



## NATIONAL LIVELIHOOD MISSION GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

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National Livelihood Mission  
- Karnataka

### **Sanjeevini - Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Promotion Society**

Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Mission was inaugurated formally on 2nd December 2011 to implement DAY-NRLM a flagship program of the Ministry of Rural Development in Karnataka. Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Promotion Society has been formed and registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960. It is an autonomous implementing agency of NRLM at the State Level.

Presently, the organization is functioning under the purview of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihoods Department of Government of Karnataka.

It has made significant achievements in the state over the past decade by creating community-based institutions like Self Help Groups, Grama Panchayath and Taluka level federations, various producer groups, Entrepreneurs clusters for the rural poor and vulnerable women.

It has been covered more than 32 lakh rural women under National Rural Livelihood Mission and working towards their comprehensive development. More than 50000 poor women in the state have been started micro and small enterprises, thereby engaging in different types of products and services, encouraging diversified agricultural activities for agriculture-based rural poor women and forming producer groups for their empowerment.

# Leather Puppets

Leather puppetry is one of the oldest and most expressive forms of traditional folk theatre in India. Leather puppets are handcrafted figures made from thin, specially treated animal hide, usually goat or deer skin. These puppets are primarily used in shadow puppetry, where figures are manipulated behind a translucent white screen with a light source placed at the back, creating dramatic shadow images for the audience. This art form combines craftsmanship, storytelling, music, and performance, making it an important element of India's intangible cultural heritage.

## Origin and Historical Background

The tradition of leather puppetry in India dates back several centuries and is closely linked to temple rituals, village entertainment, and oral storytelling traditions. Historically, leather puppet performances were conducted during festivals, religious occasions, and community gatherings. Stories from Indian epics such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas, as well as local folklore and moral tales, were commonly depicted through these performances. The art form played a significant role in educating rural communities by conveying ethical values, social messages, and cultural history in an engaging manner.

## Regional Variations in India

Leather puppetry is practiced in several states of India, each with its own distinctive style, technique, and performance tradition:

- **Togalu Gombeyaata (Karnataka):** Known for medium-sized puppets with bright natural colors and detailed ornamentation. Performances are accompanied by classical and folk music.
- **Tholu Bommalata (Andhra Pradesh & Telangana):** Features large-sized puppets, sometimes over four feet tall, with elaborate costumes and expressive facial features.
- **Tholpavakoothu (Kerala):** Traditionally performed in temple premises as part of ritualistic offerings, depicting stories mainly from the Ramayana.
- **Ravanachhaya (Odisha):** Characterized by smaller, uncolored leather puppets that produce bold and dramatic shadow effects.

Each regional form reflects local cultural aesthetics, language, music, and storytelling traditions.

## **Materials and Craftsmanship**

Leather puppets are crafted through a meticulous and labor-intensive process. The animal hide is first cleaned, treated, and stretched to make it thin and translucent. Artisans then draw intricate designs on the leather and cut them using fine tools. Natural dyes are applied to give vibrant colors, and small perforations are made to enhance the visual effect of light and shadow. The puppet parts—such as head, torso, arms, and legs—are joined with threads or leather strips to allow movement. Bamboo sticks or wooden rods are attached to control the puppet during performance.

The craftsmanship requires high levels of skill, precision, and artistic sensibility, passed down through generations within artisan families.

## **Performance Technique**

During a performance, puppeteers stand behind a white cloth screen illuminated by an oil lamp or electric light. By moving the puppets with rods, they create animated shadow images visible to the audience on the other side. The performance is usually accompanied by live music, narration, dialogues, and songs. The puppeteer often performs multiple roles, including manipulation, voice modulation, and coordination with musicians, making it a highly skilled art form.

## **Cultural and Contemporary Significance**

Leather puppetry is not only a form of entertainment but also a medium of cultural expression and social communication. In contemporary times, leather puppets are used to convey messages on social awareness, education, health, and environmental conservation. Beyond performances, leather puppets have gained popularity as decorative art pieces, souvenirs, and display items in exhibitions, fairs, and cultural festivals such as SARAS Melas.

**Manufactured By:**

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Home is where our  
story begins, and the  
artifacts we choose to  
fill it with, tells that story  
without words.





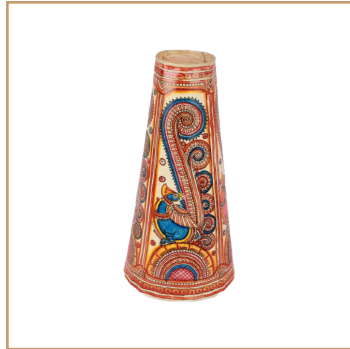


# Leather Puppet

Leather puppetry in Karnataka, particularly in regions like Mysore, has centuries of history rooted in traditional storytelling. Known as “Gombeyata,” these puppets are crafted from goat skin and intricately painted. Leather puppet lamps, wallpapers, and wall hangings have gained popularity, reflecting modern trends while preserving cultural heritage and supporting artisans.



## Living Room Lamps



## Bed Lamps - Small



## Wall Hangings





