

## FUN LEARNING



With the presence of performing arts increasing in today's society, Padmini Rangarajan associates teaching with puppetry

# PUPPETS

## make for interesting teachers

**P**uppet Padmini is what her students endearingly call her. And understandably so. If a traditional classroom has a teacher drawing diagrams on the board to explain the genesis of life, Padmini instead brings that lesson to life through her puppetry.

In her recently concluded three-day workshop at Our Sacred Space, Padmini Rangarajan attempted to just that by combine teaching and art for her group of curious tots aged between eight and 12.

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn," says Rangarajan of her motto, adding, "I believe in that philosophy. I started teaching my daughter English with the help of charts, which soon turned into puppets."

This interactive teaching method which started with her daughter at home, soon went to places. Rangarajan now holds workshops and



venues across the city. She is also the founder member and director of Sphoorthi Theatre for Educational Puppetry, Art and Crafts in Hyderabad.

However she emphasises, the workshop isn't for the benefit of developing another craft. "In this case, the purpose was to teach the participants the life cycle of butterflies. It is about making the puppets talk," she

who helps four lost friends in a forest find their way home was her base story.

Dividing her workshops into three segments - choosing a story, creating the puppets, and telling the story through puppets - Rangarajan hopes to incite a healthy thirst for knowledge. "The students negotiated among themselves to develop the plot," says Rangarajan. "This brought

Also, each of the children shared something new with their new friends." In an attempt to stage their show, the children, with the help of colour charts and sequins, designed and made the four paper-friends, caterpillar (Caty), cocoons and finally, the butterfly that emerged from the caterpillar.

Through Rangarajan's philosophy, the end of the workshop does not seem to be the end of this newly acquired skill. Chinnari, with her vivid imagination, is already writing more puppet stories. Niranjana and Keerthana are showcasing their puppetry skills at home, while Ovi calls the activity "fun" and wants to show her friends her new skill when she goes back to school.

When asked if the time taken proves to be an hindrance in this method of teaching, Rangarajan joyfully states, "It's my passion. And I will make it work for the sake of these young children."