



### Supporting Sustainable Livelihoods through Education and Cultural Entrepreneurship

K.R. Mangalam University, through its ongoing ICSSR-funded project "*Strings of Resilience: Exploring the Socio-Economic-Cultural Significance of Puppetry in the Northern Region of India for the Kathputli Community*," has extended meaningful support to local artisans by nurturing financially and socially sustainable livelihoods. This initiative has evolved into a living model of community-linked education, entrepreneurship, and heritage preservation—where research, capacity building, and creative enterprise intersect to strengthen marginalized communities.

#### Empowering through Free Assistance and Institutional Support

The university's engagement with the Kathputli artists goes far beyond research documentation; it represents a sustained effort to empower the community through **free mentorship, training, and entrepreneurial exposure**. Under the project, puppeteers were invited to conduct school-based sessions in collaboration with **SPIC MACAY**, bringing traditional puppetry into classrooms and creating paid learning opportunities for artists.

- In parallel, **public performances** were facilitated at the **India Habitat Centre, Delhi**—on October 26, 2024 (“Folktales from Panchatantra”) and February 28, 2025 (“The Monkey and the Crocodile”)—allowing artists to perform for diverse audiences and earn through institutional partnerships. During the **IDEAS 2024 Entrepreneurship Festival**, the university further provided **free stall space** for puppeteers to display and sell handmade puppets and artifacts, offering them direct access to urban markets and the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the campus. Along with that facilitated Tuition and Skill Training for Children of Puppeteers living in the Kathputli Colony with the support of **NGO Children's Hope PRAYAS**.



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Renowned puppeteer Puran Bhatt presenting a traditional *Kathputli* performance under the SPIC MACAY school outreach initiative



Poster of *Folktales from Panchatantra*, featuring puppet plays *Monkey and the Crocodile* and *Foolish Lion and Clever Rabbit* staged at India Habitat Centre, Delhi



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A vibrant scene from the *Puppet Studio India* performance held at India Habitat Centre, showcasing traditional storytelling through puppetry



Puppeteers displaying

handmade crafts and puppets at the KRMU IDEAS 2024 Entrepreneurship Festival stall.

## Evidence of Impact and Sustainable Outcomes

The project's progress report provides clear documentation of these activities through photographs, fieldwork records, and collaborative reports. The evidence illustrates not only the artistic skill of the community but also the transformative potential of structured support. The research team, led by Dr. Anshika Prakash and Dr. Monika Yadav, has integrated educational resources, capacity-building programmes, and institutional partnerships to build confidence among puppeteers as self-reliant artisans.

Moreover, academic outputs such as the paper "*Tangled Threads: Art, Livelihood, and the Struggles of Delhi's Puppeteers*" (under review in a Scopus-indexed journal) substantiate the



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initiative's broader impact—demonstrating how field-based education and entrepreneurship training can foster creative micro-enterprises within vulnerable cultural communities.

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**Strings of Resilience: Exploring the Socio-Economic-Cultural Significance of Puppetry in the Northern Region of India for Katputli Community**

**IDEAS 2024**

OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS	OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To understand the historical and cultural significance of puppetry in Delhi and Rajasthan.</li><li>To explore the socio-economic impact of puppetry on local communities.</li><li>To preserve and promote traditional puppetry as a heritage art form and viable livelihood.</li></ul>  <p>Understanding Various Types of Puppetry</p>	  <p>Conducting Field Research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Cultural Preservation:</b> Increased awareness and appreciation of puppetry as an integral part of regional culture.</li><li><b>Economic Empowerment:</b> Enhanced livelihood opportunities for puppeteers through training, funding, and market access.</li><li><b>Community Engagement:</b> Stronger networks and collaboration between puppeteers and cultural institutions.</li><li><b>Policy Influence:</b> Insights that can inform policies to support traditional arts and crafts.</li></ul>  <p>KEIC KRMU INCUBATION CENTER</p>

Principal Investigator: Prof. (Dr.) Anshika Prakash  
Research Assistant: Ms. Maryam Irfan

Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Monika Yadav

Indian Council of Social Science Research

Research poster depicting objectives, methods, and outcomes of the ICSSR-funded project *Strings of Resilience* led by Prof. (Dr.) Anshika Prakash and Dr. Monika Yadav



Colorful exhibition of tradition

al Rajasthani puppets and craftwork promoting cultural entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods



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Faculty members and guests interacting with artisans showcasing traditional Rajasthani puppetry and craft items at the exhibition stall.

### Public Visibility and Community Outreach

All interventions under *Strings of Resilience* have been designed to remain open and accessible to the public. By staging performances at cultural venues, conducting educational workshops in schools the project ensures that its outcomes reach beyond the university walls. The forthcoming **digital archive**—to include oral histories, videos, and artist profiles—will further extend the visibility of the puppeteers' work, supporting future collaborations and recognition.





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traditional puppet-making process and interacting with the Katputli community during field study.

### A Model of Socially Embedded University Practice

Through these free educational and entrepreneurial initiatives, K.R. Mangalam University has established a replicable model for **university-community partnership**. By blending academic inquiry with practical livelihood assistance, the institution has empowered the Kathputli community to transition from cultural dependency to creative autonomy.



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This sustained engagement demonstrates that when higher education institutions serve as catalysts for social entrepreneurship, traditional art forms can evolve into viable, self-sustaining enterprises—preserving cultural identity while generating equitable economic opportunities.