



NAURANG BHAT

Akademi Award: Puppetry (Kathputli Making), Rajasthan

Shri Naurang Bhat was born in 1937 at Naan village in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan into a family of traditional puppeteers. He learnt puppetry and puppet-making at home, and eventually moved with his itinerant family to Delhi where they settled when he was ten years of age. In this new environment, his native talent as a craftsman blossomed and grew in new directions. Other than puppets, he was soon making wooden figures and masks for organizations such as the Handicrafts Board. However, he remained rooted in his hereditary practice of puppetry.

Shri Naurang Bhat's talents as a puppeteer were noticed by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay while in Delhi, and by Sumitra Charatram of the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra. Under the former's guidance, Shri Naurang Lal prepared and presented several new puppet plays such as Amar Singh Rathore, Pabuji, and Lav-Kush. The latter provided the forum to present his plays Krishna Leela, Jhansi ki Rani, and Kumhar ka Gadha under the direction of the modern puppeteer Kapil Rabi. Over the years, Shri Naurang Lal was able to project his art at several festivals and exhibitions in India and the West, such as the Smithsonian Festival of World Puppetry in Washington, U.S.A., the Aditi exhibition held during the Festival of India in U.K., the Apna Utsav in Bombay, and the Kathputli workshop organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi in Delhi (2005). His excellence as a craftsman and artist received wide appreciation both at home and abroad.

To our deep regret, Shri Naurang Bhat passed away on 13 January 2007 in Delhi. He is posthumously conferred the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to the Kathputli-making.