

Design Resource

Kathputli Colony

Colony of Puppeteers in Delhi

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/kathputli-colony>



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<http://www.dsource.in/resource/kathputli-colony/introduction>

Introduction

Historically, Kathputlis (puppets) were not only a source of entertainment but also provided moral and social education. The puppet shows were used to make people aware of the problems that everybody faced and also showed ways of solving them.

Located in the country's capital Delhi, the Kathputli Colony is a tinsel slum originally founded by 11 Rajasthani puppeteers and their families more than 40 years ago. Generations of performers have passed on their ancient knowledge keeping the arts alive so that now in the center of this vast slum there are magicians, puppeteers, musicians, folk singers, painters, jugglers, dancers, storytellers and acrobats practicing their art.



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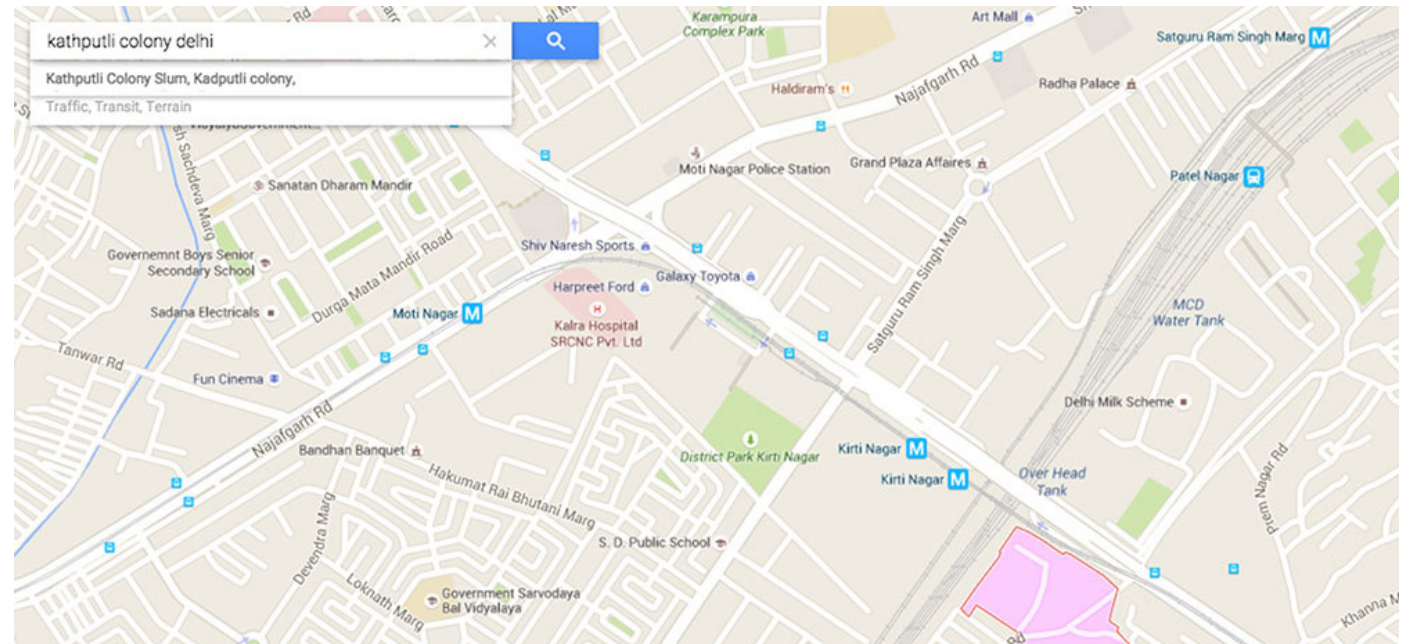
<http://www.dsource.in/resource/kathputli-colony/place>

Place

The enchanting 'Kathputli Colony', located about two minutes away from the Shadipur metro station in Delhi, superficially looks just like any other urban slum - a mess of open drains and labyrinth-like narrow lanes circumventing shoddily constructed houses of concrete and corrugated steel but in reality, it is so much more. It is home to the descendents of traveling gypsy performers from all around the country, inextricably linked to their livelihoods. Kathputli Colony is also called by other names: Kalakaron ki Basti, Madari colony and Bazeegar colony.

Since the colony occupies valuable land in the capital, the government wants to acquire and develop it. Delhi Development Authority has joined with a private firm, Raheja Developers, to build apartment blocks, some to be bought at a sharply reduced rate by the residents and others offered at market price to the wealthy. It wants the residents to move to a transit camp while the work is done. Quite obviously, the residents are anxious and fearful at the same time. While the debate over land rights continues, the artists struggle to make ends meet.

"This place is important to keeping the traditions alive," says Bhagwan Das ji, a 75-year-old singer who moved here from Rajasthan 60 years ago, giving hope to the several generations of puppeteers that strive here. The colony has become a living testament to the various hardships artists have to endure in this country.



Map for reaching Kathputli Colony.

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Glimpse of the colony.

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Glimpse of the colony.



Glimpse of the colony.



Glimpse of the colony.



Glimpse of the colony.

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Glimpse of the colony.

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People

There are over 2000 artists living in this slum, which has close to 50,000 inhabitants living altogether. Many of these artists have represented India in several fairs and festivals abroad. Magicians, acrobats, mime artists, puppeteers, jugglers, folk singers, snake charmers, bear handlers, monkey trainers and other street performers reside in this colony. A visit to the colony is enough to believe this is perhaps the only place in Delhi where the ancient tradition of magic is preserved and inherited. Most of the artists are from UP, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.



A child artist of Kathputli colony.



A child artist of Kathputli colony.

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A child artist of Kathputli colony.



An artist of Kathputli colony.

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An artist of Kathputli colony.



An artist of Kathputli colony.

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An artist of Kathputli colony.



People of the colony.

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People of the colony.

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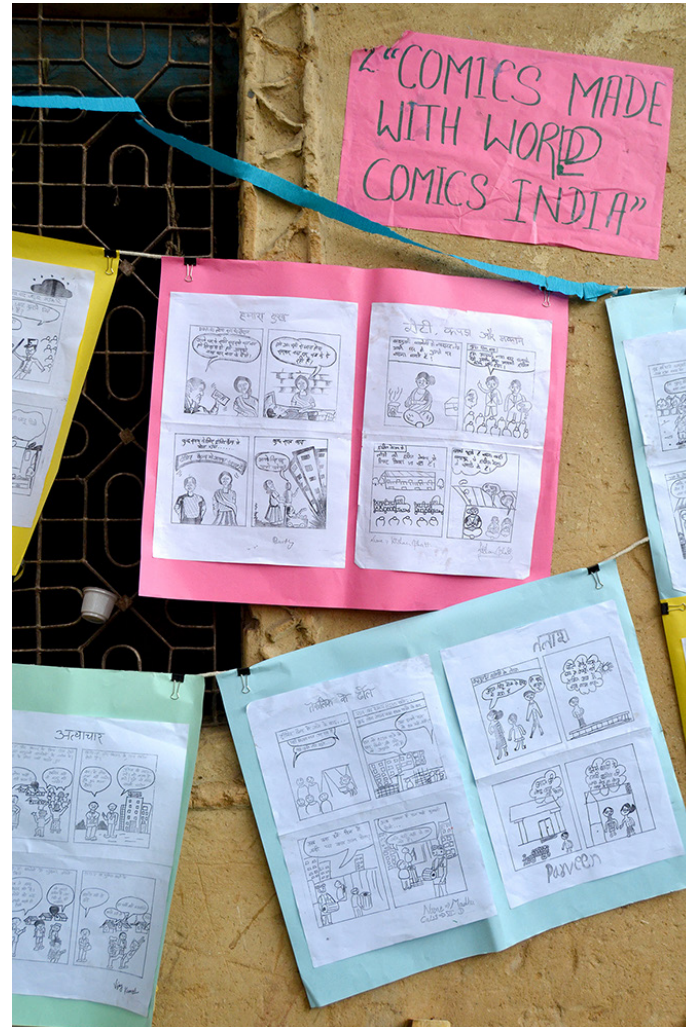
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Kathputli Colony Fest

The people of the colony had a 'Kathputli Colony Fest' in March 2014. The idea of the festival was not to create a hue and cry about colony's problems but to let these artists talk about themselves through their beautiful means of expressions. All they wanted to communicate and make sure is that their art continues to live through them with dignity and gets a wider audience.



Posters at the fest.



Posters at the fest.

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Posters at the fest.



Origami on display.

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Origami on display.



Visitor/ photographer.

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Wood carving expert.



Glimpse of the fest.

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Puppet on display.



Puppet on display.

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Performing artist.



Performing artist.

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Bhagwan Das ji.



Bhagwan Das ji's son.

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Bhagwan Das ji's son.



Dhol player.

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Dhol player.



Dhol player.

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Dance performance.



Dance performance.

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Turban tying activity to engage people.



Dance performance.

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Dance performance.



Musician telling his magic tricks.

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Puppetry.



Puppetry.

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Music orchestra.



Engaging activities.

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Engaging activities.



Engaging activities.

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Puppetry.



Puppetry.

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The cross-culture crowd.



A small skit (narrative) that talks about the problems and situation of the colony.

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Old pictures of the colony.

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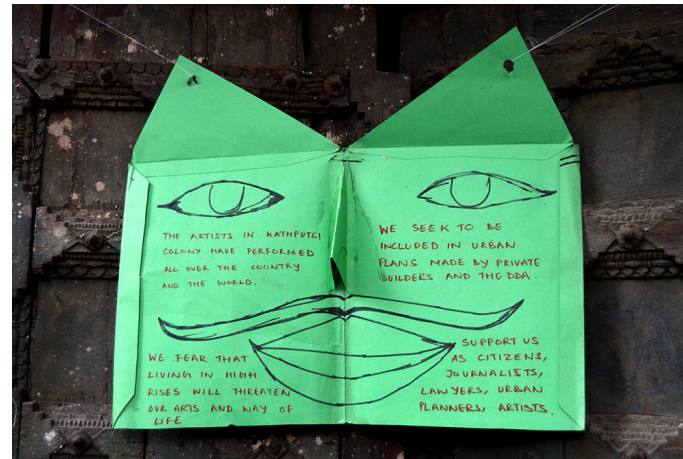
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Posters at the fest.



Participants and visitors at the fest.



Glimpse of the fest.



People of Kathputli colony showcasing their talent.

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Bioscope.

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Dhol playing on the streets of the colony.



Excited participants, hosts, visitors.



Bhagwan Das ji performing with his sons.



A small skit (narrative) that talks about the problems and situation of the colony.

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This documentation was done by Sakshi Gambhir, M. Des. at **IDC, IIT Bombay**.

You can get in touch with her at [sakshigambhir\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:sakshigambhir[at]gmail.com)

There are several organizations and communities working for the welfare of the colony. Some of those include:

1. 'Bhule Bisre Kalakar Trust':

This was formed to protect and promote the interests of the artists living in the colony.

2. 'House of Puppets':

This non-governmental organization promotes Kathputli's traditional performers and trains the next generation of puppeteers.

Email ID: house_of_puppet@yahoo.in

3. 'Friends of Kathputli Colony':

This was born to raise awareness and gather support, now physically manifested in a Facebook group.

Email ID: friendsofkathputlicolony@gmail.com

You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator

Project e-kalpa

Industrial Design Centre

IIT Bombay,

Powai

Mumbai 400076

India

Phone: 091-22-25767820/ 7801/ 7802

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