



INTACH

Heritage Club Activities

Documenting Storytelling Traditions of India

India is a land of many stories. Panchatantra, Folk Stories , Stories told by Grandmothers are all part of the Indian culture. These stories tell us about our gods and goddesses , moral values , popular legends about heroes and mythical creatures and also take us to imaginary lands full of magic and adventures .

Each region of India has a unique storytelling tradition associated with it . Some of them are shared below:

Indian Storytelling Traditions

Harikatha Kalakshepam

The Harikatha Kalakshepam storytelling tradition is practiced in Tamil Nadu. In this tradition the story is told in an extempore form. Solo performers tell the stories using wooden planks called Chappalakkattai and use voice modulations to enact the characters from the stories. The stories are mostly based on Meenakshi Kalyanam , Sita Kalyanam or Rukmini Kalyanam . Important elements of this tradition are music, knowledge of various subjects and the use of words to make the story interesting.



Dastangoi

Dastangoi is a medieval period storytelling tradition. The tradition mainly involved the recitation of stories from epics revolving around themes of adventure, magic, etc. Popular themes included stories of Amir Hamza, Bagh-o-Bahar etc.



Villu pattu

Villu Pattu is a popular folk narration style performed in states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This tradition uses a unique instrument - a bow which is placed on an inverted earthen pot. The story is told through songs accompanied by the instrument. Villu Pattu tradition is also used to generate awareness about various welfare programs, or to spread information about important issues.



Pandavani

Pandavani is a popular storytelling tradition of Chhattisgarh. It was usually performed by men of the Pardhi community but now women also perform. It is the narration of various events of the epic Mahabharata, performed by a singer accompanied by some musicians. There are two kinds of Pandavani known as Vedamati and Kapalik. One of the most popular Pandavani performers is Teejan Bai .



Kaavad

Kaavad is a 400 year old oral storytelling tradition of Rajasthan. The Kaavad is actually a wooden shrine with multiple panels decorated with images of gods, goddesses, saints etc .There are multiple panels in the Kaavad. The shrine is made by the Suthar community while the Kaavadiya Bhats or the storytellers recites the songs and narratives



Burra Katha

Burra Katha is an oral storytelling tradition from South India. It is performed by three people. One is the narrator who also dances, Second person makes the audience laugh with humor while the third speaks about social and political issues . The performance involves the three performers asking many questions. This tradition was once banned by the British!



ACTIVITY IDEAS

1. Modern Stories with a Twist

Taking stories - ancient or modern perform a storytelling in a traditional style. For e.g. choose a story by your favorite author and narrate it in the Kaavad style of narration.

2. Stories through performing arts

Narrate stories through a dance, musical rendition or a mime .

3. Share your Story !

Each student can share any story told to them by their grandparents or folk stories of their region using props/puppets/pictures etc.



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