community. We also planned to do awareness programs on issues such as alcoholism, child sexual abuse, etc.

Kattaikkuttu derives its name from the word kattai, which refers to the special ornaments worn by the actors during performances. Kuttu means "theatre". It uses traditional music, dance, songs and dialogue in the Tamil language, always accompanied by three musicians. The actors wear beautiful costumes, ornaments, and colorful makeup. The audience recognizes the various characters by the shape of their headwear and makeup. Traditionally that the theatre is handed down from one generation to the other by word of mouth. Nobody knows exactly how old Kattaikkuttu

There are no books that tell us when the first performance took place or what it looked like. Kattaikkuttu has been performed in rural Tamil Nadu for years. In November 1990, a group of seventeen rural actors and musicians founded, on the initiative of Kattaikkuttu actor Perungattur P. Rajagopal, an organization to promote their theatre in the town of Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. Our own PCT member Thilaga learnt kattaikkuttu from P. Rajagopal and is now teaching basic Tamil to Pudiador children through Kattaikkuttu. She uses this art as the medium to increase the children's delivery level and as a tool to teach basic

T a m i l .



Villu Paatu



Our girls had a chance to showcase their talents at an appropriate venue. Veteran classical musician T. M. Krishna conducted a musical concert in which the two different types of art were performed in the same stage. Our Pudiyaador girls from Urur Kuppam performed a Villu Paattu in front of a massive audience. They sang about how coastal villages like Urur Kuppam are vulnerable to class bias and developmental processes like building coal and nuclear power plants and desalination plants along the coast in places where fishermen used to haul their boats. This festival was

the first of its kind that brought people out of the typically upper-class sabhas (performance arts venues) out on the streets and into ancient fishing communities like Urur Kuppam.



Interview with Thilaga

Thilaga loves to teach this ancient art to the new budding generation. Here is a brief interview with Thilaga:

Q: What is the most important thing that children have gained from Kattaikuttu?

A: According to me, Kattaikuttu allows the children to speak their opinion confidently in front of others without hesitation or fear. Children also gained clarity in their speech through Kattaikuttu. It drives out stage fear.

Q: How does Kattaikuttu help children understand Tamil literature?

A: The script usually builds upon ancient Tamil literature like Mahabharata, Kuravanji, etc. By acting out the script, children are able to understand the story they are acting. So it provides a way to learn Tamil literature without any difficulties. Tamil literature is typically a heavy subject for the children to understand. But folk art such as Kattaikuttu acts as a tool to break this complexity.

Q: How do you convert this art to teach basic Tamil to the children? As you said, it is a art that contains heavy content. So how are you able to provide the art as a simple tool that teaches basic Tamil?

A: I encourage children to come up with their own stories. Let me give you an example: I would begin by giving them two Tamil letters. Starting with those two letter they have to write down a bunch of words. Then they should form sentences using those words. Finally they have to join all the sentences to built their story. Then we act that story as Kattaikuttu.



Ramanujan Maths

Ramanujan lived in a tiny hut in India. With no formal education or access to scholarly works, he chanced upon an old mathematics book that fascinated him. Using this basic text he was able to extrapolate theories that baffled mathematicians for years. Ramanujan's genius was unparalleled.

Mathematics is a subject that most children (and some adults) fear. By introducing the Ramanujam curriculum we help our children see that math can be fun too. Attractive and easy-to-use tools help our children approach the subject bravely. The Pudiya Dor teachers are trained at the Ramanujam Math Centre to use innovative methods to help children understand math. Assessment is also done once the children learn specific methods.

The Ramanujam Math Centre lists the advantages of using their math kit:

- It is strong enough to withstand normal use handling by children
- It is designed to accommodate children's physical competencies.
- It appeals to the child's natural curiosity and desire for action.
- It is colourful, smooth, pleasing and durable
- It promotes activities and experiments.
- It is simple to use and manipulate.
- It provides basis for abstraction.
- It is hands-on and motivating.

Quarter Update

Dec 2014: After School Program



Winter camp was held from 22nd to 29th of December in 2014. Around 20 children participated regularly while the rest were away with their families. The theme of the camp was “learning Indian art, performing arts and sports”. Majority of the children learnt Kathaikuttu and performed at the community event at Urukupam on 29th of December.



Jan 2015: Kabadi Tournament

Around 130 children from all the centers participated in our Kabadi tournament. 8 coaches and teachers mentored the children and gave them motivational and technical support. All the children got equal game time regardless of gender, skill and age. We finished with ‘spirit circle’ to discuss sportsmanship and share incidents that the children and mentors felt involved ‘good spirits’.

Jan 2015: Young Adult Program



35 YAP children participated in 'Bridging the Gaps' camp. Over a 100 children gathered from different places from India to take part in Ultimate Frisbee camp for 5 days in Auroville (near Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu). The camp exposed them to advance levels of Ultimate Frisbee and personal development activities to help build friendship and sense of team. 10 youth leaders were selected out of total 35 children to lead their respective teams.

Quarter Update



Instructing the Children



Group Activities



Playing Kabaddi



Playing Ultimate



Team Coordination